

A USR Project by Soochow University, Taiwan

“Reincarnation: The Reappearance of
the Past Century’s Brilliance of Shilin”

Chih Shan Yan

In Celebration of
the Ghost Festival



A Complete Record of Zhongyuan Pudu 2020





A University Social Responsibility (USR) Project
by the School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Soochow University, Taiwan
“Reincarnation: The Reappearance of the Past Century’s Brilliance of Shilin”

Project Introduction:

This is a USR project commissioned by the MOE and implemented by Professor Hawang, the team consists of professors in the various disciplines from the School. Discoveries in the five dimensions of Shilin District, namely its temples, military dependents' villages, ecology, food culture, and education would allow students of Soochow to be fully connected with the locality.

Principal Investigator:

Shiow-Duan Hawang
(Professor of Department of Political Science and Dean of School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Soochow University)

Co-Principal Investigators:

Jun-Feng Yang
(Associate Professor and Chair of Department of History)
Ter-Hsing Cheng
(Associate Professor of Department of Sociology and Chief Executive Officer of Central and Eastern European Studies)

Sub-Investigators:

Hin-chong Wong
(Professor of Department of Microbiology)
Yi-Ling Lin
(Associate Professor of Department of Chinese Literature)
Fu-sheng Shih
(Assistant Professor of Department of Sociology)
Shiau-Chi Shen
(Assistant Professor of Department of Political Science)
Yi-En Tso
(Assistant Professor of Department of Political Science)
Kai-Shyang Hsu
(Assistant Professor of Department of Social Work)

Project Assistants:

Shao-En Li, Hsin-Chan Chen, and Tsing-Ning Wang

Table of Contents

In the Beginning.....	3
Opening of the Tomb Gate: August 19, 2020 (1st Day of the Seventh Month of the Lunar Calendar).....	7
Releasing of Water Lanterns: September 1, 2020 (14th Day of the Seventh Month of the Lunar Calendar).....	13
The Ghost Festival: September 2, 2020 (15th Day of the Seventh Month of the Lunar Calendar).....	19
Closing of the Tomb Gate: September 17, 2020 (1st Day of the Eighth Month of the Lunar Calendar).....	27
Micro Film: "The Example Lives on: Documentation of the Ghost Festival in Shilin".....	30



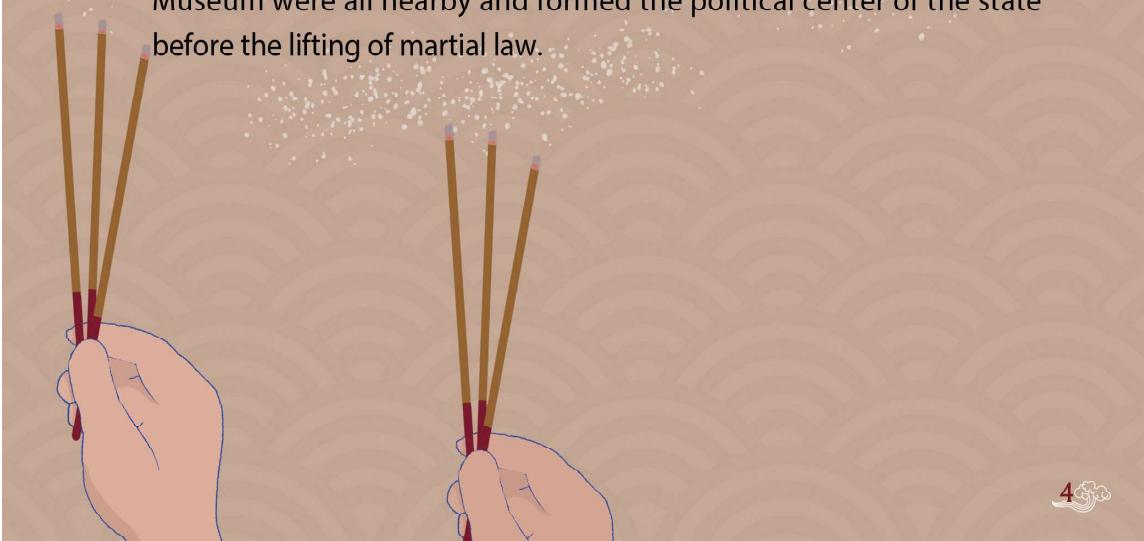
Website of USR Project, School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences,
Soochow University, Taiwan



In the Beginning

With the retreat of the Nationalist government from mainland China to Taiwan and after President Chiang Kai-Shek moved into the Shilin Official Residence in 1950, organizations in charge of security of the President were gradually established, specifically the Military Intelligence Bureau headquartered in Chih Shan Yen. With the re-establishment of the Military Intelligence Bureau in Taiwan, housing for personnel of the Bureau and their families was also built. Twelve out of the thirteen military dependents' villages under the management of the Military Intelligence Bureau in Taipei City were located in Shilin District, resulting in the fact that people arriving from mainland China all lived on the east side of Zhongshan North Road. These villages here were different from the others because the inhabitants were very low-key and confidential, demonstrating the characteristics of the intelligence personnel. As all members of the intelligence community kept the motto of "bringing the secrets into the coffin with them" in mind, the Military Intelligence Bureau located in Chih Shan Yen and its neighboring military dependents' villages were both covered under a veil of mystery.

Soochow University is located in Shilin District, an area of great significance in Taiwan's modern history. In the first phase of the project, the School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences put forward the proposition of "Keeping the Memory of History: Cultural Preservation and Prospect of Military Dependents' Villages in Shilin" to preserve the history of military dependents' villages around the Military Intelligence Bureau. During the interview with the residents of the military dependents' villages, members of the project inadvertently discovered that settlements of mainlanders on the east side of Sections 5 and 6 of Zhongshan North Road and the local residents on the west side were quite separate, as if the road were a borderline, and there was an unbridgeable gap. There were restrictions on the height for buildings around the Chiang's Residence, and anyone wanting to register their addresses in this area must undergo security checks. Even the Foremost Ice Cream parlor and Rose Promotion Center located on Zhongzheng Road at that time were all associated to the Official Residence. At the same time, Shilin Official Residence, Military Intelligence Bureau, Yusheng Hospital, Yusheng Elementary School, Shuangxi Park, National Security Bureau, Yangmingshuwu, Grass Mountain Chateau, 40 Artillery Positions Memorial Park, Chung-Shan Building, and National Palace Museum were all nearby and formed the political center of the state before the lifting of martial law.



