

# International Awards for Liveable Communities 2012 - Whole City Awards

Meinong District  
Kaohsiung City Government



2012/6/28

## I. Forward

Meinong is not only a toponym, but is also synonymous with notions related to an ideal modern society, such as “community autonomy” and “cultural identity.”

Meinong is situated in the northeastern corner of Kaohsiung in an alluvial plain created by the Laonong and Nanzihshian Rivers, two branches of the Gaoping River. The Meinong Settlement was created in the first year of the Qing Dynasty Qianlong Emperor’s Reign (1736) by the Hakka people. It contains four hundred places to worship Ba-Gong (the Land of Deity) and Taiwan’s only three Lishejhenguan Ba-Gong Shrines. In addition, it also has the East Gate Tower and Jingzi (respect for letters) Pavilions, which represent the large number of scholars the area has produced, and Guangshan Temple, as well as intangible culture such as the Jiushengli (Nine Gifts Ceremony), the Sheng-ji (sacred story) Organization and the tunes of eight ancient Chinese musical instruments. Now this settlement is a level one historic site and has seen the foundation of the Jhuzihmen Power Station and the Lionhead Irrigation Channel. The Tobacco Counseling Station and tobacco fields, as well as some 1,000 tobacco buildings, form an important site for tobacco culture. In addition, the area combines the traditional and modern with the Chung Li-ho Memorial Museum and modern Hakka music. As such, Japan city planning expert and UNESCO appraisal board member Yukio Nishimura stated that “Meinong is one of the places in Taiwan whose cultural preservation and development are important.”

Myron Cohen, professor in the anthropology department at Columbia University, sees Meinong as his “academic homeland.” In analyzing Meinong’s economy, he stated that the production of tobacco required a large labor force, used contract

farming, had a high profit margin, and also involved a monopoly system, and therefore traditional peasant society labor exchange was particularly notable as a form of interaction. Because of the environment of cooperation and commonly shared labor, the village people had a greater emotional connection to the land and the town, and this created a collective memory.

The Meinong Reservoir Opposition Movement of the 1990's caused regional organizations and local groups to develop an autonomous community movement for "sustainable development." Contemporaneously, alternative development movements started in order to preserve sites connected with agrarian culture and the natural ecology. The collective memory created by the tobacco industry and the public consciousness created by the Meinong Reservoir Opposition Movement make Meinong clearly unique in Taiwan.

The characteristics of the Meinong Community can be broadly organized as follows:

#### I. Vigorously active civil organizations:

These include the Chung Li-ho Foundation, which devotes much effort to preserve the community's culture, and the "Moonlight Mountain Magazine Co." with 30 years of history; the Meinong People's Association which gave birth to the Meinong Reservoir Opposition Movement; the youth organizations such as the Association of Housheng<sup>1</sup> and the Nanyang Taiwan Sister's Association, an organization for Southeast Asian immigrants who came to Taiwan due to marriage; village lifetime learning

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<sup>1</sup> Housheng, Hakka language, the meaning of being young. This organization was founded by the young people of Meinong.

organizations such as Cimei Community College; and organic farming organizations such as the Meinong Production and Marketing Group. There are also the organizations permeated with a strong sense of citizen movements such as the Meinong Pattidae Society, the Meinong Environmental Protection Alliance, the People's Cultural Education Foundation, the Meinong Agricultural Field Scholar Association, and other organizations, as well as original or long existing organizations like the Agricultural Cooperative, the Meinong Rotary Club, and other organizations that show zeal for work helping the community, as well as actively carry out public duties and call on others to have public consciousness.

## II. Rich research results:

In 1995 the Meinong Township Office compiled the "Records of Meinong Township." In 1999 the Meinong Pattidae Society published "Let's Write About Longdu Village" and Kaohsiung county government published the exclusive monograph "Kaohsiung County's Hakka Society and Culture," and the Chung Li-ho Memorial Museum compiled a great deal of literary material. In 2006 the County Government and the Council for Hakka Affairs supported the "Overall Planning for Building Meinong Township through Culture," in addition to creating an environment emphasizing "Meinong studies" through large numbers of academic papers and reports. Not only have these efforts formed a complete local knowledge system, they have also created a reference guide for

administering community infrastructure.

