

# A Study on the Teenagers' Community Identity Case Study of a Local Cultural Festival in Taitung Country

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## ABSTRACT

Firecrackers at the Master Han Dan” during Tait religious activities, and it is the event most attracting people around the world. People throw firecrackers toward the naked Master Han Dan in order to get rid of bad luck and celebrate for new lives. The man, decorated as the Master Han Dan, is almost naked with only a pair of red shorts, red scarf, and twined a yellow ribbon surrounding his waist during the event. And general publics, typically youngsters, try very hard throwing firecrackers toward the naked the Master Han Dan, and the firecrackers will explode on the Master Han Dan’s body with smoke surrounding his body. F to get rid of bad luck and celebrate for new lives Many people feel very curious about this special ceremony with mysterious religious characteristics though many people may get hurt by participating this activity. Anyhow, it becomes not only a local specialty but also a traditional culture in Taitung. Every year, more and more people are attracted to Taitung to participate this festival. With the help of the Tourism Bureau, this has become one of the most important Lantern Festivals in Taiwan. Drawn from the data collected by qualitative observations and analyses, the following findings are provided: 1) The teenagers in Taitung generally possess intensive interests in this local festival with special cultural characteristics. This cultural festival strengthens their identity and sense of community affinity. 2) The teenagers in Taitung generally support this activity of “Firecrackers at the Master Han Dan”, which should forward this glorious tradition.

**Keywords:** *Master Han Dan, Identity, Promotion of Culture*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of The Study

Taitung's Lantern Festival is not only lively and special, but it is the time of the year when the most firecrackers are set off. When I returned to Taitung to teach in February 1985, it was the time of the National Culture and Arts Festival season, and Taitung County Government held a series of folk feasts under the theme of "Taitung County Lantern Festival Temple Fair –the Master Han Dan 's Parade," which made the " firecrackers at the Master Han Dan" the most special and unique event. The scene that the firecrackers are lit and thrown at the naked man in red shorts and a red scarf, and the firecrackers explode and burst on his body in a flood of smoke makes people more curious about this mysterious religious event. The fear, excitement, panic, helplessness, and confusion revealing from the eyes of the people watching the event as they saw the firecrackers exploding on people's bodies In addition, from the

literature on folkloric activities, we find that most subjects studied are the eight generals or the heads of officials and generals. The lack of research related to the Master Han Dan motivates me to conduct the research.

### 1.2. Objectives of The Study

The main purpose of this study is to discuss the teenagers' knowledge of local folk culture – using Taitung's Master Han Dan as an example.

### 1.3. Research Questions

For the purpose of this study, the following two research questions were discussed.

- a) What is the teenagers' awareness toward the culture of the Master Han Dan?
- b) What is the social consensus brought about by the culture of the Master Han Dan?

## 2. METHOD

The purpose of this study is to research the teenagers' perception of the local folk culture of the Master Han Dan, and to understand the significance of the mysteriously religious Master Han Dan, which is the most significant event of the annual Lantern Festival. The contents of the literature in this section include: (1) the culture of Master Han Dan, (2) the definition of identity, and (3) the culture promotion.

### 2.1. *The Culture of the Master Han Dan*

The custom of shell-bombing the body of Master Han Dan has been passed down in Taitung for more than 40 years, and there are two popular theories regarding why the man decorated as Master Han Dan has to be naked with only shorts when bombarded by firecrackers. One theory is that the Master Han Dan is afraid of cold, and people used firecrackers for the purpose of getting rid of cold. The other theory is that he is a "rogue god", so the firecrackers is to show his power.

In the early years, society of Taiwan was formed by immigrants coming mostly from Guangdong and Fujian provinces. These Kentish immigrants, when left their hometowns, brought the incense of their respective beliefs or the guardian gods of their hometowns for psychological peace and solace to Taiwan. When they had settled down, they would build temples and worship them. The folk beliefs of the Minnan region were brought to Taiwan with waves of immigrants which formed the basis of the current folk beliefs in Taiwan.

