



Mazu of Meizhou Island,China:Construction of Self-identity and Social Network of  
Chinese People in the Process of Globalization

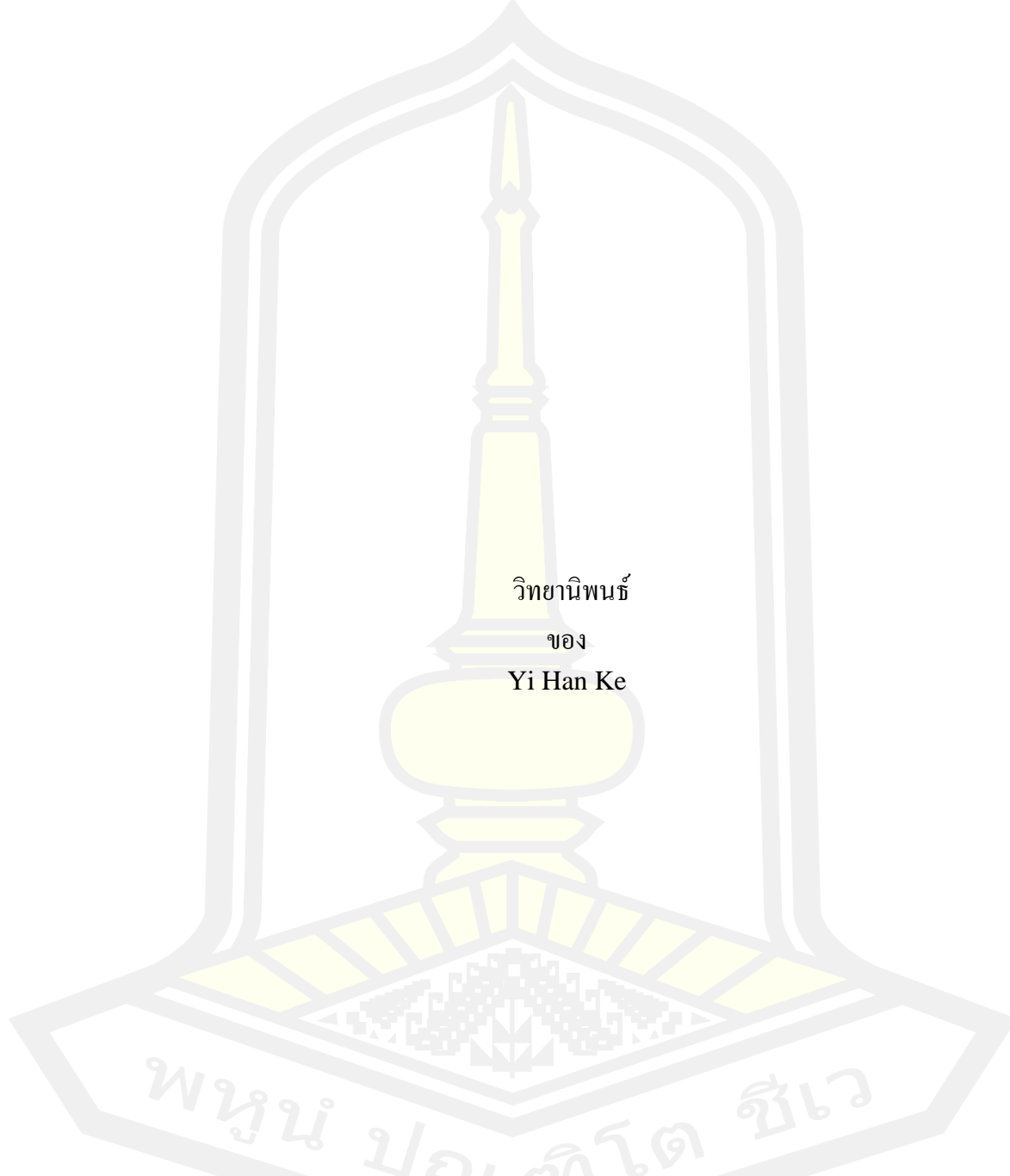
Yi Han Ke

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation

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มาจู่แห่งเกาะเหมยโจว ประเทศจีน : การประกอบสร้างอัตลักษณ์ตัวตนและเครือข่ายทางสังคมของ  
คนจีนในกระแสโลกาภิวัตน์



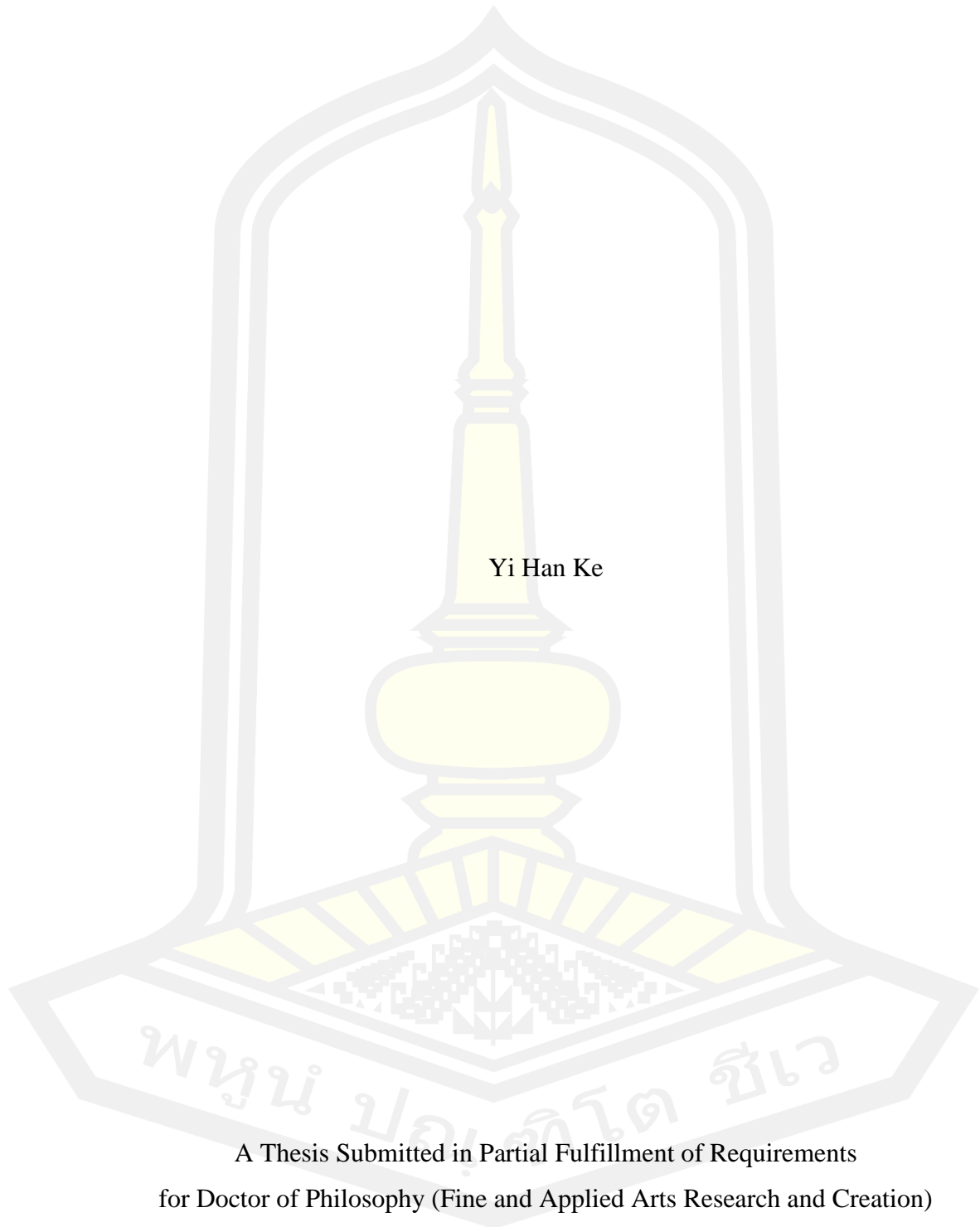
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Chinese People in the Process of Globalization



Yi Han Ke

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
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The examining committee has unanimously approved this Thesis, submitted by Mr. Yi Han Ke , as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation at Mahasarakham University

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### ABSTRACT

At present, in the context of the world's protection of intangible cultural heritage and China's policy of "One Belt, One Road", due to Mazu's unique culture and characteristic as folk belief, Mazu has become important bond for promoting China's unity, strengthening cohesion. It contributes to contact with the overseas Chinese people. Mazu culture has profound cultural connotation and historical value. The research in this article will help spread and carry forward Mazu culture, strengthen people's moral concepts, form a good social atmosphere, and maintain social stability. This has important practical significance.

First of all, this article starts with studying the specific social culture and geographical environment of Meizhou Island, and sorts out the origin, development, myths of Mazu belief.

Secondly, starting with representative Mazu artworks, it lists and analyzes the artistic characteristics of folk customs, clothes and architecture, and analyzes the symbolic significance of the Mazu statue as a new landmark on Meizhou Island.

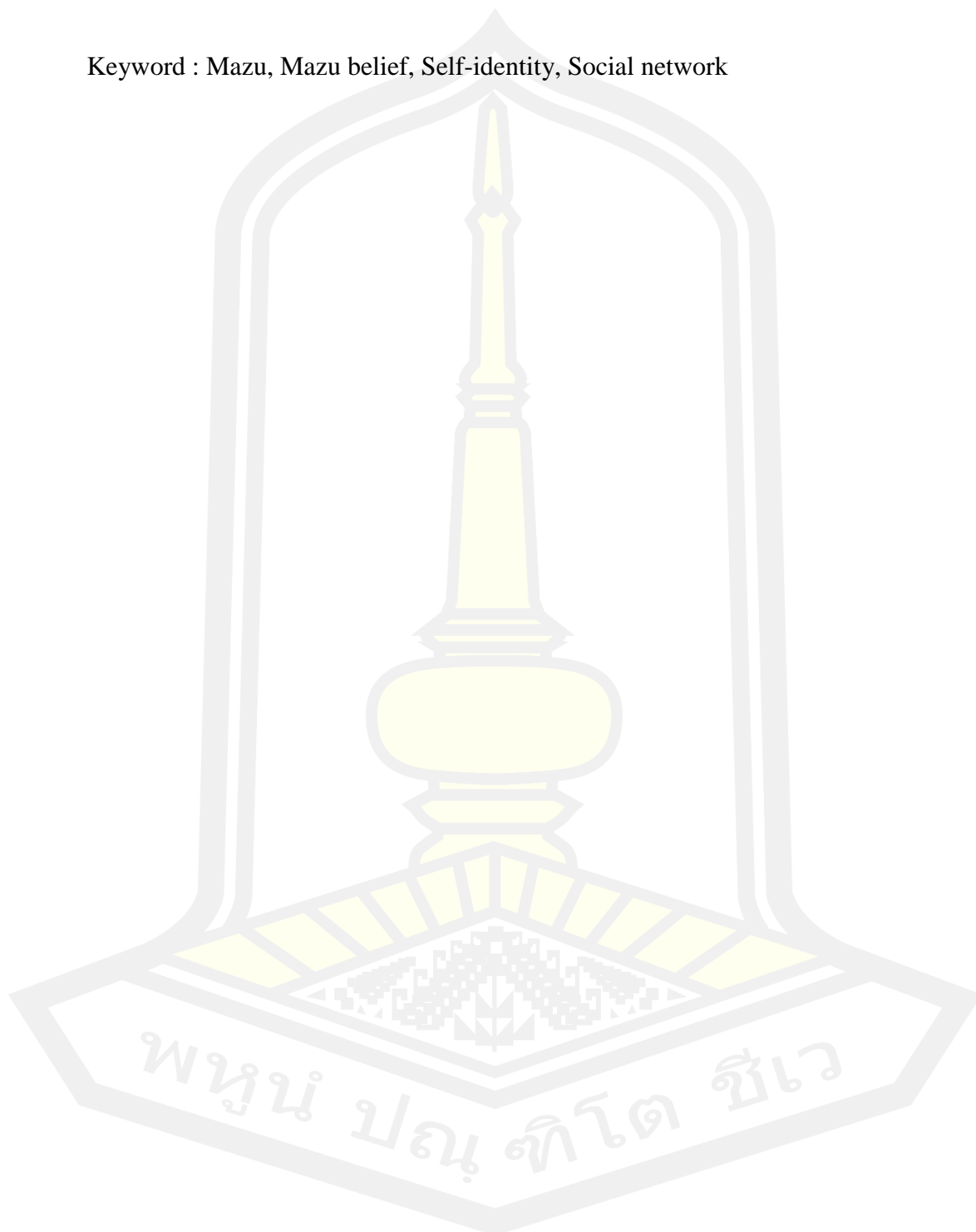
Third, it analyzes the construction process and mode of contemporary Mazu belief, and explores the performance of contemporary Chinese self-identity of Mazu belief and the important influence of Mazu belief on the self-identity of different groups.

Fourth, it analyzes the social network of residents on Meizhou Island and the influence performance of the Mazu ancestral temple, and discusses the role and performance of Mazu belief and related organizations in the construction of social networks of the overseas Chinese people.

Fifth, it analyzes the Mazu Festival, which is an important part of the Mazu beliefs and customs of the world's intangible cultural heritage, and expounds the brand-new manifestation of the Mazu Festival in modern society. It uses the concepts of self-

identity and social network to do research for demonstrate the significance and value of the Mazu Festival.

Keyword : Mazu, Mazu belief, Self-identity, Social network



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Many things in the world are indeed full of unknowns, and I never expected to study in Thailand. Although in my heart, I am full of curiosity about this mysterious country of Thailand, and I am very interested in Thai culture, especially Thai Buddhist culture. Therefore, I cherish this learning opportunities.

The study time of Ph.D. passed quickly, and I still clearly remember the scene when I came to Thailand first time. At the same time, I also changed my identity and came back again to the campus to study as a student. The study of Ph.D. gave me a lot of gains, not only learned a lot of knowledge, but also gave me the opportunity to meet my good advisors. They taught me a rigorous and serious attitude when doing research, and a friendly and humble attitude when dealing with others.

Then, I would like to thank the dean (Supachai Singyabuth) for teaching me how to do research. He recommended a lot of world-leading academic books to me, so that I can use sociological and anthropological thinking to study art.

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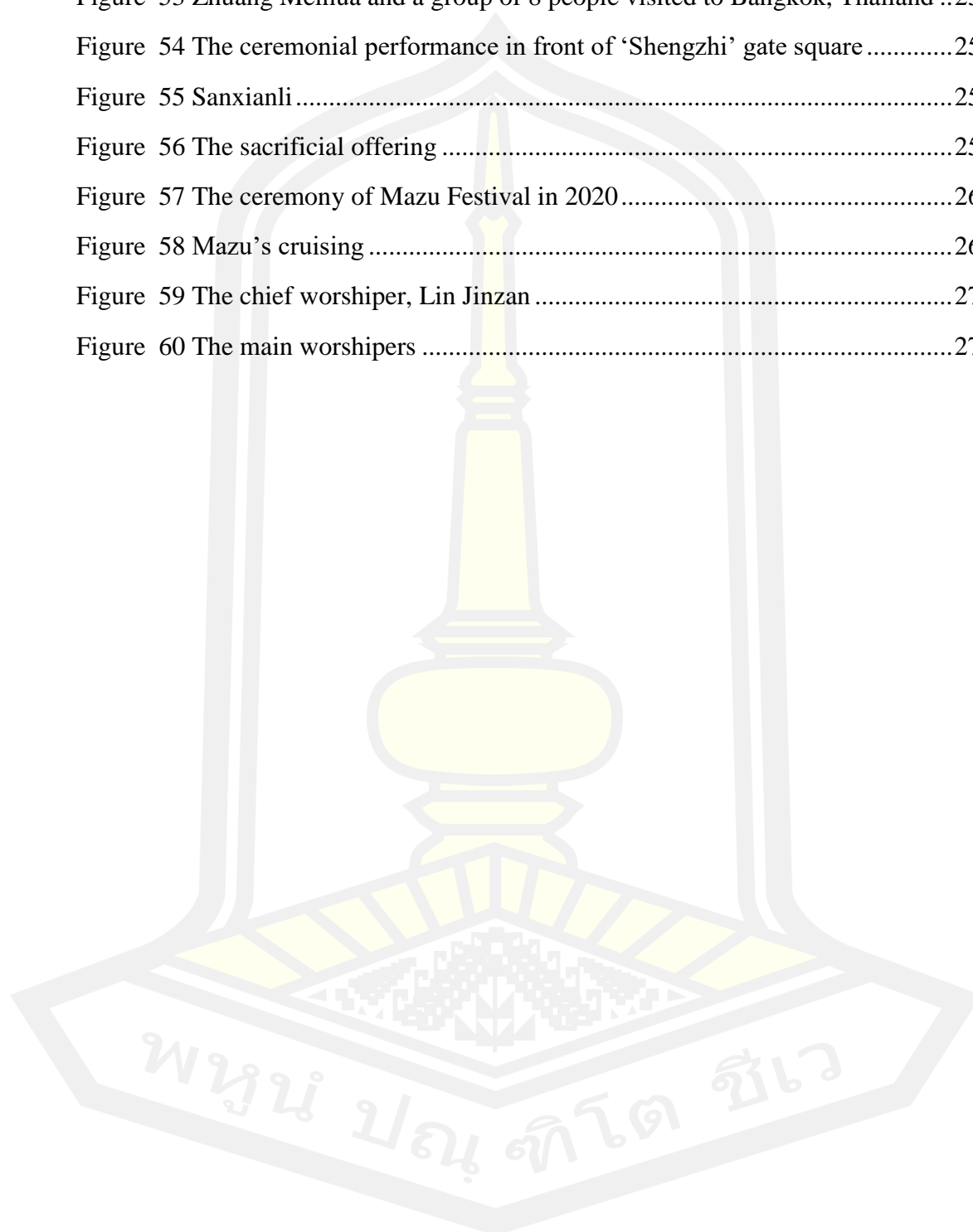
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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### 1. Background of Research

The background of research will be introduced in 5 sections:

First, the historical background of Mazu

Mazu, also known as "Tianhou, Tianfei", is China's famous sea goddess. Mazu is a folk god who transformed from human to divinity. Her archetype is a true fisherwoman who lived nearby the sea of Meizhou Island in Putian City, Fujian Province. She was named Linmo, because she never cried in the first month of life. She was born in Song Dynasty (960 years)<sup>1</sup> on the 23rd day March of the lunar month, and she died in Song Dynasty (987 years) from salvage on the 9<sup>th</sup> September of the lunar month. During the period of her 27 years short life, many respected folk tales passed down until now.

“According to historical records, Mazu was intelligent and fond of study. She had knowledge of medicine, weather and navigation, she did lots of good deeds for neighbours, fishers and maritime businessmen”.( Z Jinyan, 2013:pp 8) Human descendants respected her virtues of helping people in distress and doing good deeds, built ancestral memorials and temples for Mazu. This is the origin of Mazu belief. Mazu belief is a kind of important folk belief in China, it plays an important role in reassuring the public, maintaining social stability and driving social development and so on. Mazu belief originated in the Song Dynasty, developed in Yuan Dynasty, prospered in the Ming Dynasty and reached the apex of its development in the Qing Dynasty. Since entering into the modern times, under the new social system and economic reform, Mazu belief is quickly booming.

Second, Mazu belief, such as myths and legends

“Mazu’s life is transient but full of legendary flavor. Many folk stories reflect a series of characteristics of politics, economics, and culture of that era. It can be seen from these stories that Mazu offer mutual support, and live a life of utter devotion to

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<sup>1</sup> The year 960 was the first year of Jianlong. It was also the first year of the Northern Song Dynasty.

others without any thought of herself, setting an example of selfless of dedication. These popularly known stories not only basing on the life and trial of Mazu, but also including some legends after Mazu as a god. Closer scrutiny reveals that Mazu is a female of great love in her whole life. The legends after she died stress her characteristics as a god. They take the quality of helping others as a core, embodying Mazu's transition and change from human to god".(Z Jinyan, 2013:pp 41)

As a major maritime country, China has a long history of engaging in maritime activities. In ancient times, navigating and shipbuilding technology is not developed. Faced to the changing weather conditions at sea, people often take refuge in Mazu, the only sea goddess. Mazu emerged with the needing of human survival, her divinity and function was also bestowed by the needs of human's existence and development. The emerging of every belief has its historical background, Mazu belief as well. Mazu belief has its certain living space, it needs an appropriate social and cultural environment, otherwise, it can not get good development." After Mazu became the spiritual support of human, she encouraged people to open up new routes and explore the unknown. With the expansion of culture and trade exchanged with other people and areas, the scale and range of Mazu belief was becoming larger and larger". (W Zhengfeng, 2018)

"The Mazu belief is a regional cultural belief which formed and developed on the basis of the folk of an ordinary woman saving local people. Mazu belief, as a specific psychological state, it is a historical product that ancient Chinese maritime civilization develops to a certain stage".(L Sien, 2019:pp 66) Once Mazu belief was born, it spread quickly. The crew, fishermen, and maritime merchants were the basic media for spreading the Mazu belief. In the society of underdeveloped science and technology, relying on the god is a kind of spiritual demand. In the beginning, Mazu belief was people's private belief, it only happened in the vicinity of Putian city. Mazu had been praised by more and more people, people respected her, people loved her. As the activity course of Chinese voyagers continued to extend outward, and more Mazu believers appeared, Mazu belief gradually developed from the south to the north of China. Historically, the important reason for Mazu's rapid development was the support of the rulers. In the Song Dynasty, Mazu belief was in the stage of private belief before given title by emperor. And then, Mazu belief turned into a period of open belief. In ancient society, the overseas Chinese have become the necessary media for spreading

Mazu belief to overseas. In the past, many Chinese were forced to live overseas, to do business and settle in there. They can only cross the sea and reach their destination by riding a simple wooden boat, so they prayed for the blessing of god to keep them safe. After at the destination, they smoothly settled down until they built up a family fortune. They thought that Mazu was protecting them all the time. Southeast Asia was a must-see for Zhenghe's seven voyages to the Western seas. The overseas Chinese also followed suit, worshipping Mazu, even constructing temple for Mazu. Until now, over the world, all overseas Chinese are very pious in worshipping Mazu.

