



13 Religious Ceremonies

Religious beliefs are a core value for people's minds. Folk customs represent the outlook of life hidden in daily activities. While closely related to people's lives, they appear to be even more down-to-earth and valuable. Taipei is a melting pot of immigrants and different cultures from around the world. Folk customs and beliefs gathered here have given rise to diversified and enriched elements and the unique cultures of the city's different populations. Besides traditional elements, they appear to be more innovative and hence contribute to the unique local culture, adding to the variety of Taipei.



13 Religious Ceremonies

Religion and folk custom are closely related to people's lives. Following extended developments and evolution, they have become part of contemporary life since a long time ago. Because of the existence of diverse ethnic groups in Taipei, the public sector and civil society hold various religious and folk custom activities. Besides seasonal rituals continued as part of traditional culture, contemporary cultural elements are integrated to give religion, folk custom, and religious or temple fairs new social definitions.

Part 1 Traditional Festivals and Celebrations

1. The Taipei Lantern Festival

The largest festival in the city, in terms of having the most visitors each year, the 2013 Taipei Lantern Festival opened on February 21, 2013 and lasted for 11 days at the Fine Arts Park Area and Yuanshan Park Area of Taipei EXPO. The blessing sea of lanterns from Sections 1 to 3 of Zhongshan North Road was illuminated on February 6, earlier than the scheduled start date of the Festival. Visitors filled the festival throughout the whole event. The 2013 Taipei Lantern Festival featured the Chinese zodiac animal of the year of the Snake, totems of aborigines, myths, and fairy tales. All the lanterns on display were created by professional

artists. There was an "EcoARK area" set up at the Pavilion of New Fashion donated by the Far Eastern Group, and the redecorated site from the 2012 Auspicious Dragon Theater presented the projected 3D virtual reality show, emphasizing the importance of environmental protection and treasuring the Earth. In addition, the Yuanshan Park Landscape Area and the Fine Arts Park Landscape Area were set up to take advantage of the existing floral landscapes; the Student Area that gathered works of students from schools at all levels throughout the nation and the International Business Area displayed works from chambers of commerce and businesses; the Taipei Story Area combined the ancient



Rituals are reflections of enriched folk culture



The colorful and astonishing Taipei Lantern Festival





street views on Zhongshan North Road and in Datong District; and the Stream of Life Area conveying the images of the Year of the Snake, among others. Each area was brand new to the visitors and successfully demonstrated the unique city image of Taipei.

2. Spring Worship and Shidian Ceremony at the Confucius Temple

To remember the Great Teacher Confucius and preserve the traditional culture featuring Confucianism, the Taipei Confucius Temple held the customary annual Spring Worship and Shidian Ceremony in the spring and the fall, respectively. Both are important annual ceremonies for the Taipei Confucius Temple. In 2013, the Spring Worship took place on a morning around the Zhongchun Shangding Day in February and combined the spiritual and



Solemn Spring Worship

outstanding ritual elements of Confucianism. Featuring innovation, young people and students were invited to present new dances, music, and talent shows, contributing to a unique convergence of new rites re-interpreting the worship culture of Confucianism. The Shidian Ceremony that took place at 6:00 am on September 28, on the other hand, was serious and solemn. Taipei Mayor Hau Lungbin served as Chief Presenter of sacrifices and Commissioner Huang Lu Ching-ju of Department of Civil Affairs, served as the emcee. Together

they led people from all walks of life through the ceremony with a sincere heart. President Ma Ying-jeou and Kung Tsui-chang, a descendant of Confucius and Sacrificial Official at the ceremony, appeared in person to present sacrifices and express their respect to the Great Teacher. The 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 this ancient site. Enriched with the spirit of Chinese Confucianism and cultural aesthetics, the event attracted nearly 3,000 domestic and overseas visitors and Confucianism delegations as observers from Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and the United States.

