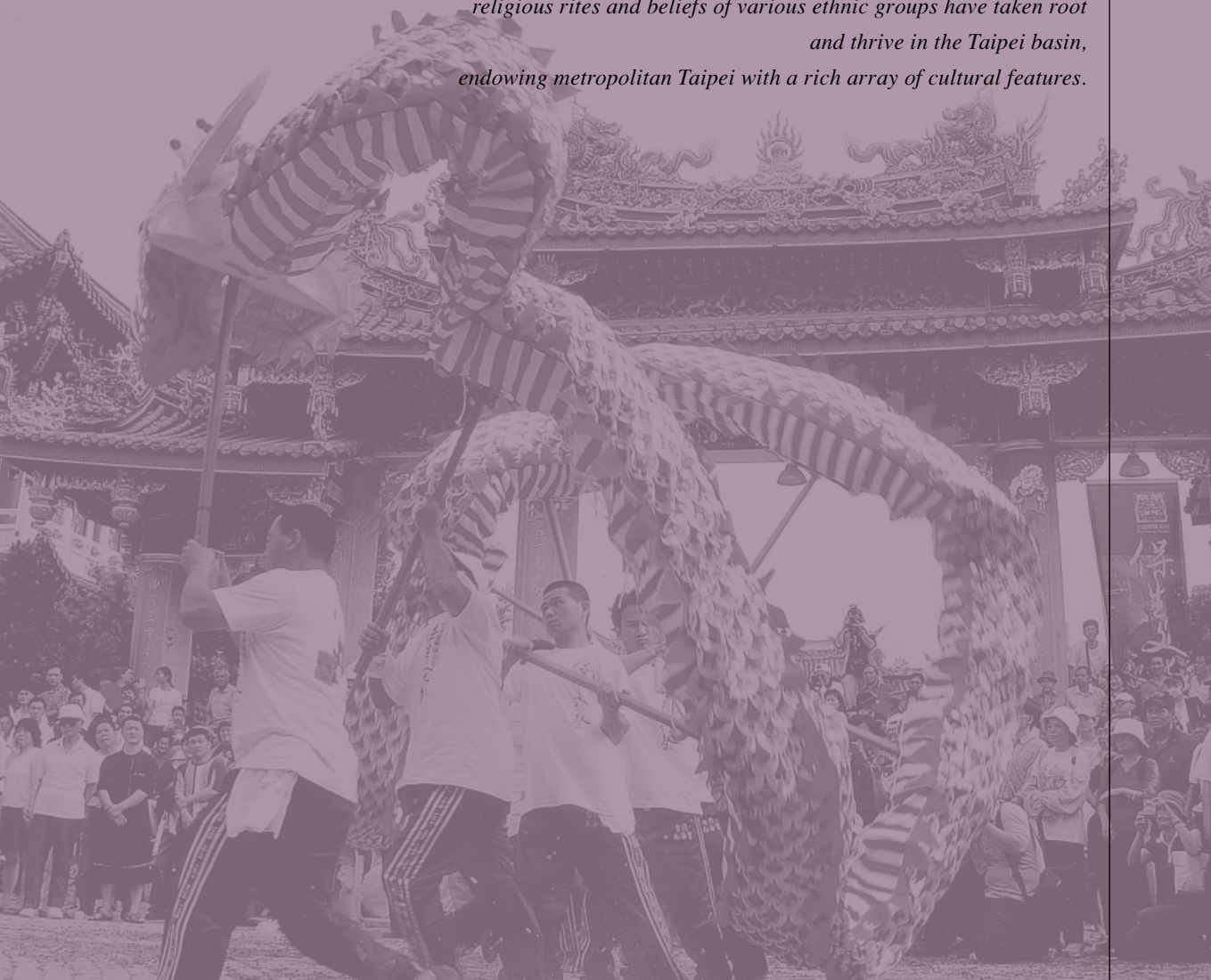


Chapter 13

Religious Ceremonies

It has been over 120 years since the ancient city of Taipei was established by the Qing dynasty. In addition to being a bellwether in politics and economics, Taipei is also a leader in encouraging religious and folk art activities; consequently, unique cultures, religious rites and beliefs of various ethnic groups have taken root and thrive in the Taipei basin, endowing metropolitan Taipei with a rich array of cultural features.



Chapter 13 | Religious Ceremonies

Taipei is home to diversified cultures; it is also a city with many immigrants who bring their religious beliefs, cultures, customs and lifestyles to the city. The religious and ritual elements embedded in the lifestyles of Taipei's residents always manage to emerge gracefully whether in the form of major Buddhist and Taoist ceremonies and rituals, traditional temple fairs of wide-ranging folk beliefs, metropolitan aboriginal harvest festivals, the Dalongdong Baoan Cultural Festival advocating Confucianism, exotic religious ceremonies, or new immigrant cultural events, the city of Taipei is constantly assimilating new cultural elements as it carries on traditional folk art heritage, translating these new energies into a unique Taipei cultural personality.