However, the development of this area is only a small piece of the puzzle in the Shilin area. If we focus only this period for further research, we will only see a piece of the whole picture. We will not be able to systematically put history into contexts, as the preservation of history and artifacts will be very fragmented.

After thorough consideration, the USR team decided to include the settlements of the local residents west of Zhongshan North Road into the scope of cultural and historical preservation. The timeline of this piece of history is divided into the period when the Han people settled down in the area, the period of Japanese rule of Taiwan, and the period after the Nationalist government moved to Taiwan. The topics that are waiting to be explored include food culture, temple culture, education development, the ecology of Shuangxi river basin, and the culture of military dependents' villages.



There are three major temples in Shilin, namely Shennong Temple (founded in 1741), Hui Chi Temple (founded in 1764), and Cixian Temple (founded in 1796). Given that President Chiang Kai-Shek was a Christian, settlements and activities near the three temples were mainly for the local residents. These three temples were built no later than mid-Qing Dynasty. After being through the rule of the Japanese and the rule of the Kuomintang government, even changes of ruling political parties, there remains the tradition of Zhongyuan Pudu in Chih Shan Yen that has sustained for 160 years. This festival is related the arduous and tragic stories of the ancestors crossing the Taiwan Strait to look for prosperity in the early years, and connects the three major temples in the region. Our team documented the festival and filming began on August 19 (1st day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar) and ended on September 17 with the closing of the gate of the underworld. Records of these activities were kept in paper, pen, and video. QRCode of the micro film is available on page 35.





Opening of the Tomb Gate

Date: August 19, 2020

(1st day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar)

The history of the celebration of Ghost Festival activities in Chih Shan Yen, Shilin District dates back to the Lin Shuangwen rebellion in the Qing Dynasty and the era of the internecine strife between Zhangzhou and Quanzhou ethnicities. As the dead bodies could be found everywhere during and after the strife, local residents could not bear to witness such atrocity and decided to bury them and held Pudu ceremonies to pray for their resting in peace. However, in order to achieve greater peace and long-term stability of the society, the four settlements near Chih Shan Yen, Taipei City, namely Shilinjie, Shipai, Beishan, and Nanya banded together and took turns to host the annual Zhongyuan Pudu ceremony. The four settlements represented a total of 49 villages in the region. Therefore, the settlement which was in charge of the ceremony in a given year would start raising big boars in the previous year to participate in the competition on who would raise the heaviest boar. It could be seen that these events received a lot of attention, and as a result, there was a four-sentence couplet that described the grand occasion of each settlement celebrating the Ghost Festival, which is still cited today: "Shilinjie is known for the electric fire (the settlement was known for the number of the electric lighting), Shipai is known for the red tortoise cakes, Beishanding (Yangmingshan) is known for its big, numerous boars, and Nanya (Sanzhilan) is known for its wealth."

The celebration began with the opening of the tomb gate on the first day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar. At noon of that day, everyone gathered in front of the Hui Chi Temple and completed opening ceremonies of the gate of the underworld at seven locations in one afternoon. There are: Shuichebian Wanshantang, Linzaikou Wanshantang, Niutaqiao Baolingta, Chih Shan Yen Great Tomb, Yongfu Village Shenggongma, Pingding Wanshantang, and Neishuangxi Wanshantang. The most famous among these places is the Chih Shan Yen Tongguisuo near the Hui Chi Temple, also known as the "The Great Tomb", which was called the "The Common End of Myriad Good Practices" at the time. It is a historical testimony of civil revolts and internecine strife. Different from opening the gates of the underworld or niches in other places, the Chih Shan Yen Tongguisuo always opens the top of the tomb of the Great Tomb so that the spirits can feast during the month of Zhongyuan Pudu. Shuichebian Wanshantang is near Shuangxi Park, and it is a place where teachers and students of Soochow University will pass by bus or car every day. Before the launch of this project, none of us could even imagine that there was a locked door behind the tomb. It will only be opened for one month, which is the seventh month of the lunar calendar, in an entire year. In some places, the lock has not been used for a long time, and it takes some effort to open it.



Road map of the opening and closing of the tomb gate



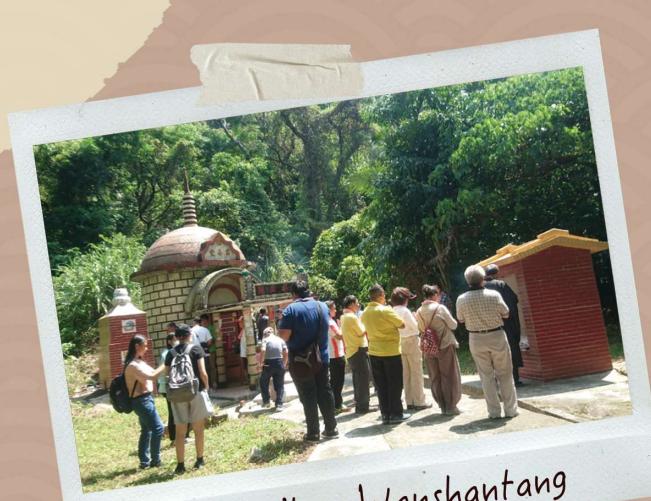
Chih Shan Yen Tongguisuo

Chih Shan Yan Celebration of Ghost Festival is mainly focused on Chih Shan Yen Tongguisuo, also known as the "Great Tomb". On the first day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, a ceremony of opening the gate of the tomb is held. The Buddhist/Taoist master hosting the ceremony opens the dome above Tongguisuo, symbolizing that the spirits of the departed inside can come and enjoy the offerings, and then, the master goes to the six Wanshantang's in Shilin area to inform the wandering spirits settling in them that they can come out to receive offerings.



