

There has been a long standing taboo against writing about the Wind Lion God, making tracing its origins virtually impossible. Additionally, and consequent to this taboo, there are extremely few written references of the wind lion god dating back more than 100 years. The first known record is an engraving on the old KinCheng (金城) city wall dated 1387 that states that they were building a wind lion god behind the Hui Xiang Temple (迴向殿) with gaping jaws placed in the path of the winds to keep them at bay.² This is the earliest time that scholars can trace back the existence of wind lion gods on Kinmen Island. The agreement seems to be that they grew throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties as disaster after disaster struck the island and the Kinmenese felt more and more need for spiritual protection against, and control of, outside forces.³



Photo 1: The old and new statues behind the HuiXiang Temple in Old KinCheng City. This is the only instance of two statues being this close together, and of two such dramatically different statues in one village

² Yang, TianHou 楊天厚, and LiKuan Lin 林麗寬, eds. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen 金門風獅爺*. Taipei, Taiwan: Rice Field Press, 2000: 29

³ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen 金門風獅爺*. 51-52

⁴All photographs by Callum Sawatzky, November 2007, unless otherwise noted

This is confirmed in *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen* which conducted interviews with village elders. These villagers mostly agreed that the statues started becoming common in the Qing Dynasty. This was a time of social movement; people were moving on to and off of the island, and trying to re-unite their families. The wind lion gods became more common during this time as people who had moved far away were trying to set their minds at ease about the safety of their family and home village. These people were sending back money to build new houses and some was given to the village funds. The villages then built statues as a way of helping ease the worry of these overseas workers.⁵

The next verifiable account of a wind lion comes from the Pedigree of the Ouyang Family of Kinmen. It reads:

There is a stone lion master situated on the east coast of the village, blocking the spectacle of Mount Dog about 100 meters away from Paizai Cliff. With its nearly 2 meters torso stand facing east with embroidered ball, the wind lion guardian was meticulously planned with a dashing heroic look. This Wind Lion God was made during Emperor Daoguang of the Qing Dynasty (1821-1851) as a means to protect the villagers from the destruction of hurricanes. Due to the sloping nature of the terrain, the paddy fields of the village were constantly overflowed by ocean grit because of the hurricanes. In view of this devastating situation, our ancestors created a stone lion master to ward off these natural disasters.⁶

⁵ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen 金門風獅爺調查研究*. JinCheng, Taiwan: Cultural Affairs Bureau of Kinmen County, 1994: 48

⁶ Kinmen County. *The Pedigree of the Ou-yang Family (Jinmen Ou-yang shi zupu)*. JinCheng, Taiwan: Kinmen County Government, 1986: 401

The Long History of the Wind Lion Gods states quite bluntly that “nobody knows when was the exact time that the Wind Lion Gods started guarding the island. Time has not changed them, except for a few shrapnel marks from the 8-2-3 Artillery Battle and other bombing.”⁷ Unfortunately, many wind lion god statues were destroyed in this war with China, and many others were pulled down afterward during reconstruction. There were a few instances where an entire village was destroyed as a result of bombing and the only proof that remained, both of the village and its statue, was the resulting rubble.⁸ Most of the statues that can be found on the island, therefore, were carved within the last 50 years.

In ancient Chinese culture, it was the tiger that was the king of beasts and worshipped as the most powerful of all animals. But the tiger was supplanted by the Buddhist lion as Buddhism spread and became prevalent. Additionally, psychologically people are afraid of immediate threats, but respect those far from them, and while there were man-eating tigers in ancient China, there were no lions. So as the idea of the lion was introduced it usurped the powerful position of the tiger due to its psychological removal from the everyday life

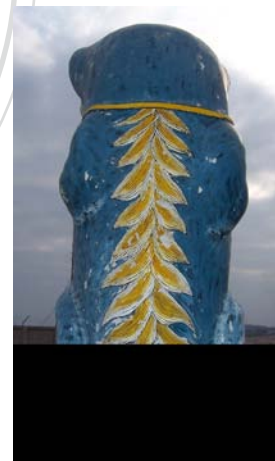


Photo 2: Rear of the XiGuoShan statue showing tiger stripes

⁷ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 76

⁸ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen* 金門風獅爺調查研究. 44

of the ancient Chinese.⁹ It is possible that the wind lion gods of Kinmen still have tiger-like stripes down their backs because they were among the last regions to change to the newer religion and kept this vestige of the visage of the older protectorate, while the curly manes around their heads define them as lions. In China, people admire the fierce look of the lion and believe that they alone of all the animals have the strength needed to defeat evil spirits, thus the figure of the lion is used as a guardian angel of sorts for the villages.¹⁰

According to Choski¹¹ in Buddhist theology lions symbolize the bodhisattvas who have attained a high level of spiritual development yet have forgone the happiness of highest enlightenment in order to stay in this world and help those who continue to suffer. They practice the six basic paramitas: charity, morality, patience, effort, concentration and wisdom. So it may be that the role of protector from the wind was a logical extension of these inherent abilities and that was how the Kinmenese came to choose a lion for this role. "Lions are the kings of the animal kingdom: they are proud and majestic...Lions are organized into clans...The male's job is to protect the clan from enemies. However, lions do not have any natural

