

A Dynamo on a Cultural Mission

Putting Taiwan on the Global Kite Map

Angela Wu, who owns her own small public relations firm in Taipei, became interested in kites when she was hired by a tourism group to promote a kite event. Fascinated by the sport and appreciating a business link for the future, she immersed herself in kiting to the extent she found herself in Jakarta in 2000 attending the annual festival there.

Angela's Hong Kong friend Alfred Lee told the Indonesian promoter of the festival, Sari Majid, of Wu's ambition to promote the sport in Taiwan and Majid, misinterpreting what she heard, announced at the festival that the next big kite event in Asia would be-----a festival in Taiwan. It was announced for September, just two months later.



Angela Wu

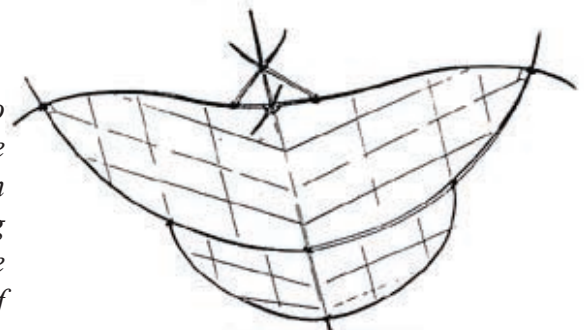
Wu was stunned. "I was very surprised. I thought it was a joke at first. Then I took it as a challenge. I felt proud. I decided almost immediately I'd hold the festival, as announced."

Returning home and with just two months to organize everything from scratch, the energetic Wu and staff, using her own money and helped a bit by the local government and a few corporations, found a beach site, invited leading kite figures from around the world as well as Taiwanese fliers, and pulled off a successful festival. More than 100 international fliers from 12 countries attended. Because the event was held in September, when the northeast monsoon produces absolutely predictable steady winds, the weekend went off swimmingly. "The Moon Festival was over, there was no typhoon, no rain. Nothing could go wrong, or did it," she recalls. The event ended

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Fighters With Spikes

Continuing his study of kites in the Philippines, Orly Ongkingco has just issued a revised, expanded booklet titled The Philippine Kite. Covering the basics-----the invention of the kite, origin of the indigenous Philippine Gurion (swallow) kite, flying traditions in the Philippines, the role of monsoon winds and the rice harvest in the sport, kite fishing and bat catching with leaf kites, and so forth-----Ongkingco breaks some new ground. He shows how the Gurion links in with other similarly shaped Asian kites, the Tombi and Yakko of Japan, the Chula of Thailand, the Janggan of Indonesia, the Wau of Malaysia, the Tukkal of India, the Riu Vang of Vietnam, and the Swallow of China. Illustrations of these various types makes his point convincingly.



Gurion fighter

In a short section, he touches on the Gurion as a fighter kite, both using ground glass-coated line to slice others out of the sky, but in a unique tradition, the outfitting of the Gurion with protruding bamboo spikes meant to pierce and destroy the other kite in mid-air combat. This Visayan Islands fighting style, he says, is an absolutely unique form of aerial kite combat. (The Visayans are a large island group in the center of the country.)

Nicely and clearly written, the booklet runs 55 pages. To obtain a copy, contact Ongkingco at kiteasia@yahoo.com.

up as a tribute to Wu's energy, imagination, and contacts, not to mention her personal charm.

Wu has held the festival ever since, this year being the fourth annual. Extending to 10 days, the dates this year are Sept. 20-28. The opening days will be devoted to local events such as a press conference, competitions, school visits, demonstrations, seminars, indoor flying, workshops. The international phase starts on the 27th and embraces the whole range of the sport-----single and stunt flying, board surfing, ballet flying, indoor and night flying, workshops, seminars. A distinguished array of global stars will participate.

Eldest child in a family of four, Wu was born in Taiwan in 1964. Her father is an educator, her mother a city council member. In addition to several Chinese languages, Wu learned fluent English in school. Married to a university instructor and with a 12-year-old son, Wu helped established the Taiwan Kitefliers Association last year to integrate all the kite teams and kitemakers scattered across the island. Easy to predict, she became its secretary general.

Wu makes it a point to keep commercialization out of the festival, although discreet corporate and governmental support is forthcoming. She herself has been surveying the world kite scene, both out of personal interest and to garner ideas for the Taiwan event. In addition to Jakarta, Wu has been to Dieppe, Bali, Weifang, Malaysia, Denmark, Japan, even Wildwood, N.J., in the U.S. "I was invited," she says of the last festival, "so I went. It was wonderful."

Promoting kiting has become something of a cultural mission for Wu. When the Nationalists left China and took over Taiwan after World War II, they failed in their haste to flee to bring more than scraps of the centuries old Chinese kiting tradition with them. Wu wants to introduce this powerful tradition to the country of her birth.

She points to aspects of a kiting rebirth in Taiwan. Fellow countryman Wen-Xiang Lai has an exceptional collection of kites, mostly traditional Chinese examples, in his private museum. And Buteo Huang is a young, contemporary kitemaker making exceptional creative designs, she says. He has already won several international prizes for his work.

Booklet on the Kites of India

What with the war in Iraq and the severe acute respiratory syndrome scare, travel agent Ajay Prakash of Bombay found himself with time on his hands. His response? Write a booklet about the kites of India.

Literate, direct, not too complex, the small volume fits a need in the subcontinent, he notes, since "there is such a dearth of any kind of organized kite material in India. A lot of school kids in the big cities really have no kite knowledge at all." The booklet has been issued under the aegis of the Nomad Heritage Trust, a foundation dedicated to "the preservation of all things uniquely Indian." Prakash is a Nomad trustee.

The book deals with the *Patang*, or Indian fighter kite, diamond-shaped but with subtle variations. Flying these kites is a huge sport in India. On *Makar Sankranti*, January 14, the great traditional Indian kite festival day, millions-----literally millions-----of people crowd the rooftops in such cities as Jaipur and Ahmedabad to fly kites, picnic, and generally have fun. The kites are supplied with cutting line-----ground glass applied to the line with a paste-----and the object is to slice other kites out of the sky. This fighting is so enthusiastic and so skillful fallen kites give some trees the appearance of Christmas trees.

Prakash's booklet, with many attractive illustrations, discusses materials, types of kites, decorations on the kites, bridling techniques, the all-important cutting line, reels, and the aerodynamics of this simple looking but actually quite complex little flying machine.