### III. Constant exchanges with domestic and foreign organizations:

During the 90's, the community consciously maintained and started new interaction networks with both domestic and national organizations to provide itself with practical breadth in its inter-organizational interactions. Meinong also sought to produce creative thought and activities and give the community a wider global perspective. For example, representatives from the Movimento dos Trabalhadores *Rurais sem Terra* (MST) (Landless Workers' Movement), which received the Right Livelihood Awards, the "Alternative Nobel Prize," spent a year receiving practical training in Meinong in 2011. In 2012 the Kaohsiung City Government Council for Hakka Affairs and the Meinong People's Cultural Education Foundation, a civic organization, as well as other teams representing various organizations, traveled to Japan's Gifu Prefecture for exchanges in order to lay the foundation for forming sister city relations.

### IV. Diverse community celebrations and ceremonies:

These include the lasting charm of the traditional ceremony called the "Minong Village Kaiji Ba-Gong Year End Blessing Prayer," and the "Yellow Butterfly Festival" which was established in 1995. In 1996 the community started holding the "Lishan

Literature Camp” and in 2002 the Community Education and Village Development Workshop was opened. The “White Jade Radish Festival” was created in 2008. These festivals were started by civic organizations and sponsored by the government, and continue as a tradition to this day. In 2005 the first Meinong Music Festival was held and, following upon this, in 2008 the “Sound of Meinong-Song of Folk” Festival as a Hakka folk music extension of the Meinong Music Festival. This year there are plans for the “Meinong Art Festival” held by the Kaohsiung Council for Hakka Affairs and the “Meinong Mountain Bottom Folk Festival.”

#### V. Emphasis on volunteer work and its operation:

The community develops volunteer work as an important means of enlivening community operations and, through this, inspiring more people to participate in social and public welfare organizations and create a mutually beneficial social atmosphere. Through various activity networks Meinong has recruited members of different parts of society to participate in volunteer work for 20 years. Many young students in Meinong have also participated. One example of this participation would be the “Yellow Butterfly Festival,” which had more than 100 junior/senior high school and university students assist in the festivals implementation. This festival has become a good example of strong cooperation between schools and the community. In addition, great effort is being put in by disaster relief organizations, city and countryside travel guide

associations, and community development associations.

VI. The community possesses consciousness concerning passing education and culture down to the next generation:

Meinong has active community organizations and lively, caring, and enthusiastic young people. For some time they have been participating in various ecological and environmental movements, as well as passing down Hakka tunes by eight ancient Chinese musical instruments to younger generations, continuing Hakka agrarian culture, and other community activities. In addition, community culture and consciousness are disseminated down through workshops, educational research and study, lectures, music performances, and learning from observing others. In 2001 Cimei Community College was founded, thus spreading this community spirit to Cimei Nine Townships<sup>2</sup> in order to assist in the learning and renewal of the community.

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<sup>2</sup> Cimei Nine Townships includes the Hakka regions of Meinong, Shanlin, Liudui, and the Minnan settlements of Cishan, Neimen, Jiasian, as well as the indigenous peoples areas of Namasia, Taoyuan, and Maolin.



**1: Meinong Society and Production Sites. 2010/6/30**

( Photographs provided by : Meinung People's Association )



**2: Meinong is a place for young people and students to participate in social services.**

2011/7/15

( Photograph provided by the Meinung People's Association )

## **II. Characteristics**

### **■ Preservation of Natural and Cultural Sights: Vision for Meinong's National Natural Parks**

Kaohsiung created Taiwan's first Shoushan National Natural Park following the formation of the Ministry of Environmental Resources resulting from government restructuring, and amendments to the "National Park Law" at the end of 2010. Meinong's local social organizations also created the Meinong National Natural Park Advocacy Committee and called on Kaohsiung city government, which merged Kaohsiung City and County in 2011, not to overemphasize the needs of urban areas at the expense of rural areas in the city's development. Coming from the position of wanting to preserve the Gaoping River's headwater region, and remembering the "Yellow Butterfly Valley Ecological Park" dream of 1996, the committee pushed for a Meinong National Natural Park to be established as quickly as possible. The group plans to carry out this establishment based on a formula of both cultural and ecological preservation, as well as sustainable community development. The Kaohsiung city government has actively sought to respond to the considerations of the people and, in October of 2011 they supported the holding of the "Meinong National Natural Park Conference" by community groups. Finally, in 2012 they started formulating the "Meinong National Natural Park Plan" and it is expected this proposal will be sent to the central government for ratification after completion at year's end.

