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● Chapter 13 Religious Ceremonies

Religions and ceremonial rites in Taiwan's folk culture are characterized by simple charms and interesting tidbits, making these colorful folk customs extremely worthy of research and preservation. The Taipei City, where the cultural elites assemble, is the stronghold where Taiwan's diverse cultures converge. The unique traditions, rites and beliefs of various ethnic groups are celebrated here in the Taipei basin in the form of many festivals; other than the outward manifestations of fascinating ritual elements, these traditions, rites and beliefs have helped preserve cultural conventions while successfully reinventing themselves to redefine Taipei's unique cultural outlook. Both the government and the private sectors are jointly endeavoring to preserve these religious celebrations and rites in hopes of enriching Taipei's cityscape.



13 Religious Ceremonies

Folk holiday celebrations have always been the heart of seasonal ceremonies; they chronicle how the ancestors developed their work and rest routines by honoring the changes of the seasons to conduct their agricultural activities. With continued progress in Taiwan's social and economic development, lifestyles and religious celebrations also undergo shifts and changes. Taipei City, as the forefront of multicultural interplays, continues to preserve the best of traditional religious cultures and folk customs, while giving them a modern splash.

Part 1 Colorful and Dynamic Ceremonies

1. The Taipei Lantern Festival

To wow and surprise Taipei citizens, visitors from around the country and abroad, the Taipei City Government strives to reinvent the annual Taipei Lantern Festival with both traditional and innovative elements. The 2010 Taipei Lantern Festival was themed, "A Tiger Year of Prosperity and Fortune," and it kicked off at the National Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall, the surrounding space of the Taipei City Hall, and the Civic Plaza all the way to the Renai Traffic Circle from February 26 through March 7, 2010. The Festival was a carnival filled with creativity, surprises, merriment and fortune, one that incorporated both the old and new, virtual and realistic presentations.



The 2010 Taipei Lantern Festival – Themed Fairy Tales.

In addition to the Hoki Tiger centerpiece and the popular souvenir lanterns, the Taipei City Government designated several themed display areas: "Public Arts," innovative and interactive "Praying for Blessings," the romantic "Sea Tunnel of Lanterns" and "Traditional Lantern Designs," "Themed Lantern Displays," the "Five Major Continents," "International Displays," "Students' Lantern Designs," and "the Entrance of Lanterns;" plus the impressive "Centerpiece Event," "Provincial Temple of City God Riddles Contest," "Songshan Matsu Shrine," "the Lucky Yoyo Town," "Street Performance Fair," and "the Taipei Lantern Festival Photography Contest." These colorful celebrations helped visitors bring home indelible memories of lantern festivities. The ten-day event attracted over six million visitors.

2. Confucius Temple Ceremony and Cultural Activities

In hopes of promoting the sophisticated Confucius culture that defines the Chinese community, the Department of Civil Affairs and the Confucius Temple Management Committee hosted a series of celebrations, titled "Spring Worships" on March 19, and organized "Confucius of the World: an International Academic Seminar on Confucius Temples and Worships," where experts from Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Mainland China, the United States, Europe and Singapore presented a total of 16 papers, and conducted in-depth discussions on the future of Confucius temples, plus opinion exchanges on rites, music, dance, sacrificial offerings and worship systems to inspire new thinking on preserving and developing Confucian traditions. These events aimed at sparking more public interest in Confucius and Confucianism, and rediscovering the charm of Confucius temples.

Year 2010 happened to be Confucius' 2,560th birthday and the 80th anniversary of the Taipei Confucius Temple. In honoring traditions, the Taipei Confucius Temple organized "Shidian Ceremony" on September 28, with Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin as the chief presenter of sacrifices, and led the delegation of representatives from different sectors to host the time-honored ceremony. President Ma Ying-jeou led Cabinet members to present incense offerings according to traditional rites. Kung Chuei-chang-the 79th-generation grandson of Confucius' lineal descent-served as the Offering Presenter. Distinguished guests, organizations promoting Confucianism, student representatives and citizens observed the ceremony in reverence. Shidian Ceremony held at the Taipei Confucius Temple continues to be a national ceremony that faithfully honors and preserves the intactness of the Three Offerings in an ancient rite. Students from Minglun High School were appointed Li apprentices, middle students from Chengyuan High School were appointed Yue apprentices, and students from the hospitality section of Kaiping Hospitality Vocational School were in charge of preparing the offerings (Zhuan); finally, students from Dalong Elementary School in Datong District were appointed Yi apprentices. Li, Yue, Yi and Zhuan rituals were solemnly reenacted by the joint efforts of private sector representatives and students to honor the Confucius legacy. The ritual was rich with humanistic and ceremonial elements. Shidian Ceremony attracts domestic and international tourists alike annually to celebrate this ancient rite.