3. Baosheng Cultural Festival

Baoan Temple, in Dalongdong, was built in 1,742 with a fund raised by ancestors coming from Tongan, Fujian, Mainland China and is not only a famous Class 2 state historic site but also the only religious arts center in Taipei that won the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Asia-Pacific Heritage Award for Culture Heritage Conservation. Baoan Temple has become an important cultural site that combines religion, culture, education, and arts in one. The Baosheng Cultural Festival is held each year around the birthday of Lord Baosheng, which is March 15 on the Chinese lunar calendar. The event lasts for 2 months and features primarily traditional customs with integration of contemporary cultural characteristics. The diversified Baosheng Cultural Festival combines a variety of activities including religious and temple fairs, folk cultural and drama performances, revival of ancient sites, and arts and academic activities. It has become an important religious event in northern Taiwan. Baoan Temple at Dalongdong is now an important private cultural hotspot.

4. Zhongyuan Pudu (General Salvation Ceremony) in Taipei City

The Taipei City Government held the 2013 Zhongyuan Pudu (General Salvation Ceremony) in Taipei at Chenghuang Temple on August 31,





Zhongyuan Pudu rituals following ancient etiquette



Everyone in Taipei is respectfully receiving the arrival of golden-faced Mazu

2013 (in July on the Chinese lunar calendar) jointly with the Taiwan Provincial Chenghuang Temple. Mayor Hau Lung-bin served as Chief Sacrificial Official. The ceremony followed the ancient etiquette of Confucianism and adhered to traditional beliefs and environmental protection. It was solemn and refined. To promote exquisite sacrificial rituals and customs, the exemplary Taipei Zhongyuan Pudu and the Prayer for Peace Ritual was completed with elegance, with due regard for environmental protection and spiritual belief. In terms of sacrifice supplies, there were ordinary things, contributed by traditional Taipei citizens, and those that were carefully prepared onsite. Unlike the common compiled arrangement of supplies, senior volunteers at Chenghuang Temple carefully arranged vegetarian foods, fruits, and daily supplies in each plate. The exquisite and beautiful arrangements are intended to let the divine and the lonely soul feel the sincerity

of the public and the delicate rituals express gratitude to heaven and one's ancestors for the blessings we enjoy. As a kind gesture to the disadvantaged, all the sacrifices were donated to charity groups after the ceremony.

5. The Martyr Enshrining Ceremony

The 2013 Martyr Enshrining Ceremony was held at Taipei City's National Revolutionary Martyrs' Shrine on the morning of September 3, 2013 as a continuation of the tradition to honor those who died during wartime or on official duty. The event was the enshrining ceremony for Mr. Huang Yu-lung, who died in a fire rescue operation. Mr. Huang had his household registered in Zhongzheng District, Taipei City, and he worked for the Haishan Special Rescue Brigade under the Fire Department, New Taipei City Government. In February 2013, a food refrigeration company in Wugu District of New Taipei City caught fire. Mr. Huang, as squad leader, died in the midst of billowing smoke while trying to rescue the victims. To express respect for him and remember his heroic deeds, the Department of Civil Affairs, Taipei City Government held this solemn enshrining ceremony. Music was played and songs were sung with great dignity. People remembered his heroic deeds and saluted him with the utmost respect. It was a heart-warming event for all.

6. The Mazu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan

The 2013 Mazu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan was jointly organized by the Department of Civil Affairs of the New Taipei City Government, Cihui Temple of Banqiao, and the Department of Civil Affairs of the Taipei City Government. A total of 40 temples from 11 counties and cities participated in the event: Taiwan Provincial Chenghuang Temple, Fucheng Temple in Xiaojilong, Fengtian Temple in Xingang, Chaotian Temple in Beigang, Ciyou Temple and Guandu Temple in Songshan, Tianhou Temple in Taipei, Funan Temple in Nangang, Nanfu Temple in Guting, Cizhen Temple in Shilin, Cihui Temple in Songshan, Shengyun Temple in Beihai, Shuntian





Temple in Yuao, Ciyou Temple in Xinzhuang, Xinglong Temple in Sanxia, Chengan Temple in Shifenliao, Dexin Temple in Gongliao, Cihu Temple in Jinbaoli, Tianhou Temple in Sanxia, Ruishen Temple in Tucheng, Yitian Temple in Sanchong, Fuyou Temple in Tamsui, Fulong Temple in Ruifang, Beihou Temple in Taipei, Chaotian Temple in Jinshan, Jide Temple in Xizhi, Tianhou Temple in Cisheng, Zhenbei Temple in Wanli, Cihou Temple in Taoyuan, Tianhou Temple in Zhubei, Nantian Temple in Nanfangao, Ciyun Temple in Houlong, Longfeng Temple in Gucuo, Qingan Temple and Tianxian Temple in Keelung, Tianhou Temple in Xiangshan, Shuntian Temple in Tuku, the authentic Shengmu Temple in Luermen, and Taizi Temple in Xinying.

