

發現台北 Bimonthly / 2006 | September-October

DISCOVER TAIPEI

55

Special Report

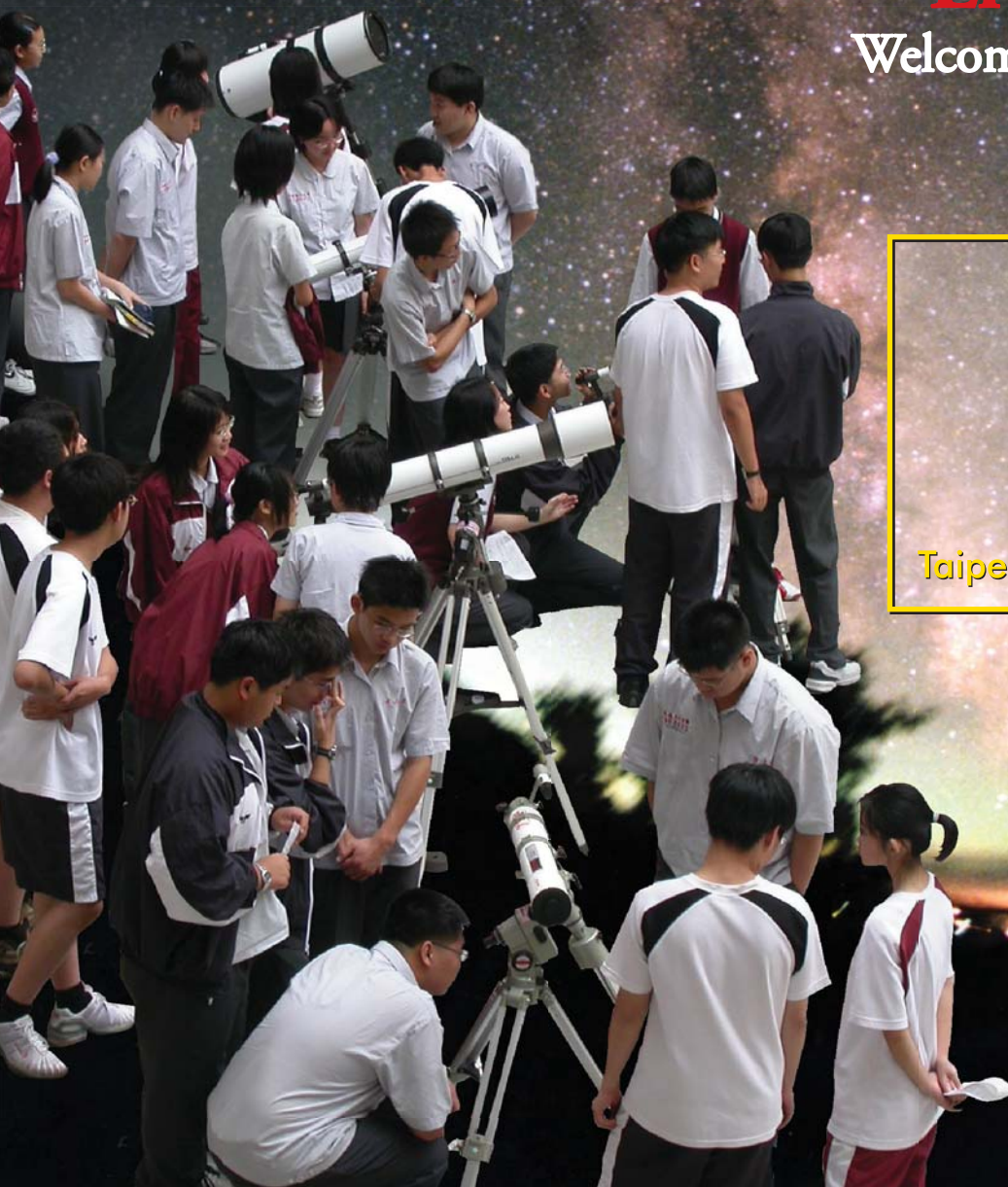
Taiwan's Next Generation of Filmmakers

Living in Taipei

Welcoming Baby, Taipei Style

COVER STORY

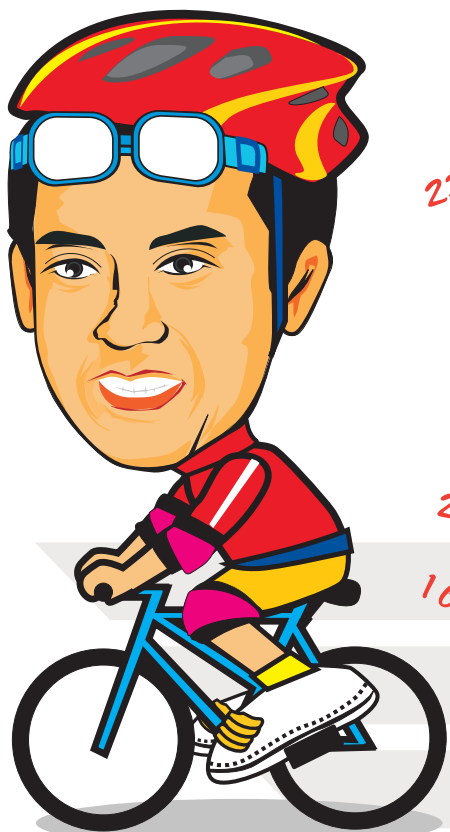
Searching for *Chang E*
An Introduction to the
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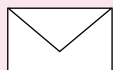
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On the Nature of the Gods

Stars cluster in the pitch-black skies of Taipei, and they seem to be shining directly at me. This is something I first experienced in movies, and later on in watching the northern skies of eastern Canada. During the part of my youth spent in Taiwan, I noticed a certain detachment from the sky. Unless you lived in the south or somewhere in the countryside, you could hardly define stargazing as a rewarding activity. As the beneficial effects of growing awareness of the need for reducing environmental pollution have become evident, one of the byproducts is growing appreciation of one's natural surroundings, including for the great space hanging above us all.

To my surprise, a fervor for sky-watching and star-tracking has taken form over recent years, exhibiting as much variation, say, as in the variety of aficionados of the visual arts. In areas such as film, graffiti, and even tattooing new aesthetic roads have been laid down, creating their own pieces of real-estate in the art world. In this issue, we introduce alternative modes of expressing one's culture, lifestyle, and society.

Getting settled into a new environment can be quite intimidating. In this issue we have included sections that help to clear up myths and false images regarding this metropolis that will serve

as a guide to ease your transition. We explore the deep and diverse cultural mosaic of the city by way of introducing, among others, the local Indian and



Japanese cultural communities. The local Rotary International chapter, renowned for its philanthropic efforts, is also brought up on stage.

Another way to introduce the diversity in this city is identification of the religious affiliations present. For those wishing for some back-home familiarity, a look at our article on the local expression of mainstream religions will provide comfort. This, of course, serves as shedding of the first light in one's exploration of a colorful city that is fast-increasing its expatriate population.

In providing our readers with our usual wealth of practical information,

this issue we have devised an easy-to-understand menu guide, which is served along with a handy cut-out card. Then we serve up something a bit unusual that you'll find very cuddly and warm—an article on having and raising children in Taipei. We hope this know-how can lessen one's anxiety level at feeling foreign in a new environment and, most importantly, help with family planning.

To understand what forms the backbone in the social framework of a vibrant city such as Taipei, one needs to go back in time.

Visiting traditional stores in the Datong, Wanhua, and Zhongshan districts allows you to travel in time and begin to discern the network of business arteries that run through the heart of Taipei. And what could be more convenient than using the MRT (Mass Rapid Transit system) as your time-travel shuttle?

The new Tucheng line extends into the suburbs of—and glimpses of—the golden yesteryear of Taipei, where obvious traces of the course of local urban development can be seen around the stops. For newcomers, visiting the Lin Family Garden is quite a pleasant experience. Read our MRT “time-travel” article. @

Hope you enjoy reading this issue of DTB. If you have any suggestions, don't hesitate to email or fax us.

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Discover Taipei Bimonthly Issue No.55 / September 2006

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Discover



Cover story: The Taipei Astronomical Museum is a 3-storey tall complex that makes a good field trip for both children and adults. (Photo courtesy of TAM)

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Searching for *Chang E*

An Introduction to the Taipei Astronomical Museum

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DISCOVER TAIPEI

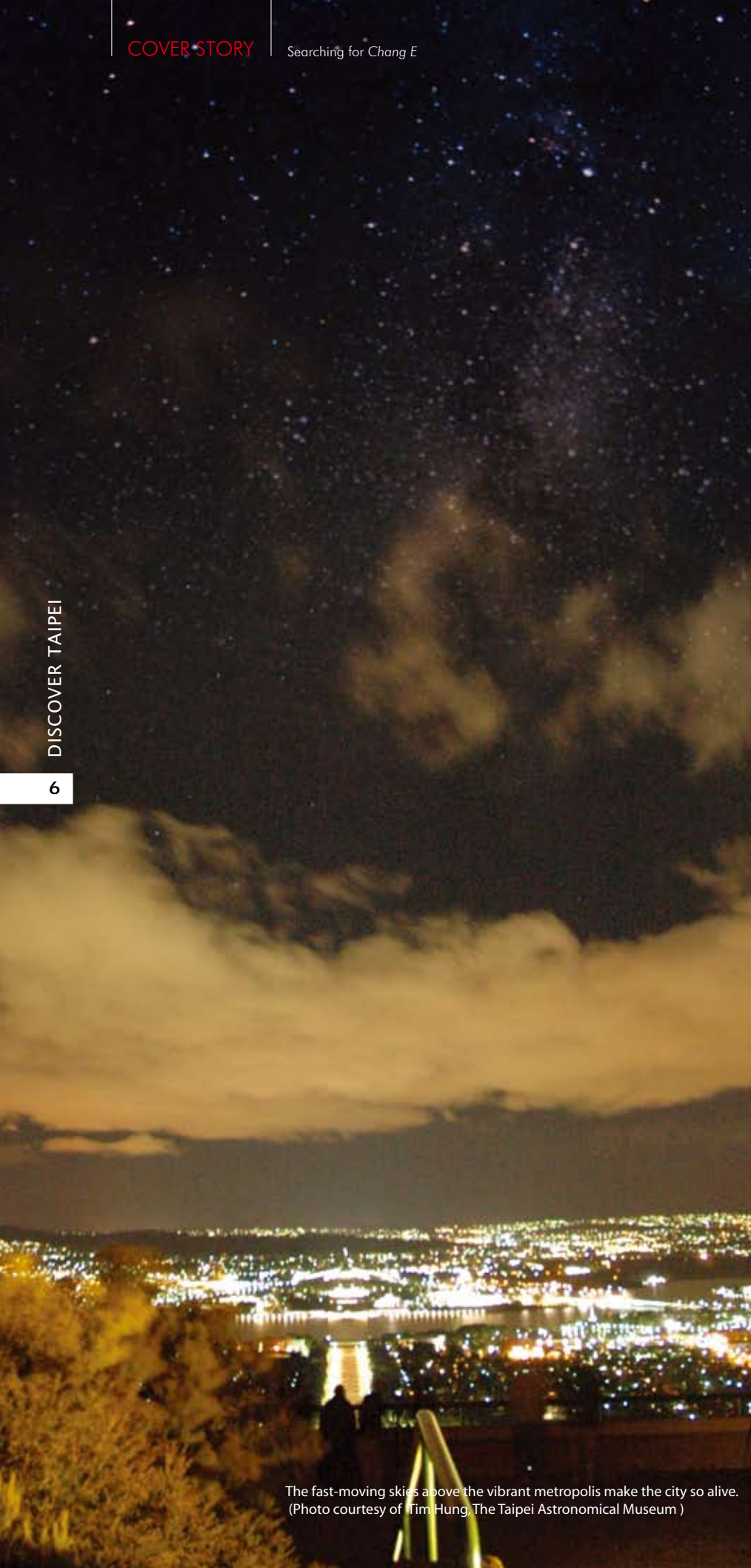
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The Mid-Autumn Festival is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar, falling on Friday, October 6 this year. Its origins are not from one key moment in Chinese history—it instead evolved over many hundreds of years. The first mention of the Mid-Autumn Festival in recorded history is from the Zhou Dynasty (周朝) over two thousand years ago. Moon worship had already gained prominence by this time, and the Mid-Autumn Festival was observed to give formal recognition to its importance. Later, during the Ming and Qing (明朝 (1368-1644); 清朝 (1644-1911) dynasties, the Mid-Autumn Festival gained further prominence, along with the traditions we see today.

Over the years a story has evolved surrounding the festival, both cementing the moon's central role in the festivities and giving it a kind of persona. The exact details of the story vary slightly from person to person. However, the general plot is centered around the evil king *Hou Yi* (后羿) and his wife *Chang E* (嫦娥).

One common version of the story states that, in ancient times, the Earth was constantly scorched by eleven orbiting suns. *Hou Yi*, an expert archer, shot down ten of them, becoming an instant hero. He was made king and given the hand of *Chang E*, a young goddess. But *Hou Yi* came to be an evil and selfish king. Wanting to achieve immortality, he ordered his scholars to create for him an elixir of life. *Chang E* heard about *Hou Yi*'s plans and, not wanting such an evil king to achieve immortality, she stole the elixir and ingested it. The potion caused her to float, eventually landing her on the moon where she is believed to be today.

This picture "Queen Nefertiti and her kingdom" was shot on a clear day by using fish-eye lens to show constellations marching in front of "the Queen."
(Photo courtesy of Liu Yen-che (劉衍哲))



The fast-moving skies above the vibrant metropolis make the city so alive.
(Photo courtesy of Tim Hung, The Taipei Astronomical Museum)

Once again, the Mid-Autumn Festival (中秋節) is upon us. It is the time of year when people get together with friends and family to enjoy a cool autumn evening and some barbecuing.

The star of the show is the full moon that hovers in the sky above that night. The festival has its beginnings in moon worship and, like all other traditional Chinese holidays, is dictated by the lunar calendar. The moon is such a prominent figure in the festivities that the Mid-Autumn Festival is sometimes called the Moon Festival in English, despite the former name being the accurate translation.

Living in Taipei, it can be difficult to appreciate the moon and the rest of the heavens. As with all large metropolises, Taipei's light pollution makes it impossible to see all but the brightest of stars. However, for those interested in appreciating the heavens at a deeper level, there is the Taipei Astronomical



The Taipei Astronomical Museum (臺北市立天文科學教育館) is a Planetarium, Observatory and a 3D theater. (Photo by Wang Ner)

Museum (臺北市立天文科學教育館). With its exhibition hall, planetarium, and observatory, it offers those living in the city a better view and better understanding of the heavens above. In this article we will take a brief look at how TAM is giving the people of Taipei a better look at the heavens.

Beyond *Chang E*

For most people, their interest in the moon ends there. However, for some people, love of the heavens runs deeper. For these astronomy enthusiasts there is the Taipei Astronomical Museum, a 5246-square-meter complex devoted to giving the people of Taipei a better understanding of the universe around us. It is the premier center on the island for those with an interest in the heavens.

Exhibition Hall

With around 800,000 visitors a year, the most popular section of TAM is the Exhibition Hall. It is a three-storey complex divided into nine sections.

The first floor hosts information on the Earth, moon, and ancient astronomy. The second floor provides information on the solar system and constellations, along with lessons on telescopes. The third floor is home to exhibits about the sun, our galaxy, and star formation. In addition, there is a children's ride on the fourth floor that gives kids a chance to experience what space travel might be like.

In addition to the permanent exhibitions, TAM is currently hosting a special exhibition on Taiwan's Formosat-3 satellite constellation, a group of six satellites designed to help scientists better understand and predict the weather. The exhibit, located on the third floor of the Exhibition Hall, will run through October 31 and is open daily until 4:00 p.m.

The hall was designed mainly for elementary and middle-school students, and the information provided is almost exclusively in Chinese. However, it is definitely worth a visit. English tours can be requested at no additional charge. And,



• Photo courtesy of TAM

although the exhibition is for youngsters, it would be impossible for an adult to tour it without learning something new. Ironically, the weekends are the best time to visit since many visitors are children there on weekday field trips.



a 5,246-square-meter complex that houses Exhibition Hall, planetarium, and observatory. (Photo by Wang Neng-yu)



The Exhibition Hall contains information on all aspects of our galaxy, Earth, moon, sun, stars, solar system, constellations, and history. (Photo by Wang Neng-yu)



The Exhibition Hall is open from 8:50 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays and Sundays, and 8:50 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturdays. Admission is NT\$20 for children and NT\$40 for adults.

Planetarium

The Planetarium is an impressive sight. It has a twenty-five-meter screen and can seat up to 325 people. Unlike many other planetariums, this one sits at an angle, with a view similar to that of a movie theater. This allows the audience to get a better view of the night sky. The show offers



The Southern Aurora. (Photo courtesy of Jim Hung, The Taipei Astronomical Museum)



The 3D theater can seat up to 208 people, with movies being presented hourly on weekdays and Sundays. (Photo courtesy of TAM)



The Exhibition Hall houses information on cross-section models of sun. (Photo courtesy of TAM)

a look at up to the 8,900 stars that can be seen from the region throughout the year.

The Planetarium not only provides a view of the heavens, but serves as an IMAX theater as well. All shows presented on the IMAX screen are overdubbed in Chinese. However, a headset allowing people to listen to everything in English can be obtained from the ticket counter on the first floor.

Shows are held every hour on the hour from 11

a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays and Sundays, with two additional shows at 5 and 7 p.m. on Saturdays. Admission is NT\$50 for children and NT\$100 for adults.

Observatory

As with any large city, Taipei is not the optimal place to get a first-hand look at the stars. Astronomers judge an area's view of the heavens using a light index for the heavens. The lower the number, the brighter the object. For example, the sun has a value of negative twenty-six and the full moon has a value of negative twelve.

The refracting telescope is open to the public, allowing for a closer look at the planets, stars, and nebulae.



The pavilion outside the complex has a wavy design that resembles the silver galaxy.



Students enjoy star-gazing and star-tracking, therefore, astronomy craze has increased its size over the years. (Photo courtesy of Lin Shih-chao, National Dali Senior High School)

From Taipei, the dimmest object you can see with the naked eye has a value of one. From Yangmingshan, you can see an object with a value of three or four.

TAM is host to two telescopes. The first one is a 45cm reflecting telescope, and is used for research only. However, the museum's NT\$7 million 20cm refracting telescope is open to the public, allowing for a closer look at the planets, stars, and nebulae surrounding us.

The Observatory is open on weekdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and again from 2 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. There is an additional session on Saturdays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission is free.

3D Theater

Although not directly related to astronomy, TAM is also home to a 208-seat 3D theater. Each presentation shows two ten-minute movies and is presented hourly from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. on weekdays and Sundays, with two additional shows at 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Admission is NT\$50 for children and NT\$100 for adults.

Celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival

TAM will host a wide range of events in celebration of the Mid-Autumn Festival. On the day of the festival, a fifteen-minute children's show will be staged every hour at the Moon Display on the first floor of the Exhibition Hall. The Planetarium will be putting on two separate IMAX presentations, one for children and the other for adults. The children's show will be held all through September and October, while the adult show will have two viewings on the evening of the Mid-Autumn Festival between 6:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. In order to offer a first-hand and up-close look at the moon, TAM will be setting up an additional twenty telescopes in its parking lot from 6 to 9 p.m. to accommodate the estimated 3,500 visitors expected to attend the evening's events. @

Getting There

TAM is located at 363 Jihe Road (基河路 363號), between Shilin (士林) and Jiantan (劍潭) MRT stations, making it about a fifteen-minute walk from either station. The 3 Red and 12 Red bus will get you to the museum from Shilin MRT Station.

Please remember that, as with all museums, TAM is closed on Mondays and major holidays. For any further questions, you can contact the museum at 2831-4551 or check out their website at www.tam.gov.tw



A hot air balloon is found inside the complex, making one want to travel to the sky in it.

TAIWAN'S NEXT GENERATION OF FILMMAKERS

Text by Sean Scanlan

Photo courtesy of Serenity Entertainment International

Photo Courtesy of Ho wi-ding



The rising star, Cheng Yu-chieh in action.
(Photo courtesy of Atom Cinema)



In "Do Over," Cheng has put together creative plots in many unique settings. (Photo courtesy of Atom Cinema)

Taiwan's young generation of filmmakers have been derided as being amateurish and youthful, with labels ranging from the "Strawberry Generation" to the "7th Graders," underscoring the difficulties faced in achieving critical and commercial success, especially in

the shadow of the island's bonafide film masters such as Ang Lee (李安), Edward Yang (楊德昌), Hou Hsiao-hsien (侯孝賢), and Tsai Ming-liang (蔡明亮).

Given this predicament, Taipei's next generation of filmmakers have chosen to pursue one of two routes--banding together to improve all aspects

of filmmaking, from camera work to sound production, in order to produce more commercially viable films; or developing what is best described as "auteur" filmmaking with emphasis on creativity and unique style.

At the moment, those filmmakers concentrating on improving craft and process are getting the most attention, notably at this year's Taipei Film Festival where a trio of young filmmakers garnered awards, including 29-year-old Cheng Yu-chieh (鄭有傑), whose feature film "Do Over" won the NT\$1 million-dollar Taipei Grand Award at this year's Taipei Film Festival.

budget of NT\$16 million dollars.

Making Cheng's accomplishment even more remarkable is the fact he was not a film major in college, instead studying economics at National Taiwan University. His film career then started only after he completed his two years of mandatory military service, with his critically acclaimed 30-minute film "Summer Dream."

(何蔚庭) and Tommy Lin (林書宇). In fact, the three banded together to share resources such as a common director of photography (DP), Jake Pollack (包軒鳴), and sound editor Tu Duu-chih (杜篤之).

Cheng was even lead actor in Tommy Lin's 30-minute film "The Pain of Others," which won the Best Narrative Film award at the Taipei Film Festival.

"We regularly interact with one

The Taipei Film festival encourages young artists to display their talents as well as to promote local cinema. (Photo courtesy of Taipei Film Festival)



A NEW MAESTRO STEPS FORTH?

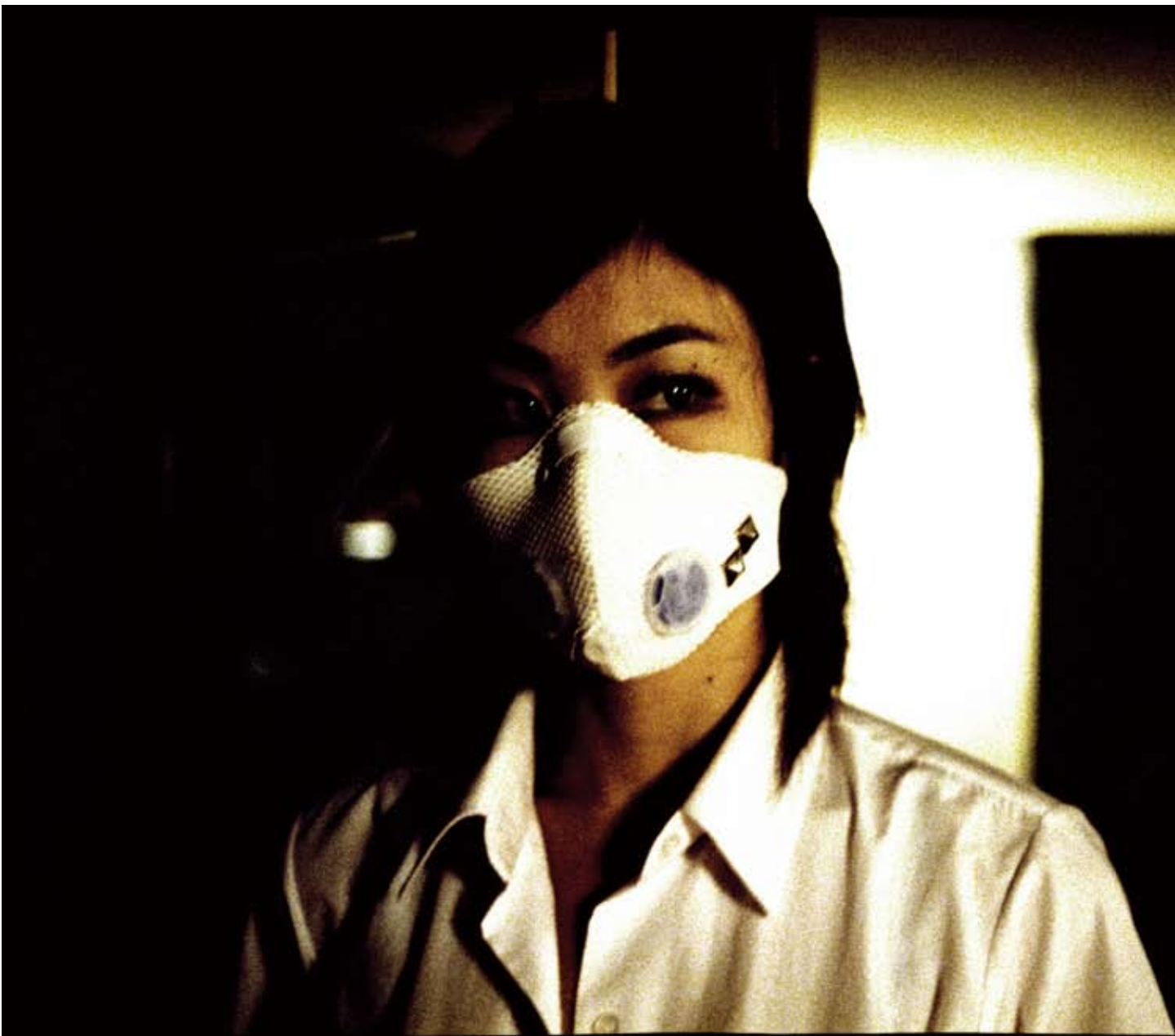
To some in film circles this was little surprise, as his debut feature-length film was a radical departure from other domestic releases, being both technically proficient in terms of camera and sound work, and smoothly tackling a complex plot involving five concurrent story lines. Government sponsorship led to an ample

"I thought the film had a few good ideas, and it was done in practical terms with more emphasis upon acting and performance, not forcing the audience to watch the filmmaker's ideas," comments Ho Yi (何怡), a film critic for the local English newspaper Taipei Times.

As a young filmmaker, Cheng has benefited from the support of other young directors such as Ho Wi-ding

another and perform as actor or assistant director," says Ho, director of the short film "Respire," which won the Special Jury Award at this year's Taipei Film Festival, as well as the Kodak Prize at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival.

Ho describes all three filmmakers as having an interest in "edgy, bright new colors, and aesthetics," which consciously rejects the old cinema, with



"Respire" is a creative and experimental short film that places greater emphasis on plausible plotlines. (Photo courtesy of Ho wi-ding)

an aversion to some problematic areas of local cinema such as overuse of wide shots as well as transitional shots.

This trio of new artists is working hard to improve the entire film process, from script development to use of a distinctive film language, and professional production facilities on par with Hong Kong and the rest of the world. In this pursuit Ho has attended NYU Film School, where he learned invaluable lessons in "how to handle the set, the editing process, and post-production."

More than anything, he says, the new group of film directors is placing greater emphasis on storytelling;



Chen's work, such as "Bade," centralizes around the social-economic theme, and the transition Taipei has made from a post-industrial society. (Photo courtesy of Chen Chien-jen)

developing plausible plotlines that keep audience interest.

At the moment, Ho is developing a film with the working title "Filipino Sunday," which will chronicle a day in the life of two male laborers in Taipei, and the variety of choices they make on their day off.

A Malaysian-Chinese by nationality, Ho identifies with the perspective that foreigners bring to Taipei.

TAIPEI'S FILM AUTEURS

At the other end of the spectrum is a group of Taipei-based film directors that each has an arts-school resume including either New York's School of Visual Arts or the Taipei National University of the Arts located in Guandu. These filmmakers aim to combine many different forms of visual artistry, dance, and film.

They are inclined towards "auteur theory," the development of a unique style of filmmaking emphasizing the creativity of the director.

The best known director amongst this group is Wu Mi-sen (吳米森), whose feature film "Amour Legende" is a highly anticipated release slated for this fall. Local audiences may know of Wu for his wildly eccentric films, which have a carnival-like feel, not unlike that of famous Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini.

True to form, Wu's newest picture includes much of these same elements, with the early word on the street that a number of local foreigners are to appear as circus performers and other eccentric characters.

Critics of Wu's style say he is excessive, often confusing audiences with plotlines that go nowhere and characters that are

not fully developed. Others enjoy his highly personal and creative approach, believing that he accurately represents the academic environment which he comes from.

A filmmaker coming from the same program, but taking a more conventional approach to filmmaking, is Tommy Yu (游志偉). He has won the attention of local critics with his 30-minute film "How's Life," which chronicles the trials of a city-dwelling salaryman trying to end his life.

The film is shot in vivid colors with edgy, often experimental camerawork, taking a cue from some of the humorous commercial films on local television. As a graduate film student at Taipei National University of the Arts Yu was able to benefit from the guidance of film-faculty professors who reviewed his script and offered invaluable comments on matters ranging from plotlines to the number of actors required.

Yu spent only one week filming, recruiting actors from the fellow directors in his program, and relying upon department resources to finish the film.

"My inspiration for making this film was a true incident. It was about a man who jumped off a bridge and survived, though he was stuck in the mud," says Yu. He adds that his inspiration for becoming a filmmaker was a desire to record and document modern Taiwanese culture.

His new, feature-length project, in the developmental stage with the working title "Motorcycle on Fire," will recall an earlier era, circa-1970, when owning a motorcycle was a source of pride and prestige, a way in which adolescent men could woo women.

At the far end of the "auteur" category is Chen Chien-jen (陳界仁), an internationally acclaimed artist who has recently taken to filmmaking, producing medium-length films that verge upon installation art.

A central theme in his latest work is social commentary, and the transition Taipei has made from a post-industrial society. His latest film "Bade" chronicles



Tommy Yu's 30-minute film "How's life," chronicles the trials of a city dwelling salaryman to end his life. (Photo courtesy of Arc Light Films)



Young artist Cheng Hsiao-tse's (程孝澤) "Numbers" has creative plotline that will keep the audience interest. (Photo courtesy of Arc Light Films)

the experiences of a man inhabiting a former factory in the Taipei area.

Recent films from Chen have portrayed a pair of older women picking through chairs and tables at an abandoned clothing factory on the outskirts of Taipei. Like other filmmakers such as Yu, and Wu Mi-sen, this filmmaker is working to document the fables and the cultural identity of Taipei City, with little regard for commercial or material success.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Of course, local directors owe a great deal of their local and international success to those who work behind the scenes in tasks such as film distribution, festival organizing, and film criticism.

Two of these important roles have been mastered by Peggy Chiao (焦雄屏), the founder of Arc Light Films, which specializes in all aspects of film production from script development to funding and distribution. Her group has been behind Wu Mi-sen's work from the beginning, as well as Tommy Yu's and other Pan-Asian films.

Chiao is also an important film critic, penning the term Taiwan's "New New Cinema," and been involved in the early careers of Tsai Ming-liang. Her understanding of local cinema, and the importance of winning international recognition at foreign festivals, has been one of the reasons why local directors have done so well in foreign competition.

Another influential voice is that of Lee Chun-yao (姚立群), the organizer

of this year's Shooting Left Film Festival (www.crossborder.org.tw), which will take place from September 29th to October 8th. Lee is helping local filmmakers such as Chen Chieh-jen show his recent work "Bade" as well as create a new forum where documentary film and left-leaning, issue-oriented subjects can be discussed.

In the past Lee worked as a translator of Taiwanese and Chinese films for a Japanese documentary-film festival, and was a programmer for the 2002 Taiwan International Documentary Film Festival. He hopes his latest festival will help stimulate radical politics in Taiwan, and add to a growing documentary field which has produced critically acclaimed works such as "Jump Boys" and "Let It Be."



Pan-Asian films are growing in numbers. Rising stars are emerging as many Asian filmmakers are making their ways onto the global stage. (Photo courtesy of Atom Cinema)

LOCAL SCENE FLOURISHING

Lee says that the local documentary scene has been aided by government funding associated with the Sept. 21, 1999 Earthquake, sending filmmakers deep into the mountains of Taiwan to document the devastation, and has continued with many of the same filmmakers producing touching films about those who continue to live in rural areas as well as niche subjects of personal interest.

Local filmmakers are quickly developing a strong presence in a variety of film categories and styles ranging from documentary film to auteur art-house fare and even to films with box-office appeal—indicating that local cinema is far from extinct or troubled. Looking just below the surface, we can see a vibrant weave of different voices and influences. @

Through this feature film, "My football summer," we discover the true stories behind the passionate young football players. (Photo courtesy of Serenity Entertainment International)



In one of the story lines in "Do over," the filmmaker has miraculously met the girl, Butterfly, via a hearing device. (Photo courtesy of Atom Cinema)



Where to See Local Films

The good news is that many of the films produced by local directors are available on DVD. The versatility of the DVD format provides multi-language viewing. Some of the best places to purchase DVDs are the bookstore at Spot Cinema, FNAC, and Eslite.

Should you want to watch local cinema on the big screen, the easiest way is to wait until the Golden Horse Festival at the end of November, which makes a point of showcasing local cinema. Typically, films from local directors receive only limited release in local theaters, and theater runs may be as short as a week at art-house theaters such as the Scholar, Spot, and other locations.

Culinary Art



The Great Indian Bazaar

From Food to Fabric, Music to Movies, Festivals to Festivities

Text by Monideepa Banerjee

Photos by udndata

On April 23, 2003, when for the first time an exhibition showcasing a wide range of items from the “Great Indian Civilization” dating back to antiquity was staged by the National Museum of History, the then director rightfully said that it was “to create awareness about our neighbor in the mind of Taiwanese.” Aided by other factors like the establishment of a direct air link (China Airlines flies directly from Taipei to New Delhi) or the increasing trade relations between the two countries, and supported by a group of active patrons from both the community, the “awareness” has triggered widespread acceptance of all things Indian, despite the fact that the Indian community itself has not grown much in size since.

I was once told by a former president of India-Taipei Association: “The sign of a great city lies in how well it receives its alien residents, allowing them space and freedom, at the same time taking an active interest to know about their culture. Taipei is really a great city in that respect and the Indian community here feels very welcome and connected to the local community.” If you have ever lived here, you too have probably felt the warmth and respect of the city’s friendly people, which helps overcome the strains of living abroad.

Still, just a few years back it was not really easy to find home-style groceries, especially Indian spices and other regular Indian items like clothes, movies, etc., in Taipei. Apart from Trinity, the flagship store of Indian goodies in downtown Taipei, Indian spices and condiments were conspicuously absent from the shelves of chainstores like Carrefour, Watson’s, or Wellcome.

However, a “Chinatown” concept is not in place here, and outlets are scattered all over the city. In this article I try to gather all the scattered pieces together so readers do not get lost in the maze of things and events. To find where to eat those delicious dishes, get those beautiful fabrics or dresses, how to take part in all those colorful festivities, and many more such interesting things, read on.



A growing awareness of Indian culture such as in crafts, food and music is evident in many commercial areas.

Delectable Curries and Savory Samosas

Indian cuisine has invaded the kitchen of the Queen of England. *Chicken tikkas* feature in her birthday feasts. So how about places that serve those delicious curries, succulent kebabs, and crunchy samosas for starters?

There are quite a few Indian restaurants in Taipei, and new restaurants are opening every month, if not by the day. Raju Relwani, who started the first Indian restaurant, called Tandoor some twenty-five years back, has since opened two more outlets and is planning a third in the Tianmu neighborhood, which has the largest concentration of Indian restaurants, including Café India, Spice Shop, and Spice Garden. The latter is a multi-cuisine restaurant serving pan-Asian fare. The Curry Shop, a small eatery on Zhongshan North Road close to its intersection with Shidong Road, serves different types of curries at reasonable rates.

The food is as diverse as the spices used in its cooking, which may pose



Naan, a daily food staple, is an Indian bread that goes with curry dishes.



Tandoori, a famous cooking style that is prepared in a clay oven.



Over a hundred spices are used in Indian cuisine which makes it very aromatic and colorful.

difficulties for beginners in selecting the right combinations. So here's some helpful hints: *biryani* is a flavored long-grain rice dish cooked with meat and a main dish, and goes very well with *kormas* (sweet, mild, lightly flavored gravy of chicken or mutton) or *dopiaza* (spicy, thick gravy). *Paneers* are especially prepared Indian cottage cheeses that come in a wide range and taste good with almost anything. Palak paneer (paneer and spinach) is a favorite at Tandoor. *Kebabs and tikkas* are excellent starters, especially prepared in a special kind of clay oven (*tandoor*), and taste as good as a main dish with *Naan* (Indian bread). Try them at Café India and be hooked for life. *Kebabs* served in Alibaba's Indian Kitchen are way above the mark.

One thing, however, needs to be noted; as the cooking methods vary widely within India, the same dish may taste different in different restaurants, though the ingredients remain the same. In Indian vegetarian dishes onion, ginger, and garlic are copiously used—if not wanted, clarify while ordering.

Trying It Out Yourself

It is the spices that of course make Indian food oh-so-spicy and tasty. Note, however, that this does not necessarily mean chilies, previously one of my major misconceptions. Over a hundred spices are used in Indian cuisine, of which about twenty are common. Spices also have medicinal value, proved in studies time and again. For example, the chemicals found in turmeric, a yellow powder used in curry, help prevent Alzheimer's, and India indeed has the lowest rates for this disease.