It is anticipated the scope of the Meinong National Natural Park plan will include the Yellow Butterfly Valley and the Meinong Mountain System, in addition to integrating 13 public historical assets. Among these regions, the Yellow Butterfly Valley, which is located on the northeastern corner of Meinong, was used for cultivating kassod trees, which unexpectedly led to swarms of *Catopsilia Pomona* gradually perching in the area in ever increasing numbers due to the appropriate

climate of the valley. This created the unique scenery of “butterfly valley” and now every year between May and July the tens of thousands of butterflies fly seemingly in choreographed unison through the air in this valley is an ornamented spectacle worth beholding. In addition, Yellow Butterfly Valley is home to over 90 different species of birds, 110 varieties of butterflies, 18 species of frogs, and many mammals. In 1999 BirdLife International classified Yellow Butterfly Valley as an Important Bird Area (IBA), one of 53 such areas in Taiwan.

When he visited the Yellow Butterfly Valley in 1996, former Australian Green Party Chairman Bob Brown commented that “a region like the Yellow Butterfly Valley would certainly be a national park in Australia.”



**3** : Meinong is located in the tail region of the Yushan Mountain Range. Its eastern part is separated by the Laonong River facing the central mountain range. This is the main food production area in Kaohsiung, as well as an important development area for Hakka culture.



4: View of Yellow Butterfly Valley's flowing streams, and the miraculous view of large swarms of butterflies descending on the area which occurs every summer. The valley covers 2,300 hectares. During the period of Japanese rule (1913), a garden was created for planting tropical trees imported from Southeast Asia, South America and Australia, which covers 7.56 hectares. This garden has become central to area environmental education.

2011/5/2

( Pictures provided by Song Tingdong )

#### ■ Artistic Culture and Artifacts: Chung Li-ho's Literary Origins

In 2005 Vladimir Il'ich Tolstoy, the great grandson of the Russian literary giant Leo Tolstoy, visited Meinong. At that time he stated "Russia would take all measures necessary to preserve an area like Shuangsi with the footprints of past authors everywhere." The earth is author Chung Li-ho's study, and *Lishan Farm* is the background of his literary work. Meinong's landscape, fields, village, smoky clouds, bamboo trees, and characters, gave birth to Chung Li-ho and, likewise, to a new generation of authors, musicians, and advocates of culture.

*Lishan Farm* depicts the literary atmosphere of Meinong in the beginning of the Republic of China. This story was also made into a movie entitled "The Native." In addition, Meinong is saturated with a cultural ambiance because of authors such as

Jhong Tiemin and Wu Jinfa, painters such as Zeng Wenjhong, and Jhong Shunwen, the singer Lin Shengsiang who is famous for winning the Golden Melody Award, and the poet Jhong Yongfeng. In reflection of Chung Li-ho's literary tradition, in 2010 Lin Shengsiang and Jhong Yongfeng recorded an album entitled "The Land Is My Study" and performed it in a tour covering Mainland China and other areas. In memorial to Chung Li-he, every summer vacation the Chung Li-ho Memorial Museum holds the "Lishan Literature Camp" and makes all efforts to sow the seeds of literature in the young. In addition, Meinong's ceramic art, paper umbrella crafts, and traditional Hakka blue shirt production is still very prevalent and makes evident the diversity of Meinong culture.

