

The Sigang Holy Fire Pilgrimage

西港刈香與醮典

Sigang Cingan Temple's Holy Fire Pilgrimage and Wangye Boat Festival is a major religious event that takes place only once every three years. First held in 1784, it has grown in size and popularity until now nearly a hundred villages in the area participate.

西港慶安宮刈香與醮典（燒王船）自1784年起舉辦，規模逐年增加，至今西港慶安宮周遭約有一百多個村里會參加此三年一次的盛典。



History | 歷史沿革

In 1784, villagers in nearby Bafen found a sacrificial boat that had been released by a village upstream on the Zhengwen River and which had washed ashore in their village. Regarding this as an auspicious omen, they carried the boat to the local Guma temple. The boat had been dedicated to the Wangye, twelve deities who represent the Jade Emperor in the earthly realm, and the villagers began to hold a festival to welcome these gods every three years. When Guma temple was destroyed in a flood in 1823, the festival was moved to Sigang Cingan Temple, where it has been held ever since. In 1847, after Sigang Cingan Temple underwent renovation, it was for the first time that both the Holy Fire Pilgrimage and the Wangye Boat Festival were held at the same time, thus creating what now becomes a major religious event.

1784年，八份的居民於曾文溪發現一艘祭拜十二瘟王的王船，視為吉兆，因此把船抬至鄰近的姑媽宮，從此每三年一次舉辦刈香（當時只有簡易的請水活動）。姑媽宮於1823年遭洪水摧毀，刈香此後移駕至西港慶安宮舉辦。並於1847年首次將刈香與醮典同時舉行，創下西港刈香的雛形。

Preparations & The Parade Processions | 準備工作及流程

The festival is generally held on the 15th of the fourth month of the lunar calendar, and lasts for three days. Both the Holy Fire Pilgrimage and the Wangye Boat Festival are cleansing ceremonies designed to invoke the blessings of the gods and seek the intercession of the Wangye to dispel evil and bestow good fortune upon the residents of the area. Preparations begin a year before the festival, when the organizers determined through divination and a geomancer decides on an auspicious date to hold the festivities. An enormous wooden boat is constructed and consecrated, and performance troupes and the local citizenry begin preparations.

The goddess Mazu is the central divinity of Sigang Cingan Temple. Since the temple's Mazu effigy was consecrated from the original Mazu effigy in Luerhmen Tianhou Temple, a procession travels to Luerhmen Tianhou Temple on the day before the festival begins to entreat her to attend. This pre-festival procession begins at 6:00 a.m. and takes an entire day.

The Holy Fire Pilgrimage itself consists of three separate parades that take place over the course of three days. Altogether, the parade routes cover over 300 kilometers, and cover every block of every town in the area, driving out evil spirits, expiating sins, and bringing good fortune.

In these processions, worshippers carry palanquin after palanquin bearing god effigies including Mazu, the Wangye (emissaries of heaven and dispellers of evil), Baosheng Dadi (the god of health), and many others to confer their blessings on the populace. Local folk performance troupes, known as battle arrays, join in the fight against evil forces.

醮典前一年即筊請神明，選擇黃道吉日舉辦。接著開始打造木製王船，民間陣頭亦開始演練。活動前一天須至鹿耳門天后宮請媽祖。再加上三天的遶境，信徒扛著媽祖、王爺、保生大帝的神轎步行超過300公里。

The Centipede Pageant | 鑽蜈蚣腳

One of the most eye-catching aspects of the parade, and one of its oldest traditions, is the Centipede Pageant. The “centipede” is a long series of sixty-six linked platforms on wheels with a stylized centipede head at the front end. Local children dressed as various characters from legend and history sit on the “centipede”, which is guided by adults walking alongside. The centipede is said to possess magic power that helps drive evil spirits away.

蜈蚣陣屬特號，可以不隨遊行隊伍，獨立行動。根據民間傳說，蜈蚣陣具祛災震邪之效。在為期三天的慶典中，蜈蚣棚會不時造訪鄰近的村莊，讓村中的小孩繞行蜈蚣腳，以求平安。

Burning the Boat | 燒王船

On the morning of the day after the final parade, the final event of the festival is held. The sacred Wangye boat, which has been out in the square in front of the temple, is dragged to a field next to the Zengwun River, where it is hoisted onto a mound of donated spirit money the size of a small hill. At 10:00 a.m., the paper is ignited, and the carefully crafted wooden ship is consumed in the flames, taking all evil with it. Legend states that whichever direction the mast points to when it falls will enjoy particular good fortune over the next three years.

在慶典最後一天，王船會被移至曾文溪，置於信眾捐獻的金紙山上，金紙於上午十點點燃。燒王船即燒掉厄運，據傳王船燒完後，倒下的桅杆所指的地方接下來三年會好運不斷。