Chapter 13
Religious Ceremonies

Taipei City is a typical immigrant metropolis that celebrates an infusion of religious beliefs, cultures, customs and lifestyles brought by different ethnic groups. The year 2008 also witnessed multifarious and colorful ritual galas and religious ceremonies. Apart from these activities, the Taipei City Government in 2008 also implemented a myriad of innovative ritual measures that broke away from the traditional, rigid elements and brought together the communities and residents in the twelve city districts that are unique in their own ways. The city of Taipei encourages the promotion of strengths of new cultural substances and religious beliefs, translating these new energies into a unique Taipei cultural vision.
Taiwan has congregated diverse cultural elements, where multiple ethnic groups coexist prosperously. Taipei City is arguably the capital where these cultures most playfully and vigorously vie for attention and spotlight. A modernized Taipei City not only expresses local folk flavors, but is always ready to embrace new and diverse cultures. Modern Taipei’s citizenry has successfully passed on traditional customs and is inspired to be innovative in its vision, calling for a creative blend of the new and the old.

Part 1: Colorful and Vibrant Ceremonial Gatherings

Conventional farming society is characterized by the myriad of holidays, which have been brought over by immigrants from their ancestral homes to Taiwan. Although modern Taipei no longer organizes elaborate and formal ceremonies, we can still witness the fusion of both traditional and innovative practices that have been adapted to modern lifestyles through rituals and religious activities throughout the seasons, molding them to form a unique religious cultural blend in modern Taipei.

1. The Taipei Lantern Festival

The Lantern Festival is a long-standing and well-established Chinese holiday, and ever since the Taipei City Government began holding the first “Taipei Lantern Festival” in 1996, it has become one of the biggest and most representative activities in Taipei. In the “2008 Taipei Lantern Festival: Prosperity and Happiness—A New Dawn in Taipei,” the Taipei City Government combined multiple cultures and technologies and used the riverbanks as exhibition venues to improve Taipei’s international visibility by hailing Taipei as a “Healthy City.” The festival’s mascot, “Lucky Mouse,” was installed to connect the themes of various events and lantern areas, including the centerpiece, “The Mouse Wedding,” a “Good Tidings from the Silver Magpie” lantern section, a long lantern-dotted tunnel, a splendid and glorious international lantern section, a topical lantern to signify traditional festivities, a students’ lantern section to showcase their creativity in passing on the legacy, and an “Auspicious Peony Mouse” lantern section in the Xinyi District, a riddle arena, the main performance stage, a folk art street and a prayer enclave to spice up the interests and diversity of the great soiree. The event attracted over 6 million visitors from February 15 through 24 in 2008.

2. Confucius Temple Ceremony and Cultural Activities

(1) Vibrant Confucianism in the Springtime

Taipei City held the first Spring Confucius Worship on March 8, 2008. With a view to “revitalize
social morality” and “infuse modernity into Confucianism” in the spring holiday season, and to display a different take on “respect for teachers” from the autumnal Confucius worship ceremonies, the public was given a golden opportunity to feel the lively and solemn festivity in a different yet refreshing way.

In the Spring Confucius Worship, the Management Commission of the Taipei Confucius Temple, for the first time, allowed Confucius’ tablet out of the temple. With Commissioner of the Department of Civil Affairs, Huang Lu Ching-ju as the presenter, and Secretary General of the Taipei City Government, Li Sush-der as the officiator, the ceremony began after the presenter burned incense in honor of Confucius, after which the accompanying honor guards, 6 tablet guards, 8 leading guards, and 72 Confucianists brought the great Confucius to the Six-Art Plaza. After the tablet was placed down, 72 students from home and abroad recited the Chapter of Great Harmony (Ta Tung) in Chinese, English, Japanese, and Korean, symbolizing that Confucianism transcends age, ethnicity and country, and is honored and aspired after around the world.

