

New Year Customs of Chinese People Who were Born in Myanmar

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Abstract

This paper presents the customs relating to giving Hong Paung, worshipping deceased ancestors and spirits, plants at home, and essential food in Chinese New Year Festival of Chinese people who were born in Myanmar (mixed-blooded Chinese born in Myanmar, and at Yunnan, Fujian, and Guan Dong). Sound exchanging is the special characteristic of Chinese Literature and Culture. Thus, sound exchanging which is the special characteristic of Chinese Language is presented. The study was done by using descriptive and comparative methods.

Keywords: Chinese born in Myanmar, Chinese New Year Festival, Custom

Introduction

Customs relating to Chinese New Year have spread from Mainland China to other foreign countries. Such customs have reached to our country and it can be seen in yearly celebrations of Chinese New Year Festivals in many places in Myanmar. The ancestors of the Chinese people who were born in Myanmar were migrants mostly from Yunnan, Fujian, and Guan Dong provinces. Their customs towards New Year are mixed having similarities and differences.

Literature Review

In the article of Cao Bo (2019) named “Cultural Essence of Chinese New Year Custom words”, Yāsuiqián is explained. In the article of Jing Meng Jie (2017) named “Homonyms in Chinese Language and Teaching Book”, homonym is explained. In Fang yu (2010) article named “Essences of Chinese New Year Culture by Folk sayings” and Zhu Yifei (1989)’s book called “Chinese Traditional Culture”. Traditional Festivals are explained in the book of Chinese Traditional Festivals and Text book of Yu Ting (2018). Chinese New Year and customs are explained in Cui Wen Ting’s (2017) book entitled “Doing Research relating to Chinese traditional festivals”.

Scope and Method

Customs relating to giving red letter (Hong Paung or An Paung), planting at home, worshipping, food in Chinese New Year Festival of in the Chinese people who were born in Myanmar is presented by means of descriptive and comparative methods.

Aim

The Chinese people who were born in Myanmar live in every place in Myanmar especially in Mandalay. Thus, it is necessary to understand their customs. Moreover, it is seen that they are trying to understand our culture and customs. Among the myriad customs of them, customs relating to New Year of Chinese people who were born in Myanmar is compiled. It is also aimed for Chinese language learners to help them in their study.

Research Questions and Problems

1. Does Chinese people who were born in Myanmar follow Chinese New Year customs spreading to foreign countries from Mainland China?

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2. Are the New Year customs of Mixed blooded Chinese people who were born in Myanmar and Chinese people who were born in Myanmar like Yunnan, Fujian and Guan Dong?
3. How is foretelling done by sound exchanging?

Data Collection

The required data for experiences about New Year customs of Chinese people who were born in Myanmar were collected from M.Res and Ph.D Dissertations, research articles, Chinese language books, and the Internet.

1. Customs relating to foods

Before presenting the above topic, New Year customs of Chinese in Mainland relating to foods is firstly presented. Chinese carefully prepare and eat foods in New Year. However, foods eaten in Northern and Southern parts are not the same.

Most of the southerners eat fish and meat balls as essential ones in New Year. Fish (yú) and plenty (yú) are exchanged in terms of sound as (niánnian yóuyú) and Chinese people eat to foretell the prosperity of the year. Moreover, balls (tāngyuán) and plenty (yuánmǎn) are in the meaning of wealthy in New Year by eating balls. Balls (tāngyuán) and reunion of the family are exchanged as the sound as (tuányuán).

Northerners eat dumplings as the essential foods. Dumplings (Jiǎozi) and the sound of (jiāotì) are exchanged and foretold as (xīnjiù jiāotì) the new are coming into the place of the old. The appearance of dumplings is like silver solid and it means wrapping bribes and are eaten in new year. Some put coins in the dumplings. It means eating that can refer to earning more money. By looking at the mentioned facts, the foods both of them eat are mostly different. What are essential foods eaten by Chinese people who were born in Myanmar like Yunnan, Fujian, Guan Dong and mixed blooded Chinese people who were born in Myanmar? Are the foods same in the survey? The results are found as the following.

1.1 Yunnan

The essential food for Yunnan Chinese people who were born in Myanmar in the New Year is fish. Therefore the sounds of fish (yú) and plenty (duōyú) are combined resulting the meaning of “Plentiful in the New Year”. Egg Mayae, sweet snack, is also eaten. Thus, Egg Mayae snack (Fùrónggāo) and rise in employments (niánnián gāo) and (gāo) by exchanging sounds as “May have sweet days in your passing and plentiful in New Year.