⁹ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen 金門風獅爺調查研究*. 25

¹⁰ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen 金門風獅爺調查研究*. 19

¹¹ Choskyi, Van. Jampa. "Symbolism of Animals in Buddhism." 1988. <http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-BH/bh117490>. (accessed December, 2007).

enemies. Due to these characteristics the lion has been considered through all ages and countries as a symbol of royalty and protection, as well as of wisdom and pride.”¹²

According to Chen¹³ lions are believed to be the king of animals, so people admire them and see them as even more powerful than humans. The lions from foreign countries were described as the fiercest and most frightening animals. “Their eyes are as bright as light, their roars are as scary as lightning, they express their emotions through teeth and tail, and all animals respect them.”¹⁴

Lions originated from foreign countries like Persia; they were introduced to China during the Han Dynasty. All animals yield obedience to lions. Lions are incredibly powerful hunters, and skilled fighters, this makes other animals dread fighting against them. Lions are the kings of all animals based on these legends and stories. Accordingly, lions have become representative of power and are also the symbols for ferocity and kindness. Many emperors have used the pattern or totem of a lion to emphasize their power. Its fierce look and attitude suppress evil spirits, and

¹² Choskyi, Van. Jampa. "Symbolism of Animals in Buddhism."

¹³ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 12

¹⁴ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 40

people often set a pair of lions in front of important palaces, temples, and tombs. Lions play the role of guarding angel and lookout in Chinese culture.¹⁵

According to legend, at the time the Sakyamuni was born, he roared like a lion. This legend connects the fierceness of the lion with the kindness of Buddhism. There is a Buddhist legend that lions can understand Buddhist Scripture, this is an expression of the spirituality of lions. People like to have lions as one of the gods they worship, and they believe that lions have a character just as kind and modest as other gods.¹⁶

Wind Lion Gods not only refers to lions, but also indicates the god of wind. “Wind Lion” is read as “feng shi” (風獅) which is phonetically the same as “Wind Master” (風師), the name of the common god of wind. The residents of Kinmen expect the wind lion gods to lessen damages caused by heavy winds. As the incarnation of the mix power and ferocity of lions and the powers and abilities of the god of wind, the Wind Lion Gods are spirits that lessen or prevent disaster and damage. Thus the Kinmenese revere them as extremely powerful spirits.¹⁷

¹⁵ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen* 金門風獅爺調查研究. 20

¹⁶ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 45

¹⁷ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 20

One origination myth is associated with the statue in Lu Cuo¹⁸ (呂厝). It is said that during the Ming dynasty a tomb for Chen Zhen was built near this village. In the front of this tomb a large horse statue was placed. The *fengshui* in this location was extremely good for the horse and it was able to absorb the benefit from both the earth and the sky. Unfortunately it absorbed too much power and became a dark horse that would escape its tether and go about eating the grain of the village. Eventually the people of the village set up a Wind Lion God to control this now harmful horse.¹⁹ At the present time Lu Cuo has two statues, both in the older “squat style.”²⁰

As can be seen on the map at the beginning of this chapter, there are more statues on the northeast side of the island. There are still quite a few on the southeast side, with fewer on the northwest. The fewest statues are found on the southwest side of the island. This is an obvious result of the winds coming out of the northeast for nine months of the year. Even in the villages the vast majority of the statues are on the northeast edge of the village area. If a statue has been placed on the southwest side of a village (for protection from the summer winds that blow from that direction) it is usually a secondary statue.

¹⁸ This village claims to have had the first Wind Lion in Kinmen.

¹⁹ Yang, TianHou 楊天厚, and LiKuan Lin 林麗寬, eds. *A Circuit Tour of Temples in Kinmen County 金門寺廟巡禮*. Taipei, Taiwan: Rice Field Press, 1998: 198

²⁰ See sections in “Forms” below for information on distinguishing physical characteristics

Statues are often put in or near the village entrance so they can keep a better eye out for strangers and enemies. Another concern that villagers must contend with is the statues of other villages. If a neighboring village has a statue facing the original village, and there is nothing between for protection, then the other village's statue may very well scare the evil spirits into the original village. This is a situation which may call for a new statue in the original village, so those spirits will choose to go elsewhere and not into either of these well-guarded villages.²¹ These statues are the first line of defense for their village; this is especially true for those that mark the boundaries of a village. The problem is that this becomes a circle, as each village puts up a new statue, then the next village must put up a statue to protect itself from the spirits fleeing the first village. Then the third village must put up a statue to protect itself from the spirits fleeing the first and second villages. This cycle can only end when all the villages have a statue.²²

It is also not uncommon to find a statue of a wind lion god near the village temple, 15 of the statues are associated with temples. This is unsurprising since the villagers see the temple as a place in need of protection so that worship can be