Mazu believers express their hope and belief by offering incense to Mazu, this is an agreed style. "According to the statistics, since 1978, the ancestral temple of Mazu of Meizhou Island<sup>2</sup> has received more than 21,000 teams and 2 million believers from all over the world. So, offering incense is an activity of folk-custom, it is an important part of Mazu culture. Mazu temple is a very important window of the communication between China and the rest of the world". (L Sien, 2019: pp 66)

"The earliest historical records is the book 'Shengdun Ancestral Temple Reconstruction Shunji Temple Notes', it reveals the historical fact that Mazu originated from Meizhou Island. Then, there is a sentence that Mazu all over the world originated from Meizhou". (Z Guilin, 1991: pp 27)

### Third, Meizhou Island and Mazu culture

Meizhou Island is the cradle of Mazu belief, it is also a famous tourist destination with beautiful scenery. Meizhou Island is located at Meizhou Bay in central Fujian Province, it is bordered by Taiwan Strait, just 1.8 nautical miles off the mainland's coast, with superior geographical location and convenient transportation. Meizhou Island is about 9.6 kilometers long and 1.3 kilometers wide, it almost has 14.35 square kilometers of land. At present, the permanent population of Meizhou Island reaches about 42,000. Its overall shape is narrow and long, looks like an eyebrow, so it is named Meizhou. The reason why Mazu belief originated from Meizhou Island

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<sup>2</sup> The ancestral temple of Mazu was established in memory of Mazu in the four years of Yongxi (AD 987) in the Song Dynasty. It is the earliest Mazu temple in the world, so it has the honor of "Ancestral Temple", which means the "ancestor" of all Mazu temples.



is closely related to the unique geographical environment of the place. Putian city, where Meizhou Island is located, also has a favourable geographical location, to the north lies Fuzhou city, which is the capital of Fujian province, to the south is Quanzhou city, and close to Xiamen city. Putian<sup>3</sup> city has many bays, the most large three bays are Meizhou Bay, Xinghua Bay, Pinghai Bay. Among them, Meizhou Bay is also one of China's important international transit ports. Geographically, Meizhou Island is located at 24.26 degrees north latitude and 119.01 degrees east longitude, a subtropical maritime monsoon climate, the annual average rainfall is up to 1000 mm, the climate is suitable. "From the tourism resources of view, Meizhou Island has always enjoyed the reputation of being 'southern Penglai'. There are 13 sandy beaches and more than 20 scenic sites. Meizhou Island is rich in tourism resources. For example, there is a Jiubaolan golden sand beach which stretch for several miles and is well known as 'the Oriental Hawaii'. There is a scenic spot with jagged rocks of grotesque shapes, so it is called 'little stone forest'. There has unique Mazu culture and the ancestral temple of Mazu, which attracts many tourists to visit and pilgrimage, it is well-known as 'east Mecca'<sup>4</sup>". (C Qingqing, 2015) In 1988, Meizhou Island was listed as the Opening Tourism and Economic District of Fujian Province. In 1992, National Tourist Resort was established. In 2012, Meizhou Island was named the China AAAA<sup>5</sup> Grade Scenic Spot. Under the support of

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<sup>3</sup> Putian City is located in the middle of the coast of Fujian Province, with a total area of 4,200 square kilometers. The resident population is 2.9 million. In history, Putian plain was located in shallow seas and swamps, where pampas grew, and the ancestors eradicated pampas and excreted seawater for farming. Putian's folk customs are colorful, and the same custom changes in different regions. But their functions or properties are roughly same, they share a common wish: peace and good fortune, prosperity for future generations, and good luck.

<sup>4</sup> Mecca is a city in Saudi Arabia. Mecca was chosen as the Holy Land because it was the birthplace of the founder of Islam, Muhammad. It is well-known as "Religious Capital".

<sup>5</sup> National AAAA-level tourist attractions refer to the scenic areas classified according to the quality level of tourist attractions in the People's Republic of China. They are divided into five levels. From high to low is AAAAA, AAAA, AAA, AA, A.



national correlated policies, Meizhou Island, as a sacred place of pilgrimage, is now attracting more Mazu believers and tourists at home and abroad with more beautiful scenery.

The ancestral temple of Mazu of Meizhou Island is located at the National Tourism Resort Area of Meizhou Island<sup>6</sup>, Fujian Province. Mazu of Meizhou Island is ancestor of all Mazu temples in the world. All Mazu temples are separated from Meizhou. People from around the world constantly rush to Meizhou Island to burn incense and worship Mazu. The ancestral temple as the spatial carriers of Mazu belief is an important location of holding sacred rituals and other activities, it plays a materially basic role in the development of Mazu belief. Meanwhile, as a social institution of assuming folk belief, under the changing space-time background, the ancestral temple of Mazu plays a social function in keeping with the times, has manifested the change process of national consciousness and folk needs.

The ancestral temple of Mazu of Meizhou is known as ancestral temple. It is located at Fujian Meizhou National Tourist Resort. It is also the cradle land of Mazu culture, and here is the core of Mazu belief, which is the human non-material cultural heritage. The ancestral temple occupies an area of 600 acres, with a construction area of 6,000 square meters. "According to incomplete statistics, at present, there are more than 300 millions Mazu believers at home and abroad, and more than 10,000 Mazu temples all over the world. It is reported that after Mazu died in 987 AD, the ancestral temple of Mazu was established".( Z Jinyan, 2013:pp 20) Through transmission and development of Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasty, each dynasty has dedicated staff to preside over the daily work of ancestral temple. As Mazu was given awards by past emperors, the ancestral temple of Mazu received support from courts and believers, the scale was becoming larger day by day. However, after the foundation of new China in 1949, with the rise of political movement, especially during the Cultural Revolution<sup>7</sup>,

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<sup>6</sup> A national-level tourist resort refers to a tourist resort that meets the requirements of the national standard "Classification of Tourist Resorts" (GB / T26358) and is approved by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

<sup>7</sup> The full name of the Cultural Revolution is the "proletarian cultural revolution." It was an internal disturbance initiated by Mao Zedong and used by counter-

the temple was damaged by vandalism for several times, it lost its function as a space of belief. But, when the Cultural Revolution ended, Mazu belief has made rapid development, not only the goods and materials reach a large-scale, but also the reputation was improved by the reason of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Belt and Road<sup>8</sup>.

The restoration of the ancestral temple of Mazu of Meizhou has a significant meaning. It likes a torch that light every corner. Many kinds of folk activities gradually recover. Through annual Mazu cultural activities in the ancestral temple, the Mazu culture plays an irreplaceable role in connecting Chinese and Overseas Chinese as a bridge and bond.

The ancestral temple of Mazu was expanded and re-installed during the past dynasties. And now, the temple has a considerable scale. It is 323 meters long and 99 meters wide and has a grand architectural group of Song style with 99 rooms. The architecture and decoration have obvious ocean cultural features. It consists of Grand Arche, Gate of Palace, Bell and Drum Tower, Shunji Hall, Tianhou Square, Main Hall, Lingci Hall, and Mazu Cultural Park and so on. These magnificent buildings are built rolling mountains. There stands a giant stone statue on the top of the mountain.

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revolutionary groups, which brought serious disasters to the party, the country, and people of all ethnic groups. The "Cultural Revolution" from May 1966 to October 1976 caused the party, country, and people to suffer the worst setbacks and losses since the founding of the People's Republic.

<sup>8</sup> "The Belt and Road" (B & R) is the abbreviation of "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road". In September and October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed to build a "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" cooperation initiative. Relying on the existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms of China and relevant countries, and using existing and effective regional cooperation platforms, the Belt and Road Initiative aims to borrow the historical symbols of the ancient Silk Road, hold high the banner of peaceful development, and actively develop Economic cooperation partnership to jointly build a community of interests, a community of destiny, and a community of responsibility for political mutual trust, economic integration, and cultural tolerance.

The architectures of ancestral temple have the characteristics of the southeast coastal buildings, its structure and construction are mostly based on adjusting measures to local conditions and local materials. As a symbol of Mazu culture, all architectures art on it conveys the characteristics of the era, cultural accumulation, and regional features. It approaches nature, and is filled with unique beauty. "The most intuitive basis for distinguishing the ancestral temple buildings from other buildings is the various decorative elements of the ancestral temple building. In the pattern decoration, dragons and phoenixes and ocean-related graphics are used many times, and the murals and architectural colors are mainly turquoise. The traditional Chinese auspicious patterns are also the important design elements of the architectural decorations, they symbolise well-being, happiness and safeness, and emphasize the sacredness of Mazu in their breath, express the spirit of Mazu culture to people." At the same time, the beautiful carving decoration embodies the artistic characteristics of Putian carving. They mainly use wood carving, brick carving and other methods. These decorations integrate the theme and patterns of marine elements to express the characteristics of the marine elements of Mazu cultural landscape". (X Huiying, 2012)

Mazu belief is a typical representative of folk belief. She has obvious characteristics of folk culture. With the development of Mazu culture, Mazu plays a different role in the hearts of believers from place to place. In addition to being a sea god, in some places people regards Mazu as a business god and a god of hometown. Therefore, compared to the Guangong temple and the temple of Wealth, the architectures of ancestral temple are not only a building dedicated for people to worship Mazu, but also a guild hall for fellow countrymen of Fujian province, an ancestral hall, and a place for parties and business talks. The architectural form of Mazu temple is based mainly on local characteristics and needs, which also reflects that the main purpose of the building of Mazu temple is to serve people's production and living needs, as well as social communication needs, and religious and cultural needs, just like other buildings. Therefore, the form of the architecture of Mazu temple is not entirely determined by its nature, it is based on historical and cultural background, regional characteristics, and the needs of the users. This is also the most significant and obvious feature of Chinese architecture.

The architectural complex of Mazu temple has a long history and covers a large area, it is a popular destination for Mazu believers all around the world. The grand and magnificent architectures stand between the mountains and the sea. The sacred buildings, rolling hills and the boundless sea form an exquisite picture.

One of the landmarks<sup>9</sup> of the architectural complex of Mazu temple is the giant stone statue of Mazu. “It stands on the island of Meizhou as high as 14.35 meters, weighs about 300 tons, it is composed of 365 blocks of high-quality granite carved by Putian people themselves in 1991”. (G Guanglei, 2018: pp 55) The statue represents that people want to be protected by Mazu every day. The height of the statue is 14.35 meters, this figure is a symbol of the area size of Meizhou Island. The statue is so tall, people can see it from far, this represents that people hope Mazu can lead the lost to find their way home. The statue of Mazu possesses a benevolent countenance. Mazu looks gracious, with a Jade Ruyi in hand, wears an elegant dress. She blesses people have a happy life.

“The giant statue of Mazu in Meizhou Island was carved by Zhu Boying, a craftsman from Jinshan village, Huangshi town, Putian city. He stood out from the tender competition of carving Mazu stone statue on Meizhou Island in 1988. The giant statue of Mazu which is located at Beigang Chaotian temple<sup>10</sup> is also his sculpture work.” Both of these two statues represent the highest aesthetic level of folk handmade stone carving. (G Guanglei, 2018: pp 55) This reflects the characteristics of the carving technology in Putian from another angle, such as being realistic, rich in layers, fresh in style, strong in decoration, and exquisite in detail. The new form of Mazu statue has become not only a landmark of Meizhou Island, but also a new standard that has been imitated and embezzled. After the evolution of the dynasties, the Mazu statue gradually transitioned from a simple folk aesthetic to a rich and noble aesthetic. Starting from traditional folk handicrafts, they have absorbed western modeling techniques and

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<sup>9</sup> Landmark refers to the iconic area or place of each city, or the area that can fully reflect the style and development of the city (region).

<sup>10</sup> Beigang Chaotian Temple is the most famous temple in Yunlin and the main temple of Mazu in Taiwan. The Chaotian Temple was built in the 33rd year of Kangxi in the Qing Dynasty. After several repairs, it is now classified as a second-class monument.

contemporary expressions, and created a new form with contemporary aesthetic standards. Mazu statue is the embodiment of contemporary aesthetic standards in folk belief. The change of the appearance of the giant Mazu stone statue of Meizhou Island and the transfer of the symbolic meaning also give it contemporary aesthetic significance. It is not only a believer's inner faith and spiritual sustenance, but also a symbol of regional culture.

For a long time, with the spreading of Mazu among civil people, Mazu's dress is also respected and followed, and developed into unique Mazu clothes. 'sailboat head, sea shirt, red and black pants bless with safeness'. This is local folk song that is historical and has been wide-spreading. It is a vivid account of Mazu clothes. Sailboat head, is a haircut style that is similar to the shape of the sailboat. Sea shirt, it consists of a Chinese-style sea-blue slant cardigan and red-and-black stitching wide-leg straight pants. The sea-blue color represents the sea, the red color symbolizes auspiciousness, the black color symbolizes missing. "Mazu clothes have some features like livelihood, practicality, it is strongly related to the living environment, daily demand and economic conditions of Meizhou women. Therefore, the formation of Mazu clothes originated from the daily life of the Meizhou working people. Mazu clothes blended deeply with natural environment, they are in harmony and unity. This is a profound understanding of life to Meizhou women". (X Shujia, 2018: pp 40)

Costume culture is an important part of Mazu culture. Mazu clothes belong to local ethnic costumes. Compared with a large variety of ethnic costumes, Mazu clothes is simple, which is without gorgeous colors, exquisite decoration, and tedious craftsmanship, but it has deep and transcendental connotations, with distinctive regional characteristics. Whether it is performance clothes which is used in activities of folk festivals, or daily-life clothes, its artistic value is reflected in originality. The residents of Meizhou Island devote the details of their lives and their deep understanding of life to the creation of Mazu clothes, and express it through costume culture. Their artistic creation comes from life, close to life, but higher than life. When people participate in Mazu folk activities, they can easier distinguish by dressing. They will find and identify people who have the same belief, this will help them feel more intimate with each other, it feels like family. Putting on Mazu clothes will guide you to better integrate into the mood of Mazu belief and quietly experience Mazu culture in your heart. At the same

time, someone can also practice the excellent morals of Mazu through actual actions. Putting on Mazu clothes means that you believe in Mazu, and that you can follow Mazu spirit, such as love, goodness and devotion. It represents both the identification with Mazu's spirit and the restraint on oneself. This will promote a positive impact on guiding good fashion in society.

“Therefore, Mazu clothes not only highlights Mazu belief, but also has a strong modern value. The formal beauty of Mazu clothes is a valuable source of inspiration for modern design. The most typical features are the beauty of symmetry and balance, the beauty of rhythm and cadence. They have certain ornamental and aesthetic values. The culture of Mazu belief is a native culture with its own distinct characteristics. Mazu clothes is a concentrated expression of Mazu belief and a window for people to experience Mazu belief and culture. The evolution of Mazu clothes reflects the deep culture of Mazu clothes from many aspects, such as style, fabric, color, and decoration techniques. It should be inherited and carried forward. Tapping and using the cultural connotation of Mazu clothes, showing its humane essence to the society, making Mazu clothes being an art treasure that the art world can draw on. This not only can help protect and inherit Mazu clothes cultural heritage, but also helps spread and communicate Mazu culture”. (L Lifang, H Chaohui, 2018: pp 63) Mazu clothes is developed and sold as a product, its economic value is realized by selling clothing culture in the market. Mazu clothes has a long history and has a strong cultural accumulation. Its cultural resources emerge the feature of diversity. It is a rare cultural resource, and its development value is very high. The cultural resource of Mazu clothes has the feature of re-creative. With the continuous enhancement of people's consciousness, more and more new connotation are required for clothes. Mazu clothes can be developed as a product with appreciation. For example, emphasize the combination with the spiritual culture of Mazu in the development of characteristic tourism, eco-tourism services and other industries on Meizhou Island. Through the uniform of tour guide and hotel service staff to reflect the traditional characteristics of Mazu, you can learn from the aesthetic characteristics of Mazu clothes to design, and use it to the soft parts of soft facilities in hotels, such as curtains, sheets, quilts, sofa covers, and so on. It will further reflect the connotation of Mazu culture. Through the form of using lifestyle products to display Mazu's image, it can help spread Mazu



culture more flexibly, tapping its market value, and promote regional characteristic of Mazu culture and improve economic development.

“On May 14, 2009, the Chinese State Department officially issued ‘Several Opinions on Supporting Fujian Province to Accelerate the Construction of the West-band Economic Zone of the Strait’, among them, one of the four major strategies of the zone is that Mazu is an important natural and cultural tourist center of China. With the aid of the policy, Meizhou Island, a national tourist resort based on Mazu cultural resources, was an earlier coastal tourist resort and has become one of the top ten tourism brands in Fujian”. (C Shuyuan, 2010: pp 35) With the attention and support paid by the local government, the favorable growth momentum of tourism in Meizhou Island is getting better, associated with tourism is various tourism souvenirs. These souvenirs have obvious Mazu cultural characteristics. At present, tourism souvenirs that have been developed include Mazu postcards, audio and visual products of Mazu Festivals, various crafts, Mazu food, etc. Many people choose to buy some souvenirs when leaving Meizhou Island, it is also a good memory once you see these items. This is another way of spreading Mazu culture.

The rapid development of tourism on Meizhou Island is inseparable with Mazu culture and Mazu believers. “Mazu culture is rich in connotations and unique features. After thousands of years of interpretation, it has become a spiritual link between human beings. Many believers at home and abroad believe that it is the most efficacious to the go to pilgrimage on Meizhou Island, because everyone believes that Meizhou Island is recognized as the birthplace of Mazu”. (W Zhengfeng, 2018) Therefore, every year there are many people go to the ancestral temple for pilgrimaging on the day of Mazu Festival, this is the most lively. Mazu Festival is held on the 23rd day March and the 9th day September of the lunar month each year. A series of activities to commemorate the 1059th anniversary of Mazu on April 25, 2019 attracted tens of thousands of Mazu believers at home and abroad to celebrate together. Many folk activities of Mazu tourism festivals have been held successfully. The most famous activity of Mazu tourism festivals is the Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival on Meizhou Island. The Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival of Meizhou Island was founded by the government of Putian city, it has successfully held the 16th times so far. The series of activities organized by Mazu Tourism Festival are rich and colorful. It has innovations and highlights each year. In

addition,the scale is large and it lasts a long time.Its influence continues to expand.Now it has become the brand of Mazu tourism culture in Meizhou Island.Therefore,paying attention to the experience of tourists is an indispensable link to promote the Mazu culture.Vigorously improving the social and personal identity of tourists of Meizhou Island will have a direct impact on enhancing the local identity of tourists on Meizhou Island.

In the process of developing Mazu tourism, highlighting ‘Mazu culture’ this unique scarcity feature in the world has become the winning key of tourism on Meizhou Island.”We should actively penetrate the influence of Mazu to all links and attractions in Meizhou Island,dig deep into some attractions like the Mazu footprint ruin.To promote the development of tourism on Meizhou Island, we can carry out some unique and comprehensive religious and cultural tourism projects around the theme of Mazu belief and culture, so as to generate strong vitality.In the report of the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Jiang Zemin stated that ‘we must deeply understand the strategic significance of cultural construction’”.(T Qing,2015) To carry out traditional religious scenic tourism, we must consider it from a strategic perspective.We should rely on the historical heritage of Mazu culture,enrich the content of Mazu religious scenic tourism and build a global tourism brand.At the same time,we should improve the sense of local identification of tourists from the livable and emotional level of sightseeing place,and from internal self level of tourists.Relying on Mazu cultural and ecological tourism to develop tourism products,and meet the ‘aesthetic needs’ and spiritual sustenance of tourists.Creating a community cultural ecology,making tourists get closer to Meizhou Island,get closer to Mazu,shortening the distance between tourists and local residents,and let them experience ‘primitive’ and rustic local culture,appreciating the unique charm of Mazu culture in learning and exchange.

#### Fourth, The role of Mazu on Meizhou Island

Meizhou Island is the birthplace of Mazu,almost all residents believe Mazu,Mazu has a strong religions influence in that area.In these relatively independent communities,individual identity and religion are innate,it directly decides personal value judgments,social status,style of behavior. People’s self-awareness is influenced



by familial ideas. Mazu has the characteristics of both personality and idolization in the minds of local residents of Meizhou Island. In the Lin family, Mazu is an ancestor who has some kind of real blood relationship with them. "At first, Mazu was an ordinary citizen girl, and gradually became the sea goddess. The important reason is the affinity of Mazu and the common aspiration of the people. Based on the situation of Mazu culture in the development of Chinese traditional culture and history, it has been revered and admired by believers everywhere, and it has formed a special Mazu ethnic culture on Meizhou Island. Among them, the most obvious awareness is that their identity with local traditional Mazu belief". (Z Lifei, 2018) Local residents actively participate in activities which are related to Mazu, and make them a part of their every day living. Some people take on the daily routines of the board of directors of Meizhou Mazu temple. Some people play the role of management and maintenance of Mazu temple. Many people take part in Mazu belief activities as volunteer during various Mazu events and festivals. At major festivals, almost everyone devotes to Mazu belief activity, and treat it as the most important and devout thing. "Mazu culture, as a grassroots belief culture and inherent existence on Meizhou Island, is based on some common moral culture and values, it connects individuals with individuals, individuals with groups, groups with groups, and make them become an interrelated social relationship. Mazu has invisibly infiltrated into their daily life, and as a part of their lives, Mazu has become a guide for their daily actions". (Z Lifei, 2018)

For Mazu believers, many of them travel a long distance in purpose of attending Mazu belief activities in time. This seems to be responsibilities and obligation. Among them are a certain number of Chinese in the US, southeast Asia. For all kinds of reasons, these Chinese cross the sea to do business or living. They hope to get Mazu's blessing, they put their emotion of yearning hometown through Mazu. Mentioning the current Mazu on Meizhou Island, local residents and staffs, and believers who come from far almost give Mazu credit and approval. Especially the rapid development and the changes of Mazu on Meizhou Island in recent years, the staffs who work in ancestral temple also identify with that. This identity includes both the identity of the Mazu belief and the identity of the current construction form of Mazu belief and its constructors. The most prominent thing is that Mazu belief as an element of the local cultural tradition.

