

# The chinese lion dance

Hundreds of years ago, a Chinese village was under constant threat by local bandits who dressed themselves as demons in order to scare the villagers away before looting the village. The villagers decided to fight back and created spiritual creatures,



such as dragons and lions, out of bamboo and wood and began banging their pots and pans to scare away the evil spirits. From there, the tradition of the Lion Dance was born.

## *southern lion dance*

The lion dance has been part of the Chinese culture for thousands of years and is performed on auspicious occasions such as weddings, store openings, and various festivals and celebrations. The lion, a symbol of power, wisdom, and good fortune, chases away evil spirits and brings happiness, longevity, and good luck. The lion dance is also performed at many business locations during the Chinese New Year's Celebration for the lion brings prosperity and good luck to the business for the upcoming year.

In China, the lion dance differed in various places, especially the appearance. In Northern China, the body of the lion was full of hair except the head. It looked more like the real lion and they usually dance in pairs.



*Northern lion dance*

In Southern China, the lion looked far removed from the real lion because it was made of multi-coloured pieces of linen. They definitely dance individually and never in pairs.

The dance is accompanied by loud music played on large drum, gong and cymbals. The use of firecrackers, drums, gongs and cymbals are related to the role of the lion in dispelling evil and bringing good luck - evil being afraid of loud noise.

The lion's dance is not choreographed to music; instead the musicians follow the lion's movements. Each of the lion's moods and moves has its own associated rhythm.



Besides, lion dance is a activities which requires teamwork and cooperating.

It is because lion dance itself need a group of people to perform. Such as the musicians, they provide the loud music to liven up the dance and in order to give the dancers the right rhythm. Often times the lion is accompanied by one or two Buddhas or funny people who interact with the crowd and tease the lion with a fan or a ball. Moreover, because it is difficult for the lion dancers to see, the Buddhas also help the lions find their "food"----choi chan (picking the green) etc. And of course, we must have the lion dancers. All of the members in the team must join their forces to finish the performance, each of them play different roles in the activities, they must be very familiar with each others and operate in coordination. Especially the dancers, there are usually two dancers in a lion. One is under the huge head of the lion, as well as the other dancer controlling the tail end. It can show that lion dance not only requires physical dexterity, but also cooperation is needed. because the two performers need to move and think as one, often on instinct. They can not only perform for sticking out oneself. In my opinion, it can reflect a kind of



*laughing buddha and sleeping lion*

collectivistic culture, because they are solidarity, do not communicate directly but group concerned.

However, Lions are not native to China, but in Chinese tradition, the lion existed as a dog, a guardian who would protect all. The Lion appears in order to ward off bad luck, chase away evil spirits, and usher in good luck. In modern times, the Chinese lion has become a multicultural, multi-purpose symbol of good luck, commonly summoned for weddings, Christmas parties and business launchings. It also is an icon of Chinese New Year and Chinatown happenings. Traditionally, lion dances were ritualistic, often used in exorcisms. once you see the lion dance performance , it is always include the ceremony of worshiping the god in order to bless the performance will be successful and hoping the days later will be good and lucky. It shows the spirit culture of the Chinese, because their customs are filled with spiritual beings and



forces, such as they believe the lion is a guardian. They use the lion dance in order to get rid of evil things and If it is well-performed, the lion dance is believed to bring good luck and happiness. It reflects that the chinese culture holds faith in spiritual beings.

On the other hand, as I mentioned before, The

dance is not choreographed to music; instead the musicians follow the lion's movements. And the dancer at the back also not clearly know what movements the the front dancer will make, so the whole team of “lion-men” are just communicate with tacit understanding. It can represent that Chinese has a high context culture, because members are expected to perform accordingly and are expected to know about the procedures in the lion dance without being told.

In conclusion, the Lion Dance is a major element of Chinese culture it is also an important tradition in China. It reflects many characteristics of Chinese customs and has already become the symbol of China, so we should savor this cultural tradition and enhance it.

Reference sources:

<http://a2amas.com/liondance/>

<http://www.angelfire.com/ca4/GlenDoyle/liondance.html>

<http://home-1.tiscali.nl/~rlion/lkdancee.htm>

<http://thatnet.com/kungfu/liondance.html>

<http://www.ar.com.au/~unistar/celebration/springfest/liondance.htm>