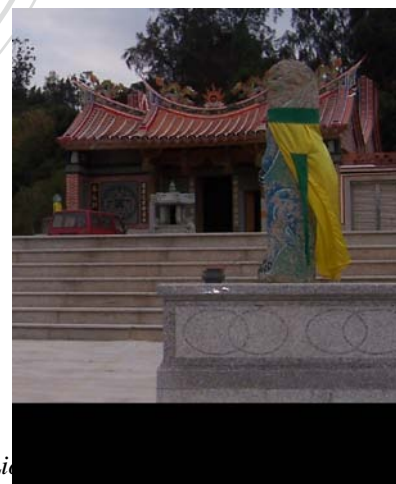


Photo 3: YangZhai 3 statue in front of the HuiShan Temple
會山寺

²¹ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods* 風獅爺調查研究. 46

²² Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 95

safely conducted and the god or gods within the temple can successfully so their duties without being harassed. When there is a special worshipping event at the temple, the villagers will invite the wind lion god into the ceremony as well.²³

2.1 Forms of Wind Lion God Statues

While the statues come in a wide selection of sizes, from the 3.8 meter An Qi statue to the 22cm Dong Heng (東珩) statue, most are somewhere between 1 and 2 meters.²⁴ Over time, there has been a definite physical evolution of the statues themselves. This can easily be seen simply by looking at them, but no records exist of carving orders, so definite dates for changes can not be established.

The oldest existing statues have all four legs on the ground, close to the body and crouch in very 'lion-like' positions. They usually do not have a lot of detail. Some have one foot on a ball, as would a typical tomb or temple guardian lion. As such I call them the 'squat' statues. They seem to be a lot less intricately carved though it is possible that since these are also badly eroded it is possible that the finer details



Photo 4: The statue in ZhongLan is a perfect example of a 'squat' form



Photo 5: The BiShan 1 statue is of the 'halfway' form

²³ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in 風獅爺調查研究*. 47

²⁴ Yang, TianHou 楊天厚, and LiKuan Lin 林麗寬, eds. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen*. Taipei, Taiwan: Rice Field Press, 2000: 63, 87

are simply no longer there. All of these statues are small, even the largest ones only rank among the medium size of the newer statues. These statues very definitely resemble what is normally thought of as the traditional Chinese lion guardian statue such as is frequently found in front of temples or guarding tombs.

Statues in the middle range of age²⁵ are still very much shaped like lions, but are no longer crouching on all four limbs. These gods sit up on their hind legs and raise their front paws. Even though they are sitting up, they may not necessarily be completely vertical. You can still see very animal-like details carved into them all the way around. This form I call the ‘halfway’ form. Chen²⁶ points out that, except for the terrifying face, the statues are decorated in ways that make them seem human-like and alive with emotions.

Most of these statues will hold a silk rope or handkerchief with a medallion or ball. This will bring them luck in their fight against evil forces.²⁷ It is in this form that the statues also start to hold military flags to give orders and to better protect the village.²⁸ It is also in this stage that the general body



Photo 6: GuanAo 2 exemplifies a ‘standing’ statue

²⁵ With no written records it is actually impossible to date these statues, so “age” is evaluated by appearance in regards to: clarity of carving, amount of erosion, style and posture.

²⁶ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 58

²⁷ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 65

²⁸ Hong, ChunLiu 洪春柳, ed. *Voice of Living in Kinmen County* 金門島居聲音. Taipei, Taiwan: Rice Field Press, 2001: 55

outline of the statues begins to itself resemble a penis, with a long shaft of a body and then a large head.

Finally, there is the ‘standing’ statue that is half-lion and half-man. These statues are completely vertical and almost all of them hold some sort of amulet to help in their battle against the wind-borne demons. By far the most common amulet is a *fengshui* Ba Gua (風水八卦) medallion on a rope, but other amulets include swords, ribbons, bells, a general’s flag, calligraphy brush and scroll, banner and a stamp.

According to Li and Huang²⁹ bells are for warning, while ribbons are for luck, gourds are for the health and blessing of children. Swords, stamps, banners and military flags are for fighting, while the calligraphy brush and scroll are for success in studies. While the oldest form does not carry anything except an occasional bell, ribbons and medallions start appearing on the halfway form statues and by the standing form all the decorations are commonly found.

