Christmas Traditions in Asia

The Christmas traditions of Asia are a collection of religious practices by different religions occurring during the holiday period. Only a small fragment of the population of most countries in Asia are Christians, and their Christmas celebrations only take the form of church services and are sometimes overrun by secular New Year celebrations. It is only in schools run by Christian missionaries, except in Christian Asian countries, that children and their parents actively participate in Christmas celebrations. Because Western secular holiday celebrations come from a cold place, the Asians have difficulties adopting these practices in tropical climate.

In India, Christmas is a state holiday due to British influences and because of mid-academic year vacations. The active Western media is slowly introducing secular Christmas celebrations with commercial activities. South Korea has a public set of the Christmas traditions of Asia because it is recognized as a public holiday. Thus, some non-Christian Koreans sometimes engage in gift-giving, Christmas cards and trees because children enjoy Santa Haraboji or Grandfather Santa, their version of Santa Claus. The Christians carol after Christmas Eve services among their church members.

The commercial influence is strong in Japan, and the Japanese enjoy the secular celebrations of Christmas, second only to New Year’s Day. Christmas is more of a time for lovers who exchange gifts and go on special dates. There are, however, sincere Christians who celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday.

In Malaysia, although Christmas is a public holiday, there is an unofficial ban on Christian religious motifs, so the celebration is purely secular.

In China and Taiwan, Christmas is a private celebration. But in Hong Kong and Macao, December 25th is a public holiday due to Western influences, expanded lately by commercial inroads into the culture. December 25th is an official holiday as the Constitution Day. The Philippines have the longest Christmas traditions of Asia due to the Spanish influence. The advent of Christmas in this country is ushered by dawn masses. The Christmas feast takes place after the midnight mass on Christmas eve. Other Christian holidays are also followed, like Innocent’s day and Epiphany.

DECEMBER 2015 CALENDAR

Universal Human Rights Month
AIDS Awareness Month
Worldwide Food Service Safety Month

1 - Rosa Parks Day (US)
2 - International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
3 - International Day of Persons With Disabilities
4 - 10- Computer Science Education Week (US)
6 - St. Nicholas Day (Christian)
7-14- Hanukkah (Judaism)
8 - Rohatsu (Bodhi Day) (Buddhist)
10-17- Human Rights Week (International)
16 - Posadas Navidenas through 12/25 (Christian)
18 - Arabic Language Day (International)
23 - Mawlid an Nabi (Islam)
24 - Christmas Eve (Christian)
25 - Christmas (Christian)
26 - Zarathosht Diso (Zoroastrian)
27 - Feast of the Holy Family (Catholic Christian)
28 - Holy Innocents (Christian)
29 - YMCA Day (US)
31 - New Year’s Eve (International)

The Origins of Santa Claus

The American version of St. Nicholas, or Santa Claus, originally came from the Dutch version called Sint Nicolaas or Sinterklaas. The Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam (New York) brought this fun and lively tradition (some even say cult) to America.

This version of Santa has given the current myth its visual form and these most curious traditions:

• A merry old man with red and white clothes;
• Eight flying reindeer, later joined by Rudolph the red nosed reindeer;
• A home located on or near the North Pole;
• The habit of filling socks or stockings with presents on the night of December 24th;
• Also the habit of entering houses through the chimney.

The most important single source for our modern day version of Santa Claus comes from the Christmas poem “A Visit From St. Nicholas” by Clement C. Moore. Written for his children in 1823, the family poem was later published for the general public and included what became the now famous picture of Santa Claus by Thomas Nast.

Actually the old “cult” of Santa Claus incorporates many traditions: Christian and Pagan, Old Catholic, Scandinavian, Dutch, German, and English.

Santa brings us all together! Kids all over the world know who Santa is... And although he may be a little commercial, who can help, but love the jolly old elf?

It’s the idea of giving that reminds us that we are all on this planet together, for the long run.
Welcome aboard, Yongmei! We are happy to have you as a part of the UC Health Written Translations Team.

When Yongmei has free time, he enjoys reading, watching TV, and spending quality time with his children. He has many topics and are fun to work on. We asked Yongmei what are his thoughts about UC written translation projects so far? In his own words, “These projects bridge differences and facilitate communication.”

Yongmei enjoys working with languages. He said, “In my personality, there is a big part of a peacemaker in me. I like to resolve differences and facilitate communication”. With that success, he obtained national ATA certification as a testament to his credentials.

