



Analysis of The Effect of Mazu Faith Story Researches on Cultural Tourism in Taiwan

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Abstract. Corresponding to the "Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival" held by the Putian Municipal People's Government, the activity of Dajia Zhenlan Temple in Taichung of Taiwan going to the ancestral temple in Meizhou of Fujian to offer incense to the ancestors has effectively promoted the spread of folk beliefs on both sides of the strait. In the tourism development of such cultural festivals, not only do the folk beliefs give the characteristics of the times, but the celebration activities become entertaining and large-scale. Under such background, this paper will find a historical basis for the rituals rooted in the ancestral temple by consulting literature and collating the research content of Taiwan's Mazu belief stories and serve as a reference to promote the performance activities of the "Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival" in the future.

Keywords: Mazu Faith Story, Cultural Tourism, Taiwan

1 Introduction

Dajia Zhenlan Temple (Picture 1), commonly known as Dajia Mazu Temple, is a Mazu temple seated in the Dajia district in Taichung City of Taiwan Province. The temple is one of the representative temples of the Mazu faith in Taiwan. The 9 days and 8 nights Dajia Mazu Circumvent Island Tour is now one of the most highly-profiled religious events and is known as the world's three major religious events attracting millions of people every year and bringing great value to the tourism effect. This activity echoes the "Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival" held by the Putian Municipal People's Government in Fujian Province. Through the activities of going to Meizhou Mazu Temple (Picture 2) to offer incense, the mutual worship activities have promoted the spread of folk beliefs on both sides more effectively.

It is worth noting that such religious activities have not only driven Taichung Dajia District to become one of the top ten sightseeing towns in Taiwan Province, but also promoted the business opportunities surrounding transportation, food, accommodation, and even cultural creative goods (Picture 3) as well. For example, although the epidemic situation is severe in 2022, many people have changed to place orders online and the number of orders has soared by 1.5 times compared with previous years according to the statistics of Dajia Mazu "Zhenlan Online Shopping Mall" (mazubuybuy.com.tw).

In such cultural festivals, not only the sacredness and mystery of folk beliefs are objectively diluted, but also the native government makes the celebration activities correspondingly entertaining and large-scale.

Under such a background of the times, this paper will find a historical basis for the worship reference of the ancestral temple. In the following sections, I will consult literature and collate the research content of Taiwan's Mazu belief story for the festival rooted in the ancestral temple to promote the performance activities of the "Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival" in the future.



Fig. 1. Dajia Mazu Temple



Fig. 2. Meizhou Mazu Temple



Fig. 3. Dajia Mazu creative goods

(These three pictures refer to the “Bing” internet pictures)

2 Mazu Related Literature Research

The study of Mazu began in the early 20th century, pioneered by overseas scholars. In 1918, the Japanese anthropologist Ito Kanori published "The Sea God Believed by the Han Chinese in Taiwan", proposing the conclusion that "Mazu is the sea protector of the Han people crossing the sea to migrate to Taiwan"¹. Domestic scholars began to pay attention to the Mazu faith by Gu Jiegang and Rong Zhaozu in 1929, and they published the paper named, "Queen of Heaven"². Wei Yingqi, a young scholar from Fuzhou who studied under Gu Jiegang, compiled the "Fujian Three Divine Examina-

tions", which summarized and sorted out the myths and legends related to Mazu's faith³. Since then, according to incomplete statistics, the academic community has published more than 1,300 works on Mazu research and thousands of papers⁴. Among them, such as He Yifu's "Review of Mazu Research in the Past Hundred Years"⁵. Jiang Weiyong's "Historical Review of Mazu Cultural Research"⁶. Zhang Xun's "Taiwan's Mazu Beliefs - Research Review"⁷. Min Zeping's "A Hundred Years of Mazu Research in the Sea God"⁸. Fan Zhengyi's "Review of Mazu Belief Research in Western Academic Circles"⁹. All these scholars have sorted out the Mazu research results of scholars in different periods and different countries and regions, providing a more useful reference for post-study research. The regionality of Mazu's beliefs has also been studied by scholars to show that the Mazu faith has also spread to Hong Kong, Macao and even to Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia.