### 2.2. *Definition of Identity*

The theoretical foundations of identity are personality theory, role imitation, introjection process, professional ego development, career development, and operational process (Chenyuehngu, 1986). Identification is also a process of social internalization in society. Identification is a person's expression of thoughts, feelings and actions in the form of imitation models. It is a process in which a person internalizes the behavioral characteristics, or the hidden life values, of another person or a group of people, and makes them his or her own attributes (Xumuzhu, 1990). In the process of identification, adolescents will become aware of their own similarity with role models, and this process will increase and expand as the individual's conscious or subconscious needs increase. Individuals grow up with a deep sense of special values and emotions, historical memories, and collective consciousness that they have learned over time (Zhangmaogui, 1999). Freud suggested in 1899 that identification is not only a process of imitation but also a process of internalization, which can be divided into three levels: (1) identification is the initial fixation with a group; (2) identification is the internalization of the

individual into the self; and (3) identification is the sharing of internalized qualities with others.

UNESCO defines culture as "a set of characteristics that can be used to distinguish the distinctive spiritual, material and intellectual dimensions of a society or group, encompassing the arts, written works, lifestyles, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs". Cultural identity is a phenomenon in which the public, through its participation in cultural activities, influences the goals and values of cultural activities in the minds of individuals, who not only recognize the close relationship between cultural activities and their environment and customs, but also develop specific emotions and identities, making these characteristics their own personality traits. Individuals recognize the attitudes, concepts, and behavioral patterns of other individuals or groups, and are willing to imitate or demonstrate other individuals' behaviors or become part of a group to participate in its actions and to develop a sense of belonging (Leezhenren, 2001).

### 2.3. *Promotion of Culture*

With the development of science and technology, the knowledge-based economy is slowly transforming into an innovation-oriented one, and cultural and creative industries have emerged in response to this context. Local distinctive industries must be unique or historical in nature, taking advantage of the rich cultural resources that exist in each region and integrating them through strategies created by the local community (Zhangyiping, 2005) in order to create sustainable management and development of local cultural industries. In order to develop local industries, it is necessary to focus on the uniqueness and competitiveness of the industry, to combine them with the unique local traditional culture, and to enhance the added value of the cultural aspect of the product.

The cultural and creative industries are a continuation of the lifestyles, cultural backgrounds and local spirits of our ancestors. Through diversified and expanded economic value-added local development, we integrate local culture into people's lives so that the cultural and creative industries can continue the traditional local culture and local spirits, and build community consensus and identity (Linchiachen, 2005). The development of cultural and creative industries emphasizes local culture and has diverse local cultural characteristics. The humanistic atmosphere, cultural accomplishment, customs and local spirit in daily life are used to increase people's recognition of local culture and participation in activities, which are the unique memories and nostalgia of local traditions. The key to the success of promoting cultural and creative industries is the power of the local community and the recognition and commitment of the residents. Public participation can transform the passion for local culture into concrete actions, so that the

industries can truly have the spirit and vitality of the local community.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative interview-based research method to collect data. The focus of the interviews is on the teenagers' identification with the Master Han Dan and the relationship between the Master Han Dan and the local community, in order to obtain information on the deep-seated feelings of the teenagers towards the Master Han Dan.

#### **3.2. Subject and Sample**

The main targets of this study are students in junior high 1, senior high and vocational schools. For the sake of control and feasibility, 6 teenagers who can be directly or indirectly contacted by the researcher were selected via a convenient sampling method. The first respondent: female, junior high school student, age of 13, aborigine, Taoist, with experience of joining temple fairs. The second respondent: male, junior high school student, age of 14, general identity, Taoist, no experience of joining temple fairs. The third respondent: male, junior high school student, age of 15, aborigine, Taoist, with experience of joining temple fairs. The fourth respondent 4: Male, senior high school student, age of 16, general identity, Taoist, no experience of joining temple festivals. The fifth respondent: female, senior high school, age of 17, general identity, Buddhist, no experience of joining temple fairs. The sixth respondent: female, senior high school student, age of 18, general identity, Taoist, no experience of joining temple fairs.

First of all, focus on the parents the researcher was acquainted with, and arranged the time and place for the interview after contacting the children by telephone for their willingness to participate in qualitative interviews, then. This research was conducted based on the literature and the experience of participating in local folk culture to establish an interview outline. The content of the interview outline: 1. Have you seen the Master Han Dan's activities? Tell me about your understanding of the Master Han Dan's culture and activities. 2. What impact did the Master Han Dan's activities have for Taitung? 3. Do you have any suggestions for the Master Han Dan's activities?

