

YOUTH



Dina (front row, fourth from left) and her Shanghai University classmates take part in a cultural exchange about traditional Chinese theater last year. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Learning from the past

Campaign inviting youth to pen their spiritual conversations to legendary poet Qu Yuan draws a huge response from more than 20 countries and regions, Wang Yuting reports.

“Ancient Chinese wisdom has allowed us to have faith in humanity and work together for a better future.”

Kim Ye-ji, an undergraduate at Fudan University from South Korea

A student from Kazakhstan, Dina has always been intrigued by the rational thinking and highly original works of Qu Yuan, one of the greatest poets of ancient China. Qu may have lived some 2,300 years ago, but his vigorous patriotism still inspires youth worldwide, and Dina is no exception.

“I first became acquainted with Qu Yuan when I read about the origin of Dragon Boat Festival in China at the Confucius Institute in Astana, Kazakhstan. As I became more familiar with his work, Qu’s patriotism became my passion,” she recalls.

Her interest in liberal arts piqued, Dina completed her undergraduate studies in China in 2017 and continued to pursue her master’s degree in ancient Chinese literature in Shanghai University.

As her understanding of China deepened, Dina discovered that the wisdom hidden in the country’s thousands of years of history and represented by the rational mind of Qu could blur regional and national boundaries and trigger a worldwide resonance.

“The road (of learning) may be long and tough, but I still want to seek the truth,” she says.

China has entered a new era of reforms and is experiencing immense changes in its economic system, social structure, interest patterns and ideologies.

“The wisdom of ancient Chinese poets and philosophers, such as Qu and Confucius, belongs to all mankind. They are the beacon of civilization; they inspire generations to follow in their progressive footsteps; they motivate people to think and



Above: Dina (left) from Kazakhstan recites Qu Yuan’s poem with a classmate at Shanghai University in 2017. Left: Chen Siyao, a student at China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing, discovers the charm of traditional culture as she writes calligraphy.

explore,” says Dina.

Every year, she celebrates Dragon Boat Festival, which fell on Friday this year, in a tribute to Qu.

To pass down Qu’s patriotic fervor and wisdom to more young people around the world, the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, China Daily and the government of Yichang city in

Hubei province have jointly launched a global youth art submission activity that involves writing “A Treasured Letter Sent Back in Time” to Qu.

The campaign invites youth worldwide to engage in “spiritual conversations” with the legendary poet across space and time. Each letter to Qu is a tribute to

traditional Chinese culture, and the campaign has drawn young participants from over 20 countries and regions.

Chen Siyao, a student at China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing, who has been learning calligraphy since she was 5, says she regards Qu’s poem *Li Sao* as a coveted treasure in her practice.

She says she discovered the charm of Chinese culture through brush and ink, and witnessed its “vitality” in the “light and shadow landscape” at the opening ceremony of the G20 summit in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in 2016 and during the landing of Chinese space probe Tianwen 1 and rover Zhurong on Mars last year.

Tianwen, which means “quest for heavenly truth”, is named after a poem by Qu.

“Young people should embrace our culture, and present a real and beautiful portrait of China to the world through spiritual conversations with ancient visionary leaders,” Chen says.

According to Gu Ruitong, a student from Shanghai International Studies University, youth in China see their own reflection in Qu.

“The world is going through monumental changes, and at the same time, China faces tough challenges on its path toward national rejuvenation. The letter campaign brings the youth closer to Qu and, I believe, in us his dreams will be realized,” says Gu.

For the youth in Taiwan, the campaign offers an opportunity for them to get a close look at their cultural roots.

Hu Chu-huan, a high school student in Changhua, Taiwan, dreams of paying homage to the great poet in person on the banks of the Miluo River in Qu’s hometown.

“I often stand by the river in my hometown and imagine Qu reciting his poems by the riverside,” says Hu.

“Every time, I deeply understand his emotions and feel the nostalgia triggered by the separation of the two sides of the Taiwan Straits,” adds Hu, hoping that his letter will promote communication between young people on both sides of the Straits.

Kim Ye-ji, an undergraduate from South Korea at Fudan University in Shanghai, says she first read *The Fisherman*, one of Qu’s poems featured in anthology *Chu Ci (Songs of Chu)*, at her high school’s Chinese culture society.

“Every Thursday evening, society members gathered to recite such classics and to study Chinese culture. Ancient Chinese wisdom has allowed us to have faith in humanity and work together for a better future,” she says.

Kim had an opportunity this semester to attend a class on pre-Qin (before 221 BC) Chinese philosophy after learning from *The Analects* by Confucius, ideologies of Confucian philosopher Mencius, and Legalist texts by Hanfeizi.

“Meaningful communication among the youth from across the globe should be based on cultural resonance,” says Kim.

“Regardless of our skin color and beliefs, we can all gain spiritual wealth from Qu’s wisdom,” she adds.

Yao Weijiao contributed to the story.

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Turkish teacher knows value of language

ANKARA — Muberra Batuhan, a young teacher who considers China as her “second motherland”, has been working to promote Chinese language and culture in Turkey among youngsters, as students in her country eye opportunities for higher education in China.

Batuhan, now living in Ankara, got a degree in Chinese language and literature from a university in Xi’an, Northwest China’s Shaanxi province, where she studied for over four years.

“I have been teaching Mandarin lessons for five years now in different universities and private education establishments,” she says.

“My job is not only teaching Chinese, but also giving my students a broad approach to immerse themselves in Chinese culture.”

As Turkey and China have beefed up cooperation in all fields during the past years, the people-to-people exchanges have also been upgraded.

“I think that the growing influence of the Chinese economy plays a big part in the rise of interest in Chinese language in Turkey. People nowadays feel that knowing English is not enough for professional opportunities, therefore, they are turning toward Chinese, which is a plus,” Batuhan says.

One of her students, Ekin Peksen, who is majoring in law at a university in Ankara, aspires to become a lawyer specializing in trade and marine issues.

She envisions being able to work in China after she graduates, where diverse business opportunities are offered to foreigners.

“Definitely one of my purposes of learning Chinese is to ultimately go there,” she says.

Peksen watches Chinese TV series and listens to Chinese music.

More than 100,000 Turkish students annually choose to study abroad to receive better education. With more opportunities offered by China, the trend is turning toward this nation, both Batuhan and Peksen say.

“Today, compared to the year of 2015 when I went to China for higher education, there is a significant increase in Turkish students traveling to China for undergraduate and postgraduate studies,” Batuhan says.

“I would definitely recommend any Turkish student to pursue higher education in China.”

XINHUA

International Education Column

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