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Research on International Communication and Localised Adaptation of Dragon and Lion Culture: Taking the Confucius Institute of Veliko Tarnovo University in Bulgaria as an Example

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Abstract

In today's globalized world, cultural exchange and dissemination have become vital links connecting people from different countries and regions. The dragon and lion dance culture, a gem of traditional Chinese culture, has showcased its powerful vitality on the international stage with its unique artistic charm and profound cultural heritage. However, how to achieve its localization in foreign countries is a subject that requires in-depth research and discussion. The Confucius Institute at Veliko Tarnovo University in Bulgaria, as a crucial platform for cultural exchange between China and Bulgaria, is committed to promoting Chinese language teaching and disseminating Chinese culture. It has successfully introduced dragon and lion dance activities to Bulgaria and facilitated their dissemination and popularization through various cultural events, providing new insights into international cultural dissemination. This study uses this Confucius Institute as a case to explore the issues of international dissemination and localization of dragon and lion dance culture, revealing the underlying cultural logic and dissemination mechanisms.

Keywords: dragon and lion culture; international communication; localised adaptation

1 | Introduction

In the wave of globalization, cultural exchange and dissemination have increasingly become

bonds connecting the emotions of people from different countries and regions. As an essential part of national culture, the international dissemination and localization of traditional sports culture, particularly dragon and lion dance culture, deserve significant attention. As a treasure of traditional Chinese culture, the dragon and lion dance culture showcases powerful vitality and influence on the international stage with its unique artistic charm and profound cultural heritage.[1] However, how to enable this traditional culture to take root and achieve genuine localization in foreign countries is a subject requiring in-depth research and discussion.

The Confucius Institute at Veliko Tarnovo University in Bulgaria, as a crucial platform for cultural exchange between China and Bulgaria, has been committed to promoting Chinese language teaching and disseminating Chinese culture since its establishment. In recent years, this Confucius Institute has actively explored and attempted the international dissemination and localization of dragon and lion dance culture. It has not only successfully introduced dragon and lion dance activities to Bulgaria but also promoted their dissemination and popularization through various cultural events and competitions. This practice has enriched the cultural life of the Bulgarian people and provided new ideas and methods for the international dissemination of traditional Chinese culture.[2]

Based on this, this study takes the Confucius Institute at Veliko Tarnovo University as a case to deeply explore the issues of international dissemination and localization of dragon and lion dance culture. By analyzing the specific practices and effectiveness of this Confucius Institute in the dissemination of dragon and lion dance culture, this study reveals the underlying cultural logic and dissemination mechanisms, providing beneficial references and insights for the international dissemination of dragon and lion dance culture and other traditional sports cultures.

2| Practical Path of International Communication of Longshi Culture

In today's increasingly interconnected world, cultural exchange and mutual learning have become essential bridges promoting mutual understanding and respect among people from different countries and regions. The dragon and lion dance culture, a brilliant gem of traditional Chinese culture, embodies profound historical heritage and unique national spirit.[3] Through diverse practical approaches, it transcends geographical boundaries to showcase its unique charm and vitality to the world.

2.1| Transnational Cultural Essence Tour

On the vast global cultural stage, dragon and lion dances, as treasures of traditional Chinese culture, transcend national borders with their unique artistic charm and profound cultural heritage, becoming a bridge for cultural exchange among people worldwide. From bustling cities

to remote villages, from ancient cradles of civilization to modern cultural centers, dragon and lion dance tours, in various forms and pathways, showcase the unique charm of Chinese culture to the world. At international cultural festivals, tourism promotion events, and various cultural exchange platforms around the globe, dragon and lion dance performances invariably draw countless spectators. On stage, giant dragons soar amidst intertwining lights and shadows, while the dragon and lion dancers, with their superb skills and enthusiasm, convey the mystery and power of the East to every audience member.[4] Spectators, amazed by the beauty of the dragon and lion dances, are also deeply attracted to the Chinese cultural spirit embodied within, fostering a deeper interest in and longing for China.

Furthermore, with the advancement of globalization, dragon and lion dance tours leverage modern media, including television, the internet, and social media, to spread this traditional cultural phenomenon to every corner of the world. Global audiences, transcending the boundaries of time and space, can collectively experience the awe and beauty of dragon and lion dances, thereby enhancing their understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture. The successful global tours of dragon and lion dances not only elevate the international influence of traditional Chinese culture but also boost the cultural confidence of the Chinese nation. They showcase the diversity and inclusiveness of Chinese culture to the world, promoting exchange and mutual learning among different cultures. Additionally, dragon and lion dance tours inject new vitality into the global cultural ecosystem, contributing uniquely to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. In this process, dragon and lion dances have become not only cultural symbols but also bridges that connect the world, conveying peace and friendship.