Jason's Marketplace is the best place to buy spices, with a wide range. It has two branches – one in the basement of Taipei 101 Mall and the other in the basement of Takashimaya on Zhongzheng Road, next to the baseball stadium. Spices are also available in the ubiquitous Carrefour, Watson's, or Wellcome chainstore outlets. The spices, especially the "Indian Curry Powder mix," a combination of many spices used in curry, are also found in local grocery stores.

Now the most difficult question -- which spices to buy? A judicious mix of six "C's" -- coriander, cumin, chilies, clove, cardamom, cinnamon -- and turmeric powder can produce the best chicken curry you've ever had. The "Curry mix" lacks the taste obtained from the separate spices. The best part about home-cooked Indian food is that the leftovers (must refrigerate) taste as good as the original, as the spices are also very good food preservatives.

Want to try? Here's a simple recipe the author would like to share with you. Deep-fry some finely chopped onion, add ginger and garlic paste, fry some more, add the chicken, the spices, turmeric, and salt, keep stirring till it gets dry, then add 2 cups of water and boil till the gravy thickens and the chicken

softens. Approximate measures -- 1 big onion for 600g of chicken, 5g of ginger, 4/5 pieces of garlic, 1 teaspoon each of coriander, cumin, and turmeric, ½ teaspoon each of the other spices, and salt to taste.

Beyond spices, a good place to buy other Indian foodstuff like basmati (long-grain) rice, daal (cereals), and Indian sweets is Trinity on Zhongxiao East Road, Sec. 5. Trinity also sells Indian music and movie DVDs and CDs.

Movies, Music, Masti (Entertainment)

It's hard to pinpoint events and locations in these areas as they are sporadic and scattered. However, foot-tapping Indian music can be heard in bars like Ziga Zaga and Carnegie's, the two most frequented outlets for night watchers.

Bollywood, the Indian movie industry that churns out some 800 films a year, highest in the world, has not yet arrived in Taiwan in full form – a handful of films have been released to date in local theaters. One theater owner, however, says that the response was so good that they are toying with the idea of releasing more Indian films in future. The USP of Indian films are the song and dance sequences in spectacular locations and vibrant costumes. For a glimpse of Bollywood beauties, be on the lookout in the movie section of local English newspapers; China Post usually has good coverage.

There have been some very good performances by classical Indian dancers (especially invited from India) in the past three years, as part of Indian Cultural Shows organized by Indian and World Music Center. This center is masterminded by Jeffery Wu, who fell in love with the versatility of Indian music during an earlier stay in New Zealand. He even took tabla (Indian

drum) training for years. Once back in Taipei he discovered people here are not that aware of Indian art or music. So he formed this group with others who believe that music has no barriers and all the world is truly a stage. They organize regular workshops on Indian classical dance and musical instruments.

Their website (<http://www.indianandworldmusic.net>) has good information on upcoming events in Taiwan, as well as information on and about India and about events of Indian origin. Violet Lee, the famous Taipei belly dancer, feels that Indian dance has much appeal for the Taiwanese. She asserts that the belly dance was originally developed from Indian dance and in ways closely resembles movements performed in classical dance. Well, classical or not, it does have a lot of similarity with the



Indian celebrations have lots of colors, spirit, and good food. (Photo by Monideepa Banerjee)

Bollywood style of dancing.

The Indian community celebrates its festivals with a lot of color, spirit, and good food, and welcomes the local community to share in the fun. The website mentioned above also tells you what's happening when, where to go, and what to see. Bookings are not required except for cultural shows, but it is advisable to keep the organizers informed before dropping in. The ISCON, a religious body, also observes some festivities, inviting all and sundry to join in. They usually advertise in newspapers.

Finding the Fascinating Fabric

The long skirt and embroidered top have become a craze worldwide. They are available in department stores like Takashimaya or in local markets. A good bet would be the night-markets. The vendors in the local morning or night markets sell them for NT\$400-500; in big stores they easily cross the NT\$1000 mark.

For fabrics, try Kalaniketan at 346 Nanjing West Road. The owner, Mr. Huang, was so impressed by the depth

Flavors of Indian music and dance have been incorporated into local folk art and popular music. (Photo by Monideepa Banerjee)



A mock wedding was being put out by a group of Indian gurus, and has attracted lots of attention at Core Pacific City Living Mall recently. (Photo by Monideepa Banerjee)

of Indian fabrics that he decided to open this, the first shop for Indian fabrics, some 20 years ago. “*Kalaniketan*” means the “house of artistic beauty” in the Indian language. The shop has a tremendous range in textures, quality, patterns, and designs.

The boutiques in and around Yongkang and Lishui streets have some interesting mix-and-match variety, using Indian fabrics (easily recognized for their vibrant color schemes and beautiful embroidery) to produce traditional Chinese-style garments. Try Sharmas at 11-1 Lishui Street for a wide range of garments. The Wufenpu Garment Wholesale Area, near Raohe Street Night Market, a mecca for budget shoppers, has shops selling Indian clothes.

By the way! In Mandarin you’ll hear “Indian clothing” pronounced “Indu-de yifu.”

One-Stop Haven for All Things Indian

Tired of hopping from place to place and want everything under one roof? No problem. Visit the Tandoor Indian Restaurant at Zhongxiao East Road. Mr. Jeffery Wu of Indian and World Music Center and Raju Relwani of Tandoor have teamed up to provide a place where one can get all things Indian including clothes, fabrics, spices, groceries, handicrafts, movie DVDs, music CDs, and books while satiating your appetite on mouthwatering dishes. Interested customers can buy that mysterious women’s apparel – the sari – from a large collection, on prior notice.

The center also arranges for photographs to be taken dressed in Indian finery; again prior notice is required.

Mr. Wu says he wants to develop this center into a full-fledged Indian Cultural Center. He has already communicated with Indian gurus and wants to run regular classes on Indian music, classical dance, and yoga.

A class on “Indian Home Cooking” is on the verge of

starting. Last year he organized a mock Indian Wedding Show with Taiwanese volunteers at Core Pacific City Living Mall, replete with the entire colorful Indian-wedding extravaganza save for the horse (the groom usually rides a horse to the wedding venue). It was very well received and he has plans to organize weddings, Indian style, for the locals here. It doesn’t end there. “Sitting here in Taiwan,” he says passionately, “I want to create a place that looks Indian, feels Indian, and has all the essence of that fascinating culture.” @

The names and addresses of some of the popular restaurants

- Trinity – 2F, 137, Zhongxiao East Road, Sec. 5 (忠孝東路五段137號2樓)
- The Curria — 11, Lane 83, Shida Road (師大路83巷11號)
- The Himalayas Indian Restaurant – 97-1, Yunping North Road, Sec. 2 (延平北路二段97-1號)
- Alibaba’s Indian Kitchen — 2F, 56-58, Nanjing East Road, Sec. 2 (南京東路2段56-58號2樓)
- New Delhi Indian Cuisine – 382, Linsen North Road (林森北路382號)
- Tandoor Indian Restaurant –
 - Main Branch - 10, Lane 73, Hejing Street (合江街73巷10號)
 - Dunhua Branch - B2, 203 Dunhua S. Road, Sec. 2 (敦化南路二段203號B2)
 - Zhongxiao Branch - 7, Alley 6, Lane 170, Zhongxiao E. Road, Sec. 4 (忠孝東路四段170巷6弄7號)
- Café India – 30, Keqiang Road (克強街30號)
- Out of India -
 - 26, Lane 13, Pucheng Street (浦城街13巷26號)
 - 23, Daan Road, Sec.2 (大安路2段23號)
- Spice Shop – 6, Alley 10, Lane 50, Tianmu East Road (天母東路50巷10弄6號)



Famous Indian dancers are often invited to cultural events in Taipei. Ms. Deepa from India presented a dance in November last year.

The Japanese Tea Ceremony

Harmonious Combination of Physical Relaxation and Spiritual Rejuvenation

Text by Monideepa Banerjee Photos by Wang Neng-yu



The Japanese have transformed the ordinary act of “drinking tea” to such a great extent it has been elevated to “ceremony” status and includes all the elements of Japanese philosophy, artistic beauty, and spiritual aesthetics. Although the Japanese name for the ceremony – *Cha no yu* – simply means “hot water and tea,” it has a profound and deep-rooted significance in the Japanese culture and thereby exerts tremendous influence in shaping its other rituals and customs. This time-honored tradition itself evolved from the ritualistic custom of Zen Buddhist monks drinking tea from the same vessel in front of their founder deity, Budhidharma, hundreds of years ago, striving for spiritual liberation.

Today, whether the ceremony is performed in specially designated teahouses, at home, or in a public place, it is an occasion where both hosts and guests desire to attain relaxation of both mind and body and achieve harmony with the universe. One of the great tea masters rightfully opined: “Served with a respectful heart and received with gratitude, a bowl of tea satisfies both the physical and spiritual thirst of host and guest.”

“That saying still holds true,” says Okunaga Soue, an *Urasenke* professional teacher with over thirty years experience in this field. Originally from Japan, she

Served with a respectful heart and received with gratitude, a bowl of tea satisfies both the physical and spiritual thirst of host and guest.



A young lady attired in a soft colored kimono of small floral prints. Summer color scheme would be light pin, violet or blue.

relocated to Taiwan when her husband, a renowned architect, shifted base. Now she holds regular classes and organizes tea ceremonies in the very heart of Taipei, and I had the good fortune to attend one of her ceremonial sessions. “Appreciation and respect are the key words in the Japanese Tea Ceremony. Through this ceremony we recognize the mortal aspect of life – nothing in life recurs in the exact manner, ever -- thus we must appreciate, respect, and cherish every single moment, every single event as something special and pay respects to that event, that moment, and contemplate it to the fullest.”

It's a Different World Out There

From the moment I was ushered into the elegantly furnished living room by a comely young lady attired in a soft blue kimono of small floral prints, I felt as though stepping inside a serene world of peace and harmony. The frenzied activities of modern life were left outside the closed door just like my discarded shoes. The furniture is kept to a bare minimum, a beautiful scroll hangs on a wall, simple yet beautifully arranged

flowers in tall vases adorn the room, which smells of lavender. Or something else; I am not good at recognizing floral scents, but it is very pleasant. One side of the room is converted into a tea-room, with low chairs and sofas, where another kimono-clad lady sits on a chair, upright, folded hands resting on her lap.

The table in front of her is bare except for a tray containing a few utensils, which I learn later is the teaware to be used in the ceremony.

The setting is so peaceful and soothing that one relaxes immediately. Okunaga explains that “Harmony (和), Respect (敬), Purity (精), and



Details such as the layout and decorations of the tea-room, the arrangement of flowers, the kinds of flowers and vases to be used need to be taken into consideration when preparing for a tea ceremony.



Formal tea ceremony even requires the guests to know the proper way to receive tea and sweets.

Tranquility(寂) are foremost to any Japanese tea ceremony.” The idea was first propagated by Sen no Rikyu in the sixteenth century, the most revered teacher, whose teachings form the basis of all kinds of tea ceremonies in Japan. Lin Ling-chia, a well-known dermatologist who’s learning the

nuances of the Japanese tea ceremony from Okunaga further elaborates that the ceremony aims “to achieve harmony with people and nature, instill respect for every object -- animate or inanimate -- purify the heart and mind, and seek contentment of the entire being (tranquility).”

Strict Adherence to Rules

However, as the ceremony progresses, I discover that it is governed by rigid rules where all the steps and movements, right from the start, are pre-designed according to the strictures proposed by the earlier masters. The layout and decorations of the tea-room, the arrangement of flowers, the kinds of flowers and vases to be used, the type of teaware, the selection of wall hangings – everything is pre-documented in painstaking detail. Season, time of day, and theme of the occasion play some part in deciding the right item, which again must be by the book – somewhat akin to clothing choice, say: if it’s summer then color scheme would be light pink, or violet, or blue, if it’s a wedding reception some bright color can be used, etc. What is surprising is that it is done so skillfully one never feels restricted by the rigidity, rather considering it the manifestations of one’s own sensitivity.

“Thus, a tea ceremony host needs to be familiar not only with the type of tea or how to make and serve tea but with other artforms like calligraphy, flower arrangement, pottery, and traditional dress,” says another student. “In the olden days, to participate in a formal tea ceremony even the guests were required to know prescribed gestures and etiquette, the proper way to receive tea and sweets and to appreciate each event in the proper manner,” quips Lin laughingly. Having noticed my weary look, she reassures me such custom is no longer strictly followed, especially with foreigners. However, there’s no harm in learning.

So I learn that although in Japan there are special tea-rooms covered in tatami mats where the host sits in seiza style



Japanese tea ceremony is governed by rigid rules where all the steps and movements, right from the start, are pre-designed according to the strictures proposed by the earlier masters.



in front of the guests, here the setting is often changed to sofas and chairs and tables. Wearing a kimono while performing the ceremony, even during practice sessions, is mandatory for the practitioner. Again, concessions are made for foreign students. But I must agree, the kimono makes the ceremony look more graceful.

I also learn that scrolls depicting a tea ceremony or featuring famous phrases of spiritual significance are typical. The flower arrangement is less formal, branching out from the Ikebana style to form a separate branch that goes by the name *Chabana* (茶花). It focuses on simple arrangement of seasonal flowers

Know Your Basics

The Japanese tea ceremony is not like serving any kind of tea from pot to cup. It requires a special set of equipment for each of many purposes, the items collectively known as *Dogu* (道具). Okunaga hints that a full list of equipment types with their styles and variations may fill hundreds of pages and numerous related texts by famous tea masters exist.

It would take years of study to comprehend all this, so here's a briefing on the essential components of a basic tea ceremony, essential in my opinion to understanding the actual ceremony.

the most important item as Japanese tea is drunk directly from these bowls, which resemble soup bowls. They are usually ceramic, and elegantly designed with flower motifs. The best are hand-made. Shape and size vary with season and type of tea used; for example, shallow bowls are used in summer, allowing the tea to cool rapidly. The bowls are so revered that often broken ones are repaired again and again using expensive materials such as gold and lacquer to hide the marks.

Drawing my attention to a beautifully designed small rounded container, Okunaga points out that in the Japanese tea ceremony the teapot has no role whatsoever, which is significantly



Cleanliness is supreme, which also signifies ritualistic cleansing of your souls.



A special set of equipment known as *Dogu* (道具) and small sweets are presented during the ceremony.

– not more than one or two blossoms of pastel hues – in tall, narrow vases without the “filler” material customary in Ikebana.

Ceremonies may include a full meal or some light refreshments, depending on occasion, which vary from parties for special guests to wedding celebrations to family get-togethers. Accordingly, they last a minimum of half an hour to hours at a stretch. Powdered green tea or *Macha* (抹茶) is usually served, although sometimes other Japanese brands like *Genmaicha* are used.

“Cleanliness is supreme, which also signifies ritualistic cleansing of your souls,” states Mayumi, another student who’s been learning the art for over a year. So let us begin with the cloths used to wipe the teaware. There are two kinds – *Chakin* (茶巾) and *Fukusa* (袱紗). The first is a rectangular white cloth, usually cotton, used to cleanse the tea bowls. *Fukusa* is a square silk cloth, usually monochromatic or brocade depending on the occasion, used for cleaning the tea scoop and tea container and also to hold the handle of a hot tea ladle or to lift the lid of the hot-water vessel. When not using it, the host must tuck it inside the belt of his/her kimono.

Then comes the tea bowls, probably

different from any Chinese or English tea ceremony. The tea is kept in the container – *Cha-ire* (茶入) – from where it is directly put into the tea bowls. Hot water is thereafter added to it.

Other equipment includes a bamboo ladle with a nodule at one side, used to draw water from the iron pot, a curved tea scoop to pick up tea from the container, and a bamboo whisk to mix tea with water. There are ordinary and very fine whisk to shake thick and thin tea, respectively. Damaged whisks are ritually burned in a temple.

“All equipment is handled with exquisite care, thoroughly cleaned before and after each use,” Okunaga informs me, which I have already noticed.

Step by Step

“Don’t worry, we serve separate bowls to our foreign guests,” says Okunaga, to my relief. As I take my first sip, I almost choke at its bitterness. The thick tea is very strong and bitter. Then, you don’t participate in Japanese tea ceremony for drinking tea, it’s an experience to be cherished in its entirety. “When tea is made with water drawn from the depths of mind, whose bottom is beyond measure, we have what we call Cha-no-yu,” a Japanese tea master once rightly said.

Later, the host serves a lighter variety or the thin tea, which I find more palatable. Throughout the ceremony, conversation is kept to a minimum, allowing the guests to relax in the pleasant environment. At the end, the guests are supposed to request the host to allow them to examine the equipment, and then admire each item profusely. “This shows respect to the host and appreciation for the whole event,” says Okunaga.

If you ever get the chance to attend a Japanese tea ceremony, remember this. @



Step by Step:

1. Host stands and bows to the guests.
2. Use the cloth to wipe the tea bowl.
3. Draw and add water with a bamboo ladle.
4. Stir briskly with a whisk to obtain a frothy paste.
5. Serve the tea with the proper etiquette.



The curved tea scoops are used for picking up tea from the container. They are personalized equipment where each one is marked with last name and generation.



Contact Information

If you want to experience the uniqueness of the Japanese tea ceremony, The Japanese in Taiwan Foundation can be contacted at 2522-2163. Okunaga’s students include a wide range of people, including housewives, students, doctors, and other professionals. One of her students, Dr. Lin, speaks very good English, and is willing to help those wanting to participate. She can be contacted at 0921-123-621.



Promoting Taipei City, Establishing a New Craze Before the World

Text by Renee Hsieh

Translated by John Jia-ren Lee

Photo by Yen Li-tai

Taipei City Government stresses the importance of promoting city souvenirs to reveal and discover the many accents and beauties of this grand metropolis. The history of Taipei City is not long, even though it has been the capital and an administrative hub throughout modern times. But its cultural uniqueness is not always obvious. In recent times the image of the city has been much stronger than that of the country as a whole in people's perceptions. By promoting city-related souvenirs, the city will not only rally all Taipei citizens to deeply cherish their

home and boost their spirit, but also effectively market and promote Taipei to the world.

To unite the residents to show their full support for the city, it need more than just fine-sounding slogans. The City Government has borrowed various symbols and signs encountered in daily lives for use in designs for city souvenirs. Taipei City has released attractive souvenirs before, but mostly positioned them as tourist items. These have thus served as profit-enhancing business items, yet lacked unique cultural background, meaning, and emotion.

Due to this, these previously released items cannot be considered true "city souvenirs."