It is said of these most modern statues that they are proof of the importance of the statues, and their involvement in the daily life of their village because they have evolved to be more human-like, even having hands and being able to grasp and hold

²⁹ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen* 金門風獅爺調查研究: 63

things. They have become more human because of their constant interactions with humans.³⁰

No matter how old or new the statue, their facial features all share some of the same basic characteristics, which seem to be the only required part of the design. In *The Wind Lions Gods of Kinmen* this is described as: prominent bulging eyes, and mouth stretched open wide to show bared teeth and a wide flat nose.³¹

The wind is his element. With the wind in his face, he glances about him with satisfaction, he bares his teeth, he lifts his head to the sky and roars. The Wind Lion stands alone. He comes in many different styles. But whether crouching lion-like, or standing man-like, he is equally unflinching. He carries human joys and sorrows as lightly as the cape that is often cast about his back. When the wind blows, shakes and heaves he stands undaunted; and when the wind dies away, human worries fade away too.³²



Photo 7: The ChengGong statue has a typical wind lion god face

There were a lot of legends about lions but few people had ever actually seen one face-to-face, so when the craftsmen were designing the lion statues, they used their imagination to emphasize the majesty of lions. The end result of this was that their facial expressions are

³⁰ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen 金門風獅爺調查研究*. 64

³¹ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen 金門風獅爺*. 65

³² Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, ed. *Classic Kinmen*. JinCheng, Taiwan: Kinmen County Government, 2003: 77

“exaggerated with frightening power”³³ and unrealistic. Their mouths are always open and carved deep to ensure maximum ability to swallow the wind.³⁴

Even with the traditional features of the face that must be included, there is great variety in the expressions on the statues. They can be smiling, laughing, staring, fierce, or proud. The positions of their bodies vary even more so, with some statues crouching and ready to jump up at evil spirits at a moments notice, a few are roaring, others are waiting, while still others are proudly surveying their territory.³⁵

There is great variety from one statue to another and no two are the same. The most similar two are the pair in Pu Bian (蒲邊) which are almost identical. Second to that set is the pair in Guan Ao (官澳) but they have one massive difference: one has been granted a rather large penis, the other has a blank groin. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of villages only have one statue. There are just more than a handful of villages with two, but except for Pu Bian and Guan Ao they are very obviously different statues, from different times and in different styles. Less than five villages have more than two statues.

³³ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen* 金門風獅爺調查研究. 21

³⁴ Shih, Sandra. Lions Protect Windswept Kinmen *Taiwan Journal* (2007)
<http://taiwanjournal.nat.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=24906&CtNode=122>. (accessed December, 2007).

³⁵ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 86

According to Lu and Huang³⁶ the island's foundation is mostly granite gneiss (花崗石), so most of the stone for the Wind Lion Gods was quarried locally and the vast majority of the statues are made from this. The one drawback to using this particular stone is that it is extremely hard and therefore not so great for intricate or delicate carvings. There are two other kinds of stone used Green Grass Stone (青草石) and QuanZhou White Stone (泉州白石).³⁷ These two stones are somewhat softer and allow for greater detail, though they are also different colors, with Green Grass Stone being a greenish rock, and QuanZhou White Stone being quite white. It is thought that the statues which are carved out of rock are “the most traditional and appropriate” ones.³⁸

Attempts have been made to use other materials to make the Wind Lion God statues, but none have been as durable. Another material tried was a brick core and cover it with a cement mixture. The least effective attempt was a statue in Dong Cun (東村) made out of unfired clay which was quickly eroded and badly damaged. The village tried to patch it with cement but finally wound up simply replacing it.



Photo 8: Broken DongCun statue³⁸

³⁶ Lu, ShuFei, and ShuMei Huang, eds. *Taiwan's National Parks*. Taipei, Taiwan: Construction and Planning Agency, Ministry of the Interior R.O.C., 2003: 41

³⁷ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen 金門風獅爺*. 58

³⁸ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen 金門風獅爺調查研究*. 49

*Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen*³⁹ reports that in 1994 there were 64 official statues in Kinmen. 52 of them were carved of granite, with the rest being cement or mud. This same statistic is cited in Chen's 1996 book *Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* on page 63.⁴⁰ Recently cement, molded or carved, has started being used with a high level of success, it is durable yet allows itself to be easily carved with intricate patterns. According to my own research, there are now 69 village statues on Kinmen Island, with the newest ones being mostly made out of molded cement.

A lot of the statues are painted, though there seems to be no more significance in this other than in bestowing honor. There is no official ritual or rite, nor time to repaint the statues, it is an individual decision that a person makes and follows through with. What is surprising is the detail of the painting; they are not simply just given a coat of paint, but very carefully painted in multiple colors with lots of detail. The paint serves to highlight different details in the carved rock. As of November 2007 the most common color used was blue, but Mr. Kuo Tsao Hwei (郭朝暉)⁴¹, Manager of the Cultural Heritage Division of the Kinmen Cultural Bureau, based in the Shang Yi Sustainable Park (尙義環保公園), a Wind Lion God themed tourist

³⁹ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen* 金門風獅爺調查研究. 48

⁴⁰ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 63

⁴¹ Kuo, Tsao-hwei 郭朝暉, (Dec 17, 2007) Manager of the Cultural Heritage Division, Cultural Bureau of Kinmen, *Interview* by Eric Lin, ShangYi Sustainable Park, Kinmen

park built by the Kinmen County Government, explained that there is no significance to this color, it's simply a personal preference by the person who has decided to buy the paint.

