

Beating a 'Petty Person' under Goose Neck Bridge

By Sally Wu

On the 5th, 6th and 7th of March, you will hear “plok, plok, plok.....” at a place called the Goose Neck Bridge in busiest shopping districts in Hong Kong, Causeway Bay. The sounds are produced by hundreds of people beating on pieces of paper that symbolize the “petty persons” with shoes or slippers.

The “Petty Persons”

The idea of beating the “petty persons” came from Cantonese Chinese who believe that “petty persons” are those who love poking into others’ affairs or those who are wicked. The “Petty persons” may also symbolize misfortune, bad luck, trouble, or difficulty that someone faces. Cantonese Chinese believe that “petty persons” must be eliminated in order to bring fortune, good luck, happiness, and success. Beating the “petty persons” is a ritual in Hong Kong to eliminate the “petty persons” as well as those harmful effects that are caused by them.

Preparations for the Elimination of The “Petty Persons”

Here are the things you have to do before beating the “petty persons”: 1) cut a piece of paper into the shape of the “petty person”, man or woman, 2) write down the “petty person’s” name and his or her date of birth, 3) prepare a pair of



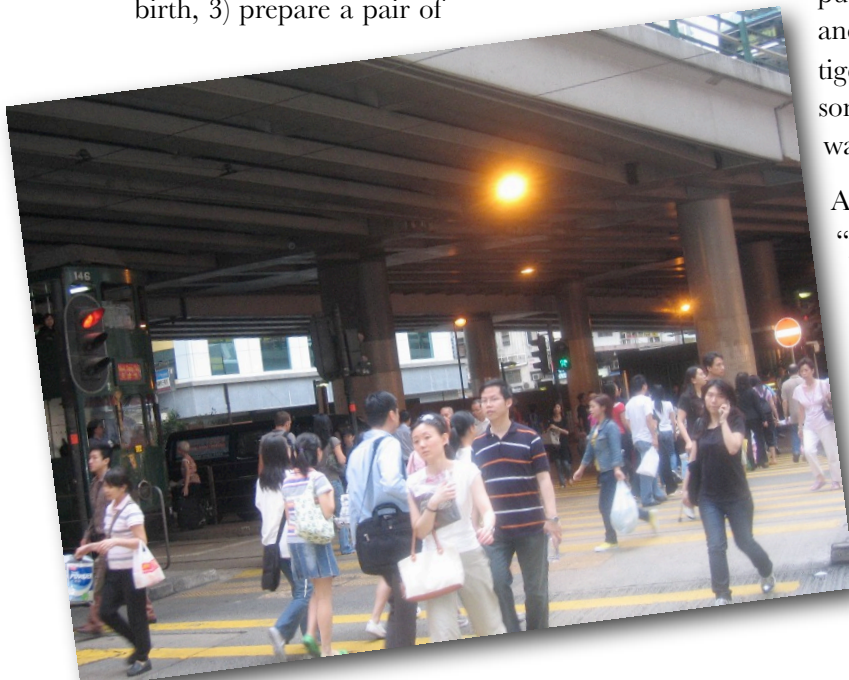
red candles, some paper money, some joss sticks, a yellow-paper-tiger and a piece of pork. Then you can start the beating.

Beating the “Petty Persons”

Take off one of the shoes that you are wearing or bring a slipper along with you, which helps produce louder “plok, plok, plok...” than an ordinary shoe. Then you light up a pair of red candles and some joss sticks. Next, put the paper man in front of the yellow-paper-tiger and start beating it with your shoe. The yellow-paper-tiger is used as a safety guard preventing the “petty persons” from escaping. The piece of pork is used to reward the tiger.

As the beating starts, people usually swear at the “petty persons” while beating it hard. You can beat

Cantonese Chinese believe that once the “petty persons” are beaten, he or she can no longer harm others.



any parts of the “petty person’s” body. For example, if the “petty person” said something evil to you, you should focus on beating his or her mouth, in order to stop him or her from saying bad things again.

If you do not want to beat it yourself, you can hire some old ladies who earn their living under the Goose Neck Bridge by beating the “petty persons” for others. All you have to do is to tell them the names and the dates of birth of the “petty persons” and pay them for about 50 Hong Kong dollars.

Favorite Dates and Places for Beating the Petty Person

Although there are no restrictions about when and where this ritual practice should take place, many people choose to beat on the 5th, 6th and 7th of March under the Goose Neck Bridge. Locals believe that animals and the “petty persons” harm the others after hibernation, and this is the period when hibernation ends. To avoid the “petty persons”, people should beat the “petty persons” before they have wake.

This ritual practice is usually held at traffic circles or under bridges. People believe that most of the evil spirits, such as the spirits of the “petty persons”, gather in those places. So it will be easier to grab and beat them in those places. The most popular place in Hong Kong for beating is under the Goose Neck Bridge.

Psychological Relief

Beating the Petty Person is a ritual practice that helps releasing anger and stress. It also provides psychological

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comforts as the “petty persons” can no longer harm you after being beaten. When you find no way to express your anger or hatred towards someone or you want to eliminate misfortune and bad luck, you should come to Hong Kong and try beating the “petty persons” under the Goose Neck Bridge.

Further Reading:

- ❖ “Beating the Petty Person”: A Ritual of Hong Kong Chinese: <http://sunzil.lib.hku.hk/hkjo/view/35/3500124.pdf>
- ❖ Smallmanmain: (Chinese Web Site, with game in it): <http://rthk27.rthk.org.hk/homepage/mdc/cuhk/culture/Yan/smallmanmain.html#>
- ❖ Game for beating the petty person: http://games.lynms.edu.hk/games/shooting_gallery.swf