1.2 Fujian

Most of Fujian Chinese people who were born in Myanmar eats noodle as the essential food. Therefore the sounds of noodle (chángmiàn) and longevity (chángshòu) are combined resulting in the meaning of “Healthy in New Year” with the sound of (cháng). Some Fujian eats (miànxiàn). It is called as “Mu Swun” in Myanmar. It has long shape and means (chángshòu).

1.3 Guan Dong

Most of Guan Dong Chinese people who were born in Myanmar eats “Ee Kway or T Kway” as the essential food with the reason of combining the sounds of Ee Kway (niángāo) and yearly living and employment rise (niánnián gāo) resulted in the meaning of “May rise at living standards and employment in New Year”.

1.4 Mixed blooded Chinese people who were born in Myanmar

Most of them eat together as a means of preserving the tradition. However, they have no custom of foretelling by exchanging sounds. They cook what they want to eat.

2. Customs relating to Plants

Before presenting this topic, the customs of Mainland China is firstly introduced. Chinese prepare the plants carefully in New Year. In front of the door, they put orange plants and sugarcane plants. By exchanging the sound orange (júzi) and being auspicious (jíxiáng) or being prosperous (jǐlì), the meaning of being auspicious sounded (jíxiángrúyì) or (dàjídàlì) is put in front of the home by foretelling. Apart from hish, sugarcane plant is put in front of the door. The stems of sugarcane rise one after another. By exchanging the sound (jié jié gāo) that means above meaning and rising one season after another (jié jié gāo), they put it at front door of the house. Houses in the southern part put sugarcane and organe mostly and northern are for orange plants. From these facts, it can be concluded that Chinese put these plants in homes at southern and northern parts. So, which plants do Chinese people who were born in Myanmar like Yunnan, Fujian, and Guan dong put in front of their homes? To a certain extent, the followings are found.

2.1 Yunnan

Some Yunnan Chinese people who were born in Myanmar put pines in front of the door at New Year. By exchanging the sounds of pines (sōngshù) and convenience (qīngsōng) from (sōng), taking the meaning of convenience in daily lives (rìzi guò de qīngqing sōngsong) and red string is put in front of the door. Peanut is used instead of pines. In terms of Yunnan, peanut is (huāsōng), the sound (sōng) is exchanged and put in front of the house.

2.2 Fujian

They are not the same as Yunnan Chinese and put tall sugarcane in New Year. The stems of sugarcane rise one after another. By exchanging the sound (jié jié gāo) that means above meaning and rising one season after another (jié jié gāo), they put it at the door of the house by wrapping with red strings.

2.3 Guan Dong

These people are different from above mentioned groups. They do not foretell by putting plants in front of the house and door in New Year.

2.4 Mixed blooded Chinese people who were born in Myanmar

Like Guan Dong Chinese, these people are different from above mentioned groups. They do not foretell by putting plants in front of the house and door in New Year.

3. Customs relating to Worshipping

Before explaining this topic, New Year customs of Chinese in Mainland relating to worshipping are firstly presented. They worship gods (Heaven and Earth god, Kitchen god, God of Wealth) and deceased ancestors with red candles, intense stick, fish and fruits. Some regions worship by calling gods and ancestors. If Heaven and Earth gods are called, three insances are lightened and called three times to come. For deceased ancestors, just one intense stick is lightened, and call three times. If the smokes go to the Abode of Heaven and earth gods or feeling of swaying intense stick is came out, it can be assumed that gods of heaven and earth, and ancestors are coming and they are welcomed by firing gold and silver paper solids.

Like this, how worshipping towards gods and deceased ancestors by Chinese people who were born in Myanmar like Yunnan, Fujian, Guan Dong and Mixed blooded Chinese can be found in the followings.

3.1 Yunnan

Most of the Yunnan Chinese people who were born in Myanmar worship gods and deceased ancestors from father side. (Some Yunnan Buddhists worship in a way of vegan by offering fruits to Buddha.) However, Heaven and earth gods, Guardian gods of the house door and gods of wealth are worshipped, not for god of kitchen. In worshipping gods and deceased ancestors from father side, the essential meat is fish. The raw fish is wrapped with red paper. Some offer the whole boiled pig or chicken. In doing like this, internal organs are extracted. After that they are cleaned and re-put into the bodies for the worshipping by boiling. In the past, pig in terms of the whole body is capable in worshipping but not now due to trade price. In temples and rich Yunnan family, it can be seen. Some assume head, legs, tails of the pig as the whole body and use them. Some regard blood, meat, and internal organs as the same as the whole body. As for the whole body of chicken for worshipping, chicken is killed. If not willing to kill, an egg is assumed as the whole chicken. Most Yunnan foretell “complete” and “every thing is totally fine” or “flawless” as (wánměi) for the New Year so they worship with the whole body without degrading the appearance. Moreover, in front of the door or the place without roof, lightening intense stick and firing golden paper solid are done with the aim of prosperity in treasures.

