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Australian Dragon Boat Federation

Dotting of the Eyes Procedure Manual

v 1.0

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1 Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to explain the procedures of:

- the dotting of the eyes ceremony for a dragon boat
- the closing of the eyes ceremony for a dragon boat

Though there can be many variations across different countries, this document will provide guidelines to each state and club on how the dotting of the eyes may be performed. This document will outline the **core** and **optional** eye dotting activities. Though the optional activities are not always performed, they add colour and spectacle to the ceremony and it is recommended they be conducted.

As examples of how other locations perform dotting of the eyes, the IDBF championships in Penang and Macau had all the boats blessed and eyes dotted a day or so before the championships and a "token" single boat (or two) was blessed on the first morning of the competition by a Government Minister and / or Major Sponsor with a quick Eye Dotting ceremony on the Day.



2 Introduction

The **EYE DOTTING** is actually the **AWAKENING of the DRAGON**. This should be repeated each year after the dragon's rest during the off-season prior to racing.

The Blessing of the Dragon Boats is not only a tradition but it is also entails strong and intricate religious beliefs. As with most Chinese Festivals, they relate closely to the agricultural seasons eg sowing, harvesting times or praying to the rain Gods. This is because Dragons are traditionally believed to be the rulers of rivers and seas and dominate the clouds and the rains of heaven.

In modern times teams can train all year round. However, it is important to remember that it is considered Bad Luck to paddle or race in a Dragon Boat that has not been properly awakened or has its eyes closed.

The dotting of the eyes prior to racing is well worth it, not only for the competitors and spectators, but for the Major Sponsors and Sports or Multicultural Ministers as well.

2.1 *Origin of Eye Dotting*

Extract from <http://www.hungkuen.net/tradition-hoigong.htm>

It is generally believed that the tradition of "eye-dotting" originated from two Chinese stories concerning printing pictures. During the Eastern Jin Dynasty [314-420 A.D.] a painter named **Gu Kai Zhi** was famous for painting portraits. However, he had a strange habit of leaving the eyeballs out, even for several years. When he was asked why, he said, "The most life-like strokes of a subtle portrait come from the eyes." Actually he implied that even a single stroke should not be done casually.

When a painter called **Zhang Seng You** was designated to paint a mural for the An Le Monastery in Nanjing during the Southern Dynasty [420-589 A.D.], people found that all the dragons on the wall-paintings lacked pupils in their eyes. When the Abbot invited him to add the pupils, Zhang said, "It must not be done, otherwise they will fly away from the wall into the sky."

The Abbot was not convinced. Eventually those dragons with eyeballs painted on them emerged and flew away, while those without stayed on the wall - (This is the origin for the Chinese proverb "Draw the dragons, dot the eyes".)

In fact, when we dot the eyes, we are dotting in the essence of the

dragon. When we dot the eyes for dragon-boats, lion-dance lion heads or masks we draw in the eyes and give them life!

3 Situations When Eye Dotting Occur

- Start of the season
- Prior to a regatta
- New boat
- Start of a festival race

It is **important** that the eye dotting occurs **prior to** racing. If there is not enough time before racing to perform the eye dotting, it is **strongly recommended** that an informal eye dotting occurs possibly the night before or early morning by a local group. Another ceremony can be performed on race day for the public.

4 Dotting of the Eyes Procedures

4.1 *High Level Overview*

Here is a high level step of the dotting-of-the-eyes procedures are detailed below.

1. Preparation prior to the season/regatta
 - a. Items required for the Ceremony
 - b. Choosing a date of Ceremony
 - c. Location of Ceremony and Boats
 - d. Who should dot the eyes?
 - e. Organise Taoist Priests / Buddhist Monks
 - f. Other checks
2. Preparation on the day
 - a. When naming a dragon boat
 - b. Setting up for the ceremony
3. Blessing Ceremony
4. Offering to Dragon (optional)
5. Naming of the Boat (optional)
6. Dotting of the eyes
 - a. Old Boat
 - b. New Boat
7. Awakening the Dragon (optional)
8. Bowing of the Awakened Dragon (optional)
9. Showing the Dragon Boat Around (optional)
10. Cutting of the Suckling Pig (optional)
11. Lion Dance (optional)
12. After Ceremony