Part 1 Colorful and Vibrant Ceremonial Gatherings

Traditional farming society is characterized by many holidays, which have been brought over by immigrants from their ancestral homes to Taiwan. These holidays are based on husbandry, religion, and seasonal social activities, faithfully cataloging the lives of country folk. Although modern Taipei no longer organizes elaborate and formal ceremonies, we can still witness both traditional and innovative practices fused together to adapt to modern lifestyles through rituals and religious activities throughout the seasons in 2006, shaping them into the life-style of modern Taipei.

1. The Taipei Lantern Festival

The Lantern Festival on the 15th of the first month of the lunar calendar has always been one of the greatest events in stirring up enthusiasm. Mere mention of the Lantern Festival never fails to conjure up special impressions of “beehive rockets in the south, sky lanterns in the north.” The Taipei City Government in recent years has successfully sponsored the renowned “Taipei Lantern Festival,” and event organizer, the Department of Civil Affairs, drew upon its years of experience in presenting “The 2006 Taipei Lantern Festival—Prosperity and Good Fortune in Taipei City,” with “Friendly City and Wholesome Taipei” as the core concept, introducing a series of events starting with the centerpiece section, diamond section, topical lanterns, artistic lanterns, student lanterns, the lantern tunnel and riddle arena, the main performance stage, a folk art street and a prayer enclave featuring the storytelling of an aboriginal boy, KoKai, and his dog, Wong Wong, all of which contributed to the fun and diversity of the festival. The event attracted about 5 million visitors from February 11th through 19th in 2006. The great event was characterized by enchanted, jostling crowds and brightly decorated lanterns.



● The 2006 Taipei Lantern Festival attracted many tourists



● The 2006 Taipei Hakka Yi-Min Ceremony

2. The Hakka Bag Gung Ceremony

The Chang Qing Temple is located on Jinjiang Street in the Guting District, and has over 210 years of history. In 1983, local residents, of both Hakka or Fujian heritage, donated to its expansion, resulting in its imposing stature today. In recent decades, due to the eager participation of Hakka seniors in temple affairs, the Chang Qing Temple has become the stronghold of Hakka Bag Gung religion in the greater Taipei area. To express its support and promote solidarity among Hakka constituents, 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 Chang Qing Temple on Jinjiang Street in conjunction with Hakka organizations and local residents to celebrate the Earth God’s birthday.

3. Baosheng Cultural Festival

To celebrate the birthday of Baosheng Dadi, the Baoan Temple of Dalongdong sponsors the annual Baosheng Cultural Festival which takes place during March of the lunar calendar. This 2-month festival combines religious activities with folk arts, and has become the biggest, the most celebrated and leading traditional temple fair in Northern Taiwan. Starting on March 4th of the lunar calendar, the show, “Folk Play—The Surname Show” was put on at the Baoan Temple Garden Square for a month, with famed theater troupes, famous Gezai opera societies, and school clubs gracing the occasion with performances. On the morning of April 11th, 2006, folk cultural arts

The Endearing Bag Gung Religion

To celebrate the birthday of the Earth God is special religion in Taiwan. The Earth God also known as ,Fu Te, the God of Land and called “Bag Gung” (an endearing term meaning “uncle”) by the Hakka is the god of managing the earth. According to above-mentioning, we can feel the Hakka regard the patron god of the earth as the benign uncle .

Hakka Three Mountain Kings Ceremony

In contrast to Taiwan’s local deity, Yi-min Ye, the Three Mountain Kings myth was regarded as a Hakka divinity, brought over by the Hakka. 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 onto other ethnic groups. Every year during the Three Mountain Kings’ birthday, fellow Hakkas would travel to Three Mountain Kings temples throughout Taipei to celebrate and pray for peace.



● The 2006 Baosheng Cultural Festival Folk Cultural Art Competitions

competitions and performances were held; folk cultural art groups from all over Taiwan constituted 10 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 most anticipated event, the folk custom of “crossing fire” would be performed, which served to demonstrate the power of the gods. In addition to the various traditional festivities, the Baoan Temple arranged genteel activities for recording the Baosheng Cultural Festival, including photography and sketching competitions, and conducted religious seminars, medical clinics offering free treatment and academic workshops.