Local cultural traditions are elements of belief and identity which are shared by belief constructors, tourists, and local residents and staffs of Mazu temple, it illustrates the importance of that folk beliefs as public knowledge which penetrates into local public life.

“This local cultural traditions are the foundation of the survival and continuity of folk belief, especially under the trend of folkification and culturalization of folk beliefs. Emphasizing the results of promoting local traditional culture which is emerged by self-construction and development of folk belief, besides, it can increase legitimacy and activity achievement of self-constructing folk beliefs”. (Y Lijun, 2009)

Whether in the traditional countryside or today's countryside, civil elites play a vital role in the rural management of China. As the initiator of rebuilding Mazu ancestral temple in the new period, Lin Congzhi<sup>11</sup>, who is a local people of Meizhou Island, plays an important role in the process of protecting and passing down Mazu. At that time she promoted a good development of Mazu belief. Besides, the Lin blood ties, the clan relationships and the temples of the villages closely connected the villagers. On Meizhou Island, which has a resident population of about 42,000, besides the famous ancestral temple of Mazu, there are still 14 local temples of Mazu and a rebuilding palace of Mazu. The density of Mazu temple in that area is extremely high. These Mazu temples distribute in every corner of Meizhou Island. Each temple has a corresponding local organization, which is responsible for the daily affairs of the temple. These local temples have maintained a certain interaction with the ancestral temple of Mazu, and have formed a folk community that is linked by Mazu belief. This strong internal cohesion has precipitated relevant members to take part in community activities and constructions in full extent, it has strengthened the influence of community.

During the early stages of the ancestral temple of Mazu, the board of directors of the ancestral temple of Mazu is organized and managed by the family model. It

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<sup>11</sup> The world-famous Mazu, the former chairman of the ancestral temple of Mazu in Meizhou Island, has made a great contribution to Mazu culture. The ancestral temple has changed from a ruin to the architecture complex of today's world pilgrimage center. She took the lead in rebuilding the ancestral temple and reviving the result of the Mazu culture.

exposed some questions, such as cronyism, non-transparent financial and lack of long-term planning. In this situation, the local government (Meizhou Island National Tourism Resort Management Committee<sup>12</sup>) tried to get involved in the daily management of the ancestral temple of Mazu. Considering Lin Congzhi has a very broad social impact in local place, the government adopted the model of government and civilian jointly constructing the Mazu belief. That was the result of a compromise between the government and civil elites. "The board of directors of the ancestral temples of Mazu is led by Meizhou Island Party Committee, it is directly responsible department of the ancestral temples of Mazu. The board of directors is composed of 24 members whom are from Meizhou Island Party Committee, town government and delegates of 14 Mazu temples on Meizhou Island, they are all elected by Mazu believer Congress for a term of five years". (Z Xiaoyi, L Xiangping, 2016: pp 172) As a result, Mazu belief construction formed a semi-governmental model. This is a Win-Win result. Both sides identify with the current operation mode and function of the ancestral temple of Mazu. This also makes government workers have a tight link with Mazu, some of them take part in the management of Mazu after retirement, such as the secretary of some villages, and the Mazu school secretary. Obviously, now Mazu belief convergence of human and political resources of political elites, cultural elites and civil elites, also include social relationship and materials, and so on. These promote the development of Mazu.

After the government involved, Mazu's function of united front against Chinese and overseas Chinese has become increasingly prominent. At the same time, along with Mazu belief has been paid more attention and support by the government, the material input and reputation of the ancestral temple of Mazu have also increased day by day. This is also what the elites like to see. Therefore, their identity of Mazu on Meizhou Island has both the identity of Mazu belief itself, also the construction form of co-construction by the government and the civil elites, and they identify to be one of the constructors of the construction form.

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<sup>12</sup> It is the administrative agency of Meizhou Island National Tourism Resort in Putian City, and it is the dispatch office of the People's Government of Putian City.

After the establishment of the Board of the ancestral temple in Meizhou Island in January 1986, the study of Mazu culture began to operate in an organized manner step-by-step. In October 1987, the Mazu Research Association was established, which promoted the development of the collection and arrangement of historical data on Mazu belief and culture. In June 1997, the Min-Tai Mazu Cultural Research Association was established in Xiamen University. In October, the Meizhou Mazu Cultural Research Center was established. On June 18, 2004, the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association was established, it closely connect more than 300 million Mazu believers and more than 10,000 Mazu temples in more than 40 countries and regions. This fully reflects the accepted sentence 'the only and same Mazu in the world, all Mazu believers in the world are a family'.

On April 30, 2005, the Mazu Culture Research Institute was formally established in Putian university, it was the first research institution of Mazu culture in universities and colleges in the whole nation, it aimed to promote cooperation and exchanges among the majority researchers of Mazu culture on and off campus. On May 1, 2005, the "Chinese Mazu" was officially launched and hosted by the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association, and it is under the charge of the National Cultural Ministry. In order to lead the study of Mazu belief culture, on February 15, 2007, the Chinese Mazu Cultural Institute held a groundbreaking ceremony in Dongyan Mountain, Putian city. Since then, the study of Mazu belief has a wider stage.

Along with the footprints of overseas Chinese, businessmen, and seafarers, Mazu belief have crossed China and spread into the world. "Mazu temples have spread to more than 40 countries and regions. From Japan, Singapore, and Thailand in Asia, to Norway and Denmark in northern Europe, and to the United States, Canada, and Mexico in the Americas, all there have Mazu temples (or Tian Hou Temples). There are magnificent Mazu Temples in Bangkok of Thailand, and the stories of Mazu are also recorded in Thai classics; Mazu in Mito of Japan was integrated into Japanese Shinto and enshrined in a shrine; In New York of the United States even says 'one Chinese street, two Tianfei Temples'. The overseas Chinese find their roots in the Chinese nation through their belief in Mazu. This 'root-seeking' belief has given Mazu belief a strong vitality and allowed it to continue for a long time. Mazu culture is the spiritual bond that connects the Chinese nation. It objectively plays the role of

strengthening the unity of overseas Chinese inspiring the love of the motherland and the hometown,enhancing the centripetal force and cohesion of the Chinese nation and promoting international friendship”.(C Xinggui,2009:pp 423)

As the representative of Chinese marine culture,Mazu culture has been inseparable from China's exchange with foreign countries,it is closely related with China's maritime trade and transportation for thousands of years.Since the 19th century,the function of Mazu culture as a cultural bond of national identity has become increasingly apparent.”In 2016, Mazu culture was written into the outline of the national ‘13th Five-Year Plan’.At the same time, ‘the Maritime Silk Road’ was applying for he World Cultural Heritage,Putian as the ‘Hometown of Mazu on the Maritime Silk Road’ was listed in the united cities.The ancestral temple of Mazu of Meizhou Island was selected as the first batch of cultural relics of China's ‘Maritime Silk Road-Chinese Historical Sites’.Especially, the first ‘World Mazu Culture Forum’ was successfully held in Putian in November 2016.The broad and folk characteristics of Mazu culture have determined that people from all countries have a common cultural and emotional identity to the great love spirit of Mazu.Mazu culture can play an important role in the interaction of grassroots people.The affinity and identification of Mazu culture will resonate with the cultural emotions of the countries and people along the route,this can form the same interests,and deepen mutual understanding and achieve mutual benefit”.(Z Feifan, 2017:pp 63) Therefore,Mazu culture will definitely play the role of cultural messenger in ‘the Belt and Road’, which is initiative advocated by the Chinese government,and it will promote people's hearts and common development in countries and regions along the ‘the Belt and Road’.

After reform and opening up<sup>13</sup>,with the implementation of the free religion policy of China,and the fast developing of the economy in near sea area,more and more people seek roots and worship ancestors,Mazu belief rapidly revived,developed fast.Various customs also quickly recovered,such as the magnificent Mazu Festival,Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival,and so on.The ceremony is a mean of

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<sup>13</sup> Reform and opening up was a policy of internal reform and opening up to the outside world that China began to implement in the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the CPC in December 1978.

enhancing the social relationship of the community, it is a way humans connect with god, it is a live religion. People have endowed these rituals and ceremonies with new content according to modern social rules. It is no doubt that the memory of worshipping in childhood will affect people's long life.

On May 20, 2006, Mazu Folk Festival got the approval of the Chinese State Department listed in the first National Nonmaterial Cultural Heritage List. On September 30, 2009, Mazu Belief has made UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity<sup>14</sup>. The Mazu Festivals are held on the 23rd day March and the 9th day September of the lunar month each year. They are respectively called Mazu Spring Festival and Mazu Autumn Festival. Mazu Festival is a combination of folk custom activity and ancient court rituals, it is an important component of the Chinese traditional culture. It expresses that the Chinese nation always respects the true and best virtue, and has a beautiful desire of conquering nature and protecting the country and people. Due to generation inheritance and the folk ritual of advancing with time, Mazu belief is continuously increasing and developing.

Mazu Festival is one of the important components of Mazu belief. Mazu believers worship Mazu in accordance with the worship ritual of ancient rulers, and use this way to express their faith in Mazu and achieve their spiritual needs. "The ceremony of Mazu Festival is very solemn. Various props are used to set off the sacred atmosphere of Mazu Festival, and it also reflects the majesty of Mazu as the sea goddess. Among them, the props of the festival highlight the marine theme; the offerings of the festival reflect the characteristics of the island's diet; The dance of Mazu Festival uses the shape of wave to reflect the life on Meizhou island; the music of Mazu Festival shows the marine culture". (L Mingtai, L Chengxi, L Youmei, 2018: pp 23) Through the Mazu Festival, participants and observers can purify the soul, inherit the excellent traditional virtues of China, and inspire people to remember the good style of their ancestors, and educate people to think and do things seriously. Therefore, holding the Mazu Festival is an external manifestation of learning sages, and its practical significance is obvious.

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<sup>14</sup> Intangible cultural heritage refers to various social practices, expressions of expression, expressions, knowledge, skills and related tools, physical objects, Handicrafts and cultural venues.



Every year, the Mazu Festival is held in the ancestral temple of Mazu on Meizhou Island, it attracts many believers and people at home and abroad to attend and observe. Mazu believers participate in the sacrifice ceremony on Meizhou Island. In the process, they promote an exchange of information and form an inseparable sense of Chinese culture identity among the believers and participants. At the same time, through a special cultural conversion, Mazu Festival reshapes the common experiences and memories of participants, and evokes a special emotion and consciousness among groups. This can establish an emotional consciousness of 'common community' to maintain connections between present and future. Whether during offering incense or ceremony of Mazu Festival, believers do not pay attention to things which are not related to the activity, and they do not want to discuss topics which are not related to the activity. In the hearts of believers, when the Mazu Festival is in progress, they are going through a 'sacred baptism'. At the time of the ceremony, the believers think that at this time, the distance between them and Mazu is the closest. No doubt that it is in a state of self-forgetful, a best time to talk Mazu." Due to the limitation of space and time, it needs to make people who is involved in the Mazu Festival believe that the Mazu Festival which is held in the ancestral temple of Mazu of Meizhou Island is solemn, this is the core of all sacrificial activities, and it is an identity of Mazu belief and Chinese culture". (Z Jinyan, 2015: pp 81)

#### Fifth, the modern significance of this research

Now, Mazu belief is widely spread around the world, this has greatly expanded its social and cultural functions. After satisfying the people's basic needs for belief, people begin to continuously build up new functions of Mazu belief. In modern society, Mazu belief is also given new functions such as cultural identity, national identity, and ethnic cohesion." The global characteristics of the Mazu belief are in line with the current trend of globalization, and its functions and effects are constantly emerging. When Mazu being as a national symbol and cultural identity, its divine characteristics are not obvious again, but it shows a stronger secularity and identity. The Mazu belief is constructed to be as the belief identity of the global Chinese". (Y Lijun, 2009)

Mazu belief has maintained a rising influence in the new historical period. In the new context of the Belt and Road, on research of Mazu has great theoretical value

and practical significance. With its advantages, Mazu will continue to play its unique and constructive role in the process of globalization.

## **2. Purpose of the Research**

There are five research objectives:

- 2.1 To study the historical background of Mazu, the development of society and culture in the place of Meizhou Island.
- 2.2 To study artifact and the meaning of Mazu sculpture and the place.
- 2.3 To study construction of self-identity of Chinese people in the place of Meizhou Island, China.
- 2.4 To study social network of Chinese people in the process of globalization.
- 2.5 To study unit of analysis of Mazu Festival on self-identity and social network of Chinese people.

## **3. Research Questions**

- 3.1 What is the history and true connotation of the Mazu?
- 3.2 What is the meaning of Mazu sculpture and the place?
- 3.3 How self-identity of Chinese people be constructed in the place of Meizhou Island, China?
- 3.4 How social network of Chinese people connects to the process of globalization?
- 3.5 What is the meaning of Mazu Festival?

## **4. Definition of Terms**

### **4.1 Mazu belief/Mazu culture**

In this thesis, it means that Mazu belief is one of the important traditional folk beliefs in China. The Mazu belief originated from Putian in the Song Dynasty. Due to the frequent maritime activities and the acceptance and awards of Mazu by the rulers, Mazu belief spread along the footsteps of the seafarers.



Mazu culture is a general term for the material and spiritual wealth left and passed down by the working people who respect and believe in Mazu for thousands of years , and it is one of the important cultural treasures in Chinese nation.

#### **4.2 Social cultural development on Meizhou Island**

The social cultural development on Meizhou Island is basically closely related with the process of the development of Mazu belief.It has experienced development stages such as origin,rise,prosperity,decline and redevelopment,especially after China's economic reform on 1978.

#### **4.3 Self-identity**

In this thesis it means that Chinese people formed a sense to identify with Mazu belief in their own way.Self-identity refers to the self-concept formed by a person's overall understanding of himself and is composed of relatively permanent self-evaluation. No self-identity is given, it is a continuation of individual action systems. To be a "person" is not only to be a reflective actor, but also to have the concept of a person (describing self and others).

#### **4.4 The construction of self-identity of Chinese people on Meizhou Island**

In the old society,people was spontaneous in believing Mazu.Mazu belief was based on the experience of people's life and spiritual sustenance.At the same time,it was also a mean for rulers to restrict people's behavior and thoughts.

In the new society,under the background of meeting the needs of material and spiritual weath,government intend to awaken people's sense of national identity and Chinese identity through Mazu belief,and to strengthen the national cohesion.

#### **4.5 Social network**

In this thesis it means that Social network is a form of social organization based on "networks" (interconnections between nodes) rather than "groups" (clear boundaries and order). It is also an analytical perspective of Western sociology from the 1960s.

## 4.6 Globalization

In this thesis it means that globalization is a phenomenon of the development of human society. Globalization in the general sense refers to the growing global connections, the development of human life on the basis of global scale, and the rise of global consciousness. Countries are interdependent in politics, economy and trade, etc.

## 5. Research Methodology

### 5.1 Population and Sample

#### 5.1.1 Key Informant

##### 5.1.1.1 the board of directors of the ancestral temple of Mazu

This is the folk organization which is responsible for promoting Mazu culture, and it is responsible for all matters of the Mazu Temple. Board members are composed of rural elites and government workers.

##### 5.1.1.2 Meizhou Island National Tourism Resort Management Committee

This is the government department and is responsible for all matters of Meizhou Island.

##### 5.1.1.3 local residents of Meizhou Island

This is an important folk force to witness, participate in and inherit the development of Mazu culture. They are also devout believers of Mazu. They personally experienced all about Mazu.

##### 5.1.1.4 believers

They are Chinese people who believe Mazu in China and Overseas.

#### 5.1.2 General Informant

##### 5.1.2.1 tourists

They come here because of Mazu's reputation, they came to pay tribute to Mazu and look forward to being protected by Mazu. At the same time, they will appreciate the beautiful scenery of Meizhou Island

#### 5.1.2.2 performers

They participate in various large folk activities of Mazu, such as Mazu Festival and Mazu Parade, etc. They show Mazu culture from another angle in a unique way, they spread Mazu culture, and reflect the artistic characteristics of Mazu culture

#### 5.1.2.3 researchers

They are the main force of studying Mazu culture and deeply exploring the essence of Mazu culture. They can be teachers, researchers, librarians, retirees, etc. They query the literature, record relevant information, and demonstrate and promote the Mazu culture with a unique perspective.

#### 5.1.2.4 artists

There are many artworks in folk activities, such as sculptures, folk painting, architectural decorations, etc. They combine their own professions with Mazu to gain an in-depth understanding of Mazu and explore the representative artistic elements of Mazu, they use these elements for creation.

## 5.2 Research Instrumentation

### 5.2.1 Qualitative research

### 5.2.2 Formal and informal interviews

### 5.2.3 Fieldwork observation

### 5.2.4 camera and recording pen

## 5.3 Data Collection

### 5.3.1 Documentary Collection

#### 5.3.1.1 Documents and records

#### 5.3.1.2 Research on audio-visual materials

#### 5.3.1.3 Academic journal and research

### 5.3.2 Fieldwork Data collection

#### 5.3.2.1 Fieldwork studies

#### 5.3.2.2 Formal interview

#### 5.3.2.3 Informal interview

## **5.4 Research Tools**

### 5.4.1 Social survey

### 5.4.2 Observer

### 5.4.3 Documentary studies

Through various channels, using various methods and methods, there are plans and purposeful understanding of the real situation of things. Processing, and gradually understand the nature and laws of objective things.

Interview form is one of the important information collection tools. Based on the research questions formulated in advance, they will be submitted to the interviewees in written form. The interviewees will have a clearer understanding of the research content and make targeted explanations. Researchers can also develop new questions based on the answers given by the interviewees, or consider deeper interviews. At the same time, the question-and-answer form need to make the participants to communicate flexibly and give the interviewees enough time to consider problems. However, during the interview, the interviewer is required to explain the content on the questionnaire form to help the interviewee understand. After the interview, we can consider whether we need to organize more in-depth interviews according to the process and results of the interview. Interviews can be conducted with different people or multiple times with the same person.

The observer is the main test or main test assistant who observes the research object in the observation method. The observer encodes the target behavior according to the definition and rules of the coding scheme. The results can be used for quantitative analysis and comparative research.

The Documentary studies method mainly refers to the methods of collecting, identifying, collating the literature, and forming a scientific understanding of the facts through the research of the literature. Bibliographic method is an ancient and vital scientific research method.

## **5.5 Fieldwork**

Fieldwork is a general term used to describe the collection of raw materials. Fieldwork is mainly carried out in the field. The nature of field work will vary depending on whether the subject is alive or dead, and where they exist in a residential

habitat or buried beneath the soil. Other processes such as interviewing or observing people to learn their language, folklore, and their social structure are also included. In some situations, especially when the subject of the study is human beings, the work must be designed to avoid the risk of observer effects or over-theorization or idealization of the actual cultural activity. Field investigation can be divided into five phases: preparation phase, start phase, investigation phase, investigation report writing phase, and supplementary investigation phase. Only the first three stages are explained here.

### **5.6 Data Tabulation and Analysis**

There are two things to do here.

First, to tabulate all data collected and group them according to research purposes or objectives, make sure that you bring in all data collected using all research tools or instrument.

Second, to analyze the research data. When we analyze research data, we often use some statistics. In qualitative research, we describe the situation which must in line with objectives or purposes. If possible, use number, frequency or percentage or whatever needed pictures, spoken words, diaries etc.

### **5.7 Research results**

The basic data recording tools are cameras and recorders. Cameras are used to collect image data, and should be used for image data collection of Chinese traditional painting works themselves and on-site image data of Chinese traditional painting related activities. The recorder is used to record conversations in formal or informal situations to facilitate further data analysis and research. In the scope of a scientific and technological research project or research project that you are engaged in, a series of mental and physical work, such as experimental observations, investigations, and comprehensive analysis, are obtained and reviewed and identified to confirm creative results with academic significance and practical value.

## 6. Scope of the Research

The scope of this research can be divided into three sections.

### 6.1 Research Sites/Area

The main object of this study was Mazu of Meizhou Island. The research area is based on the Mazu belief, and involves many aspects, such as culture, politics, architecture, tourism, festival, clothes, social networks and so on.

The spatial scope of this study is Meizhou Island. Meizhou Island is located at Meizhou bay in central Fujian Province, it is bordered by Taiwan Strait, just 1.8 nautical miles off the mainland's coast, with superior geographical location and convenient transportation. Meizhou Island is about 9.6 kilometers long and 1.3 kilometers wide, it almost has 14.35 square kilometers of land. Geographically, Meizhou Island is located at 24.26 degrees north latitude and 119.01 degrees east longitude, a subtropical maritime monsoon climate, the annual average rainfall is up to 1000mm, the climate is suitable.

### 6.2 Unit of Analysis

In the research, I will use the Mazu Festival as a research sample. In this scene, there are all kinds of people, including local residents, rural elites, governments, researchers, tourists, actors, etc. They work in different professions, but they are all believers in Mazu and they are constructing themselves. Around Mazu, people gradually formed a new social network. Due to the diversity of members and the wide distribution of social groups, the author chose a representative social organization with greater research influence. Comprehensively understand the construction and internal operation of social organizations that maintain Mazu's development, and explore the role of Mazu in building self-identity and social networks in the context of globalization.

I choose to use the Mazu Festival as the unit of analysis for the following reasons:

- 1) The Mazu Festival has a long history and is one of the important contents of Mazu belief. It has deep cultural and artistic values.

2) The Mazu Festival is very large in scale and has a large number of participants. The space and time of the event are the best conditions for contacting with Mazu, and it provides the most favorable opportunity for studying people's self-identity.

3) The effect of the Mazu Festival is the result of the joint efforts and cooperation of civil organizations and government departments at all levels. The structures and relationships of social networks have played an important role in it, it allows people to actively participate in it. This also can be better to spread Mazu culture.