Also, to spice up Taipei City's tourist charms, the Department of Information and Tourism, the Department of Civil Affairs and Confucius Temple collaborated with the Tourism Bureau under the Ministry of Transportation and Communication to launch "the Taipei Confucius Temple Historical Area Tourism Rehabilitation Plan." Starting October 2010, routine nighttime dramas: "Confucius Temple Stage Performances – Legendary Trilogy of the Confucius Temple" were held every weekend in outdoor theaters. The performances were of a neo-Chinese nature that incorporated new musical compositions highlighting Confucian philosophy and beliefs into modern dramatic presentations.



The gift of wisdom pens after the Shidian Ceremony.

3. Aboriginal Cultural Exchange Activities

The City's Indigenous Peoples' Commission organized the first "Taipei Naruwan Culture Festival" on July 31, 2010 at the Civic Plaza, featuring traditional "Rukai" seasonal ceremonies and tribal swing activities that accentuated aboriginal lifestyles. Visitors were able to enjoy aboriginal products, creative and cultural works, handicrafts and aboriginal cuisine sampling and "the Night of Naruwan Culture Festival." On August 1, in commemorating the "changing the name of aboriginal tribes," the "Aboriginal Music Celebration" was hosted at the National Dr.Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall auditorium. Music performances rich with the traditional Puyuma floral cultural highlights and Rukai ballads were on the repertoire. The performances were complemented by aboriginal classic narrative history accounts and fairy tales to present a memorable, yet significance-rich musical feast. On August 14, the "Aboriginal Flavor" traditional sports tournament was held at the track and field venue in Taipei Municipal Stadium to reenact traditional archery, weight-bearing and timber-sawing contests. On August 21, the artistic performances, "A Night for Butterflies," were held at the Expo Hall to showcase the multifaceted elements of aboriginal culture. These performances were excellent renditions symbolic of Taiwan's vibrant local culture.



A sport tournament celebrating aboriginal traditions.



The carrying of a shoulder pole to present a meal to Yi-min God.

4. Hakka Yi-Min Memorial Ceremony

The Hakka community in Taipei City invites the principal Fangliao Yi-min Temple in Xinpu to travel north for a blessing prayer ceremony to protect Hakkas who are away from their homelands. The annual extravaganza began in 1988 and has grown bigger in scale over the years.

The 2010 Taipei Hakka Yi-Min Carnival was held from October 23 through 25, 2010, at the Songshan Tobacco Plant, where the traditional Hakka religious ceremonies were showcased in the form of a vibrant, colorful carnival. The “Hakka Flora Expo-Stomp-the-Street” event was graced by Hakka townspeople and professional performance troupes, who successfully employed both Hakka cultural elements and Flora Expo imageries to manifest Hakka’s multifaceted cultural style with much zeal, energy, innovation and lifestyle-centric representations. The repertoire was both colorful and dynamic and included solemn and folk-driven circuit processions, traditional Hakka prelude performances, the conventional Hakka meal presentation ceremony on a carrying pole, the classical Hakka “entertaining the gods” performance, plus spectacular Hakka song recitals, and concerts featuring popular, international-class Hakka performance troupes. The presentations were dynamic and fun-filled that faithfully presented the essence of Hakka culture.

In-depth Report

Yi-min God Faith

The Righteous People Lords religion is ever-present in every Hakka community throughout Taiwan. The history of Righteous People Lords was almost exclusively connected to folk tales of Hakka ancestors who gave up their lives to protect the country and townsmen. “Yi-min” refers to the Yi-min militia formed by Hakka people and the authorities during the Qing dynasty. Hakka ancestors who sacrificed their lives to protect their homeland were knighted by the emperor as “Yi-min,” “Bao-zhong” and “Officers of Faith and Courage,” and were enshrined for worship. Even if they were to move elsewhere, Hakkas in Taiwan would always take a symbol of the Yi-min spirit with them from Fangliao Yi-min Temple, to build Yi-min temples, Bao-zhong pavilions and Zhong-yi pavilions, and organize worship ceremonies where they live. “Yi-min” and “Bao-zhong” temples therefore have become the symbol of Hakka people, who also call themselves the offspring of Righteous People God. The Righteous People God faith therefore became the center of Hakka’s folk religion. The Yi-min memorial festival hails from the Qing dynasty: it is a unique religion created by the Hakkas. In 1955, the government declared July 20 on the lunar calendar “Yi-min Memorial Day.”