This year, the Department of Information has sponsored a variety of city souvenirs demonstrating obvious purpose and motive. Each item is either engraved or printed with specially designed logo; exclusive to these modern and art-deco look souvenirs, they also make us feel the sensation of musical rhythm in them. To fully promote Taipei, future plans include licensing manufacturing rights to the private sector and distributing these souvenir items directly to the market. @



Making It through the Menu An Ordering Survival Guide

Text by Sebastian Bitticks
Photos by Yang Chih-jen



Helpless without pictures? Order most of your food by pointing at the menu and saying “*ji-rou?*” Your life’s about to get better. Truthfully, reading a Chinese menu can be challenging, even with language experience. Conventions, taken together with a huge range of ingredients and cooking styles, can create confounding character combinations to turn even modest menus into seeming Rosetta stones. Knowledge of a handful of extremely common Chinese characters and dishes, however, with a little background, will have you confidently ordering in no time. Don’t worry about memorizing them, either; we’ve included a Menu Key on pages 29 and 30. Cut it out, stow it in your wallet, and never go hungry again.

The Name Game

By and large, the names you find on a menu are purely descriptive. They tend to simply combine the names of sauces, styles of preparation, primary meats and vegetables, and in some cases, the cut. This makes it possible to break the names of dishes down into individual pieces and become reasonably literate with a minimum of grief. For example, Lamb Steak Braised in Soy Sauce consists of the method of cooking (紅燒; *hōngshāo*), the meat (羊; *yáng*), and the cut (排; *pǎi*). The same characters come up constantly; you just as easily see Braised Beef Noodles (紅燒牛肉麵) as Stewed Lamb Steak (清燉羊排), and many other variations of the same pieces. Menus are commonly divided into hot dishes, rice plates, noodle bowls, soups, and side dishes.

Family Fare

Most of what westerners imagine when they think of Chinese food falls under the heading “hot dishes” (熱炒; *rèchǎo*). These combine several ingredients together in some sort of sauce or broth. They are the shared dishes that form the backbone of Chinese communal eating. While some things you find on a menu have non-descriptive names, most of the time a name consists of three things: the style, the type of meat or vegetable, and the cut. Some, like 紅燒羊排 from above, list all three, while others might just tell you the the main vegetable and meat, like Lamb with Bamboo Shoots (劍筍羊肉; *jiànsǔnyáng ròu*).

For Taipei carnivores, the type of meat is most important. As I expect you’ve experienced, pork is the default here in Taiwan. When menu ordering, dishes will often simply have the Chinese character for meat (肉; *ròu*). In these cases, expect pork. For example, the ground meat in a thin broth often find atop your bowl of rice (肉燥; *ròuzào*), is almost always pork despite not being specially labeled as such. Our Menu Key gives a full list of the different meat types, including the many parts of the animal that find their way to your plate. Depending on the dish, meat comes ground, diced (丁; *dīng*), in thin strips (絲; *sī*), sliced (片; *piàn*), or as a cutlet/steak (排 *pái*). Often 排 means deep-fried, as

with both Fish and Pork Cutlets (豬排 and 魚排), but it can also mean a pan-fried or even grilled steak (as in 牛排 or beef steak).

Rechao names often begin with the sauce or style of cooking. There are several common cooking methods (see our Menu Key). Two of the most widespread are Braising in Soy Sauce (紅燒; *hōngshāo*) and Stewing in Light Broth (清燉; *qīngdùn*), meant to complement one another, 紅燒 being spicier and hotter, 清燉 milder. The idea is to help regulate your intake of harsh and soothing foods, so you will frequently have a choice between the two. The 熱炒 range is vast and sports some of the trickiest names, but becoming familiar with a few enables deeper acquaintance with the larger culinary tradition here in Taipei.

Hotter Dishes

Sichuan style, famous in the West, is also much enjoyed here in Taipei and many 熱炒 draw from that tradition. The ever-popular Kong-Pao Chicken (宮保雞丁; pronounced *gōngbǎojīdīng*) hails from Sichuan, and displays the region’s characteristic use of unseeded chili peppers. Sichuan food has a well-deserved reputation for spicy flavors, as a healthy portion of ginger, Sichuan peppercorns (花椒; *huājiāo*; literally, “flower pepper”), and other spicy herbs

Chinese / English Menu Key

Take this menu key along with you, and study Chinese while you chew...

Meat / 肉 / Ròu

Beef / 牛 / niú
Lamb / 羊 / yáng
Pork / 豬肉 / zhū ròu
Ham / 火腿 / huǒtuǐ
Chicken-雞-jī
Chicken Leg-雞腿-jītǔi
Duck / 鴨 / yā
Liver / 肝 / gān
Spare Ribs / 排骨 / páigǔ
Stomach / 肚子 / dùzi
Pork Joints / 肘子 / zhǒuzi
Tendon / 筋 / jīn

Seafood-海鮮-Hǎixiān

Crab / 螃蟹 / pángxiè
Lobster / 龍蝦 / lóngxiā
Shelled Shrimp / 蝦仁 / xiārén
Unshelled Shrimp / 蝦子 / xiāzi
Squid / 花枝 / huāzhī
Cuttlefish / 魷魚 / yóuyú
Clam / 蛤 / gé
Fish / 魚肉 / yú ròu
Tuna / 鮪魚 / wěiyú
Eel / 鰻魚 / mànyú

Noodles-麵-Miàn

Flour / 麵條-bǎntiáo
Starch-冬粉 / dōngfěn
Rice-米粉 / mǐfěn



Vegetables-青菜-Qīngcài

Onion / 洋蔥 / yángcōng
Green Onion / 蔥 / cōng
Green Pepper / 青椒 / qīngjiāo
Hot Pepper / 辣椒 / làjiāo
Bamboo Shoot / 劍筍 / jiànsǔn
Mushroom / 菇 / gū
Cabbage / 白菜 / báicài
Bean Sprout / 豆芽 / dòuyá
Pea Pod / 豌豆 / wāndòu
Cucumber / 黃瓜 / huángguā
Carrot / 紅蘿蔔 / hóngluóbō
Eggplant / 茄子 / qiézi



Chefs cooking on open flames are often seen at various Chinese restaurants. One should be tempted to order rather than feeling intimidated. (Photo courtesy of Taiwan aujourd'hui)

Style-式-shì**Cooking Methods**

Deep Fry / 炸 / zhà
 Pan Fry / 炒 / chǎo
 Flash Fry / 炮 / pào
 Roast or Bake / 烤 / kǎo
 Boil / 煮 / zhǔ
 Boil with Starch / 燴 / huì
 Boil in Soup / 汆 / cuān
 Steam / 蒸 / zhēng

Style of Cut

Ground / 燥 / zào
 Diced / 丁 / dīng
 Strips / 絲 / sī
 Sliced / 片 / piàn
 Steak / 排 / pái

Photo by Wang Neng-yu

**Hot Dishes-熱炒-Rèchǎo**

Braised / 紅燒 / hóngshāo
 Stewed / 清燉 / qīngdùn
 Sauteed w / spices, peanuts / 宮保 / gōngbǎo
 Spicy Tofu / 麻婆 / mápó
 Seasoned Fish / 魚香 / yúxiāng
 Sweet and Sour / 糖醋 / tángcù

Photo by Sarah McMaster

**Sauces-醬-Jiàng**

Tomato / 蕃茄醬 / fānqéjiàng
 Mustard / 芥末醬 / jièmòjiàng
 Soy Sauce / 醬油 / jiàngyóu
 Butter / 牛油 / niúyóu

Rice-飯-Fàn

Curry / 咖哩 / gālǐ

Chinese Dumplings -水餃-Shuǐjiǎo

Leek / 韭菜 / jiǔcài
 Pork / Cabbage / 高麗菜 / gāolìcài
 Fresh Shrimp / 鮮蝦 / xiānxiā
 Lobster, Shrimp and Pork / 三鮮 / sānxiān
 Mixed Vegetable / 素 / sù
 Wonton / 餛飩 / húntūn
 Potsticker / 鍋貼 / guōtiē



Taipei is known for its beef noodle soup selections. Make sure to stop by a noodle house and sit in for a hearty bowl! (Photo by Yang Chih-jen)

always find their way into the stirfrys. It's the Sichuan peppercorns that give the spicy-sounding Pockmarked Grandma's Beancurd (麻婆豆腐; *mápódòufu*) its kick. Named after a likely fictional bespotted old chef, the dish serves beancurd silk-style in a red bean sauce mixed with bits of pork.

Not all Sichuan cooking is spicy. Another good Sichuan dish common here in Taiwan is 魚香肉絲 (*yúxiāngròusī*). The pork dish gets its name from a borrowed technique originally used to season fish--hence the "fragrant fish" (*yúxiāng*) bit--popular in Sichuan. The meat doesn't taste like fish, but instead sports a complex flavor of sweet, sour, and salty, with just a bit of heat to bring it home.

Hunan chefs are famous for being liberal with hot peppers and garlic, earning their fare a reputation as being even spicier than its Sichuan cousin. That degree of spiciness has proven less popular here in Taiwan, but a few dishes commonly found are actually Hunan in origin. The "Sweet and Sour" shrimp and chicken dishes popular in the West come from the Hunan-perfected Sugar-Vinegar Sauce (糖醋醬; *tángcùjiàng*). You can find 糖醋 dishes in many restaurants here. The main ingredient is

usually deep-fried before being topped with the tasty red sauce.

No-Fuss Noodles

Noodles (麵; *miàn*) come either fried (炒; *chǎo*) or in broth. The soup character (湯; *tāng*) on your menu, however, can complicate things. Basically, a beef noodle soup (牛肉湯麵; *niúròutāngmiàn*) is just noodles in beef broth, while beef noodles (牛肉麵; *niúròumiàn*) is the same thing but with meat included. Generally the drastic price difference is enough to point you in the right direction. If that weren't confusing enough, 湯 by itself, as in 紅燒牛肉湯, does not just mean broth, but rather a soup with pieces of meat and vegetables (牛肉麵 without 麵).

There are three basic types of noodles to choose from, and most menus will leave it to you to circle your preference. The basic flour noodle is written 板條 (*bǎntiáo*), but if you're interested in something different, 冬粉 (*dōngfěn*) are skinny noodles made from bean starch that can be a welcome change of pace. These aren't usually fried, but super-thin rice noodles (米粉; *mǐfěn*) are and provide a great alternative to the everyday noodle daze.

Fried noodles (炒麵) are a lot more straightforward than soups and broths. With names like 蝦仁炒麵 (*xiārénchǎomiàn*) and 肉絲炒麵 (*ròusīchǎomiàn*), a quick glance at the Menu Key should be enough to tell you you'll be eating Shelled Shrimp Fried Noodles and Fried Noodles with Pork Strips. One notable exception is Ten Ingredient Fried Noodles (什錦炒麵; *shíjīnchǎomiàn*), whose contents vary from place to place but will likely include carrot, cucumber, pork, tofu, and egg.



Fried noodles take on various combinations. However, they vary mostly in ingredients. (Photo by Sarah McMaster)

Rice

Like noodles, rice can come either cooked (白飯; *báifàn*) or fried (炒飯). Most fried-rice dishes are the same as their noodle counterparts, but usually have the character for egg (蛋; *dàn*) added, as egg helps bind the rice. White-rice plates are often single servings of 熱炒 dishes that include sides. Several dishes, though, are completely discreet. Roasted meat (烤肉; *kǎoròu*) is usually portioned for one and is delicious with the Taiwanese sweet glaze. Chicken leg (雞腿 *jītuǐ*), deep-fried and split into strips, is also a solo affair. Taiwan also sports a wide range of curries (咖哩; *gālǐ*), every restaurant having its own blend of spices and seasonings. One constant, though, is what to expect

the day, so you have to ask if it's an issue. Still, more than a few vegetables are named by adding a single character before 菜, which can take away some of the confusion. There are several general types listed on the Menu Key, including mushrooms which all end in the character 菇 (*gū*). If you would like a side of vegetables, just ask for 青菜; use the Menu Key to specify your preference.

Dumplings

Shǔijiǎo (水餃), Taiwan's deservedly well-known style of cooked dumplings, fall into three categories: meat, shrimp, and vegetable. The most common by far for each, leek (韭菜; *jiǔcài*), pork and cabbage (高麗菜; *gāolìcài*), and fresh shrimp (鮮蝦; *xiānxiā*), however, aren't the only

the most common characters you'll come across on a Chinese menu is 式 (*shì*), meaning "style," which often comes after a single-character abbreviation for a country. For example, 日式 (*rìshì*) means Japanese style (日 being shorthand for 日本; *rìběn*), which helps distinguish Japanese-style curries, pork cutlets, and noodles from the rest. Learning all the single-character codes for countries is impractical, so just remember that when you find 式 it's specifying the style, and most likely the characters preceding it name a place. In general there's no reason to pay too much attention, but one possible exception is 韓式 (*hánshì*), Korean style, which can refer to Korean spicy kimchi cabbage, an acquired taste that might turn some people off.



Familiarizing with dish names and making special orders is more than survival. The joy of tasting good dishes can be rewarding. (Photo courtesy of The Howard Plaza Hotel Taipei)



Restaurants in Taiwan are quite vegetarian-friendly. Although dishes are usually stir fried in garlic, chilies and even fish, vegetarian dishes can be ordered without trouble. (Photo by Wang Neng-yu)



Equip yourself with the basics found in the Menu key in order to advance to the core of Chinese culinary arts. (Photo courtesy of The Ambassador Hotel)

from the name on the menu; 豬肉咖哩 (*zhūròugālǐ*) will contain pieces of pork in curry sauce, whereas 豬排咖哩 (*zhūpāigālǐ*) has a deep-fried pork cutlet served with curry sauce.

Vegetable

Vegetables can present a challenge to a westerner; many Chinese vegetables are completely unknown to us, and an exhaustive list here would be far too unwieldy. The first difficulty is that often a vegetable will appear on the menu as 青菜 (*qīngcài*), which just means "vegetable." What is meant by that can depend on the season or even

game in town for dumplings. There are many varieties--just use the Menu Key to help sort it all out, as most 水餃 names are very straightforward. Wontons (餛飩; *húntūn*), usually served in a soup, are more delicate and lighter than 水餃, though generally come in the same flavors. Potstickers (鍋貼; *guōtiē*), too, have most of the same fillings as 水餃, so ordering a few of your favorites quickly becomes a snap.

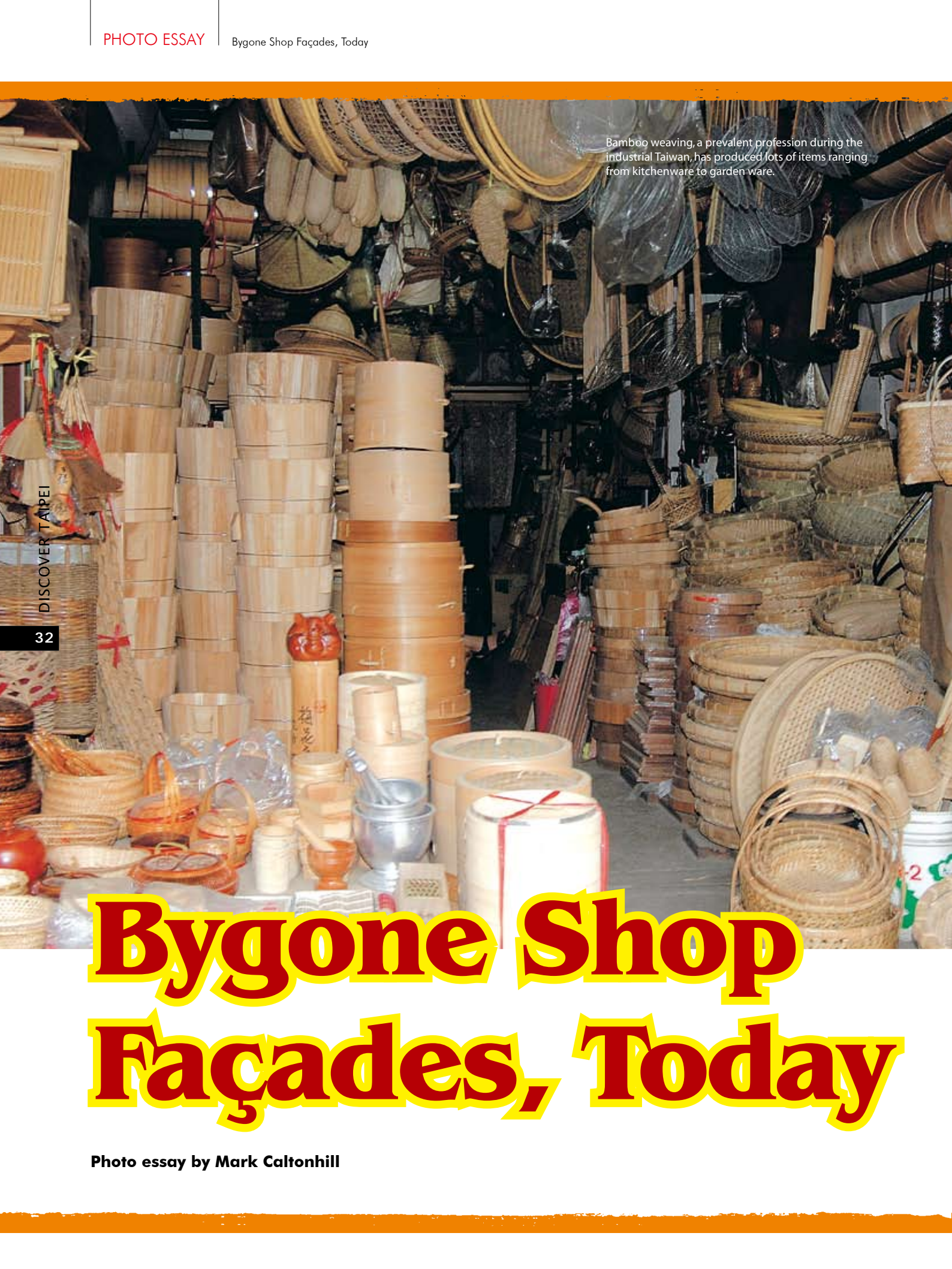
Other Common Characters

There are a few other important characters that merit discussion. One of

The general character for sauce (醬; *jiàng*), can be ambiguous, as in 炸醬麵 (*zhájiàngmiàn*), a pork noodle dish where the pork is first deep-fried then topped in a slightly spicy sauce.

Ready Now?

The bottom line is, even with a healthy serving of menu-savvy Mandarin under your belt, sometimes ordering will be an adventure. But what else are you here for? Take this handful of hands-on tips as foundation to hit the street and branch out. And should you ever need a break, just remember, the Mandarin word for sandwich is *sānmíngzhì* (三明治). @



Bamboo weaving, a prevalent profession during the industrial Taiwan, has produced lots of items ranging from kitchenware to garden ware.

Bygone Shop Façades, Today

Photo essay by Mark Caltonhill

It is sometimes hard to remember a time before supermarkets, convenience and department stores met ninety-nine percent of our shopping needs. These “convenience” type stores are even present in the smallest villages here in Taiwan.