The whole event opened in front of the northern city gate of Taipei on November 16, 2013, accompanied by the melodic sounds of young traditional begun musicians, stately ceremonial weaponry, flags received by imperial decree in the past, graceful nan guan music, and traditional folk dancing, and more than 50 performances carefully arranged by the Cihui Temple in Banqiao, to receive the golden-faced Mazu statue, originally enshrined in Taipei Prefecture's Mazu Temple in the Qing Dynasty as it returned once more to Taipei. Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin, along with the head of each neighborhood in Zhongzheng District, held the carriage of the golden-faced Mazu on their shoulders and paraded along the street to wish Taipei good luck and blessings. Fengtian Temple in Xingang was invited to organize the prayer for peace ritual adopting innovative and culturally creative concepts, adding the thoughtfulness of traditional rituals and diversified worship significance to the event. While the golden-faced Mazu was in Banqiao, between November 16 and November 23, there was a series of artistic and cultural performances and activities. On the mornings of November 23 and 24 in particular, the procession took place in the downtown area of Banqiao. A variety of refined rituals and traditional performances helped Taipei citizens get to know the significance of temple events and feel the cultural airs of folk belief.

Part 2 Diversified Festivals

1. Aboriginal Culture in Taipei

There were around 15,155 aborigines living in Taipei in 2013. Among all the ethnic groups, the Amis accounted for a majority, followed by the Atayal, Paiwan, and Bunun. They mostly lived in Neihu, Wenshan, Beitou, Nangang, and Shilin. The 14 aboriginal groups are decentralized among the 12 administrative districts, further diversifying Taipei.

Traditional rituals are among the most important heritage in Taiwan's aboriginal culture. Different aboriginal groups have unique rituals. Some of the rituals represent their respect for their ancestors' souls, while others are to express their respect for nature, gratitude upon a good harvest, and prayers before a hunting mission. As society changed and they relocated, aborigines moved from tribal to urban areas and some gradually lost their connections to traditional culture. To encourage aborigines that have relocated to Taipei to resume their tradition and exchange with one another, the Taipei City Government developed the urban Aboriginal Cultural Festival featuring traditional tribal rituals to make the humanity and culture of aborigines shine in every corner of Taipei.

(1) Naluwan Culture Festival

The Aborigines Commission, Taipei City Government holds the Naluwan Culture Festival



Amis Coming-of-age Ceremony





Amis Harvest Festival



Amis Sikawasay Praying for Blessings and Removing Bad Luck



Traditional seasonal rituals of the Amis

between September and October each year, including traditional rituals, traditional sports events, and concerts. In 2013, the series of activities featured primarily the Amis. On October 15, the Changguang Township Association in Taipei presented the age-oriented hierarchy system of the Amis and the traditional seasonal rituals in the surroundings of the Expo Hall. The biggest characteristic of Amis culture is the age-based hierarchy system, the maternal society, and the Harvest Festival. In order for the Amis raised in the city who are seldom able to participate in the age-based hierarchy system to resume this traditional social system, the Amis Age-based Hierarchy Training Program was held between July 20 and August 24 at the Beiyuan Assembly House. The program included the introduction to the Amis age-based hierarchy system, description of the age-based hierarchy system at different tribes, and dancing and singing skills. Young aboriginal students from more than 40 elementary schools and colleges and universities attended the program and learned to appreciate their traditional culture. The learning results were presented in the seasonal rituals of the Naluwan Culture Festival. The seasonal rituals included sending messages, the coming-of-age ceremony, Sikawasay for sending prayers for blessings, clearing bad luck, receiving spirits, treating spirits, and seeing off spirits. Around 500 guests appreciated the once-in-a-lifetime traditional rituals in Taipei.

Besides understanding the significance of the whole ritual, the participants sang while dancing the feature dance hand-in-hand. It was very inspirational as well as educational.