As was mentioned above, the newer statues are having some more features added to them, one of which is genitalia. Traditionally all Wind Lion Gods are thought of as male⁴² and as such there was no need for explicitly showing this. It is unclear why there has been a movement towards adding penises, and so far only 16 statues have them. Penises cannot be found on the older statues and on very few of the middle-age statues. The larger amount of penises is found on newer statues. However, not all of the newer

⁴² This can be seen by the fact that they all have curly manes around their heads, a feature of male lions

statues have penises; some are completely without, staying true to the older form of neuter representation. A few of the statues, however, have not been carved with penises, but instead have been given a bottle gourd (*hulu*- 葫蘆) in the same anatomical position. One theory about the bottle gourd is presented by Chen⁴³ “craftsmen often carve a bottle gourd on the genitals as in traditional Chinese society that is a way of praying for more children.” Shih⁴⁴ confirms this when she says that bottle gourds represent all things male because in Chinese lore a drinking gourd represents productivity and virility. It is also possible that the statue is simply using the gourd as a place to store any captured demons, or to heighten its healing powers as this gourd is often thought of as having medicinal uses.⁴⁵ One thing that is certain, none of the statues are female, they are either: male with a penis; male with a bottle gourd; or male / neuter with no genitalia. All of the statues have manes, whether realistically or symbolically, and are representations of male lions for the extra strength that the male being has over the female.

As for the penis itself, according to Dr. Weilie Hu, “Very traditional Chinese think of the penis as a 'life-spring' to carry on the

⁴³ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 68

⁴⁴ Shih, Sandra. *Lions Protect Windswept Kinmen*

⁴⁵ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 68



Photo 9: The XiaLan statue has a hulu



Photo 10: GuanAo 1 is the most well-endowed statue

ancestral line; indeed, they regard it to be the symbol of man.”⁴⁶ Mr. Kuo⁴⁷ of the Kinmen Cultural Bureau theorizes that as Kinmen suffers more and more from a decrease in population the fertility powers of the wind lion gods are becoming more and more important, so the penises are being made more explicit to match the residents’ explicit need for children. In *Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* Chen⁴⁸ claims that most of the statues that have exaggerated penises were made in China and exported to Kinmen.

As a penis is generally thought to represent intangible ideas like fertility, prosperity and longevity, it is would seem logical that the new statues are being given genitals as a more direct and graphic representation of the ability to grant what Kinmenese villagers desire.

2.2 Powers of the Wind Lion Gods

The powers of the Wind Lion God are varied; they do not exist merely to control the wind. That, obviously, is their primary and most important function, but in addition they do things as varied as bringing baby boys, controlling water, improving

⁴⁶ Saletan, William. "Giving Head: The First Human Penis Transplant." 2006.<http://www.slate.com/id/2150153/>, (accessed December, 2007).

⁴⁷ Kuo, Tsao-hwei 郭朝暉, Manager of the Cultural Heritage Division, Cultural Bureau of Kinmen, *Interview* by Eric Lin

⁴⁸ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 68

village *fengshui*, counteracting negativity associated with cemeteries and even fighting termite infestations.⁴⁹

From taming winds, subduing goblins, warding off evil, and answering prayers for good fortune, to granting the birth of children, driving out termites, finding lost property and keeping babies from crying in the night, or standing watch at the roadside to bar the way to evil—these are all among the services he is called upon to provide.⁵⁰

Not every statue has all of these powers. For example: in order to fight termites the Wind Lion needs the partnership of a white chicken (real and dead, or as a statue) so this power can be a temporary one that is only called upon when it is needed by any statue, or a permanent one for a wind lion god statue that has been paired with a white chicken statue.⁵¹

As for controlling water in various ways it is said that only seven villages ask this of their god. These villages are: Yang Zhai⁵² (陽翟), Liu Ou (劉澳) Bei Shan (北山), Xi Guo Shan (昔果山), Hou Zhai (后宅), Lu Cuo and An Qi (安岐). Each of



⁴⁹ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風

⁵⁰ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, ed. *Classic Kinmen*: 77

⁵¹ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion God* 風獅爺調查研究: 52

⁵² The only village to have 4 wind lions -- one in a park in the middle of town, one near a temple on the north side of town and two outside a temple on the east side of town (one to the west and the other to the east side).

Photo 11: Double Carp Lake can be seen beside the BeiShan Wind Lion God

these villages tailors their request for their own particular needs. Yang Zhai, Liu Ou and Bei Shan all have their statues near local waterways to help control flooding, as well as suppressing the evil spirits and ghosts that are in the water.⁵³ Conversely, Xi Guo Shan, Lu Cuo and Hou Zhai have placed their deity statues where they can overlook and safeguard their fields and wish for these gods to aggressively bring more rain with the objective of getting more water resources for their irrigation and cultivation. Finally the Wind Lion God of An Qi has a unique function. At 3.8 meters in height it is easily the tallest lion on the island and it is placed outside of town in an area where it can clearly be seen by those on the ocean. It therefore functions as a semi-lighthouse, semi-guiding beacon. It also usurps a little of the sea-goddess Matzu's⁵⁴ (媽祖) duty of helping those in peril upon the seas.⁵⁵

Kinmen is a small island surrounded by the violent waters of the Taiwan straights. Many of the residents make their living from these unpredictable waters. The fishermen and other boat men can suffer greatly at the whims of storms upon the

⁵³ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen 金門風獅爺調查研究*. 54

⁵⁴ It is said that she had supernatural powers and performed miracles, subduing evil spirits and averting disasters at sea. The first Taiwanese to worship Matsu were immigrants from mainland China. This can probably be traced to the fact that the immigrants came over on boats. Safe passage was by no means assured, however, and when the waves rose and storms beat down, many would pray to Matsu to look after them. Those who reached Taiwan would have the sense that Matsu had indeed saved them, and they would make her their patron deity for when they were at sea.