The “Taiwan Hakka Industry Stronghold” program was incorporated into the event that combined Hakka village highlights to promote their local specialties. During the “Hakka Carnival Shopping Spree,” a total of 123 manufacturers from 58 townships throughout Taiwan presented over 300 items of merchandise in 41 booths. The lineup impressed many on-site visitors. In addition to quality agricultural product displays and auctions, the organizer collected many unique Hakka cultural and creative products to upgrade the exhibition’s diversity. A variety of events were organized on the site of the Shopping Spree Event. Tourists could enjoy color painting on paper umbrellas, soft clay DIY activities, tourism promotions, and Hakka activities to better understand both the Yi-min faith, and the dynamic Hakka culture. The events were attended by 50,000 people.

Part 2 Thanksgiving Religious Rites and Tributes in Solemnity

1. Chungyuan Pu Tu in Taipei City and the Prayer for Peace Ritual

In a move to fulfill the Confucian spirit of familial piety that honors the funeral rites and mercy for all, the Taipei City Government organized the 2010 Taipei City Chungyuan Pu Tu Prayer for Peace Ritual on September 3 in the juridical Taiwan Provincial City God Temple in Zhongzheng District. The ritual was conducted in the Confucian tradition and combined Oriental humanistic and art elements. The Department of Civil Affairs, Taipei City Government invited religious groups and organizations that promote support for folk customs in all administrative districts to jointly organize the ceremony, and to pray for favorable weather, peace for the country and the people. Prior to the ceremony, Mayor Hau Lung-bin and the Commissioner of the Department of Civil Affairs, Huang Lu Ching-ju, led distinguished guests from different sectors to present a report to the City God, in keeping with the ancient rite. The City God Temple invited veteran Buddhist masters to lecture on the Buddhist scriptures, and pray to release souls from purgatory. Also, in a move to reach out to underprivileged groups, artifacts and food used in the ceremony were donated to charity organizations.

2. September 9 Bell and Drum Tolling Joint Peace Prayer Ceremony

The Department of Civil Affairs, Taipei City Government invited various religious groups to conduct peace prayer ceremonies, such as “prayer/praise and worship” or “presenting incense offerings/scripture recital” at 9:00am on September 9. At 9:09am, prayers were offered, drums were sounded, and bells were tolled to ask for peace for the country. Among the prayers being offered, the Catholic Bishop Union hosted a prayer meeting; Songshan Ciyou Temple presented 999 memorial tokens after the peace prayer ritual; Cihui Temple in Songshan organized “Taiyuan River Universal Sanyuan Ceremony” in keeping with traditional Taoist ritual; Nongchan Temple in Beitou led a group of worshipers to recite the Great Compassion Mantra, and sounded the bells and drums to ask for blessings for the worshipers; Guandu Temple, the Taiwan Provincial City God Temple and Funan Temple hosted the Mini Tri-Offering Ceremony to pray for blessings for worshipers in the district. Xingtian Temple led worshipers to conduct three kneeling prayers and nine kowtows to pray for blessings, peace and good fortune. Nanfu Temple, Donghe Zen Temple, Linji Huguo Zen Temple, Jingfu Temple, the Taipei Matsu Temple, Longshan Temple, the Taipei Prefecture City God Temple, the Taipei Xiahai City God Temple, Songshan Xiahai City God Temple, Monga Qingshan Temple, Muzha Zhongshun Temple and the judicial



Various organizations throughout Taipei City sponsored the Pu Tu ceremony.

In-depth Report

Tolling the Bell for Blessings

“The sound of bells” has been considered the symbol of “prayers for blessing” and “peace” in both eastern and western hemispheres in recent years. It just so happened that it was Year 99 for the Republic of China, Taiwan, and the Department of Civil Affairs arranged to host the ceremony at 9:09am on September 9, ROC Year 99 that signified “Everlasting and Eternal Happiness.” Religious organizations from across Taipei City joined efforts to pray for prosperity, happiness and blessings for all people. The blessings were extended to the country, to Taipei City, to all individuals and to all families.



Cihui Temple in Songshan joined the bell-tolling ceremony to pray for everlasting happiness

person Taipei City Shengling Temple also tolled the bells and sounded the drums to ask for blessings for all people.