(2) Aborigines' Seasonal Rituals

There are more than 532,000 aborigines throughout Taiwan. There are only 15,000 residents in Taipei. By encouraging non-governmental organizations to hold seasonal rituals symbolic of each aborigine's culture and promotion of such culture in their operations so that aborigines and non-aborigines can feel the spirit of aboriginal culture and the cultural contents, it helps not only to continue aboriginal traditions and preserve their culture, but also lends a diverse and rich cultural elegance to Taipei.

A. Amis Fishing Festival and Harvest Festival

There are over 7,300 Amis living in Taipei, making up 48% of Taipei's aboriginal population. The Harvest Festival (Ilisin), in particular, is an important village festival. To celebrate the festival, all Amis do not work, and they put on their traditional costumes that are rarely worn more than once a year. At the command of their chief, they gather at a square to join hands and to sing and dance. They use their most resounding songs and pious hearts to thank the gods for their protection over the past year and to pray for peace and a good harvest in the





year to come. Already, many of the Amis tribe have migrated to the capital. Though they miss home at the time of the happy atmosphere of the annual Harvest Festival, there Amis people in the capital can also find an open space to sing and dance. Although they lack the atmosphere of the mountains, forests and seaside, and instead are surrounded by the city's concrete buildings, their craving to experience their cultural traditions will never change. The Amis, starting in Hualien and Taitung, mostly live by the ocean and are under the influence of the Pacific waters. To express their respect for nature and the God of the Sea, they hold the Fishing Festival each year around the second week of June. They satiate and placate the God of the Sea with wine, meat, and sticky rice cakes by the ocean and pray for a good fishing year. The Indigenous Peoples Commission, Taipei City Government sponsored the Jian Township Association in Taipei for the latter to hold the Cultural Relay Fishing Festival underneath the Zhongyang Road Bridge in New Taipei City on June 30, 2013 and the Cultural Relay Harvest Festival on the round square off Caihong On-ramp on November 10, 2013. The two events saw around 200 to 250 participants, respectively.

B. Puyuma Weeding Festival

The Indigenous Peoples Commission, Taipei City Government focuses on the role and function of young students in restoring and passing down culture. The Commission sponsored the Talu'an Student Society of National Chengchi University to visit the Xiabinlang Tribe in Taitung County, where the students took part in the Weeding Festival (Misa'ur) between March and May 2013 and collected information on the tribal culture. The 15 college and university students from Taipei learned the praying ritual, weeded, sang Puyuma songs, picked flowers, produced floral rings, and assembled traditional houses of the tribe. Besides learning the daily life wisdom of their ancestors, aborigines that grew up in the city were able to re-visit the forest, learn, and develop the deep ecology closely related to nature.

2. Hakka Culture in Taipei

(1) Hakka People in Taipei

Taipei is a typical immigrant city. Most of the Hakka people living in Taipei came from other Hakka towns around Taiwan and settled in Taipei. The earliest Hakka population in Taipei resided in Sanzhangli, Shilin, Shipai or other areas such as Nanchang Road, Taishun Street, Tonghua Street, and Nanjichang. Recent immigrants, on the other hand, came to look for a place to live because of their work or school. At present, Hakka people mostly live in Da-an, Shilin, and Neihu Districts. In order to prevent their traditional culture from gradually disappearing, they brought their belief and culture, traditional customs, and daily living back home the capital of Taiwan. The Hakka population in Taipei not only preserves their humanity, arts, and spiritual contents, but also built the first Hakka Cultural Park in Taiwan where they can hold a variety of enriched Hakka beliefs and customs cultural activities featuring different topics so that Hakka culture can continue to grow in Taipei.



Hakka Bag Gung Ritual



(2) The Hakka Gung Ceremony

Hakka "Bag Gung" is the lord that is the closest to the life of Hakka people and guards the village. Therefore, Hakka people treat this lord of the land as friendly and respectful as their elderly. On the eve of the birthday of the lord of the land in 2013, which is February 2 on the Chinese lunar calendar, Hakka people in Taipei gather together to celebrate the birthday of "Bag Gung." Many fellow Hakka people come for the celebration. Along with their communities and neighborhoods, they plan a lot of activities and prepare delicacies to present the diversified contents of Hakka culture.

