The Dissemination of Chinese Dragon Culture and the Inheritance and Innovation of Dragon Dance in Colleges and Universities

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Abstract. As a cultural heritage of the Chinese nation, the Chinese dragon culture has run through the long history of the Chinese nation for thousands of years, which is a symbol of the industrious, brave, progressive, enterprising determined and fighting spirit of the Chinese Nation. The dragon dance derived from the Chinese dragon culture does not have a high artistic appreciation value, but also passed the national wisdom, promote the national spirit. Colleges and universities are the holy land for cultural education and heritage, enjoy a unique advantages in the development of Chinese dragon culture. With the development of dragon dance in colleges and universities, this study starts from the change of times, discusses how to retain the excellent gene of traditional Chinese dragon culture while enhance its realm, how to integrate modern sports and positive elements in the modern life at the same time of retaining the characteristics of folk sports. The purpose is to focus on the inheritance and innovation of the value of times to achieve endless inheritance and increasing prosperity of Chinese dragon dance culture.

Introduction

Higher education is the combination of technological production and talent resources; the unique status of colleges and universities determines that it plays an irreplaceable role in the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture, the reference and spread of advanced culture and creation and cultivation of modern culture, etc. The dragon is an ancient totem of Chinese nation, and dragon is the information carrier for the ancestors of Chinese nation to express life philosophy and spiritual pursuit; this research regards the connotation and characteristics of Chinese dragon culture as the starting point; on the basis of clarifying the property of dragon dance sports and the current status of dragon dance sport in colleges and universities, as well as the higher education functions of colleges and universities, it constructed the evolution system for the cultural function of dragon dance. According to analysis, we believe that it has an important and positive role to create and enhance the perfect image of Chinese nation to carry out the dragon dance sport in colleges and universities, to make its cultural function enter an evolution mechanism of virtuous cycle and spiral rise.

Connotation of Chinese Dragon Culture and Spiritual Symbol of Chinese Nation

As far as the concept of culture is concerned, there is no specific definition in the world. It is a type of comparative culture in all countries. A common explanation on culture in both Chinese and western dictionaries or encyclopedia is that culture is the sum of material wealth and spiritual wealth created by human beings in the course of social and historical development. Although culture is a polysemous concept, its base point is to reflect people's thought and spirit. Culture is the spirit and soul of a nation. It is the decisive factor of a nation's true strength. It can profoundly influence the development of a nation and change the destiny of a nation.

With regard to the nation, the biggest influence to Chinese officials and academic circle came from the definition of nation from Stalin: "Nation is a stable community that was formed in the history with common language, common region, common economic life and common psychological quality that is reflected on common culture." The national consciousness was created along with the emergence of
the nation. It is a type of psychological consciousness constructed in the postnatal environment, and it is inherited and strengthened through the shaping and inheritance of the nation and society.\textsuperscript{4} In the Central Ethnic Work Conference held from September 28\textsuperscript{th} to 29, 2014, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: "to strengthen the unity of Chinese nation, the long-term and fundamental factor is to enhance the national cultural identity, construct the common spiritual homeland of all ethnic groups, and actively cultivate the Chinese community awareness." \textsuperscript{5} The first use of the concept of "Chinese nation community" indicated that our understanding of ethnic issues had shifted from the one-sided emphasis on "material determining consciousness" to the emphasis on "consciousness reacting on material".

In China, from the date when human came into being, the Chinese people were convinced that they had a blood relationship with the dragon, and they were descendents of the dragon; they believed that all the descendents of the Yan and Huang Emperors were offspring of the dragon, and the family of dragon, and they deemed dragon as the ancestor.\textsuperscript{6} The dragon, as miraculous animal in the mythology, is great, because it won the respect of all descendents of the Yan and Huang Emperors; dragon is also virtual, because it is not a type of matter, but a spirit; Dragon completely participated in, accompanied, witnessed and symbolized the formation process of Chinese nation and the Chinese civilization; the dragon culture has magic and rich connotation; as a mascot and symbol, this form of culture has high status. The Chinese people call themselves the descendents of the dragon, and the dragon culture is deeply rooted in the social life of Chinese nation. This profound awareness has made Chinese dragon culture a symbol of the spirit of Chinese nation and it is irreplaceable.