Since the Mazu faith has the role of promoting normal cross-strait exchanges¹⁰, governments at all levels have organized relevant meetings, and some palaces and temples have also funded the publication of books on the study of Mazu belief. Taking the "Mazu Cultural History" jointly compiled by experts and scholars on both sides of Taiwan and Fujian in 2019 as an example, the Mazu Cultural Chronicle compiled by cross-strait cooperation by the former Fujian Provincial Local History Compilation Committee and the Taiwan Mazu Friendship Association, bringing together more than 40 experts and scholars to complete and taking 10 years from preparation to release. The "Mazu culture" as the core has become an important part of traditional Chinese culture, which has the role of communicating emotions, spiritual bonds, and maintaining cultural identity¹¹, reminding scholars to begin to eliminate "superstition" in the study of Mazu belief, and turn to examine it from a cultural perspective, opening up a new feasible way for the study of Mazu belief. This paper will be based on the path of the Mazu faith from China to Taiwan, and further examine the flow of the story of the Mazu faith in Taiwan.

3 The Story of Mazu Faith Characteristic Collation in Taiwan

Jiang Weiyong speculated that the Mazu faith in the Penghu area can be traced back to the Song and Yuan dynasties, and that the Mazu faith had taken root in Taiwan. The spread of Mazu faith in Taiwan was mainly in the Qing Dynasty, according to the analysis of the construction of nearly 100 Mazu temples in Taiwan in the Qing Dynasty, and the folk played the main driving force for transmission. The temples were built earlier and were roughly located in the southern part of Taiwan. And most of eastern Taiwan did not appear any Mazu temples until the end of the Qing Dynasty due to the reclamation route of the Fujian-Cantonese Han immigrants then¹². With the evolution process of the historical inheritance of the Mazu belief, there has always been a corresponding miraculous narrative development, such as the evolution from witches, goddesses to heavenly concubines, and Tianhou, an all-powerful god with multiple divine skills of the sea god. In the following part, I will make a detailed collation of the Mazu story data, discussing the relationship between the development of Mazu faith

and the evolution of this narrative, such as divine development, divine personality evolution, god-man exchange etc. to analyze the derivation process and overall development trend of Mazu's life through the following three points:

3.1 The Derivative Trend of Mazu's Life story

1. It could be discovered that Mazu used "witch" as the belief prototype in the process from human to God, and the color and narrative of which gradually faded. It could be found in the narrative of Mazu's birth from a witch to the daughter of an official family.
2. The Mazu faith also gradually appeared as a sea god priesthood by deriving narrative plots such as saving her father from the sea.
3. Since the Song and Yuan dynasties, the three religions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism have tended to integrate and develop, and the Mazu faith had also been integrated into the cultural quality of the three religions to expand its belief power. Mazu's life story and Taoist culture are manifested in the motif of the salvation of the world under the immortals. The connection between the Mazu life story and Buddhist culture derives from the incarnation of Guanyin Dashi. The connection between Mazu's life and Confucian thinking is to strengthen the narrative of her filial piety and the love of the people.
4. The derivation of Mazu's life as a whole tends to develop toward the image of a "divine hero".

3.2 The Evolution of the Mazu Spiritual Story and Connotations

Looking at the development of Mazu spiritual stories from the beginning of the Song Dynasty to the present, the preliminary construction of Mazu spiritual stories is about the following thirteen common types:

- (1) Mazu spiritually showed the people's sacrifice;
- (2) Mazu protected the navigation from difficulties;
- (3) Mazu helped to fight against the enemy;
- (4) Mazu stopped drought and natural disasters;
- (5) Mazu cured diseases and eliminated plague;
- (6) Mazu warned to stop the disaster;
- (7) Mazu assisted the embankment to stop the flood;
- (8) Mazu helped people rise from the dead;
- (9) Mazu sheltered women to help conceive;
- (10) Mazu conquered the demons;
- (11) Aquarium pilgrimage;
- (12) Mazu saved the hunger;
- (13) Mazu helped agricultural growth.