Students comprised the main body in the “2008 Spring Confucius Worship.” The music class from Nanmen Junior High School in Taipei performed the “New Confucius Worship Music” arranged by Teacher Sun Rey-jin, together with the Taipei Chenggong High School Choir, and accompanied by dancing of students from Dalong Elementary School. Students from Taipei Physical Education College were in charge of presenting and retrieving the worship offerings, while Minglun Senior High School students served as the ceremonial receivers, ushering in a new era of hope for the younger generation.

The offerings in this spring worship came from the innovative creations of students in Taipei Kaiping Culinary School, in which they made use of in-season ingredients in combination with western baking techniques in presenting an assortment of 27 exquisite, original dish offerings and prize-winning cakes. Student involvement in the process is a way of expressing respect for teachers, and the spirit of education to all without distinction. Following the worship ceremony, the officiator, Secretary-General Li Sush-der, led the students in a prayer to improve their learning and distributed the prize-winning cakes. At the same time, on-site exhibitions by schools around Taipei showcased the students’ talents. In the afternoon, hands-on Confucian cultural workshops were open to the public, such as “Album Art Learning,” “Interactive Calligraphy Learning” and “Big-Letter Calligraphy Show,” drawing the first “Spring Confucius Worship” to a perfect ending.

(2) The Dalongdong Cultural Fair

The “Dalongdong Cultural Fair” entered its third year in 2008, with the theme of “Taipei – Joy and Peace” intended to convey a peaceful and auspicious ambiance. 2008 also marked the completion of the one-year renovation of the Confucius Temple, a Class 3 Historic Site. The fair opened on September 20, when a “Blessing Ceremony for the Completion of Restoration” officiated by the Commissioner of the Department of Civil Affairs, Huang Lu Ching-ju was held, accompanied by music and dancing of Yi and Yue students in remembrance of the great teacher Confucius.

September 28 of 2008 marked the 2,558th birthday of the Great Teacher, Confucius, and also the 40th anniversary of the Confucius Worship at the Confucius Temple. To exalt this grand occasion and
highlight the cultural characteristics of Confucian rites, ancient ritual ceremonies were reenacted in full, including a performance of the Ba Yi Dance during the sacrificial offering of twelve ancient foods. Taipei City Mayor Hau Lung-bin was the chief presenter, Commissioner of the Department of Civil Affairs, Huang Lu Ching-ju was the officiator, while President Ma Ying-jeou paid his respects in person by burning incense and presenting a “Clear Path of Virtue and Moral” plaque. After the ceremony, Mayor Hau Lung-bin personally distributed wisdom cakes and “Confucianism Forever” keepsakes to attendees. On the day of the ceremony, the commission also arranged archery shooting-themed activities (archery shooting as one of the six arts) to give the public an opportunity to experience the essence of archery in ancient times and the spirit of modern archery.

The 3-month “2008 Dalongdong Cultural Fair” was given new life with calligraphy and painting competitions, street parties that revolutionized people’s impression of traditional Confucian temples, exploration tours into historic sites and nighttime parties that combined elements of the East and the West. Tradition was infused with a new breath of vigor. The combination of traditional arts and innovative activities not only brought vivacious and energetic dynamics to the Dalongdong Cultural Park, but also elicited enthusiastic responses from the public, creating a unique Confucian and local flavor not to be experienced anywhere else.

3. Aboriginal Cultural Exchange Festivities

The “Light-i potal” 2008 Taiwan Aboriginal Cultural Series Events took place on November 23 in the expansive and lush Fudekeng Recreational Park in Mucha, Taipei. Activities kicked off with the “traditional ceremony” of the Paiwan tribe, arranged by the Indigenous Peoples Commission, the Taipei City Government, followed by traditional sports contests and impassioned singing and dance performances, giving Taipei residents a taste of original aboriginal customs.
To present the tradition of tribal rituals in metropolitan Taipei, activities were followed out in accordance with the solemn and grand five-year festival rituals of the Paiwan tribe, where ritual ceremonies were presided over by the tribal priest. Blessing ceremonies were carried out by respected Paiwan elders and warriors, in which the contestants engaged in fighting for a rattan ball to symbolize good harvest, health, and peace and well-being in the coming years. This was a chance for the city's aborigines to recollect and relish their traditional tribal crafts once again. The organizers arranged a multitude of sports contest activities, including net casting, an archery competition, bare-handed chicken catching, good-fortune ball games, and relays. On the other side of the plaza song and dance performances were held with a total of 20 aboriginal groups performing in succession, showcasing an array of tribal celebrations from various tribes, such as the Amei Harvest Festival, the Bunong Malahodaigian Ritual, and the Zou Blessing Dance.