(3) The Hakka Three Mountain Kings Ceremony

The three mountain kings faith is endemic of the Hakka people in Chaozhou, Guangdong and came to Taiwan along with immigrants from Chaozhou. Therefore, wherever there is a temple of the three mountain kings there is the trace of ancient Hakka settlers. Three Mountain kings have also become one of the important faiths for the Hakka population in Taiwan. The Hakka Affairs Commission, Taipei City Government held the Three Mountain Kings Faith Cultural Festival in the Hakka Cultural Park on the eve of the three mountain kings' birthday so that Taipei citizens could gain better knowledge of the three mountain kings faith and help glorify this faith in Taipei.

(4) The Hakka Yi-Min Ceremony in Taipei

The Yi-Min faith started in the Qing Dynasty. It is a local faith indigenous to Taiwan. Anywhere that has Hakka people in Taiwan, one can see Lord Yi-Min being worshipped. In light of the fact that there is no Yi-Min Temple in Taipei, local Hakka people started in 1988 to invite Lord Yi-Min from the Yi-Min Temple in Xinpu to visit Taipei so that they can honor Lord Yi-Min and the latter can bless them, too. Through collaboration between the government and non-governmental Hakka societies, the Yi-Min ceremony is organized and held each year. The Hakka Yi-Min Memorial Ceremony has become one of the major folk belief events in northern Taiwan. In 2008, the Taipei City Government first combined the traditions of the Hakka Yi-Min Memorial Ceremony with the traditional acts of carrying the shoulder pole and offering rice to create a street-festival style event that became the Hakka Yi-Min Memorial Ceremony Carnival. The 26th such ceremony was held at the Taipei Hakka Cultural Park in 2013. Yi-Min temples from across Taiwan were invited to participate. Activities held included the Welcome Ceremony of the God, the grand ceremony, Da Bat Sien (Eight immortals ritual ceremony), Hakka drama performances, the ceremony of the three offerings, the carrying of the shoulder pole and offering of rice, a parade and carnival, a sacrificial ceremony and a Yi-Min night-time party.

In-Depth Report

The history of Lord Yi-Min is almost exclusively connected to the moving traditional folk tales of Hakka ancestors who gave up their lives to protect the country and townspeople. There are currently about 50 Yi-Min temples throughout Taiwan. Amongst them, Fangliao Yi-Min Temple in Xinpu in Hsinchu County is generally regarded as a Hakka religious center, and it seems that most other Yi-Min temples around Taiwan trace their own origins back to this temple. Others include Yi-Min Temple in Miaoli and Lord Zhongyong in Zhutian, Pingtung County. Such beliefs later became a key way of uniting Hakka people together, and thus the Yi-Min Gods became particular to the Hakka. The government dedicated the 20th day of the 7th lunar month to the Yi-Min Gods in 1955 and, since then, Yi-Min memorial ceremonies have become a formal addition to the Hakka yearly festivals.





Part 3

Heart-Warming Folk Custom Services

1. Bringing Happiness and Lucky Bags to Homes

To develop Taipei into an even friendlier and heartwarming city, the Department of Civil Affairs, Taipei City Government planned the Bringing Happiness and Lucky Bags to Homes project in 2007. 5 types of lucky bags were designed for marriage, childbirth, house warming, divorce, and funerals. The 2013 lucky bags featured carefulness, sweetness, and care. Contents of the bags included special-made handy bags, useful information handbooks, paired souvenir cups carrying the image of Taipei, and a greeting card from Mayor Hau Lung-bin. There was also a QR-code for Taipei citizens to quickly connect to webpages to search for related information. The Bringing Happiness and Lucky Bags to Homes project is the first of its kind in Taiwan and is the only service that district commissioners deliver in person. The project accomplishes multiple purposes, such as building a good relationship with local residents and neighbors, neighborhood watch, and care for the disadvantaged. It also provides Taipei citizens with necessary information so that they can receive the most instantaneous and complete reminders during different important

stages of their life, and expresses the care and blessings of the Taipei City Government. For the past 6 years since the project was first started, more than 500,000 lucky bags have been delivered. Among them, more than 350,000 were delivered by district commissioners, mobilizing around 10,000 people of the Department of Civil Affairs team and more than 1.5 million workers. The hope is to discover more people that need help and accompany and care for them through large and small acts in the life of every Taipei citizen, so that the public feels blessed to be living in Taipei.

