

Dragon Boat Festival

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Traditional Chinese festivals are the epitome of Chinese civilization, exhibiting Chinese traditions, customs and religious concepts. Dragon Boat Festival, which comes on the fifth day of the fifth month in the Chinese lunar calendar, is one such festival celebrated in China for over 2000 years.

There are many different legends about the festival. One is said to commemorate Wu Zixu, an allegiant minister in Chu Period (476-221 BC). Another is said to commemorate Cao E, a filial girl in Han Period (25-220 AD) (“Past Dynasty Calendar”), but the most popular legend is to commemorate Qu Yuan (332-296 BC), a minister of the state Chu and one of the earliest Chinese poets (“Dragon Boat Festival”). He was upright, loyal and highly esteemed for his wise counsel that brought peace and prosperity to the state. However, when a dishonest and corrupt prince vilified Qu Yuan, he was disgraced and dismissed from office. Realizing that the country was now in the hands of evil and corrupt officials, Qu Yuan grabbed a large rock, leaped into the Miluo River, and drowned himself on the fifth day of the fifth month in 296 BC in the lunar calendar.

During Dragon Boat Festival, people eat glutinous rice dumplings (see Fig. 1), have dragon

Fig. 1



Source: “How to”

boat racing, and hang perfume pouches. A glutinous rice dumpling called *zong zi* symbolizes rice offerings to Qu Yuan. In ancient times, people who mourned his death threw glutinous rice dumplings into the river to feed his ghost every year. Currently, we eat glutinous rice dumplings instead of throwing them.

Dragon boat racing is an indispensable part of the festival, held all over the country. A typical dragon boat ranges from 50 to 100 feet in length, with a beam of about 5.5 feet (“Equipment for the Competition”), accommodating two paddlers seated side by side. During the race, as the gun is fired, racers in dragon-shaped canoes pull the oars harmoniously and hurriedly, speeding toward their destination, accompanied by rapid drums (see Fig. 2). The dragon-boat races symbolize the many attempts to rescue and recover Qu Yuan's body. On Dragon Boat Festival, parents also need to dress their children up with a perfume pouch filled with perfumes or herbal medicine (see Fig. 3). The perfume pouch will be hung around the neck or tied to the front of a garment as an ornament. It is said to be able to ward off evils.

Fig. 2



Source: “Traditional Chinese Festival”

Fig. 3



Source: “Eat Glutinous Rice Dumplings”

In brief, Dragon Boat Festival is one of the most popular festivals in China. As it represents Chinese traditions, customs and religious concepts, it will continue to be celebrated for many years to come.

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