A luncheon feast was prepared in the most primitive manner, in which traditional aboriginal gourmet cuisine such as roasted pig barbecue, barbecued tilapia fish, and rice prepared in bamboo tubes were available for all attendees. The “Light-i potal” 2008 Taiwan Aboriginal Cultural Series Events ended on a high note and the unique experience was embedded in everyone's memory, especially among the aborigines residing far away from home in Taipei City.

4. The Taipei Hakka Yi-Min Festival

The Yi-Min Festival, showcasing the unique religious beliefs of the Hakka communities in Taiwan, falls on July 20 (Lunar calendar). In 2008, the Taipei Hakka Affairs Commission and the Yi-Min Hakka communities traveled to the Xinpu Main Temple and asked for Yi-Min Ye's approval to postpone the Yi-Min ceremonies to October. The ceremonies took on a new form as the “Taipei Hakka Yi-Min Festival” to celebrate the occasion in conjunction with the National Day. The festival has grown in stature into an event that is distinct from the Ghost Festival. Now, this grand event attracts not only Hakka people, but friends from all over the world, making this joyous festival a memorable occasion at home and abroad.

The “2008 Taipei Hakka Yi-Min Festival” took place between October 11 and 13, in which nine Yi-Min representatives from 8 counties and cities and 9 townships and villages, including Xinpu Fangliao Main Temple, Miaoli, Pingzhen, Miaoli, Toufen, Dongshi in Taizhong, Pingdong's Liudui Temple, Guoxing in Nantou, Jiayi, and Fenglin in Hualien, gathered at the Songshan Tobacco Factory to hold their grand prayer ceremony. The main activity kicked off with a god-welcoming procession starting from Taipei City Hall, passing the Taipei City Council, and finally arriving at the Songshan Tobacco Factory, where the festival was held. The Yi-Min god was seated amidst folk performing troupes. Starting from the afternoon, the organizers presented
various Hakka operas, fun contests and shows featuring performing artists. The theme of the festival for 2008 was “Save more and save the environment.” On the second day, thousands of people assembled and carried rice with carrying poles to experience the heavy burden the Earth carries today. Thousands of participants stood on one leg for 21 seconds at 10:21am on that day, showing the Hakka spirit of integrity, hard work and environmental awareness.

Through a series of activities, the audience was given an opportunity to explore the religious veins of the traditional Hakka faith, so that Hakka culture can be sustained and passed on and at the same time is able to impart life and energy into the multifaceted Taipei City.

**Part2 Dignified and Thanksgiving Religious Rites**

Taiwan’s temple festival culture has become a source of strength to immigrants in settling down in a new place; it is also the root for building metropolitan identity. Religious festivals are held in different seasons with added innovations, creating a one-of-a-kind religious culture in metro Taipei.

**1. The Baosheng Cultural Festival**

To exalt traditional local folk customs and celebrate the birthday of Baosheng Dadi, the Department of Civil Affairs and the Baoan Temple of Dalongdong co-sponsor the annual “Baosheng Cultural Festival” that takes place in March of the lunar calendar. This two-month festival combines religious activities with folk arts, and has become one of the biggest, the most celebrated and leading traditional temple fairs. Starting on April 10 (March 5 of the lunar calendar), the show, “Folk Play: the Surname Show” was staged at the Baoan Temple Garden Square and ran for nearly a month, with famed theater troupes, famous Taiwanese folk opera societies, and school clubs gracing the occasion with performances. On the morning of April 19, folk cultural art activities, competitions and performances were held; folk cultural art groups from all over Taiwan constituted dozens of circuit teams, and released the fire lion. The stomach of the fire lion...
was rigged with tens and thousands of beehive rockets, waiting to be ignited to light up the sky. On the following day, the folk custom of “crossing fire” was performed, which served to demonstrate the power of the gods. Apart from the various traditional festivities, the Baoan Temple arranged artistic activities for recording the “Baosheng Cultural Festival,” including photography and sketching competitions, and conducted religious seminars, medical clinics offering free treatment and academic workshops.