A Model of Historic Monument Preservation

Legend has it that the Baoann Temple of Dalong Dong, located at 61 Hami Street in the Datong district of Taipei, was built in the 7th year during Qing emperor Qianlong's reign in 1755. It's listed as a Class 2 National Historic Monument, with numerous Taoist believers and tourists coming from near and far to worship and pray for protection at this temple daily. 7 years and NT\$260 million had been poured into the historic monument preservation project to complete. The temple had received the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Asia-Pacific Cultural Heritage Award. It was Taiwan's first attainment of this honor as a non-United Nations member and it embodies great historical significance.

4. Taipei Hakka Yi-min Ceremony

The Yi-min Festival falls on July 20th (Lunar calendar). Every year during the Yi-min Festival, the Hakka communities in Taipei choose an auspicious day and invite the Xin Pu Fangliao Yi-min Main Temple up North to pray for blessings for Hakkas who travel far away from their homeland. Since 1988, the festival has grown in stature; on August 6th and 7th, representative from 11 temples including Xin Pu Fangliao Main Temple, Guanxi, Qionglin, Pingzhen, Miaoli, Toufen, Sanwan, Nanzhuang, Shitan, Dongshi, and Pingdong's Liudui Temples gathered at the plaza by the Taipei City Government to hold their grand prayer ceremony.

The series of festival activities included a procession of Yi-min Ye, the carrying of a load to present fresh rice, the main ceremony, and the offering of sacrifices following the three presentations of sacrificial rites, and the five presentations of offerings and burnt incense. The highlight of the activities was the creative sacred pig ritual. Each of the Hakka organizations worked hard to put their creativity to the test and produced their own version of the sacred pig. 2006 saw an orchid pig, the food grains pig, and the winter melon fashionable cell phone pig, all of which were extensively covered by the press. This festival is decidedly the biggest annual event of the Hakkas, and it gives residents a glimpse into Hakka traditions, and serves to extend the Hakka cultural heirloom, while effectively expanding the traditional cultural event, instilling a more lively culture into Taipei City .



● The 2006 Taipei Hakka Yi-Min Ceremony

5. The Joint Aboriginal Harvest Festivities in Taipei City

A popular saying goes, “A faraway place becomes home over the course of time,” bespeaking the longings that Taipei City’s aboriginal communities feel toward their homeland; it also tells of a helplessness that one cannot ever return home to find it the way it used to be. Currently there are more than 11,000 aborigines from all over Taiwan living in Taipei City. They are far away from the tribal life they are familiar with in order to make a better living in metropolitan Taipei, and they are faced with much more pressure; consequently, they find themselves in need of certain relief and

consolation both spiritually and emotionally. As a result Indigenous People Commission, Taipei City Government, was inspired to organize a carnival specifically for aborigines living in the 21st century metropolis in the hope of evoking memories of their homeland, and popularizing unique aboriginal cultures among all of Taipei’s residents.

The Joint Aboriginal Harvest Festivities in Taipei City the “2006 Mountain and Ocean Festival the Original Flavor and Sound Feast” kicked off on October 28 and lasted through the 29th from 10 in the morning till 5 in the afternoon at the Civic Plaza at the City Government Building. A group from one of the Chinese ethnic minorities, Xishuangbanna sang and danced during the event; the traditional Taroko ballads, the Pingpu tribal songs,

The Yi-Min Temple commemorates the ancestors who died during the battles in Taiwan, specifically those involved in the incident of Zhu Yi-guan, Lin Shuang-wen, and Dai Chao-chun, who died protecting their country. In November of 1799, Lin Shuang-wen staged a rebellion and captured an important city in the southern part of Central Taiwan. Many died, and the governor Sun Ching-sui was killed. In December, Lin attacked Dan Shui, and upon victory immediately attacked Hsinchu city. Inspector Zhang Chih-hsin was killed in the line of duty. At this time, the people of Hsinchu and Hsin Pu organized their own militia force under the leadership of Chen Zi-yun and fought with Lin fiercely for several months, and regained control of Hsinchu. Lin fled first to Miaoli and then to Dachia. In October of 1800, the soldiers commanded by the governor of Fujian landed in Lugang, met up with the militia and fought with Lin at Lunziding in November. The fight moved to Niuchou Shan, where Lin and his forces were finally eliminated.

During the war, over 200 members of the militia died, and their remains were scattered in various locations. Liu Xian-kun and Wang Yan-chang traveled back by ox cart and picked up remains along the way home. Originally, the plan was to bury the remains at Dawokou (today’s Hukou Xiang). But after passing Feng-Shan River, the ox refused to travel any further. After burning incense, prayer, and asking the gods, everyone realized that where the ox stopped was a lucky location. After confirmation by a geomancer, the remains of the loyal soldiers were buried in that spot. During the winter of 1801, the “Baozhong Temple” was erected there, and disciples worshipped there continuously. Later, the deceased from the Dai Chao-chun incident were buried there as well. The Liu Zhong Memorial was built there after the Zhu Yi-guan incident. The Hakka’s spirit of commemorating the dead lead to the Yi-Min belief became a unique folk religion for the Hakka people.