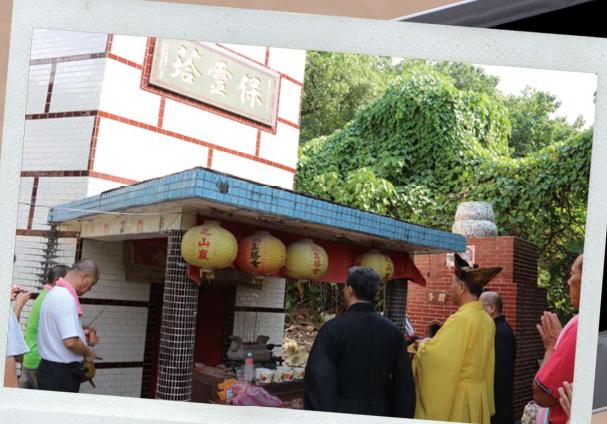
Shuichebian Wanshantang

Located on the right side of Tudigong (literally translated as "Earth God") Temple opposite Shilin Shuangxi Park, you can see a small tomb with the words Taisho 5 (1916) inscribed on the tombstone. The small tomb is called the Shuichebian Wanshantang.



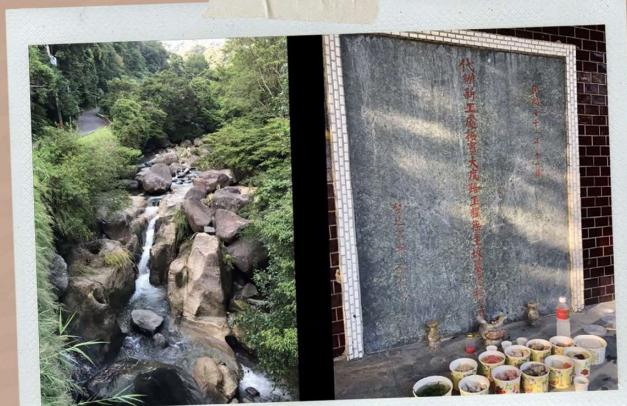
Linzaikou Wanshantang

Linzaikou Wanshantang, which is not far to the left of Tudigong Temple next to Shuangxi Park, is a place that many people will see when they pass by but have never noticed.



Niutaqiao Baolingta

The Niutaqiao Baolingta is located on the campus of Ming Chuan University, which is unknown even to many students of the university. The seventh month of the lunar calendar happens to span over the summer vacation and the beginning of the new semester; therefore, every time the ceremony is held on campus of Ming Chuan University, it would attract a lot of attention of the students.



Neishuangxi Wanshantang

This Wanshantang, located deep in the mountains of Neishuangxi, requires about half an hour of walking up the trail in the mountain to arrive. The USR team members find that many senior citizens have better physical strength than a lot of young people today.



Pingding Wanshantang, Pingdeng Village

Pingding Wanshantang is located in Pingding Cemetery.

Shenggongma Temple in Yongfu Village is located next to Yang Ming Home for the Disabled in Yangmingshan.



Yongfu Village Shenggongma Temple



The USR team and the elders who maintain the temple took the minibus together, to record the journey with cameras. Along the way, the elders often said to our team members that it was a very good thing that young people were willing to participate in festivals like this.



Releasing the Water Lanterns

Date: September 1, 2020

(14th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar)

On September 1 (14th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar), it was the turn for the settlement of Shipai, Shilin to host the event this year. The Taoist worshipping ceremony was performed first, then everyone proceeded to the Great Tomb next to Hui Chi Temple in Chih Shan Yen, and then to Wanshantang next to Shuangxi Park , and then to Shennong Temple, and finally, to Baolingta in Ming Chuan University. As the night fell, everyone was holding lanterns made by students or local residents, and the head of the ceremony also held the water lanterns and walked into the Shilin Night Market in a parade, which immediately attracted the attention of the people eating at the night market. Then, they entered Shilin Cixian Temple and walked around in the temple, and they walked to Fude Temple on Jihe Road, eventually arriving at Shipai Fuxing Temple.

The highlight of the Water and Land Dharma Service was the releasing of water lantern at night. At night, the chiefs of the villages nearby showed up with water lanterns with the name of villages written on them, and the residents of Shipai also took their self-made painted water lanterns and went to the Zhoumei Heshuang Riverside Park No. 21 for the ceremony. The atmosphere at the riverside park was very vibrant; in addition to the simple ceremony and performances, we saw the district mayor, all village chiefs, the chairpersons or representatives of the temples, and elected representatives all came to participate. Finally, under the guidance of the Buddhist master, the water lanterns were let go and they flowed downstream. The scene of lit water lanterns drifting on the water, coupled with the smoke of burning joss paper, was very beautiful with the moonlight in the mist produced by the burning of joss paper. The purpose of releasing the water lanterns is to comfort the souls of the departed and to inform the wandering spirits and ghosts in the water to come to the ceremony so as to help them avoid the suffering of being deep in hell and unable to eat. It is also called "Zhaomin", which is to illuminate the dark paths of the underworld to guide the wandering spirits to come to enjoy all the food prepared for Pudu ceremony.



"On the fourteenth night of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, the parade passed through Chih Shan Yen Linzaikou, from the wide field and a wide avenue with two rows of trees on both sides to Hui Chi Temple. After sunset, the procession was as follows: large pillar lamps → auxiliary pillar lamps → votive lamps → flower lanterns → dragon lanterns → water lanterns of various tribes → water lantern row → water moon lanterns → color lanterns → landscape lanterns → flower and bird lanterns → fish lanterns → silk lanterns → torches → Neishan gongs and drums → glass lanterns → lotus lanterns, etc. The water lanterns were used to illuminate the river, and the hut-shaped water lanterns were placed to make it easier for the wandering spirits to find the way."

Pan, Nai-Chen, Shilin Chronicles, December 1947

The water lanterns prepared by each temple and each village were about to be carried away from Hui-Chi-Temple.



The water lanterns prepared by each temple and each village were carried by the participants of the festival from Chih Shan Yen to the truck fleet in preparation for the parade.

The truck fleet drove by Shilin Night Market.





The water lantern parade walked through Shilin Night Market



The water lantern parade gathered with residents at Shipai Fuxing Temple and set off for Zhoumei Park.



Elected representatives arrived at Zhoumei Heshuang Riverside Park No. 21 to participate in the Zhongyuan Pudu Ceremony.