Despite this convenience/department store trend, it is still possible to wander the backstreets of Taipei’s most modern neighborhoods, like the East District (東區) around Taipei 101, and find a rich selection of “mom and pop” stores specializing in a single trade or even a single product. These stores are also abundant in some of the city’s older areas, such as around Lungshan Temple (龍山寺) in Wanhua District (萬華區) or Dihua Street (迪化街) in Datong District (大同區). In these districts it is like walking back in time, where a multitude of Taiwan’s traditional skills and the world’s oldest professions wait around every corner.

To the east of Lungshan Temple, for example, stores concentrate on selling fresh herbs for medicinal use, while



Narrow storefronts hidden in tiny alleys provide many creative ways of displaying items.



Different colors of slippers.

to the west there is everything needed to set up an altar in the home or even a fully operational temple. To the south there are gold, jewelry and watch shops, which then lead on to the clothing outlets concentrated around Wanhua Station.

Dihua is famous for the “south-to-north goods” (南北貨) representing the best dried goods from the bottom to top of China and, of course, these days from far beyond.

Although this mercantile practice represents the “old Taipei,” it has by no means stagnated, as is evidenced by the new stores springing up selling Vietnamese, Thai and Filipino goods.

Another common feature of the “mom and pop” stores here in Taipei is that purveyors of similar products gather in the same districts, often side by side. Thus Taipei also has neighborhoods dedicated to carving chops and selling tea leaves and almost everything imaginable.



Religious wooden sculptures and items can be found at specialty shops in many older neighborhoods.



Shopping in older districts can be quite a treasure hunt. Not only will the prices be much lower, bargaining can be quite an interesting experience.



Having a bird as a pet is a popular sport among the locals, especially amongst older generations. Here, you can find various types of cages.



Rare and exotic plants can be found at local shops, and store owners often volunteer to offer explanations to visitors.

Taipei has the convenience of various transportations, making all residents' life easy to get to the places needed. Through these photos, readers like you may only get a slight taste of what's interesting and available in these "mom and pop" shops. Many of the items sold in the shops are very practical in our routine life that even some of the department stores do not offer. Best of all, if you chat with the owners for a bit longer, you may get a good bargain of your purchases. Whether you're a visitor or a resident of Taipei City, these shops can be your next destination for your treasure hunting game.

So, when in Taipei with a free hour or two, get off the bus, leave the major shopping streets and explore the tiny backstreets of the city, perhaps even take a camera with you!



Colorful hoses ranging from small to large stack up in front of a store. A good strategy to bring some attention?

TAIPEI'S PLACES OF WORSHIP:

A PEEK AT WHERE MUSLIMS, JEWS, AND CHRISTIANS CAN WORSHIP IN THE CITY

Text and Photos by Daniel Mojahedi

Religion is an essential part in the lives of many people. It is not only a link to their view of a higher power, but serves as perhaps the key standard by which they live their lives. Therefore, one challenge facing foreigners who move to Taiwan is finding a place to worship. While it is impossible to find a significant following for every

The Islam religion worships a deity of the Moon-god by the name of "Allah."



religion, the city is accommodating to the major Western and Middle Eastern faiths. In this article we will take a look at what places are out there for four such religions: Islam, Judaism, Protestantism, and Catholicism.

ISLAM

Islam has a long and rich history in Taiwan. The earliest records of Muslims inhabiting the island date back to the 17th century when soldiers of the Ming Dynasty arrived from mainland China to fight the Dutch. After the war, many of them settled on the island. While they built their own mosques in both Taixi Village (台西鄉) and Danshui (淡水), none are left standing, and the descendants of these groups converted to other local religions over time.

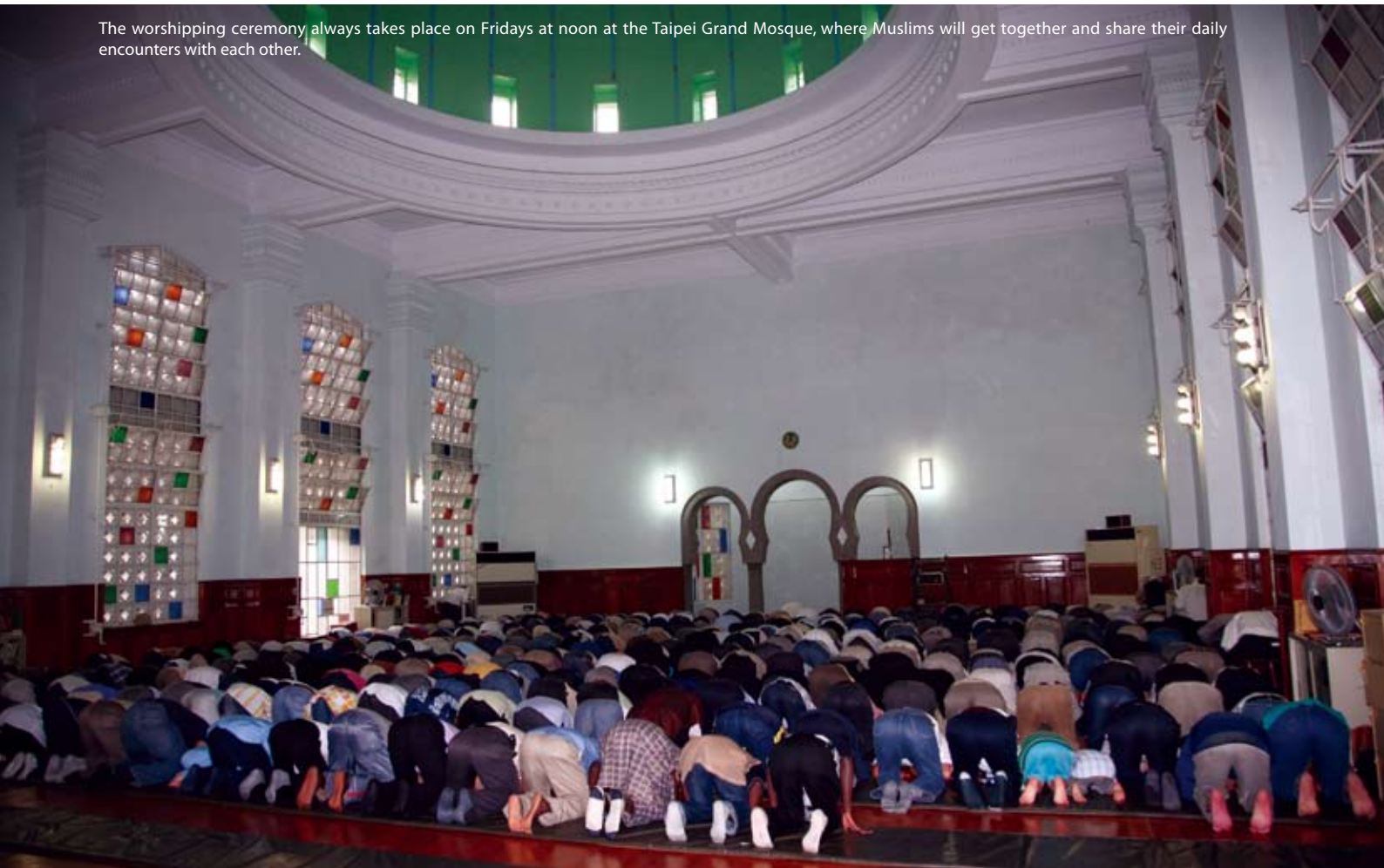
The majority of Muslims in Taiwan today came to the island during the Nationalist retreat of 1949, or are descendants of those involved. However, it was not until about ten years later that anybody made an effort

to re-establish mosques on the island. While there are no official numbers, it is estimated that there are about twenty thousand Muslims living in the city, with just under a thousand of them actively worshipping.

Muslims do have a couple of guidelines and traditions that do not always fit neatly into the mainstream Taiwanese lifestyle. For example, they have their main worship service on Fridays at noon, requiring those employed to take an hour or so off work. However, when given the chance, most Taiwanese friends and coworkers are more than willing to accommodate any needs. "Back before I owned my own company, I had to ask for a couple of hours off every couple of weeks," recalls Yavuz Avcı, who now owns his own trade company. "My boss never once said anything to me about it."

Sadly, in the post-9/11 world, when many people think of Islam they think of the horrors being committed by extremists. Ma Shiao-chi (馬孝棋),

The worshipping ceremony always takes place on Fridays at noon at the Taipei Grand Mosque, where Muslims will get together and share their daily encounters with each other.



The Taipei Grand Mosque serves as one of the two main places in Taipei where Muslims can worship.

Imam of the Taipei Grand Mosque (台北清真寺), spends much of his time dealing with these misconceptions. “The coverage of Islam that you now see in the media is not very accurate,” observes Ma. “Only a Western view of Islam is presented. We hope that people can see Islam through the view of Muslims.”

One common misconception people have is about jihad, a term used, or misused rather, by militants when committing their atrocities. “People always think of all this fighting when they hear the term jihad,” explains Ma. “However, the true meaning of jihad is ‘to struggle’ -- including to struggle to better yourself as a person, to struggle to help and serve those around you, to struggle to make the community a better place to live.”

There are two places in the city where Muslims can worship. In addition to the Taipei Grand Mosque, which is located right across from Daan Park (大安公園) on Xinsheng South Road (新生南路), there is the Taipei Cultural Mosque (台北文化清真寺). Both places offer services at noon on Fridays that are held in Arabic and Chinese.

JUDAISM

Judaism also has a small but thriving following in Taipei. Not having a foundation in Chinese history like Islam, and not being evangelistic like Protestantism or Catholicism, the number of Jews has remained somewhat low since the United States removed its military from the island in 1979. Unofficial estimates have the number of Jews in the city at about one hundred. This number is made up almost exclusively of foreigners, from Israel and the United States. Nevertheless, the Jewish community here is both tight-knit and active.

While traditional Judaism has many laws that could be difficult to accommodate in Taipei, such as eating only kosher food and not working on the Sabbath (Saturday), most Jews have found Taiwan to be

accommodating. For example, the food served in the island’s Buddhist restaurants meets kosher requirements. And most companies no longer require their staff to work on the weekends.

While Taipei does not have an actual synagogue, the Landis Taipei Hotel, offers the local Jewish population a room in which to hold their services. The main services are on Fridays and Saturdays at sundown to commemorate the beginning and ending of the Sabbath. Other events include the celebration of Hanukkah, Purim, and Passover. In addition to the Passover dinner held at the Landis, there is also a more family-oriented version held at the American Club. Services are designed to cater to all Jews, whether they be Orthodox, Conservative, or Reformist, and are held in a mix of Hebrew and English.

Taiwan also has a Jewish Community Center. Once housed in its own offices, the Community Center is now simply a network of Jews in the city. “These days it plays a role somewhat less important,” states Don Shapiro, president of the center, “than it was a few decades ago when there weren’t so many other institutions and facilities available for expatriates.” Most religious ceremonies are hosted by Dr. Einhorn, the island’s only certified rabbi. Other matters pertaining to Jewish life in the city are usually handled by Shapiro himself.

PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

Protestant Christianity is by far the most popular Western religion in Taiwan. Look in the classifieds in any one of the island’s English newspapers on a Saturday, and you will see about a dozen different services. This popularity is accredited to the long and ongoing history of missionaries evangelizing on the island, and the partiality the KMT once had toward the religion. The latter was due in part to Soong Mei-ling (宋美齡), the wife of Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石), who

Jewish members gather every Friday and Saturday at the Landis Taipei Hotel at sundown to commemorate the beginning and ending of the Sabbath.



was an active Christian.

Although many Protestant churches here are denominational, most church-goers do not find this a problem. “We are less Baptist,” observes Dave Brown, pastor of Grace Baptist Church (懷恩堂) “than we are everything else.”

For those interested in attending, Grace Baptist Church is located on Xinsheng South Road (新生南路) across from National Taiwan University (國立臺灣大學). It offers two English Sunday services, one at 10:00 a.m. and the other at 5:30 p.m.

Another popular place of worship is Friendship Presbyterian Church. English-worship services are held on the second floor from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. every Sunday.

For people living in the city's north, there is the Taipei International Church in Tianmu (天母). Unlike most other local churches, TIC's services are almost exclusively in English, the exception being a Tagalog service held on Sunday afternoons at 2:00 p.m.

CATHOLICISM

With its active community outreach and long island history, Catholicism also enjoys wide popularity. Catholicism was introduced to Taiwan in the early 17th century by the Spanish, though they were later kicked off the island during the Dutch conquest. A more permanent presence was established in the nineteenth century.

One striking thing about the Catholic church here is how tightly both Taiwanese and foreigners integrate. Despite Catholicism being a foreign import, Taiwanese members are some of the most devoted in the congregations. “I think some of the Chinese have more religion than the foreigners,” notes Sister Petronelly Keulers, noting their devotion to Catholic traditions and attending Mass.

One popular church among expats is Saint Anne's Catholic Church and Home for Seriously Retarded Children

(聖安娜之家). The church has four English Masses: at 10:00 a.m., 12:15 a.m., and 7:00 p.m. on Sundays, and 7:00 p.m. on Saturdays. With each Mass hosting about two hundred worshipers, the church has a regular attendance of just under eight hundred members. Father Jan van Aert and Sister Keulers, both from Holland, have been running the church and children's home for several years now.

The church with the largest foreign-attendee population is St. Christopher's Catholic Church (多福天主教堂). Made up almost exclusively of foreign laborers, the church plays host to nearly two thousand worshipers every weekend. St. Christopher's holds English Mass at 12:15 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays and 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 6:00 p.m. on Sundays.

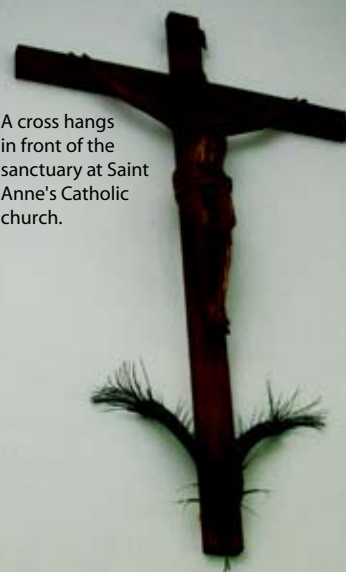
For those living in the city's south there is the Holy Family Catholic Church (聖家堂), also located on Xinsheng South Road, across from Daan Park. Holy Family holds its English Mass on Sundays at 9:45.

ON NEUTRAL GROUND

The breed of worshipers that you find in Taipei is a rarity. Those who are active in their fellowships are sincere. There is no pressure from the family or surrounding society at large to worship. Those who do go do so of their free will and with conscious decision. Because of this you see a sincerity among worshipers that is often lacking in those lands where the religions have much longer been observed.

Yet refreshingly absent within the churches, mosques, and synagogues is the ultra-conservatism or extremism that you might find in lands where each religion has much deeper roots. These religions are not tied to the local culture as they are in many Western and Middle Eastern countries. This allows people to take a more objective look at their religion, free of bias. “In much of the U.S.,

A cross hangs in front of the sanctuary at Saint Anne's Catholic church.



A statuette of Mary greets worshippers as they enter Saint Christopher's Catholic church.





Expect to meet both Father Jan van Aert and Sister Keulers when visiting St. Anne's Catholic Church on Sunday and receive warm welcome to make you feel like home.

being Baptist carries a certain culture with it that does not wash out," notes Dave Brown. "So for me it is a good thing not to have that culture there."

In addition, there is no animosity within the religious community towards outsiders. Quite the opposite--many worshipers feel it is their responsibility to help the people of the island gain a better understanding of their beliefs. Many also feel the island's needs can best be met by transcending religious

barriers and working together. "There are already a lot of problems around the world -- pollution, drugs, disease, natural disasters," states Imam Ma. "There is no need to kill each other. We should instead be cooperating to tackle these problems. That is what the Koran says. That is Islam."

"Whatever you are -- Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, whatever," says Sister Keulers, "when you are good to other people, this is the point." @

Places to Worship

Islam

- ▶ **Taipei Grand Mosque**
(臺北清真寺)
62 Xincheng South Road, Sec. 2
(新生南路二段62號)
2392-7364
www.taipeimosque.org.tw

- ▶ **Taipei Cultural Mosque**
(臺北文化清真寺)
Xinyi Road, Sec. 1 Alley 25 #3
(信義路一段25巷3號)
2367-5421

Judaism

- ▶ **The Landis Taipei Hotel**
41 Minquan East Road, Sec. 2
(民權東二段41號)
2597-1234

Protestant

- ▶ **Grace Baptist Church**
(懷恩堂)
90 Xincheng South Road, Sec. 3
(新生南路三段90號)
8369-2840
www.gbc.org.tw
- ▶ **Taipei International Church**
Services Held at Taipei
International School
800 Zhongshan North Road, Sec. 6
(中山北路六段800號)
2833-7444
www.taipeichurch.org
- ▶ **Friendship Presbyterian Church**
5 Lane 269, Roosevelt Road,
Sec. 3 (羅斯福路三段269巷5號)
2362-1395
www.frcptw.org

Catholicism

- ▶ **Saint Anne's Catholic Church**
and Home for Seriously
Retarded Children (聖安娜之家)
171 Zhongshan North Road, Sec.
7 (中山北路七段171號)
2871-4397
- ▶ **St. Christopher's Catholic**
Church (多福天主教堂)
51 Zhongshan North Road, Sec.
3 (中山北路三段51號)
2594-7914
- ▶ **Holy Family Catholic Church**
(聖家堂)
50 Xincheng South Road, Sec. 2
(新生南路二段50號)
2392-0701(ext.5)

Exploring further down the Blue Line --which saves its best for last

Text By Mark Caltonhill

Photo courtesy of Taipei Rapid Transit Systems

With the opening of the new section of the Blue Line of Taipei's MRT system this summer, a whole stretch of the western suburbs came into citizens' focus. Consisting of six underground stations between urban Banqiao (板橋) and rural Yongning (永寧) on the far side of Tucheng (土城), this extension promises something for everyone. DTB set off to investigate.

Banqiao Station

▶▶ 板橋站

The first new station comes with a double name or, rather, alternative

spellings of the same name meaning "plank bridge."

The MRT station offers immediate access to the Banqiao bus station with numerous local connections, and the Banqiao mainline railway station, with connections islandwide. Nevertheless some non-Taipei foreigners may alight here for the visa extension service of the Banqiao foreign affairs police.

The huge plaza in front of the station is popular with roller-bladers and skateboarders, and this is also the nearest MRT stop to the popular Banqiao night market, though gourmets will work up a good appetite walking there.

Fuzhong Station

▶▶ 府中站

Named for all the Taipei County government offices (府), of more interest to DTB readers are probably the restaurants nearby which makes this the best destination foodwise on the line, at least for lower and middle range cuisine.

Heading south down Chongqing Road (重慶路) from the station, for example, there is an al fresco sushi restaurant that also sells big plates of Taiwan-style tempura ("tian-bu-la"; 甜不辣); opposite that is a café selling Italian-style noodles, and nearby again



The Lin Family Garden is a cultural spot for people who enjoy Ching dynasty Chinese architecture and gardens.

the Amorous Café selling an assortment of snacks. This latter is open 24 hours, so is worth knowing about if one misses the last train. On the corner of Gongyuan Jie (“Park Street”; 公園街) there is Molay Café offering cheap pizzas and a vegetarian all you can eat buffet for NT\$75. The basement of the Eslite Department Store on Zhongshan Road (中山路) contains two Japanese restaurants that offer more atmosphere but charge higher prices.

