

Performance Venues & Architectural Heritage

Beigang Chaotian Temple

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Chinese Name: 北港朝天宮

Address: No. 178, Zhongshan Rd., Beigang
Township, Yunlin County

Establishment: 1694

Official Website: <https://www.matsu.org.tw/>

Did You Know That...?

In 2024, the Beigang Mazu pilgrimage was approved as one of the important national folk customs, and Beigang Chaotian Temple was recognized as the custom's preserver.

Legend has it that a monk called Shu-pi (樹璧和尚) introduced the statue of Mazu (媽祖), the Goddess of Sea, to Taiwan from Chaotian Temple in Fujian Province, China. He established a temple for the deity in the Bengang (笨港) area, now known as the Beigang Township (北港鎮) of Yunlin County (雲林縣). According to the local record Chuluo County Annals (諸羅縣志) in 1717, the temple enshrining Mazu was named "Tian-fei

(天妃).” In 1730, the temple was renovated and renamed Chaotian Temple. The name literally means “the temple of the Queen from Heaven.”

In 1775, local officials worked with other temple groups on a reconstruction project. The fundamental layout of the temple was changed. The dragon pillar people see today was the product of this project. In 1808, the temple’s name was changed to “Chaotian (literally the origin of the Sea Goddess).

During Japanese rule, Chaotian Temple underwent major reconstruction. In 1904 and 1906, parts of the temple were destroyed by earthquakes. In 1904, Beigang’s subprefecture director Yasutake Masao worked with the local district chief Tsai Jan-piao (蔡) to hire a master carpenter/temple restorer Chen Ying (陳) to lead a renovation project. In 1912, the temple’s reconstruction was completed. The revamped temple was even hailed by Taiwan’s government (now one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Taiwan). In 1928, the temple expanded its spaces on account of urban reconstruction. In 1937, allowing itself to be devoted to other gods except for Mazu, a new day temple was established at that time.

Minor renovations of the temple continued. In 1928, the temple’s main doors: Dragon Door (龍門) and Tiger Door (虎門). In 1937, repaired, its interior painted, and its stone pillars reconstructed. During Japanese colonization, the temple had been through strict regulations. In 1940, burning spiritual money (joss paper) for deities was prohibited. A paper furnace was removed from the temple. Because of these regulations, statues of deities were destroyed and others were

In 1985, the Chaotian Temple was registered as a national monument. In 1994, it was designated as one of the national monuments in 1994 due to its architectural value. Because of its widespread reputation, Chaotian Temple has more than 300 branch temples worshipping Mazu across Taiwan. The temple's architecture, the beam structure, was made by eminent craftsmen. The most representative feature is the octagon-shaped caisson, an architectural feature that is generally a sunken panel set into the ceiling, often made of dougong, which was built through the use of the complicated dougong element of interlocking wooden brackets. The pieces are held together by glue or fasteners, requiring precise carpentry. Chaotian Temple appears in Taiwan and therefore has very high academic value.

Chaotian Temple is commonly filled with many worshippers. Celebratory events that the temple holds take place on the 15th day of the 8th month (also known as Lantern Festival) and on the goddess's birthday. Especially on the birthday of the goddess, many people participate in a grand religious procession, which is the Beigang Mazu Pilgrimage.

Related pictures

The statue of Mazu, the
Goddess of Sea

Chaotian Temple at night

Chaotian Temple's caisson

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