The launching of the water lanterns is a ritual of reception for receiving wandering spirits in the water to accept Pudu. It is a kind of ritual to worship the wandering spirits in the water, also known as Zhaomin.



Launching of water lanterns are often seen in Ghost Festival and in Ullambana Dharma Services held near the waters. The lanterns are released to welcome the wandering spirits, help light up the way for the souls, and invite them to share the incense and food. The water lanterns in Taiwan are mostly simple hand-made festive paper crafts in the shape of a house. "Celebrate the Ghost Festival," "Generously Give the Ullambana" and other Ghost Festival honorifics are written with traditional Chinese calligraphy on the sides and back of the water lanterns. In addition, the names of the worshippers are written on them so that the wandering spirits know which benefactor is worshipping. There are also people who have the Pudu flags attached on them. People in Taiwan believes that the farther the water lantern floats, the more blessed for the person who releases it.



The Ghost Festival

Date: September 2, 2020

(15th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar)

September 2 (15th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar) was the day of the Ghost Festival events. In the morning, at Hui Chi Temple, people paid tributes to the Three Great Emperor-Officials (Upper World: Heavenly Official, Middle World: Earthly Official, Lower World: Water Official). In the afternoon, the ceremony of looking for wandering spirits started from the Great Tomb by the Hui Chi Temple in Chih Shan Yen, and once again passed through the other six Wanshantang' s, and then proceeded to the Pudu places in Tianmu, Yangmingshan, and Shipai areas, and finally, Shipai Fuxing Temple. The purpose of looking for wandering spirits was to inform all wandering spirits that there would be a Pudu festival and they were more than welcome to visit and receive hospitality. In the evening, people returned to Hui Chi Temple to send off the wandering spirits and to commence the grand Pudu of Relieving the Flame from the Mouth (the term refers to "the hungry ghosts" who eat a lot, but their throats are extremely thin, and it is difficult for them to swallow any food. Due to their karma, even if there is delicious food, it turns into smelly pus and blood when they chew it, and then they vomit fire. Because these ghosts are often burned by the starving fire, and the flames come out from their mouth, hence the name "flame mouth."

To help them eliminate their inner hatred and greed, it is necessary for the worshippers to relieve them from the suffering of the flames and provide them with blessed food so that they can eat well, that is, to let out the flame from the mouth), as well as performing the dance of Zhong Kui.

The purpose of the dance of Zhong Kui is to guide the wandering spirits so that they know which way to go. To avoid being possessed by these wandering spirits, when Zhong Kui [dancer] walks off the stage and walks around the place, everyone present stayed away from him and kept their mouths shut. Only Prof. Shih of our team bravely followed Zhong Kui and filmed closely behind him while everyone was extremely nervous for him. During the ceremony, nobody was allowed to speak, let alone call anyone' s names so as not to be possessed by the wandering spirits. When someone on the scene tried to speak, others automatically gestured the person to be quiet. The atmosphere between solemn dance of Zhong Kui and the carnival-like parade before releasing the water lanterns was a stark contrast. By the time the whole ceremony was completed, it was late in night, and descending from the hills of Chih Shan Yen in the middle of the night was really a kind of dare challenge for all team members.

"Zhongyuan Jie is also known as the Ghost Festival. Every family worships their ancestors. In the evening, there is an Ullambana Dharma Service. The lights are brilliant and the offerings are displayed. The streets are crowded. Young women wearing seasonal flowers and beautifully dressed go out to enjoy the festival. The ceremony is conducted in Zhangzhou accent of the Taiwanese language, which is unique to Shilin. It is also interesting to see the big boar, as the winning boar of the competition is displayed on the rack for viewing. The winning boar weighs about 700 catties.

The temple is where the religious ceremonies are held; some rich families compete to set up altars (decorative altars). Colorful lights illuminate the house quite brilliantly. Antiques, paintings, and incense are placed on the central altar. Everyone has some quality tea such as Bi Luo Chun and Tieh Kuan Yin. People are coming and going on the street, and it is a very lively scene. The decorative altar is called "huajiao", and the ceremony ends with the monks' chanting sutras. The family style private Pudu ceremony is held later in the seventh month of the lunar calendar, and offerings such as five sacrifices, kueh (traditional snack made from rice), fruits, etc., are prepared starting from 3:00 p.m. The incense and joss paper will be burned to provide the offerings to the wandering spirits."

Pan, Nai-Chen, Shilin Chronicles, December 1947



The boar competition is a feature of the Ghost Festival. The purpose of using an entire boar as the offering is to demonstrate devotion and respect to the gods and spirits.



The Buddhist master went to various Pudu ceremonies in the settlement of Shipai to host them, and all places provide rich offerings.

The truck fleet drove around Tiamnu, Shilin, and Shipai areas looking for wandering spirits and paying their respects.



Relieving the Flame from the Mouth, a Buddhist ceremony, is a ritual based on the Dhāraṇī Sutra for Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghosts to save the hungry ghosts from the flame of the mouth. The ceremony is intended for the hungry ghosts as the main recipients of the food. When the Relieving the Flame from the Mouth Ceremony is being performed the hungry ghosts will be saved. It is also one of the Buddhist ceremonies for the deceased.

There are two types of sheds in the shape of a house made entirely by paper. One of them is called Hanlinsuo (referring to the Hanlin Academy), which is for the ghosts who are aristocratic or have higher status, and the other is called Tongguisuo, which is for ordinary ghosts. Pudu of greater scale also has paper-made bathing pavilions, changing kiosks and other paper-made buildings in place, which provide the wandering spirits with places to change clothes and bathe.





After the ceremony, all paper-made buildings were burned down and sent to heaven.



Grand Pudu offerings, just like in private Pudu ceremonies, must be inserted with incense and paper flags. The offerings to the gods can do without the incense and flags, but offerings for ghosts must be inserted with incense to specify that they will be delivered to them. The reason for inserting paper flags is to indicate the range of sacrifices for ghosts and to act as a marker to differentiate who prepared what offerings.



At the end of Pudu ceremony in the temple, there is always the performance of the dance of Zhong Kui. This is because they are afraid that some wandering spirits do not want to leave after Pudu ceremonies, to escort them from the site the temple will invite Taoist priests, masters, or troupes to do the dance of Zhong Kui.

