



Good Practice Story Title: *Be a Sharer: The Revitalization of the Traditional Orange Turtle Sharing Culture*

Destination: Yilan Park of National Center for Traditional Arts (NCFTA)

Country: Taiwan

Submitting Organization: Sunmake Cultures Foundation (an Foundation entrusted by the government to operate National Center for Traditional Arts)

Category:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- X Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

Destination description:

1. Yilan Park of National Center for Traditional Arts (NCFTA), located in Yilan county in the north east of Taiwan, which is operated by Sunmake Cultures Foundation under the consent of government project. "The NCFTA is an intermediary organization and destination of culture which shoulders the responsibility of heritage, innovation and sustainability. Moreover, it is also an platform which connects traditional arts with life memories of people through cultural services and management, integrating traditional arts to everyday life.

NCFTA is 24 ha in area, and in there 3 traditional heritage buildings under preservation work, and 3 boulevards with traditional Taiwan craft/art shops and spaces. In addition, there are concert, exhibition and theater halls in the park. NCFTA has high cooperation with local artists and performers in traditional performances all year round.

2. SieTian Temple, a local belief temple of Taoism, was built in 1804, located in Jiaoxi town, Yilan County, where is about 20 km from NCFTA. SieTian Temple dedicated to God Emperor Guan Gong.

The two places are both located in Yilan where composed of alluvial fan plains. Most of the people living here are embraced by towering mountains. The wind from the Pacific Ocean



brings moisture, and rainy days have become a daily routine here. The good weather allows for a bumper harvest of crops here every year. Therefore, the residents here will enthusiastically share their excess food with their surrounding neighbors. The concept of "**sharing**" deeply affects Yilan's daily life and is very important in Yilan's culture.

There is a special-shaped island on the sea. It looks like a turtle, so the residents here call it Turtle Island. It can be seen in almost every corner of Yilan. The "turtle" has become the spiritual symbol of the residents here, who believe that turtles will bring good luck and peace. Yilan has an excellent natural environment and culture. Tourism and farming have become the main economic pillars here. Every visitor to Yilan will know that Yilan has arrived as soon as they see Turtle Island. Similarly, the image of turtles has fallen into the lives of Yilan people. Whether it is temple decoration or food, turtles can be seen almost everywhere.

Summary of Good Practice Story:

"The Orange Turtle Sharing Ceremony", an intangible culture has been inheriting and developing in Yilan for nearly sixty years. Residents use local plants (bamboo) as material to weave into the shape of a turtle, and filled with local fruit - oranges and kumquats to pray to the gods for peace and good luck in the coming year. Turtle represents longevity and peace in Chinese culture, and orange sounds like auspiciousness in Chinese. These offerings have excellent meanings, and both represent good luck. After ceremony, the fruits inside the bamboo turtle will be shared together, that symbolizes sharing good luck with others.

During the interview, the local elders said that only the worshippers of the SieTian Temple (local beliefs of Taoism) at Jiaoxi are left to maintain such traditional ceremony, but it is still very hard for them to hold on to.



The Sunmake Cultures Foundation take the responsibility of revitalization of Intangible folk art, started from inventory resources, field study and inviting craftsman in passing the skills. The target is to preserve intangible traditional skills and cultural ceremony of **"The Orange Turtle sharing culture"**.

Issues faced:

A news titled "Bamboo Turtle Has Infinite Meaning," on Central Daily News in 1979 reported the unique culture of turtle-shaped offering in SieTian Temple at Jiaoxi, Yilan, in which the turtle shaped bamboo basket was rated by experts as an outstanding folk art (heritage). The SieTian Temple has been holding "The Orange Turtle Sharing Ceremony" for nearly sixty years. On every



lunar 13th January the day the God Emperor GuanSheng's big day till the 16th January, the temple holds the orange turtle sharing ceremony. One large and four small bamboo-woven turtles would be filled with local produce of oranges in Yilan, which not only has the meaning of good luck, but also to show their deep gratitude to God with their own harvest. The worshipers pray for prosperity for the following year, and share offerings and blessings after worship; a local culture rich in cycles of goodness.