The Origin of Yi-Min



● A joint opening ceremony with honored guests

and the welcome dances of the Amis, Puyumas, Bununs and Rukais were presented, as were the prayer ceremony of the Tsous, the coming-of-age performance, learning presentations of aboriginal kids, an aboriginal creative band performance, and other interesting and educational games and contests. The event showcased a diversity of traditional costumes, entertaining songs and dances, and cultural rites of great significance, inspiring spectators to join in on the fun. Many parents who brought their children to the event agreed that such a fun-and culture-filled event should be held more frequently.

The Chairperson of the Commission, Mr. Panai, also invited spectators to “join the dance” when tribal dances were underway. His invitation spoke volumes of the personality and passion unique to aboriginal culture as he directly invited the audience to experience it first hand. Right there during the event was a rare treat—a barbeque on a slab-stone, and rice cooked in bamboo tubes, and a variety of fine food stalls. Exquisite handicrafts, rice grinders, rice carriage bags and traditional costumes could also be enjoyed.

The Joint Aboriginal Harvest Festivities in Taipei City—the “2006 Mountain and Ocean Festival—the Original Flavor and Sound Feast” has helped Taipei City’s aborigines to abate their longings for their home villages, allowed aborigines of different tribal backgrounds to get to know each other, and given people a chance to know the cultures of Taiwan’s 12 indigenous tribes. The enthusiasm radiated by our aboriginal friends deeply affected every Taipei townsman, and everyone had a chance to enjoy an autumn aboriginal cultural festival.



● Cultural exchanges with the visiting Yunnan minorities



● The aboriginal Amis Dance

Part 2 Dignified and Thanksgiving Religious Praise and Admiration

1. The 2006 Religions and Arts Carnival

In addition to expanding the previous Matsu Cultural Festivals and the Ceremony at the Temple of the City God, the 2006 Religions and Arts Carnival specifically integrated unique Taiwan folklore peculiarities and added cross-town activities. In addition to contributions from the Department of Civil Affairs of Taipei City Government, the Kuangtu Temple, the Temple of the City God of Taipei City, Taiwan Province, and Baoan Temple of Taipei City joined hands to sponsor the event. The National Temple of the City God Society, and Minor Keelung Fucheng Temple pooled their resources to organize folk art performances, mobilizing believers to escort the gods. These financiers contributed largely to the success of the event, and created a good model of public-private collaborative efforts.

(1) Matsu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan

The “Taipei Government Heavenly Queen Temple” that housed the “Golden-Faced Matsu” was built in 1888 within the walls of Taipei City. After Taiwan’s provincial status was formally established, the temple became the official Matsu Temple in Taiwan. It was demolished by the Japanese in 1905, and it has been 95 years since the statue of Matsu was officially enshrined in Sanzhi. To restore this amazing, historically significant religious ceremony, various departments of the Taipei City Government since 2004 enlisted the support of the Temple of the City God of Taipei City, the Taipei City Songshan Ziyou Temple, and the Taipei City Kuantu Temple. For three successive years, the “Receiving Golden-faced Matsu Back to Taipei” ceremony has been held to return the divinity to its former residence.

The Matsu Cultural Festival of Northern Taiwan kicked off amid much fanfare on September 24th, 2006. As one of the organizers, the Department of Civil Affairs, and the eastern shrine host, the Kuangtu Temple, invited 15 of the most symbolic temples from 8 counties and cities to organize the activity. In order to propagate the development of the Matsu religious belief since the launch of



● Matsus in Northern Taiwan joyfully met

Taipei prefecture (which now includes all 8 counties and cities in Northern Taiwan) in the Qing dynasty, the county and city governments courteously invited 15 major temples in Northern Taiwan to participate: the Ci Yun Temple from Miaoli, the Zhubei Heavenly Queen Temple from Xinzhu County, Changhe Temple from Xinzhu City, Fuhai Temple from Taoyuan County, and Nantian Temple from Yilan County, Qingan Temple from Keelung City, the Xinzhu Ciyou Temple and Sanxia Xinlong Temple from Taipei County, Heavenly Queen Temple, Nanfu Temple and Funan Temple from Taipei City. The Matsu statues



● Kuantu Joint Worship Service

from 8 counties and cities first were jointly worshiped at the Kuantu Temple, with Mayor Ma Ying-jeou, Chief Zhong Ze-liang of the Department of Civil Affairs, the Kuantu Temple Chairman Chen Lin-fu, and 8 county and city chiefs to initiate the “water and land prayer for blessing pilgrimage.” As the host, the Temple of the City God mobilized nearly ten thousand believers to welcome Matsu ashore. Next was the “Stomp the Street Parade” to return to the former Heavenly Temple (now located inside the 228 Park). To pay its own tribute as the host, the Temple of the City God honored the ancient traditions and invited the Xinzhu Northern Wind Instrument Society to perform a traditional show. During Matsu’s visit for the following 9 days, the participating temples held their peace ceremonies, and invited performance groups to delight the worshippers.