In order to worship and summon deceased ancestors in New Year, most of the Yunnan Chinese request the two gods in door in advance to let them into the house. By requesting to serve the foods the sons, daughters, grand children offer in front of the stand (some are written their names or attached with photos). After that, the foods on the stage are taken after worshipping for about two hours.

3.2 Fujian

In New Year, most of Fujian Chinese people who were born in Myanmar worship gods and deceased ancestors from father side. (Some Fujian Buddhists worship in a way of vegan like fruits to Buddha.) However, Heaven and earth gods, Guardian gods of the house door and gods for wealth are worshipped, not for god of kitchen. In worshipping gods and deceased ancestors from father side, the essential meats are duck and chicken. The whole body of boiled duck or chicken are worshipped. Some Buddhists boil an egg of duck or chicken by assuming the whole body. Fujian assumes blood or meat of the blood as the whole body of the pig in worshipping. Like most Yunnan, they foretell “every thing is totally fine” or “flawless” as (wánměi) for the New Year so they worship with the whole body without degrading the appearance. Moreover, in the place without roof in front of the house, lightening intense sticks and firing golden paper solid are done with the aim of prosperity in treasures. Their thinking are the same with the Yunnan.

Some Fujians want their deceased ancestors to be rich in other life or in reincarnation by getting silver and gold. In firing, that silver and gold paper are put in the middle and sprinkled with alcohol in order not to snatch by other ghosts.

In order to worship and summon deceased ancestors in New Year, like Yunnans, most of the Fujian Chinese request the two gods in door in advance to let them into the house. However, the way of summoning is not the same. They use a coin by putting two coins in front of the worshipping stage for ancestors. If both of the coins are heads or tails, that is assumed that the ancestors are looking at their children smiling before eating. One coin is head and one is tail, it is assumed that the ancestors are eating the offering. They also send back ancestors by

putting two coins and if they are not the same, it is assumed that they have gone. If both of them are tails or heads, it is assumed that they are not going back and looking by smiling at their children.



Two coins



Coin with head and tail



Coin with two heads



Coin with two tails

3.3 Guan Dong

In New Year, most of Guan Dong Chinese people who were born in Myanmar worship gods and deceased ancestors from father side. Some Guan Dong Buddhists worship in a way of vegan like offering fruits to Buddha.) However, Heaven and earth gods, Guardian gods of the house door and gods for kitchen are worshipped, not for god of wealth. In worshipping gods and deceased ancestors from father side, the essential meat is chicken. The whole body of the boiled chicken is worshipped. Some Buddhists Guan Dong do not want to kill chicken so they boil an egg and worship as the whole chicken by foretelling every thing is full in the new year. Apart from that, they follow this as a preservation of the custom. Now, most of the Buddhist Guan Dong prefer to worship with a boiled egg to boiled chicken. In order to worship and summon deceased ancestors in New Year, like Yunnans, most of the Fujian Chinese request the two gods in door in advance to let them into the house. In summoning ancestors, they tell ancestors to serve what they offers by lightening intense sticks in front of the worshipping stage.

3.4 Mixed blooded Chinese people who were born in Myanmar

In New Year, most of the Mixed blooded Chinese people who were born in Myanmar worship gods and deceased ancestors. However, Heaven and earth gods, two Guardian gods of the house door and gods for wealth are worshipped, not for god of kitchen like Yunnans and Fujians. The way of worshipping is the same as Yunna with the aim of completing every thing in the New Year without degrading body of the chicken or fish. In worshipping gods and

deceased ancestors from father side, the essential meat is chicken. However, gold paper solids are fired for gods and silver ones for ancestors. The aim is to flourish in treasures like gold and silver.

Summoning and worshipping deceased ancestors are the same as Yunnans. They wish ancestors to serve what they offer by lightening intense sticks in front of the worshipping shrine. Then, they take back what they offer after two hours on the stage.



Two Guardian gods of the house door



Name-written Ancestors' stage



Photo attached Ancestors' stage and Stage worshipping for god of earth and heaven



Stage worshipping to Earth god

4. Customs relating to giving red bag (Hong Paung or An Paung)

Before introducing this topic, the customs of this relating to Mainland China about giving red bag (Hong Paung or An Paung) is briefly introduced.