2. Matchmaking Events and Joint Matrimonial Ceremonies

To increase opportunities for young men and women who have their households registered or are working but yet to be married in Taipei, the Department of Civil Affairs organized 4 rounds of social matchmaking gatherings in June and September 2013 that served as social channels for unmarried men and women to find their significant other. The participants could meet more friends, get to know each other better after various activities, and eventually decide to start a happy family together and begin to raise their



2013 Happiness and Lucky Bag



Newlyweds share their happiness





In recognition of outstanding religious groups

kids. Joint matrimonial ceremonies have been held by the Taipei City Government since 1973 in order to promote matrimonial etiquette and values of marriage and family, and such events are well received by the public. More than 200 ceremonies have taken place so far. The 2103 Joint Matrimonial Ceremony took place on March 30 and November 2, 2013. The ceremony was planned on the basis of family. Families of the bride and groom were invited to take part and share their happiness. The newlyweds were also provided opportunities to thank their parents for their upbringing so that they can deeply feel the love and care their parents had devoted to one another and their families while they were growing up, honoring and living by the traditional ethical idea of filial piety and turning their love for each other into the deepest blessing.

3. Outstanding Religious Groups: Recognizing Folk Improvement and Filial Piety Role Models

On September 30, 2013, the Department of Civil Affairs organized the 2012 Taipei Outstanding Religious Groups: Folk Improvement and 2013 Filial Piety Role Model Recognition Ceremony at the International Convention Center of the National Taiwan University Hospital. A total of 50 groups and 11 individuals were recognized.

The accumulated value of donations exceeded NT\$ 1,029.13 million. All the winning groups had been devoted to helping the poor, providing disaster rescue and assistance, scholarships for poor students, and protecting the environment, among other social public interest charity. The four role models for practicing filial piety, Chen Hsiu-tzu, Hsing Te-hui, Liu Mu-man, and Chen Chen received medals in recognition of their devotion to caring for the bedridden elderly in unfavorable health conditions. The Department of Civil Affairs hopes to promote such benevolent acts, kind ideas, and the spirit of filial piety of all these winners to every corner in society through this annual recognition event and to spread selfless and sacrificial spirit, arousing gratitude in people for whatever they have. This inspires more organizations in society to jointly devote themselves to tasks that aid the public interest, benevolence, and improving folk customs, and it propels Taipei to become a top philanthropic city in the world.

4. Joint Funerals

To maintain positive folk customs, reform the general practice in society, and help people reduce the costs of funerals and related etiquette, the Taipei Funeral Management Office has been organizing joint funerals for the Taipei public since 1991 providing participants with 19 free services. The overall ceremony is planned by a professional team hired centrally by the Funeral Management Office. The funerals are solemn and have become a new funeral choice for the people. The joint funerals in 2013 were originally set to take place on every Thursday. Due to the increasing number of participants and some participants from other counties and cities that were eager to take advantage of the convenient ceremony, additional funeral ceremonies were scheduled on every Tuesday. Throughout the year, nearly a hundred ceremonies were held, saving nearly NT\$20 million in total for the families of more than 1,100 people that passed away.





5. “We Care” Spontaneous Care Group

The Taipei Funeral Management Office is devoted to promoting a new funeral culture emphasizing environmental protection, innovation, good care during life, and making funerals more available to society, while at the same time improving the quality of service associated with traditional funerals through a diversified and innovative train of thought and the belief in serving the people. In addition, the office has updated and restored software and hardware facilities and continues to introduce various service-oriented measures. In order to help funeral business practitioners combine the honest and transparent administrative ideas of the Taipei City Government, the Spontaneous Care Group, the first of its kind in Taiwan, approaches families preparing funerals, expresses their care, condolence, and provides correct funeral-related useful information to let the families feel cared-for while they say farewell to their beloved that has passed away. Three specialists representing the Funeral Management Office call families applying for the funeral facility or funeral service to show their care and express condolences on behalf of the Taipei City Government and provide heartwarming assistance while the families are at a loss. Since it was established in April 2012, the Spontaneous Care Group has successfully made more than 13,000 phone calls and provided assistance. Up to 98% of the families indicate that they support the phone call service offered by the office because it helped them receive instantaneous assistance while they were feeling helpless. The services also helped them take care of the funeral successfully. Through the care provided by the group, the families were able to look at the sadness brought about by the death of their beloved ones positively, instead of feeling overly saddened by the loss of their loved ones, and were able to address this life issue with a broader horizon.