(2) The Retro-esque Wanggong Welcome Ceremony—Praying for Farming in Northern Taiwan

For the purpose of paying tribute to traditional beliefs of farmers living in the Taipei Basin, the Department of Civil Affairs joined hands with Zhongshun Temple in Muzha, Taipei, to courteously ask Kuantu Temple, Songshan’s Ciyou Temple, Little Keelung’s Fucheng Temple, Jiying Temple of Muzha, and Zhangshan Temple to organize the “Receptions of Matsu and Wanggong—Praying for Taipei Farming” in the style of ancient Taipei religious ceremonies right in the Maokong area in Muzha. Matsu and Wonggong—customarily known as the deity to drive out pests and protect seedlings—and Bodhisattva Guanyin and the God of Land are expansively worshipped by farming communities in Taipei. The deities were carried by worshippers and made an emblematic tour of the tea farms in Maokong to pray for a bumper crop.

(3) Religions and Arts Exhibitions

The Religions and Arts Carnival kicked off the Taiwan Lion Artistry Exhibition from September 24th to October 22nd, 2006 at the Taipei City Town and Country Club House, displaying traditional Taiwanese lion and folklore arts. From October 18th through the 22nd, the “General — Ten Workmanships—a Religions and Arts Exhibition” was presented at the atrium of Taipei City Hall, during which professional country investigative units provided assistance to exhibit important immigrant religious crafts, an assortment of representative relics of deities and house gods, and an introduction to Taipei’s immigrant beliefs and folklore arts, providing Taipei residents with a glimpse into the contents of various folklore arts.

(4) Topical Folklore Heritage Lecture

To encourage the understanding of carrying on folklore and art legacies and duly revivify their status, the Department of Civil Affairs, Baoan Temple and NGOs in Taipei organized a Topical Folklore Heritage Seminar on October 14th and 15th, 2006 at the NGO Club House, with experts and academicians invited for a retro look into the strongholds of immigrant beliefs, marshalling visitors into an excursion to tour some of Taipei's most important immigrant religious strongholds and private religious centers. On October 20th, the Folklore Heritage and Development Lecture kicked off at Baoan Temple, with the Chairman of the temple Liao Wu-zhi, Professor of Architecture Wang Hui-jun from the National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, Headmaster Wu Yong-meng of Baosheng Taoism Cultural Institute, Professor Wu Teng-da from the Department of Physical Education of National Taitung University, and Professor Zhou Zong-xian from Tamkang University gracing the occasion to present their lectures and keynote speeches on renovations of traditional architectural sites, folklore and art heritage movements, and the fusion of folk cultures and modern life. About a hundred strong research groups, NGO groups, social researchers, literature and history buffs and temple supporters attended the seminar.

(5) The National Temples of the City God Convention

Thirty City God statues from 17 counties and cities were assembled on September 19th, 2006 in Taipei for the National Temples of the City God Alliance. The Taipei Temple City of God of Taiwan joined hands with the Department of Civil Affairs to promote and preserve model folk arts, and invited member temples of the National Temples of the City God Alliance for the Convention in Taipei on the eve of the birthday of the City God.

The event is arguably an important gala affair devoted to folk customs. The Department of Civil Affairs, the Alliance and the Taipei Temple of the City God of Taiwan jointly invited the Taipei Prefecture Temple of the City God, the Xiahai Temple of the City God from Songshan, Xinzhu's Temple of the City God, Jingfu Temple of Xinzhu City, Temple of the City God from Fengyuan, Temple of the City God from Dajia, Temple of the City God from Taizhong, Temple of the City God from Lugang, Linde Temple from Zhushan, Yinghai Temple of the City God from Puli, Huide Palace from Caotun, Yi-min Temple of the City God from Shuili, Temple of the City God from Yulin County, Temple of the City God from Jiayi, Qigu Tangming Palace, Old City Temple of the City God from Fengyi, Temple of the City God from Pingdong, Temple of the



● Immigrant religious strongholds



● The National Temples of the City God Convention

City God from Chaozhou, Temple of the City God from Luodong, Temple of the City God from Hualian, Shanhuatangdu Temple of the City God from Taidong, Magong Temple of the City God from Penghu, Nation Defender Temple of City the God from Keelung and 24 main statues and deities for the “Stomp the Streets” event in Taipei City. In the afternoon, the statues took off and were placed for 2 days at the Temple of the City God Shrine at the Civic Plaza by the Taipei City Hall for worship services.