### **6.3 Time (Duration and length)**

The research period is from 960, when Mazu was born until now. Covering a total of more than 1000 years. It is divided into two stages: before reform and opening up of China and after reform and opening up of China.

Before reform and opening up of China: 960-1976.

After reform and opening up of China: 1976-2020.

## **7. Research Framework**

### **7.1 Try to demonstrate a conceptualization of the study**

The main concepts of this research are self-identity and social network.

When the network concept was first applied, it was just a metaphor used to describe the network structure between social relations or social elements. Social network analysis is a set of norms and methods for analyzing the structure of social relations and their attributes. It mainly analyzes the structure and attributes of the relationships formed by different social units (individual, group and Society).

Self construction is defined as the tendency of an individual to recognize himself in various reference systems when he or she knows oneself, and regards the self as an independent entity separate from the other, or to place the self in society. Part of a relationship network. Individuals understand themselves from the perspective of self-other relationship, and the different perspectives of individuals in defining themselves bring about differences in cognitive style, individual autonomy, and social interaction.

When confronting concepts, we need to consider how self-identity is established. How to conduct self-verification in construction of self-identity? What is



the social network of Mazu? This study will use these two main concepts to analyze Mazu.

### 7.2 Show components of the framework in a diagram form

With the support of a series of relevant policies, Mazu has achieved prosperity and development, the scale of Mazu believers and social networks has continued to grow. The framework of this study is that take Mazu on Meizhou Island as research text, use self-identity and social networks as research concepts, and the research context is that the process of globalization of China.



Figure 1 : The framework of this article

Source: Illustrated by Ke Yihan,2020

## 8. Literature Review

The following is a literature review of this study. Researchers collected literatures on the theme of “Mazu of Meizhou Island,China: construction of self-identity and social network of Chinese people in the process of globalization” ,used them to study and analyze.



### 8.1 The development history of Mazu

Mazu, there is a indeed person in history, but her name, life and deeds have been continuously supplemented by literati and believers. According to historical records, Mazu was a wizard when she lived. The worship of wizards in Fujian has a long history. Wizards are mysterious characters and possess supernatural spells. They can predict good and bad, pray for rain, expel evil spirits, and be a doctor to eliminate disasters. Therefore, people who was engaged in wizard were worshiped by believers. In the Song Dynasty, the concept of worshiping witchcraft in Fujian was very popular and there were many witchcraft activities. It was common to appear in Fujian include Putian. In the Song Dynasty. According to records, Mazu's great-grandfather gave up his official position and retired to Xianliang Port. Her grandfather who was named Fu was the governor of Fujian. Mazu's father, Lin Yuan, was also an officer in the early Song Dynasty. Her mother, Wang, had one son and six daughters. Mazu is the youngest daughter in the family.

Before Mazu's birth, her parents have had five daughters. They hoped to have a boy again. Therefore, they offered incense every morning and evening to worship and prayed for birning a son early. Legendary, in the evening of the day which Mazu was about to be born, the neighbourhood saw a meteor turning into a red light from the northwest sky, shining brightly, reflecting the rocky red light on the island. Her parents noticed that this child was definitely not an ordinary woman, so they take cared carefully for her, and loved her. Because she never cried from birth to the full moon, she was named Lin Mo. Lin Mo has been very clever since she was a child, better than her sisters, she studied in private school at the age of eight, she was diligent, hard-working and had a strong memory. She had a lofty ideals since she was a child, and was dissatisfied with the feudal marriage system and determined not to marry. She studied medicine from a young age, and taught people to prevent from sick. She has a gentle temperament and enthusiasm, eliminates difficulties for the masses, resolves disputes, and do good deeds.

Legendarily, when Lin Mo was 27 years old, she was hit by the mast when she was rescuing a distressed ship in the sea, dropped in the water and died. Later generations regarded her as a god. After her death, local residents of Meizhou Island established a temple for sacrificing Mazu, hoping that the soul of Mazu would bless

people's production and life as safe like before, and the result was always responsive, so that the identity of Mazu changed qualitatively from a witch to a goddess. The Mazu belief was officially recognized by the government in Xuanhe five years, 1123. It was recorded that when Lu Yundi visited Gaoli. Their ship encountered by wind and waves during the voyage, the boat overturned, and many people drowned. Only the boat which he was riding in was unharmed. Lu Yundi asked the entourage, and Li Zhen (Ninghai Town, Putian City) told him that he was protected by Mazu. Lu Yundi trusted that, and after returned, he reported that to the court. Therefore, Song Huizong praised Mazu, gave Mazu the title. The Emperor titled temple showed that Mazu began to be received by official recognition and great attention.

During the Southern Song Dynasty, Mazu belief really developed greatly. Because the court of the Southern Song Dynasty lived in Jiangnan and was afraid that Jin Dynasty would attack the south, the court attached great importance to supporting sacrifices and deities, daydreaming in virtue of the power of the gods to stick to Jiangnan, and often rewarded the folk gods who contributed to the protection of the court. In more than 100 years of the Southern Song Dynasty, the court titled Mazu 14 times.

During the Yuan Dynasty, the Mazu belief began to flourish. The court of the Yuan Dynasty attached importance to maritime trade. Quanzhou became an international port. Maritime trade needed a maritime protection god. In the Yuan Dynasty, the emperor also attached great importance to grain transporting. Because the grain production in the north was low and grain was carried to the north by seagoing vessels, it can be said that grain transporting was the lifeline of the Yuan Dynasty, and grain transporting was very dangerous. Therefore, as the protection god of navigation, Mazu was the most respected.

During the Ming Dynasty, Mazu belief expanded into new areas. In the early Ming Dynasty, in order to avoid Japanese pirates, the court imposed a strict ban on maritime, which caused the Mazu belief reaching the lowest possible level. The entire Ming dynasty only rewarded Mazu twice. From Ming Chengzu abandoned the maritime ban, he sent Zheng He to lead the fleet seven times to the western seas. Zheng He believed in Mazu, and he must worship the statue of Mazu at the bow before each

voyage. With Zheng He's voyages to the western seas, Mazu belief continued to spread to Taiwan, Guangdong and other places, and gradually spread abroad.

During the Qing Dynasty, the Mazu belief was popularized. In the Qing Dynasty, the Mazu belief spread to the whole province of Fujian, and other provinces also have the Mazu temples.

From modern times, 1840 to the 1980s, due to the loss of government's support, Mazu belief tended to decline. Especially during the "Cultural Revolution", almost all Mazu temples in the country were destroyed. Since the reform and opening up, the nation has revived the Mazu belief.(L Chunrong,2006:pp 3)

## **8.2 Self-identity**

Self-identity is the confirmation of an individual's identity. Simply, it is to know who you are and what expectations and evaluations you want to have by yourself. Logically speaking, the premise of our discussion of anything is to acknowledge its identity. Similarly, everyone must have a certain understanding of personal identity. Without knowing who they are, individuals cannot get along with others and cannot live in society. For the normal life of a normal person, self-identity is a implicit problem, but every time facing social changes, cultural changes, and life encounters, our minds will doubts and confusions.

Self-construction is a research concept in the field of social psychology. The literature on self-concept as the theme or key words first appeared in 1989 in China, and most of the texts studied are the identity construction of social special groups. Up to now, the concept of self-construction has not been integrated with the study of painting schools.

Personality psychologists Markus, Hazel R. and Kitayama Shinobu put forward the self-schema theory, which has great influence on personality research. With the accumulation of cross-cultural studies, there are significant differences in individual self-schemas in different cultures. Specifically, people in individualistic culture tend to see themselves as separate entities from others, while people in collectivist culture tend to see themselves as part of the relationship around them. Markus interprets the cognitive structure of self from the perspective of the relationship between self and others as "self-construal".

As a biological species, human is undoubtedly a product of accidental evolution and was thrown into the world by an unknown force; but as a cultural being, the existence of us is deterministic, and we are Shaped and cultivated by our own culture. However, the contingency of human as a biological species seems to have certainty obtained the given by science in empirical scientific research, while the certainty as a cultural being has always been questioned in human science research. Self-identity is obviously not a problem that can be effectively solved by relying on scientific knowledge. Although the uniqueness of the body is undoubtedly the true basis of individual self-identity, the recognition of the body can only help us achieve self-identity when it is linked with cultural value judgments. It can be seen that self-identity is ultimately a cultural issue. Individuals are created by culture, and culture is maintained and innovated through individuals. Who we are is that our identity is closely related to what the society requires us to do and who we should be. Therefore, cultural change directly affects the construction of individual identity. In this sense, paying attention to Mazu culture means paying attention to people themselves, while studying human culture and its operating laws, it is also brave to enter the social field and explore ourselves. This kind of self-attention must require the meaning and value of culture to be pointed out, and provide some guidance for people to choose their own cultural forms.(M Mingqi,2005:pp 1)

### **8.3 Social network**

The ideas of western social network can be traced back to classical sociologists, the representative people is French sociologist Emile Durkheim. Although he did not explicitly put forward the concept of social network, he paid special attention to the study of social structure and social relations. Emile Durkheim explicitly pointed out in the "Social Division of Labor" that the division of labor and social differentiation has led to a change in the form of social solidarity from "mechanical solidarity" to "organic solidarity", which is actually a change in the form of social relations. He said in the book that with the division of labor, individuals can get rid of isolation and form mutual connections. The division of labor creates a strong relationship, and this function is not temporary, but has far-reaching effects.

The word "network" first appeared in the book "The Network of Group Connections" which is written by German sociologist (G. Simmel). G. Simmel imagined society as an interwoven network of relationships, focusing on the form of social relations. He believes that society is a process. The nature of society is the interaction between people, and the form of communication is the focus of research. He treats interactions of people-to-people as "networks." Different networks also will affect personal development. In his book "The Network of Group Relations", he further analyzes that how changes in social structural networks affect individuals within them.

British anthropologist Radcliffe Brown inherited the view of social structural analysis and functionalist perspective of Emile Durkheim. In his book "Social Anthropological Methods", he states that social structure is a relationship regulated or governed by established codes or patterns of behavior in society, it is a combination of continuous configuration of individuals. He attached great importance to the study of social structural forms, not just the study of social structures, and he proposed three theoretical branches to study this "structural form": "social morphology, social physiology, and social structural change studies". Social morphology focuses on the comparison and classification of various structural relations; social physiology studies how to maintain and survive this structural form of society? What is the underlying mechanism? In addition, we should also pay attention to the changes in the mechanism of various social and social phenomena such as law, morals, etiquette, etc. These changes will lead to changes in social structure. He used the concept of "Network of Social Relations" to explain social structure in the early 20th century. He believed that all networks of relationships between people were part of social structures, and analyzed the nature of individuals and classes based on differences in social roles. It is worth noting that the social relationship network proposed by Brown is only an ideological concept, which is different from the analysis level concept proposed by social network analysts later.

It can be seen from the origin of the above-mentioned concept of social networks that the early theories of social network analysis are extended from the research in disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. Their structure is relatively loose, with only vague ideas, and it does not have corresponding system architecture and research methods. ( J Scot,2007:pp 2)

#### 8.4 Globalization

Globalization has become one of the hottest words in an early time, but people have never reached a complete agreement on the understanding of globalization. In the face of various phenomena of globalization, scholars think from the aspects of economy, society, politics, culture, history, and global organization, and define globalization from different angles.

Broadly speaking, globalization can be understood as a global social change, that is, the process of changing human history into world history. Globalization in a narrow sense mainly refers to the process of global economic integration after the Second World War, especially after the Cold War. However, it is easy to equate globalization with Americanization, Cosmopolitanization, Internationalization, MacDonaization, Supernationalization, Transnationalization, Westernization and so on. These tags all have some truth, but the meaning of globalization is not what these tags can cover.

Examining globalization, of course, requires attention to different areas. For example, economic globalization is the most direct field that we need to analyze first, because economic globalization has driven the development of globalization in other fields. In a sense, it is difficult for different countries to avoid being involved in the tide of economic globalization. Economic globalization has also largely surpassed ideology, and different nationalities are involved in the process of economic globalization. Globalization is gradually changing the structure of global economic capital allocation.

Economic globalization has brought about the emergence and rise of various forms of multinational organizations. Economic globalization has also brought about various forms of international and global problems. People's global activities have transcended the economy, entered the political realm, and gradually changed the political significance of nations and countries. Many scholars believe that globalization is a restriction on the power of nations and countries. In dealing with many international and global issues, matters that originally belonged to the responsibilities or responsibilities of nations and states can gradually be negotiated and resolved by international organizations. Globalization is gradually changing the power structure of the global political landscape.



Whether it is economic globalization or a change in the power structure of the global political landscape, as a force, globalization itself will form a culture, which we call globalization culture. Traditionally, culture has regional and national characteristics. On the basis of different regional and national traditions, we have also developed some world-wide concepts and values. However, even so, different traditional cultures still encountered problems in the process of globalization. The cruel facts of the world today tell us that how different traditional cultures participate in the globalization process and how globalized culture develops is a very difficult problem.(W Zhicheng, 2013:pp 115)

## **9. Research Presentation**

### Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the general situation of Mazu, outlines the social and cultural background of China, and analyzes the social and cultural functions and significance of Mazu.

### Chapter 2 Historical background of Mazu

This chapter introduces the process of historical development of Mazu. It describes the life of Mazu and how Mazu achieved the transformation from human to god. This chapter also introduces the social and cultural background of Meizhou Island, where Mazu was born, and Mazu's modern significance in the context of China's globalization and "the Belt and Road".

#### 2.1 The ancestral temple of Mazu

This part introduces the geographical environment of Meizhou Island, where Mazu was born, and analyzes the inevitability of Mazu belief, introduces the history and development of the ancestral temple of Mazu, which is the main external manifestation of Mazu belief. After a long period of continuous development, the characteristics of the current architectural style of the ancestral temple of Mazu are discussed. It integrates people's religious beliefs from the whole and details, and looks forward to the beautiful wishes expressed by Mazu. At the same time, it analyzes the significance of the giant stone statue of Mazu in people's hearts, which is a new landmark of Meizhou Island.

#### 2.2 Mazu clothes



This part introduces the characteristics of Mazu clothes which is an important part of Mazu culture. Mazu clothes is a local national costumes with distinctive local characteristics. Through modeling and color, it expresses the culture and spirit of Mazu and reflect modern people's Identity and inheritance of Mazu culture. This also represents the self in Mazu culture, that is, identity. People put it on, it is not only an identity with Mazu culture, but also they restraint themselves according to Mazu spirit. At the same time, tap the more cultural connotation and value of Mazu clothes.

### 2.3 Mazu tourism

This part mainly discusses Mazu tourism, it is developed with the help of Mazu culture. Mazu is a unique and scarce resource that has far-reaching effects at home and abroad, and it is worthy of further study. In the process of the development of tourism, Mazu culture can affect people in all aspects, it can affect the development of social culture, and spread to people around the world through Mazu tourism, which has a wide range of effects.

### Chapter 3 The construction of self-identity of the Chinese people on Meizhou Island

First, this chapter studies the relationship between the residents of Meizhou Island and Mazu from the aspects of geographical location, economy, literature, culture, and politics. As the birthplace of Mazu, Meizhou Island has its unique side. This chapter investigates the characteristics of various populations on Meizhou Island in detail, especially local residents, overseas Chinese, etc., and explores how they use Mazu to build self-identity, the form, time, channels, and degree of godliness, etc., and reflected in which ways. This will help the inheritance and development of Mazu culture.

Second, this chapter studies about social and cultural development on Meizhou Island.

The social cultural development on Meizhou Island is basically closely related with the process of the development of Mazu belief. It has experienced development stages such as origin, rise, prosperity, decline and redevelopment, especially after China's economic reform on 1978.

### Chapter 4 Social network of Chinese people in the process of globalization

This chapter examines the social organization and structure formed by Mazu, which is based on Chinese self-identity through Mazu, it explains their origin and

characteristics, and analyzes the characteristics of people and group in them, it masters the rules and methods of operation of social network, analyzes how to use the social structure and social relations to develop Mazu culture, and the impact on economic, political, cultural and other aspects.

#### Chapter 5 The unit analysis of Mazu Festival

This chapter introduces the details the Mazu Festival, which is the core of Mazu belief. Starting from the historical development of the festival, including the form of the festival, various props, music, dance, crafts, etc. The modern significance and social and cultural value of the Mazu Festival are discussed in depth. It points out that people participate in it through different social network or personal, and people experience the Mazu culture in a specific way. Social network influence people's thought and action. Get close with Mazu and realize self-identity with Mazu in both physically and mentally.

#### Chapter 6 Discussion of research outcome

The history and inheritance of Mazu exudes strong vitality in modern society. The construction of self-identity and social network of Chinese people are built under the promotion of various forces, showing specific characteristics and organizational structures, which are conducive to promoting the continuous development of Mazu culture. This will strengthen the cohesion of the Chinese nation.

#### Chapter 7 Conclusion

Finally, summarizes the positive effects of Chinese self identity and social network on the dissemination and development of Mazu.

## **10. Benefit of Research**

10.1 At present, in China, the literatures on self-identity and social network as research concepts are still scarce, these two concepts belong to a relatively new discipline. Prior to this, few one used these two concepts to study Mazu. Therefore, this study will fill the gap in this regard. This study will consider aesthetics, anthropology, and sociology as interdisciplinary studies. Compared with a single discipline, it will increase the value of current academic research. At the same time, it can be concluded that research based on this research concept is still in its infancy. Systematic and

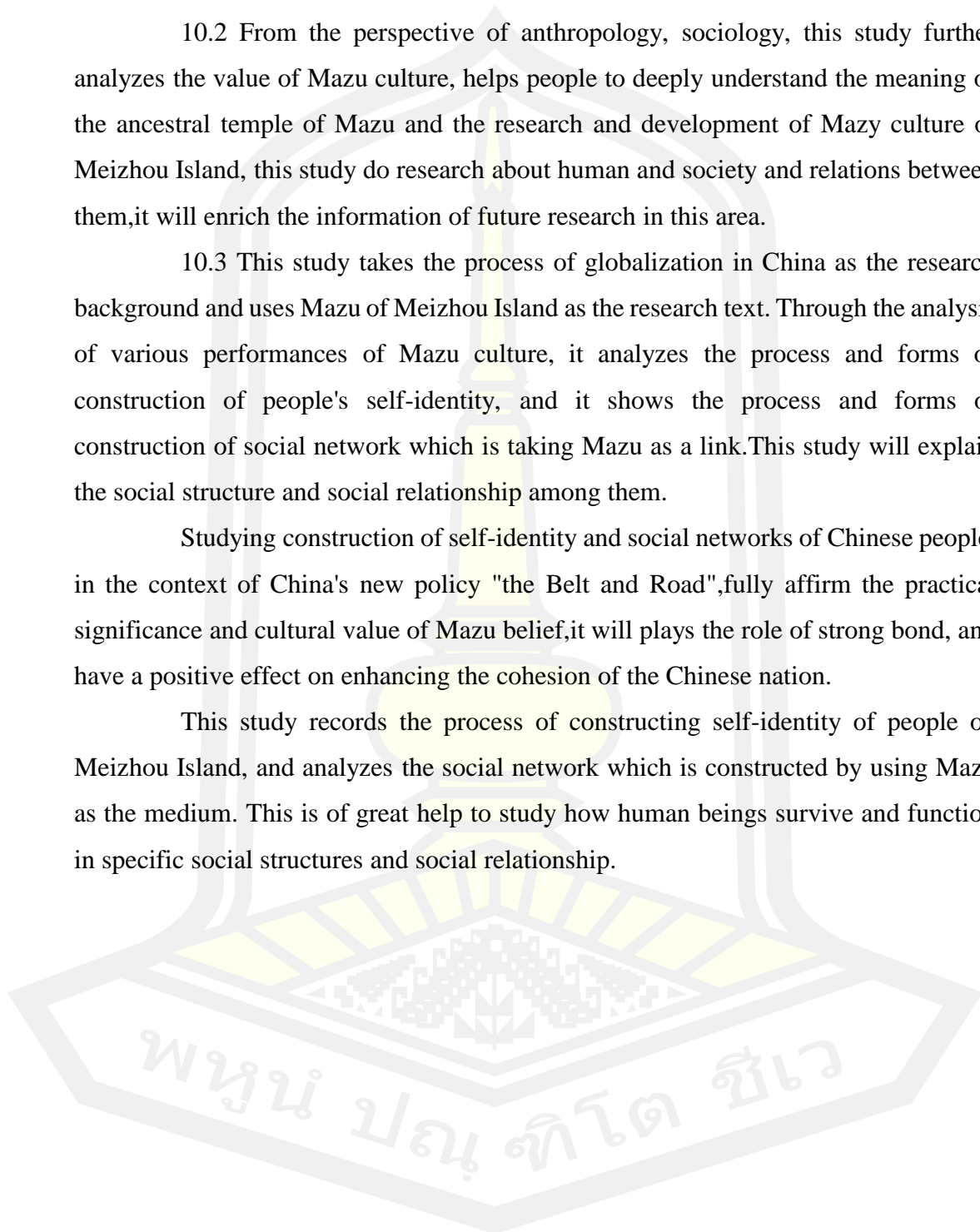
comprehensive research can enable the results of this research to fill a gap in that particular academic field.

10.2 From the perspective of anthropology, sociology, this study further analyzes the value of Mazu culture, helps people to deeply understand the meaning of the ancestral temple of Mazu and the research and development of Mazu culture of Meizhou Island, this study do research about human and society and relations between them, it will enrich the information of future research in this area.

10.3 This study takes the process of globalization in China as the research background and uses Mazu of Meizhou Island as the research text. Through the analysis of various performances of Mazu culture, it analyzes the process and forms of construction of people's self-identity, and it shows the process and forms of construction of social network which is taking Mazu as a link. This study will explain the social structure and social relationship among them.

Studying construction of self-identity and social networks of Chinese people, in the context of China's new policy "the Belt and Road", fully affirm the practical significance and cultural value of Mazu belief, it will play the role of strong bond, and have a positive effect on enhancing the cohesion of the Chinese nation.