Part 4 Up-to-Date Customs

1. Reduction and Centralized Burning of Ritual Paper Money and Incense

Burning paper money and using incense are traditional customs in folk belief rituals, but burning traditional ritual paper money generates dangerous particles, aerosols, heavy metals, benzene, toluene, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon, among other air pollutants. Excessive cremation, on the other hand, gives rise to black smoke and monoxide as well as a high temperature and dust, which also impacts the living environment, ecology, and public safety, not to mention people's health. People tend to burn paper money and use a large quantity of incense at important festivals such as the Chinese New Year, Tomb Sweeping Day, Ghost Purdue, and the 2nd and 16th day of each month on the Chinese lunar calendar, which not only causes air pollution but also endangers people's health and hinders the energy-saving



Burner Purification Ceremony



and carbon reduction campaign for the sake of the Earth. In light of this, the Department of Civil Affairs and the Department of Environmental Protection of the Taipei City Government jointly promote the “reduced paper money and incense for fresher air and environmental protection” policy over the years to call on people living in Taipei to cooperate by collecting ritual paper money at a centralized site for burning. People are becoming more and more accepting to the policy and the results have begun to be realized.

To honor folk customs, Professor Wu Yung-meng was invited by the Taiwan Provincial Chenghuang Temple to perform annual burner purification ceremonies at incinerators in Beitou, Muzha, and Neihu on the eve of the Zhongyuan Pudu as part of the common religious practice to reassure Taipei citizens. Meanwhile, jointly with individual district commissioners, the Zhongyuan Pudu collection bag for ritual paper money to be burned were distributed free of charge. Taipei citizens and friends were invited to join the effort to make the living environment a better place, improve the quality of life, and take care of environmental protection and health, while keeping their religious beliefs. The campaign started in 2,000 and the collected volume has grown by more than ten-folds. Among the 277 temples throughout Taipei, 117 have practiced no burning of paper money. Among the other 160 temples that do burn paper money, 147 have also practiced collective burning. All have

indicated that collective burning is a practice being gradually accepted by the general public.

2. Taipei Confucius Temple Confucianism Program

To demonstrate the beauty of oriental Confucianism, the Taipei Confucius Temple has been organizing visits to the Confucius Temple and the Six Arts Experiential Games, among other events, during Chinese New Year for years. Visitors can feel the noisy air of Chinese New Year and try the traditional, auspicious, and culturally enriched activities. For the Lantern Festival, on the other hand, there is the Confucius Temple Traditional Arts and Culture series of events. The traditional lanterns decorated with poetry, arts, and paintings help visitors feel the literary air of Confucianism. In April and May, when the flowers blossom, there is the Spring Tea Tasting Fun event, where people can learn the spirit of the tea ceremony. While they spend their holidays visiting the Confucius Temple, they can chat with their friends over tea and enjoy the tea-tasting fun in an ancient aura filled with Confucianism.

During the summer vacation, the Confucius Temple Summer Camp is offered, where parents and their children jointly take part in a variety of summer workshops on paper-cutting and pasting art, calligraphy, poetry, singing, dancing, and music and spend an enriching and interesting summer vacation filled with humanity. Routine



Diversified Confucianism promotional events at the Confucius Temple



Ancient Zhuazhou rite for one-year-old newborns





performances are arranged on the red square in front of the Dacheng Hall of the Confucius Temple. During the summer vacation, people can feel the beauty of classics and poetry under the topic of the “Six Arts” taught by Confucius. Professors Shu Fu-chuan, Lee Chian-lang, and Chuang Yung-ming were invited for a series of talks called “Discussing the Classics beneath the Trees.” They discussed the spirit of Confucianism and the life of Confucius, the characteristics of the architectural style of the temple, and the cultural significance of the Datong area with an emphasis on the Temple’s role in it, giving people a closer experience of the temple. All this shows that Taipei’s Confucius Temple is not just an emblem for Confucianism, but is a place for ceremonial performance, a place for tradition to be learned and passed to later generations, and a multi-faceted architectural and cultural landmark.