#### **3.3. Data Sorting and Analysis**

After the meeting, the researchers translated the recordings into verbatim manuscripts, and then conducted a qualitative analysis verbatim, and summarized themes and concepts for each topic. A code was given to each participant in logging procedure (first respondent C1, second respondent C2, third respondent

C3, fourth respondent C4, fifth respondent C5, The sixth respondent C6). U The content analysis was used to find out the themes in the records as well as the transcriptions and the correlation between the themes:

#### **3.4. Research Results and Findings**

According to the research objectives and questions, the results of data analysis found that:

- 1) Teenagers have watched " the Master Han Dan ", not only like watching it but also looking forward to the Lantern Festival.

From the interview results from the teenagers, it is found that they have an open attitude towards the Master Han Dan, and differences in the demographic characteristics resulted in different perceptions of the Master Han Dan. In the research of social sciences, gender is an important part of the structure of social relations, and it is also an important dimension for the study of individual variables. With the change of the times, society's norms and women seem to have changed. The existence of gender difference is pervasive and necessary to be taken into account. Gaojiahui (2001) believes that the gender roles and gender stereotypes of middle school students in different grades are not much different. The results of the study are the same. Zhouxuehui (1989) pointed out that religious beliefs are affected by their social class status and personal experience, which leads to differences in religious behavior. The strength of religious attitudes is an important reason for personal religious behavior.

"I have seen the Master Han Dan, and I like it very much and look forward to it. (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6)"

"I don't think the Master Han Dan is a hooligan, nor do I reject being friends with them. (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6)"

" The Master Han Dan will cause air pollution and should be improved. (C3, C5, C6)"

- 2) Teenagers in Taitung County have a positive attitude and a high sense of identification with the Master Han Dan.

Teenagers in Taitung County have a stereotype that " the Master Han Dan " does not exist as a hooligan, and they will not blindly "idolize". "In the process of idol worship, there must be a lot of "identification" and "involvement", even to the extent of excessive" (Jian Miao Ru, 1996). In the development process, students are influenced by peers, family, school, society and various interactive factors around them, forming a value standard for judgment of right and wrong (Liyiming, 1991). In addition to agreeing that " the Master Han Dan " is the unique local culture of Taitung, they also believe that it is the nostalgia and emotional sustenance of Taitung people. Freud proposed in 1899 that identification is not

only a kind of imitation, but also a process of internalization, which can be divided into three levels: 1. Identification is the initial fixed emotion with a certain group. 2. Identification is to inject the individual into the self. 3. Recognition is the sharing of internalized characteristics with others.

"I don't think the Matster Han Dan is a gangster. They are not heroes and will not worship them. (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6)"

"I hope they don't drink or smoke. (C4)"

"I hope they will restrain their people and reduce the occurrence of fighting. (C2)"

3) The Master Han Dan is a unique local folk culture, which must not only be maintained but also carried forward.

The Master Han Dan is a unique folk culture in Taitung. It not only adds a lively atmosphere to the Lantern Festival, but also adds to the local folk culture. The promotion of economic benefits of local culture must rely on commercial behavior. The creative industry must not only focus on industrial development and positive economic growth, but also have its unique value for cultural innovation and creativity. The industry must inject local characteristics and integrate with the spirit of traditional local stories. In the process of promoting cultural and creative industries, the public sector plays a very important role. From small units to grassroots township and city offices, they actively play the role of promoter of cultural and creative industries. It is expected that industrial development can integrate with local cultures, boost the local economy, and further create local vitality and vision.

"I think The Master Han Dan is a specialization in Taitung that should be preserved and promoted. (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6)"

"You can help the Master Han Dan with commercials and movies. (C1)"

"Going to a local performance can be experienced by others (C2, C4)"

"Should go abroad to perform, so that foreigners can also meet the Master Han Dan (C3)"

"Established the Master Han Dan Museum to introduce the history of Han Dan Ye (C5, C6)".

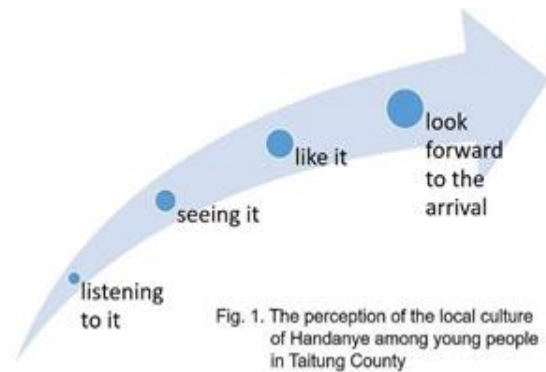
#### 4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to investigate the recognition of the local culture of the Master Han Dan among teenagers in Taitung County, and further provide the function of recreating the Master Han Dan's local culture. Based on the research findings and results, the conclusions and recommendations of this research are summarized as follows.