⁵⁵ TECO, New York, *Celebrating the Birth of Matzu: The Goddess of the Sea*. 2007. Government Information Office. <http://www.taiwanembassy.org/US/NYC/ct.asp?xItem=29883&ctNode=3483&mp=62&nowPage=3&pagesize=50> (accessed November 2007).

water, therefore it is not really surprising that there are statues whose powers extend offshore to help these Kinmenese people at sea.⁵⁶

All the Wind Lion Gods have the power to grant baby boys if they wish. “It has been customary that whenever a son is born, his parents are supposed to provide three piles of oysters to the side of the Wind Lion God as a tribute to increase its power on controlling winds.”⁵⁷ In order to encourage the Wind Lion God to grant a baby boy, villagers will give him offerings of very sweet candies.⁵⁸ However, if a woman is especially desperate for a child, she will go to a statue that has a gourd or a penis carved in its loins, there she “will make offerings of winter melons and sweet glutinous-rice balls to this statue, as these two things also symbolize prosperity and fertility in local customs.”⁵⁹ This particular facility has grown in importance over time as Kinmen suffers from a dropping population base. One statistic is for the years 1915 to 1929 when there was an almost 40% decrease in population from about 80,000 to less than 50,000 people. These people were unable to come back to the

⁵⁶ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 67

⁵⁷ Kinmen County. *The Pedigree of the Ou-yang Family (Jinmen Ou-yang shi zupu)*: 401

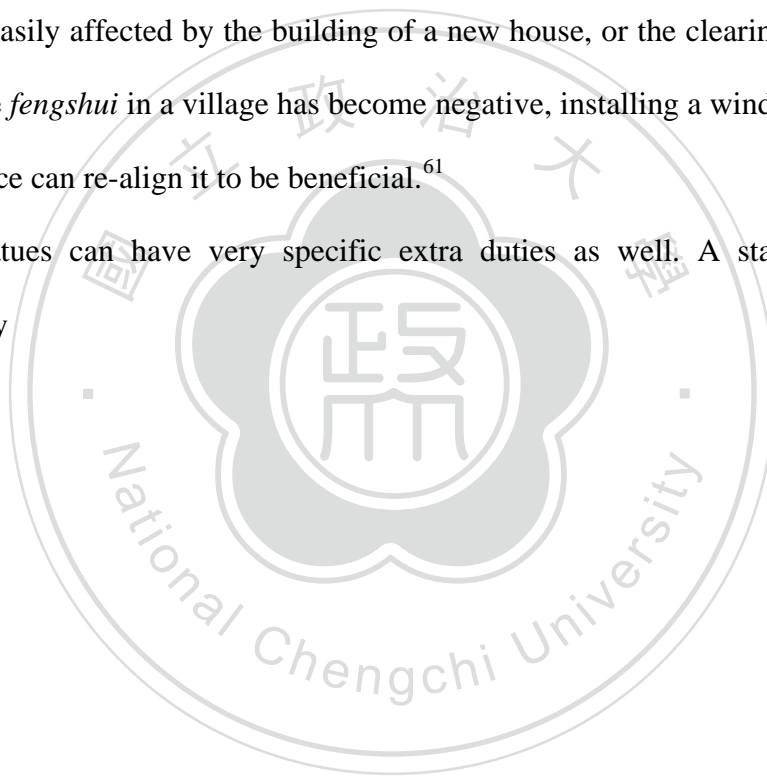
⁵⁸ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 61

⁵⁹ Shih, Sandra. *Lions Protect Windswept Kinmen*

island due to the political conflicts and wars that were happening there. Even after the war ended, martial law prevented many people from returning.⁶⁰

As mentioned above in the myth associated with the founding of the Lu Cuo statue, the wind lion gods can also adjust and improve the *fengshui* of a village. *Fengshui* is extremely important to traditional Chinese people, and to the Kinmenese. It can be easily affected by the building of a new house, or the clearing of trees in an area. If the *fengshui* in a village has become negative, installing a wind lion god in the proper place can re-align it to be beneficial.⁶¹

Statues can have very specific extra duties as well. A statue that has a calligraphy



⁶⁰ Xiao, FuYuan 蕭富元, ed. *Taiwan in One Hundred Years 風雲台灣一百年*. Taipei, Taiwan: Commonwealth Magazine, 2000: 8