Fuzhong is also the line’s prime destination for culture vultures with the Lin Family Garden (林本源園邸), which is said to be the best example of Ching dynasty Chinese architecture and gardens in Taiwan, located within walking distance to the north.

Far Eastern Hospital Station

▶▶ 亞東醫院站

In addition to its hospital and having the most attractive design among the six new stations, this neighborhood boasts a well-kept secret, its golf course. With 18 holes of golf costing upwards of

NT\$3,000 almost everywhere else, a round at the course 100 meters east of the station costs just NT\$840 on weekends and even less during the week.

While it is not as well manicured as the more expensive courses, and the queues at some tee boxes can be quite dispiriting, it is very popular with patient golfers short on cash. The only other catch is that a coupon is required to play. These can be picked up during the game, the only problem is being invited a first time.

Haishan Station

▶▶ 海山站

Despite its teasing name, which means “Sea Mountain,” frankly, this is really a dormitory town with little or nothing of interest to foreign visitors unless they are in the market for some reasonably priced accommodation. The MRT station is surrounded on all sides by high-rise apartment blocks, and the neighboring streets have a few cheap eateries, a supermarket, and excessive numbers of take-away coffee outlets, banks and real estate offices.

Tucheng Station

▶▶ 土城站

Tucheng is of older origin, and its name meaning “earthen city wall” hints toward a history of struggle. Still aside from a lively wet market and a literary arts center, Tucheng downtown has little to draw the visitor from Taipei. It does, however, boast an impressive array of temples dedicated to all manner of Buddhist figures and popular deities, and a number of huge public cemeteries, which offer unique insights onto the religious lives of Taiwan’s citizens.

Don’t these milk chocolate bars look too appetizing to be sitting on?



Yongning Station

►► 永寧站

The extension saves its best for last. To the north is the Taiwan Nougat Museum (牛軋糖博物館) while taking exit 2 and walking south (those short on time can take the Blue 44 bus) outdoor enthusiasts can go under the No.3 Highway and reach the foot of the Tong Flower Trail (桐花步道) heading up toward the Chengtian Buddhist monastery (承天禪寺).

Yongning means something like “eternal tranquility” but, with the roar of traffic and rush of weekend hikers, the name seems inappropriate at first. Out-of-towners shop at the stores selling “mountain produce”—mushrooms, vegetables and strange roots—a coffee shop has a tethered pig to attract customers. Once on the climb, however, the car engines are distant and people fall silent, intent on the effort. Here and there along the path a vendor has set up shop, selling umbrellas, flashlights, t-shirts whatever he or she thinks the walkers might need.

Every 100 meters or so there are one of a series of Buddhist statues: Guanyin (the “hearer of sighs”, 觀音), the bodhisattva Dizang (地藏菩薩) who vowed to remain in hell till all sinners are saved, and so forth. Hikers stride past; pilgrims stop and genuflect. Occasionally along the path there is someone climbing the hill slowly, prostrating themselves every ten steps, Tibetan style.

For most of its length, the path is bounded on the left by bamboo and on the right by forest. One or two side paths lead off into the forest and up some hill or other, and one or two walkers are tempted. The vendors are fewer now: a man selling vegetables, and two women surreally offering professional haircuts, their mirrors hanging from the bamboo, their customers perched on plastic chairs.

The statues, on the other hand, are more frequent, and a series of short posts lists the tenets of Buddhist teachings: the four noble truths, five basic precepts, eightfold path and much, much more.

The trail heading to the Chengtian Buddhist monastery makes a delightful walk for everyone.
(Photo by Mark Caltonhill)



Seeing an outdoor barber shop along your way up to the hill can be rather interesting and may even seem a bit odd. (Photo by Mark Caltonhill)



Turning a corner, walkers hear the first notes coming from a bamboo flute higher up the trail. The musician turns out to be an elderly Mr. Huang who has played here for decades.

Indeed, as a sign explains, the path is not a new creation to cater to the MRT trade but was first laid down between 1960 and 1963 when the temple was established. The Buddhist inscriptions and plaques were erected between 1963 and 1966.

While one path cuts up the steep hill, that to the temple is gentle and paved with stones the whole way. Soon comes a long stretch bounded on the left side by stones engraved with whole texts:

Yongning Station



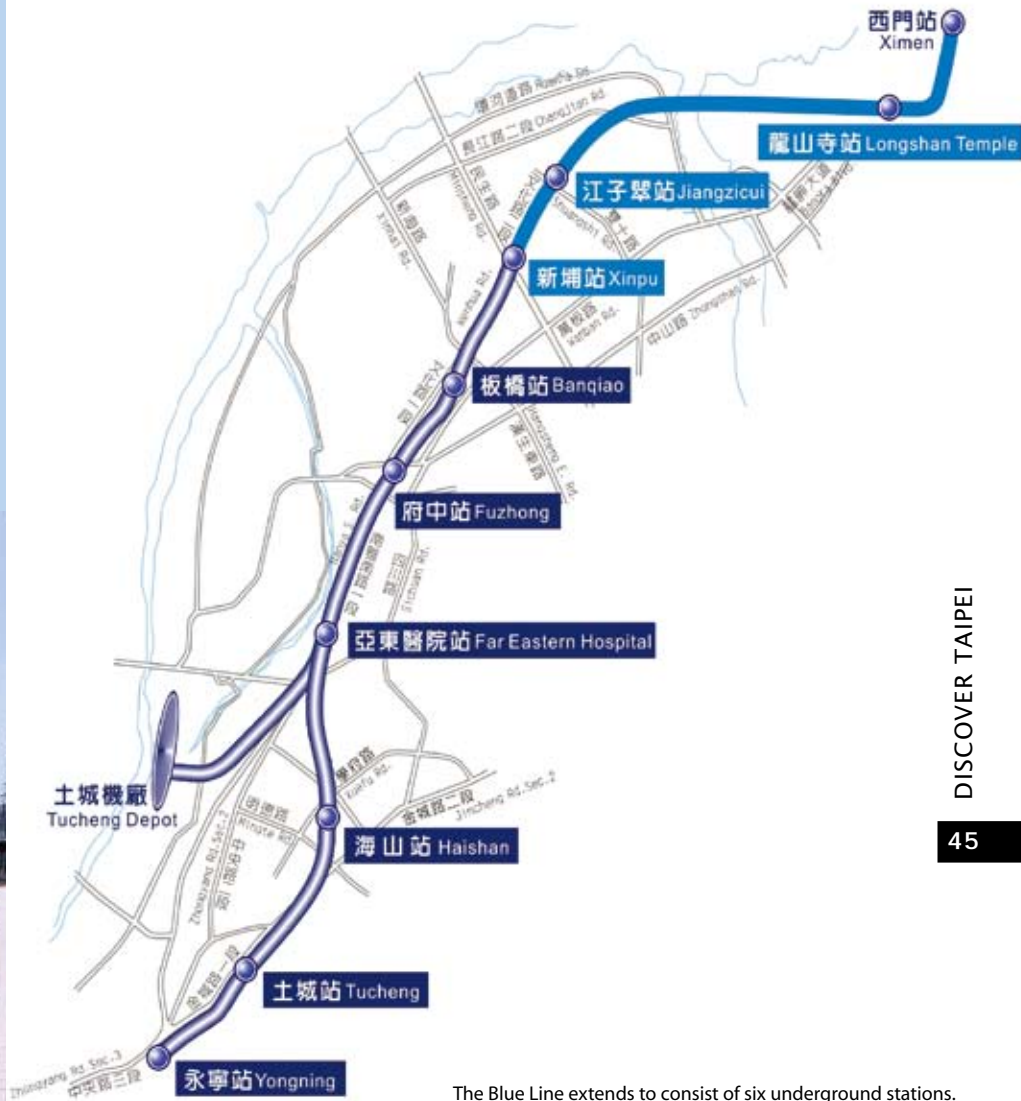
The Yongning Station has a contemporary artsy exterior that sits at the end of the Blue line.

More than an amateur musician, Mr. Huang has played the bamboo flute on the hill for decades. (Photo by Mark Caltonhill)



favorite sutras and teachings. Finally, an ornate archway announces the pilgrims' arrival at the monastery but, due to restrictions on entry ("no dogs allowed") that is as far as this DTB team can explore. Just before the temple entrance, another path leads to the hill's summit and, apparently, from there down to Zhonghe (中和) and Xindian (新店) beyond but, that must be for another day.

For an online map of the MRT system in English go to <http://english.trtc.com.tw/travel/95.asp> then select "route map" under "hot favorite." Clicking on each station on the map will then generate street maps of the area around that station. @



The Blue Line extends to consist of six underground stations.



End your day trip at the Banqiao stop where a serene night view from the plaza can be quite pleasing.

Discover Taipei Graffiti

Text and photos by C. McHale



If you asked about graffiti in Taipei ten years ago, the answer would be about handmade signs covering street posts, advertising small businesses, places for rent, and things for sale. Times have changed, with an explosion of youth culture since the mid '90s. The exchange of ideas on the Internet, Hip Hop

consumerism and even political incentives have fueled this cultural flowering, making it a noted part of Taipei's arts scene.

This summer five Taipei parks have opened free-art spaces. This is an effort by the city to curb illegal graffiti and allow people to make art, express their ideas, or just doodle a message to someone special.

It's proven particularly popular with lovers taking walks in the parks. In April, 2005 Public Works Commissioner Chen Wei-zen commemorated the newly opened space in Zhongshan Park, bringing 60 kindergarten students to draw there. Hopefully the new spaces will become "treasure islands" for the Taipei community.



The Art of Spray: This face and others around Taipei are done freehand with only spray paint.

More than Street Cred

In the past 10 years, graffiti art has been recognized worldwide as fine art and shown in museums and galleries. Last year, Taipei's MOCA (Museum of Contemporary Art) show "Well Made," featured graphic arts, including 100 pairs of customized running shoes. The new AMPM Gallery (3/4F, 24, Alley 55, NeiJiang St., near corner of ChengDu Rd. in Ximending; tel: 02-2389-2896) also exhibits graffiti artists and even has temporary graffiti installations. Last year the Taipei Artist Village held two graffiti-art shows in its gallery. One featured

local artists' work on large canvases. The other, "Start Making Sense," was curated by Nina Liao of Fake Design (www.fakedesign.co.uk) and featured international talent. She also presented her book, *Urban Wallpaper*, the first book on graffiti art in Chinese.

Ms. Liao is conflicted with the idea of graffiti as a gallery art, but used the show to connect Taipei with a world movement in graffiti. The French graffiti artist, Blek le Rat, has noted that graffiti in a gallery is only a "memory of what happened in the streets," somewhat disconnected from its environment. He believes memory is the key in what makes graffiti important—an ephemeral yet concrete embodiment of urban memory. The people who make graffiti and see it share in this memory. It transcends the emptiness of urban architecture and advertising with a message that, no matter how simple, is human.

History on the Wall

The history of graffiti is vast, simple messages, revolutionary slogans, art, and even advertising. One famous example is the message "Kilroy was here," scrawled by an American shipyard inspector in World War II. It gave the military servicemen who copied the practice a feeling of importance as individuals when



Taipei History: Murals at Huashan Culture Park, dating back to 1997, remain after renovations to show the building's colorful past.

facing the inhumanities of war. Another example of note, from the 1980s, concerns artist Keith Haring. Mayor Koch of New York City stopped a graffiti-removal crew from covering up a Haring mural at a public basketball court. Haring's work, featuring simple interconnected black and white figures, was a beacon for racial harmony and AIDS awareness. Haring was thereafter commissioned by the city to do more murals.

Hip Hop culture is a strong influence on the graphic style of what most people think of as graffiti. There are other influences and styles, but the worldwide commercial success of Hip Hop in the past 10 years has made it the most notable. There is a vast difference between Hip Hop and the street-culture haute couture that is being marketed in Taipei. At the roots of Hip Hop is a fight for racial equality in the U.S. This is absent in Taipei, as are the gangs, drug dealing, and violence that is represented in the inner-city struggle of a society that allows handguns. As a result Taipei's Hip Hop and graffiti communities are really more concerned with artistic talent in dance, music, and spray. What this means for the graffiti we see on the streets of Taipei is that it's not sloppy gang-tagging but often clever, considered work by artists.

The Taipei Scene

Taipei's graffiti scene "is tiny, but size isn't everything, right," says Heiro, a Taipei graffiti artist who recently moved to London. Graffiti shows up in many places around Taipei, but it's definitely concentrated in a few areas. Lane 96 of KunMing Rd. is called "American alley." Located in the youth-culture megaplex of Ximending, it is dominated by quick, sometimes sloppy work.

But there are a few gems too! The alley includes a number of Hip Hop and youth-style clothing stores, and a skateboard shop. The graffiti at these locations matches the commercial



At Work: The Youth Hub Graffiti Club paints a wall along JingMei stream. (Photo courtesy of youth Rights Organization)

style of the stores. Likewise the concentration near ZhongXiao E. Rd. and DunHuan N. Rd., an area with a lot of youth fashion, designer-streetwear shops, and Luxy, Taipei's premier DJ nightclub. An Adidas outlet here once hired a graffiti artist to do a mural on its construction wall during renovations.

The blurring line between graffiti and advertising is a matter of debate. A common view among the artists is that advertising is simply work and that graffiti, as art, is defined not simply by the style of painting, but by the idea. K-Swiss shoes sponsors a free studio program for artists, providing space and materials. There are few strings attached, other than the opportunity to show at their flagship store or one of their events. One event is the annual K-Spray tour, which brings international graffiti artists to Taipei (check www.k-spray.com for details). K-Swiss' support is obvious, and it even markets two lines of shoes designed by graffiti artists.

Artists maintain that the environment is part of street art. Producing canvases and designing is different, but still art.



Oh Yeah! : A nice example of what can be done with stencils.

Fubon Bank's recent "Mogu Mogu" show is another example of corporate support. The show featured graphic arts with a mushroom theme, shown at Fubon branches all over Taipei (www.fubonart.org.tw). Sponsorship isn't really an issue of selling out, but of getting paid for making art. One artist said he wasn't interested in the K-Swiss studio because of brand loyalty to Nike.

Graffiti is an art of the urban environment, and Taipei has a few sites with lots of big mural works. HuaShan

Culture Park (on BaDe Rd. at ZhongXiao E. Rd. and JinShan S. Rd.) has a number of large pieces dating back into the 1990s. As renovations were being made in recent years, it was decided to keep the graffiti as part of the buildings' cultural past. The area around the bridge on ChengDu Rd. is also interesting. Children's murals line the wall next to the southern ramp. The flood walls under the bridge have a variety of work. Bailing Waterside Park just north of the bridge is Taipei's "Hall of Fame" with a football-field length of some of the best murals in the city.

The skateboard park at Zhongshan No. 2 Park, next to Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), was formerly one of the only legal sites for graffiti in Taipei. The Taipei City Government has added a wall across the street as a free-art space. The other parks with newly designated free-art spaces are DaAn Forest Park, TianMu Park, NanGang Park, and the ChangAn Greens in Beitou. There are also plans for free-art spaces on the flood walls along QingMei Stream and KeeLung River—hopefully for murals like those

found at Bailing Waterside Park. Heiro notes that London's legal spots "are amazingly vibrant and creative areas. Like walking around a throbbing art college."

A Caution

Graffiti done outside of these areas is illegal. A person caught doing graffiti in Taiwan is liable to a fine of NTS\$3,000 for defacing another person's property or vehicle (under the Act for the Maintenance of Social Order) or up to NTS\$6,000 for defacing public structures (under the Solid Waste Disposal Act). Some artists believe that, by definition, graffiti is illegal art. Graffiti has political meaning and being told when and where to do it defeats the purpose. The style is important, but the message is the most important.

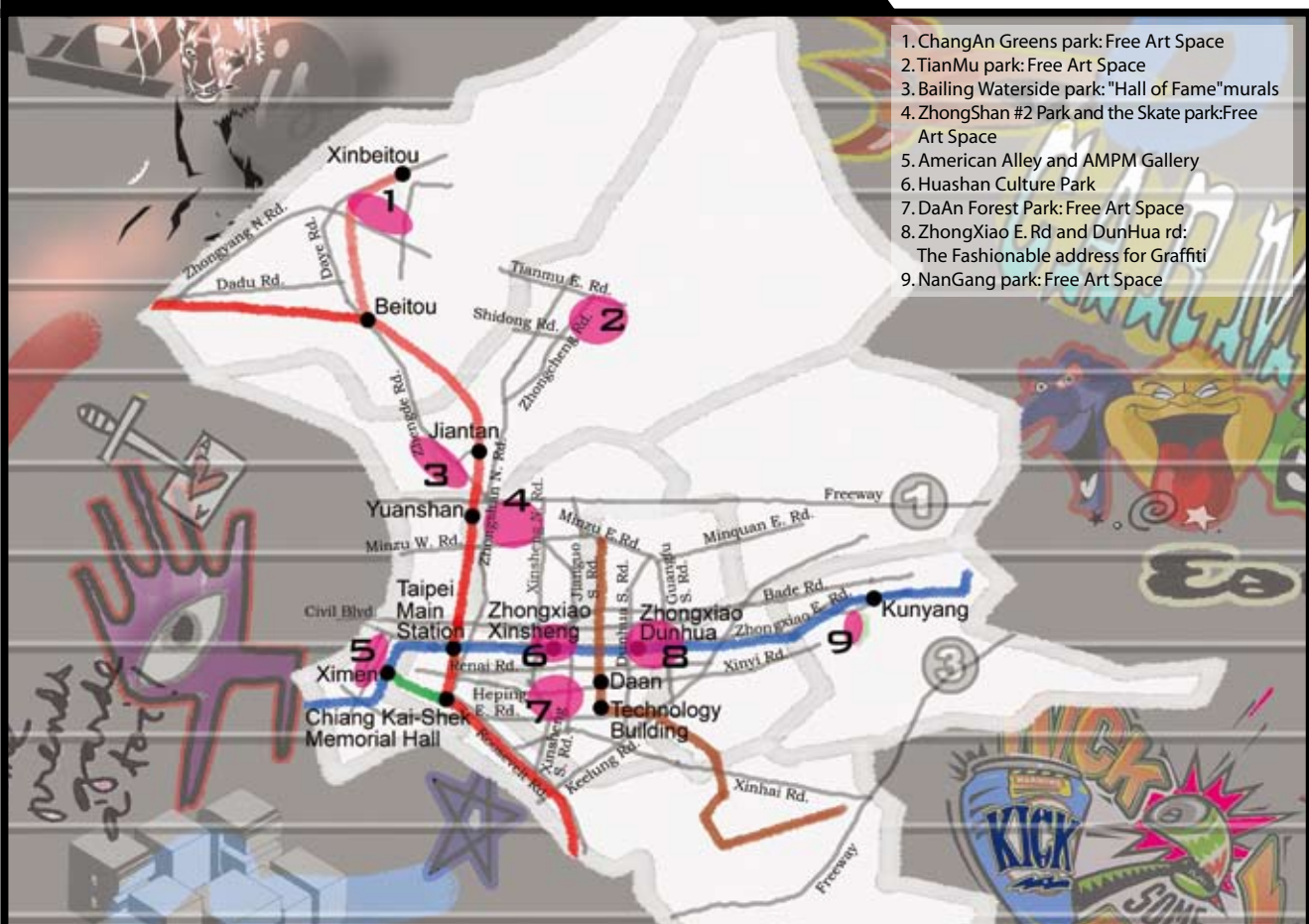
Your Opportunity Knocks

The free-art spaces offered by the city are nevertheless a great idea and offer everyone the chance to express themselves. Dbsk1 has been making art in Taipei for five years and offers this advice

for those getting started: Practice and develop a style that's your own! Graffiti is public, and artists work hard to present their own distinct style. Covering other people's work is a direct challenge—don't do it unless you can bring something better.