The purpose of the dance of Zhong Kui is mostly to expel the evil spirits. But what the dancer does at Pudu ceremony was to "escort the wandering spirits" in a gentler way. People would like the wandering spirits to see that since they have heard the Dharma and received the nectar food, they should return to the underworld in accordance with the rules there. Therefore, this kind of the dance of Zhong Kui is not to drive away the evil spirits, but to press down the wandering spirits softly with a little bit of force to make them go back. After the dance of Zhong Kui is over, the Pudu ceremony in the temple is completed.



Closing of the Tomb Gate

Date: September 17, 2020

(1st day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar)

Finally, the tomb gate was closed. On September 17 (the 1st day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar), we once again gathered in front of the Chih Shan Yen Hui Chi Temple. The ceremony began at 2:00 p.m. After calling the names of the village chiefs within the settlement that was in charge of the festival this year, we then follow the Buddhist/Taoist master to start offering incense and reading the elegiac address, offering flowers, fruits, and vegetarian food. Then, the elegiac address and joss paper were cremated, and finally, firecrackers were lit to signify the completion of the ceremony. Before closing the tomb gate, we must first worship to the Tudigong Temple and ask him to lead the wandering spirits back home. Finally, the master of the ceremony led the representatives to the top of the tomb and officially closed the tomb gate. The procedure was repeated at every Wanshantang, closing the tomb gates one by one, as they were locked up with locks. Finally, all the rituals required in the seventh month of the lunar calendar were completed.

Our trips to temples in the Ghost Month have finally come to an end. During the process, when we followed the itinerary of going to seven places in mountainous areas or by seashore in a short period of time, there were usually one assistant riding a motorcycle and the other holding a camera to follow and to document the process, and it made us very tired. The whole event embodies the spirit of universality and integration. Regardless of your group affiliation, having done bad or good things in your lifetime, the ceremony will lead all to calmly return to the Earth together, and it will also make everyone safe and respect the departed. Given that the younger generation is generally unfamiliar and indifferent to local beliefs and traditional culture, we hope that, with our efforts, this kind of cultural heritage can be emphasized and valued.



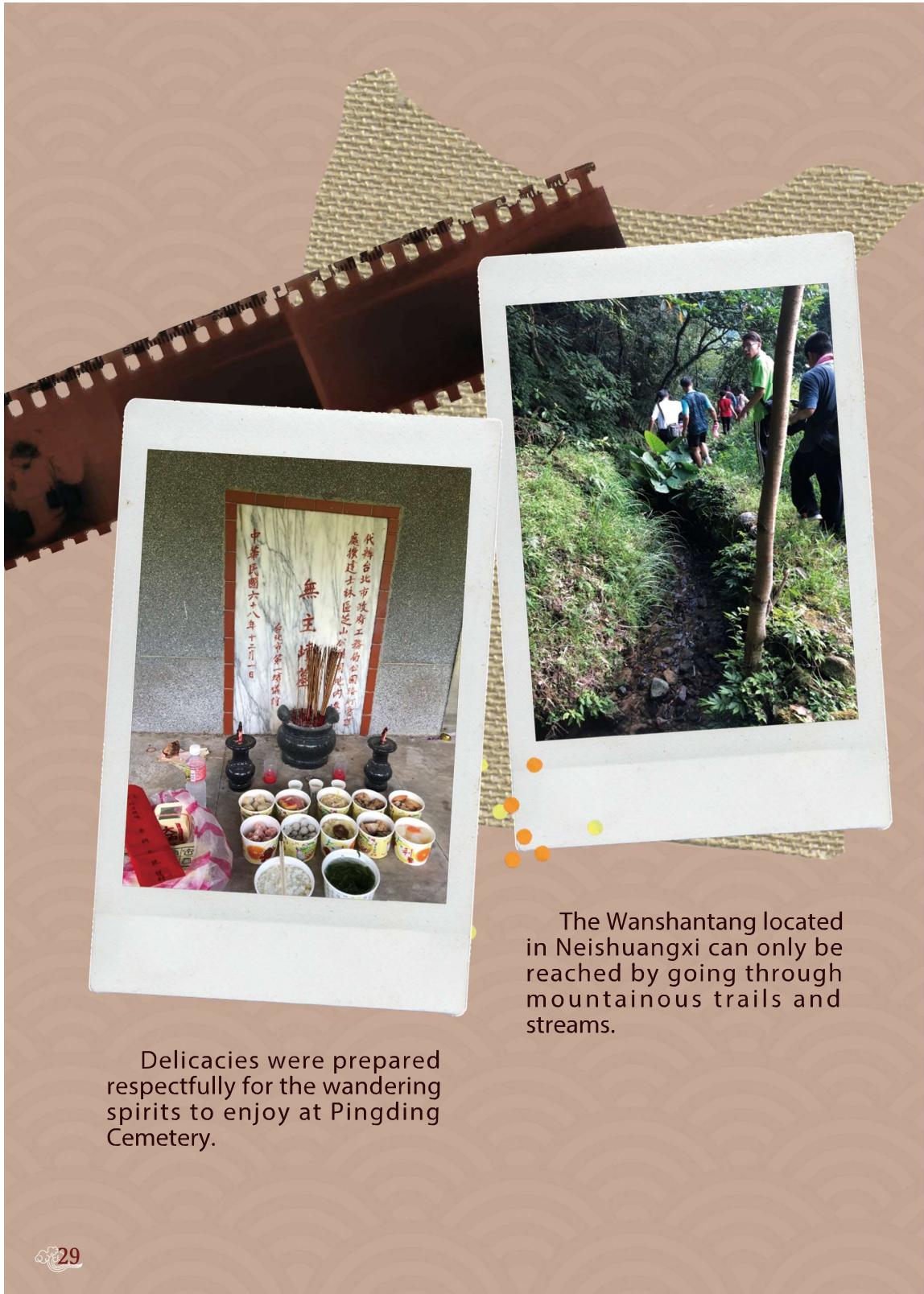


Local officials, elected representatives, the village chiefs, and the community leaders all attended the closing gate ceremony of the Chih Shan Yen Great Tomb.



Locking the tomb gate of Baolingta symbolizes the end of Zhongyuan Pudu.