3. The Matsu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan

The 2010 Matsu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan was held between September 4 and October 1. Guting Zhuang’s Nanfu Temple was appointed the status holder for the “2010 Matsu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan.” A total of 22 Matsu temples took part in this great event, including Guandu Temple in Taipei, the Taipei Matsu Temple, Xingang Fentian Temple, Little Keelung Fu-cheng Temple, Nangang Funan Temple, Nantian Temple in Nanfangao, Qingan Temple in Keelung, Houlong Ciyun Temple, Cihu Temple in Taoyuan, Matsu Temple in Zhubei, Matsu Temple in Xiangshan, Xinglong Temple in Sanxia, Cihui Temple in Banqiao, Dexin Temple in Gongliao, Chengan Temple in Shifenliao, Shengyun Temple in Beihai, Cizheng Temple in Shilin, Shuntian Temple in Wanli Yuao, Longfeng Temple in Zhunan Houcuo, Gongfan Temple in Mailiao, and the Taiwan Provincial City God Temples.

On September 4, the Matsu statue first arrived in Nafu Temple. The local gentry organized an “honorary banquet” on September 5. With quality offerings and “A Feast of Flowers Banquet” as the reception, Mayor Hau Lung-bin led a delegation of county and city chiefs to welcome the arrival of the golden-face Matsu statue and Matsu statues from 22 temples around Taiwan to meet in Taipei City for parade that included “stomp-the-street” and a citywide pilgrimage; afterwards, the statues were carried back to Matsu Temple in Taipei for deity settlement and formal visits by believers. Over a hundred folk custom prelude performance troupes and 3,000 worshippers participated in the parade. Along the way, Matsu followers set out incense offering tables to welcome the statue with fervor. During the Matsu statue settlement, famous performance troupes, such as the Nazha Theater House, gave religious presentations that embodied Taipei’s sophisticated



The Matsu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan- photograph by Cai Zhou Yulian.

religious cultures, plus prelude presentations that integrated traditions and innovations. Between September 12 and 18, the former site of the Taipei Prefecture Matsu Temple of the Qing Dynasty (at the 228 Peace Memorial Park) hosted “the praying for peace ceremony,” “a history of the Matsu exhibition,” and the “Matsu Photography Contest.” The event ended at 10:00am on September 18, until Matsu returned to the temple. Also, to help the public better experience the diverse culture of Matsu worship, “a Pilgrimage to the Matsu Temple Culture in Northern Taiwan” was held between September 13 and 14; on September 18, “the Incense Experience” interview was held. On October 1, “Faith and Matsu,” a themed academic seminar was held at the National Taiwan University College of Law International Convention Center. The seminar aimed at infusing sophisticated worship services and creative elements into traditional activities to showcase religious faiths in artistic craftsmanship and the ever-progressing cultural elements; organizers also hoped to upgrade the Matsu faith into a paragon for Taiwan’s religious ceremonies through these activities.

In-depth Report

The Origin of the Matsu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan

The enshrining of the golden-face Matsu statue was held in Matsu Temple in Taipei during the 14th year of Qing emperor Kangxu (1888). Taiwan’s first governor, Liu Ming-chuan proposed to the Imperial Court to create a Matsu statue for imperial worshipping. This imperial Matsu goddess was an imperial worship service that belonged to the Taipei prefecture jurisdiction (approximately the size of the eight counties and cities in Northern Taiwan). The temple was torn down during the Japanese Colonial Period, and the golden face Matsu was received in Sanzhi Township for worship. In 2004 (Taipei City’s 120th anniversary), Matsu was returned to Taipei for a ceremonial celebration as part of Taipei City’s historic milestones. Taipei citizens responded to the proposal positively, and it inspired many social sectors to focus on the folk and religious implications of the Matsu faith. Since then, a joint organization of “Receiving the Golden face Matsu back to Taipei” has been held annually. In 2006, the Department of Civil Affairs began to invite the Departments of Civil Affairs in Northern Taiwan’s counties and cities, and Matsu temples in the same region to host exchange activities every eighth month on the lunar calendar. The festival is a religious extravaganza in Northern Taiwan.



The Statue of Matsu and the Divine Departure.