⁶¹ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen 金門風獅爺調查研究*. 52

brush in its hand is meant to bring good luck to students or to anybody taking an exam. The brush is thought to represent the pen of Wen Chang Di (文昌帝), the Taoist god of literature, who helps people with career-related issues. Usually parents will visit these statues to light incense and pray for good luck for their children.⁶²

The powers granted to these statues changes over time and depending on need. In modern times not only are the gods asked to protect residents and harvests from the wind, but also to provide children (especially boys, as mentioned above), bring good health, and grant success in business and in study.⁶³ It is easy to conclude, from the changing needs of the residents and how the functions of the statues evolve to meet those needs, that the statues are still an important part of everyday village life in Kinmen. The statues gather people together and the villagers become friendlier and willing to help each other because of shared daily beliefs.⁶⁴



Photo 12: XiYuan 2 has a calligraphy brush and chop

⁶² Shih, Sandra. Lions Protect Windswept Kinmen

⁶³ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen 金門風獅爺調查研究*. 58

⁶⁴ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen 金門風獅爺*. 96

2.3 Worship of the Wind Lion Gods

Worship of these statues is highly individualized. Other than the rite for awakening and empowering a new statue there are few instances of communal rituals associated with these gods. Villagers ask other gods for the perfect time and place to set the wind lion gods. The installation and awakening ceremony is usually grand and splendid. If a wind lion god falls down and is not in the same position as before, the villagers do not move it back to the former place immediately, but choose another appropriate time and location to reset the statue.⁶⁵

One example of a local ceremony relates to the tallest (approximately 2m) statue of three in the town of Hou Shui Tou (後水頭). The town has a small birthday party for this god that is located in the courtyard of the Wen Yuan Temple (汶源宮), on the 5th of May every year where they give him bowls of pork noodles to make sure that he has a full tummy. They say that if he is full he will be better able to concentrate on guarding their village.⁶⁶ In general it is thought that the birthday of most of the wind lion gods is on August 15th.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen* 金門風獅爺調查研究: 56

⁶⁶ Yang, TianHou 楊天厚, and LiKuan Lin 林麗寬, eds. *A Circuit Tour of Temples in Kinmen County* 金門寺廟巡禮: 221

⁶⁷ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen* 金門風獅爺調查研究: 57

There is a general fund in each village for maintenance of the statues that can also be used to purchase new ones when they are needed. The village master makes this decision and decides what the new statue should look like. To awaken a new Wind Lion God there will be an official Kai Guang Kai Yan (開光開眼) ‘Open-Eyes Ceremony’ with at least the three parts: a consecration rite, a candle burning, and a gift exchange.

Starting with the chanting of a shaman or Taoist priest, a white chicken will be buried alive underneath the plinth of the wind lion god. Blood from its cockscomb is required to be marked on the leonine guardians’ eyes to “open” its vision...In most cases, the ritual or the process of communicating with these guardian angels carries on by burning paper money, candles and joss sticks. In some extreme cases, the ritual of communication is done by “feeding” Wind Lion God with food, especially sweets or sticky pastries as a lure or attraction to activate the connection between the celestial realm and the terrestrial world.⁶⁸

It is believed that the white chicken dramatically enhances all the powers of the wind lion god.⁶⁹

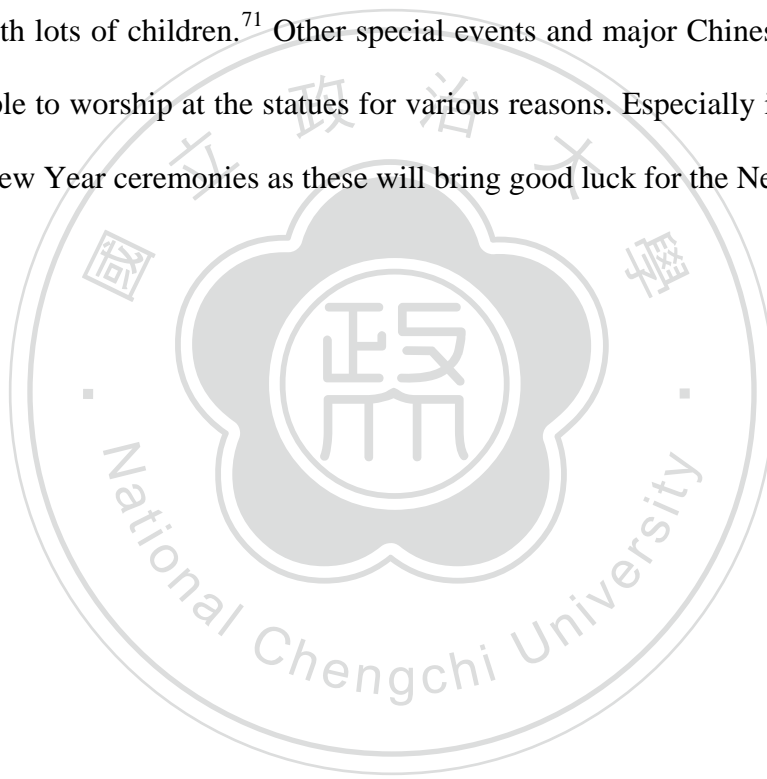
Generally the Wind Lion God is not demanding, he does his job and doesn’t require any sort of service in return for this. This is perhaps why there are very few public ceremonies associated with these statues, most of the time individuals give him offerings to entreat him to answer a specific personal entreaty and that is good enough.

