

Striving Towards a Modern Coastal Metropolis

Observing Qingming Festival in Spring

By Xu Zhuowei

A drizzling rain falls like tears on the Mourning Day; the mourner travels with his heart lost in dismay.

This quote is from one of the best-known poems by 9th-century Chinese poet Du Mu. The "Mourning Day" mentioned in the poem is the Chinese Tomb-Sweeping Day, also called the Qingming Festival.

Qingming's Long History

Qingming Festival is a celebration rooted in Chinese culture and marks one of the 24 solar terms in the lunar calendar. Falling between mid- and late spring, it is an occasion for the Chinese to remember and to make ritual offerings to our ancestors. Alternative names for the Festival include Qingming Festival can trace its origins to ancestor worship beliefs and springtime rituals in ancient China. Tomb-sweeping and nature trips are the two main activities of the Festival, having been practiced for thousands of years.

Almost every Chinese family will head to cemeteries to clean and sweep the tombs of their deceased family members. People use this occasion to honor the memories of their dead, keep alive the traditions of a timeless legacy, and to feel more grounded spiritually in our modern world.

For many office workers, Qingming Festival is a time to go out for a hike and take a break from their busy work routine. For those who value to tradition, it is a time that evokes a sense of nostalgia. Together, these emotions shape the modern-day Tomb-Sweeping Day that we are familiar with.

In some areas of southern China such as Ningbo, there is a custom of eating *qingtuan* (green rice ball) during the Festival. They are made of glutinous rice dyed with the juice of barley grass and con-



Volunteers are making traditional food.

[Photo by Xu Neng]

tain differently-flavored fillings. Their soft texture, delicious taste, and subtle herby fragrance of herbs will make you feel as if you are biting into spring itself.

Sales of Qingming Food Surge

With the approach of Qingming, seasonal treats such as *qingtuan* (green rice ball), *maci* (fried glutinous rice cake), and *jintuan* (golden rice ball) are taking center stage in pastry stores and supermarkets, attracting many consumers. This year, many new flavors are making a debut, alongside traditional ones.

"You have to go as early as possible. After 3 pm, the freshly-made *qingtuan* and *jintuan* will be sold out," citizen Ms. Lou instructed her husband. Rice-based treats from the best-known local brands sell out quickly, so it is always a good

idea to head over early in the day. As the holiday draws near, traditional pastry sales are going up.

At one of the oldest pastry stores in Ningbo, a chef brings out trays of freshly-steamed sweet buns and stamps a red pattern on the center of each one. The buns, *qingtuan*, and *jintuan* are arranged neatly on the counter. A store clerk is busily packaging the *qingtuan*, *jintuan*, and sweet buns and handing them to the waiting customers. *Qingtuan* and *jintuan* are sold at a price of 2.8 yuan to 5 yuan each.

"We have been doing very good business lately. Usually, everything would be sold out by afternoon. Customers who arrive late would have to come again the next day," said a store clerk. Most of the pastries will be used as offerings at Qingming rituals or consumed at housewarming and birthday celebrations.

In a large supermarket on Tianhe Road, Jiangbei, a large display of *qingtuan* offers consumers over ten flavors to choose from: sesame, rice-and-red-bean, pumpkin-and-orange, strawberry, jujube, taro, peanut, and pork floss. People can be bought by box or by weight.

Digital Tomb-Sweeping Booking System Launched

For this year's Qingming Festival, Ningbo has once again opened the citywide digital system for pre-booking cemetery entry. By inputting their identity information, citizens can pre-register to sweep their family's new tombs. This is the system's second year in use. New functions have been added.

According to Ningbo custom, new tombs must be swept on the day of Qingming Festival. This year's system has a new section specifically for those sweeping new tombs,

prioritizing their bookings for the time slots of April 5th.

To reduce crowding and prevent the risk of the pandemic spreading, the Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau rolled out a "virtual tomb-sweeping" function on WeChat. Citizens can enter the information of their deceased on the *Ningbo Minzheng* ("Ningbo Civil Affairs") WeChat account to offer virtual flowers, candles, and messages.

