

Two Hong Kong representatives selected as sixth batch of representative bearers of national intangible cultural heritage (with photos)

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism announced the sixth batch of representative bearers of the national intangible cultural heritage (ICH) on March 12. A total number of 942 representative bearers of the national ICH across the country were selected, including two from Hong Kong, Mr Lau Kam-tong, bearer of Hakka unicorn dance in Hang Hau, Sai Kung, and Dr Lee Yiu-fai, bearer of the Wong Tai Sin belief and customs.

In response to the invitation of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for nominations for the sixth batch of representative bearers of the national ICH, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government nominated Mr Lau and Dr Lee upon consulting the ICH Advisory Committee. Mr Lau and Dr Lee have been dedicated to promoting and preserving the Hakka unicorn dance in Hang Hau, Sai Kung, and the Wong Tai Sin belief and customs respectively. The HKSAR Government extended warm congratulations to the two representative bearers.

The two ICH items were inscribed onto the fourth national list of ICH and the First ICH Inventory of Hong Kong respectively in 2014, as well as the Representative List of the ICH of Hong Kong in 2017. Information on the two representative bearers are as follows:

(1) Mr Lau Kam-tong, representative bearer of the Hakka unicorn dance in Hang Hau, Sai Kung

The Hakka unicorn dance in Hang Hau, Sai Kung is a culture that has been passed down through generations among the Hakka people of the local community for more than 200 years. The Hakka people believe that the Chinese unicorn, the qilin, is an auspicious animal that can ward off evil and bring good luck. The Hakka unicorn dance is performed on all celebratory occasions such as the Chinese New Year, weddings, birthday parties, the inauguration of an ancestral hall, moving into a new home, welcoming guests, the jiao festivals, and birthdays of deities.

Mr Lau has made substantial contributions to passing on the Hakka unicorn dance culture over the past 60 years. He has been learning the Hakka unicorn dance since he was 7 years old. He established the Joint Association of Traditional Hakka Unicorn in Sai Kung and Hang Hau, Hong Kong in 2013, and has since been the chairman. He has led the community to form unicorn dance teams and arrange training courses. He has also actively promoted this ICH item in Hong Kong and on the Mainland. Under his leadership, the Hakka unicorn dance in Hang Hau, Sai Kung was inscribed onto the fourth national list of ICH in 2014.

(2) Dr Lee Yiu-fai, representative bearer of the Wong Tai Sin belief and customs

The folk religion of Wong Tai Sin originated in the Jinhua area of Zhejiang Province and was introduced into the Lingnan region at the turn of the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Wong Tai Sin belief and customs in Hong Kong can be traced back to 1915. In 1921, Sik Sik Yuen was established to manage the Wong Tai Sin Temple. After a century of inheritance, the development of the Wong Tai Sin folk religion has nowadays incorporated charity, with the "To act benevolently, teach benevolence and grant every wish" spirit actualised through Sik Sik Yuen's provision of various social services.

Dr Lee joined the Wong Tai Sin Temple in Sik Sik Yuen in 1985 and has served as the Abbot of the Wong Tai Sin Temple since 2006. Dr Lee has been devoted to promoting the Wong Tai Sin belief and customs, organising courses, publishing ritual books and establishing the Cultural Centre for Wong Tai Sin Belief and Customs in 2021. Apart from being responsible for the religious matters of Sik Sik Yuen, Dr Lee also actively participates in public service activities, and promotes the "To act benevolently, teach benevolence" spirit. Under his stewardship, the item of Wong Tai Sin belief and customs was inscribed onto the fourth national list of ICH in 2014.

The HKSAR Government will continue to preserve and promote local ICH, and encourage community participation in sustaining the development of Hong Kong's traditional culture.