(6) Taiwan's Folk Art Joint Performances

“The Art Performances to Receive City God” on October 21st and 22nd, 2006 at the Civic Plaza at Taipei City Hall was the capstone of the Religions and Arts Carnival. Over 50 folk art performance troupes that escorted the city gods from all over the country performed on October 21st. The Department of Civil Affairs invited the “Water Margin Song Jiang Battle Formation” led by Professor Wu Teng-da from the Department of Physical Education of National Taitung University, and “Puan Hall Religious Rites” led by Headmaster Wu Yong-meng of the Baosheng Taoism Cultural Institute, the world's only “Children's White Crane Formation” from Goupung Elementary School



● Song Jiang Battle Formation was performed by Goupung Elementary School

of Gaoxiong County, the famed “Zhongzhou Stilts Formation,” “Countryside Bullfight Formation” and the fun “12 Cranes Formation” from Tainan County to perform. On that night, the internationally renowned Ming Hua Yuan Taiwanese Opera took the stage. The following day, an additional Song Jiang Battle Formation was performed by Goupung Elementary School, with 3 generations of performers from Danshui South and North Hall to stage the “Eight Deities,” “Eight Generals,” “Officers,” and “Shi Generals” to give demonstrative performances.

(7) The Sacrificial Ceremony to the City God

To celebrate the 125th (1881-2006) establishment anniversary of the first official Temple of the City God in Taiwan, the 60th renovation anniversary of the Temple of the City God of Taipei City and the 61st Taiwan Retrocession Day, the Taipei City Temple of the City God observed the ancient ceremony passed down since the Ming and Qing Dynasties and held the Sacrificial Ceremony to the City God at 10 in the morning on October 25th. Then Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou was invited to preside over the sacrificial ceremony as the mayor of the nation's capital. The Chairperson of the Department of Civil Affairs Zhong Ze-liang was invited to serve as officiator of the event. As the host, the Taipei Temple of City God chief board member served as an assistant ceremony official. The reenactment of the ancient ritual doubled as a thanksgiving ceremony to the deities, and drew attention to the benevolence showered on the faithful by the City God. It was a perfect end to the 2006 Religions and Arts Festival.

2. The 2006 Dalongdong Cultural Fair

The Confucian Temple represents the Confucian school of thought that has been around for thousands of years. The spirit of Confucianism also symbolizes the origin of Confucian culture. The

Confucian Culture is more than a historical phenomenon; rather, it bespeaks of the Confucian Orthodoxy. The teachings of previous masters and saints were aimed at establishing a model community, in which everyone could enjoy the quality of life. But many traditions and cultures have died out in modern society, and in light of that the Taipei City Government fused Temple—the Confucian Temple, Academy—Dalong Elementary School in Taipei, and Palace—the Baoan Temple to promote the Dalongdong Cultural Park to renovate the old city blocks and promulgate the Chinese Culture.

The planning of the 2006 Dalongdong Cultural Fair marked the first step directed at invigorating the cultural park. The Fair was held from September 20th through December 16th, 2006, and featured about a dozen traditional yet modern cultural events.

First of all, Schoolmaster Chen Wei-ying was received into the temple, and that was the first ever such reception in any Confucian Temple in Taipei City for expanding the Confucian Spirit of teaching people of all classes, and teaching in accordance with dedication to invigorate the Confucius ceremonies, into which fresh educational significance was instilled. A standard protocol was drawn up at the end of 2004, and after six consultations with experts, one public hearing, and four review meetings, Dalong Elementary School of Taipei City recommended Schoolmaster Chen Wei-ying, a Dalongdong native, who has nurtured numerous talented individuals, and is an advocate of culture and Confucianism. Chen was unanimously approved during the first and the following reviews to be received to supervise the Hongdao Shrine of the Confucian Temples.

The Birthday of Confucius on September 28th every year is celebrated in a dignified ceremony, the highlight of the Confucian Temples. The 2556th Anniversary of Confucius's Birthday and Worship Ceremony kicked off at 6 in the morning on September 28th, 2006 at the Dacheng Palace in Taipei's Confucian Temples, with Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou as the chief presenter of sacrifices, Chairperson of the Department of Civil Affairs Zhong Ze-liang as officiator of the event, and outstanding social leaders as various presenters. The homage ceremony was guided by the MC in accordance with ancient traditions, as officials saluted to the tablets of previous saints. The whole ceremony was solemn and respectful. afterwards, Mayor Ma Ying-jeou distributed Wisdom Cakes to attendees of the



●928 Confucius's Birthday and Worship Ceremony

ceremony. A 928 Cultural Park is in the planning to encourage attendance of the ceremony.

