

History on Sky Lanterns

According to legend, sky lanterns (or "Kong Ming lanterns") were first invented by Kong Ming, a famous strategist, during the Three Kingdoms Period. In order to transmit military intelligence, Kong Ming utilized similar theories to those which were employed in the invention of the hot-air balloon when inventing the sky lantern. A general from Kong's rival camp named Sima Yi mistook the light of the lanterns in the sky for stars and subsequently misread the astrological charts. Sky lanterns gradually caught on thereafter, becoming a medium through which mortals could send prayers to heaven. In modern times, people still launch sky lanterns to pray for a prosperous and successful New Year.

The Sky Lantern Festival in Pingshi Township has been celebrated for some 100 years. Based on unofficial historical accounts, the then Pingshi Township was inhabited by early settlers from China. However, as Aborigines from the plains would loot local villages after dark, the locals would send the old and weak, as well as women and children, to hide in safe places in the hills before nightfall. Only male villagers would remain to defend their homes. As soon as the looters had left, the male villagers would launch sky lanterns to signal to their fellow villagers in the hills that it was safe to return. Over the years, launching sky lanterns has evolved into a festive activity, attracting tens of thousands of tourists each year during the Sky Lantern Festival. The Sky Lantern Fest in Northern Taiwan and the Firework Festival in Southern Taiwan have also become two of the most popular festivals in Taiwan. People write prayers for family and friends on the lanterns, and as the lanterns slowly rise into the sky, people makes wishes, asking for their prayers to come true in the New Year.