Delicacies were prepared respectfully for the wandering spirits to enjoy at Pingding Cemetery.

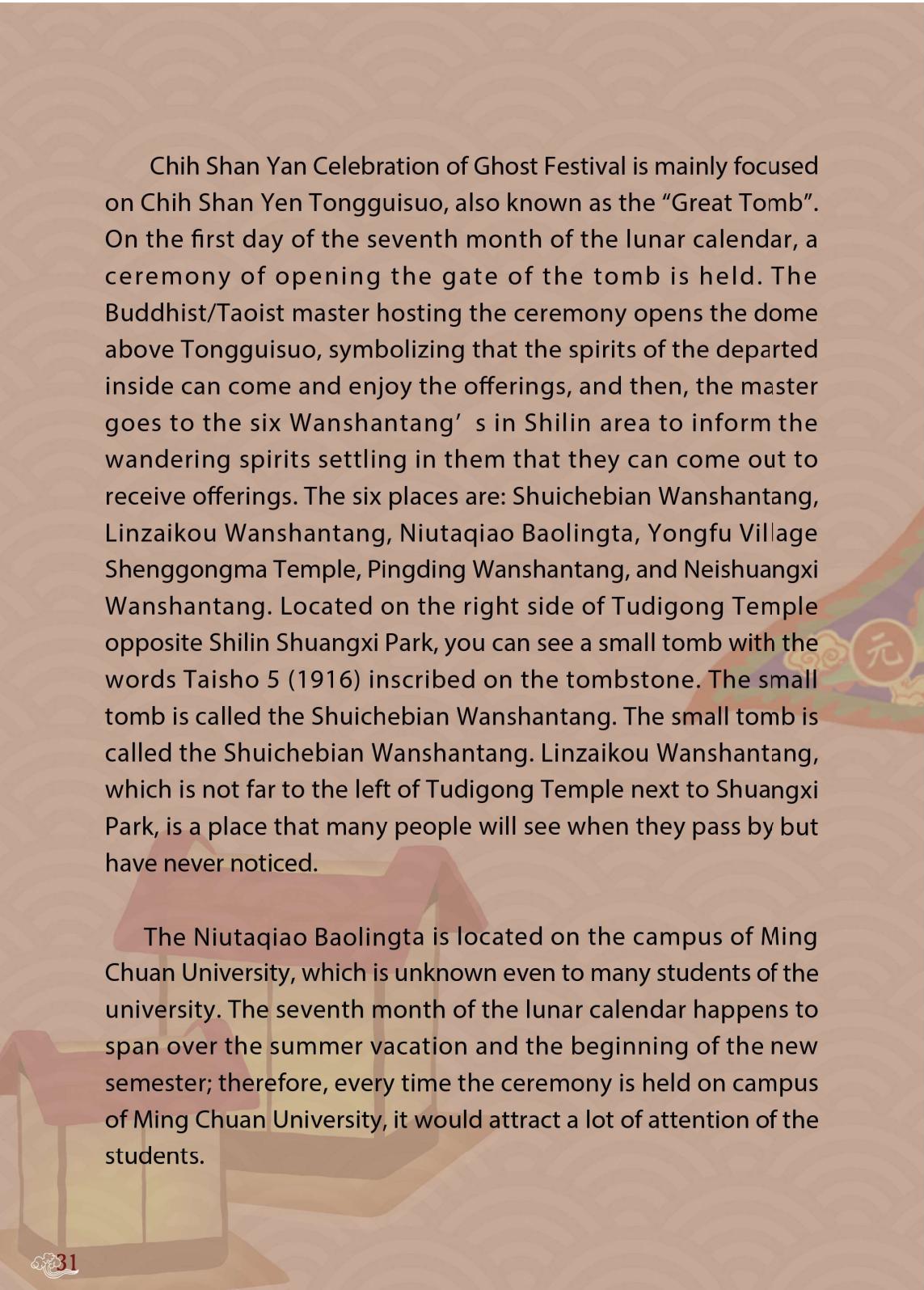
The Wanshantang located in Neishuangxi can only be reached by going through mountainous trails and streams.

Micro Film:

“Example from the Past Shall Live on:
Documentation of the Ghost Festival in Shilin”

Apart from a complete written documentary of the Chih Shan Yan Zhongyuan Pudu Festival , the USR team also produced a micro film to record the event by image. QRCode of the micro film is available on page 29.