All of Yongmei’s translating career started in San Francisco, about 20 years ago. He saw a posting in the newspaper for a freelance translator job. He responded to the posting and was hired on after passing an assessment. His experiences were all hands on. He learned translation and interpreting mostly on the job. He also had a few mentors that guided him through the process. With that success, he obtained national ATA certification as a testament to his credentials.

Yongmei enjoys working with languages. He said, “In my personality, there is a big part of a peacemaker in me. I like to resolve differences and facilitate communication”. We asked Yongmei what are his thoughts about UC written translation projects so far? In his own words, “These projects have many topics and are fun to work on. I can also see why it is important to translate them into other languages for people who are not proficient in English”.

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Welcome aboard, Yongmei! We are happy to have you as a part of the UC Health Written Translations Team.

World Arabic Language Day

During its 190th session, the UNESCO Executive Board adopted a decision to celebrate 18th of December of every year as the World Arabic Language Day. The new initiative, proposed by Morocco and Saudi Arabia, seeks to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity, as well as celebrate Arabic language’s role in and contribution to the safeguarding and dissemination of human civilization and culture. The decision recognizes the need to implement more wide-ranging cooperation between peoples through multilingualism, cultural rapprochement and dialogue among civilizations.

Language is not merely a tool for communication, but rather the bearer of a whole range of cultural expressions and a bridge enabling close relations between societies. The Day creates an occasion to raise awareness about the cultural and social treasure of the Arabic language and gives an opportunity to discover more about the language and its contribution to human civilization.

Arabic is the language of 22 of the Member States of UNESCO and is one of the organization’s official languages. It is one of the most widespread languages spoken by more than 422 million people, most of whom live in the Middle East and North Africa.

Arabic became a UN official working language on 18th of December 1973 by virtue of a United Nations General Assembly resolution. In an effort to support and strengthen linguistic and cultural diversity within the UN system, on 19th of February 2010 the United Nations Department of Public Information announced the decision to celebrate an international day for each of the six official languages of the UN: French (March 20), English (April 23), Russian (June 6), Spanish (October 12), Chinese (November 13), and Arabic (December 18). Arabic Language Day is celebrated on 18th of December, the date on which the UN General Assembly designated Arabic as the sixth official language of the United Nations.


New Staff Interpreter Profile: Lucy Ma

Lucy was born in a small village in Canton, China. She immigrated to Canada in 1991, where she finished 2 years of college and worked as a nurse assistant before getting married and moving to the US in 2005.

After her move to the US, she worked as an insurance broker. She also volunteered to interpret for clients during her free time. She loves to help people, especially when she sees the appreciation from the people she helped.

Because of her passion for interpreting, her husband suggested for her to become an interpreter, so she could help others and be paid for her help at the same time. She worked for a local medical interpreting agency as a free-lance interpreter starting in 2007, interpreting into and from Cantonese and Mandarin languages.

Lucy is a happy person, as she described herself. She enjoys walking, reading, browsing the internet and spending time with family and friends.

Lucy joined the UCDHS Medical Interpreting team in May of 2015. She said she is very fortunate to work for such a great department with strong support, great teamwork, and many learning opportunities. She hopes she can help others break the language barriers through interpreting. In her own words “Thank you for letting me join the team!”

Welcome onboard, Lucy! We are glad to have you as a part of the UCHDS Medical Interpreting team!

New Staff Translator Profile: Yongmei Liu

Yongmei was born in Xingzi, a small town in Jiangxi Province in Eastern China, which is a typical Chinese town that is full of history and tradition. He attended school in China and graduated from Beijing Medical University majoring in Life Science.

A little history on how he learned English. A teacher in elementary school got him interested in the English language. By the time he started high school, China was just opening up opportunities to learn multilingualism, cultural rapprochement and dialogue among civilizations.

Yongmei’s translating career started in San Francisco, about 20 years ago. He saw a posting in the newspaper for a freelance translator job. He responded to the posting and was hired on after passing an assessment. His experiences were all hands on. He learned translation and interpreting mostly on the job. He also had a few mentors that guided him through the process. With that success, he obtained national ATA certification as a testament to his credentials.

Yongmei enjoys working with languages. He said, “In my personality, there is a big part of a peacemaker in me. I like to resolve differences and facilitate communication”.

We asked Yongmei what are his thoughts about UC written translation projects so far? In his own words, “These projects have many topics and are fun to work on. I can also see why it is important to translate them into other languages for people who are not proficient in English”.

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