This study records the process of constructing self-identity of people on Meizhou Island, and analyzes the social network which is constructed by using Mazu as the medium. This is of great help to study how human beings survive and function in specific social structures and social relationship.



## CHAPTER II

### Historical Background of Mazu

This chapter starts with a specific social culture and geographical environment, it discusses the origin, development, legendary stories and characteristics of Mazu belief, and discovers many profound connotations from Mazu belief. It also explains the current development of Mazu statue. Through analyzing the social and cultural characteristics of Meizhou Island, this chapter discusses the conditions for the emergence of Mazu belief.

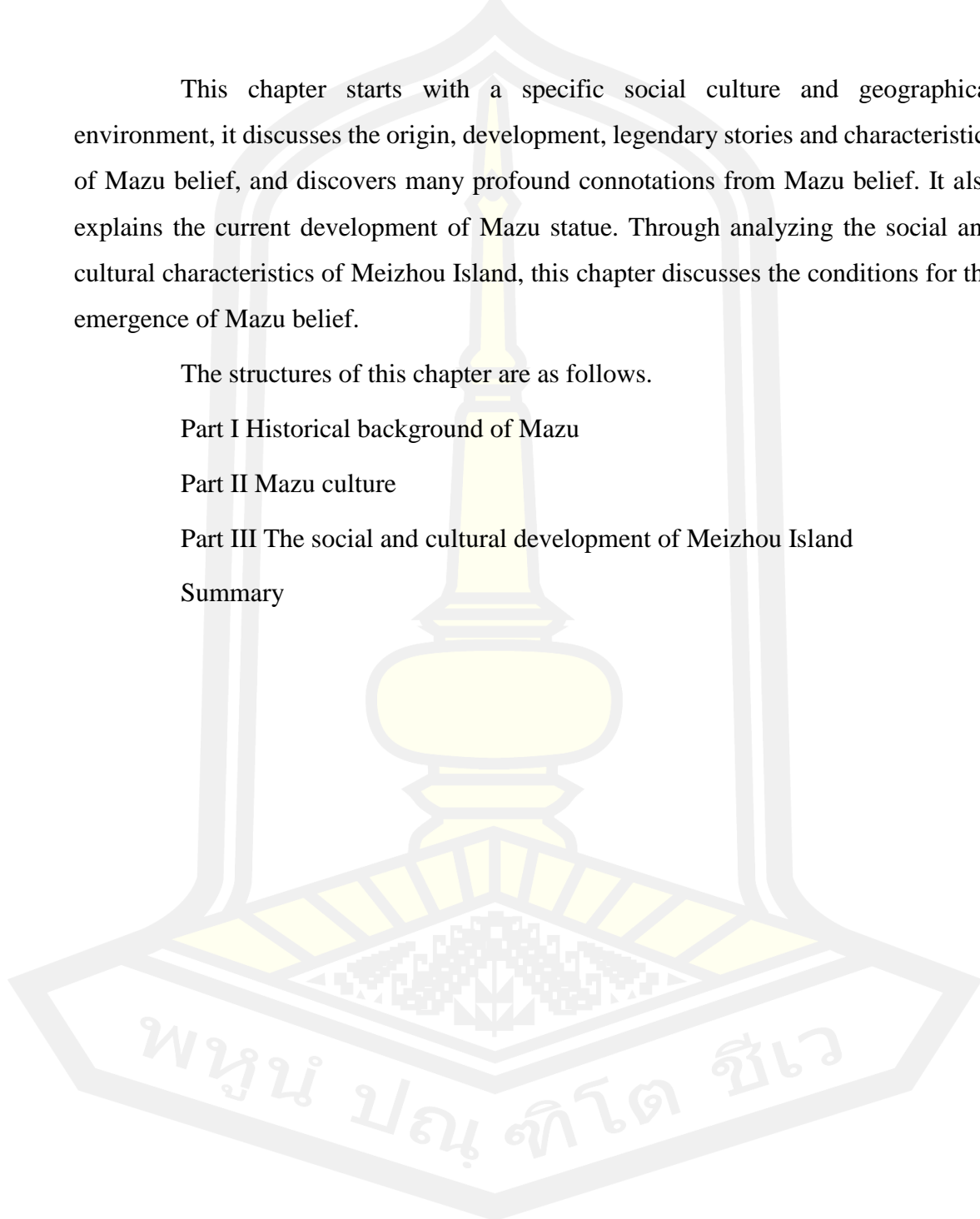
The structures of this chapter are as follows.

Part I Historical background of Mazu

Part II Mazu culture

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Summary



## Part I Historical background of Mazu

### 1.1 The introduction of Mazu

Mazu, formerly known as Lin Mo, her hometown is Meizhou Island of Putian City. Mazu is the sea goddess of China. She was awarded titles by the emperor, who is also called ‘Tianhou’<sup>15</sup>, ‘Tianfei’<sup>16</sup>. “Mazu means the mother in Fujian dialect. Generally, People don't like to call her title, but call her as Mazu, this is a respected and kind name for Lin Mo, because people treat her as a family.” (R Chunrong, 2006: pp 3) The call changed from ‘Linmo’ to ‘Mazu’ also reflects the whole process of Mazu's transformation from human to god. Today, Mazu has received more attention from Chinese folk people, and she has become one of the female deities who has many believers. Mazu belief has a significant impact on the daily life of the people in the coastal areas of China and many overseas Chinese, this influence has been continuing and developing.



Figure 2 The statue of Mazu in the ancestral temple of Mazu on Meizhou Island

Source: Photographed by Keyihan, 2020

<sup>15</sup> Tianhou generally refers to Mazu, the honorific title of goddess.

<sup>16</sup> Tianfei generally refers to Mazu, the honorific title of goddess.

“Mazu is the only female sea god in ancient Chinese mythology. Many documents and historical materials have detailed records about Mazu. Most Chinese myths and legends are centered on real people and real events in history. They are the direct expression of the minds and wishes of the ancient Chinese working people. They come from the folk and are highly secular.” (H Guohua, 2003: pp 21) They can give people a sense of tenderness, comfort and sustenance, and even give them strength. This characteristic is determined by the suffering of the ancient Chinese working people.

Myth is also a kind of historical culture. Almost every nation in the world has its charming myths. This is determined by the characteristics of history. “Myths and legends are generated on the basis of certain reality, although they are illusory, they can reflect reality after all. Moreover, the characters in myths and legends mostly are legends or heroes in a certain area of a certain era. After reasonable fantasy and artistic processing, they have become gods with transcendental power in people's minds.” (H Guohua, 2003: pp 21)

Mazu's myths and legends are just like this. Mazu's myths and legends have become a special cultural ecology of the Chinese nation, it's an integral part of Chinese civilization. Today's Mazu culture mainly based on taking Mazu belief as the core, taking Mazu temple, sacrifice, myth and legend, literature and art as the main carriers, derived and integrated with various cultural elements, and then forms a special culture. Its content involves politics, economy, society, religion, folk custom, architecture, history, literature and art, sports, military, diplomacy, navigation, immigration and many other fields.

Mazu is a folk goddess in China and even the world's Chinese inhabited areas. Mazu was born as a human and died to become a god. Her archetype is a real figure in history. Her name, birth and death year, and life stories are constantly supplemented and perfected by scholars and believers in each era. Mazu belief has experienced more than one thousand years since it came into being. As a kind of folk belief, it lasts for a long time, spreads in a wide range and has far-reaching influence, which is unprecedented in other folk worship. In 2009, ‘Mazu belief’ was selected into the



Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>17</sup> Representative List by the UNESCO<sup>18</sup>. Mazu culture, which is based on Mazu belief as the core, has become the common spiritual wealth of all mankind.

“According to historical records, Mazu was born on March 23rd of the lunar calendar in the first year of Jianlong in Song Dynasty (960 A.D.). Mazu's father, Lin Yuan, was an official in Song Dynasty. The surname of Mazu's mother was Wang. Lin is one of the famous families in Fujian Province. Before Mazu was born, her parents had five daughters, and they were looking forward to having a boy. Because in feudal society, people thought that only sons could inherit the family. So, her parents burned incense and worshipped Buddha every morning and night, prayed for having an intelligent child. In the evening of the day when Mazu was about to be born, the villagers in the neighborhood saw the meteor turning into a red light from the northwest sky. It was crystal clear and dazzling, reflected the red light of the rocks on the island. The parents realized that the child must be a special and talented daughter. They cared and loved her very much. Mazu never cried from birth to the full moon, so she was named Linmo. ‘Mo’ means silence.” (R Qinghua, 2016: pp 3)

Mazu was very clever from childhood, surpassing other sisters. She began to study at a private school at the age of eight. She studied hard and had a good memory. She could recite the article after reading it once. Since Mazu was a child, she had great ambition and was dissatisfied with the feudal marriage. She made up her ambition not to marry. Mazu has studied medicine since childhood, her medical skills are exquisite. She has treated many patients, and she also taught people how to prevent and eliminate

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<sup>17</sup> Intangible cultural heritage refers to the various practices, performances, expressions, knowledge and skills, and related tools, objects, handicrafts and cultural sites that are regarded as cultural heritage by various groups or individuals.

<sup>18</sup> UNESCO, it is United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. It established on 16th November 1945. It is headquartered in Paris, France, with 195 members, the organization is the specialized agency of United Nations, with the largest number of members in the international educational, scientific and cultural fields. The organization aims to contribute to the world's peace and security by promoting cooperation among nations through education, science and culture.



diseases. Mazu is gentle and warm-hearted. She often helps the neighbors to solve their problems and disputes. She always does good deeds and is willing to help others.

On 9th September of the lunar calendar in 987A.D., Mazu was 28 years old. One time, when she rescued a ship in distress at sea, but accidentally she was hit on the head by the mast, then fell into the water and died. There is a traditional Chinese word said that if people do more good deeds, they will become gods after death. Therefore, later generations treat Mazu's death as ascending to heaven and becoming a god, she specialized to rescue and help people at sea. After that, Mazu often appeared, and villagers often saw Mazu sometimes sitting beside the cave, sometimes sitting in the clouds, or flying on the sea dressing in red clothes. She often comes to people in people's dreams, saves people in danger. After her death, the villagers built a temple for her on the mountain of Meizhou Island and worshipped her with reverence. There was an endless stream of people coming to worship and sacrifice Mazu.

#### 1.2 The historical background of Mazu before reform and opening up (1960---1978)

“Liao Pengfei, who is from Xianyou, is a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations in the Southern Song Dynasty. He wrote the book ‘shengdun ancestral temple reconstructs Shunji temple’<sup>19</sup>, which is the earliest document about Mazu. It is recorded in the book that the god of the ‘Dun’<sup>20</sup> is a goddess who can communicate with heaven. Her surname is Lin and she is from Meizhou Island. In the beginning, she engaged in witchcraft and helped others, she was able to predict the fate of the world. After her death, people built a temple for her on Meizhou Island. In 1192,

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<sup>19</sup> This book is a record about temple. The author is Liao Pengfei, Xianyou Country, Fujian Province, an official of Song Dynasty. This book was written in Shaoxing 20th year (1150). It was discovered in 1987. It is the oldest and most detailed Mazu literature.

<sup>20</sup> It is located in Xiaoyili, Putian City. Shengdun temple is the earliest recorded Mazu temple in China. In the fifth year of Songxuanhe (1123), it was awarded the "Shunji" temple by emperor Huizong of Song Dynasty. Since the Ming Dynasty, Shengdun temple has ceased to exist.

‘Puyang Zhi’<sup>21</sup> record that Tianfei is a wizard in Lizhong.<sup>22</sup> According to this historical record, Mazu was a wizard before her death.” (R Qinghua, 2016: pp 2)

People who live in Fujian Province have a tradition of admiring wizards for a long time. Wizards are mysterious figures with magic beyond nature. They can predict good or bad luck, pray for sunshine or rain, subdue monsters, get rid of demons and eliminate diseases. Therefore, those people who are engaged in witchcraft are worshipped by devout believers. “In Song Dynasty, the concepts of admiring witchcraft are very popular among Fujian people. For example, the magistrate of Anxi County<sup>23</sup> in Song Dynasty, Chen Mi<sup>24</sup> wrote that people who believed in witchcraft should give more, if they were sick, they can get well without seeking medical treatment. In Song Dynasty, there were many wizards in Xinghua territory, such as the literature record that Xinghua County has a witch, who is good at witchcraft, people set up temples for her after her death. There are also many records in other places, recording similarly. Thus, it can be seen that wizards were very common in Fujian Province, including Putian city in Song Dynasty. The records of Mazu who was a wizard and engaged in witchcraft before her death should be credible.” (R Qinghua, 2016: pp 2)

After Mazu died, the residents of Meizhou Island built temples for her, hoping that Mazu's soul could protect people's safety in production and life as she did before her death. In fact, Mazu often appeared to help people, this is very magical. “Mazu's miraculous deeds and legends changed Mazu's identification from a witch to a goddess. During the Song Dynasty, the court supported and worshipped various gods. For the folk gods who had merits and virtues to the people, the court granted the temple amount first, and then conferred the title of god. Mazu was granted titles fourteen times from the Northern Song Dynasty to the Southern Song Dynasty, and the call words of

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<sup>21</sup> A book co-edited by Huang Tiqin and Lin Ruoquan in the first year of Chenghua in Ming Dynasty (1465), it records the history of Putian Country.

<sup>22</sup> A place name.

<sup>23</sup> It is located in the southeast coast of Fujian Province, it is under the jurisdiction of Quanzhou City.

<sup>24</sup> He is from Kuokou, Putian County (now the place is in Licheng District, Putian City), he is the son of Prime Minister Chen Junqing.

the title were added from two words to sixteen words. In addition, she was granted titles four times in Yuan Dynasty, four times in the Ming Dynasty, and five times in Qing Dynasty. The total number of be granted times is 27. In the past dynasties, a folk god was granted so many times to achieve such a level. The god's position was so high that it was second to none among the folk gods in China.” (Z Daren, 1988: pp 50-54)

The Song Dynasty (960-1279) is a dynasty that inherits Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms in Chinese history and before the Yuan Dynasty. It is divided into two stages: The Northern Song Dynasty and the Southern Song Dynasty. The Song Dynasty has a total of 18 emperors, and it has existed for 319 years. In the early Northern Song Dynasty, there were many natural disasters continuing, so that people's life was miserable. Due to the state of struggle with neighboring countries, the development was difficult, especially the traffic with the north. In order to develop the North, Song Dynasty took the development of maritime transportation and overseas trade as the national policy, and moved the center to the southern ports. The support of the imperial court promoted the development of shipbuilding and navigation technology, which had reached the world-class level in Song Dynasty.

“Mazu belief was officially recognized in 1123, the fifth year of Xuanhe period of Song Dynasty. The officer of the imperial court---Lu Yundi was assigned to take the emperor's mission to Gaoli<sup>25</sup>. According to Liao Pengfei's book ‘shengdun ancestral temple reconstructs Shunji temple’ record, when they were sailing on the sea, suddenly encountered wind and waves, eight ships collided head-on-end, and seven ships sank. Only Lu Yundi's ship was safe because there was a goddess standing on the mast of the ship, spinning and waving, and then the ship was safe. Lu Yundi asked the entourage who the goddess was, and Li Zhen (a native of Ninghai, Putian City) told him that she was Mazu. Mazu of Ninghai Shengdun temple appeared to save the ship and protect their navigation. Lu Yundi believed that and reported all the facts to the imperial court. Therefore, the emperor Songhuizong issued an edict to give the name of ‘Shunji’ to the Mazu's temple of Ninghai<sup>26</sup> Shengdun. The emperor granted the temple's name, shows that Mazu began to receive official recognition and high

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<sup>25</sup> Gaoli is one of the countries on the Korean Peninsula in ancient period.

<sup>26</sup>A place belongs to Sanjiangkou Town, Hanjiang District, Putian City.

attention. Since emperor Songhuizong granted Mazu temple the name of ‘Shunji’ and Songgaozong titled Mazu as ‘Linghui Furen’<sup>27</sup>, Mazu not only had the legal title granted by the court, but also created favorable conditions for the further development of Mazu belief.” (L Chunrong, 2006: pp 40)



Figure 3 The drawing of Mazu legendary, “saving official ship”.

Source: [https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442\\_99916694](https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442_99916694), 2017

The formation and development of Mazu belief in Song Dynasty can be roughly divided into three stages. The first stage is the formation period. In the beginning, Mazu acted like a witch, after she died, she became a goddess. The centre of belief was Meizhou Island. The belief range was near Meizhou Island. In this period,

<sup>27</sup> Linghui means smart and clever. Furen is the honorific title of goddess in ancient times.

Mazu mainly appeared with the image of a witch. Like other witches, no difference. Mazu was just a common god in a small place, and her believers were also local residents. But Mazu was different from other witches, she also can protect the safety of voyagers and ships. Fishermen on the island had to pray to Mazu for problems, such as drought, flood, disease and shipping and so on. In their mind, Mazu was an omnipotent protection god. The second stage is the initial development period. During the period of Songyuanyou (1086-1094), the activities' range of Mazu belief centered on shengdun temple and extended northward to Ninghai Town, Hanjiang District. During the period of Songxuanhe (1119-1125), Mazu was credited with the matter of protecting sailing to the envoy, and the temple was granted by the imperial court. Mazu belief was officially recognized, and it is also more widely known that Mazu has the ability to rescue ships and protecting sailing. In addition, some legends about Mazu rescued people and ships at sea began to be widely spread. The third stage is a period of great development. The center of Mazu belief moved to Baihu temple. After Mazu was given the title of 'Furen', Mazu was promoted from a common local god to a special official god.

The promotion of Mazu to 'Furen' in the early Southern Song Dynasty was closely related to the social situation at that time. The Song Dynasty was invaded by foreign enemies, leaving only half of the territory. So, it was called the Southern Song Dynasty. The court of the Southern Song Dynasty lived in Lin'an<sup>28</sup>, and the court was afraid that the foreign soldiers would continue to invade the south. They imagined that they would defend Lin'an with the help of gods, they specially rewarded the folk gods who had made contributions to the imperial court. Liao Pengfei's book 'shengdun ancestral temple reconstructs Shunji temple' record that Mazu had virtue to the people and had the merit to the court, this reflected that the goddess---Mazu had the 'divine power' to protect the motherland and stabilize the country. Therefore, it was highly valued and utilized by the imperial court.

In addition, the promotion of Mazu was related to the policy of the Southern Song Dynasty to vigorously develop overseas trade. With the development of the folk shipping industry, there were different gods of the sea in coastal areas, which were

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<sup>28</sup> It is located in the west of Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province.



respected more and more. In Putian City, people believed Mazu as the god of the sea. In Guangzhou City, the god of the sea is ‘Guangliwang’<sup>29</sup>. In Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces, ‘Guanyin’<sup>30</sup> and ‘Dragon King’<sup>31</sup> are regarded as ‘sea protection gods’. The emergence of so many gods of the sea is the inevitable result of the extensive development of maritime trade in Song Dynasty. It is also inevitable that Mazu should be paid attention to. However, many sea gods coexist, but no one is the most powerful and the only one.

In the first year of the period of Songshaoxi (1190), Mazu was granted the more noble title of ‘Fei’<sup>32</sup>, which was promoted from ‘Furen’. Her status was raised and her reputation as god spread far and wide. She gradually became a goddess worshipped by navigators all over the world. Mazu can gradually replace other gods of sea and become the supreme god in the navigator’s mind, because of the appearance of various stories about the Mazu's extraordinary power. Mazu's life experiences began to attract the attention of believers. Due to various forms of propaganda, Mazu's extraordinary power is more prominent. Whether there is drought, disease, fishing, or even fighting on the battlefield, people all want to pray for Mazu's help. Therefore, Mazu was highly valued and utilized by the Southern Song Dynasty, Mazu really became the goddess of ‘protecting the country and protecting the people’ in Song Dynasty.

As an important carrier of Mazu belief, Mazu temple also appeared and developed at this time. On 9th September of the lunar calendar in the fourth year of

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<sup>29</sup> One of the dragon kings of the Four Seas in Chinese mythology. It lives in the south sea of China and is second only to the dragon king of east sea of China.

<sup>30</sup> One of the four great bodhisattvas of Chinese Buddhism. In Buddhism, Guanyin is regarded as the bodhisattvas of great compassion, relief, and responsiveness by folks. In Chinese temples and folks, the general statues and images of Guanyin are mostly female figures.

<sup>31</sup> Dragon king is the king of water animals in ancient Chinese myths and legends. In legend, the dragon can bring and control raining, eliminate disasters and bring blessings, the dragon symbolizes auspiciousness.

<sup>32</sup>The honorific title of goddess.

Yongxi in Song Dynasty (987 A.D.), Mazu died because of rescuing the shipwreck. People missed her kindness and built a temple of ‘Tongxian Shennv’<sup>33</sup> on Meizhou Island. This is the first Mazu temple in the world, so it is honored as ‘the ancestral temple’. “According to the literature, the temple was very simple at that time, but many people came to worship and pray every day. Later, after the merchant who is called Sanbao in Song Dynasty and other Mazu believers continued to donate money to expand the ancestral temple, until Song Dynasty (1023-1032), the ancestral temple had begun to take shape. In the fourth year of Xuanhe in Song Dynasty (1102), after the granting of ‘Shunji Temple’<sup>34</sup>, with the upgrading of Mazu's title, the ancestral temple continued to be built and expanded, and its scale became larger and larger, and the architectures became more magnificent.” (Board of Directors of Mazu Temple, Meizhou, Putian City, 2011: pp 90)

In ancient China, the maritime links between coastal economic zones were very frequent, navigation was very developed. One of the most important events is sea transportation in Yuan Dynasty, which not only made the development of China's domestic navigation reach the peak, but also has a profound cultural connotation.

In 1276 (A.D.), the Yuan army occupied Lin'an, the capital of the Southern Song Dynasty, this declared the end of the Southern Song Dynasty. The Yuan Dynasty chose Dadu (today's Beijing) to be the capital. The expansion of the capital at that time required a large amount of grain to be transported to the capital by water. The long-distance between the north political center and the south economic center in Yuan Dynasty was a strong pull to promote the development of north-south water transportation. However, inland water transportation is not good, so it will inevitably promote the development of sea transportation.