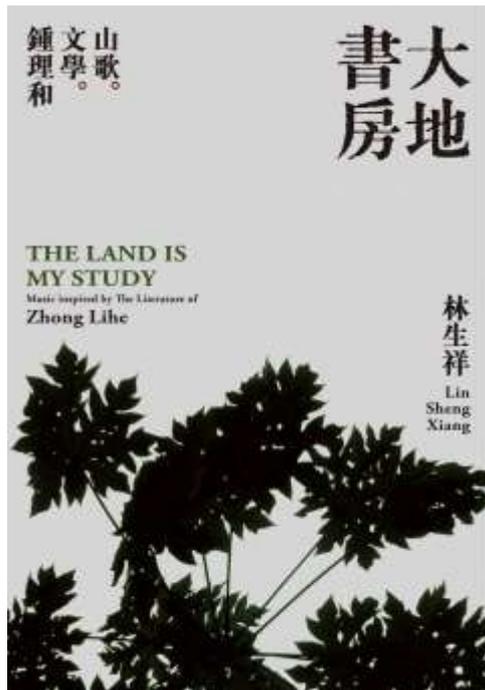
Over 90% of the population of Meinong, which traditionally belonged to the Liudui area, is Hakka. The Council for Hakka Affairs has determined that areas in which over one third of the population is Hakka will be Hakka culture development emphasis zones. The government will assist in advocating for the Hakka language to be one of the languages used in carrying out official matters in these areas. It will also push for the creation of Hakka language schools, provide rewards to encourage the propagation of Hakka academic and cultural activities, and advocate for the creation of a living Hakka cultural environment. The Kaohsiung Government's Council for Hakka Affairs established the Meinong Hakka Culture Center and comprehensively planned for its Hakka cultural development works. Not only did they advocate for Hakka language, as well as life learning and bilingual learning environments (Mandarin, Hakka) in kindergartens and elementary schools, the council also coordinated projects such as the "Seventh Tobacco Building Recording Studio Protection and Revitalization Plan Subcommittee," the "Chung Li-ho Memorial Museum Premises and Literary Park Enhancement Project Proposal," the "Design Plan and Project Proposal for the Meinong Tobacco Counseling Station

Post-Disaster Repair Plan,” and Yong-An Settlement’s “Plan for Designing Jhongjhuang’s Overall Historical Space and Environment’s Scenery.” This year the Committee is more actively cooperating with local groups in the effort to designate “Minong Village Kaiji Ba-Gong Altar,” which was built in the first year of the Qing Dynasty Qianlong Emperor’s reign (1736), as a historic site.



5 : Starting in 1995, different members of society were invited to participate in the Yellow Butterfly Festival in Yellow Butterfly Valley. This became a ceremonial occasion to pay reverence to the butterflies and express sincere regret over past collective environmental degradation. In 1996 civic groups sought to hasten the creation of the Yellow Butterfly Valley Ecological Park. From 2000 the Yellow Butterfly Festival echoed the notion of a leisurely small Hakka cultural village as its vision and sought to encompass industrial development, irrigation channel culture, as well as music and art into the festival. 2011/7/8

( Photograph provided by Meinung People’s Association )



6 : The Chung Li-ho Memorial Museum was Taiwan’s first literary memorial hall built with private funds. Following the Meinong mountain song singing tradition, Meinong singer Lin Shengxiang expressed his respect for Chung Li-ho with the album “The Land is my Study.”

2010/10/24

( Pictures provided by the Chung Li-ho Foundation )



7: The scenery described in *Lishan Farm*, such as the river valley’s scenery and Autumn

maple tree have become important literary sights. 2011/5/28

( Pictures provided by Chung Li-ho Foundation )