The thirteen representative story types summarized above could be found that the expansion of Mazu's divine power includes a set of folk logical thoughts. The development of the Mazu spiritual story of (1) and (2) types is probably the earliest style to show the people's sacrifice. Because of the narrative of escort and avoidance, the rel-

evant events of maritime rescue are carried out based on escort disasters as (3) and (4). And for the other nine common types, various spiritual stories were derived, such as Mazu's stories of stopping drought and flood disasters due to Mazu being born as the god of the sea and the god of water. Also, Mazu's stories of helping the embankment to stop the flood are the manifestation of the water god's water production, Mazu's treatment of diseases and plagues with the holy spring to cure the disease with water is the authoritative presentation of Mazu's water production. In addition, the type of story of Mazu's separating the stream to help the movement appeared in the later period still related to the spiritual power of Mazu to avoid difficulties. To sum up, Mazu's helping the enemy in battle, stopping drought and flood natural disasters, curing diseases and eliminating plagues, saving hunger, ambushing demons to control evil, warning to stop disasters, etc., all these types of spiritual stories are derived from the characteristics of Mazu's escort to avoid difficulties because of water spirits.

Overall, "water spirits" has become the key to Mazu's transformation, which is why even if Mazu is constantly transformed into an all-powerful god, the image of "Sea God" is still a typical internal factor that cannot be shaken. Secondly, in the process of Mazu's divine character as "sea god", the story of the relevant sea rescue has become a propaganda tool for the expansion of her faith. It has even become the most authoritative sea god supreme in Fujian, Taiwan, and other southern regions.

4 The Characteristics of the Transmission of the Mazu story in Taiwan

Because of the terrain of Taiwan island and its historical background, Taiwan's Mazu faith breaks through the framework of the sea god and presents the image of the almighty god's welfare, which can be glimpsed by the story of Taiwan's Mazu. Examining the spiritual story of Mazu in Taiwan, we can find the following five characteristics:

- (1) The genre of Taiwan's Mazu spiritual story can be called a timely evolution.
- (2) The agrarian god personality of Taiwan's Mazu is far higher than that of the sea god, which is related to the background of Taiwan's development and reclamation. In general, Taiwan's Mazu spiritual narrative of helping farmers grow is quite developed. Many Mazu folk belief activities are also related to the legend of Mazu helping farmers.
- (3) The all-powerful image of Mazu in Taiwan can be said to be omnipotent, so it has created the story type of "Mazu Splitting the Stream", which has not been found in other Mazu belief areas. This shows that the mana of Mazu in Taiwan is boundless, and also reflects the extreme respect of Taiwanese believers for Mazu.
- (4) The image of Mazu has a tendency to be secularized in Taiwan, and this trend has added the characteristics of Mazu's closeness to the people, which has contributed to the Mazu belief in the atmosphere of folk life.
- (5) In the transmission of Taiwan's Mazu faith story, incense activities are related to the connection between different spaces, and also affect the spread and derivation of various Mazu stories. That is why the pilgrimage sites of incense activities often have the phenomenon of story transmission. The transition area of the Mazu belief space in

various places can often find two different storylines compounding, which is a feature that can be found in Taiwan.

5 Brief Conclusion

The activities of the Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival held in Taiwan and Fujian not only have the element of mass entertainment but also arouse strong emotional resonance. In particular, regarding the various activities of the Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival held so far, it not only conforms to the lively entertainment psychology of Chinese nature but also records the emotional interaction of the people of Fujian and Taiwan in the festival. This symbolized the people on both sides have developed a strong identification with the emotions of "flesh and blood are connected" through their participation in the festival. This article briefly sorted out the characteristics of the transmission of the Mazu story in Taiwan, hoping to connect the identification elements of the self-identity of the people of Fujian and Taiwan in terms of their cultural characteristics that are different from each other, and also explain the cultural foundation that constitutes identity and memory sharing. Through the Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival, the common historical memory and cultural traditions of the people of Fujian and Taiwan are connected. The literature and the collation of Taiwan's Mazu faith stories in this paper are used as references to trigger the memory sharing and resonance of the people on both sides of the strait in the future.

The geographical advantages of Fujian and Taiwan determine the feasibility of sharing the tourism market in the protection of cultural resources and the development of the tourism market. Promoting the integration of culture and tourism has always been a major decision made by the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core. In the context of reviving Chinese traditional culture and "One Belt One Road", Mazu culture as an integral part of the cultural messenger of the Maritime Silk Road has the same significance and formed its regional characteristics in the process of development. The combination of a series of activities has stimulated the corresponding creativity of Fujian and Taiwan to promote the development of Mazu culture together.

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