2. Xiahai City God Birthday Celebration

In the years of Emperor Guangxu, the Dadaocheng commercial district reached the height of its economic prosperity. Businessmen felt the need to honor the power of the prominent Xiahai City God, so they expanded the scale of the Xiahai City God Birthday Celebration, which created a popular saying that goes “On May 13, all you see is people and more people.”

Every year, the Taipei Xiahai City God Temple holds the Xiahai City God Birthday Celebration that begins on May 6 of the lunar calendar with a birthday celebration ceremony and continues with ceremonials such as Fangjun, the Settling of the Gods in the Five Positions and the Xiahai City God Festival Ceremony. From July 13 to 14 (May 11 to May 12 on the lunar calendar) of 2008, a peace offering ceremony involving a procession led by the Tiger God takes place, with troops of boys, eight god general performing troupe, the Seventh and Eighth General, Beiguan music performers, statue holders, and leading palanquins following in the god's wake. July 15 (May 13 on the lunar calendar) is the birthday of the Xiahai City God; at 1pm of that day, the Xiahai City God is welcomed back from the procession, along with a convoy motorcade, the leading flag bearer, a lion performing troupe, the head of god generals, god generals, drum performing arrays, a Bajiajiang performance, flag-performing arrays, Beiguan music performers, the Golden Lion troupe, and chentou troupes, stretching hundreds of meters long and bringing the festival to a climax. On July 16 (May 14 on the lunar calendar) a birthday celebration ceremony is held that includes calling back the god generals. The entire festival ends with a theatrical act that commemorates the god's work over the preceding few days.

Taipei Xiahai City God Temple

Taipei Xiahai City God Temple is located at 61 Dihua Street in Tatung District, Taipei City, in which the Xiahai City God is worshipped. It was built in 1856 at the current site, and opened in 1859. In 1984, it was designated by the Ministry of the Interior as a Class 3 Historic Site with 150 years of history.
3. The Matsu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan

Since 2004, communities around Taipei began holding the ceremony “Welcoming Gold Face Matsu Back to Town.” In 2006, the Department of Civil Affairs took over as the host, and held the “Matsu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan” in August of the lunar calendar, which coincides with the traditional “Welcome to Gods as Our Guests” activities. On September 6, 2008, Taipei City Mayor Hau Lung-bin and county heads in Northern Taiwan jointly invited Matsu from the carriage, which officially launched the festival. On September 6 to 10, a series of activities were held at the 228 Peace Memorial Park.

The “2008 Matsu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan” was an inter-county effort in promoting exchanges between religious temples, carrying forward folk arts, and allowing a broader range of people to come to understand the profound value of traditional temple culture. The event has become a grand religious occasion in Northern Taiwan, and 2008 happened to be the 120th anniversary of the Taipei Gold Face Matsu Temple, in which the then governor Liu Ming-chuan was given the order by royal decree of the Qing Emperor to worship Matsu, making this event ever more auspicious.

Funan Temple in Nangang was the Matsu statue holder in the “2008 Matsu Cultural Festival of