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<sup>33</sup> Tongxian means that people who can communicate with god. Shennv is the ancient name of the goddess. Shennv and goddess are the titles of women god in mythology in ancient Chinese literature, but they are different with being used times. Shennv is mostly seen in ancient books.

<sup>34</sup> Shunji Temple, located in Yuhu Park, Putian City, it was built in the first year of Yuanyou of the Northern Song Dynasty (1086). It enshrined the statue of "Meizhou Goddess", which was also named "Shengdun Temple".



The emperors of Yuan Dynasty worshipped Buddhism very much for the demand of ruling. To meet the needs of sea shipping, Mazu was also worshipped by the court. Even the flood, drought and rain were inseparable from Mazu's protection. It is such a religious policy that creates an opportunity for Mazu to combine with Buddhist culture.

The Yuan Dynasty needed to transfer grain from the south to the north, pay attention to open-up sea routes and develop maritime trade. In 1282, Hubilie, the first emperor of Yuan Dynasty, adopted the proposal of sea transportation and carried out large-scale maritime trade. Sea transportation became an important economic lifeline of Yuan Dynasty. The foreign trade of Quanzhou port in Fujian Province is very prosperous, which has become an international port. The maritime trade needs the protection of the sea god, so Mazu belief comes into being.

The Yuan Dynasty relied on the protection of Mazu for the safety of sea transportation. For the first time in Yuan Dynasty, Mazu was granted the title of 'Tianfei' for 'protecting the country', 'assisting the saints' and 'protecting the people'. Mazu was promoted from the ordinary goddess of folk god to the most respected god, who ruled the gods and monsters of the seas. Mazu's supreme authority was established. The court sent envoys to worship every Tianfei palace<sup>35</sup> from the north to the south. The Yuan Dynasty worshipped the goddess of the sea very much, it was bound to set off a wave of activities to worship Mazu in coastal areas. Even Hainan Island<sup>36</sup> also believed in the sea goddess---Mazu at this time. Yuan Dynasty was an important period for Mazu belief to be spread in most coastal areas of China.

With the enthusiastic advocacy of the feudal rulers, the records of Mazu's life in Yuan Dynasty were constantly supplemented and deified. First of all, the feature of Buddhism has been strengthened, it was said that Mazu was the incarnation of Guanyin. This has something to do with the vigorous promotion of Buddhism of Yuan Dynasty. In Yuan Dynasty, the word 'Guangji' was added to Mazu title, which has the metaphor of universal salvation. This also reflects the folk religious idea that Taoism and

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<sup>35</sup> The same as Mazu temple, some places call Mazu as Tianfei.

<sup>36</sup> The tropical island in southern China, it is the second largest island after Taiwan Island in China.

Buddhism can be integrated. After the Wei and Jin Dynasties, many scholars advocated that ‘Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are consistent’, and they have a compatible tendency for their own use in the folk society and popular belief. It is easier for believers to accept Mazu as a goddess with both celestial beings and Buddha-nature.

With the rise of sea transportation, Mazu belief has become more popular. Sea transportation has great economic and political significance. In order to protect safety by sea transportation, the worshipping activities of Mazu in Yuan Dynasty formed a number of traditional customs on the basis of Song Dynasty. When spring festival and autumn festival every year, local governments sent officials to Mazu temples to offer Mazu. The imperial court also sent officials to the ancestral temple of Meizhou Island and the Shunji Temple of Baihu. The status of the ancestral temple of Meizhou Island was rising day by day. In Yuan Dynasty, the local worship of Mazu unified the conventional Memorial Day, which was generally on the fifth day after the beginning of spring and autumn. Until Ming Dynasty there just appeared the relevant record that Mazu was born on March 23rd of the lunar calendar. In a word, after the Yuan Dynasty, a unified sacrificial day had been formed. Men, women, old and young people gathered in front of Mazu temple to burn incense and pray for worship. There were also troupes to increase the atmosphere of the festival. Mazu belief had become a kind of folk custom, which was established by local convention.

“In Yuan Dynasty, there was no detailed record about the architectural groups of the ancestral temple. Only described in some related poems, such as ‘silver tower, jade building’, can reflect the splendid building of Mazu temple at that time. From another aspect, it can show that the scale of Mazu temple had become larger.” (H Guohua, 2003: pp 97)

“According to historical records, China's large-scale international navigation activities began at least in the Qin<sup>37</sup> and Han<sup>38</sup> Dynasties. According to the records of

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<sup>37</sup> The Qin Dynasty (221 B.C.-207 B.C.) was the first unified dynasty in Chinese history.

<sup>38</sup> The Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-220 B.C.) was a unified dynasty after the Qin Dynasty, it was divided into the Western Han Dynasty and the Eastern Han Dynasty.

‘Hanshu • Geographic’<sup>39</sup>, there is a legend that in the northern area of the sea there are emperor Qinshihuang<sup>40</sup> and Hanwudi<sup>41</sup> who had sent the alchemists overseas to seek a secret recipe for immortality. In the southern area of the sea, there has some envoys go to overseas countries to establish the maritime silk road, which can lead motherland to the countries along the south sea and the Indian Ocean. This may be the budding stage. During the period of Three Kingdoms<sup>42</sup>, Sun Quan, the Lord of Wu, had sent envoys to Southeast Asian countries and Taiwan Island. Sun Quan<sup>43</sup> was called ‘the advocator of large-scale navigation’ by modern historians. During the Tang<sup>44</sup> and Song<sup>45</sup> Dynasties, China's navigation took a leading position in the world. The emergence and success of the voyages of Zheng He<sup>46</sup> and Wang Jinghong<sup>47</sup> in Ming Dynasty was the result of the

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<sup>39</sup> The masterpiece of ancient historical geography, it is the earliest book titled by "Geography" in China.

<sup>40</sup> Ying Zhng, an outstanding politician, strategist, strategist, and reformer in ancient China, a politician who completed the unification of China for the first time, and was also the first monarch to be called emperor in China.

<sup>41</sup> Liu Che, the 7th emperor of the western Han dynasty, an outstanding statesman and writer.

<sup>42</sup> The Three Kingdoms (220-280) is a period of history between the Han Dynasty and the Jin Dynasty in China. It is divided into three regimes: Cao Wei, Shu Han, and Dong Wu.

<sup>43</sup> The founder of Dongwu in the Three Kingdoms period.

<sup>44</sup> The Tang Dynasty (618-907) was a unified central dynasty after the Sui Dynasty. It had 21 emperors and existed for 289 years.

<sup>45</sup> The Song Dynasty (960-1279) was a dynasty that inherited before the Yuan Dynasty and under the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. It was divided into the Northern Song Dynasty and the Southern Song Dynasty. It experienced eighteen emperors and existed for 319 years.

<sup>46</sup> He is from Kunyangzhou, Yunnan Province, the eunuch of the Ming Dynasty, a navigator and a diplomat.

<sup>47</sup> The official of Ming Danasty.

development of Chinese ancient ocean navigation, this is also a great feat of China's international navigation.” (H Guohua, 2003: pp 50)

In 1368, in the 28th year of Zhizheng in the period of Yuanhuizong, the peasant uprising army which was led by Zhu Yuanzhang<sup>48</sup> captured Dadu, it declared the end of Yuan Dynasty. The worship of Taoism<sup>49</sup> in Yuan Dynasty directly led to that Mazu had some characteristics of Taoist culture. On the one hand, it was to meet the needs of the Taoist god-making movement. On the other hand, it also reflected the extension and prosperity of Mazu belief since Song and Yuan Dynasties. Mazu belief was further secularized.

At the beginning of Ming Dynasty, due to the strict ban on the sea by the emperor Zhu Yuanzhang, the relations between China and other overseas countries were mostly interrupted, and China was in an isolated position in the world. This was very disadvantageous to the establishment and consolidation of a unified feudal empire in Ming Dynasty. Later, emperor Yongle of the Ming Dynasty sent envoys who were called Zheng He and Wang Jinghong to the western countries to carry out the policy of gentleness, established friendly relations with the western countries. In addition, they divided and attacked the overseas opposition forces. Historical opportunity decided that Mazu faith will flourish again. The feudal rulers of Ming Dynasty continued to advocate and believe in the sea goddess. They mainly used Mazu belief to send envoys overseas and communicate with foreign countries. Because navigation and shipwreck still often happened. The psychology of praying for the protection of gods was a helpless expression in front of the powerful natural force. Therefore, navigators had always regarded Mazu as the protection god in their minds.

In the early Ming Dynasty, in order to placate overseas countries and let them come and pay tribute to the court, the imperial court often sent envoys to overseas countries. Before sailing, these envoys would go to Tianfei palace to offer sacrifices, and set off sailing on a selected day. After the ships returned country safely, they also talked about how to get the protection of the sea goddess during the voyage, and

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<sup>48</sup> Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1398), the first emperor of Ming Dynasty.

<sup>49</sup> Taoism is a native religion in China, with "Tao" as the highest belief, and it is one of the five major religions in the world.

attributed the successful traffic to Mazu's boundless magic power. On this basis, emperor Mingchengzu issued an imperial edict to confer the title of Mazu as 'Tianfei'. The Ming Dynasty once carried out a policy of sea ban, restricted the coastal people from trading at sea, only allowed Fujian Province to communicate with Taiwan Island in Fuzhou port. When the Ming Dynasty needed to confer the title of Taiwan Island, most of the ships set out from Fujian Province. After returning home, all the envoys praised Mazu's divine power with one voice. To show off the prestige and honor of the Dynasty, it is necessary for the Ming Dynasty to borrow Mazu's power to rise the supremacy and position of the court.

From the third year of Yongle (1405) to the eighth year of Xuande (1433), Zheng He and Wang Jinghong made seven voyages to the Indian Ocean. Each time, they led tens of thousands of officers and men and more than 100 ships. They sailed from Taicang<sup>50</sup> and sailed southward through Fujian Province to South Asia and the east coast of Africa. Zheng He and Wang Jinghong had to worship Mazu before setting off, and worship Mazu again after their smooth return with more respect. They believed that the safety of every voyage was the protection of Mazu. Zheng He visited the ancestral temple of Meizhou Island eight times, supervised the construction of the expansion of Mazu temple, and built Tianfei palace in Changle City of Fujian Province and Liujiagang of Jiangsu Province. He also wrote articles and engraved steles to commemorate Mazu's miraculous power. Under the strong support of Zheng He, the ancestral temple of Mazu was more solemn and imposing. The capital also built Mazu temple to treat Mazu with respect.

In addition, the officials of Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties had to worship Mazu about everything related to navigation. Doing this in order to pray for safety, and the folk sacrificial activities were more frequent. The conferring envoys of the Ming Dynasty worshipped Mazu before they set sail. On the way, they still worshipped on the ship at any time. If the sea transportation in Yuan Dynasty expanded Mazu belief from the south to the north, the voyages of Zheng He and Wang Jinghong mainly spread Mazu belief from domestic to overseas. There were Mazu temples

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<sup>50</sup> A city located in the southeast of Jiangsu Province.

successively built in Taiwan Island and Malacca<sup>51</sup>. In Ming Dynasty, Mazu belief expanded to overseas. In addition to the contribution of Zheng He and Wang Jinghong, the spread of folk maritime merchants and overseas Chinese was also very important. In particular, although overseas Chinese were living in foreign countries, they still maintained the belief and customs of their hometown, so Mazu belief was handed down from generation to generation.

In Ming Dynasty, the ancestral temple of Mazu in Meizhou Island was further expanded. In the seventh year of Hongwu (1374), the commander of Quanzhou garrison presided over the reconstruction of the bedroom hall, incense pavilion, drum tower and the gate of the mountain. In the early years of Yongle (1403), Zheng He sent officials to repair Mazu temple because of the protection of Mazu. In the sixth year of Xuande (1431), before Zheng He's last voyage to the west, Zheng He personally prepared wooden stones with local officials and rebuilt the ancestral temple again to make it larger.

The Qing Dynasty, like the rulers of Ming Dynasty, attached great importance to use Mazu belief to consolidate its political power. In Qing Dynasty, Mazu was granted titles seven times by the imperial court, excluding granting plaques and awards by the imperial court. Compared with Yuan and Ming Dynasties, although Qing Dynasty continued to use Mazu's role in north-south sea transportation, envoys conferring titles, praying for rain and relieving drought, it focused more on the use of Mazu's power to fight at sea, recaptured and pacified Taiwan. This made Mazu belief had a strong military color in Qing Dynasty. The trend was directly related to the relationship between Fujian and Taiwan in the early Qing Dynasty.

Taiwan Island is located in the southeast of China's mainland, east of the Pacific Ocean, west of Taiwan Strait and Fujian province. The southern boundary of the Strait is opposite to the Philippines archipelago. In the late Ming and early Qing

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<sup>51</sup> It is located in the west of Peninsular Malaysia. The Ming Dynasty navigator Zheng He led seven voyages to the West. Five of them were stationed in Malacca, they brought Chinese silk, tea, porcelain and other products and advanced production technology here, made Malacca becoming a flourishing trade center.



Dynasty, the Qing Dynasty concentrated its military forces against Taiwan. In order to cross the strait and ensure victory, they had to pray Mazu for protecting them.

In the 19th year of Kangxi (1680) in Qing Dynasty, Wan zhengse, the commander in chief of the navy, led the navy to conquer Xiamen Island and won the first battle. He thought that he was assisted by the Mazu in his dream. He asked the imperial court to praise Mazu. The emperor immediately issued an imperial edict to call Mazu 'Tianshangshengmu'<sup>52</sup>. In the 22nd year of Kangxi (1683), Shi Lang<sup>53</sup> led the navy army to conquer Taiwan Island, and he also reported to the emperor that he won because of the help of Mazu. Emperor Kangxi was very pleased. In the second year, emperor Kangxi granted Mazu the title of 'Renci Tianhou'<sup>54</sup>, who can protect the country and the people, and upgraded the title of Mazu from "Fei" and 'Shengmu'<sup>55</sup> to 'Tianhou'. This is the highest level of women's reputation in the world. The Qing dynasty attached great importance to the role of Mazu to unify Taiwan.

Since then, the title of 'Tianhou' has been widely spread. In this way, on the one hand, it played a deterrent role in making use of the universal psychology of Mazu of Fujian and Taiwan people. On the other hand, it also showed that the imperial court's war with Taiwan was in line with god's will. After the restoration of Taiwan in Qing Dynasty, the sea goddess was highly praised. In Fujian and Jiangsu-Zhejiang areas, another wave of worshipping for Mazu had been launched.

Mazu belief in Taiwan developed rapidly in Qing Dynasty. After the Qing Dynasty unified Taiwan, in order to maintain the feudal rules on the island, the court attached great importance to the role of Mazu in the psychology of worshipping of Fujian and Guangdong people. They want to constantly promote Mazu's divine power of protecting the country and people, and use this to control people's spirit of Taiwan

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<sup>52</sup> Tianshangshengmu generally refers to Mazu, the honorific title of goddess.

<sup>53</sup> A native of Jinjiang County, Quanzhou City, Fujian Province, he was born in Gushi, Henan Province, a military strategist in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasty, he is an important general in the early Qing Dynasty.

<sup>54</sup> Renci means kindness, Tianhou generally refers to Mazu, the honorific title of goddess.

<sup>55</sup> Shengmu generally refers to Mazu, the honorific title of goddess.



Island. In the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of Kangxi (1683), Shi Lang asked to build Mazu temple in Tainan City of Taiwan Island, the earliest official Mazu temple in Taiwan Island. Subsequently, Mazu temples have sprung up all over the island, with 222 new Mazu temples. So far, Mazu, Wangye<sup>56</sup> and Guanyin have become the three major beliefs in Taiwan Island.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Kangxi (1683), the governor of Fujian Province, Yao Qisheng<sup>57</sup>, rebuilt the bell and drum tower and the gate of the mountain, he changed the original 'Chaotian Pavilion' into 'Zhengdian'. Later, Yao Qisheng prepared to go to Taiwan to issue the first imperial edict. This sailing can just get to Taiwan on time if the wind blows northwesterly. To achieve this goal, he went to Mazu temple of Meizhou Island to pray for the northwest wind. As a result, the wind was smooth and the wish was fulfilled.

In the end, Yao Qisheng asked the emperor to rebuild the main hall of Mazu. Yao Qisheng made many contributions after building the main hall of Mazu. He was named 'Taizi Taibao'<sup>58</sup> by the emperor, so people called this main hall as 'Prince Palace'. In 23<sup>rd</sup> of Kangxi (1684), Shi Lang built a dressing house, Chaotian Pavilion, a Buddhist hall and a monk's room. Then the ancestral temple-built Guanyin hall, Zhongjun hall, Tudi temple and so on. After the period of Qianlong in Qing Dynasty, the Mazu temple of Meizhou had become a magnificent building complex with 16 halls, 99 rooms, and it was called 'Dragon Palace on the sea'. At this time, Mazu temple had been basically finalized and had been retained until 1966.

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<sup>56</sup> Wangye was bestowed by the Jade Emperor, it is the god of Chinese folk belief in Taoism. Wangye belief is very prosperous in southern Fujian and Taiwan.

<sup>57</sup> Yao Qisheng (1644-1683) was a politician, military strategist, minister, and general in the Kangxi period of Qing Dynasty. He was one of the decisive figures in the recapture of Taiwan.

<sup>58</sup> Taizi Taibao is official who is responsible for teaching the prince. In the Qing Dynasty, it was generally given to important and close ministers as an honorary official title.



Figure 4 The Prince Palace, photographed in 1922

Source: Re-photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

After the Qing Dynasty was overthrown, Mazu belief lost the support of the central government and the local government. From 1912 to 1949<sup>59</sup>, Mazu belief was also supported by local authorities in some areas of China mainland. But it was basically a spontaneous stage of development, holding festivals or building and repairing temples mainly through raising funds or apportionment fees by folk squires and businessmen.

In this stage of spontaneous development, Mazu belief shows two characteristics because of the change of social conditions. One is that Mazu belief gets rid of the direct use of the government, it takes root in the grass-roots, and tends to be civilian. Due to the improvement of social science knowledge and the development of navigation technology, the ship owner and cargo owner generally, cross the sea and transport goods by large ships now, they weaken their dependence on Mazu. These people who are related to maritime transportation do not have to go to worship Mazu before getting on board or sailing. The main people who depend on Mazu are boat

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<sup>59</sup> This was the period of the Republic of China. It was the first democratic republic in Asia, which was established after the Revolution of 1911.

owners, small boat owners, boatmen and fishermen. They treat Mazu as a professional protection god and have a deep belief in Mazu. They dare not neglect the existence of Mazu. Secondly, with the increasing number of people who went abroad to make a living, Mazu belief spread all over the world. The origin of spreading abroad of Mazu is that some of the statues or incense sticks of Mazu carried by people, and Mazu is worshipped in the places of these overseas Chinese. Some overseas Chinese are very devout in Mazu belief in their hometown. To meet the requirements of overseas Chinese' belief, the hometown association builds temples for the overseas Chinese to worship Mazu.

After the liberation of the Chinese mainland in 1949, New China is established. Mazu belief was declining, like all folk religious beliefs, it mainly due to the great changes in social living conditions. Because of the elimination of the system of exploitation and political oppression, the difficulties in the production and life of the broad people will be solved with the help of the new government and the mutual assistance of themselves. The sense of urgency of seeking mutual assistance from god has been reduced. On the other hand, the activities of using religious superstition for self-interest has been banned. The number of people who advocate believing in gods or collecting money to build temples and hold ceremonies has decreased. In addition, the masses are affected by atheism education. Therefore, all folk religions tend to decline, and Mazu belief is no exception.

But, before 'the Cultural Revolution'<sup>60</sup>, many temples were preserved. Although the number of worshippers in the central temples of Mazu decreased greatly, the activities of offering incense did not stop. However, during 'the Cultural Revolution', all Mazu temples were destroyed, or temples were destroyed, or statues of gods were destroyed, the activities of offering incense were cut off. The Mazu temple of

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<sup>60</sup> The Cultural Revolution, its full name is "The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," it is a civil strife initiated by Mao Zedong and used by counter-revolutionary groups, which brought serious disasters to the party, the country, and the people of all ethnic groups. The Cultural Revolution from May 1966 to October 1976 caused the party, country, and people to suffer the most serious setbacks and losses since the founding of the nation.

Meizhou Island was demolished and leveled, the bricks, tiles and timber were used for other purposes. After ‘the Cultural Revolution’, many Mazu temples were restored with the support of their followers. The ancestral temple of Mazu on Meizhou Island has also been rebuilt on the original site, and the main hall has been built. Other ancillary buildings are also gradually restored.

### 1.3 The historical background of Mazu after reform and opening up to present (1978---2020)

The reform and opening-up is a policy of reform and opening up to the outside world that China began to implement at the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978. China's internal reforms start with the countryside. In November 1978, Xiaogang Village, Fengyang County, Anhui Province, implemented the household contract responsibility system, fields are distributed to each household and they are responsible for profit or loss, this is the beginning of China's internal reform. In the cities, the right of self-management of state-owned enterprises has been significantly improved.

The reform and opening-up is one of the two basic points of the Communist Party of China's basic line in the primary stage of socialism. Since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, it is the general principles and policies for the construction of socialist modernization. It is the road to a powerful country, and it is the source of vitality for the development and progress of the party and the country. Reform, that is, internal reform, means consciously adjusting and reforming the aspects and links between the relations of production and the productive forces, reform is also the link between the superstructure and the economic base, on the premise of adhering to the socialist system, so as to promote the development of productive forces and the overall progress of various undertakings, it can help the country better realize the fundamental interests of the broad masses of the people. Opening up, that is, opening to the outside world, is an inevitable choice to accelerate China's modernization. It is in line with the characteristics of the times and the general trend of the world's development. It is a basic national policy that must be adhered to for a long time.

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping said that any nation or country should learn from the advantages of other nations, and learn from other countries' advanced science and technology. Therefore, he took the lead in proposing to carry out reform and opening up in China, and made indelible contributions to the cause of China's reform and opening up, he was known as the chief designer of China's socialist reform and opening up and modernization!