4. Hakka Three Mountain Kings Ceremony and The Hakka Bag Gung Ceremony

In contrast to Taiwan’s indigenous Righteous People Lords, the Three Mountain Kings were regarded as the local deity by the Hakka community. Taiwan’s Three Mountain Kings are the patron gods of the Hakka immigrants from Chaozhou. The religion began to spread throughout Taiwan along with the immigrants who built settlements and among other ethnic groups. The 2010 Three Mountain Kings’ birthday festival was celebrated in Taipei Hakka Cultural Hall, featuring festive events like seating the gods and ceremonial rituals. There were Hakka concerts, Three Mountain Kings cultural exhibitions, Hakka cuisine, as well as balladry performances that infused elements from the Taiwanese, Hakka and

new immigrant communities, showing the respect for diverse ethnicities and cultures. About 650 people participated in the event. Chang Qing Temple located in Taipei City's Jinjiang Street goes back to 1983, when residents from both Hakka and Taiwan communities pooled their funds to expand the temple, thus its present-day glory and magnificence. In recent decades, thanks to respected Hakka elders' heartfelt commitment to temple affairs, Chang Qing Temple has become a stronghold for the Hakka Bag Gung faith in Greater Taipei. Local Hakkas organize celebrations for the "Birth of Bag Gung" on the second day of the second lunar calendar month. Many Hakka townspeople and local residents joined in to celebrate Bag Gung's birthday with Hakka music performances, ballads by teenagers, Hakka folk dances, and samplings of Hakka cuisine. The repertoire included performances from Taiwanese, Hakka and new immigrants, illustrating the symbiotic and peaceful coexistence among different populations.



Promoting Hakka culture through a variety of campaigns.

Part 3 Living Wellness and Happiness in Taipei

1. "The Bond of Love" Program

In light of the lack of opportunities for people in the modern business world to meet friends of the opposite sex, the Department of Civil Affairs hopes to share part of the expenses of hosting blind-date gatherings among corporations and agencies, so that these organizations are inspired to reach out and care for the love life of their employees, helping single men and women find lifelong companions at a marriageable age. The Department encourages companies and agencies to apply for the hosting of these events for their single employees and help them find their better halves.

2. Taipei Joint Matrimonial Ceremony

The Department of Civil Affairs, Taipei City Government hosted the "Love in Taipei"- themed Joint Matrimonial Ceremony at the X Light Canopy in Nangang Software Park on April 10, the "Love Comes to Taipei" themed Joint Matrimonial Ceremony at the St. Mary's Catholic Church on July 10, the "Everlasting Love and Happiness" Joint Matrimonial Ceremony at the Expo Hall at the Taipei Flora Expo on September 9, and the "Love Discovered in Taipei" Joint Matrimonial Ceremony at the Daan Sports Center on October 10, where Mayor Hau Lung-bin married 366 newlyweds.

The Department of Civil Affairs, Taipei City Government designed conventional and Catholic wedding ceremonies that highlighted the



Happiness Forever-Taipei Joint Matrimonial Ceremony.

significance of “everlastingness” on the September 9, ROC Year 99, and the “Acme of Perfection” on the Double Tenth Day, making matrimonial ceremonies a vital ritual that champions and ensures family values; newlyweds learned about love and self-sacrifice, and took vows to always be there for each other, declaring their love and steadfast promises to love and to hold their companions. Organizers wished all the happy newlyweds a blissful, fulfilling married life together always.

3. Diversified Programs to Encourage Childbirths: Have a Care-free Pregnancy

The Taipei City Government officially launched the “Have a Care-free Pregnancy” project on May 7, 2010, in hopes of encouraging childbirths with robust care packages and measures, alleviating the burdens of child care on parents, and creating a childbirth and child-rearing-friendly city. The variety of incentive packages has been successful in motivating the desire to tie the knot among local residents. By December, 2010, the number of registered married couples reached 17,321, an increase of 21.4% over the previous year. The Department of Civil Affairs pioneered the country to set up the Population Policy Division as the liaison platform for cross-departmental population policymaking and the designated one-stop contact for the Central Government. The division is in charge of determining the division of labor among all departments to address special issues. Also, in response to the dwindling birthrates and the graying population, the division works to enhance inter-agency communication and strengthens policy-incorporation effectiveness, reinforces outreach and consultation for new immigrants to improve their adaptation to Taiwan’s lifestyle. Other than the “Have a Care-free Pregnancy” project, the division has undertaken several initiatives, including “Safe Newborn Growths,” “Placement in Taipei for Senior Citizens,” “Settlement in Taipei for New Immigrants,” “the Promotion of Family Values” and “Encouraging Gender Equality” as Taipei City’s population policy focuses, and plans to meet these goals in different stages.