Details of each step are detailed below

4.2 *Preparation Prior to Season/Regatta*

4.2.1 Items for Ceremony

Required

- Rice Dumplings (1 for each Boat and 1 extra). Recipe is found in Appendix 1.
- Red Paint (There is special red paint that is available from Chinese Herbalist shops - amongst other things it contains powder that "calms" the dragon. If you cannot find this paint, you can buy acrylic paint from craft shops)
- Paint Brush (Paintbrushes are available from craft or Chinese shops)
- Red packet for Taoist Priests / Buddhist Monks (Red packets AKA Hong Bao or Lai Si) a monetary gift which is given in Chinese society on social occasions (weddings) or holidays (Chinese New Year)
- Red packet for Lion Dance Troupe

Optional

- A small table and table cloth
- Three fruits (e.g.: bananas, oranges, green pears, green apples, nashi pears)
- A vase of flowers
- Incense (purchased from Chinese shops)
- Red Ribbon and fixing the golden "flower" (Can be purchased from Chinese Grocery/Buddhist supplies) to decorate the Head of the Dragons
- Whole steamed chicken, roasted suckling pig, roasted duck
- Other food a dragon likes ☺
- Firecrackers to scare off the demons
- Gold or silver coloured paper
- A metal bucket or open container to burn the hell money
- (Only if you include giving a name to your boat) Red wrapping paper or cloth to cover the writing of the name on the boat's hull.
- Lettuce for Lion Dance
- Spring onion for the Awakening the Dragon ceremony
- Paddles for Awakening the Dragon and showing the Dragon ceremonies



4.2.2 Choosing the Date of Ceremony

Consult a Chinese calendar and try to find a date that is not a bad date. Go to:

<http://www.chinesefortunecalendar.com/GoodEvents.htm>

Please note that it doesn't matter when you dot the eyes, as long as it is done before the boats are raced.

4.2.3 Location of Ceremony

The boats should be positioned such that it is easily accessible by the eye dotters to access the boat and in full view of the audience.

4.2.4 Fully Dressed Boats

Ensure that the organisers have all boats with heads and tails mounted for the whole duration of the regatta. Ensure there are enough spares in case of any damage. Without heads or tails on the boat, it is not a dragon boat, just a canoe with 20 paddlers in it!

4.2.5 What Happens If the Eyes Are Already Dotted

Check if the boats have already been dotted. If they are already dotted, wipe the red paint off in preparation to the new eye dotting.

4.2.6 Organise the Priests/Monks and Lion Dance Troupe

Please contact your local Taoist Priests or Buddhist Monks to perform the blessing ceremony part of dotting of the eyes.

Please ensure that the Priests/Monks involved with the Blessing Ceremony and Lion Dance are given clear instructions detailed in section 4.5. Ensure they clearly understand the timeframes

Ensure that the Priests/Monks and Lion Dance Troupe have a map of the venue and car parking available to them

4.2.7 Estimated Costs

Costs for Taoist Priests/Buddhist Monks and Lion Dance troupes are subject to local negotiation. These prices are only an indicative price.

Taoist Priests/Buddhist Monks - \$188 - \$500

Lion Dance Troupe - \$688

Total Price: Budget for about \$1,000 for this part of the event.

Please note: often Buddhist Monks aren't paid for their services but are given a donation. In some states, Monks will leave it up to you how much is donated. Ensure the donated value has a number of 8's in it as 8 is a lucky number.

Also, the money should be given to the monks very discreetly or sent the donation to their monastery afterwards.

4.2.8 Who Should Dot The Eyes?

VIPs such as special race day guests, dignitaries, team captains, major sponsors, Government Ministers, and anyone else of importance can dot the eyes of a dragon boat. VIPs are used in the eye dotting ceremony to impress the importance of the ceremony to the VIPs and the paddlers.

4.2.9 Other Checks

1. Ensure you have permission from the water authority to throw dumplings into the water
2. Ensure that a brief written explanation of the Dragon Boat Legend and the Blessing Ceremony is provided to the Master of Ceremonies (MC) to read out to competitors and spectators as he/she asks them to gather up for the ceremony.
3. If talking over a microphone/PA system, check if there are noise restrictions where ceremony is being held before announcing (e.g., in Adelaide the Australian Championships were held in a residential area, so announcements could not occur until after 9am.

4.3 Preparation for Optional Activities

1. **Dressing the boats.** The dragon boat can be dressed with ribbons and golden flowers etc as they are being blessed. Colour is very symbolic, with red, green and gold being very good colours to use. Avoid using white as according to Chinese traditions, the colour symbolise death.
2. **Purchase protection bands.** These bands are special strings / beads blessed by a Buddhist Monk which protects people going on a journey and or to give them good luck. In some states, these protection bands are presented as a gift to guests participating in the eye dotting ceremony. In other states, these

are given to all paddlers, depending on the amount of paddlers there are. These protection bands are meant to be worn until they 'drop off', ie "not to be cut off".