**Historical Dissemination of Chinese Dragon Culture and Chinese National Image**

In the clan society, totem was the object that the ancients worshiped, and it was the symbol and sign of the clan, with the purpose of distinguishing different communities. With vicissitude, totem worship substantially had the similar meaning with the shaping of national symbol in modern society. A nation advocates a totem or symbol in order to identify itself and distinguish other countries, and this is just a type of abstract national image. Such national images and symbols have two basic functions: internal identification and external declaration of self-worth. Nowadays, all countries in the world have the symbolic and concrete descriptions of their national images. Dragon, as the totem of Chinese nation, the same with bald eagle in the United States, the polar bear of Russia and the elephant head god of India, is deemed as the totem of Chinese country and nation; the cultural cohesion and accumulation has become a symbol of national image that was recognized by the folk.\textsuperscript{7}

In foreign countries, the archaeologists found Chinese dragon art had been introduced into America more than seven thousand years ago; at the end of Shang Dynasty and at the beginning of Zhou Dynasty, Chinese dragon culture was introduced into ancient Indians in America; the fire dragon and water dragon in Indian myths and legends respectively represent the north and south gods, and this proves the historical facts that the Chinese race had crosses the ocean in early ancient period and arrived in America and took the Chinese civilization there. The prototype of Dragon King in Indian Buddhism was the Dragon God that was in charge of rains in pre-Qin Dynasty period of China; after the faith of dragon was introduced into India, it was recreated by Indians and became "Dragon King", and added the faith about dragon palace and dragon ball. In the Han Dynasty, the art of Chinese dragon was introduced into Japan. The images of many Japanese ancient buildings were mostly the images of dragons in the Han, Tang, Ming and Qing Dynasties of China. They were almost the same as the Chinese dragon. The dragon and phoenix art in Southeast Asia obviously has the characteristics of Chinese Yangtze River Culture System; the dragon culture in Southeast Asia belongs to the family of Baiyue Culture. In the sixteenth century, the gorgeous Chinese dragon design was already introduced into Europe, and was often dedicated to the churches for decoration. “The History of Christian Expedition to China” published in 17\textsuperscript{th} century had description on royal sign—Gold Dragon; “Description of the Empire of China and Chinese-Tartary, together with the Kingdoms of Korea and Tibet; Containing the Geography and History (natural as well as Civil) of Those Countries”
composed by a Frenchman Duheard in 1735 definitely upgraded dragon as "the national symbol of Chinese people". In Europe, from 16th to 18th centuries, the dragon was regarded as a symbol of the imperial power of the Chinese Empire. After the 19th century, the image of the Chinese dragon was gradually vilified.

In China, starting from 1994 when Chinese archaeologists discovered the earliest (8000 years ago) and the largest heaped dragon shape (Youzhou Dragon) in China, dragon just existed as a type of religious belief in quite a long period of time; at the era of Qin Shihuang, the dragon began to be closely linked with the politics of China. "Historical Records—Qin Dynasty" described Qin Shihuang as "Ancestor Dragon". After that, the feudal emperors of all the dynasties called themselves as Son of Heavenly Dragon. Starting from the late period of Qing Dynasty, dragon officially appeared as an official image of China on the international stage. In 1860s, the western countries opened the door to China and held up their own national flags in China. In order to adapt to the needs of modern diplomacy, the Qing government began to realize the importance of the official flag to represent the government. In 1868, the Qing government dispatched the first diplomatic corps to visit the western countries and the dragon flag entered the international vision as the national flag of China; in 1888, "Northern Navy Constitution" officially determined the national flag of Qing state to be a rectangular yellow dragon flag; in 1906, the military anthem “Ode to Dragon Flag” of Department of the Army of the Qing Dynasty was ever regarded as the national anthem; by end of the 19th century, the dragon flag had been generally accepted by the international community.

Development of Dragon Dance in Colleges and Universities and Attribute of Dragon Dance