“Have a Care-free Pregnancy” project encourages Taipei citizens to be fruitful and raise their young with actual support.

4. Reaching out to New Immigrants

To showcase the fruitful learning achievements of new immigrants in Taiwan, the Department of Civil Affairs hosted the “2010 Joint New Immigrant Graduation Ceremony” on October 2, 2010 at the Taipei Water Park, at which new immigrants proudly presented their learning results in joy with their families. Since the launch of the New Immigrant Courses in 2010, 228 workshops have been held and attended by 7,234 people by the end of 2010. In addition to a speech of gratitude by a representative of the graduates, immigrant students prepared traditional gifts in thanking their instructors for their patient guidance. Other than meat jerky, which represented the end of studies, students brought fish sauce from Vietnam, coffee from Indonesia, and local specialties from different countries. Students and instructors embraced each other as attendees looked on with joy. The new immigrants’ learning achievements were displayed in an exhibition; the exhibits included handicrafts, homework and course documents. Song and dance

performances of exotic southeastern Asia flair were arranged during the ceremony that manifested diversified cultural elements and dimensions.

New immigrants are a vital part of Taipei City, and Taipei is a better place only when new and veteran immigrants work together to encourage cultural exchange activities, to learn more and to unleash greater creativity and sympathy. The Taipei City Government vows to carry out the spirit of building a sustainable, healthy city, to look for more diverse outreach and consultation measures to assist new immigrants in adapting to local living, to encourage Taipei residents to embrace a multicultural outlook, and to build a blissful married life. Taipei, a city capable of much care and love, is inhabited by people who are broadminded; they assist new immigrants in settling down on this land and in celebrating a new landmark in life with a constant outpouring of love and care.



Diversified outreach programs for new immigrants.

5. The Coming of Age Ceremony

The 2010 Taipei City Joint Coming of Age Ceremony was held on October 30 by the plaza at the Taipei Confucius Temple, themed, “Spreading the Wings and Embracing the World.” A total of 120 young adults and their parents took part in the ceremony. The rite was held as a way to encourage youths to pursue their dreams courageously, to align themselves with the best in the international community, to be humble and thankful, to face challenges fearlessly, to shoulder responsibilities for the country and the community, and to embrace a beautiful future ahead. Participants bowed to the gods and worshiped them en masse consistent with the dictates of the ancient rites, and presented incense offerings to their Chinese ancestors, Confucius and virtuous figures. Mr. Liu Chen, who represented Taiwan to win an international award in magician excellence, was invited as a distinguished guest to the ceremony and gave his blessings to the attending youths. Ten letters written to the young adults by ten celebrities were compiled into one collection, “the Adulthood Handbook,” and were published for the event. The celebrity writers shared their experiences and success stories with every young adult in Taipei City.



The Coming Of Age Ceremony in Taipei.

6. Joint Commendation Rallies of Religious Organizations

The Department of Civil Affairs organized the “2009 Joint Commendation Rallies for Organizations Seeking to Improve Folk Customs, Religious Fellowships and the Awards of Familial Piety Excellence.” Award-winning organizations and individuals were publicly commended. The Department of Civil Affairs hosted the event in hopes of expressing its sincerest gratitude to religious and social groups, and kind-hearted individuals who are committed to good deeds in a ceremonious and heartwarming activity. 48

religious groups were publicly recognized, with donation money totaling NT\$1,165,643,458. 24 organizations donated more than NT\$10 million. Among these, juridical Xintian Temple in Taipei, juridical Longshan Temple in Monga donated over NT\$100 million. The 2009 Typhoon Morakot devastated southern Taiwan, causing the worst floods in the country in 50 years. Religious organizations donated money and resources to help alleviate devastations caused by this destructive storm. In addition to actively participating in all forms of disaster relief and post-disaster reconstruction projects, the groups also helped make up in those areas which government failed to address by providing spiritual comfort to victims. Other than conducting these publicly known welfare and charity campaigns, the religious groups also extended their services to children's protection, youth consultation, women's welfare, development projects for the disabled, and social reconstruction initiatives. They even expanded their contributions to social education and cultural construction projects, translating their care for the communities and country into real action plans, and further motivating other social groups to follow suit, turning Taipei City into a charity-driven metropolis of the world.



Religious groups in Taipei City are committed to charity work year-round.

