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Graduation Project: “Reserve Burning Joss Paper or Forbid it?” and Reflection

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6AM TIMES

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NT\$100,000 FINE FOR BURNING JOSS PAPER

By Debra Hsu, 6AM TIMES, Staff Writer
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In light of the rising awareness of the environment protection, the act of burning joss paper has been suspected that if it is necessary to be reserved or to be forbidden in Taiwan.



According to a news from Taiwan News, Joss paper store owner threatened with NT\$100,000 fine for burning joss paper. The owner was as mad as hell that he had reported that he was burning joss paper money. Additionally, he also noted that over 20 years of his store's operation, it was the first time that he had been warned by an inspector for burning joss paper. With his irritation and frustration, the owner wondered that if the EPA was trying to destroy the traditional religious industry or not.

According to a report by Everington (2007), as Kaohsiung EPA Air Pollution and Noise Control section chief Chang Cheng-lan stated that "the burning of joss paper which is clearly causing pollution would be a violation under Article 31 of the Air Pollution Control Act, and therefore offenders can be subject to a fine between NT\$5,000 and NT\$100,000".

However, according to a report by Everington (2007), another member of Kaohsiung City EPA, Environmental Inspection Chief Ma Chen-yao, stated that "an act of burning of joss paper money itself is not necessarily illegal unless it is producing obvious particulate matter pollution, such as when the paper has not fully burned up or is smoldering, in which case, measures should be taken to control the source of pollution".

DEBATE

01 June 2017

Reserve or Forbid Joss Paper ?

RESERVE



FORBID

It is a Chinese traditional Culture

which should be reserved to pass on to the coming generations. We need to let the next generation to understand the tradition so they could respect it and accept it.

– 40, Max, Miaoli

Joss paper is not a thing for the past.

Although it is a Chinese traditional culture, the young needs to pay more attention to it. It is a way to ensure the ancestor's continued well-being and live well in another world.

– 50, Dean, Tainan

It is a way to worship Gods and a

way to respect them. It is a sacred tradition in Chinese culture that could venerate the ancestors and influence the fortune and fate of the living of ancestors in another world.

– 60, Tim, Kaohsiung

They are bad for the environment. It

will cause not only water pollution but also air pollution. We must to forbid it if we consider the environmental issue and want to keep healthy.

– 34, Danny, Taipei

You don't need to burn joss paper to bribe the Gods to bring you good

luck. Burning joss paper is just like a way to pay money to Gods to ask for assistance. Miracles only happen to those who stay true to their faith in Gods.

– 25, Willy, Taichung

I couldn't understand the purpose of

burning joss paper. We are the master of our destiny and we don't need to burn it to benefit from Gods. Additionally, burning joss paper is a way to waste resources and pollute the environment.

– 41, Kenny, Taoyuan

CULTURE

01 June 2017



Joss paper, is made of recycled paper and bamboo and is commonly used for ceremonial purposes in some Asian countries with Buddhist and Taoist religions. During ritual practice, the majority of temples in Taiwan and many families would burn it for deity venerating and ancestors worshipping and usually, it is practiced on the first and the fifteenth day of the Chinese lunar month.



陳協和 (Xie-He, Chen)

- The owner of Chen Xie He Paper Money Shop
- The paper money shop is located in Miaoli, Chunan
- Handmade joss paper
- Pursuit of refinement

曾師兄 (Mr. Tseng)

- The member of Xingtian Temple
- Xingtian Temple is located in Taipei
- In Xingtian Temple, they don't burn the joss paper and incense
- Since August, 2014, they removed incense burner and altar table
- When we worship God, we just need to be faithful and sincerely pray the God



403110577 Debra Hsu

Graduation Project – Chinese Culture through Foreign Languages- English

22 May 2017

Reserve Burning Joss Paper or Forbid it?

Outline

I. Introduction

- A. Thesis Statement: In light of the rising awareness of the environment protection, the act of burning joss paper money has been suspected that if it is necessarily to be reserved or to be forbidden in Taiwan
- B. A news from Taiwan News - Joss paper store owner threatened with NT\$100,000 fine for burning ghost money

II. Literature Review

- A. Introducing joss paper
 - 1. Made of recycled paper and bamboo
 - 2. Commonly used for ceremonial purposes in some Asian countries with Buddhist and Taoist religions
 - 3. For deity venerating and ancestors worshipping
 - 4. On the first and the fifteenth day of the Chinese lunar month
- B. Negatives effects of joss paper
 - 1. Environmental Problem - Air pollution
 - a. Burning joss paper would produce non-stop heavy smoke during the long, slow, and incomplete combustion.
 - b. Articulate matters (PM), heavy metals, polycyclic aromatic

hydrocarbons (PAHs)

- c. Adverse human health effects from high concentration and long exposure of PM

C. No government and laws could afford to be seen attacking religious freedom and religious ritual

1. Government's move

- a. The Kaohsiung County Environmental Protection Bureau donated money to charity rather than burn the spiritual kind

2. Religious Leader's move

- a. On Dharma Drum Mountain, featured large screens showing stock footage of joss paper being burnt

III. Reflection

IV. References

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Reserve Burning Joss Paper or Forbid it?