Dragon dance is a traditional sports item performed by the dragon dancers who hold the dragon props under the guidance of the dragon ball, along with music or music accompaniment, through the change of body movements and postures, to complete the actions and postures of dragon, such as: swimming, crossing, flying, jumping, rolling, playing, binding and posing, to fully display the spirit, temperament, manner and charm of dragon. Dragon dance is a collective event, and the mistake of any team member will affect the completion of the overall performance; each of the chapters of the performance requires the participating members to be united together and cooperate with each other in the accompaniment of music. The prerequisite condition to complete the dragon dance is to have a group of dragon dancer team, in which each member is responsible for respective duties, and a skilled dragon dance tutor, as well as a set of alive dragon dance prop; the team members should have some basic skills of martial arts, dance and music, and have enough time and energy to stay together for training; the organizations with the most complete conditions are schools, enterprises and villages. In May, 1994, the State Sports Commission introduced dragon dance into competitive sports, so the dragon dance developed into a cultural sports event that integrates entertainment, celebration, sports and fitness from a general performance, and this sport was held regularly, such as: National Farmer Games Dragon and Lion Dance Competition, National Dragon and Lion Dance Competition, International Invitational Tournament of Dragon & Lion Dance, National Dragon & Lion Dance Championship, National Dragon & Lion Dance Elite Competition, etc. In recent years, some universities had gradually realized the significance of the dragon dance sport, so dragon dance sport entered campus. For example, Beijing Sport University, Wuhan Sports University, Hunan Normal University, Central South University and other universities that started this sport early, not only set up their own dragon dance teams, but also established the pilot course of dragon dance. In December 28th, 2003, Central South University set up Chinese University Students Sport Association Dragon & Lion Branch and started to cultivate dragon and lion dance coach and referee in the following year, and launched the activity of "Dragon & Lion Dance Classroom Lecture in 100 Universities of China", and aroused the passion of university students to learn dragon and lion dance; now 186 universities have joined the program of "Dragon & Lion Dance Classroom Lecture in 100 Universities of China".

Dragon dance was originated in Han Dynasty, and has developed into more than 200 kinds by now. Each kind of dragon dances is the crystallization of inheritance and innovation. At the beginning,
someone or some people created some actions and form a certain series; then these people taught others through words and deeds and so the dragon dance was passed from generation to the next generation, and formed the spontaneous sport that was popular among the folk. Dragon dance has always retained the characteristics of national sports for thousands of years. The characteristics of dragon culture were the basic attributes of dragon dance. Without dragon design and dragon culture, there would be no dragon dance. Dragon dance is the best carrier to spread Chinese dragon culture, and it can make China dragon vividly displayed in front of people; on the one hand, it reflects the industrious, brave, enterprising, progressive, perseverant and fighting spirit of Chinese people. On the other hand, it embodies the spiritual connotation of "unity is strength" of the dragon culture. With the tacit coordination of dragon dancers, according to the length of the dragon dance, the number of dragon dancers can be as many as ten, several dozens and even more than 100 persons. In the dragon dance activities held on Badaling Great Wall in 2000 by youths of both Hong Kong and the mainland, total of 5000 persons performed a dragon as long as 3048 meters, making a new record. Professor He Xingliang, the dragon culture expert in China Academy of Social Sciences, believed that the pattern of “Double Dragons Playing one Ball” was quite matched with the character and humanistic spirit of Chinese people; in the artistic expression of “Double Dragons Playing one Ball”, through the completion of two dragons for one jade ball, it symbolizes the people's pursuit of a better life; in the pattern of “Double Dragons Playing one Ball”, the tails of two dragons are linked, and their heads are toward each other, showing the intimacy between them, and this symbolizes the unity of Chinese people; the ball on the pattern of “Double Dragons Playing one Ball” is the essence of dragon, and it can not only symbolize the moon, but also symbolize the sun and earth; the dragon and the ball are integrated, to vividly reflect the cultural concept of "harmony between nature and the human" and the integration between human and nature. In China, there are a lot of types of dragon dances, but only 7 types dragon dances were protected as intangible cultural heritages; various forms of dragon dances are exclusive and are not willing to accept the elements of other geographical dragon dances; therefore, only a type of dragon dance form can be popular in one place, and the local dragon dance can hardly be accepted and become popular in other places. Dragon dance culture has always been adhering to the idea of family cultivation and inheriting from master to apprentice, which inevitably lead to the backwardness, conservativeness and stagnation of the dragon dance culture; the inheritance mode by words and deeds caused a very narrow inheritance scope of dragon dance culture, because the limited cultural knowledge level caused the dragon dance culture could hardly be passed down through generations in the form of documents.