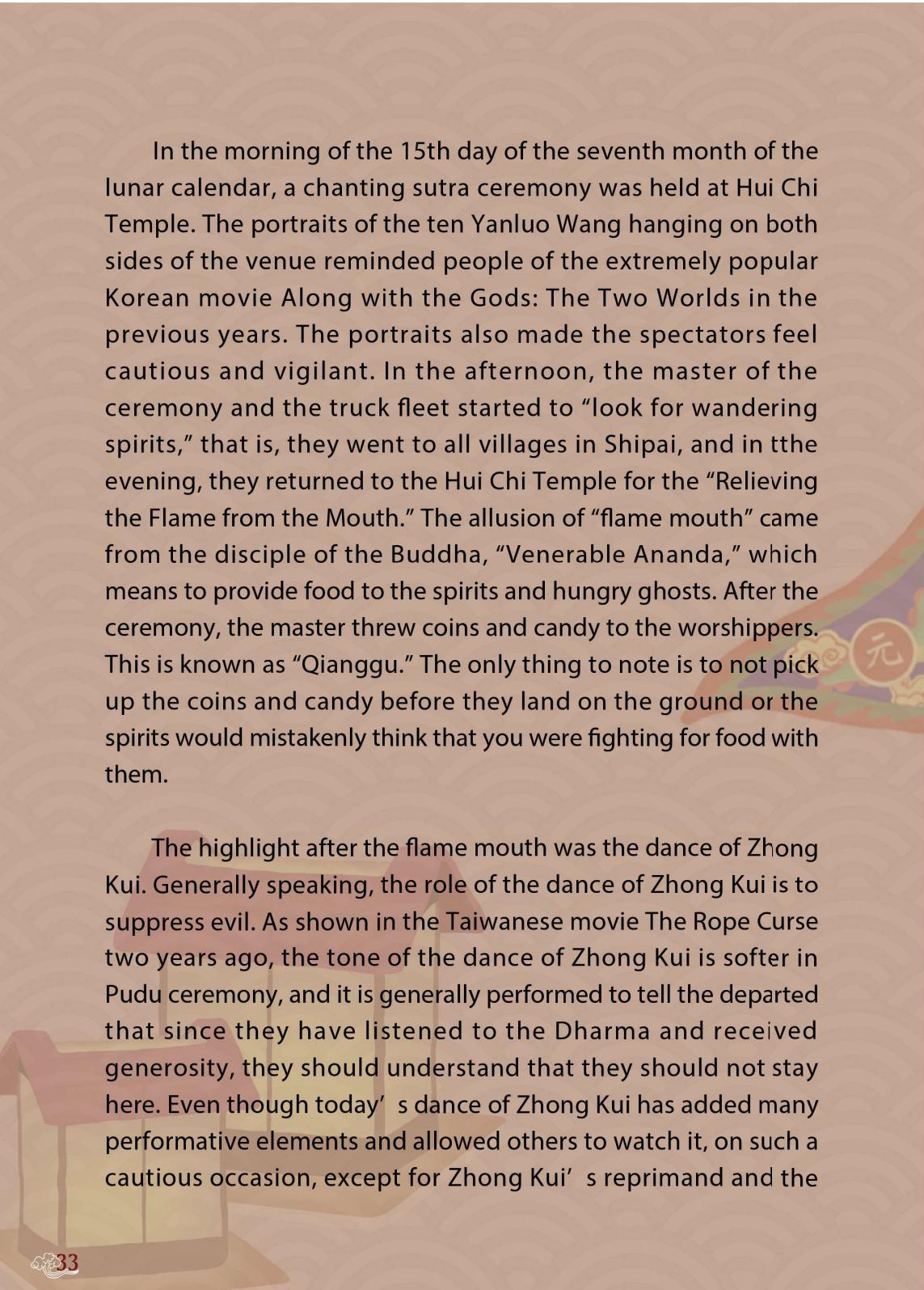
Zhongyuan Pudu is a traditional custom held in the seventh month of the lunar calendar. The most famous Pudu takes place at Lao Da Gong Temple in Keelung, in northern Taiwan, but in fact, there is also a Pudu tradition that has been maintained for 160 years in Shilin named “Chih Shan Yan Celebration of Ghost Festival.” The origin of Pudu in Chih Shan Yean dates back to the Lin Shuangwen rebellion in the Qing Dynasty and the era of the internecine strife between Zhangzhou and Quanzhou ethnicities. As the dead bodies could be found everywhere during and after the strife, local residents could not bear to witness such atrocity and decided to bury them and held Pudu ceremonies for them. However, in order to achieve greater peace and long-term stability of the society, the four settlements near Chih Shan Yen, Taipei City, namely Shilinjie, Shipai, Beishan, and Nanya banded together and took turns to host the annual Zhongyuan Pudu ceremony. The four settlements represented a total of 49 villages in the region.



Chih Shan Yan Celebration of Ghost Festival is mainly focused on Chih Shan Yen Tongguisuo, also known as the “Great Tomb”. On the first day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, a ceremony of opening the gate of the tomb is held. The Buddhist/Taoist master hosting the ceremony opens the dome above Tongguisuo, symbolizing that the spirits of the departed inside can come and enjoy the offerings, and then, the master goes to the six Wanshantang's in Shilin area to inform the wandering spirits settling in them that they can come out to receive offerings. The six places are: Shuichebian Wanshantang, Linzaikou Wanshantang, Niutaqiao Baolingta, Yongfu Village Shenggongma Temple, Pingding Wanshantang, and Neishuangxi Wanshantang. Located on the right side of Tudigong Temple opposite Shilin Shuangxi Park, you can see a small tomb with the words Taisho 5 (1916) inscribed on the tombstone. The small tomb is called the Shuichebian Wanshantang. The small tomb is called the Shuichebian Wanshantang. Linzaikou Wanshantang, which is not far to the left of Tudigong Temple next to Shuangxi Park, is a place that many people will see when they pass by but have never noticed.

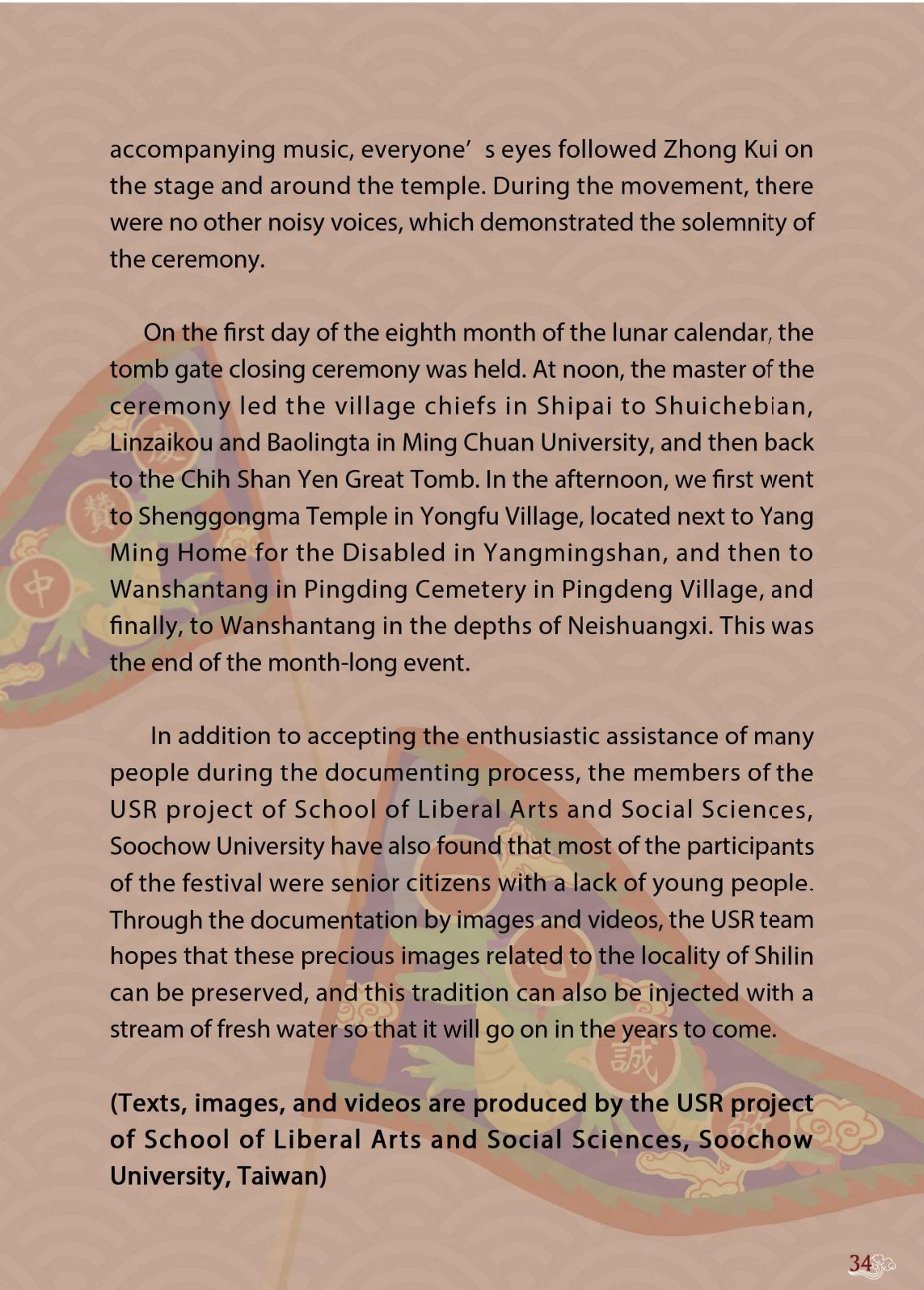
The Niutaqiao Baolingta is located on the campus of Ming Chuan University, which is unknown even to many students of the university. The seventh month of the lunar calendar happens to span over the summer vacation and the beginning of the new semester; therefore, every time the ceremony is held on campus of Ming Chuan University, it would attract a lot of attention of the students.