2.2|Spreading to neighbouring regions on the basis of Confucius Institutes

In recent years, dragon and lion dance has been promoted by Confucius Institutes abroad, spreading to surrounding regions and beyond, thus playing a key role in the international dissemination of Chinese culture and fostering international cultural exchange and understanding. Confucius Institutes, as significant platforms for promoting Chinese language and culture, are established in numerous countries and regions worldwide. They serve not only as venues for language learning but also as bridges for cultural exchange and integration. Dragon and lion dance, a prominent element of traditional Chinese culture, with its unique performance styles, rich cultural significance, and embodiment of unity, harmony, and progress, aligns closely with the mission of Confucius Institutes to spread Chinese culture. With the support of these Institutes, dragon and lion dance has been introduced into classrooms, communities, and cultural events in many countries. Teachers at Confucius Institutes not only teach the fundamental skills and movements of dragon and lion dance but also delve into the historical stories, cultural meanings, and symbolic significance behind it, providing students with a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. Furthermore, Confucius Institutes actively organize dragon and lion dance

tours and exchange events, bringing this traditional cultural art to nearby regions and beyond. During these tours, dragon and lion dance troupes interact with local residents and tourists, showcasing the art's charm and sharing the joy of Chinese culture. These activities not only enhance foreigners' understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture but also promote cultural exchange and integration. Additionally, Confucius Institutes leverage their resources to invite dragon and lion dance experts from both China and abroad for academic seminars and skill exchanges, fostering the preservation and innovation of dragon and lion dance art. Through these efforts, dragon and lion dance has achieved wider dissemination and development abroad, becoming a vital link in cultural exchange between China and other countries. In summary, with the support of Confucius Institutes, dragon and lion dance has enriched the content of Chinese cultural dissemination overseas and enhanced the international influence of Chinese culture. In this process, dragon and lion dance has become a force for conveying friendship, enhancing mutual understanding, and promoting cooperation.

2.3 | Leveraging a diverse media matrix

In the digital age, the international dissemination of dragon and lion dance has effectively utilized a diverse range of media platforms, achieving unprecedented coverage and penetration. This strategy has enabled this ancient and enigmatic art form to transcend geographical and cultural boundaries, generating significant global interest and vibrant discussions about Chinese culture.

Firstly, social media has become a crucial platform for spreading dragon and lion dance. Short videos, live streams, and multimedia posts on Weibo, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok showcase the spectacular moments of dragon and lion dance to audiences worldwide. These engaging and varied media contents, with their immediacy, interactivity, and entertainment value, quickly attract a large number of followers and likes, fostering active cross-cultural dialogue and exchange.

Secondly, traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers have also played a pivotal role. Special features on international channels, documentaries, and news segments highlighting dragon and lion dance performances offer viewers deep insights into the culture. Additionally, collaboration with local mainstream media has extended the reach of dragon and lion dance to broader audiences, enhancing its international visibility and impact.

Moreover, digital technology and online platforms have introduced innovative methods for promoting dragon and lion dance. The use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies allows audiences to experience the immersive beauty of dragon and lion dance. Online courses, workshops, and seminars provide overseas learners with opportunities to systematically study the techniques of dragon and lion dance and appreciate the depth of Chinese culture.

Through the use of diverse media platforms, the dissemination of dragon and lion dance has transitioned from single-channel to multi-channel approaches, achieving qualitative

improvements in content, form, and impact. This comprehensive and multi-faceted dissemination approach has not only revitalized this traditional art form on a global scale but also expanded the possibilities for the international dissemination of Chinese culture.

2.4 | International Students and Enthusiasts Become Dynamic Force in Spreading Dragon and Lion Culture

In the global dissemination of dragon and lion dance culture, international students and enthusiasts play a pivotal role. They are not only key contributors to the international promotion of dragon and lion dance culture but also crucial to the revitalization of this ancient art form in contemporary society.

Domestically, an increasing number of international students are drawn to the unique allure of dragon and lion dance culture, actively engaging in its learning and preservation. They participate in university dragon and lion dance clubs, progressing from basic movement training to complex routine choreography, demonstrating dedication and perseverance at each step. These students, hailing from diverse cultural backgrounds and with a strong interest in Chinese culture, use dragon and lion dance as a universal language to deepen their understanding and appreciation of traditional Chinese culture. [5] They strive for technical excellence and embrace the values of teamwork, unity, and resilience embodied in dragon and lion dance.

Notably, these international students also actively participate in national dragon and lion dance competitions, performing alongside top teams from across the country and showcasing their skills. Dressed in ornate dragon and lion costumes, they perform dynamic routines to the beat of drums, exhibiting the vibrancy and power of dragon and lion dance. These competitions provide a platform for self-expression and challenge and serve as invaluable opportunities for cultural exchange and the building of friendships.

Furthermore, with the advent of social media, international students and dragon and lion dance enthusiasts utilize online platforms to share the highlights of dragon and lion dance with a global audience, further enhancing its international influence. Through videos, photos, and written accounts, they narrate their experiences and insights, fostering a greater appreciation for the unique charm of dragon and lion dance culture and igniting a broader interest in traditional Chinese culture.

In summary, international students and dragon and lion dance enthusiasts, with their unique perspectives and passion, are emerging as a vital force in the global promotion of dragon and lion dance culture. Through their participation and proactive advocacy, dragon and lion dance culture is thriving and shining brightly on the world stage.