However, under the influence of urban development, the young population of Yilan has moved out, and this precious cultural asset is faced with problems such as the breakup of generation inheritance, the loss of weaving skills, the difficulty of interpretation and the new year ceremony is limited to one-day, the 15th January Lantern Festival. As a result, **only SiTian Temple still keep this sharing ceremony in Taiwan.**

Over time, the local industrial structure has changed, and new generation rarely engage in agricultural work. They seek better job opportunities elsewhere. Only some old people are still engaged in agriculture, so many temples have stopped using orange turtles to pray for a good harvest in the coming year. People hardly feel the changes of seasons and the growth cycle of crops. The traditional "sharing culture" has gradually disappeared from daily life. The faster and faster lifestyle is eroding our generation and the next generation. Just like the problems encountered around the world, we should start think about long-term and sustainable ways to live on the earth, slow down the pace, and be better with the world. Re-feel the joy of sharing again.

This issue can be broken down into two aspects:

- 1. The disappearance of worship ceremony:** As mentioned before, due to industrial transformation and the migration of young people, the traditional sacrificial culture has gradually disappeared. thus, there is only one temple left in Taiwan to continue this tradition.
- 2. The disappearing bamboo weaving skill:** It is a pity that the artist who was able to weave the turtle-shape basket before the preservation has passed away. As a result, no one can make the basket anymore. Can not be repaired, if the basket is damaged.





Solution:

To inherit traditional culture as a mission, through the concept of "become a cultural sharer!" of sea turtle to revive **"The Orange Turtle Sharing Culture"**, and to implement the sustainable regeneration. The foundation started the **revitalization of the Intangible folk art and ceremony project to record, measure and training and public education.**

Since no next generation is willing to pass on this tradition of Orange Turtle, the foundation has taken on this important responsibility and is committed to becoming a "sharer".

We started with our own team members to learn the worship ceremony from the elders from the temple in the most rigorous way, and then studied how to replicate the weaving process. After putting a lot of hard work and learning, we finally became qualified "sharers" by Elders in the temple.

We plan to gradually expand the influence of "sharing culture", from local communities to more people across Taiwan. We invite more people to become sharers and pass on the sharing culture of "The Orange Turtle Sharing Culture" together!



Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

STAGE 1 : Become a qualified sharer first (2018~2019)

1. Field investigation & oral history study: (2018)

Initiated and started field investigation, invited experts, scholars, and temple staff for writing to dictation. Try to repair this broken history with memory fragments.

2. Learning about traditional ceremony: (2018~2019)

Just like successors, our employees learn from the elders in the temple how to perform worship ceremony. From the placement methods, process, prayers, etc., we all learn in the most traditional way.

3. Retrieve the lost bamboo turtle basket weaving skills: (2018~2019)

a) In the beginning, our foundation found no elder craftsman to recreate the bamboo weaving, the skill supposed to be lost, and after many inquiries, we cooperated with Taiwan indigenous craftsmen, Blyah Yumin in Yilan area, and Kaling Diway in Hualian to retrieve the orange turtle weaving techniques, great difficulties of many bending and turning, together and have finally succeeded after tremendous efforts.





The most important thing is that we preserve the most important weaving technique of Orange Turtle, **the hexagonal weaving** method.

- b) Train more bamboo weaving craftsmen under **“The Successors of Traditional Arts Plan”** to recreate the **bamboo turtle baskets**. Include orange turtle weaving as one of the craftsman qualifying examination.

After the above efforts, our learning results have passed the multiple assessments of elders in the temple and some historical scholars. By then, we are certified as qualified sharers by elders in the temple, ready to share sharing-culture with more people!

STAGE 2 : Spread The Orange Turtle sharing Ceremony in Yilan local communities and more (2020~now)

After becoming qualified sharers, we began to think about how to share culture. So we first start to influence the local area. Of course, the most important thing for us is to start educating children. We cooperate with schools to carry out cultural education programs so that teachers, students and parents can enter the NCFTA to learn about The Orange Turtle Sharing Culture. At the same time, they can learn more about Taiwanese culture and get more knowledge at a much cheaper ticket price.