Evolution of Higher Education Function and Dragon Dance Cultural Function

Higher education is an important carrier of excellent cultural inheritance and an important source of ideological and cultural innovation, and cultural inheritance and innovation is an important function of higher education. As far as colleges and universities are concerned, talent cultivation is the core, scientific research is a prerequisite for perfect talent cultivation, and talent cultivation is the direct manifestation of serving the society, and inheriting and innovating culture. Scientific research, serving society and cultural inheritance and innovation should be carried out according to the cultivation of talents, but should not be separated from talent cultivation; the talent cultivation should be realized through scientific research, serving society and cultural inheritance and innovation. The four functions of colleges and universities: cultural inheritance and innovation, talent cultivation, scientific research and social service, have close relationship and interact with each other, to jointly form an interactive mechanism of cultural inheritance and innovation with the talent cultivation as the key point. If we’re to establish the system and mechanism for cultural inheritance and innovation in colleges and universities, we should get rid of the dualistic opposite thinking mode of everything is good or bad, and we must promptly adjust the attitude towards traditional culture. The evolution of dragon dance cultural function need to focus on the four important tasks: 1) improve the understanding of the dragon culture; 2) establish dragon culture top-level design concept; 3) clearly
determine the connotation of the dragon culture; 4) properly carry out general education about dragon culture. Therefore, we should adjust the attitude toward dragon culture, and eliminate the misunderstandings about the dragon culture; when we revive dragon culture, we should establish a noble, rational and healthy social and cultural values; we should deeply explore and develop the time values of dragon culture, such as: benevolence, people-orientation, integrity, justice, cooperation and great unity; we should absorb the essence and discard the dross in dragon culture, so as to select a model that is suitable for the public and the times to interpret and spread dragon culture.

The involvement of colleges and universities plays a very important role in into dragon dance sport. Chinese dragon culture is closely related to dragon dance. On one hand, the development and spread of Chinese dragon culture can promote the development of dragon dance; on the other hand, the development of dragon dance can also actively promote the development of Chinese dragon culture, and help the spread of Chinese dragon culture. the evolution of dragon dance cultural function should make full use of the interactive mechanism of cultural inheritance and innovation (Figure 1); we must first focus on talents cultivation as the core, and play an active role in educating people with culture; for example, the colleges and universities can continue to promote the activity of "Dragon & Lion Dance Classroom Lecture in 100 Universities of China" and add dragon culture elective course; secondly, we should strengthen the scientific research; for example, we can hold lectures about dragon culture and the academic exchanges about dragon culture; thirdly, we should expand social service functions; for example, we can hold dragon dance performance in the large-scale activities of colleges and universities, or carry out dragon dance performance and exchanges in enterprises or villages. For the replacement of the old and new cultural functions of the dragon dance, the inheritance is the basis and the innovation is the motive force. If the innovation has no inheritance, the "cultural building" will eventually collapse; on the contrary, if there is no innovation in the inheritance, the culture will be like a pool of stagnant water without vitality. The development of dragon dance sport in colleges and universities enables its cultural function to enter an evolution mechanism of benign cycle and spiral rise, which will lay a solid foundation for the development of dragon dance sport and Chinese dragon culture.

![Figure 1. Evolution chart of dragon dance cultural function.](image)

**Strategy for Inheritance and Innovation of Dragon Dance Sport in Colleges and Universities**

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: only if we adhere to walking to future from history and forging ahead from the continuation of national culture and blood, can we perfectly complete today's undertaking. The inheritance and innovation are two wheels for culture progress and they're
indispensable and should not be deviated. The inheritance and innovation of dragon dance sport should focus on history, and be carried out from the perspective of times value and should not be separated from the attributes of the dragon and the national sport.

First of all, retain the excellent cultural elements of dragon culture, while absorb the essence and discard the dross. We can retain the rites of greeting dragon, respecting dragon and sending off dragon, and refine and develop its positive traditional culture, such as: respect to power of nature, respect for the history and culture, respect to lofty quality and the respect to and remembrance of the exploits of our ancestors; we should retain the form of dragon dance for celebrating festivals, combine the tradition and fashion and enrich the cultural connotation of festivals. Second, we should retain the characteristics of dragon dance sport as a national sport, while enhance its level, including props, the costumes, technical methods, spread way and music of dragon dance; for example, in order to enhance the aesthetic value of dragon artistic image, we can add the technologic content of dragon dance props, to set off the dragon dance by contrast and increase the atmosphere of dragon dance; for example, we can add the number of 8-shaped dragon dance movements and the dragon rolls and reduce the numbers of swimming dragon movements; or we can select to satisfy the requirements of dragon dancers and the audience in aspects of competition organization, competition form and venue selection; third, when we develop the characteristics of dragon dance sport as a national sport, we should integrate the positive elements of the modern sports and modern life. For example, we can adopt nylon cloth material with perfect elasticity in the dragon dance costumes, and add pattern to the costumes and adopt irregular geometric patterns for the costume patterns; as for the music accompaniment, we can change from the musical instrument accompaniment to music accompaniment, and change the accompaniment from ethnic folk music to the combination of Chinese national music and the western music, and pay attention to combine the outstanding classic music of both China and western countries.

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