3 | Localised Adaptation of Dragon and Lion Culture

3.1 | Dragon and lion culture is compatible with local culture

In promoting the integration of dragon and lion dance culture with local traditions, this ancient Eastern art form has shown remarkable vitality and appeal in Bulgaria. It has evolved from merely showcasing a foreign culture to becoming intricately linked with Bulgaria's rich cultural elements, creating a vibrant scene of cultural exchange.

Firstly, dragon and lion dance performances have been seamlessly incorporated into traditional Bulgarian festivals. During the Sofia Spring Festival Gala in the Year of the Dragon, the dragon and lion dance team became a highlight of the event with their unique artistic displays. Wearing costumes that blend Chinese traditions with Bulgarian ethnic motifs, they performed with dragon lanterns, integrating their movements with local dances and music, creating a cross-cultural harmony. This fusion allowed the audience to appreciate the exquisite skills and charm of the dragon and lion dance while experiencing the harmonious coexistence of Chinese and Bulgarian cultures.

Additionally, the dragon and lion dance culture has engaged deeply with distinctive Bulgarian cultural events such as the Yambol Mask Festival and the Kazanlak Rose Festival. At the Yambol Mask Festival, dragon and lion dancers performed alongside locals wearing various masks, creating a unique cultural tableau where the mystery of the masks and the grandeur of the dragon lanterns complemented each other. At the Kazanlak Rose Festival, dragon and lion dance performances seamlessly blended with the fragrant, romantic atmosphere of the roses, adding a touch of Eastern allure to this traditional celebration.

These integration efforts have not only facilitated the widespread recognition and appreciation of dragon and lion dance culture in Bulgaria but also fostered mutual understanding and friendship between the peoples of China and Bulgaria. By engaging in these activities, the Bulgarian people have gained a deeper appreciation of the rich and unique aspects of Chinese culture. Simultaneously, the Chinese dragon and lion dance teams have drawn inspiration from Bulgarian culture, bringing new vitality to the evolution and innovation of dragon and lion dance performances.

3.2 | Dragon and lion culture is compatible with universal values

In the process of spreading dragon and lion dance culture to Bulgaria and globally, emphasis is placed on highlighting its core values of unity, cooperation, and courage. These universal values resonate across geographical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries, fostering a deep connection and facilitating cultural adaptation.

As a collective art form, the dragon and lion dance relies on the seamless cooperation and collective effort of its team members. Each performer must work closely together, moving in harmony to exhibit the lively and grand movements characteristic of the dance. [6]This spirit of

unity and cooperation mirrors the collective resistance and solidarity shown by the Bulgarian people during their national liberation movements. By sharing the stories behind the dragon and lion dance, Bulgarian audiences can resonate with this enduring spirit, fostering a greater affinity and acceptance of the culture.

Additionally, the dragon and lion dance embodies the spirit of perseverance and resilience. The dynamic movements of the dance, characterized by upward spirals and downward dives, symbolize a fearless and relentless forward momentum. This aligns with the tenacity and courage demonstrated by the Bulgarian people in their pursuit of national rejuvenation. Through the dissemination of dragon and lion culture, Bulgarian audiences can experience this uplifting force, enhancing their sense of national pride and inspiring a resilient spirit.

3.3 | Dragon and lion culture adapted to local institutions

In promoting the dissemination of dragon and lion dance culture, platforms such as Confucius Institutes and international Chinese education programs have collaborated with local cultural institutions, schools, and community organizations in Bulgaria to create a diverse and inclusive arena for cultural exchange. Notably, international Chinese education volunteer programs and various cultural exchange initiatives have been especially active, working closely with local entities to pave new ways for showcasing dragon and lion dance culture. These volunteers, with their cultural enthusiasm and professional expertise, deeply engage with Bulgarian communities, organizing classes, performances, and tours that allow locals to experience the allure of dragon and lion dance firsthand.

Meanwhile, Bulgarian cultural institutions, schools, and community organizations have actively sought out collaborative projects related to dragon and lion dance dissemination. Joint cultural activities, including art exhibitions, cultural festivals, and film screenings, have emerged, offering diverse platforms for presenting dragon and lion dance culture and attracting a wide audience. In these activities, dragon and lion dance becomes more than a performance art; it serves as a bridge that connects different cultures and fosters mutual understanding.

Additionally, new dissemination channels such as social media and online platforms have further facilitated the spread of dragon and lion dance culture. By sharing performance videos, educational resources, and cultural stories online, dragon and lion dance has overcome geographical limitations, reaching a global audience. This cross-cultural exchange and dissemination have enhanced the appeal and impact of dragon and lion dance culture while contributing to the flourishing and development of global cultural diversity.

4 | Reach a verdict

The international spread and localization of dragon and lion dance culture hold great promise in the context of globalization. Through effective dissemination strategies, the pivotal role of key

platforms, successful localization efforts, the promotion of universal values, and diverse cooperation and exchanges, dragon and lion dance culture has achieved widespread international reach and fostered deep cultural exchange and understanding between China and other countries. In the future, these practices can be further explored and enhanced, offering valuable insights and guidance for the international promotion of other traditional sports cultures.

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