At the same time, as we mentioned before, Yilan is a tourist destination. Many people will take the initiative to travel to the local area who are very important relational. We cooperate with SieTian Temple on the sustainable tourism project to bring the newly produced orange turtle back to It, and introduces the history of the Orange Turtle to every tourist who comes to worship, making tourism more meaningful.



1. Let turtles migrate back home, create local sustainable tourism: (2020)

We brought the newly made orange turtle back to worship ceremony to participate in the Lantern Festival in Xietian Temple, and explained of the orange turtle story to every tourist who came to worship, making the local trip more meaningful and in-depth , promoting cultural sustainable tourism.

2. Turtle’s new base, establishes a connection between children and their hometown: (2020~now)

For us, cultural education should start from childhood, so we began to carry out cultural education activities in Wenchang Temple(in the NCFTA). We invited Local students came to experience the Orange Turtle culture. They also started to experience the ceremony and gradually experienced the simple weaving method. The development relationship between the Orange Turtle sharing culture and Yilan's history was explained to them. Help the children





rediscover their connection with their hometown and let them co-prosper with nature more humbly.

3. Create an open database of detailed orange turtle history, ceremony, and weaving methods: (2020~now)

We plan a permanent exhibition about the Orange Turtle's detailed information, include worship ceremony, history, weaving skills, etc. in Scholar Huang's Residence in the NCFTA. We believe it is a physical open database that allows information to be shared selflessly with more people.

STAGE 3 : Touring the whole of Taiwan, making sharing culture a daily routine again (2021~now)

Spread the culture story from activities & Display in whole country :every year during the Lantern Festival from year 2021, the PX Mart stores (Group owned supermarket brand) in every counties and cities would take turn to display the orange turtle, and foundation also promote the culture in schools , temples and communities around Taiwan.

1. Operation of The Orange Turtle migration across Taiwan: (2021)

The SieTian Temple mainly prays for students to go well in exams, so we searched for 24 temples and monuments across Taiwan based on goodwill for studies. Hope that good luck by the Orange Turtle, can be passed to more local students.

This time we took the orange turtle to various places and displayed it in Wenchang Temples or monuments, and invited local students to be the performers of the ceremony. Through personal experience of culture, so that traditional skills remain in memory. We looking forward to the day when students will also share taiwan's culture with others.



2. Small local museums: transforming supermarkets into cultural museums: (2021~now)

PX Mart store is a well-known supermarket in Taiwan and one of the brands of our group. We turn the supermarket into a small museum and put the orange turtle on top of the product shelves for display. We also teach supermarket employees to become docents to introduce and explain, so that people can enjoy the museum exhibitions in the supermarket. Get sharing-cultural information in the easiest way.

Moreover, we also conduct activities such as bamboo weaving courses and Lantern Festival cultural promotion(Sweet Dumpling) in supermarkets, so that families can participate together.

STAGE 4 : Future plans, more creative combinations (2024~)

The greater the influence of the orange turtle culture, and it has become more and more famous. We began to think about various possibilities, such as cross-border cooperation, promotion of other cultural issues, etc.





1. Designing more creative products: (2024)

We are now about to launch orange turtle cake and digital AR experience. All through cross-border cooperation.

2. Start the orange turtle weaving school: (2025)

Due to the difficulty of weaving a turtles, currently only professional craftsmen know how to weave a whole turtle, but most people only know how to weave other containers. We plan to offer long-term courses in the future to teach people how to weave a whole turtle, teach them from amateur weavers into professional weavers.

3. Become a successful case of cultural promotion: (2025)

Thanks to the efforts of the past few years, the successful promotion of Orange Turtle culture has become quite famous in Taiwan. We plan to share the valuable experience of this successful cultural preservation project with various museums, universities, etc. in the future.