⁶⁸ Young, Min-Chia. "The Conceptualization of a Guardian Angel: The Wind Lion God of Kinmen ." *The International Journal of the Humanities* 3, no. 5 (2005/2006): 169-78: 175

⁶⁹ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen 金門風獅爺調查研究*. 57

One of the few times that many people will come together to make offerings to the Wind Lion God is seven days after a funeral when they will present him with meat or fish and ask him to take away the bad fortune associated with the death and funeral.⁷⁰

Another time that groups of people will gather to pray to the wind lion gods is at weddings. In so doing they are wishing that the newly married couple will be blessed with lots of children.⁷¹ Other special events and major Chinese holidays will bring people to worship at the statues for various reasons. Especially important is the Chinese New Year ceremonies as these will bring good luck for the New Year.⁷²



⁷⁰ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 67

⁷¹ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 70

⁷² Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen* 金門風獅爺. 73

The rest of the time, offerings such as fruit or money (both ghost paper money and real coins) are given in thanks for answered prayers, for appreciation of a job well done, or in supplication for fulfillment of a desire. An example mentioned earlier was piles of oyster shells given to a wind lion god in thanks after the birth of a boy child.

Almost all of the statues have incense bowls in front of them and it is not uncommon to find candles sticks there as well. *Research of the Wind Lion God in Kinmen*⁷³ explains that due to the carnivorous nature of lions, people are a little afraid of their statue, so in order to keep them happy and well-fed they will fill his mouth with rare meats and sweet snacks.

Most of the statues are regularly given capes by the villagers as a way of thanking them for their protection against wind and sand storms, and also

because the villagers worry that the gods might get cold standing exposed to the elements year-round and want to make sure that they stay warm.⁷⁴ Chen⁷⁵ also states



⁷³ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen 金門風獅爺調查研究*. 57

⁷⁴ Yu, Fu 魚夫. *Visiting Kinmen with Yu Fu 魚夫帶你遊金門*. Taipei, Taiwan: Discovery Culture Press, 1999: 34

Photo 13: Several kinds of offerings were given to the QingYu Wind Lion God

that capes are given as thanks for a specifically prayed for blessing that was granted. Since the capes are never removed but are left on the statues until they rot, one can judge the efficacy of a statue based on how many capes it is wearing.⁷⁶ This is not universally true, however, as some villages don't bestow capes on their statues.



Photo 14: A replica of the XiHu Wind Lion God in a small land-god temple

⁷⁵ Chen, BingRong 陳炳容, ed. *The Wind Lion Gods of Kinmen 金門風獅爺*. 53

⁷⁶ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, and KuoTai Huang 黃國泰, eds. *Research of Wind Lion Gods in Kinmen 金門風獅爺調查研究*. 58

There is one feature of the Kinmen Wind Lion God that is extremely unique in Chinese culture. The Wind Lion God is the only god that is never inside a temple. They are elemental gods, and in order to better control their element that need to be out in it. Occasionally, as villages expand, buildings or walls are built around the statues depending on the needs dictated by the growing village. These walls are not designed specifically to enclose the statues⁷⁷. This does not interfere with their powers however, as they are gods after all. In the village of Xi Hu (泗湖) there is a unique situation. They have a tall thin new-style Wind Lion God on the hill over their village, but just down the path about 15 meters closer to the village is a tiny knee-high temple. It is an almost typical Chinese land-god temple except that within this temple there is a tiny replica of the larger Wind Lion God. The temple is indeed a land-god temple and is not dedicated to the wind lion god, but this is the only instance that was found where any image of a Wind Lion God was inside a temple.

Instead of having a roof over his head, the statues are intentionally placed in the direct path of the wind. This means that the heavy northeasterly winds in winter and only slightly less powerful southwesterly winds in the summer dictate that most statues are placed either in the northeast or southwest corners of the villages. Of 69 statues on the island 42 face either north or northeast, with another 13 face south or southwest. Thus, 78% of the statues on the island face into the predominant winds.

⁷⁷ The two statues that were the most difficult to find for documenting had been enclosed in walled-in gardens behind houses. Local village children had to be convinced to lead us to them.

That means the total for all the remaining directions (northwest, southwest, east and west) is only 22%. “Accustomed to frogs croak and insects chirrup, cocks crow and dogs bark, and the hubbub of human voices, the Wind Lion stands on the outskirts of the village, but in the center of people’s hearts.”⁷⁸



⁷⁸ Li, ZhuFeng 李炷烽, ed. *Classic Kinmen*: 77