4.4 ***Preparation on the day***

4.4.1 **Setting up the Boats**

Core Activities

1. All Boats need to be fully dressed – Heads, Tails, Drums, Seat & Drum sticks.
2. The boats can be on land or in the water for the ceremony.
3. All Boats to be lined up for easy access.
4. The Ceremony must be fully viewable to the paddlers and spectators

Optional Activities

1. **Decorating the Dragon.** The Head of the Dragons can be decorate/tied with Red Ribbon and the Golden "Flower"



2. **When Giving A Name To A Dragon Boat.** Where a boat is to be named, the name should be affixed on both sides of the hull close to the drum, and then covered with red wrapping paper or cloth.

4.5 ***Blessing Ceremony and Dotting of Eyes: Core Activities***

Before the commencement of racing, the permission of the guardian spirits must first be sought in order to avoid bad luck befalling and to bestow good fortune to those taking part in the racing.

Buddhist Monks are now being used more widely for the blessing ceremonies because Taoist Priests are not always available.

Ensure they are ready to start on time. Be aware that the Buddhist Monk's or Taoist Priest's "chanting" may be very drawn out. Agree to a "short version" citing time constraints.

Allow approx **30 to 45 minutes (max)** in the time schedule for below

No	Step	Time
Core Activities		
1	Blessing Ceremony	
	Chanting/Jossing	5 mins

	Blessing the Competitors	5 mins
2	Eye Dotting, Zong Zi offering and blessing of the boats (People can drum as this is happening) Ensure all boats are blessed, even the emergency/backup boats. Also ensure a Red Packet Donation is given to the Monks	15 mins
Optional Activities		
3	Lion Dance	15 mins

4.6 Dragon Boat Ceremony

The Dragon Boat Festival is a Taoist celebration and the traditional blessing ceremony should be performed by Taoist Priests or by a Taoist person. Following Taoist tradition, the steamed chicken used in the ceremony should come complete with the head and both feet. According to Raymond Leung, roast ducks are rarely used as offerings.

4.7 Procedure for Blessing Ceremony

Many Taoist followers these days also practice Buddhism which involves "chanting" as part of the Blessing procedure. These chants can go for as long as an hour or so, therefore Regatta organisers should make the Priests/Monks aware that there is a tight schedule before they start the "chanting" process (say limited to 10 minutes) as once they start the chanting, you can not interrupt them or hurry them up.

Competitors, volunteers and spectators should bow their heads and think good thoughts and **not** talk amongst themselves during the chanting by the Priests/Monks.

The MC or announcer should explain what the Priests/Monks are doing and why

4.7.1 Dotting of the Eyes

Before the ceremony begins, each important person (President of each club, Mayor, president etc) needs to stand by the head of the Dragon.

The MC or announcer should explain what the eye dotters are doing and why.



4.7.2 Dotting the Eyes of New Boats

For any new boats, the dragon head, seat 6 and the tail of the boat will also be dotted.

When there is a brand new dragon boat, you awake the brand new Dragon or new Dragon Boat that you need to dot the forehead (being the Wisdom Eye), the tongue, the body (a boat seat) and the tail. When performing the dotting, the important person should think good thoughts and say “Awaken, Awaken, Awaken” as they are dotting the eyes of the dragon boat.

4.7.3 Dotting the Eyes of Old Boats/ Regattas/ Championships

In general, for a regatta or championship, it is only necessary just to dot the eyes, i.e. a simple eye dotting (just eyes, boat seats and tails) but not the fore head (or Wisdom Eye)

4.7.4 After Dotting the Eyes of All Races/Ceremonies

Once each eye dotter has finished dotting the eye of a dragon head, they should pray for world peace and ask for the Dragon to protect the competitors after awakening the Dragon for the regatta. Once they have asked for world peace and protection, pass them a dumpling.

When all the Dotting is done, the dumplings are then thrown into the water to appease the Dragon.

Drumming, fire crackers and wetting the Dragons head is a popular addition to the Eye Dotting / Awakening ceremony.

4.8 *Post Ceremony*

Once the dumplings have been thrown, this is the end of the core activities of the eye dotting ceremony. Let the racing begin!

4.9 *Optional Activities*

After the core activities are complete, here are some of the optional activities that can be performed to add more colour and spectacle to the eye dotting ceremony.

