

## Dragon Boat Racing

### A Blend of Chinese Tradition and Modern Sport

**D**ragon Boat Racing was used as a way of worshiping the Gods of Rain in Ancient China. Though it started as a traditional Chinese activity, it is now quickly gaining popularity across the world. Chances are there are Dragon Boat Races near where you live. It is both a sport and social event, but do you know the origins of the dragon boat race and its latest developments?

### The Dragon Boat Racing - A Special Chinese Tradition



Deeply rooted in Chinese culture, the dragon symbolizes power, strength and good fortune. It is a special creature with a combination of tiger's paws, goat's beard, carp's scales and snake's belly <sup>(i)</sup>. The Dragon boat is designed with a **Dragon head**

**bow and a dragon tail stern.**

The **boat's hull** is painted with **Dragon's scales** while the **paddles** are crafted as the **claws** <sup>(ii)</sup>.



The race was later organized as the **Dragon Boat Festival** (Duanwu Festival) on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month in Chinese lunar calendar. The Dragon Boat Festival falls on **20 June** (China time) this year.

The festival commemorates Qu Yuan, a minister and warrior poet who committed suicide in 278 BC by drowning himself in the river as a protest against the political corruption in the late Warring States period <sup>(iii)</sup>. The local people were very distressed by his death and fishermen took to their boats in search of his body. Dragon Boat Racing has become a Chinese custom representing patriotism and group integrity.



## Dragon Boat Racing nowadays - A Modern Sport and Recreation

Dragon Boat Races are a colorful spectacle. In the 1970's, the Hong Kong Tourist Association started organizing **an International Dragon Boat Festival** and spread news and pictures of the event around the world <sup>(iv)</sup>. Soon after, international and regional associations of Dragon Boat Racing were established to promote the sport, including the International Dragon Boat Federation, United States Dragon Boat Federation, European Dragon Boat Federation and Hong Kong China Dragon Boat Association, and others.



The sport continues to grow worldwide. **Dragon Boat Festivals attract tens of thousands of spectators**, with competitions and celebrations held at various

times of the year. Today, there are over 40 million dragon boat racers in China, over 300,000 in the UK and Europe, around



90,000 in Canada and the USA and many thousands in Australia and New Zealand <sup>(v)</sup>.

The **United States Dragon Boat Federation** was formed to promote the growth and development of dragon boating in the country <sup>(vi)</sup>. To learn more about Dragon Boat Racing in the United States please visit this link:

<http://www.topeventsusa.com/top-dragon-boat-festivals-USA.html>

### Endnotes:

- i) China Highlights, The Chinese Dragon: A Symbol of China's Strength and Prosperity, <http://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/article-chinese-dragons.htm>
- ii) International Canoe Federation, A Canoe Discipline from the Orient, <http://www.canoeicf.com/icf/Aboutoursport/Dragon-Boat.html>
- iii) Travel China Guide, Dragon Boat Festival, <http://www.travelchinaguide.com/essential/holidays/dragon-boat.htm>
- iv) Dragon Boat History, <http://www.dragonboathistory.com/History.html>
- v) Cooloola Dragon Boat Club, Recent History, <http://www.coolooladragonboatclub.org.au/index.php/about-our-sport/recent-history>
- vi) United States Dragon Boat Federation, <http://usdbf.org/>