On September 29th, 2006, the City's Confucian Temples for the first time organized the Confucian Temples Homecoming—Spreading Confucianism Round Table Discussion on “The Role of Confucianism amid Cultural Globalization.” Representatives from Confucian Temples around Taiwan were invited to discuss extensively on expanding the international exchange of international Confucian thought, and promoting ancient Chinese traditions and cultures. A Confucius Campaign Memorandum was jointly signed to create a new platform for bolstering Confucianism exchange.

The Cultural Fair also incorporated related festivities: Mid-Autumn Festival (October 6th), Christmas (December 25th) and the weekends devoted to Ancient Moon and Modern World—Watch the Moon with Confucius (October 6th); Discover the Beauty of Confucian Temples—Photography and Painting Competition (October 15th through November 15th), interscholastic tours around Confucian Temples—Prizewinning Displays (December 16th, 2006—February 28th, 2007), and Creative Cultural Party—Boogie with Confucius (December 16th). This series of events included religious worships, festivities, exhibitions, workshops and performances that reinforced understanding of Confucianism; it also encouraged tourism activities.

Part 3 Foreign Ceremonies and Rituals in Taipei

Taipei is an international metropolis, with new immigrant cultures converging here to create new chemistry. The city is now home to more than 28,000 new immigrants. Other than those from China, immigrants from Southeast Asian nations constitute a majority of Taipei's new residents. With that in mind, the Department of Civil Affairs put together a special “2006 New Immigrant Cultural Fair—New Spices of Life,” highlighting the unique condiment dietary cultures of Southeast Asian countries, and providing people with a hands-on experience to interact with new immigrant cultures. We hope that cultural interchanges and ethnic harmony are encouraged through this event. The program included the Spice Republic Fair, the New Immigrant Song and Dance Contest featuring immigrants from the seven counties and cities in Northern Taipei (Taipei County, Taipei City, Keelung City, Yilan County, Taoyuan County, Xinzhu County and Miaoli County). Renowned overseas performance groups and exotic folk performances were featured in the repertoire. The Spice Republic featured cuisines from Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and other Asian nations, plus booths with delicious light repasts, such as refreshing, sour and spicy Malay cooking, and traditional Chinese Korean food. A drawing was held to randomly pick out parents or family members of the new immigrants to come to Taiwan for the event. An online survey was organized to choose people's favorite southeastern Asian cuisine, and winners were given gift packs. Some of the programs of the event included:

1. Families of New Immigrants Invited to Taiwan for Mid-Autumn Festival

The Department of Civil Affairs organized a drawing, through which parents or family members of the new immigrants were picked out and given the chance to come to Taiwan to spend the holidays together. Every winner of the event was awarded NT\$10,000 for airfare. A total of 21 such winners were invited to Taiwan (7 from Indonesia, 8 from Thailand, 4 from the Philippines, and 2 from Myanmar). They also toured the Taipei 101.

2. Favorite Southeastern Asian Cuisine Online Ballot

People of Taiwan have always enjoyed the sour, spicy and refreshing Southeastern Asian cuisine, so during the New Immigrant Cultural Fair, a Favorite Southeastern Asian Delight ballot was held from September 14th through 24th, 2006 to pick out the 20 dishes that people love the best. Results were announced during a press conference on September 29th, with the top three favorite dishes being: Moon Shrimp Cookies, Fresh Shrimp Rolls and Pepper Sesame Chicken. 25 winners were chosen and awarded a gift pack.

3. 2006 New Immigrant Cultural Fair—New Spices of Life

The Department of Civil Affairs held the 2006 New Immigrant Cultural Fair—The Spice Republic—on October 1st at the Civic plaza at Taipei City Hall, featuring a wide range of events, including the spice forest, spice labyrinth, Southeastern Asian Spread, and an international feast competition to entertain visitors. The new immigrant song and dance competition won wide applause, with family members of the new immigrants visiting from Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines to join Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou, Yilan County Magistrate Lu Guo-hua in presenting a 133-catty lemon citronella giant moon cake 1 meter in diameter. The moon cake was served to event participants.

The new immigrants and their families gave the chiefs of the local administrations specialty fruits they brought from their homelands to express their appreciation. Ma and his retinue rewarded these special guests with the traditional “promise” folk art pendants, symbolizing that the city promises to take good care of its new immigrants.

Due to the growing number of new immigrants living in Northern Taiwan, the Department of Civil Affairs specifically organized a dance contest with 7 other cities, and a singing contest using the immigrants’ native tongues, Mandarin, and Taiwanese. The contestants emerged as winners from local competitions, and they made it as finalists for the Taipei competition. All of them gave it their all in order to win the top honors.