## ■ **The Best Environmental Protection Experience: Emphasizing Community Education to Raise Collective Consciousness**

The success of the Meinong Reservoir Opposition Movement depended on the formation of community education and collective consciousness. After this movement, education continued to have value to the community. With local organizations as its underlying strength, Meinong actively advocates for environmental education and the development of industries tied to the community's culture and ecology. For the past few years the Forestry Bureau's "Community Forestry Plan" has sought to promote conservation and the bureau has cooperated with the Meinung People's Association to work for "the conservation of Yellow Butterfly Valley and community low-carbon eco-tourism" and have mutually cultivated the development of eco-tourism activities such as stream tracing, night time observations, and tours to the historical site of the Guanglin Community near Yellow Butterfly Valley. In addition, the Forestry Bureau and the Meinung People's Association will create community kitchens to promote local cuisine and actively cooperate in tree planting activities with businesses and foundations such as Cathay Pacific Enterprises and the Seven Star Eco-Tourism Foundation, in addition to preserving Yellow Butterfly Valley's native vegetation. What is more, this year the Forestry Bureau plans to undertake a survey and evaluation of protected areas, as well as empower the community to monitor and investigate. Through participation in practical activities, various environmental protection policies are being implemented with less effort and greater efficacy.

## ■ **The Spirit of Public Participation and Community Empowerment: Community Civic Forum**

Meinong has diverse civic organizations (including NGOs and NPOs) of different types including those involved with education, culture, immigration, social movements, rural reconstruction, environmental protection, and other issues. The success of the Meinong Reservoir Opposition Movement symbolized a challenge to the notion that the people must passively accept policies determined by the nation's government. A long list of community development activities have had an impact on the way the people of Meinong think. They have come to believe they have the right and the ability to implement autonomous community development. As such, these community movements have cultivated strong participation and concern for public policies among community groups

For public participation, both empowerment and information transparency are important elements. One example would be the effort to designate the Minong Village Kaiji Ba-Gong Altar as a historical site. The Kaohsiung Government Kaohsiung held to the principle of making information available to the public and visited stakeholders, such as the Ba-Gong Altar Sponsors and Management Committee one at a time. City government also held multiple coordination and explanation meetings in order to clarify to stakeholders, organizations owning the land, and other relevant parties the steps involved in designating the Minong Village Kaiji Ba-Gong Altar as a historical site. The city government also wanted residents and community organizations to gradually understand and even participate in the process of the government's implementation of its policy.

Thematically there can be differences in how we measure empowerment and

organizations such as the Commission on Women's Rights Promotion, the members of the Environmental Campaign Committee, and members of the Council for Hakka Affairs are all representatives of the people and have authority to propose laws and make suggestions concerning how the government is run. In addition, they often can facilitate spontaneous discussion and bring about autonomous action in response to various unreasonable government policies. Topics involved in such discussions or activities can include proposals water resource development, the expropriation of land, the protection of cultural properties, and other important items. Public participation consciousness and “Moonlight Mountain Magazine,” the community’s media platform, make exchanges and the sharing of ideas concerning public matters possible.

### ■ **A Healthy Lifestyle: The Possibility of Living a “Carefree Life in the Country”**

The core philosophy of Cimei Community College, a lifetime learning organization supported by the Kaohsiung city government is “rural village education.” With the fertile land of Cimei Nine Townships as a backdrop, they implemented their four grand learning programs of Rural Villages and Farming, Ethnicity and Culture, Environment and Health, and Community and Growth. They are also involved in disseminating learning to outlying farm villages and mountain areas. As a platform for rural knowledge, through frequent forums, observation, and other means the Cimei Community College brings in progressive forces from outside to assist in advocating for environmentally friendly agricultural production activities. The “Community Education and Rural Development Workshop,” which started in 2002 and is in its eleventh year, brought in even more international progressive forces.

Organic farming started to develop in Meinong in 2004 with the “Organic Production and Marketing Group.” In November of 2007, the local government established an “exclusive organic farming zone” in Meinong and advocated the “student rice planting” activity. At present, there are a number of “volunteer farmers” in Meinong. They are young people who have come to participate in the planting of organic crops. Two schools, Longdu and Fuan Elementary Schools, participate and support rice planting education, and the rice planted in these activities provides the school with nutritious lunches for students.

An “Urban and rural exchange” plan, which integrated the opportunity to experience organic planting in Meinong, was started in 2004 with Cimei Community College as its platform. With “rural village learning” and the notion of a “rice college” as its basic premises, the program also started a “harvest festival,” as well as the opportunity to experience other activities. Through the experience of actual farm labor, students who were invited from the city gained greater empathy for farmers and the land. In 2006 the college attempted to integrate other activities such as the farming experience, a farmers market, and other forums to discuss concepts such as food miles, the certification of consumers replacing the certification organic produce, etc. It also sought to create the foundations for a “breeze market.” Cimei Community College also cooperated with Kaohsiung First Community University in implementing a course of study entitled “Rural Villages and Agricultural Studies.” The course is presently in its third year and will continue to develop organic farming organizations and courses, as well as the program “one person purchases one basket of vegetables” to help promote agricultural development.