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Yi-Ge

It is said that Yi-Ge was introduced to Taiwan by ancestors from Xiamen and Quanzhou, Fujian Province. Formerly, Yi-Ge's were made of wooden platforms, decorated with cloth ornaments, where Yidan performers would sing and act out characters from classic poems or works of fiction. Accompanied by nanguan music, the Yidan would sit on the stage, which is sometimes carried by 4 to 8 strong men to parade around the streets. It won the hearts of many nanguan lovers and poets. Later on, Yi-Ge was transformed into a kind of performance by devout religious followers who would appear in stunning costumes and play the characters on stage. Yi-Ge, formerly carried by men, was later carried and hauled by ox carts, wood wheel carts, electric cars, and even large trucks and trailers. Nowadays, Yi-Ge is adorned with more decorative paintings, coupled with high-tech sound and light effects, so that it has evolved into nighttime floats.
Northern Taiwan.” A total of 16 Matsu temples took part in this great event, including Fucheng Temple in Keelung, Matsu Temple in Songshan, Guandu Temple in Taipei, Matsu Temple in Taipei, Nantian Temple in Nanfangao, Chingan Temple in Keelung, Cihu Temple in Taoyuan, Matsu Temple in North Shinchu, Xinglong Temple in Sanxia, Matsu Temple in Shincuang, Shengyun Temple in Beihai, Nanfu Temple in Guting, Cixian Temple in Shilin, Shuntian Temple in Wanli, as well as City God temples around Taiwan.

More than 100 spectacular Yi-ge floats were on display in the nighttime religious procession around Taipei streets, a magnificent view to behold. The floats toured around Nangang, Neihu, Songshan, Zhongshan, Datong, Wanhua, and Zhongzheng districts, attracting believers to witness and experience a temple fair atmosphere that is now a rarity in Taipei. The last stop was the former site of Taipei Matsu Temple (now the 228 Peace Memorial Park) where Matsu was seated, also a rare temple scene that is special to Taipei residents.

During the festivities, exhibitions from eight counties and the Matsu Cultural Exhibition were staged at the 228 Peace Memorial Park, as well as Hakka Huagu performances, acrobatic stunts, traditional Chinese opera and modern musical performances. The participating temples arranged 10 peace ceremonies. The Matsu statues from each temple were seated at the altar in the 228 Peace Memorial Park until the morning of September 10 when they were welcomed back to their carriages.

In addition, the Department of Civil Affairs continues its long-term dedication for promoting “simplified worshiping” and encourages the awareness of environmental protection in practicing traditional customs. During the course of the “2008 Matsu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan,” the organizers held special activities such as “Matsu Fortune Money, Good Heart Charity” where people can make a wish by throwing blocks. Believers pray to Matsu for fortune money, vowing to do good to benefit society. It encourages the public to be involved in public affairs with blessings from Matsu.

4. The Hakka Three Mountain Kings Ceremony

The Three Mountain Kings were the patron gods of the Hakka immigrants from Chaozhou. The religion began to spread throughout Taiwan along with the immigrants and among other ethnic groups. On the occasion of the Three Mountain Kings’ birthday in 2008, the Taipei Hakka Affairs Commission held a number of memorial activities at the Taipei Hakka Cultural Hall, including such
festive events as seating the gods and other ceremonial rituals. Hakka concerts, Three Mountain Kings cultural exhibitions, Hakka cuisine were among the offerings, as well as songs that brought together Taiwanese, Hakka and new immigrants, showing the respect for diverse ethnicities and cultures.

5. The Hakka Bag Gung Ceremony

Starting in 2004, the Taipei Hakka Affairs Commission began to celebrate the “Birth of Bag Gung” on the second day of the second lunar calendar month at the Zhangqing Temple on Jinjiang Street in conjunction with Hakka organizations and local residents to celebrate the Earth God’s birthday. In 2008, aside from the “Birth of Bag Gung” celebration ceremony, Hakka music performances, song performances by teenagers, Hakka folk dance, and Hakka cuisine were offered to the public. The series of events included performances by Taiwanese, Hakka and new immigrants, illustrating the cooperative and peaceful coexistence among various groups among the overall population.

Part 3: Foreign Ceremonies and Rituals in Taipei

To encourage interaction and exchange, the Department of Civil Affairs organizes annual activities associated with new immigrants. Participants have become increasingly enthusiastic about taking part in these occasions, which have become an annual gala for new immigrants from everywhere.