Chinese people give red bag (Hong Paung or An Paung) in New Year. Red means “Hong” in Chinese and bag for “Paung”. In doing this, money is put in the red bag. Red is the symbol of free from dangers, being auspicious, success, pleasant, and lucky. Red is the traditional color of China. So, money is given in a red bag. The story goes like this. Once upon a time, the demon called 夕 (xī) in Sichuan, 年 (nián) in Jing Ling, and 祟 (suì) in Je Jiang got to the home at midnight of the last day of december when the children fall asleep and they touched their heads. The touched child cried and was afraid, and became sick and numb. Then, it was known that the 祟(suì) demon that came at midnight of the last day of december is afraid of red and it run away when he saw red. With the meaning of suppressing that monster, 压祟钱(yāsuiqián) which means “ money suppressing monster” turns to giving red bag or 红包(hóngbāo). This has become a custom. It is for children in order to free from dangers and worries.

The amount of money is not principal in giving Hong Baung, the essence is giving red. By exchanging the sound 压 祟 (yāsui) (Suppressing the祟 (suì) demon” and 压岁(yāsui) (Safing from life danger), it is called 压 祟钱(yāsuiqián) (Money safe from life danger) and giving red bag to the children in the New Year. It has become a custom. Nowadays, it turns to be called as 红包 (hóngbāo),

Although time is changing for Chinese, giving red bag (Haung Paung or An Paung) is not changed till now. Likewise, Chinsese people who were born in Myanmar like Yunnan, Fujain, Guan Dong and Mixed blooded Chinese people who were born in Myanmar preserve that custom till now.

4.1 Yunnan

Most of the Yunnan Chinese people who were born in Myanmar are used to give red bag (Hong Paung or An Paung) to children in the New Year with the intention of having wealth and longevity. The number of money is even. Moreover, the number is taken as foretelling as a custom especially the number six and eight. By exchanging the sound eight 八 (bā) and becoming wealthy 发财 (fācái), they give eight hundreds or eight thousands. By exchanging the sound six 六 (liù) and becoming convenience in every thing 六六大顺 (liùliùdàshùn), they give six hundreds or six thousands. Most of the Yunnas give Hong Paung to Chidren.

This is because of willing to be happy. They foretell on the number of money like Yunnan.

4.2 Fujian

Most of Fujian Chinese give red bag to children. “An Paung” which is commonly used in Myanmar is from Fujian accent. Giving Hong Paung (An Paung) is with the aim of making happiness. They foretell on the number of money like Yunnan.

4.3 Guan Dong

Most of Guan Dong Chinese give Hong Paung as a wealth enchantment for grace and auspicious. Guan Dong do not have a custom for foretelling the number of money. They give not only for children but also spinsters and bachelors for by assuming them as children.

4.4 Mixed blooded Chinese people who were born in Myanmar

Most of the mixed blooded Chinese people who were born in Myanmar give Hong Paung as enchantment for wealth. Like Guan Dong, they do not foretell the number of money.

Findings and Discussion

Chinese people who were born in Myanmar like Yunnan, Fujian, and Guan Dong keep the customs of ancestor's New Year customs and celebrate yearly. In celebrating this, some follow traditions strictly and respectfully but some are weak in customs. In worshipping deceased ancestors, they are from father side. In summoning ancestors, it is found that Fujians are different from others like Yunnan, Guandong. What is different is that they send back ancestors after summoning. The strange custom is turning the coins in summoning and sending back for worshipping. As for customs towards plants, just Yunnan and Fujian prepare carefully and put in front of the houses, not for Guan Dong and Mixed blooded Chinese born in Myanmar. Giving red bag or Hong Paung is mostly on even numbers and most of the Fujian and Guan Dong foretell on the number as a custom. This custom is lack for Guan Dong and Mixed blooded Chinese born in Myanmar. To sum up, learning Chinese born in Myanmar New Year customs of foods, plants, worshipping, giving red bag means that most of Yunnan, Fujian, and Guan Dong exchange sounds and foretelling auspicious omen and doing New Year customs.

Conclusion

Socialization will be eased if people understand New Year customs of Chinese people who were born in Myanmar. Moreover, language and literature are always linked. Thus, those who learn Chinese literature and language can learn about rich vocabulary in Chinese words and apply by knowing that sound exchanging is the specific characteristic in Chinese culture and literature. It is hoped that this paper will be a support for those who learn Chinese literature and language.

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