Part 4 Advances and Innovations in Ceremonies

1. Promotion of Centralized Collection and Burning of Paper Money

Chungyuan Pu Tu is a vital religious rite in folk religions. Customarily, it is inevitable that worshippers burn paper money to express their sincere regard for the Pu Tu rites. However, the burning of paper money can cause serious pollution problems in densely populated cities. In a move to promote the building of an eco-city and cultural religion, the City Government began to encourage centralized collection and the burning of paper money since 2000. In addition to promoting the initiative among temples and religious organizations, the City Government created “designated bags for paper money” for regular households, painted and decorated circuit trucks for collecting paper money in order to show respect to centralized collection and the burning of paper money. The City Government also installed an online donation website, encouraging worshippers to donate money originally designated for deities to social welfare or charitable organizations, converting respect for the spirits into greater love for those in need. In order to express the respect for gods and folk religions, the Department of Civil Affairs collaborated with the juridical Taiwan Provincial City God and cordially invited professor Wu Yong-meng to lead religious organizations to conduct a “Cleaning of the Incense Furnace” ritual on the eve of the Ghost Month, to pray for peace for the whole nation through a high-tech religious rite. The Department also called on Taipei citizens to cut down on the burning of incense sticks and paper money as much as possible. If unavoidable, worshippers can hand over the incense sticks and paper money to designated paper money-collecting circuit trucks to transport them to incinerators for centralized burning. Exhaust gas caused by burning is treated by air pollution control facilities before emission to effectively minimize air pollution.

2. Creative Designs of Ceremonial Offerings for Religious Rites

In celebrating the advent of sophisticated worship services, the Department of Civil Affairs encouraged temples to work with the creative industries to transform religious conventions with an innovative touch to design religiously-purported, sophisticated and environmentally-friendly ceremonial offerings that can

be mass-produced and market-ready. These new offering products are to replace the traditional livestock offerings, incense sticks and paper money, thus driving religious cultural reforms and the development of a sophisticated worship goods industry. The initiative inspired the Taipei City Government to host “the Contest for Innovative Ceremonial Offerings.” “The Outreach Worship Series” by the Taipei Guandu Temple, Idea Designs and professor Cai Xiang-hui won the top award. The runner-up was Zhaomingjing Temple in Beitou, Jixian Design and Mr. Lin Bao-chun; the team designed “Unity and Peace.” The third-place winner was “Creative Offerings for Zhongshun Temple,” created jointly by Zhongshun Temple in Muzha, the Master’s Program of Visual Arts Education, Department of Arts and Creative Industries at National Dong Hwa University, and Ms. You Xiu-mei. Innovative designs of ceremonial offerings help worshippers express the same level of deference during religious ceremonies while successfully conserving energy, reducing carbon dioxide emissions and protecting the environment; these innovative worship offerings also promote sophisticated worship culture among temples, display the artistic imageries of temples, and encourage the development of tourism. These innovative products play a role in driving sophisticated worship services toward a new milestone in an age of innovation, environmental protection and artistic sophistication.



Eco-friendliness-inspires innovative worship offerings.

3. Cemetery Relocation

Most of the decrepit cemeteries in Taipei are located in border areas or hillsides where populations are sparse; due to the heavy concentration of local populaces and the rapid expansion of urban development, these old cemeteries have severely obstructed regional development and a variety of public welfare projects. In a move to ensure cityscape and water and soil conservation, the City Government made a series of announcements prohibiting private interment. In considering the fact that public cemeteries are publicly-owned resources, the City Government aimed at reconstructing these areas and formulating follow-up development to improve lifestyle quality for citizens. The project would take into account the demand for urban development. Interests accrued from the projects would be shared among Taipei citizens to implement cemetery relocation. Greening projects, tree planning and simple water and soil conservation projects will be administered on lands after the cemeteries are relocated. Public cemeteries would then be designated as reserve areas, or be used according to the original land use project to ensure urban planning effectiveness. The project is instrumental in improving the quality of life for the public and the cityscape.

4. Seminar on “A New Beginning after Posthumous Dressing”

The end of life is actually the beginning of another journey. Due to the changes of time, “Posthumous Business” is no longer repressed



A seminar on “A New Beginning after Posthumous Dressing”.

with traditional confines and taboos. Arranging for one's departure from this life with dignity, having a perfect, final farewell to this life, and drawing a beautiful close on this life is now a new study. The Taipei Mortuary Services Office hosted its first seminar on "A New Beginning after Posthumous Dressing – Learn the Know-How." Courses included in the seminar were: issues of life and death, how to confront the final challenges in life, and a preview to life's final destination.