1. Thailand’s Songkran Festival

To allay the homesickness of Thai laborers and new immigrants, the Department of Civil Affairs and the Department of Labor kicked off “Thailand’s Songkran Festival” on April 12, 2008 at the Ashanti Square of Shinkong Mitsukoshi in Xinyi district, and celebrated the Thai holiday with friends from Thailand, new immigrants, and Taipei citizens.

On the day of the festival, the director of the Department of Labor Su Yin-kuei, and the deputy director of Department of Civil Affairs Chen Qi-yong donned traditional Thai costumes, and invited the dance troupe from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Srinakharinwirot University in Thailand to officiate over the orthodox throwing of water. The event also featured independent bands, including Blue Sky, plus a freestyle bazaar with great food and Southeast Asian handicrafts, prize-drawings and quiz sessions. The highlight at the end of the event was the “Songkran blessings.” in which participating citizens, foreign laborers and new immigrants congregated to wish each other a happy holiday by using the most universal and merry language of gesticulation, and welcoming the exotic benedictions in unison.
2. The New Immigrant Art Show/Contest

For the first time ever, the Taipei City Government and the Taipei County Government co-organized for our new immigrant friends on November 9, 2008 the “Taipei City and Taipei County New Immigrant Art Show/Contest” at Ankeng Elementary School in Taipei County. Talent contests included speech, reading, a talent show, parent-child singing mother tongue songs, “How well do you know Chinese,” featuring the theme of happy families and parent-child education. A total of 806 contestants from over 10 different countries came from 76 schools in Taipei County and Taipei City, including 578 from Taipei County and 228 from Taipei City. Of these contestants, 463 were native Vietnamese, 100 Indonesians, 32 Thai, 29 Cambodians, 39 Filipinos, 18 Burmese, 67 Mainland Chinese, 1 Dominican, 5 Japanese, 5 Malaysians, 2 Hong Kong natives, and 45 children of new immigrants. Some of the players even donned dazzling traditional costumes and turned heads everywhere they went. Through the lively and interactive talent contest, new immigrants were given a chance to engage in cultural exchange, which also symbolizes that new immigrants in Taipei are members of the big Taipei family, a place where resources are shared to enrich the lives of new immigrants for a brighter and multi-cultural future.

3. The Joint New Immigrant Graduation and Carnival

To showcase the fruitful learning outcomes of new immigrants in Taiwan, the Department of Civil Affairs held the “2008 Joint New Immigrant Graduation and Carnival” on December 7, 2008 at the 228 Peace Memorial Park, in which new immigrants presented their learning in a joyous atmosphere. The families of new immigrants were invited, together with Taipei residents, to experience exotic and diverse cultures, promote cultural exchange and learn to respect the values of diverse ethnic groups.

The Department of Civil Affairs began offering courses for new immigrants in 1990. In 2008, 43 courses were offered, with 1,220 students taking part. In order to emphasize the importance of learning for new immigrants, as well as to underline the mutual learning and respect in new immigrant families to accept the beauty of different cultures, the Department of Civil Affairs held a joint graduation ceremony.
To endow these new immigrants with the graduation atmosphere and spirit, the Department of Civil Affairs also arranged tailor-made graduation gowns for them. The event also followed all the formalities of a typical graduation ceremony, including speeches made by graduate representatives on behalf of the graduating body. All of this served to encourage the general public and newly arrived families to support new immigrants to devote themselves to education, so that the multi-cultural experience brought by the new immigrants can generate new sparks within the existing Taiwanese culture.

The graduation ceremony was filled with Southeast-Asian-style performances, where new immigrants pulled out all the stops on stage, singing and dancing, fully presenting the fruitful outcomes of their learning. Handiworks made by the new immigrants for the courses they took were on display, including arts and crafts, workbooks and curriculum records. The ceremony drew to an end when the Commissioner of the Department of Civil Affairs, Huang Lu Ching-ju, sang together with the new immigrants “The Sky of Taipei.” The ceremony ended with graduates throwing their graduation caps into the air. The Taipei City Government compiled the touching stories and the works provided by the students, hoping to keep a memorable record for the new immigrants as well as for Taipei City to treasure in the future.
The Taipei City Government has introduced innovative ceremonial measures by observing the changing times in order to meet various demands of the public.