If you're interested in seeing how to make graffiti, check the free-art space in DaAn Park in September. Various artists who now show in galleries will take to the parks to do murals and display stencil and spray-can techniques. There's also the Graffiti club at Youth Hub, run by social worker Hung Xiao-Ping. The club brings together young people to paint and explore different styles of Graffiti. On one outing, they painted along the JingMei stream. Currently, they're presenting "Youth Graffiti show - Look! Roadblock" at the Youth Hub, until the end of September (Tel: 02-2369-5195; www.youthhub.net.tw). Remember, getting involved is a lot more fun, and the reason Taipei City is offering free-art spaces. There are many ways to improve society. Art doesn't give us answers; it gives us better questions and a fresh way of looking at things. It's all about thinking outside of the box. @

Follow this map to find out where graffiti art can be seen.



1. ChangAn Greens park: Free Art Space
2. TianMu park: Free Art Space
3. Bailing Waterside park: "Hall of Fame" murals
4. ZhongShan #2 Park and the Skate park: Free Art Space
5. American Alley and AMPM Gallery
6. Huashan Culture Park
7. DaAn Forest Park: Free Art Space
8. ZhongXiao E. Rd and DunHua rd:
The Fashionable address for Graffiti
9. NanGang park: Free Art Space

Skin Art

Text and photos by Daniel Mojahedi

The Art of Getting a Tattoo

DISCOVER TAIPEI

50



Once seen only on gangsters and former Kuomintang (KMT) soldiers, as elsewhere tattoos are slowly becoming a mainstream fashion in Taiwan. It is not an obvious trend due to people having their tattoos more discretely placed—but there is a much wider spectrum of individuals getting them, including lawyers, businessmen, and even teachers.

While being more widely accepted in the society is one reason for the industry's nascence on the island, another reason is that the artists who create these works are now using more advanced equipment and more sanitary operations. In this article we will take a look at who is getting tattoos locally, the methods involved, and where you can go if you are interested in getting one yourself.

Who Is Getting Them

For Josephine Wang (王秋萍), an administrative assistant manager at a

design company, getting a tattoo was a way to mark a milestone in her life. “It serves as a kind of memorial,” she states, showing off her tattoo of a female tribal figure. “Before I was somewhat of a tomboy, but as I grew older I began to accept my femininity. It was a happy time in my life.”

For Kai Liang (梁凱琳), a Taiwanese woman raised in Vancouver, Canada, the story of the sun she has on her shoulder is a similar one. “It serves as a kind of memorial to an important time in my life,” she notes. “I was eighteen at the time, and was learning, growing, and earning money.”

For James Voges and Sarah Mainville, two English teachers from Michigan, the reasons for their tattoos are more philosophical. “It is a representation of the Fibonacci Rectangle,” states James, showing off the deceitfully plain rectangle on his lower leg. “Studies show that faces that are sized to these proportions are the

ones that people find most beautiful. I wanted a tattoo that is the most attractive thing to the naked eye.”

“A philosopher once stated that a person's ambitions for an object are more perfect than the actual object can ever be,” Sarah says, describing the circle on the back of her neck that, despite their insistence to the contrary, seems to complement James' as part of a matching set. “In the same way a circle, which is considered the perfect form, can never be perfectly created. So for me, my tattoo is a symbol of man's imperfection.”

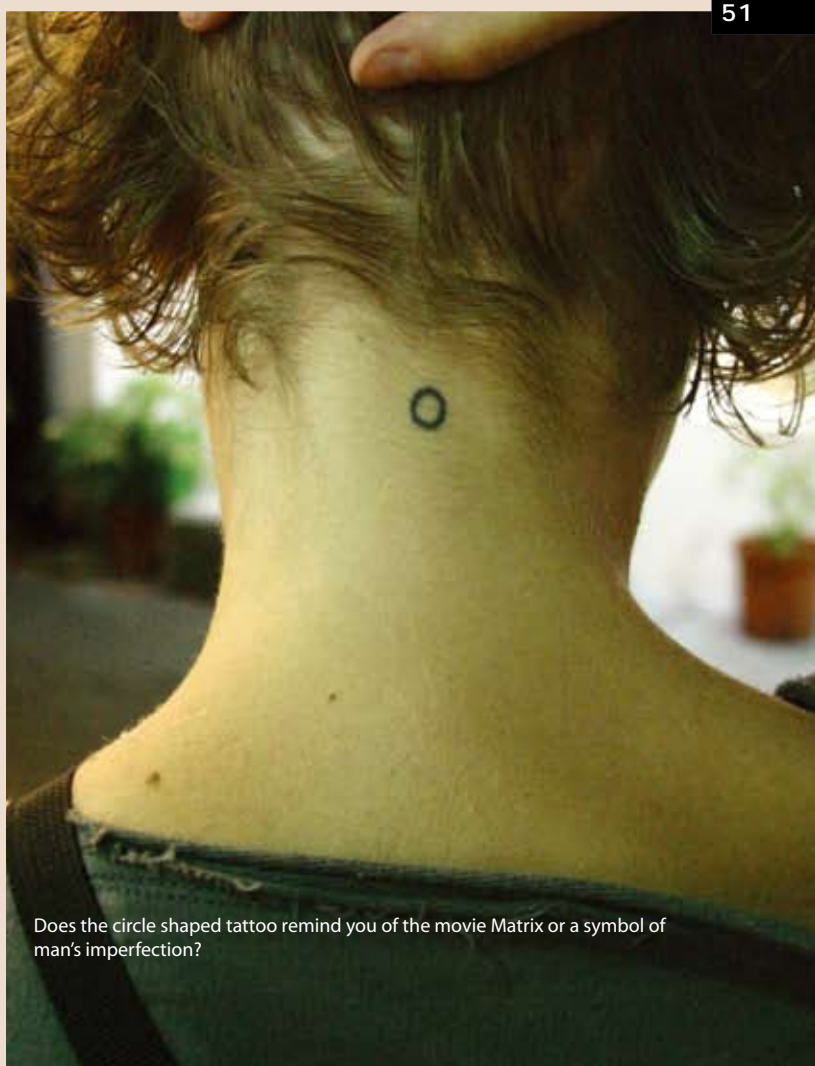
“A tattoo is a kind of artwork,” observes Yang Shi-ming (楊世銘), a tattoo artist. “But with a tattoo, the body serves as the canvas, making it a part of the person's life.”

What to Watch Out For

For those interested in getting a tattoo, Taipei is home to a number of good tattoo parlors. The most essential factor



The female tribal figure on the lady's arm will serve as a kind of memorial to her.



Does the circle shaped tattoo remind you of the movie Matrix or a symbol of man's imperfection?



Each Tattoo artist has his or her own drawing style, make sure you communicate well with them before getting one for yourself.



to consider in deciding on which one is safety. Taiwan is considered a safe place to get a tattoo, and there are relatively few cases where people develop complications. However, currently there are no health or sanitary regulations for tattoo parlors, so sanitation practices vary widely from place to place. The best tattoo parlors use disposable needles, negating the spread of disease.

In addition, if you have any allergies or are prone to keloids, a condition where your body creates excessive scar tissue over abrasions, it might be best to avoid getting one. If you do have allergies and still want to get a tattoo, avoid using yellow and red ink, which are more prone to aggravating the skin.

While a tattoo artist will draw pretty much anything you want, each has his or her own style. These styles vary from

cute little kittens on the ankle to morbid dragons covering the shoulder of some ex-convict. So check out the work an artist has done before to make sure it is in line with what you want.

Getting a Tattoo

While larger tattoos can cost several thousand NT dollars and take many hours to create, the two- or three-inch single-color design that most people get can be done in about an hour for comfortably below NT\$5,000.

Once you have found an artist that you are comfortable with, you will need to convey to him or her what you want. In Taiwan, you will not often see the catalog of tattoos common in other countries because artists want each work to be individualized. "The last thing I ever want to see is someone come in, point to a picture of a tattoo, and say 'I want what he has,'" states Da-mao, a tattoo artist for nearly thirteen years.

It is therefore essential that you express very clearly what you want. Half the time in the studio will be spent communicating with the artist about what you want. Artists encourage foreigners to bring a Taiwanese friend with them to serve as translator and make sure the customer and artist perfectly understand each other before the work begins.

Once the design is decided upon, the artist will use a pen to draw a sketch of it upon the chosen area of the body to make sure it is exactly what you want. This is a crucial step in the process because it is the last chance you will have to make any changes.

Once you are happy with the sketch, the real fun begins. The artist uses a motorized needle, which oscillates back and forth about a hundred times per second, that inserts the ink under the skin. The actual time spent under the needle is about thirty minutes for a tattoo of the above-mentioned specs.

The area around the tattoo will be red, bloody, and swollen for a couple of hours, and a slight scab will form over the region that will last for a couple of

Tattoo artist Da-mao is drawing a one of a kind tattoo design on his customer.

weeks. After that, the skin will fully heal and the tattoo should gain a more normal appearance.

Tattoo Removal

While getting a tattoo might be somewhat painful and expensive, it is nothing compared to the costs and pain involved in having one removed. The two/three-inch tattoo that cost below NT\$5,000 to have done will cost in the neighborhood of NT\$8,000 to have removed. In addition, it is quite painful. A topical anesthetic is used during the procedure and patients often require an additional painkiller over the next several hours. The bonus is that the procedure removes the tattoo completely and without scarring.

The coloring of the tattoo will also affect the time and cost of the removal. “In my personal experience, black and dark-blue tattoos come off easier,” states Dr. Tsung-hsien Tsai (蔡宗憲), dermatologist at the Skin Laser Center at Wanfang Hospital (萬芳醫院). “Reds,

yellows, and browns are more difficult to remove due to the nature of the dyes.”

Taiwanese Conception about Tattoo

Although you now see more and more people with tattoos, they still are not completely mainstream, and people sporting one might face negative stereotypes. “The social standard is still to look down upon those with a tattoo,” notes Dr. Tsai.

Josephine has never had any social problems because of her tattoo, which is located on the upper part of her left arm. However, she has always made a point to cover it up with a longer-sleeved shirt when in formal situations. “Unless I am closer to someone personally, I usually do not even let them know I have it,” she states.

“When I first got it, I told my parents it was a stick-on,” admits Tony Song (宋昌祐), showing off the tattoo on his ankle. “But after a couple of weeks they figured it out. They actually did not get mad though.”

“People who judge others because

of a tattoo are too superficial,” says Damao, whose arms are covered in Chinese characters in aboriginal designs. “If I covered up my arms you would never know I have tattoos. After you got an impression of me, would it then make me a different person if I rolled up my sleeves and you could see them?”

The costs, benefits, and social perceptions involved make getting a tattoo a major decision that each person must make individually. But that is what getting a tattoo is about—individuality. The size, style, and location of your tattoo, or even the decision not to get one at all, are marks of how an individual wishes to present him or herself to the outside world. Needless to say, the Taipei City Government does not promote or suggest people to get a tattoo. But then again, those thinking about getting one are probably not waiting for an official blessing from their local government before committing to it. Regardless of how you make the decision to get one or not, Taipei is a safe and clean place to have it done. @



A tattoo design may reveal your inner self to others. Think carefully before you decide to have one. (Photo by Wang Neng-yu)

Welcoming Baby, Taipei Style

Text by Jerri Graham

Photo courtesy of Diana Schaddee Van Dooren



Staring up at the ceiling, counting holes in tiles, I listened as the second-shift nurses milled about. Occasionally one would lift my gown, check on my progress, and scribble on the chart at the foot of my bed. With each contraction moans escaped from somewhere inside me that hadn't existed twenty-four hours ago. With the nurses and doctors chattering away in Chinese and Taiwanese, I was in

a state of oblivion and the only way I knew they were talking about me were the "ta's" and jerks of the head in my direction. As I lay there on January 13, 2001, waiting for my husband to return with a lunchbox, tears of fear from unpreparedness and excitement sprang forth. In a matter of hours I was going to be a mother, one of thousands of women that gave birth in that Year of the Dragon. As a lifetime sufferer of terminal

delusions of uniqueness, I genuinely believed at the time that I was the only foreign-born woman to ever give birth in Taiwan.

Fast-forward five years and it is more than apparent that I am and was never alone. As more and more foreign women are opting to hang their hats in Taiwan, eventually hanging strollers, diapers, and bonnets is a natural cyclical progression.

Those Blessed Pink Lines

A language exchange can be enlightening. Eating out at a new restaurant or having drinks at a pub with friends can be a treat. But for an eye-opening experience that will make a more lasting impression than stinky tofu ever could, try giving birth and raising a child in Taipei, which brings a full dose of cultural insight.

It all begins with a positive pregnancy test. Convenience stores are everywhere and most offer a few home pregnancy test (HPT) brands. For those overeager to test, it is possible 24/7 to nick into a 7-Eleven, grab a newspaper, a bag of chips, and an HPT. Within minutes you can catch up on world events, have a snack, and find out if you're going to be a mother. Alternatively, a visit to the local women's clinic, if you are covered under National Health Insurance, will run you NT\$150 or slightly more depending upon the clinic. Once those two lines show up the ride has begun, and the journey is a long, exciting, and bumpy one.

Prenatal Care from A to Wahhhh!

After the initial shock/joy has worn off, it is time get down to the business of prenatal care. As quality care during a pregnancy is essential for the overall health of both mother and unborn child, the earlier the prenatal care is established the better. But put on the brakes for a minute. Before or around the same time a visit to an obstetrician is made, an expectant mother should let her fingers do the walking and visit Parentpages.net. This Taipei-based website is the absolute best resource for parents-to-be. Founded by entrepreneur and mother of four Jennifer Chau, birth stories, recommendations, resources, and myriad little nuggets of advice are waiting. The very active forums attest to the fact that parents and parents-to-be are eager to give and receive advice. As an expat mother, Chau saw a need for a place where the foreign community could come together and share their experiences about raising children and living on the island. Mothers in the forum share the practical advice and wisdom to help make the transition from childless to childrearing easier for new parents.

Once the pregnancy test has been stared at a few hundred times and the reality has sunk in, it is time to head to a clinic or hospital to establish the foundations of prenatal care. Once a doctor has confirmed the pregnancy, the mother-to-be will be issued a Pregnant Women's Health Manual. Provided by the



Taipei has become the birthplace to many foreign babies due to its outstanding medical care.

Bureau of National Health Insurance, this book is where all prenatal checkups until delivery are recorded. Even though the book isn't in English, hospital and clinic personnel can usually explain the information.

Under the NHI plan a woman can visit the OB/GYN twice when she's less than 17 weeks along, another two times between weeks 17 and 29, and an additional six times after the 29th week. Visits are generally standard and include a physical, blood and urine tests, and one free ultrasound. Should you be as impatient as I was in regards to finding out your baby's sex, additional ultrasounds can be performed and for a nominal fee, which varies depending upon whether the facility is private or public. During the prenatal visits, mothers must present their NHI IC card as well as their book. Additional visits, should there be any, will follow the same procedure and run the price of the average co-payment fee.

Finding a doctor/clinic is easier than ever before and it is best to get recommendations from different mothers before



Giving new born babies a hygienic and fully staffed environment is not hard to find in Taipei. (Photo by udndata)

settling on one. Like most physicians in Taipei, obstetricians have either spent time overseas or studying English and will be able to communicate easily with their foreign patients.

From Here to Maternity

Pregnant women in Taipei can stick out in more ways than one. In terms of maternity fashions, there are two schools of thought. The first is the one that dominated for years in Taiwan, but is slowly dying out. The clothing available in the past was for the most part unattractive. The dresses and smocks were adorned with bears or kittens and expectant mothers tended to resemble pregnant toddlers versus women about to have children of their own. Nowadays, with fashionable women demanding trendy maternity wear, more specialty stores catering to this need have opened. On Zhongxiao W. Rd., Sec. 2, a row of maternity-wear stores provide mothers-to-be with a pregnancy wardrobe that will get them close to styles that

represent their taste in fashion.

For basics, OIO, a chainstore with a green and white logo, can be found throughout the city as well as on Zhongxiao and Zhongshan roads. For the mother-to-be with a true sense of style, Ive & Sean off of Zhongshan is the best maternity-wear store in Taiwan. Founded by Ive Fu during her own pregnancy three years ago, this boutique offers such stylish clothing it might make any woman want to extend her pregnancy by a few months. Fed up with having to change her style during her pregnancy, Ive, a former graphic artist, started creating designs for the fashionable woman that just happens to be pregnant.

Another noticeable difference in maternity fashions is that the days of covering your bump in a tent-like dress are, possibly, over. The Hello Kitty-emblazoned maternity dresses still exist, but pregnancy no longer means a woman must forsake her fashion standards. Women are now wearing clothing that doesn't attempt to disguise their pregnancy but embraces it as a time when they are at their womanly best. A look that had once been reserved only for belly-baring celebrities has become mainstream. Jun Lee, a dance and voice instructor as well as the lead singer of Neon, a widely popular local rock band, sees her pregnancy as just a period of time and not one where she'll stop dressing like herself. "This is how I always pictured myself pregnant," she says, wearing a bright yellow T-shirt that fully reveals her seven-month belly. Expecting her first baby, Jun has received stares of curiosity for her fashion forwardness during her pregnancy. "I get some women praising me for the way I look and saying that I'm a spicy mama," she says with a laugh.

Shop Till the Baby Drops

Preparing for the baby and buying the essentials is fairly easy depending on what you're looking for in terms of equipment. All major department stores carry items from Europe and North America, with a fair amount of imports from Japan and Korea as well. Mothercare, a UK-based



Taipei offers a lot of great choices for babies and women during their maternity. (Photo by udndata)

retailer, has stores throughout Taipei in addition to retail space in numerous department stores.

