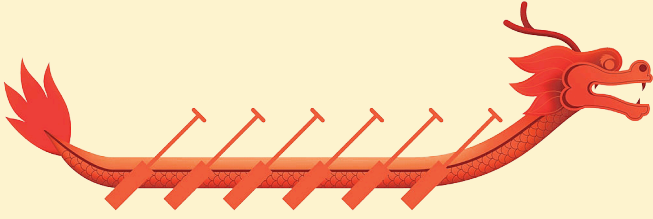


DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL



The Dragon Boat festival(端午节) is a traditional Chinese holiday that commemorates the famous Chinese scholar and poet Qu Yuan(屈原). It occurs every year between May-June on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar.

Origins of the festival

The festival is believed to be based on the suicide of a famous Chinese poet Qu Yuan in 278BCE. He was once a trusted and loyal advisor of the Emperor of Chu and dedicated his life to making the State of Chu stronger. Despite this, he gave the advice to his Emperor to ally with the State of Qi to fight against the State of Qin, and many officials regarded his advice as an act of treason. This ultimate lead to the emperor banishing him.

During his exile, Qu Yuan wrote many poems about his passion and love for his country. When he learned that the Qin State conquered and defeated the capital of Chu, he committed suicide on the fifth day of the fifth month by drowning himself in the Miluo River(汨罗).

Upon hearing of Qu Yuan's death, locals were saddened and rowed their boats out onto the river in attempt to search for his body but were unable to locate him. In order to protect him, they hit the water with their paddles and beat drums loudly in order to scare evil spirit from harming him. To prevent fish from eating his body, they threw rice into the river to feed them.



Traditions today

Today people race dragon boats along the river. The wooden boats are 20-35 meters in length and require between 30 to 60 people to paddle it. During the races, teams paddle to reach the finish line first while being accompanied with the sounds of beating drums. The largest Dragon Boat Racing tournaments are the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival held in Hong Kong, Yueyang International Dragon Boat Festival in Hunan, Guizhou Dragon Canoe Festival of the Miao Ethnic People held in Guizhou, and the Hangzhou Dragon Boat Festival held in Zhejiang.



It is customary to eat Zongzi(粽子), which is sticky rice wrapped in bamboo leaves and tied with colorful cords. Inside is filled with beans, meats and other fillings. It is eaten to commemorate the rice that was thrown in the river to preserve Qu Yuan.

People also drink Realgar wine which is an alcoholic drink that is supposed to relieve any toxins and is believed to acts as an antidote to all poisons and drive away any evil spirits.

Additionally, Mugwort leaves are used medicinally to drive away flies and mosquitos. This is due to the unpleasant fragrance. On the fifth day of the fifth month, people clean their houses, courtyards and hang the mugworts around their houses to expel diseases and bring good luck into one's home.

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