Since the implementation of the policy of reform and opening up, the cultural policy of the Chinese government has been in constant change and adjustment. Although there have been repeated and hesitant in the process, the general direction of reform has always been to weaken and ease the control of ideology, and regard culture as its own body, rather than as the slave of ideology or the tool of ideological struggle, so as to gradually go to the trend of gradual democratization of national social life that can adapt to the comprehensive cultural policy. During this period, through actively participating in the declaration of the world heritage and the world intangible cultural heritage, introducing the internationally accepted concepts, such as 'intangible cultural heritage', the great transformation of cultural policies has been realized smoothly and without any trace. With the concept of the cultural revolution and class struggle being replaced by 'harmonious society', the Cultural Revolution policy which is based on class ideology in the past naturally gave way to the cultural protection policy which is based on Nationalism ideology (patriotism and national state). From the policy of eliminating old culture and building new ones to the policy of protecting 'intangible cultural heritage', the great transformation of China's cultural policy is of great significance.

After the reform and opening up, with the implementation of the policy of believing in religious belief freely in China's mainland and the rapid economic development of the southern coastal areas, as well as the upsurge of seeking roots and worshipping ancestors, the folk religious belief revived rapidly in Fujian Province, some dormant folk beliefs also sprung up one after another. "According to the field investigation and estimation of Kenneth Dean, an American anthropologist, by 1992, there would be 30,000 folk temples rebuilt in Fujian Province. From 1978 to 2003, thousands of temples in Putian City have been restored or rebuilt in different degrees. Mazu belief is undoubtedly the first place in folk beliefs of Fujian, even the five major



religions are hard to match. According to incomplete statistics, there were 782 Mazu temples rebuilt or expanded in Putian City from 1978 to 2011. From 1978 to 2010, 86 Mazu temples were built in Putian and Xianyou area.” (Y Liyuan, 2014: pp 1)

“The ancestral temple of Mazu on Meizhou Island, which is one of the important symbols of Mazu belief, it was first built in Meizhou Island, then raised in Putian, Fujian, Taiwan and even around the world. In recent years, the ancestral temple of Mazu has become the center of pilgrimage of Mazu believers at home and abroad.” (H Guohua, 2003: pp 96)

The ancestral temple of Mazu on Meizhou Island, commonly known as the ancestral temple, is located in Meizhou Island National Tourism Resort of Fujian Province. It is the birthplace of Mazu culture and the core area of human intangible cultural heritage ‘Mazu belief’. It covers an area of 600 mu<sup>61</sup> and a construction area of 6000 square meters. It has a history of more than 1000 years. From the beginning of Mazu belief in history, it has gone through several dynasties of Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing. Each dynasty has a special clergy in charge of the daily affairs of the temple. During the ‘Cultural Revolution’ in 1966, the ancestral temple was destroyed, leaving only the sleeping hall, the main hall, and the ancestral hall (Youde Ci).

In the process of spreading Mazu culture for thousands of years, the development stage of Mazu culture that since the reform and opening-up is very important. Since the reform and opening up, the development of Mazu culture can be roughly divided into three stages, they are the early 1980s to the early 1990s, the early 1990s to the end of the 20th century, and the beginning of the 21st century to the present.

In 1978, with the reform and opening up, all things in China were revived, the religious policy was relaxed and free. The ancestral temple of Mazu in Meizhou Island was also restored. Lin Congzhi<sup>62</sup>, who is from a fisherman's family on Meizhou Island in Putian City, she and others led the villagers to offer work for free, they started

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<sup>61</sup> Mu is a unit of land area in China. One mu is equal to about 666.667 square meters. Fifteen mu is equal to one hectare.

<sup>62</sup> Lin Congzhi, the world-famous Mazu native, she is the former chairman of the board of directors of the ancestral temple of Mazu.

the preliminary work of rebuilding the ancestral temple. They carried out a large-scale reconstruction of Mazu temple and held various cultural exchange activities. It rekindled the first incense of Mazu belief. Mazu belief has been restored rapidly, various traditional folk activities have also been restored rapidly. Soon, the first board of directors of the ancestral temple was established, they elected Mr. Lin Wenhao<sup>63</sup> and Ms. Lin Congzhi as the chairman of the board of directors, and a large-scale reconstruction project of Mazu Temple began. Mazu believers at home and abroad felt and missed the kindness of Mazu, they generously contributed to the smooth progress of the reconstruction project. Especially, Taiwan compatriots have made great contributions to the reconstruction of the ancestral temple. The activities of Mazu belief can be carried out with great fanfare again.

On 9th September 1983, the State Council approved the establishment of Putian City, which was based on the needs of the development of Meizhou Bay, and meet with the actual situation of natural geography and social history of Xinghua area. From then on, the activities Mazu culture had a new beginning. On March 23 in 1986, the Political Consultative Conference of Putian City hold an academic seminar to commemorate the 1026th birthday of Mazu, it invited well-known scholars from inside and outside the province. In September 1987, the Political Consultative Conference of Putian City led to organizing the activities of ‘Mazu Millennium Festival’, which attracted nearly 100,000 Mazu believers from both sides of the Taiwan Strait, it also held an academic seminar about ‘Mazu Millennium Festival’. The term ‘Mazu culture’ has been recognized by most people. Since 1987, there were about 100,000 people from Taiwan and nearly a thousand pilgrimage teams from all over the country come to Meizhou Island every year. They came back to worship their ancestors and Mazu. The exchanges of Mazu culture have become more and more active. In 1987, the ‘National Symposium on Mazu culture’ was held in Putian City. Some scholars and experts from Taiwan came to China's mainland for Mazu cultural exchange through various channels, which opened the prelude of Mazu cultural exchange between the two sides

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<sup>63</sup> Lin Wenhao, 1921-2011, the chairman of the First CPPCC of Putian City, the former chairman of the board of directors of the ancestral temple of Mazu.



of the Strait. Since then, there has been an upsurge of research on Mazu in various fields on both sides of the Strait.

In April 1990, the International Symposium on Mazu research was held in Putian City, which pushed the cultural exchange of Mazu to a climax. In May 1994, the Mazu cultural tourism festival was held for the first time in Putian City, which started the unique cultural brand of Mazu's hometown. In the same year, under the leadership of the Political Consultative Conference of Putian City, and after jointing research by Jiang Weiyan, Zhu Hepu, Lin Hongguo and others, the 'notes of ancestral temple ritual of Meizhou' and 'sacrificial ceremony schedule list' were restored and improved. After that, sacrificial music and dance were continuously improved in art. In 1997, the golden body of Mazu of Meizhou Island<sup>64</sup> made a 102 days tour in Taiwan, with more than 10 million people paying homage and worshipped, which became the 'highlight' of Mazu cultural activities at this stage.

In 1997, the ancestral temple of Mazu began large-scale reconstruction, and completed 36 large and small buildings, including Paifang, Corridor, gate of mountain, incense burner platform, Yimen, Square, Bell and Drum Tower, Main hall, Bedroom hall, Dressing building, Chaotian Pavilion, Shengtian tower, Mazu stone statue, Buddha Hall, Guanyin Hall, Wudi temple, Zhongjun hall, shengfumu temple, Aixiang Pavilion, Longfeng Pavilion, and sun watching Pavilion and so on. There, buildings formed the west axis architectural complex of the ancestral temple, with large scale, distinct levels, staggered and vertical buildings and pavilions.

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<sup>64</sup> The golden body of Mazu is located in the ancestral temple of Mazu in Meizhou Island, Putian City. It is enshrined in the main hall of Mazu temple. The body of Mazu statue is not really made in gold, people uses the word 'gold' to describe the noble position of Mazu.



Figure 5 The west axis architectural complex of the ancestral temple

Source:

[https://ss0.bdstatic.com/70cFuHSh\\_Q1YnxGkpoWK1HF6hhy/it/u=2991744093,3986169395&fm=26&gp=0.jpg](https://ss0.bdstatic.com/70cFuHSh_Q1YnxGkpoWK1HF6hhy/it/u=2991744093,3986169395&fm=26&gp=0.jpg), 2018

In 1998, for the purpose of expanding the scale of incense in the ancestral temple of Mazu, with the support of relevant design units of Tsinghua University, the south axis was constructed. In the first half of 2002, the work was complete. It spends four and a half years, with a cost of nearly 100 million yuan. The whole buildings were imitated in the style of Song Dynasty. There are Lingci hall, Tianhou hall, Shunji hall, Bell and Drum Tower, Palace Gate and Archway. It's supporting projects include the East-West corridor, Qifu hall, exhibition hall of Mazu culture, Qifu hotel, Tianhou square, Grand Theater, etc. It covers an area of 80 Mu, with a total construction area of 32,000 square meters (including the area of 10,000 square meters of Tianhou Square). The buildings are symmetrically distributed along the axis and tended north and south, so there are called the south axis architectural complex.



Figure 6 The south axis architectural complex

Source:

[https://ssl.bdstatic.com/70cFvXSh\\_Q1YnxGkpoWK1HF6hhy/it/u=1211505521,1667428430&fm=26&gp=0.jpg](https://ssl.bdstatic.com/70cFvXSh_Q1YnxGkpoWK1HF6hhy/it/u=1211505521,1667428430&fm=26&gp=0.jpg), 2018

General Secretary Jiang Zemin once instructed that further promote Mazu culture. In 2003, the Ministry of culture, the Ministry of Finance and the National People's Commission jointly issued the notice on the implementation of the project for the protection of Chinese ethnic and folk culture. In October 2004, the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association was established. This indicates that Mazu belief, which has a wide influence at home and abroad, is officially defined as 'Mazu culture' by the state. In March 2005, the general office of the State Council issued the opinions on 'strengthening the protection of China's intangible cultural heritage'. In December, the State Council issued 'the notice on strengthening the protection of cultural heritage', which set off a wave of protection of cultural heritage all over the country. In January 2006, President Hu Jintao visited Fujian Province and stressed that Mazu belief is deeply rooted in the spiritual life of Taiwan people, Fujian should use these rich resources to play a better role in promoting cross-strait exchanges. On 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009, the fourth meeting of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the protection of intangible cultural heritage approved that the custom of Mazu belief should be included in the list of world intangible cultural heritage. Mazu belief became

the first World Heritage site in the kind of belief in China and the first World Heritage in Putian City.

In 2011, the Putian municipal Party committee, publicity department, Municipal Bureau of culture, Municipal Radio and Television Administration, Putian University, Meizhou Island Management Committee and the board of directors of the ancestral temple convene a meeting. They discussed expanding the scale and momentum of Mazu festival on the basis of inheriting the Mazu festival of 2000. The number of participants was expanded from 308 to 456, all the festival teams came from Putian University. In terms of instrumental music, the whistle horn was changed into a bugle, restored tradition. In terms of music, they added 10 drums to increase the atmosphere, they also added flags of Mazu's titles from 16 to 36. These can help enhance the ceremony, solemnity and artistry of Mazu festival.

Since the reform and opening-up, Putian City has highlighted the central position of Mazu culture, and set off an upsurge of research on Mazu culture. It has successively held five international Mazu cultural academic seminars, and consecutively held 11 'Meizhou Mazu • Strait forum', it also organized 'Taiwan Mazu forum' in Taiwan. Many anthologies were published, a large number of books on Mazu culture was being compiled, it has published 'the collection of Mazu documents and historical materials', founded 'the Chinese Mazu', 'the voice of Mazu' and 'the website of Mazu in the world'. Putian University has established 'the Research Center of Mazu Culture'.

On 28<sup>th</sup> December 2012, the website of China Mazu, and the mobile phone newspaper of China Mazu were officially opened. The website of China Mazu uses modern media to open up a new window of the publicity of Mazu culture. At present, more than 30 research institutions of Mazu culture have been set up at home and abroad, with a large number of research teams, they have got fruitful achievements in the research of Mazu culture.

Since the reform and opening-up, Putian City has successfully held 21 sessions of China • Meizhou Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival, and it has held the final of Chinese Mazu cultural knowledge, the week of Putian Mazu cultural activities, the month of Mazu cultural publicity and other activities. Putian city also filmed 'peculiar



fate in Meizhou Island’, ‘Mazu’ and other TV series, it has cooperated with CCTV<sup>65</sup>, Southeast TV and other media to hold the theme of ‘love between the strait’ to perform in Meizhou Island, and the large-scale concert of ‘Mazu light’ in Taiwan, it held the exchange meeting of communication experience of Mazu culture. Mazu Pavilion, which is the classic landscape passed down from Mazu culture was successively completed, the Research Institute of China Mazu Culture was also completed. The effect of communicating Mazu culture was outstanding.

Since the reform and opening up, Putian City has done a good job in the protection of Mazu cultural heritage, initially established a national, provincial, municipal, county (District) protection list system of Mazu cultural heritage, rescued and protected a number of important cultural relics, such as wooden statues of Mazu in Song Dynasty and star maps of Ming Dynasty. It held some exhibitions of Mazu cultural relics in Taiwan Island, and set up an experimental area of ecological protection of Mazu culture. The ancestral temple of Mazu in Meizhou Island has become the sixth batch of national key cultural relics protection units. The Mazu Festival in Meizhou Island was listed in the first batch of the national intangible cultural heritage list. Mazu belief was successfully declared as the world’s intangible cultural heritage, which further promoted the inheritance and protection of Mazu culture, it undoubtedly has milestone significance for the spread and inheritance of Mazu culture.

In the speech at the Fourth Session of the Eighth CPPCC<sup>66</sup> National Committee, Mr. Ding Guangxun<sup>67</sup> pointed out, the phenomenon of Mazu culture has been sublimated into a phenomenon of folk moral culture. It embodies the excellent traditions culture of the Chinese nation, and it also shows the Chinese virtues of hardworking and brave, helping the weak and the poor. It purifies people's souls and makes people full of love. Believing in Mazu can be said to represent a cultural and moral expression of Chinese people. they pursuit truth, goodness, and beauty. Under

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<sup>65</sup> China Central Television, referred to as CCTV.

<sup>66</sup> CPPCC generally refers to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

<sup>67</sup> Vice Chairman of the Tenth National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the Honorary Chairman of World Religions.

the current policy of "The Belt and Road"<sup>68</sup>, it should adapt to the trend of the times, promotes the prosperity and development of Mazu culture, and play a full role in the modern significance and value of Mazu.

## **Part II Mazu culture**

### **2.1 Mazu's legends**

The evolution of Mazu changed from human to god has gone through a long historical period. Mazu is the goddess of the sea. Since Mazu was worshipped as the protection god of navigation and had the function of commanding all the seas, the old gods of the river and sea in ancient China have all retreated to the second position in people's minds and have been replaced by Mazu. The reason why Mazu was chosen by history as the navigation god to symbolize people's desire and belief in conquering the sea was that Mazu was born with many mythological features.

Myths and legends are produced on the basis of certain reality, although they are illusory, they reflect reality after all. Moreover, most of the characters in myths and legends are legends or heroes in a certain area and a certain era. After reasonable fantasy and artistic processing, they have become gods with transcendent power in people's minds. From birth to death, Mazu has many vivid and magical legends. These legends have a strong feature of 'man-made god', they also reflect the politics, economy, culture and other aspects of the times. From every story in myths and legends, we can see that

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<sup>68</sup> "The Belt and Road" (B&R) is the abbreviation of "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road". In September and October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed to build a "new Cooperation initiative of "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road". Relying on the existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms between China and relevant countries, with the help of existing and proven regional cooperation platforms, the Belt and Road Initiative aims to borrow the historical symbols of the ancient Silk Road, holds high the banner of peaceful development, and actively develop relations with countries along the route. Setting up economic partnership to jointly build a community of interests, a community of destiny, and a community of responsibility to feature political mutual trust, economic integration, and cultural tolerance.

Mazu has done a lot of good deeds for people in her whole life, they can show her noble quality of selfless dedication and sacrifice. In addition, they also reveal the historical reasons from various aspects that how these myths and legends originate. Here are some main legends.

“Mazu was born. Mazu's father was Lin Yuan, her mother's surname was Wang. Her parents always did many good deeds. When her father was in his 40s, he had already have a son and five daughters. He often worried that only one son was too few to ensure the succession of his family. Her parents often burned incense and worshipped Buddha, they prayed that they could have a son again. Mazu's parents were very religious, Nanhai Guanyin was moved by them. One night, Mazu's mother dreamed that Guanyin said to her, your family did good deeds and accumulated virtue. I would give you a pill, and it would be good after eating it. Soon, she got pregnant. Then later Mazu was born.” (R Qinghua, 2016: pp 46)

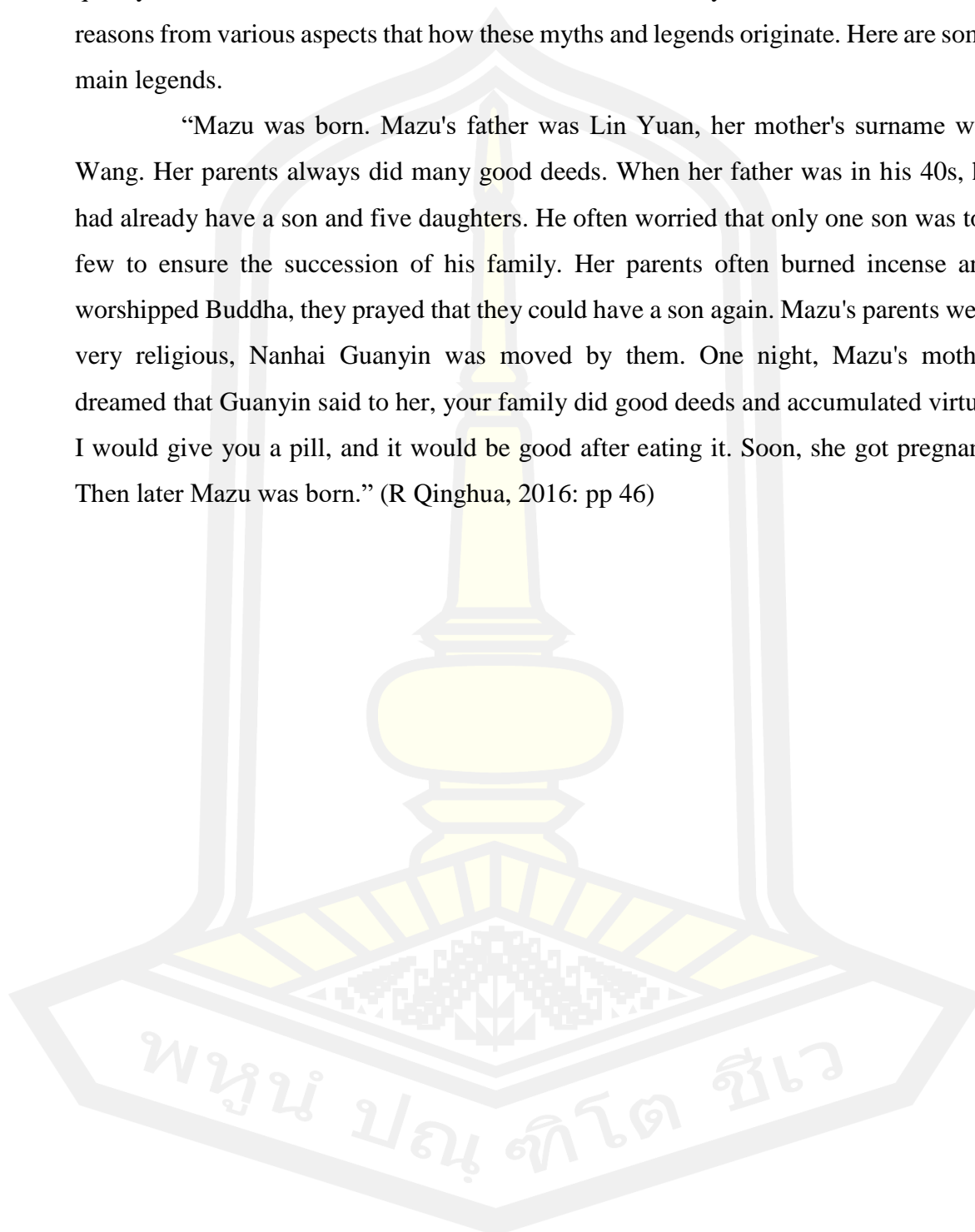






Figure 7 Mazu was born

Source: [https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442\\_99916694](https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442_99916694), 2017

“Save father and find brother. In September, one day, Mazu's father and brother sailed across the sea. At that time, the wind from the west was very strong, they suddenly met fierce wind and waves. The sailboats of father and son were bumping in the fierce wind and waves, the situation was critical. At that time, Mazu was weaving cloth at home. Suddenly, she lowered down her head on the loom and closed her eyes. The expression on her face suddenly changed. She used one hand to grasp the shuttle and used the other hand to grasp the loom, her two feet firmly treaded on the spindle, struggled to support and feared of losing. When her mother saw that scene, she was startled, her mother quickly woke up Mazu. Mazu dropped the shuttle to the ground. She cried and said, my father was saved. But my brother fell into the sea and drowned. After a moment, it had someone report what Mazu said, and all of that was consistent with facts. At that time, when Mazu closed her eyes, she was standing on her father's boat, and she was holding on to the rudder of her brother's boat. When her mother woke

her up, the shuttle fell to the ground. That is to say, her brother's boat capsized. Her father was out of danger, but her brother's boat was submerged by the waves. Mazu accompanied her mother and brother's wife sailing the boat to find the body of her brother. At that time, the sea was turbulent, and they suddenly found a group of creatures gathering in the sea, everyone was scared. Mazu said to everyone, don't worry about that, and she told the creatures, don't need to salute her. Suddenly, the sea turned clear and her brother's body had surfaced. At this time, everyone knew that it was the water god who came to protect her brother's body. Finally, Mazu took her brother's body back. After that, whenever meeting Mazu's birthday, many fish will come in groups in the middle of the night, gathering in front of Meizhou Island, like dancing, until dawn. It is said that it still be so now. On this day, all fishermen do not go fishing in the sea.” (R Qinghua, 2016: pp 48)



Figure 8 Save father and find brother

Source: [https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442\\_99916694](https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442_99916694), 2017

“Pray for rain to help people. When Mazu was 21 years old, Putian City suffered a severe drought. The water dried up and the trees died of drought. Farmers prayed for help. All the people in the county said that only Mazu could save the disaster.

