

Titbits of my trip to Chao Zhou with the Teochew Culture Club

1. The Teochew Culture Club (short form TCC or the Club) organized a trip to Chao Zhou, from May 17 to 20, for 3 days. TCC is a registered society, since 2011, and it has a membership of about 100. I am proud to be a founding member.

2. There were 31 persons in the tour group, comprising mainly the students of Teochew dialect, and their families or friends. Our two teachers, Mr Xu and Dr Xi, joined us and they acted also as the tour leaders. I know most of the participants, so I was convinced that it would be a enjoyable trip from the very beginning. I observed too that there were six councilors, out of a total of eight, of the TCC joined us in the tour. I am glad that I know all these six councilors, from my Teochew classes. Later in the trip, I was able to witness, somewhat emotional within myself, the councilors in action, to discuss the official business of the Club.

3. We spent 3 hours, in the morning of our second day, at the Hanshan Teachers College (now known as Hanshan Normal University). TCC named this occasion as an "academic interaction" with the College. Actually it was 2 lectures delivered to us, one hour each from Prof Huang Ting, a distinguished scholar in Chinese history, and Prof Lin Lun Lun, President of the College, a noted scholar on local dialects. Several classmates raised relevant and stimulating questions addressed to the two Professors.



4. The Professor and the "gender supremacy" - I liked one of my lady classmate raised the "gender supremacy" question to Prof Lin. The Prof said that as he is getting aging, he has more remorse that he has let his wife doing all the house cores. He is prepared to take on more dishes washing, and sweeping of the floor, and some more house cores. His sudden expression of "sentiment" was met by loud applauses from us. Then the Prof pointed to the rear of the classroom. There sat a beaming Mrs Lin, the Prof's wife !



5. THE TEOCHEW DIALECT - we had our two lectures at the Han Shan Uni, the two big professors stated that for academic talks, it would be better for them to deliver their lessons in Mandarin. Personally I was rather disappointed that they abandoned their own native Teochew dialect! I made this remark via my Facebook. Shortly, I got a response from a former classmate, CL, as follows:

“don't be disappointed, they are actually in good heart to extend Teochew dialect to those who don't understand it including myself. It's a kind of promotion of traditional

language to people also who are interested but don't know about it, I suppose. The purpose of the seminar was not the media of transmission but tell us the history, the culture and the spirit of it. My 2 cents”

Thanks, CL. I do agree with your statement. I am glad that you have led me back to the right path!

6. Jiang Lin Port was a busy and important port, since ancient time and continuing this status even to early Qin dynasty. It was from here the "red head boats" sailed to Far East countries, and elsewhere. Our Teochew ancestors, because of wanting to have a better living or other relevant reasons, they went, voluntarily and some non-voluntarily, to go overseas. Some of them were not able to return home!



7. It was a horrible experience to participate in a venture on our way to Jiang Lin Port. Our coach must have missed the correct conjunction leading to the Port front. We were caught in the torrent rain and strong wind, and on a narrow muddy road. The rain beat on the windows, the uneven yellow sand road made the bus rocking side way. The driver wanted to turn back, and he tried reversing. But the visibility was low, and the road was too narrow to make a three points turn. It was a helpless situation! Suddenly we saw a man, braved the rain and the gust wind, riding behind towards our coach, in a little motor bike! He was a "saviour", because he directed us to go forward, about 100 meters, and there we could make a 3 points turn and got out of the danger. But, we never made to the Port we planned to!

8. The precious tea trees - One of the most famous tea tree in the Chao Zhou district is known as : 鳳凰單叢茶 (meaning phoenix tea in a single tree). This type of tea tree is found on top of the Pheonix mountain, about 1,500 m above sea level. Our tour group went up the hill by mini bus, and then by walking to reach the top where this type of tea trees are found. I did NOT climb up to the top, an further distance of about 200 m, because the rocky and muddy path was difficult for me to tread. Several classmates waited with me for the return of the majority who ventured uphill to visits the trees. There are trees of 400 to over 600 years old.



9. A double rainbow - sign of good omen? On our way to visit an old "4 point gold" building, and after a stormy rainfall, we were given a double rainbow in the sky. It was a wonderful moment that I shared with my friends this "miraculous" moment during our recent trip to Chao Zhou. It was the very first time I saw a double rainbow. (But I was given to understand this phenomenon was common in Hawaii. Hawaii has double rainbow very often). And, my friend AW convinced me that God was handing out a reward to him for his good deeds rendering to society!



10. I claim myself a Christian, though “sleeping” most of the time. There is a record in the Bible about the rainbow. For those who are interest, in the Appendix attached: you will find a full quotation.

11. One of the selling points of this trip is the “inn” we stayed at for two days. It is two separate 3 storey high buildings among the residential area in the Chao Zhao old town. It is only half a minute’s walk from the famous “monuments” square. The Inn offers a sense of “antique”, a pleasant change from the modern hotels. The owner and the operator even gave us a talk, at a time close to mid-night about his inn. But at that time it was well passed my bed time, and I begged to be excuse from his talk. Before our departure, TCC advised us to bring our own bath towel, and the slippers. Alas, all these were provided by the inn.



12. We had an all beef dinner, in a steam boat, at the second evening. In my opinion, it was the best meal of the trip. I had plenty of beer and beef of course. In fact, I have forgotten the last time I had that much beer. During the meal, I made sure to toast to my two teachers, and all

the six councilors of the Club. It was an enjoyable evening.

13. While in Chao Zhou, I took time to walk around the old city town area trying to see if I can recognize anything and any recollection about the places, buildings and the general surroundings which I might have been when I was a little boy under the care of my grand parents in a village near Chao Zhou city. No luck, and I was deeply disappointed.



14. This is my third trip to Chao Zhou in about 2.5 years, after I have begun to learn the Teochew dialect under my two teachers. All these three trips were organized by Mr Xi. Learning from the painful experience from my last trip, this time I vowed to watch and monitor my foods seriously. You see, I am acute allergic to crab. I can take only one small piece of crab in a day. In that particular day, we had crabs at lunch, and also at dinner. I took a little piece each time, because those crabs were appetizing and real mouth watering, I forgot my allergic. The result was that I had a strong running stomach the next day. I suffered the most uneasy trip, for about 7, 8 hours in the bus and train from Chao Zhou back to Hong Kong. It was a very painful experience I did not want to repeat this time.

15. Shen Zhen to Chao Zhou and back - it was a six hours bus drive, each way, via the new improved highways. I remember years ago, the same journey took more than sixteen hours each way! Someone mentioned about that there was a ferry from Hong Kong to Shantou, in the early 1980's. Yea, I remember that too. The steam boat sailed from Hong Kong at evening time. And we could have our dinner at the boat. By dawn the next morning, the boat reached the Shantou port. We would have to wait for the Chinese Customs and the Immigration for clearance before boarding. On our homeward journey, because we had over spent our time at the Phoenix mountain, we did not take our lunch until about 3.30 pm. By the time we arrived Shen Zhen, it was about 9.00 pm. Finally I was able to arrive home safely at about 11.15 pm. loaded with plenty of sweet memory!

Dr Peter Lam, Hong Kong, May 28, 2013.

Appendix :

I look up my Bible, and here are the words of God about “rainbow”:

Quote:

12 And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come

13 I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

14 Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds,

15 I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.

16 Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

17 So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

Unquote

Quoted from: Genesis 9:12 - 17 (New International Version)

So, we were bestowed with double rainbow. But, I keep on wondering why should we be allowed a double assurance from God ?