



Ying Wang Festival in Donggang

During the 23rd year of the reign of Emperor Kangxi in the Qing Dynasty, growth in the Donggang area attracted a large number of Chinese migrants from Quanzhou and Zhangzhou in Fujian province. Feeling homesick and in fear of catching epidemic diseases in a new land, these people, who came to Taiwan from across the ocean had no choice but to rely on the blessings of Wen Wangye, the god who carried out inspections on behalf of heaven.



Wen Wangye

Wen Hong was born in 609 AD (5th year of Sui Dynasty), in Chinese province of Shandong, in Licheng county, in the prefecture of Jinan. During the Tang dynasty (618-649 AD), while he was traveling, the emperor Taizong Li Shimin was in distress; Wen Hong, with the help of 35 other people, was able to save Emperor's life. The emperor rewarded him as well as the 35 other rescuers by giving them the title of Chin-shih.

Wen Hong became served the emperor so well, years after years that he was finally awarded as Wangye (the highest official rank). Many years later, the 36 men were sent on an official tour around the world to promote Tang dynasty's culture and prosperity. Unfortunately, there was a shipwreck where all of them perished.

The emperor Taizong Li Shimin lost his hero, but he believed that Wen Hong would become a god, and fight evil for the "Emperor of Heaven". He had a huge vessel build for Wen Hong. On board was placed an imperial order saying that anyone seeing the ship had to worship it.



Donggang "Ying Wang" ceremony is the largest in Taiwan. The ceremony lasts for seven days. It is held once every three years, on the Years of the Bull, Dragon, Goat and Dog. The exact dates of the ceremony is only announced after consulting celestial gods.

"Ying Wang" Festival in Donggang, Pingtung County, has a long history, from a festival local to Donggang, where it originated, it became a county-wide celebration. The entire festival, which is completely open to the public, is deeply intertwined with people's lives. The festival was originally held to banish evil spirits, but has since evolved into a celebration of peace and security. This celebration is an integration of local culture with the worship of Wen Wangye. Two of the most valuable traditions preserved within the festival are the construction of the Wangye ship and the folk art performances (zhéntóu), both of which are of great religious and artistic significance. The excellence of Donggang's craftsmen and performing artists is evident in the Wangye Ship's construction, the

deity pilgrimage, and the dancing performances. Wangye ship was once made of bamboo and papier mâché but now is made of different kinds of wood.



Here are some of the "Ying Wang" Festival many sub-rites

Rotation of Jiao Tou

The Wangye parade of Donglong Temple, Donggang is hosted by seven "Jiao Tou" sedan teams. The teams make a draw three days after the end of the festival to decide which team will carry which sedan chair for which celestial lord next time. (The team leaders pick the draws.)

The heavenly guard and the construction of the Wangye ship

Two years ahead of "Ying Wang" Festival, the new Wangye, ship construction starts. The believers ask one of the lord, to stay on the site as an heavenly guard and to oversee the construction.

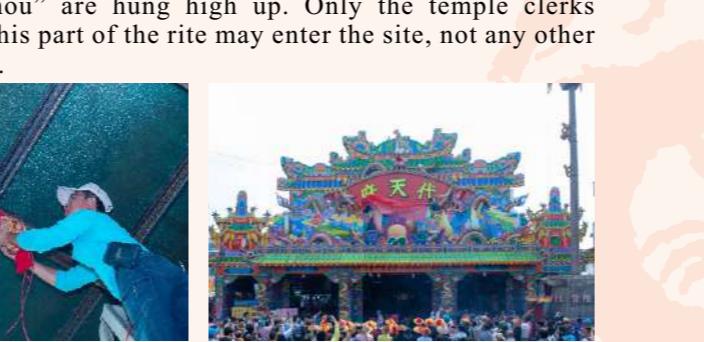


Jinbiao (submitting prayers to God)

"Jin Biao (presenting letters)" is held in lunar June of the year of the "Ying Wang" Festival. Temple representative kneel down on behalf of the locals, sending a celestial letter to invite the thousand-year-old Daitian Shunshou Wangye of Tianhe Temple to purify the place and chase away plague when the rite is held.

Preparations at Daitianfu

The residence of Daitian Shunshou Wangye while he stays in the human world is called Daitian Hall. The hall is built three days ahead of the ahead of "Ying Wang" Festival. Silk banners saying "Daitian Shunshou" are hung high up. Only the temple clerks responsible for this part of the rite may enter the site, not any other unrelated people.



Invitation of Wangye

The "Invitation of Wangye" marks the official start of the festival. The ceremony is held at the shore. Sedan teams, street parade teams, etc. all gather up there. The leaders of the "Jiao Tou" then make a draw to learn the arrival time of each celestial god. Upon their arrivals, firecrackers are set off and gongs and drums are beaten, as a way to welcome the lords. Once we know which Wangye is the main lord, his surname is written on the "general's flag."



Walking over Fire

After the "Invitation of Wangye", the lords are going to Daitian Hall but before entering the celestial lords must "pass the fire" first. After the sacred fire turns wood into charcoal, the charcoal is flattened and covered with salt and rice. A taoist priest prays for the sedan teams and the believers. Then, the sedan teams carry the statues of the five celestial lords over the warm charcoal. Because there are five Wangye in total, the fire is called "the fire of five lords."

Inspection Procession

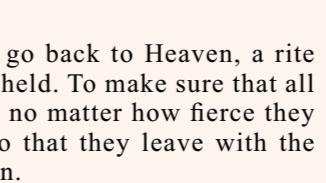
A celestial parade is held to manifest the power of Wangye, as well as to expel evil and anything that's unclean. When the Wangye goes out for a patrol, believers kneel down by the roads to get his blessings. During the parade, it is said that dead people who feel wronged during their lifetime can ask for justice from Wangye as long as a sign that says "receiving complaints" is held.



Wangye Ship Ceremony (sailing through the town)
The afternoon before sending celestial lords back to Heaven, "Sailing of Wangye ship" is held. Wang Yeh ship "sails" through the town, to catch evil spirits of diseases and disasters, especially plague, along the way, and take them away once the festival is over.

Suppressing the spirits of plague

On the night before the celestial lords go back to Heaven, a rite called "suppressing spirits of plague" is held. To make sure that all evil spirits are kept away from the town no matter how fierce they are, the priest send them in the ship, so that they leave with the celestial lords, making the town safe again.



Feasting Wangye

The night before sending the celestial gods back, in Daitian Hall, a full-course feast is held for them to enjoy and express gratitude.



Sending off Wangye

On the last day, the seven Jiao Tou sedan teams and members of Donglong Temple set everything for the ship cremation. When the right time comes, anchors are removed and cannons are fired. The boats are burnt and the celestial lords travel back to Heaven.



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