Part 5 One District, One Personality

The Civil Affairs Department commissioned the Taipei City District Offices in the 12 district areas to organize "Grass-Root Folk Performing Arts Activities." Through styling and marketing the uniqueness of each district, it is expected to effectively highlight the different personalities of Taipei City's 12 administrative districts. In 2009, these 12 districts successfully showcased their diverse charms via various folk performances.

1. Extending the Legacy of Traditional Folk Customs

The 2010 Xikou Cultural Festival was held between May 6 and 20 to combine the birthday celebration of the heavenly goddess, a festival at the Xikou Wharf by the Rainbow Bridge in Songshan, the Raohe Street tourist night market anniversary celebration, and the eco-festival by the Rainbow Bridge, highlighting the traditions and innovations complemented each other. "The 2010 Wanhua Cultural Carnival – Jiarui and Ximen Cultural Fairs" was held on April 24 and 25, featuring annual local activities and traditional temple circuit procession to solidify local culture and promote local agricultural specialties. The Ximending Cultural Fair was held between September 24 and 26, combining band performances popular among youths and a creative bazaar to enhance public understanding in Wanhua as a traditional yet fashionable tourist spot, while encouraging local commercial activities to support business development. "The 2010 Feel Datong Festival for the City God Matchmaker" in Datong District lasted from August 1 through September 15, combined with the birthday celebrations for the legendary city god matchmaker in Xiahai, Dadaocheng to promote local cultural activities.

2. Innovating Modern Artistic and Cultural Activities

"Dragon Boat Festival and a Heart for Xinyi" was hosted on June 12 in Xinyi District that combined Dragon Boat festivities and local theater troupe performances to promote local specialties; "the 2010 Historic Revival – the Floral Old Times" was held in Zhongzheng District between May 2 and June 26 that featured many local museum visits and historical relics promotional campaigns. "The Feast of Spring – Love in Neihu" in Neihu District was held on March 27 and 28, featuring musical performances and combining residents' support for promoting cultural activities to showcase the unique local flair.

Shilin District, where many foreign expatriates live, kicked off "the 2010 Shilin International Cultural Festival" on October 2, with the local "international cultural perspective" as the theme, to encourage residents' consensus and show respect for multiculturalism.



The 2009 Nangang Osmanthus Creativity Carnival.



Promotional activities for bamboo shoots and tea production in Wenshan District.



Residents participate in grassroots cultural activities.

3. Promoting Industrial Culture

“The 2010 Daan Flower Celebration and Concert” in Daan District was held from May 1 through 9 that combined Daan’s local industries and the Taipei International Flora Expo to host music and cultural activities; local residents were invited to partake in this international extravaganza. “The 2010 Flora Expo Blooms in Zhongshan – Floral and Artistic Carnival” was held on March 27, April 24, and June 19; it highlighted the occasion of the Flora Expo being held in Zhongshan. Greening and beautification projects were conducted to improve the local landscape. “The 2010 Wenshan Tea and Bamboo Shoots Cultural Festival” was hosted between May 8 and June 11 that combined tea, bamboo shoots production and tourism farming in Wenshan District to promote local industrial prosperity. “The 2009 Nangang Osmanthus Creativity Carnival” was held on August 17 and 18 and October 17 to promote Nangang’s osmanthus tourism, industrial development and high-tech clusters, and to encourage artistic activities to support the combination of industrial development and cultural operation. “The 2010 Taipei Hot Spring Festival” in Beitou District was held from September 30 through October 3. It was co-sponsored by the Taipei City Hot Spring Development Committee as part of the Taipei Hot Spring Festival to champion the spirit of hot spring tourism and to accentuate Beitou’s hot spring industry. Beitou’s quality cultural space, industrial activities, local festivities and specialties were packaged for tourism marketing to create an image of a healthy, dynamic city.

Conclusion

Religious ceremonies and ritual services have endured long-standing development and evolution to become a natural part of modern lifestyles. They have also indirectly constituted an integral strength to solidify the community. The Taipei City Government will continue to honor seasonal changes to organize various religious rituals in the future accordingly, while supporting innovative thinking into traditional beliefs in addressing urban transformations to promote sophisticated religious cultures, revive these rituals and temple festivals with new ideas, and enrich these ceremonies with distinctive social influences and a cultural lifeline that is unique to Taipei.