As a result of the strong educational and cultural rural environment Meinong provides, many city people and international visitors intend to settle in Meinong so

their children can grow up in this nurturing rural environment and they can live an ideal carefree country life.



**8:** Campus agricultural education allows children to learn food culture from doing, and to have a greater feeling of connection with the land. 2008/1/19

( Photograph provided by Meinung People's Association and Cimei Community College )



9: Cimei Community College Community Education and Rural Development Workshop  
2004/8/2

( Photograph provided by Cimei Community College )

#### ■ Strategic Planning: “Meinong National Natural Park” Addresses the Possibility of Balancing Ecological, Cultural, and Industrial Development

Economic development should proceed in conjunction with notions of protecting a community’s ecology and culture. Meinong has continued for the past 20 years to produce actual achievement in this respect, as can be seen in the community’s ecological protection, its preservation of cultural assets, the protection of natural scenery, its personnel training education, its creation of a museum of industrial ecology, and its intellectual exchanges with entities in Taiwan and abroad. Kaohsiung city government is Meinong Community’s partner in sustainable development. From aspects such as the construction of external hardware, as well as the internal cultural software that goes into resource planning, Meinong will continue to be developed as a “livable international city.”

Meinong possesses a complete green belt and blue belt system, as well as abundant biological diversity. It also has strong ecological protection consciousness and early on proposed ideas such as the “Yellow Butterfly Valley Ecological Park,” the “Chung Li-ho Literary Landscape,” the “Meinong Mountain Culture Landscape,” The “Yong-An Settlement Ecological Museum,” the “Hydro-Ecology Museum,” and “Meinong Tobacco Museum.” The concept of a “Museum of Ecology” will serve as a force to integrate Meinong’s rich cultural elements.

“Meinong National Natural Park” was proposed at the end of 2010. It is hoped that the abundant ecological and cultural resources Meinong has, and the intellectual resources of the local people will be instrumental in the following efforts:

I. Comprehensive consideration of the Yellow Butterfly Valley, the Meinong Mountain System, Jhongheng Lake, and other green and blue belt area ecological systems in creating a complete ecological database and performing surveys in order to form the foundations for preserving the butterfly perching areas and restoring the areas’ biological diversity.

II. Meinong Modern Settlement is composed by irrigation channels and sites related to tobacco culture. The integrated settlement interior is centered around the Jhuzihmen Power Station national historical site and the six tobacco counseling stations. Based on this, the creation of a system which rewards the preservation of the traditional settlement and encourages protecting the integrity of its traditional ethos is recommended.

III. The preservation of intangible cultural assets such as the Ba-Gong Association and the Jiushengli (Nine Gifts Ceremony), and the tunes of eight ancient Chinese musical instruments, is carried out with the maintenance of tangible cultural assets such as Ba-Gong worship sites and the Guangshan

Temple.

IV. Channels for communication between central departments, the regional government and local organizations should be created in the process of promotion, which will realize a bottom up partnership mechanism for civic participation.

In response to public proposals, the National Park Committee, the Ministry of the Interior, put forth the “Yellow Butterfly Valley Resources Survey” to assess the area’s ecological and cultural resources. Hereafter, the Kaohsiung city government put forward its proposed plan for the “Meinong National Natural Park” and attempted to integrate various administrative and civic resource items. Kaohsiung also sought to bring in models for the “participatory operation of reserve areas” developed by international ecological protection community in the last 20 to 30 years. With an emphasis on small scale items, insistence on community participation, attention to local interpersonal networks and knowledge, and emphasis on the community as the main subject of operation and management method, Kaohsiung city government has attempted to find a balance between resource conservation and the development of Meinong and its surrounding areas.