Achievements and Results:

Social Benefits:

1. Successfully preserved an important Taiwanese culture that is about to disappear, **The Orange Turtle Sharing Culture.**
2. **109 staff members** are skilled and able to perform the Orange Turtle Sharing Ceremony.
3. Since 2021, **20 professional bamboo weavers** have been trained by “The Successors of Traditional Arts Plan” of the bamboo “hexagon” waaving skill. (The main bamboo weaving techniques of Orange Turtle.)
4. The lost bamboo turtle basket weaving skill is properly retrieved, and created **20 orange turtles** were recreated to initiate activities & displays around Taiwan.
5. Since 2021, The Orange Turtle Cultural Exhibition has been held in **41 selected PX Mart stores.** And started from year 2021, **about 600,000 people** have been either visiting the permanent exhibitions, participating in orange turtle luck sharing activities during Lantern Festival, PX Mart store exhibitions, or worshipping ceremonies.
6. In 2021, we cooperated with **11 Wenchang temples or historical sites** to promote the orange turtle culture, and at the same time, we worked with at least one nearby school to teach students about the ceremony.
7. Since 2021, **240,000 students and 2,500 schools** have come to the NCFTA to learn about Taiwanese culture and the Orange Turtle.
8. Since 2021, At least **12 weaving craft classes** have been held every year to teach how to weave hexagonal bamboo weaving techniques.

Environmental Benefits:

1. Teach every participating child the relationship between crop growth and traditional culture.
2. Every orange used in the ceremony comes from local agricultural products.





3. The materials used in each weaving course are all locally produced bamboo.

Economic Benefits:

1. Starting from 2021, approximately **20,000 visitors** will come to the NCFTA to participate in the Orange Turtle Ceremony on the Lantern Festival every year.
2. The NCFTA is a well-known cultural tourist attraction in Yilan and a domestic benchmark cultural park. Since 2017, it has attracted approximately 6.5 million visitors at home and abroad. Creating a tourism economy in Yilan, foreign tourists spent more than NT\$11 billion in Yilan.
3. Since 2021, the cooperation with supermarkets is expected to sell 37,045 oranges from local farms.

Lessons Learned and Advice:

1. Be creative and break some rules:

Just like the difficulties encountered by all traditional cultures, fewer and fewer people are willing to listen or feel it. Based on our experience, we use "creativity" to attract attention, and make people feel fun.

When we studied the culture of the Orange Turtle from SieTian Temple, we found that if we don't break some rules, we may face the same dilemma as SieTian Temple. It cannot meet the current era of fast pace and commercial interests, and there will be obstacles in promotion. so we need to think out of the box!

First of all we re-designed the experience. Fortunately, we established a cultural foundation from the supermarket group, so our team members are full of business knowledge and creativity, and try their best to make the experience interesting.

We know that traditional rituals cannot be changed, so we retain our core "sharing" then change other things. such as new way of online marketing, exhibitions, games, etc., to make the traditional culture no longer difficult to understand and can be felt from daily life.

2. The Integration of existing resources for widely spread the traditional story :

With the mission of "retrieving traditional folk art skill and inheriting a lifestyle of community and goodness"

"The Orange Turtle sharing culture" has been regularly displayed in the NCFTA, and the worshipping activities are held from time to time, so as to fulfill the responsibility of cultural education and effectively integrate internal and external resources into the cultural sustainability.





Through the group's cross-sector marketing resources and business volume the National Center for Traditional Arts (NCFTA), operated by PX Mart, can help with cultural inheritance. This project invites island-wide PX Mart stores, Wenchang temples and academies, schools, experts and scholars, craftsmen, and etc. to participate in the revitalization of Orange Turtle, and successfully **spread** and **promote** the cultural assets of “**The Orange Turtle sharing culture**”.

Recognitions and Additional References

1. Permanent Exhibition: Orange Turtles Share the Culture of Peace and Good Luck
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2. 2024 Sustainability of the NCFTA: Memory and skills of Traditional Arts
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltCbUdZgits>
3. PX Mart and the NCFTA: Lantern Festival prayer ceremony for good luck
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hg161nLWlc>
4. PX Mart and the NCFTA: The Revitalization of the Traditional Orange Turtle Sharing Culture
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krNPzETpkto>
5. Lifeintaiwan - How can I ever repay TAIWAN?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yh5LjuthoxU&t=26s>
6. The Successors of Traditional Arts Plan
<https://www.ncfta.gov.tw/cp.aspx?n=2813>