1. **Promotion of Centralized Collection and Burning of Paper Money**

Nine years have passed since the centralized collection and burning of paper money was launched for the Ghost Festival in 1990. From July to September, 2008, the Taipei City Government inspected 270 temples officially registered in Taipei, in which 114 (42%) had ceased burning paper money; 128 out of 156 temples (82% that still burned paper money) had participated in the centralized collection and burning movement. According to the “Survey on Carbon Reduction and Energy Conservation in Taipei,” 81% were in favor of the movement, evidencing that it has been widely accepted.

Nevertheless, the centralized burning of paper money is merely a downstream measure to reduce pollution. Cutting back on paper money burning is to solve the problem at its root. To improve the air quality in Taipei, the Department of Civil Affairs has been actively engaged in the promotion of “Reduced and Centralized Burning of Paper Money.” In 2008, the Department implemented various measures, such as providing special paper bags during the Ghost Festival, conducting interviews with focus groups, holding exhibitions on simplifying religious worship and sponsoring NGOs forums on the subject matter, staging competitions for the development of eco-friendly paper money and incense sticks, and designing websites advocating an end to paper money burning. The Taipei City Government aspires to revolutionize and simplify the folk customs of religious worship, making Taipei an environmentally friendly city that holds true to both tradition and environmental protection.

2. **Joint Sea Burial**

To promote environmentally friendly burial practices and encourage mortuary service reforms, the Taipei City Government, the Taipei County Government and the Taoyuan County Government held a joint burial at sea for a total of 53 deceased on May 29 for 19, 29 and 5 deceased from the Taipei City, Taipei County, and Taoyuan County, respectively, together with their family members.

3. **Promoting Environmentally Friendly Burial Practices**

The Taipei City Government is a pioneer in promoting environmentally friendly burial practices such as tree burials and sprinkle burials. On November 10, 2003, the first tree burial test-run area was set up, and by December 31, 2008, a total of 988 departed from various cities and counties had tree and sprinkle burials here. The “Yongai Garden” in the Fude Mausoleum features tree and sprinkle burials, environmental functionality, landscaping and ecological restoration purposes, in which the 1.2-hectare area offers 6,000 tree burial sites. There are no tombstones or inscriptions of the name of the departed, as the ashes of the deceased are put into bio-degradable urns, so that a sustained natural cycle can be allowed to carry on.

4. **Taiwan's First Sprinkle Burial Site for Pets**

Taipei City also set up Taiwan's first Sprinkle Burial Site for Pets – “The Secret Garden” next to Yongai Garden's tree burial section, which began operating in June, 2007. “The Secret Garden” measures about 500 pings. As of 2008, a total of 665 pets have been buried in the Garden.
5. Joint Matrimonial Ceremonies

To ameliorate social morals and promote economical wedding ceremonies, Taipei City introduced demonstrative nuptials by organizing “The Joint Matrimonial Ceremonies” in 1973 (formally known as communal marriages). The practice has been widely popular. Two Joint Matrimonial Ceremonies were held in 2008, one on April 27 themed “True Love in Taipei” and one on October 4 themed “Loving Taipei, Loving You.” At the ceremonies 243 couples were formally wedded. During the ceremony in April, a “Retrospective Show of Ceremonies over the Years” was held, at which wedding photos were displayed to share with the public the joyful memories of tying the knot in Taipei.

6. Joint Coming Of Age Ceremony

The Department of Civil Affairs held the “2008 Taipei City Joint Coming of Age Ceremony” on November 23 (Sunday), with a theme of “Coming of Age-Passing on the Legacy,” at 2pm in the main gymnasium of the National Taiwan University Sports Center. On that day, a total of 600 young people went through the coming of age ceremonies, including passing through the door of intelligence, offering gifts to parents, drinking a glass of coming-of-age liquor, expressing gratitude to parents, as well as participating in the ceremony of the intelligence crown and passing down the legacy, after which they were considered to have entered adulthood, a new stage in life.

