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The Spread of Acupuncture Culture in Europe

Zhenghao Zhu
University of Shanghai for Science and Technology of Foreign Languages, Shanghai 20000, China

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Abstract

This paper investigates the historical trajectory and contemporary dynamics of acupuncture culture in Europe through a combined methodology of literature review, historical analysis, and selected case studies. Drawing on both Chinese and Western archival materials, policy documents, and clinical reports from the 16th century to the present, the study traces the initial introduction of acupuncture to Europe, examines the institutional and cognitive barriers it encountered, and identifies key turning points that facilitated its gradual acceptance. Particular attention is given to the role of UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage designation, the impact of high-profile medical endorsements and the emerging channels of medical tourism and legislative support. The analysis reveals that, despite persistent skepticism and competition from modern biomedical technologies, acupuncture has successfully established a foothold in Europe by adapting its theoretical framework, improving clinical standards, and leveraging cross-cultural exchanges. The paper concludes that sustainable dissemination depends on continuous methodological innovation, rigorous evidence-based practice, and active dialogue with local healthcare systems, offering practical implications for the global promotion of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Keywords

Acupuncture Culture; Communication Between China and the West; Europe; Modern Medicine

1. Introduction

Acupuncture, as a special treatment method in traditional Chinese medicine, is a medical method based on acupuncture point theory and meridian system. It has a long history. In recent years, acupuncture has gradually gone out of the country, has had a profound impact on the world, has been highly evaluated in the world medical field, has been well developed in foreign countries, and the culture of acupuncture has been understood by more and more people.

2. Review of previous studies

The culture of acupuncture has a long history, and there are not a few researches on it by predecessors. Wu Zhongchao (2003) studied the development of acupuncture

and culture in Egypt “Acupuncture have been applying in Egypt for over 30 years. Acupuncture develop continuously in Egypt. China and Egypt have strengthened cooperation of acupuncture.” Yu Tianyi (2011) studied the development and current situation of acupuncture in the United Kingdom, showing the difficulties and opportunities in the development of acupuncture overseas, where it has been supported by the government and recognized by people from all walks of life, and the culture of acupuncture has also been spread. In this paper, I will take the spread of acupuncture culture in Europe as the topic, from the perspective of the long history of acupuncture culture, the challenges of the development of acupuncture culture in Europe and the new development of acupuncture culture in Europe.

3. The long history and theoretical basis of acupuncture

Acupuncture culture originated in ancient China, the earliest can be traced back to the Stone Age more than 3000 years ago, in the historical development process, the practice of acupuncture first, people through continuous trial and summary, found the treatment of acupuncture. In the Tang and Song dynasties, the development of acupuncture reached a new height, and the acupuncture culture was officially recognized and promoted, and a large number of acupuncture books and theoretical works appeared. Such as Sun Simiao's "Qianjin Yaofang", Wang Tao's "Secret to Outer Taiwan", Wang Weiyi's "Bronze Man acupuncture and acupoint diagram", etc., mark the establishment of Chinese acupuncture culture and the important position in the field of Chinese medicine. Since modern times, acupuncture culture has been widely spread and applied, and has become one of the important components of traditional Chinese medicine.

The theoretical basis of acupuncture is mainly divided into meridian system and acupoint theory. By stimulating specific meridian and acupoint points, acupuncture doctors can regulate the movement of qi and blood, adjust the function of zang-fu organs, and achieve the purpose of treating diseases.

4. Challenges of acupuncture culture in Europe

China's acupuncture culture was first introduced to Europe in the late 16th century and early 17th century, and it was recorded in a book called Oriental Medicine, which became one of the earliest documents systematically introducing acupuncture in Europe and played an important role in promoting the development of acupuncture in Europe.

However, the spread of acupuncture culture in Europe has also encountered many challenges. Take Britain as an example. At first, the British government had a low entry threshold for Chinese medicine and had a good medical policy guarantee, which led to a great increase in the number of Chinese medicine in Britain. However, due to the lack of medical technology, the reputation of acupuncture culture was greatly damaged.

In addition, as a traditional medical method in China, it will have a great impact on the local medical methods when it is introduced to Europe. In the eyes of Europeans, acupuncture culture is an imported medical means. In addition, Europe is the birthplace of modern western medicine, and western medicine has a long history and a more complete medical system. The spread of acupuncture culture has encountered great challenges. Many Europeans believe that acupuncture is only used to treat pain or some conventional diseases, and there is no exact scientific basis, so they are skeptical about its therapeutic effect.

In addition, even now, the spread of acupuncture culture in Europe is still facing great challenges. After acupuncture in traditional Chinese medicine was recognized as one of the representative works of human intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO, acupuncture culture was gradually understood by the western world, but there was a new challenge. In today's world, with the promotion and development of science and technology, the medical level has also been improved, and more and more new medical methods have appeared, which have impacted the traditional acupuncture culture. Many new medical devices have replaced acupuncture, and the spread of acupuncture culture has ushered in new challenges, and the spread of acupuncture culture has also been hindered.

5. A new opportunity for the development of acupuncture culture in Europe

In today's world, there are more opportunities for the spread of acupuncture culture. Under the background of today's peaceful times, exchanges between countries are more frequent and close, and cooperation in various fields is very close. At the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, many athletes experienced the treatment of acupuncture in traditional Chinese medicine, which was recognized and praised by these athletes. Acupuncture in traditional Chinese medicine became one of the most popular treatment items for athletes in comprehensive clinics. Being recognized by athletes is inevitably a brand-new development opportunity for acupuncture culture. Athletes, as a profession with high requirements for medical technology, can gain their recognition and will greatly win a bigger market for acupuncture. Europe is the birthplace of modern sports, and people's enthusiasm for sports and admiration for athletes will help spread the traditional acupuncture culture in China.

The continuous improvement of the theoretical basis of acupuncture has also provided support for the spread of acupuncture culture. The success rate of medical treatment through acupuncture has greatly increased, and even many medical miracles have been created, which has been widely recognized by western medical circles. Many European countries have introduced laws and policies to ensure the treatment of acupuncture, which has helped the spread of acupuncture culture.

In addition, the rise of medical travel also provides a new development opportunity for acupuncture. As the birthplace of medical travel, Britain has a huge population

base, and the medical tourism market in Europe is developing rapidly, which provides more opportunities for the development of acupuncture culture in Europe.

6. Conclusion

As a traditional medical culture of the Chinese nation, it is not easy for acupuncture culture to gain a foothold in the western world. During this period, it has experienced many challenges, and many medical scientists and experts in various fields have contributed to the spread of acupuncture culture. Under the background of today's world, the spread of acupuncture culture has ushered in the best era, and the attention of acupuncture has reached a new height. In order to make acupuncture culture develop in the world for a longer time, we need to constantly improve the medical theory of acupuncture, innovate medical means, meet the needs of various places, carry forward the traditional acupuncture culture in China, and provide greater help for human health.

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