Basics such as diapers, inexpensive clothing, and other necessities can be found at Carrefour and smaller retailers in the area. Some of the best shops are located a stone's throw away from major hospitals where procrastinating parents can pick up that last-minute crib or car seat. IKEA is a favorite for furnishing an inexpensive nursery in a no-nonsense style that's clean and fresh.

Taipei mothers can now join the ranks of environmentally friendly parenting with the recent introduction of quality cloth diapers. Little Wonders, an online cloth-diaper and baby-supply store based in Taipei (www.littlewonders.com.tw; English available), will deliver top-of-the-line cloth diapers to your front door. More cost-effective than disposable diapers, Little Wonders is a godsend to environmentally conscious parents.

Doctors, Nurses, and Birthing Oh My!

As the months creep on and the due date draws near, birth arrangements should be finalized. Many foreign-born women, especially westerners, erroneously believe that quality of care in Taiwan is second-rate. Some think that they should head home to give birth and make arrangements to do so. This should be unnecessary, however, as care in Taipei is on a par with what one would experience in any western country. Last year, 1,812 foreign-born women gave birth on the island.

Taiwan Adventist Hospital, located on Bade Road, is just one of a half dozen or so top-notch hospitals on the island known for its birth facilities. With 2,709 deliveries last year, a good percentage were to foreign mothers. An average of five to ten women from countries as diverse as the U.S., Japan, and Saudi Arabia give birth at Adventist each month. Adventist is a pro-breastfeeding hospital and has a staff of 21 labor and delivery nurses with specialized training as lactation consultants. Grace Chien, the head labor and delivery nurse, prides herself and staff on listening to the needs of the mother. While most of the nurses speak English, Chien has drafted a list of questions and requests for her nurses in case language problems arise.

Much of the fear of giving birth in Taiwan was based on the behavior of the past where traditional practices were the norm and the wishes of the mother were pushed to the side. No longer is this the case. Mothers work with their physicians to ensure that their birth experience is as much under their control as giving birth can be. Katrina Brown, a



Now women in Taipei can breastfeed with comfort since more designated areas for breastfeeding are installed in public.

New Zealander who has made her home in Taiwan for nearly a decade, was extremely pleased with the care she received from her physician, Dr. Chang at Wan Fang Hospital. "He actually gave me homework," she says. "He made me keep a notebook where I wrote down the questions that I had for him." With her second child due any day, Katrina is once again delivering with Dr. Chang.

There are alternatives to giving birth outside of the typical hospital setting. Private clinics, such as the birth center in Xin Zhuang (新莊) at No. 72-1, Jianzhong St. (新莊市建中街72-1號; tel: 02-2990-2299), are at the top of the list for expecting mothers. The facility is even equipped to offer the option of a water birth. The center is winning rave reviews from mothers for their natural childbirth methods and their flexibility to allow nature to take its course.

One option open to new moms after giving birth in Taiwan

is the postpartum practice of *zuo yuezi* (坐月子). This practice is when a woman follows certain traditional guidelines that include resting, limiting exposure to water, and eating certain medicinal foods, for the first month or 30 days after the birth of a child. This period has its benefits and drawbacks, but it is ultimately a decision that a mother must make. For families with little support, a week or two of rest may help a great deal. Clinics, hospitals, and many recuperation facilities cater specifically for this period of time after childbirth. Special meals designed to rebalance the woman's *qi* (氣) are prepared and the mother can recuperate in comfort while caring for her newborn.

Practical Matters

National Health Insurance covers a three-day hospital stay for a natural delivery and six days for an uncomplicated caesarian section. Delivering a baby isn't free, but is relatively inexpensive with insurance coverage and runs between NT\$10,000 to NT\$14,000 for delivery and a minimum three-day stay. Private rooms, painkillers (epidural), and postpartum-care periods can increase this price as well as specialized meals. Without insurance coverage, the price for giving birth is between NT\$20,000 and NT\$30,000 according to the Department of Health representative Penny Kuo.

Under the local labor laws, working mothers receive eight weeks paid leave after giving birth. While this time is short compared to some European countries, it is still rather generous in comparison to American standards. In addition to the two



Expat families enjoy taking their children to neighborhood parks where mothers share their experience with each other.



Hospitals are staffed with well-trained nurses. (Photo by udndata)

months off, the government will also give you a month's salary. Documents verifying the birth need to be submitted in order to receive this "bonus."

Children born in Taiwan to foreign parents aren't considered citizens of Taiwan unless one of their parents is a local citizen holding a Taiwan passport. My daughter, though she was "made in Taiwan" as in born here, and has only spent two weeks of her five-and-a-half years off the island, is considered an American citizen. As the children of foreign nationals, an ARC must be obtained for children born in Taiwan within 15 days of birth. This will allow the child to legally reside on the island. Sending your newborn off for a visa run to Hong Kong before the end of her first month in the world just doesn't seem fitting, so this should be a top priority. While a new mother may not be ready

to deal with the paperwork at this point, it will save trouble and a fine in the long run. Failing to apply for an ARC can get you tangled up in red tape and bring a fine based on length of delay. The required application can be picked up and submitted at the police bureau's foreigner affairs division.

Parents of children entitled to dual citizenship should register the birth under Taiwan's "Household Residency Act."

Worth It All

The care and facilities at many of the hospitals are on the same level as those in the West, and only improving with local and foreign mothers' demand for the best. Just as every child is different, so is every birth experience. One mother's experience won't be the same as another's. Hospitals vary as

do the doctors and patients. But one thing is certain, Taipei is an outstanding place to give birth to a child. The support of a great community of fellow expatriate parents along with local parents makes this truly an international village where a child can be brought into a safe and loving environment. Researching this article and speaking with expectant mothers has made me nostalgic for the days when I was pregnant. The lovely flush of beauty on the face of June Lee and the radiance that spilled from Katrina Brown made my heart smile. Here are two women about to bring life into the world but just happen to be in Taiwan. Home will always be where you lay your hat, but for myself and other women, home becomes the place where we give birth to and raise our children. @

Taipei is a cradle that parents can comfortably raise their children.



Useful Links and Addresses

- ▶ English site for parents about giving birth and raising children in Taiwan – www.parentpages.net
- ▶ A source of great information, classes, community and children's groups, and info on getting settled in the city – www.community.com.tw. The Community Services Center also offers counseling that can help new parents deal with some of the adjustments of having a new baby in the house. Stop by their office at 23 Lane 290, Zhongshan North Road (中山北路), Section 6 or call (02) 2836-8134 and ask for Lyn Neal.
- ▶ Cloth diapers and environmentally friendly baby supplies – Little Wonders: www.littlewonders.com.tw
- ▶ Information for newcomers to Taiwan including a parenting forum – Forumosa: www.forumosa.com
- ▶ Pregnancy and baby portraits in your own home – www.nanachen.com
- ▶ La Leche League (breastfeeding) – sabine@rossnickfamily.com
- ▶ Kindermusik programs for developing your child's love of music. These classes are a great bonding experience for parents and children. – Jennifer@kmjoy.com
- ▶ For fashionable maternity finds stop by Ive & Sean at Alley 26, Zhongshan N. Road, Section 2. Check out their website at ive sean.com to see some of the fashions on hand.

Rotary and Rotaract Living to Serve Others

Text by Brian Asums

Photo courtesy of Rotary Club of Taipei and Rotaract Taipei Club



Rotary and Rotaract—two international organizations devoted to service—have a large following among professionals and students in Taiwan. Since Rotary's 1948 beginnings, followed later by Rotaract, the two groups have been at the forefront of private-sector efforts to help the most vulnerable members of Taiwanese society—the elderly, orphans, the disabled—as well as organizing international exchanges to foster greater understanding and international goodwill.

Birth of Rotary and Rotaract

The Rotary Club of Taipei was formally established on Oct. 9, 1948 with 28 members. Its first president was former ROC President C. K. Yen. Even in the early days, its international

citizenship. It was officially established in Taiwan on Dec. 5, 1997. The brainchild of the Rotary Club of Taipei, Rotaract Taipei Club consists of college students and young professionals from a wide range of industries and academic disciplines.

Rotaract's objective is to provide

speaking contests, career exploration, and speeches on a wide variety of topics, designed to expand member knowledge and awareness.

Caring for Taiwan's Least Fortunate

Orphanages and underprivileged children were among the first beneficiaries of Rotary largesse. Some of the many groups assisted by the club over the years include Taipei Life Line, Children's Cardiac Foundation, Rota-car Project (administered by the Salvation Army), Chen Kuang Activity Center (joint project with Taipei Da-an Rotary Club), and homes for unwed mothers and mentally-challenged children.

The club was also instrumental in supporting projects to promote ethical standards as well as funding a Red Cross Project

for mentally-challenged children, computer classes for those suffering from muscular dystrophy, anti-drug abuse campaigns, Taiwan Adventist Hospital CPR training sessions, the St. John Orphanage, and World Vision. Later, generous donations enabled it to support the Taipei Talking Library for the Blind, Ai Ai Home for the aged, Sunlight Culture and Education



A warm and welcoming environment has always been the mandate for the Rotarians. (Photo courtesy of Rotaract Taipei Club)

character was evident. Of the 28 charter members, 22 were Chinese and six foreigners, mostly Americans. Today the club has over 90 members from 24 different countries.

Rotaract, a worldwide association of service-minded business/professional leaders for men and women aged between 18 and 30, fosters leadership and responsible

an opportunity for young men and women to enhance knowledge and skills that will assist them in personal development, address the physical and social needs of their communities, and promote better relations between people worldwide through a framework of friendship and service. Activities include vocational services, including field visits, English-

Foundation, and Taiwan Scoliosis Foundation. Fighting polio was also a major cause, and its efforts earned the club high praise both at home and abroad, including from Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian.

Guide Dogs for the Blind

In a recent discussion with a number of group members, Dale Holmgren, former president of the Rotary Club of Taipei, discussed some of the projects in which he has been personally involved. “One major project that we are working on is raising awareness of the need for guide dogs for the blind. Incredibly, while there are 50,000 blind people in Taiwan, there are only 14—yes, that is right—14 guide dogs. It costs a lot of money to train these dogs.” In addition, he pointed out, only certain breeds of dogs are suitable for the task.

“We are also trying to target child abuse. We want people to take a more proactive approach and speak out. In Taiwan, there is a lot of reticence about discussing the issue. We are working with the Good Hope Foundation, which is doing a lot of excellent work in dealing with this very serious problem.”

The one project, however, that has really touched his heart has been working with crippled children. “Every Sunday for 25 years, I helped bring crippled children to see doctors at Taiwan Adventist Hospital. At that time, many people in Taiwan still suffered from polio. We also helped to set up the China Crippled Children’s Club.” Now that incidences of polio are on the wane, the problem is less severe,

so attention is shifting toward how to help burn victims. “We are partnering with MacKay Memorial Hospital in this area.”

Visiting the Elderly

Rotaract has also been active in supporting Rotary efforts. “We have done many community-service projects,” said Max Chao, investment manager at HSBC Bank, in a recent discussion. “Things such as cleaning up local beaches and visiting the Bali Elderly Home. We go to the home every year. One resident, in particular, really looks forward to my visits. She is always very happy to see me.” Visiting the residents, added Chao, gives them “something to look forward to, some companionship.”

Olympics in conjunction with the International Rotary Club of Taipei,” said Gloria Hsu, management trainee in the marketing division of Johnson & Johnson, Greater China, and club president from 2002 to 2003. What struck her most was how hard the disabled athletes worked. “It was a very big challenge to try to inspire very severely disabled people to play when some of them were barely able to lift a ball much less shoot it. Working on the event really made me realize how fortunate I am and to appreciate how much I have been given in life. You should never take anything that you have for granted!”

International Exchanges

Christine Reber, director of the



Charity activities such as the visit to the Bali Elderly Home have been inspiring to many Rotaract members. (Photo courtesy of Rotaract Taipei Club)

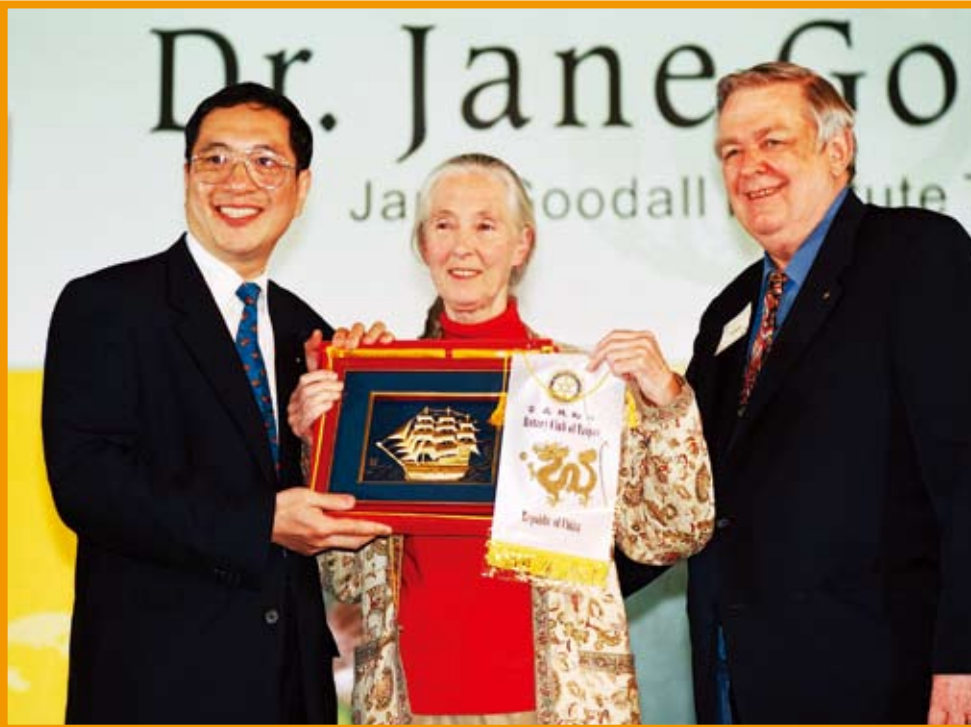
In addition, Rotaract also helped organize a wheelchair Olympics for disabled people. One of the participants became one of Chao’s friends, and they regularly correspond. “She really inspires me because of her approach to life.”

“Our Rotaract members worked very hard to organize the Wheelchair

German Trade Office in Taipei and the first-ever female member of the International Rotary Club of Taipei, has been very active on the international committee to make contacts with sister clubs around the world. “This is important since we team up with other Rotary clubs to fund service projects. We like to see where we can pool our



International exchanges take place frequently to further cultural promotion.
(Photo courtesy of Rotaract Taipei Club)



Dr. Jane Goodall received an honorable gift from the Rotary Club of Taipei.
(Photo courtesy of Rotary Club of Taipei)

efforts and cooperate.” One recent project involved sending dentists to Malawi, Southeast Asia, and Taiwan’s Orchid Island.

“We team up with other clubs,” said E. Ferdinand Einhorn, “with any funds that we raise being immediately matched by Rotary International. The globe-hopping Einhorn has been

responsible for establishing sister-club relations with Washington, DC, Honolulu, Singapore, Prague, Warsaw, and Riga. In the process, and partly as a result of his visits, Einhorn has also delivered some diplomatic benefits to his adopted home—Taiwan. Because of his connections, over the years Einhorn has been

instrumental in forging ties between the ROC government and the nations of Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and the Bahamas as well as fostering closer relations with Romania and Ukraine.

“Rotary,” said Einhorn, “is very active in funding student and youth exchanges. Such exchanges are a good way to put people around the world in touch with each other, helping them forge friendships and ultimately bringing about greater understanding—something that the world sorely needs.”

International exchanges and cultural events are important planks in Rotaract’s objectives as well. “We have been to an exhibition of French art and we also visit our sister club in Hong Kong every year,” said Hsu. “These types of activities help put us in touch with people from all over the world, broadening our minds and outlooks.”

Personal and Career Development

“One of the best things about being in Rotaract,” observed Chao, “is that it has exposed me to people from many different industries and countries. The challenges put me in the ‘danger zone,’ taking me out of my usual comfortable rut. It has really helped me realize my potential, giving me much greater self-confidence.” According to Chao, when he joined the club 4.5 years ago he was a shy college kid. “My participation in Rotaract has allowed me to polish myself and improve my public speaking. I have become more poised, especially after serving as club president.”

Chieh Hsu, a student at National Taiwan University, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, and this year’s club president, could not agree more. “Our members are highly motivated, dedicated, and involved. Being a bilingual club, we are better able to communicate with clubs and members all over the world. This has opened entirely new

horizons for me. I really feel that I have grown as a person, becoming much more poised, confident, and aware in the process.”

Jointly focusing on helping youth with career and personal development is one of Rotary’s key aims. “We did a big presentation at a local university to show young people how to go about entering a career,” noted Reber, “including how to develop their professional lives so they would know the steps they needed to take once they finished their studies.”

Rotaract serves as a bridge in the process. “Some of our members are already beginning their careers,” said Chieh. “Interacting with them has

helped me understand what I need to do to prepare for my work life following graduation,” concluded the university senior.

Service: What It’s All About

While the other objectives are all highly laudable, ultimately both clubs are all about service, the absolute core *raison d’être*. “Personally, helping and caring for others are central parts of what we are all about,” said Holmgren. “Rotary is all about service and the organization has played a very important role in my life because of this.”

Gary Hsu, owner of Master Real Estate, also finds the service plank to be a very important one. “People should help each other,” he explained. “Rotary gives us a chance to do this. The other good thing about service is that it often leads to friendship and that, too, is highly rewarding.”

“I think that it is necessary to help others,” said Reber in agreement. “State and government programs are not always sufficient; there are too many political and economic interests involved. Rotary makes it possible to be involved on a deeper, more personal level, to be more engaged.”

Similarly, what makes Rotaract so special to Hsu is contributing to society without any expectation of payment or reward. “This helps us value the individual attributes, contributions, and characteristics of each member,” she concluded.

“Serving others is central to who we are and what we do at Rotary,” said Henry Wun, chairman of Rotary Friendship Exchange Committee. Wun has been an active member for 26 years, during which time he has had 100 percent attendance.

“The more you serve,” said Wun, “the better you enjoy being a part of Rotary. Without serving, you are not really involved. I have made so many friends in the process, both here in Taiwan and abroad. These friendships are very special because we have shared the common goal and experience of serving others. I cannot stress how important this is. The intense personal satisfaction of doing something good with your time and money is what Rotary is all about.”

For information on how to join Rotary, please contact Fanny Chen, executive secretary, at 2381-0986, or Chieh Hsu, president of Rotaract, at 0928-338-074. Or check out the shared organizational website at www.rctaipei.org.tw. @



Rotaract also serves as a personal and career development body that supports young professionals. (Photo courtesy of Rotaract Taipei Club)



World renowned speakers are often being invited to give speeches at the Rotary Club of Taipei. (Photo courtesy of Rotaract Taipei Club)



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