3. Coming-of-Age Ceremony

“Coming-of-age” means a new stage where one has grown from a child and a teenager to adulthood. It is an important milestone in life and is a growth process worth celebrating. The Department of Civil Affairs, Taipei City Government organizes the Coming-of-age Ceremony to let participants realize that they have grown and must be responsible for themselves, their family, and contribute to social development.

The joint Coming-of-age Ceremony of 2013 took place at the Taipei Confucius Temple on October 20. Mayor Hau Lung-bin served as Minister. He led the whole delegation through honoring the ancestors of the Chinese nation, the Great Teacher Confucius and other great predecessors and Confucianists, following traditional Confucian etiquette. He invited the youngest winner of the “Merlin Award” to be the guest of honor. The latter led the 120 students through the Coming-of-age Ceremony in accordance with the National Etiquette custom. The ceremony included many elements: pre-training meant to rid the students’ childishness and develop a calm attitude about life; the

“celebration of adulthood” where they served their parents tea to express their gratitude for bringing them up; the “drinking rite” where they accepted an adult scarf and a Certificate, which is meant to give the students something to take home in memory of this meaningful event in their life; and finally the gratitude and festivity evening party, which the students and their parents jointly shared in and students bravely expressed to their parents how grateful they were before the parents and their children happily enjoyed dinner together. The event helped promote a harmonious family and a good parent-child relationship. The organizers also hoped that by holding the Coming-of-age Ceremony, each teenager could become an adult on this day and bravely take on responsibilities with a grateful heart. The hope is also to promote cohesive families and make society better through joint participation in the ceremony.

4. Lin An-Tai Historic House and Taiwanese Culture

To promote the traditional daily life customs of Taiwanese culture, folk culture traits and the architecture style of the Lin An-Tai Historic House were selected for a series of mutual experiential and learning promotional events in 2013. Students were taught traditional Taiwanese culture. 4 events, on April 20, June 29, September 7, and October 12, of “Newborn Folk Customs” were organized. Rites such as



An-Tai Elementary Classroom

“Shou Xian” (held in April), and the “Zhua Zhou” (the first birthday of a child) were performed following the traditional practice in Taiwanese culture. Parents and children could play games to earn points, and the events were educational while being entertaining. On June 8, there was a Poetry Feast where the Taipei Tianlai Reciting Club, famous Taiwanese opera singer Sun Tsui-feng, and the Confucius Temple Poetry Class students cited and sang poetry in Taiwanese to present the beauty of a traditional life and lead the audience through the elegance of the Taiwanese language. The Mid-summer Concert on July 20, on the other hand, featured ancient folk songs that depict family reunions on the front square of a farmhouse. Taipei citizens were able to feel the aura in the cool mid-summer evening. The Fall Tea and Poetry Gathering on October 5 invited the Republic of China International Tea Association to combine the tea tasting art with ancient poems cited and sung by the Fisherman Reciting Club and Taipei City Tianlai Reciting Club. They presented these traditional arts and instilled new life to the old building.

The An-Tai Elementary Classroom project held a total of 21 events with theme workshops for elementary school students at Lin An-Tai Historic House in 2013 along with cultural relic exhibitions. Among these, the An-Tai elementary Classroom, which began in April, has garnered exceptional positive reviews, and elementary school students have profited from guided tours, and learned about South Fujian architecture and garden styles, as well as the South Fujian culture



An-Tai Elementary Classroom



Life customs hidden in daily life

and customs from the time of the Qing Dynasty. Through these hands-on activities and taking part in the festivals of the early South Fujian people, participants can learn in the relaxed and fun environment of a traditional garden, and keep alive the popular South Fujian cultural traditions for the future.

Conclusion

Taipei City is known for its diversified cultural populations and lifestyles in the global Chinese community. The diversified religious folk customs and festivals reflect the pluralistic ethnic and cultural backgrounds and appear to be particularly unique to Taipei. Taipei citizens demonstrate civic pride and energy to skillfully combine tradition and culture, while reflecting the contemporary lifestyle, adding further to the diversity and wonder of the religious folk customs and culture.