The joint ceremony combined the themes of “cultural heritage” and “thanking parents” to create a coherent identity of the youth in Taipei, hoping that the rite of passage will encourage them to become the pillars of the country’s future as they shoulder the mission to make Taiwan a better place.

The ceremony started with participating youngsters passing through the door of intelligence that is decorated with onions symbolizing intelligence, and celery stalks symbolizing diligence, as well as with words of encouragement—“mental growth and self-affirmation,” and “responsible and thankful,” followed by a series of exciting martial arts performances by the Taipei Physical Education College, themed “Young Taipei, Young Dance,” that served to infuse new life into traditional martial arts. This was followed by ancient rituals, such as “thanking the ancestors,” “drinking coming-of-age liquor,” “ceremony of the crown of intelligence” and “passing down the heritage.” Parents of the participants took part in the “ceremony of the crown of intelligence” and “passing down the heritage.” The ceremony of the crown of intelligence and passing down the family heirlooms signify that members of the younger generation are now entrusted to assume social and family responsibilities;
through the intimate parent-child interactions, children knelt before their parents to express their gratitude for the selfless devotion of parenting.

Taipei City Mayor Hau Lung-bin served as the chief master of ceremonies, and the Commissioner of the Department of Civil Affairs, Huang Lu Ching-ju, served as the accompanying master of ceremony. Distinguished guests included the Ten Outstanding Young Persons Award winners, Outstanding Citizens of Taipei, and an exemplary model for Taiwan's youth, the ultra-marathon hero Lin Yi-jie. Under the witness and blessing of all the guests, these young ones were declared to have officially entered adulthood, having moved on to the next stage in life.

"The 2008 Taipei City Joint Coming of Age Ceremony" not only gave the young people a chance to recognize the rights, obligations and responsibilities that mark adulthood, but encouraged everyone to speak up and express their love and gratefulness for their parents.

Part 5 Each District with Its Own Uniqueness

In view of implementing cultural construction at the grassroots level, providing the public with quality recreational environment, uniting residents and establishing community identity, the Department of Civil Affairs commissioned the Taipei City District Offices in the 12 district areas to promote "Folk Performing Arts Activities." Through styling and marketing the uniqueness of each district, it is expected to effectively raise Taipei's international visibility and expand the economy as a whole.

In 2008, a variety of folk performance arts activities were held in the 12 districts in Taipei, including the "Lantern Festival at Neihu" in Neihu District, the "2008 Xikou Cultural Festival" that recreated a bustling and flourishing downtown scene in Songshan District, the "Colors and Beauty" that highlighted the Daan Forest Park in Daan District, the "2008 Tea and Bamboo Shoot Festival" that combined two major regional industries, Tieguanyin oolong tea and green bamboo shoots in Wenshan District, the "Relive the History Festival" that focused on the historic buildings in Zhongzheng District, the "2008 Taiwan Beer Festival—From Past to Present" that transformed old buildings into breweries in Zhongshan District, the "Xiahai Matchmaker Birthday Celebration—Bliss and Happiness" that combined traditional festivities with traditional performing arts in Datong District, the "2008 Nankang Osmanthus Cup—Music The 2008 Wanhua Cultural Carnival.
Carnival” that re-spread the development of tea culture in Nangang District, the “2008 Taipei Hot Spring Festival” that was built on the theme of creating a healthy new lifestyle in Beitou District, the “2008 Shilin International Cultural Fair” that revolved around the diverse nationalities in Tianmu in Shilin District, the “2008 Wanhua Cultural Carnival—Jiarui and Mengjia Cultural Fair” that integrated tradition and modernity in Wanhua District, and the “Wufenpu Clothing Festival” that gathered businesses at Wufenpu in Xinyi District.

**Conclusion**

Traditional agricultural communities have many holidays which are related to folk activities associated with farming, religious faiths and social entertainments around the year. Modern religious faiths and ceremonial cultures in Taipei City have helped to maintain traditional styles, have become more diverse with the infusion of customs brought in by immigrants, and continue to present a new look with fresh ideas and new conventions.