Cemeteries in Ningbo are also opening online platforms where citizens can host virtual rituals free of charge. For example, on Tongtai Jialing Cemetery's website, citizens can view real-time video feeds of their deceased's tombs and offer virtual flowers, joss sticks, fruits, and cups of tea or spirits. The VR function gives visitors an immersive, panoramic view of their loved ones' final resting place.

SPOTLIGHT

Intelligent Equipment Made in Ningbo Ensures Tunnel Safety

By Gou Wen

Major international sporting events are not only a stage for top athletes from around the world to compete, but also a showcase of cutting-edge technology.

The Hangzhou Bo'ao Tunnel is one of key infrastructure projects in the run-up to the 2022 Asian Games. Its tunnel evacuation and rescue system was independently developed by Ningbo Heliweiye Fire Science and Technology Co., which has successfully acquired several technology patents for their invention.

"Even in the worst case scenarios—external power failure, fire alarm signal failure, internal wire breakage—the system can still be quickly started up manually," said Xie Hong, general manager of Heliweiye. The system can even be started up remotely.

The system has been hailed as a "model tunnel evacuation system" in Hangzhou. In the future, it is expected to be used in new tunnel construction projects in Ningbo, Shantou, and Suzhou.

Innovation is the key to the success of this system. Xie Hong explained that conventional escape portal covers in evacuation tunnels around the world are usually difficult to open manually and have a high failure rate.

But it was this worldwide lack of escape portal cover R&D that motivated Xie Hong and his colleagues to innovate.

Although the R&D team is small, they have excellent engineering skills and a culture that encourages innovation. By cleverly incorporating a window-opening mechanism invented by the company, the team managed to design a new portal cover within three months.

"The force required to open this new cover is 75% less than opening a conventional cover. It is one of the most effective evacuation systems available on the market," said Xie Hong.



Chief Adviser: Zhao Qingchuan
Proofreader: Dong Na



双语汇 Different Tongues

走马塘：中国进士第一村

By Dong Na

The thousand-year-old ancient village of Zoumatang is located in Jiangshan Town, Yinzhou District. It is considered "one of the oldest settlements in Ningbo, where many great scholars were born, surrounded by majestic rivers and hills, and embraced by fertile lands and rivers".

In the village, there are many ancient buildings from the Ming and Qing Dynasties (14th to early 20th century). The villagers are simple and honest folk. Throughout the dynasties, 76 scholars from Zoumatang received the *Jinshi* degree, the highest and final degree in the imperial examination in Imperial China, earning the village the name "home of China's *Jinshi*".

千年古村走马塘位于鄞州区姜山镇，人称其为“四明古郡，文献

之邦，有江山之胜，水陆之饶”。村中明清古建筑众多，民风淳朴。历朝历代，这里出过76位进士，被誉为“中国进士第一村”。

Historical records show the village was built in 988 AD during the Duangong Period of the Northern Song Dynasty, when a family surnamed Chen moved to the area from Changzhou, Jiangsu Province. Eight Ming Dynasty buildings and many Qing Dynasty buildings are still standing. There are also three buildings from the early 20th century, bearing typical signs of Western architectural influence.

据历史记载，它始建于北宋端拱年间（公元988年），当年陈氏从江苏长洲迁此歇脚居住，至今已逾千年。村中明代建筑尚有8处，清代建筑比比皆是，另外三幢民国时期具有西洋痕迹的建筑也极为典型。

What makes Zoumatang Village even more impressive is its stone art, the best of which



The Zoumatang Village./ 走马塘村。

[Photo by Yan Long] 严龙 摄

being the homes' stone lattice windows. Stone lattice windows are rare in China. The stone lattice windows of Zoumatang are not only exquisitely carved, but also rich in symbolism.

走马塘更令人赞叹的是它的石头艺术，其中最著名的就是石雕花窗。以石头做窗在国内实属罕见，

走马塘的石花窗不仅雕刻精美，且寓意丰富。

In an old residence near the village's North River, one window's stone latticework form the Chinese characters 第一 (*dì yī*, "number one"), meant to inspire younger generations to seize the first place; another window's lattice form the characters 乾坤

(*qian kun*, "heaven and earth"), serving as a reminder for younger generations to always keep the world in mind and serve the country.

古村的北河老屋上石雕“第一”文字窗，鼓励后人抢夺第一；“乾坤”文字窗，希望后人胸中有乾坤，时刻不忘报效国家。