#### 4.1. Conclusion

1) Teenagers in Taitung County have heard and watched the performance o activities.

The bombing of the Master Han Dan is not only a unique folk event in Taitung, but also an important and indispensable role in the parade of the Lantern Festival temple fair. From the results of the interview, it is found that most teenagers in Taitung County not only have heard the event but also participate in it in person. They also like it very much and look forward to the arrival of the Lantern Festival every year. Figure 1 shows the perception of the local culture of Handanye among young people in Taitung County.



**Figure 1** The Preception of the Local Culture of Handanye Among Young People in Taitung Country

2) Teenagers in Taitung County have a positive attitude towards the Master Han Dan's local folk culture.

Since it was mentioned in the field notes that the Master Han Dan is a "rogue god", there is still a stereotype of the Master Han Dan as a "rogue god." From the interview results, it is found that the teenagers in Taitung County do not think that the Master Han Dan is a hooligan or a deviant actor, and are more willing to be friends with them.

3) Teenagers in Taitung County have a high sense of identity and emotion towards the Master Han Dan's local folk culture.

Teenagerse in Taitung County highly recognize the Master Han Dan as a unique local folk culture. Taitung people look forward to the arrival of the Lantern Festival every year. Everyone gathers together to watch the Master Han Dan, a nostalgic and emotional exchange. Figure 2. shows the procedure of motivation.

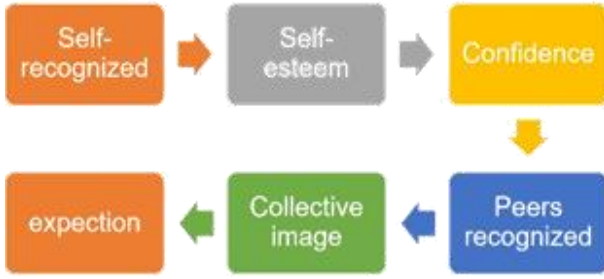


Figure 2 The Procedure of Motivation

4) Taitung’s local folk culture "the Master Han Dan" is an art that must not only continue to be maintained but also carried forward

The Master Han Dan is a unique folk culture of Taitung. It not only adds a lively atmosphere to the Lantern Festival, but also adds to the local folk culture. It also brings a tourist boom to Taitung and increases economic income. In order to continue Taitung's unique culture, it adds local flavor and bombardment. The Master Han Dan should be preserved, and can promote peripheral products, experience activities and in-depth visits of tourists and other marketing, so as to carry forward and eventually enter the international stage.

4.2. Suggestion

Based on research findings and results, the following suggestions are mad. Figure 3 shows the methods of continuation of local folk culture.



Figure 3 The Methods of Continuation of Local Folk Culture

The explanation of the methods of continuation of local Folk Culture:

1) Making local teaching materials for the Master Han Dan.

During the Lantern Festival, everyone can speak up: "Bei Tian Lan, Nan Feng Pao, Dong Han Dan", it can be seen that Taitung Master Han Dan has a very high reputation. Being able to incorporate the Master Han Dan into Taitung’s allows students to understand the historical allusions of the Master Han Dan, to learn about the folk

customs of their hometown, to strengthen their concept of loving their hometown, and finally to have a sense of perception and belonging.

2) Reshape the positive image of the Master Han Dan

For a small group of people, the Master Han Dan culture still has the stereotype of hooligans. With the changes of society, we must first get rid of these negative images. The police unit and temple fair principals should restrain members of the group and refrain from drinking or smoking in order to establish a good cultural image. Figure 4. shows the methods of reshape the positive image.



Figure 4 The Methods of Reshape the Positive Image

3) Preservation, planning and promotion of local culture

The Master Han Dan’s culture is a tradition. You can digitize the Master Han Dan’s local culture-related materials, and then introduce innovative thinking and life integration, diversified presentations, and integrate the Master Han Dan’s culture into life and transform it into performing art. Information technology has spread to the world, pushing the local culture of Taitung Master Han Dan to the international stage. Figure 5. Shows The methods of planning and promotion.



Figure 5 The Methods of Planning and Promotion

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