4.9.1 *Making a Sacrifice to the Dragon*

Place the table cloth in front of the Dragon either on the floor or if you have on a small table. Put the fruits and chicken and perhaps others on it and decorate it nicely together with some incense.

Place the metal bucket or container nearby.

Some important person like team captain, chairman of your club or major should, while holding some incense, bow three times to the Dragon and three times to the open water. The team and other attending guests may join him or follow to bow.

After bowing, burn the Gold/Silver paper.
So far no speeches are held!

By making the sacrifice and the bowing respect is shown to the Dragon and to the spirits of the water.

4.9.2 *Naming of the Boat*

This activity is performed before the eye dotting ceremony.

An important person or, if this is the case, your sponsor removes the wrapping paper or cloth covering the name of the boat. They may say some nice but short words like: "This boat shall from now on carry the name (insert boat name here)"... or something like that.

4.9.3 *Bowing of the Alive Dragon*

If the boat is still on land, put it into the water now.

The entire paddling crew with drummer and helm enters the boat and back paddles some distance away from the shore just to sprint back towards land again. This is done three times and symbolizes the Dragon bowing to the audience, which may bow also or greet him.

4.9.4 Awakening the Dragon

Depending on where dragon boaters are from, the ceremony would involve dipping a spring onion in the water and shake over the dragon's head. In other places such as Hong Kong and Guangzhou, paddlers would awaken the dragon by having a water fight between boats.



4.9.5 Showing the Dragon Around

The boat is paddled once around the water venue. By this the Dragon and the spirits of the water become introduced and know where the Dragon will be moving around.

4.9.6 Cutting of the Suckling Pig

This is normally performed at big events and regattas such as Chinese New Year and Dragon Boat Festival Races.

When the boat is back, it is time for speeches and to cut the roasted pig, which is known as food for the gods. After the cutting, eat it and have a nice party.

Also the fruit and chicken, which have symbolically sacrificed are in fact still there and can be eaten.



4.9.7 Lion Dance

The Lion Dance performance can be done any time after the Blessing Ceremony. This can be a separate performance.

During the Lion Dance, it is **important** that an offering (a red packet of money/cheque tied to a head of lettuce and spring onion) is presented to the Lion in appreciation (the donation amount should be agreed with the Lion Dance Troupe before hand). The amount is related to several factors such as the size of the Troupe and how far they had to travel.



5 Closing of the Eyes

People may be concerned about "Closing the Eye" ceremony.

Dragon Boat Racing used to only occur once a year during the Dragon Boat Festival (5th Day of the 5th Month). This was before the Festival became a sport where racing has become a regular and common event throughout the world.

The Dragon Boats in the past would be placed back into storage or buried back in the mud after the Festival where they would have their eyes closed, so to speak. This was done to preserve the boat until the next race

Because most of the boats now no longer go into storage for a great length of time the "Eye Closing" ceremony is rarely performed as far as I know. In Penang the Dragon Boats of old were very large wooden boats which were actually buried to help preserve them, thus they "would go to sleep".

The details of closing of the eyes are unclear. This section will be added in future versions of this document.

6 Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people and acknowledge the following references for their contribution to this document:

References

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Zong Zi Recipe

Patricia Quah - CYL President

7 Appendix 1: Dumplings / Zongzi Recipe

INGREDIENTS:

Bamboo leaves	1 packet	*Dried products"
Glutinous rice	1kg	*Dried products*
Belly Pork	1kg	*Cut into Cubes
Mung Beans	0.5kg	*Dried products*
Chestnut	300g	*Dried products*
Dried prawns	250g	*Dried products*
Mushrooms	200g	*Dried products*
5 Spice Powder		
Light Soya Sauce		
Dark Soya Sauce		
Sesame oil		
Garlic		
Oil		
Salt		
Pepper		



METHOD:

PREPARATION

- a) Soak (All dry ingredients) overnight:-
 - a. Bamboo leaves
 - b. Rice
 - c. Dried Prawns
 - d. Beans
 - e. Chestnuts
 - f. Mushrooms
- b) Cut Pork belly into cubes and season with:
 - a. Five spice powder
 - b. Light and Dark Soya Sauce
 - c. Pepper/Salt (small amount)

THE NEXT DAY

- c) Wash and drain all above ingredients and season with
 - a. Five spice power
 - b. Sesame Oil
 - c. Salt/Pepper
- d) Fry the below ingredients SEPARATELY:
 - a. All the ingredients above with:
 - i. Garlic oil
 - ii. Light/Dark Soya Sauce
 - iii. 5 Spice powder.
- e) Wrap it.