The highlight of the Water and Land Dharma Service on the 14th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar is the releasing of the water lanterns at night. In the afternoon, the Buddhist/Taoist master led the sixteen village chiefs in Shipai, each of whom was holding a water lantern with the name of the village written on it. We departed from Chih Shan Yen Hui Chi Temple to all the Wanshantang's and Shennong Temple and Cixian Temple, two of the three largest temples in Shilin. When the parade entered the Shilin Night Market from Jihe Road, the night was still young. Although the night market was not as crowded as before, the parade still attracted the attention of many tourists, and they stopped to take pictures. After that, the parade arrived at Shipai Fuxing Temple to meet with the residents of Shipai. The residents also prepared hand-painted water lanterns and would be ready to release them in Heshuang Riverside Park No. 21 in Zhoumei. The scene at Zhoumei was already very lively, with singing and dancing, as well as lion dance performances taking place. The gathering of local officials, elected representatives, and community leaders were all present, signifying the importance of this grand event.



In the morning of the 15th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, a chanting sutra ceremony was held at Hui Chi Temple. The portraits of the ten Yanluo Wang hanging on both sides of the venue reminded people of the extremely popular Korean movie *Along with the Gods: The Two Worlds* in the previous years. The portraits also made the spectators feel cautious and vigilant. In the afternoon, the master of the ceremony and the truck fleet started to "look for wandering spirits," that is, they went to all villages in Shipai, and in the evening, they returned to the Hui Chi Temple for the "Relieving the Flame from the Mouth." The allusion of "flame mouth" came from the disciple of the Buddha, "Venerable Ananda," which means to provide food to the spirits and hungry ghosts. After the ceremony, the master threw coins and candy to the worshippers. This is known as "Qianggu." The only thing to note is to not pick up the coins and candy before they land on the ground or the spirits would mistakenly think that you were fighting for food with them.

The highlight after the flame mouth was the dance of Zhong Kui. Generally speaking, the role of the dance of Zhong Kui is to suppress evil. As shown in the Taiwanese movie *The Rope Curse* two years ago, the tone of the dance of Zhong Kui is softer in Pudu ceremony, and it is generally performed to tell the departed that since they have listened to the Dharma and received generosity, they should understand that they should not stay here. Even though today's dance of Zhong Kui has added many performative elements and allowed others to watch it, on such a cautious occasion, except for Zhong Kui's reprimand and the



accompanying music, everyone's eyes followed Zhong Kui on the stage and around the temple. During the movement, there were no other noisy voices, which demonstrated the solemnity of the ceremony.

On the first day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar, the tomb gate closing ceremony was held. At noon, the master of the ceremony led the village chiefs in Shipai to Shuichebian, Linzaikou and Baolingta in Ming Chuan University, and then back to the Chih Shan Yen Great Tomb. In the afternoon, we first went to Shenggongma Temple in Yongfu Village, located next to Yang Ming Home for the Disabled in Yangmingshan, and then to Wanshantang in Pingding Cemetery in Pingdeng Village, and finally, to Wanshantang in the depths of Neishuangxi. This was the end of the month-long event.

In addition to accepting the enthusiastic assistance of many people during the documenting process, the members of the USR project of School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Soochow University have also found that most of the participants of the festival were senior citizens with a lack of young people. Through the documentation by images and videos, the USR team hopes that these precious images related to the locality of Shilin can be preserved, and this tradition can also be injected with a stream of fresh water so that it will go on in the years to come.

(Texts, images, and videos are produced by the USR project of School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Soochow University, Taiwan)

Link to the
micro film



Link to the
website of the micro film



Copyright

Chief Editor: Shiow-Duan Hawang

Author: Hsin-Chan Chen

Artistic Designer: Yu-Chin Chen

Presented By: The USR Project by the School of Liberal Arts
and Social Sciences, Soochow University

Members of The USR Project by the School of Liberal Arts
and Social Sciences, Soochow University:
Shiow-Duan Hawang, Jun-Feng Yang, Ter-Hsing Cheng,
Yi-En Tso, Hin-Chong Wong, Yi-Ling Lin,
Fu-sheng Shih, Shiau-Chi Shen, Kai-Shyang Hsu,
Shao-En Li, Hsin-Chan Chen, Tsi-Ning Wang





