

Site Visit #1

On Wednesday, November 12, I attended the program “Seeking the Sacred of Asia: Food and Faith” that took place in the Norton Culinary Center at LCCC. My religious affiliation is Catholic, but I also have visited a Buddhist Temple in Taiwan when I was a young child, so I also was educated on Buddhism. Because of that, this program was of great interest. The program started out with several cultural performances that came from different parts of Asia. The first performance I observed was the Chinese Erhu, played by Janice Liu. The instrument played was an intricately carved string instrument, almost similar to a cello in a way. Janice played six different pieces. It was explained that each song had a story and a certain emotion that it evoked. For example, the last two songs were called “Old Train” and “Withered Flower”. “Old Train” was to evoke the feeling of traveling in a train through the countryside, while “Withered Flower” described a story of a country girl falling for a city boy, and it evoked a feeling of pain and suffering. After the Chinese Erhu, the next performance was a Korean Talchum Dance, performed by Giyoung Lee, Irene Chan, and Woojin Jeon. This was described as a traditional masked dance, and the dancers could act out as animals or even supernatural beings. The dancers wore black costumes that have red, yellow, and blue sleeves, and colored masks, and they waved white pieces of fabric while they danced. The dance itself included synchronized movements, a bit of yelling, and the movements were done with precision. The music that was played for the dance had a strong beat a fast melody. After the Korean Talchum Dance, I observed a performance of the Cambodian Takhe and Tro by Em Sovan and Sou Hoeth. There were two instruments played, and the performers played two types of pieces, one for example was called “Ju Jung” and that type of piece is played in all happy events in Cambodian culture. After the three performances, there were three presentations. The first was a presentation of Chinese

Confucianism/Daoism by visiting professor Dr. Yizhen Wang. He talked about Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist culture. He also explained while Buddhism and Daoism are religions, Confucian is in fact not a religion. Furthermore, Dr. Yizhen Wang described the Confucian and Daoist culture and how that tied into the farming culture and food in religion. He talked about the significance of the letter kǒu for food and faith, explaining it as a part or “mouth”. He said that food was a necessity to the people. Then, he talked about the way of nature in the Confucian and Daoist culture. He also explained that “round” things are a key symbol in their culture. Also, how one eats in Daoist culture if they were a vegetarian. Then, the presentation moved on to the next presenter. The next presentation was about Cambodian Buddhism presented by Mr. Born Nai. He began with a brief history of Cambodia and the introduction of Buddhism. He explained the two types of Buddhism that were prevalent in Cambodia, which were Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. He went on to talk about the monks and their way of life and culture. I learned that the monks practice self-control and moderation, especially when it comes to food. He explained how food and Buddhism tie in with each other, because food is offered to the monks for example. I also learned that monks collect alms. Mr. Born Nai also talked about the Buddhist dietary practice, and he explained that there are no set dietary laws one must follow, but instead just do not be greedy about food. After this presentation, Dr. Young Ko presented about Korean Ancestral Rite and Japanese Shintoism. I learned about how Koreans have a shrine in their homes for their ancestors, and it started with honoring four generations, to two, then even to just deceased parents. Dr. Ko explained that it happens as a result of people having busier schedules, that they start performing the ritual at night instead of the morning. The ritual consists of prayers, preparing a table with food at the shrine, and bowing. He explained the respect that Korean culture has for the elderly and the dead. After learning about Korean Ancestral Rites, Dr.

Ko presented about Japanese Shintoism. He explained about the Kami, and how they are in different forms, such as water or thunder. He explained about honoring the Kami in Japanese Shintoism culture. After Dr. Ko's presentation, we were given the opportunity to taste different foods of the Asian religious culture. I had the opportunity to try curry from the Cambodian Buddhist culture, dumplings from the Chinese culture, mochi, pears, and several other foods. In conclusion, this program was very enriching and I learned a great deal about the different Asian religions and how food plays a key role in them.