Introduction

In light of the rising awareness of the environment protection, the act of burning joss paper has been suspected that if it is necessary to be reserved or to be forbidden in Taiwan. According to a news from Taiwan News, Joss paper store owner threatened with NT\$100,000 fine for burning joss paper. The owner was as mad as hell that he had reported that he was burning joss paper money. Additionally, he also noted that over 20 years of his store's operation, it was the first time that he had been warned by an inspector for burning joss paper. With his irritation and frustration, the owner wondered that if the EPA was trying to destroy the traditional religious industry or not. As Kaohsiung EPA Air Pollution and Noise Control section chief Chang Cheng-lan stated that "the burning of joss paper which is clearly causing pollution would be a violation under Article 31 of the Air Pollution Control Act, and therefore offenders can be subject to a fine between NT\$5,000 and NT\$100,000" (Everington, 2017). However, another member of Kaohsiung City EPA, Environmental Inspection Chief Ma Chen-yao, stated that "an act of burning of joss paper money itself is not necessarily illegal unless it is producing obvious particulate matter pollution, such as when the paper has not fully burned up or is smoldering, in which case, measures should be taken to control the source of pollution" (Everington, 2017).

Literature Review

The public in Taiwan realizes the importance of not smoking in public places because it would cause health problem and air pollution; however, if it involves the age-old custom, burning joss paper, is it legal and accepted to burn in temples, on sidewalks and outside homes?

Generally, joss paper, is made of recycled paper and bamboo and is commonly used for ceremonial purposes in some Asian countries with Buddhist and Taoist religions. During ritual practice, the majority of temples in Taiwan and many families would burn it for deity venerating and ancestors worshipping and usually, it is practiced on the first and the fifteenth day of the Chinese lunar month (Hu et al., 2009). Approximately, in each year, the people burned joss paper range from 90,000 tons to 220,000 tons. In addition, especially during the seventh month of the lunar calendar, so-called “ghost month”, it is a major cause of air pollution in urban areas (Steven, 2010). Furthermore, burning joss paper would produce non-stop heavy smoke during the long, slow, and incomplete combustion. Within incomplete combustion processes, pollutants such as particulate matters (PM), heavy metals, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), or others may be generated. Also, it may result in adverse human health effects from high concentration and long exposure of PM (Hu et al., 2009). Consequently, the health of people working in temples, visitors, and residents living nearby might be affected. With increasing environmental and health concerns, government agencies should lead by example. According to a news by Taiwan Today on 2010, during ghost month on that year, the Kaohsiung County Environmental Protection Bureau donated money to charity rather than burn the

spiritual kind (Steven, 2010). Additionally, no government and laws could afford to be seen attacking religious freedom and religious ritual. Nevertheless, religious leaders also should remind their followers of the environmental and public health responsibilities. On 2010, Master Cheng Yen, founder of the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, stated that “ghost money is just paper and that developing sincerity and virtue are far more important”. Rather than burning spirit money, on Dharma Drum Mountain, featured large screens showing stock footage of joss paper being burnt (Steven, 2010).

Reflection

After I have done my project, I gained so many knowledge about joss paper from the interviewers and also the knowledge about the laws and the problems of joss paper from the Internet. My initial idea of doing this project is just introducing different kinds of joss paper and the process of making joss paper. However, after I discussed with professor, she told me that recently there was a news which stated that joss paper store owner was threatened with NT\$100,000 fine for burning joss paper and maybe I could do a project which discusses this issue about how the public thinks about it and different approaches of different shops and temples to face this issue.

I interviewed the owner of Chen Xie He paper money shop who is a really kind and nice old gentleman and also his daughter who is an enthusiastic woman. Chen Xie He paper money shop is located in Chunan, Miaoli. The special feature about this shop is that they make joss paper by themselves. Owing to the decreasing demand of joss paper, their strategy to cope with this problem is to pursue the refinement and

make it more delicate and better. In addition, he said that nowadays, in Taiwan, it only had five places to manufacture the paper which made joss paper due to the law on Prevention and Control of Pollution. Furthermore, his daughter stated that she thought that their shop wouldn't be affected by the laws and she said that it would just affect the city such as Taipei City and New Taipei City. The rules in Taipei City is more strict than New Taipei City. However, it depends on the city because different city has their own policy to cope with the issue of burning joss paper. In my perspective, I think this custom of handmade joss paper needs to be reserved and be cherished. In addition, due to the fact that this is a hardworking work and the young roughly don't want to do it, people who engaged in this industry are generally the senior.

I interviewed Mr. Tseng who is the member of Xingtian Temple. Xingtian Temple is located in Taipei. Since their establishment, their policy is not burning joss paper and incense because they think that people just need to be faithful and pray the Gods sincerely then Gods would protect us. They think that we don't need any offerings and incense to worship Gods since it seems that we want to bribe the Gods. Additionally, since August 2014, they have removed incense burner and altar table. In my perspectives, I think this point of view is quite interesting. I have ever thought to this aspect about the offerings, the incense and the joss paper. I think it is great that due to Xingtian Temple as one of the biggest temple in Taiwan, they lead the trend to protect the environment and the globe.

In my point of view about this issue, owing to the air pollution and water pollution, I will support to forbid burning joss paper. However, I think we should still

reserve this kind of traditional Chinese custom in another way. Just like Mr. Tseng from Xingtian Temple said, we don't need to burn joss paper and the incense and also provide the offerings to the Gods in order to make them wish us luck and protect us. We just need to be faithful and pray to the Gods with sincere then Gods would protect us and wish us luck.

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