The 2006 New Immigrant Cultural Fair—The Spice Republic saw renowned master bakers who devoted two months of time into creating a 133-catty lemon citronella moon cake one meter in diameter. Family members of the new immigrants together with county and city chiefs presented the moon cake, which was divided into pieces and shared by fair attendees to symbolize the Full Moon and Union.

In addition to the opportunity to sample a wide range of exotic delicacies, the Cultural Fair also unveiled the first ever Spice Forest Hall, which provided games, for people of Taiwan to familiarize themselves with the different kinds of spices and their applications. The water park gave people a chance to experience the fun of splashing water, and the cultural significance behind it.



● The New Immigrant Song and Dance Contest

Part 4 Progressive Ceremonial Innovations

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

It has been seven years since the centralized collection and burning of paper money was launched for the Ghost Festival, and its effects have grown over the years. To further cut down on air pollution caused by the burning of paper money, the Taipei City Government continued to promote the centralized burning of paper money in 2006 among temples and religious groups in the city, in the hope of changing believers' habits of personally burning paper money. In order to expand its effects, every household in the city was encouraged to join the centralized collection of paper money, the amount of paper money collected in 2006 has grown to 636.48 metric tons from 445.06 metric tons in 2005, showing that the movement has been widely received. Traditional forms of worship have been gradually transformed over the passage of time.

2. Joint Sea Burial

Traditional burials include interment and cremation. As time passes and society progresses, new environmentally friendly burial methods have been developed, including tree burial and the scattering of ashes, and sea burials, which have been gradually accepted by more and more people.

The Taipei Mortuary Services Office and Taipei County held a joint burial at sea on May 5th for 23 deceased and their family members. The members converged on the Bali Dragon-shaped Wharf. After going through silent prayers and customs checks by Coast Guard Administration, Executive Yuan personnel, the participants were allowed onto the ship. As they waited for the time to come to throw the urns overboard, short memorial documentaries of the deceased were played. Staff members led the family members for a prayer, and they threw the urns overboard. On the return trip the family members gave short speeches. At the completion of the ceremony every member was given a "Heart of the Ocean" pendant, inside which a small amount of ash was preserved.

3. Joint Funeral Service

Funeral rituals are aimed to solemnly commemorate the deceased, and not meant to be fanciful and stylish. In order to improve social



● The Furnace Purification Ceremony for the Centralized Collection and Burning of Paper Money



● Joint Sea Burial to Commemorate the Deceased

conventions, simplify memorial service procedures, and reduce funeral expenses, Taipei took the lead and began holding joint funeral services in 1988.

The so-called joint funeral service was a weekly gathering of bereaved families at the Taipei Second Funeral Parlor for a joint funeral service. The mayor and department officials take turns in conducting the service, and a representative from the district office of the deceased comes to pay respect. Nineteen free services such as the employment of halls, decoration of halls, emcees, bands, caskets and urns are provided to the bereaved. In 2006, a total of 68 services were held for 804 deceased.

4. The 2006 Taipei Joint Matrimonial Ceremonies

The 2006 Taipei Joint Matrimonial Ceremonies highlighted the theme of “Honeymoon Taipei”, featuring unique landscapes and cultural aspects, plus international honeymoon attractions to create five brand new joint topical matrimonial ceremonies, including “Taros of Happiness,” “Azure Taipei Avenue des Champs Elysees,” “Aloha Taipei Summer,” “Romantic Eternity,” and “The Curves of the Aegean Sea.” A total of 707 newlyweds joined the ceremony in 2006, and 272 of them participated in “Romantic Eternity,” marking a record-breaking number of newlyweds to join a joint marriage ceremony during Mayor Ma’s 8-year tenure.

Folk religion fusing Buddhist and Taoist beliefs has long been the center of the beliefs, lifestyles, and customs of many people. Desirable moral and character traits, such as loyalty, familial duties, integrity and a sense of justice have been idealized into gods and celebrated by the people, becoming the moral values of the ancient society and encouraging people to perform good deeds. The worshipped gods have human characteristics, and their duties are directly related to the daily lives of the people; therefore the gods are widely accepted by their disciples and relied upon for spiritual support, even throughout changing times.

Seasons and climates, and the rhythms of weddings and funerals of modern Taipei are still being fashioned after ancient conventions, and presented through the embodiment of a collective lifestyle. Religious ceremonies are still a part of everyday life, and certainly will not be forgotten over time.



● “Azure Taipei Avenue des Champs Elysees” Joint Photo



● “Aloha Taipei Summer” Joint Marriage Ceremony — Newlyweds Marching In