So, the county magistrate of Putian went to visit and pray Mazu in person. Mazu immediately prayed for rain, and she said that it would rain at a certain time. On that day, there was still a scorching sun in the sky at noon. The county magistrate said that is Mazu's prediction not working? But not long, the dark clouds were thick, and the rain was coming. It's heavy rain. After raining, people had a good harvest. People took the initiative to cheer, thank and praise Mazu for her boundless merits.” (R Qinghua, 2016: pp 48)



Figure 9 Pray for rain to help people

Source: [https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442\\_99916694](https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442_99916694), 2017

“Help people get rid of the disease. One year, the plague was prevalent in Putian, the whole family of the county magistrate also fell ill. Some people told the county magistrate that Mazu on Meizhou Island has great magic power, she can bring the dead back to life, and can rescue the disaster, eliminate the disease. The county magistrate personally came to visit Mazu, and ask for help. He earnestly said, ‘I have traveled thousands of miles to become an official of Putian. All my family was also in

Putian. Now life and death were up to Mazu. He hoped Mazu can pity and save his family.’ Mazu knew that the county magistrate was kind to people, so she promised to repent for him. Mazu told him to use flatleaf to boil and drink, and stick the mantra that she wrote to the door. The county magistrate followed her instructions, and then the disease healed quickly. The county magistrate was very grateful, he took his whole family to visit and thank Mazu. From then on, Mazu became more famous, and had a good reputation.” (R Qinghua, 2016: pp 50)



Figure 10 Help people get rid of the disease

Source: [https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442\\_99916694](https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442_99916694), 2017

“Mazu died on Meizhou Island. Mazu was 28 years old in the fourth year of Song Yongxi (987). On the day before the Double Ninth Festival, Mazu told her family, ‘I liked being quiet and I didn't want to live in the world all the time. Tomorrow was the Double Ninth Festival. I wanted to go climbing. Now I said goodbye to you in advance’. Everyone thought she just wanted to climb the mountain to see the scenery. They didn't know that she was going to become an immortal. The next morning, Mazu finished burning incense and chanting sutras, and said to her sisters, ‘today I am going to climb a mountain and travel far away to realize my usual wish. But the road is rough



and very far. You can't join me; it is a very sad thing!' The sisters didn't understand what she said. Instead, they laughed and comforted her and said, 'if you want to travel, do it, why say too much!' After Mazu said goodbye to her sisters, she climbed the highest peak of Meizhou Island. At this time, there had thick clouds appeared on the top of the mountain, a white air rushed into the sky. It seems that there was a music played by bamboo strings in the sky. There had a rainbow in the sky. Mazu sat on the cloud, flew leisurely in the sky. The residents of Meizhou Island were amazed. Mazu hovered in the clouds, overlooking the world, faintly visible. Suddenly, the color clouds all merged and disappeared. Since then, Mazu often appeared. From time to time, villagers could see Mazu sitting in the mountains, beside the rocks or springs, or sitting in the clouds and mists, or flying in the sea with red clothes. Mazu appeared to save people who were in need, she also protected the country and people. So, after she died, the villagers set up ancestral halls and temples on the peak of Meizhou Island to worship Mazu. More and more people came to worship Mazu." (R Qinghua, 2016: pp 52)



Figure 11 Mazu died on Meizhou Island

Source: [https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442\\_99916694](https://www.sohu.com/a/154898442_99916694), 2017

Mazu's myths and legends, which have a wide range of contents, are very magical, very supernatural. They are an important part of Chinese folk culture. From the content, it can be divided into four aspects. First, about the life experiences of Mazu, including birth, becoming god, death and so on. This kind of legend has a strong feature of witchcraft or Buddhism, it gives Mazu the attribute of god. Secondly, there are the stories of Mazu saves people's lives and helps others at sea. This kind of theme is the main part of Mazu's legend, which reflects Mazu's virtue of doing goods and protecting the world, it also expresses people's good wishes to extricate themselves from suffering. This kind of legend is well known to everyone, and it is widely spread. Third, it is the legend of Mazu surrenders demons and eradicates ghosts. These demons and ghosts in the legend symbolize all kinds of difficulties, dangers, and evil forces that people may encounter in nature and society. Mazu dares to fight with violence, promotes good things and suppresses evil forces. It not only shows people's spirit and courage of conquering nature actively, but also reflects the ancient laborer's psychology of feeling helpless with nature's incomparable power so that they want to seek the protection of god. Fourth, it is the myth of Mazu protects the imperial envoys and sea transportation, and assists in fighting against the enemies. These legends are closely related to the historical events and characters in each Dynasty, they have certain historical significance.

There are three main reasons for Mazu's transformation from human to god. First of all, it is due to people's admiration for Mazu's noble moral character, people hope that Mazu's spirit can last forever and never die away. Mazu is good at doing good things and saving people in the world, she is respected by people. After her death, people continued to feel her benefits, hoping that she would stay in the world forever and protect people's safety at sea. Therefore, Mazu was honored as a god of protection for people and be worshipped in temples. This is the fundamental reason why Mazu changed from human to god and why there were many various legends.

Secondly, Mazu changed from human to god, it is closely related to the historical background of the economy, society and culture at that time. The economic development of Song Dynasty promoted the development of the navigation industry in coastal areas. Because of the Taoist theory, to some extent, females have some features of water, so the water god should be female. Therefore, it chose Mazu as the goddess,

and she was honored as the sea god. This ended the situation of that ‘Dragon King’ controlled the sea.

Finally, with being worshipped and given titles by emperors in every past Dynasty, Mazu was promoted from a folk god to an official god of navigation protection. Moreover, Mazu's divinity became higher and higher, and spread more and more widely. From the area of Putian to all parts of the world, Mazu reached a level that everyone knew her and no one could replace her. From Song Dynasty, through Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, due to the political and economic needs of drought, flood, plague, famine, war, sea transportation, diplomacy and so on, the feudal rulers of every past Dynasty, all used the divine power to get ‘god's help’ to support their rule. Totally, they praised and titled Mazu 36 times, and Mazu belief was listed in national ceremonies, included in the Spring and Autumn festivals. Therefore, the status of Mazu belief is more fixed, the status of ‘god of the sea’ is stronger.

In a word, as a historical figure, Lin Mo in Putian has various favorable conditions to be deified into a god. History has selected her as the navigation protection god in this area. Because of the advantages of Mazu's myths and legends, history selected her as the national navigation god again. Today, Mazu has to shoulder the responsibility of ‘the goddess of peace’. This is naturally the choice of history and period, and Mazu has become a sea goddess with a strong influence in the world.

## 2.2 Mazu's spirit

When there is Mazu belief, there is Mazu spirit. Mazu spirit is the concentrated expression of the noble behavior, noble emotion and noble morality in Mazu's life and legends. It is a kind of moral system that is recognized and respected by people and the officials of every past Dynasty. In the present period, Mazu's spirit is summarized as ‘setting up morality, doing good deeds and great love’.

‘Setting up morality’ is setting the great virtue of human beings, which is to help people in need and the world in danger. The hardship of life and the awe of nature make humans yearn for spiritual transcendence and spiritual sustenance. No matter at sea or on land, in China or overseas, no matter in case of floods or droughts, no matter whether it is resisting the enemy or catching thieves, as long as we pray for Mazu in case of emergency, we will always be able to overcome the danger safely. This is a



miracle, this is a myth, this is a great virtue! Mazu's virtue goes beyond the limitations of the human world, it is a kind of divine power, and becomes the highest model of human morality.

‘Doing good deeds’ is doing the best things, which is be good and kind to others. of human beings. In Mazu belief, there has the call for ‘doing good deeds will has good rewards’, but there doesn't have the threat that doing bad deeds will get punishments. Mazu interprets a philosophy with countless stories of good deeds and blessings, ‘people without good roots, although alive, but like dead.’ People want to get happiness; the premise is to have ‘good heart’ and ‘good deeds’. As long as people do good deeds, they will get other people's help and happiness, as long as all people help each other, the world will be prosperous.

‘Great love’ means the great love of mankind, that is maternal love. Mazu itself is an image of a kind, respectable and graceful mother. Calling for Mazu is as safe and warm as jumping into a mother's arms. Of course, it is effective. Being close to Mazu is as fearless as holding a mother's strong hand, and everything changes from adversity to prosperity. Although the emperors of every past Dynasty have praised and titled Mazu from ‘Furen’, ‘Fei’ and ‘Tianfei’ until ‘Tianhou’. The common people still like to call her ‘Niangma’<sup>69</sup>, Mazu, because people long for the kindest and direct protection like a mother.

Mazu's great love is firstly manifested in the universality of her objects of love. In the legends of Mazu, there is Mazu's love for her relatives, but most of them are about Mazu's love for others. For example, ‘Mazu turned into the grass to save merchants’ shows the story of Mazu rescued the shipwrecked merchants. What is most touching is that there is also a story about Mazu's love for other ethnic groups in Mazu's legends, that is the story of ‘Mazu burned her house to navigate for the disoriented ship’. This story is about a Roman fleet that encountered the wind and waves in the sea near Meizhou Island, and they lost their direction. In order to guide them, Mazu set fire to her house, so that the fleet could know the route and reach the shore safely.

Mazu's great love is also reflected in her punishment and transformation of some evil forces. For some demons and ghosts, Mazu adopted the method of subduing

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<sup>69</sup> Niang Ma is the cordial name of Mazu in folks.

rather than simply eliminating them, and made them become the assistants of Mazu to rescue the shipwreck. This is a special and meaningful love, which greatly broadens the broad connotation of Mazu's love.

Mazu's great love is also reflected in her sincerity and selflessness. Mazu showed great love and saved people in danger and suffering. In order to rescue the Roman fleet which was in distress, she set her house on fire without hesitation. To rescue the sailors who were in distress at sea, she spent many years at sea, never married and finally sacrifice her young life. It can be said that Mazu's great love is the broadest, most sincere and selfless love beyond time and space. The great love is regardless of race, nobility, and gender.

Even today, Mazu's spirit is developing. Mazu is the 'goddess of peace on the sea' in the minds of believers. Mazu's spirit is endowed with the meaning of peace in the contemporary period. The contemporary government has dug out the connotation of Mazu belief, it has a special role in peaceful reunification of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. The common Mazu belief has become the emotional link to connect Chinese people. With the changes of times and the development of society, Mazu's spirit has been constantly interpreted with new connotations, better function, better development and inheritance.

### **Part III The social and cultural development of Meizhou Island**

The emergence and development of Mazu belief is the need for society and the inevitability of history. It needs a special space and environment.

#### **3.1 The geographical conditions of Mazu belief**

Mazu's hometown is located in Meizhou Island, belongs to Putian City, Fujian Province. Meizhou Island is the second-largest island in Putian City, it is 42 kilometres from the center of Putian City, and only 1.82 nautical miles away from the mainland. Meizhou Island is in the middle of the west coast of Taiwan Strait, which is 72 nautical miles away from Taichung port of Taiwan Province. In the north of Meizhou Island is Meizhou Bay port, it is one of the four major international transit ports in China, which is determined by the Ministry of communications. It is about 9.6 kilometers long from north to south and 1.3 kilometers wide from east to west. Meizhou

Island is longitudinally long and narrow from north to south. The central part of Meizhou Island is plain and shaped like an eyebrow, so it is called Meizhou.

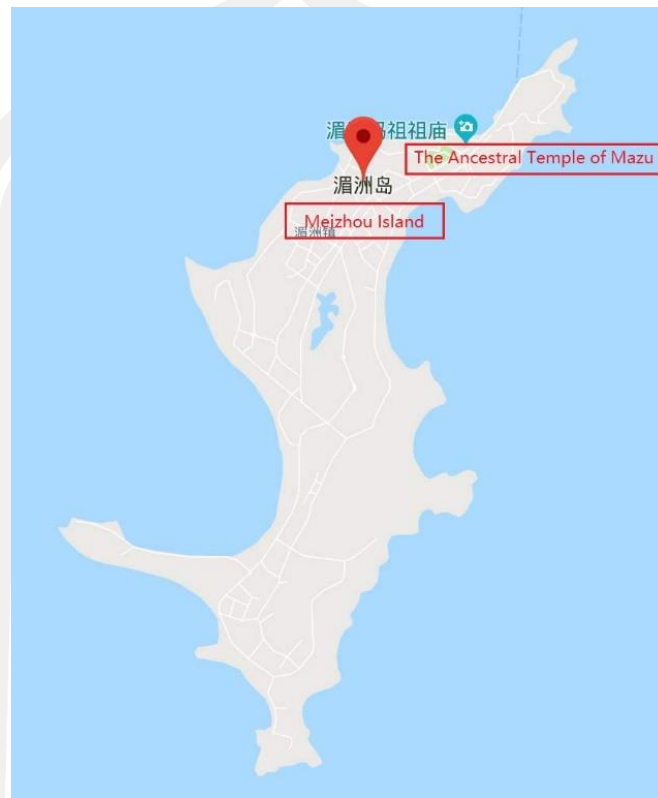


Figure 12 Meizhou Island National Tourism Resort of Fujian Province. This is the birthplace of Mazu culture and the core area of human intangible cultural heritage ‘Mazu belief’.

Source:

[https://ss2.bdstatic.com/70cFvnSh\\_Q1YnxGkpoWK1HF6hhy/it/u=3089282630,1819365484&fm=26&gp=0.jpg](https://ss2.bdstatic.com/70cFvnSh_Q1YnxGkpoWK1HF6hhy/it/u=3089282630,1819365484&fm=26&gp=0.jpg), 2016

Meizhou Island has a land area of 14.35 square kilometers, with a population of 42,000. The coastline is 30.4 kilometers, it has more than 30 big and small islands, including reefs. Meizhou Island is known as ‘Nanguo Penglai’<sup>70</sup>. There are more than

<sup>70</sup> Penglai is a fairy island in the outside of the east sea in Chinese pre-Qin myths and legends, surrounded by a fantastic sea. Nanguo Penglai means the Penglai is located in

30 scenic spots, such as the exciting ‘Meiyuchaoyin’<sup>71</sup>, ‘golden beach of Jiubaolan’<sup>72</sup>, ‘Eastern Hawaii’<sup>73</sup> and so on. There also has the ancestral temple of Mazu, with more than 300 million believers. Every year, during the birthday of Mazu on 23<sup>rd</sup> March and the sacrifice day of Mazu on 9th September, the pilgrimage and tourism are unprecedented, which is known as ‘Oriental Mecca’<sup>74</sup>.(W Zhengfeng, 2018)

Meizhou Island has a typical subtropical maritime monsoon climate, with an average annual temperature of 21 degrees centigrade and an average annual rainfall of about 1000 mm. The climate is mild, the scenery is beautiful, it is an ideal resort. Meizhou Island is the origin place of Mazu culture. In 1988, it was developed as a tourism economic zone of Fujian Province. In 1992, Meizhou Island was approved as a national tourist resort by the State Council.




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the south of China.

<sup>71</sup> Meiyuchaoyin is one of the twenty-four scenic spots of Meizhou Island. The sound of the waves on Meizhou Island can be heard clearly at this place.

<sup>72</sup> It is located in the most prominent place in the southwest of Meizhou Island, its shape likes a crescent moon hanging on the blue sea. It is the longest, largest and most charming beach on Meizhou island.

<sup>73</sup> Hawaii is a world-famous tourist destination; it is located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. People call Meizhou Island as the Hawaii of the East, so as to describe its beautiful scenery.

<sup>74</sup> Mecca is the most important holy place in Islam, it is well-known as the "religious capital".

Figure 13 The environment of Meizhou Island

Source: <https://image.baidu.com/search/detail?ct=503316480&z>, 2016

Meizhou Island is a tourist and summer resort integrating religious holy land, natural scenery, cultural landscape and exchanges with Taiwan. Mazu temple on the island, with thousands of believers, is the ancestor of more than 10000 Mazu temples in more than 40 countries and regions in the world. It is known as ‘Oriental Mecca’ overseas. Meizhou Island is surrounded by sea on all sides, and many seas eroded rocks have been baptized by years in various forms, strange and lifelike, the golden sand beach is flat, clean, it is cool in summer and warm in winter, and has a pleasant climate. The unique geographical location creates an attractive natural landscape, which makes the tourists linger on and have an endless aftertaste. Meizhou Island is a good place for leisure and vacation tourism. The broad and profound connotation of Mazu culture, the world's great reputation, and the gorgeous natural scenery have laid a firm foundation for economic development.

Meizhou Island lies in front of Meizhou Bay. Meizhou Bay is located in the middle area of the Fujian coast. It is an important maritime traffic center in Southeast China, and it is a must place for ships. Meizhou Bay is surrounded by low hills and red soil platforms, which are composed of granite and volcanic rocks, and the erosion is not very strong. There are not many rivers in this area, and the sediment from the surface through river caves is very less, the harbor is wide, so it is not silted all the year-round. In addition, it is located in Fujian Province where the marine climate is the most obvious, and it is also one of the most areas which are seriously affected by the typhoon in China.

As a result, under the influence of typhoons, the area around Meizhou Bay often has the weather of big wind and precipitation, which causes the sea to be rough and huge waves, which may bring disaster to the passing ships. “Meizhou Bay is surrounded by hills in the east, west and north. The port's front is open to the southeast. There are three natural barriers in the bay. The first one is Meizhou Island, which lies



across the port's mouth, the second one is Pan Island<sup>75</sup>, Renzhu Island<sup>76</sup> and Xiaozhu Island<sup>77</sup>, the third one is Luo Island<sup>78</sup>, Heng Island<sup>79</sup> and Yang Island<sup>80</sup>. These form a natural harbor. Even if there are waves outside, but the harbor is still calm. The natural and geographical conditions of Meizhou Bay are very superior.” (G Hong, 1997: pp 34)



Figure 14 The location of Meizhou Island in Fujian Province

Source: <https://image.baidu.com/search/detail?ct=503316480&z>, 2016

Mazu, who is a common fisherman's girl, although is familiar with the nature of the sea and the astronomical phenomena, only her subjective factors are not able to eliminate danger for ships in distress again and again in big winds and huge waves. That is due to the unique geographical environment of Meizhou Bay. Whenever the weather changes, especially when a typhoon comes, she sails out to the sea, and shouts

<sup>75</sup> The name of the island, a small island belonging to Putian City.

<sup>76</sup> The name of the island, a small island belonging to Putian City.

<sup>77</sup> The name of the island, a small island belonging to Putian City.

<sup>78</sup> The name of the island, a small island belonging to Putian City.

<sup>79</sup> The name of the island, a small island belonging to Putian City.

<sup>80</sup> The name of the island, a small island belonging to Putian City.



loudly to remind others. At night, the torch is held high to guide the passing ships and guide them to sail to the inner harbor, to avoid the wind and waves. The people sailed in the direction that Mazu had pointed out at a critical juncture. As a result, the wind and waves gradually calmed down, the distress and danger were suddenly relieved. Many fishermen on the sea have experienced this situation. Over time, Mazu's images with the ideal expression of working people have formed, and Mazu's legends also spread widely.

### 3.2 The cultural foundation of Mazu belief

Since Tang Dynasty, Putian City, which is located at the southeast coast of China, was not a wild and backward place as people imagined. On the contrary, it has a good cultural environment, the imperial examinations were prosperous, and it has a large number of talented people. This is related to the large number of noble families<sup>81</sup> from the central plain<sup>82</sup> who moved in due to escape the wars in history, and it is also related to the dedicated development of literati in the past dynasties. “According to historical records, during the Liang and Chen Dynasties<sup>83</sup>, a Confucian scholar, who was named Zheng Lu, set up Hushan school in Nanshan of Putian, teaching his children and advocating poetry and calligraphy. Hushan school is the earliest school in the documented education of Fujian Province. From then on, Putian gradually formed a good style of study and outstanding teaching achievements. In Song and Ming Dynasties, there were related poems. ‘There are reading sounds throughout the alley’ and ‘Nine out of ten houses are schools’. Putian has become a famous literature state that is praised by people. In ancient times, Putian was prosperous in reading.” (R Qinghua, 2016: pp 72)

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<sup>81</sup> The noble family refers to the famous family who served as officials of government for generations in ancient China.

<sup>82</sup> It refers to the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River centered on Luoyang City to Kaifeng City. In a narrow sense, it refers to Henan Province today.

<sup>83</sup> It belongs to the Southern Dynasty during the Northern and Southern Dynasties; the period is from 502-589.

“There was once a collection of poems in Putian, which was specially written by female authors from Putian, it included many talented poems in every past Dynasty. From this, we can see the education situation of women in Putian in ancient times. In Putian, where the literary style is flourishing, Mazu as a folk woman, has higher talents and Knowledge is not accidental. This also lays a cultural foundation for the emergence of Mazu belief.” (R Qinghua, 2016: pp 73)

### 3.3 The moral environment of Mazu belief

Putian is a famous moral state in history. Since ancient times, Putian people have attached importance to moral education and have a good moral environment. In history, there have been many loyal men and integrity women, as well as many loyal officials and filial children.

The expression of morality in Putian is the spirit of literati and scholars who would rather die than surrender. In the Southern Song Dynasty, the champion Chen Wenlong is a national hero, he insists on resisting Yuan Dynasty to the end. These people with lofty ambitions used their high spirits to create a glorious moral landscape for Putian literature. In addition to the traditional orthodox morals, in Putian's history, the folk also has many very effective methods in moral education and moral inheritance. Putian has a very good medium for spreading moral concepts, that is well-known folk stories. These stories poured into the love, hatred and praises of the common people, they produced a peculiar effect of suppressing evil and promoting good. These stories have become classic legends that children will never tire of listening to, and some of them have been written and showed on the stage of Puxian Drama.

Some simple preaching is often easy to lose in the process of inheritance. The ancient Putian people often transformed moral education into a kind of folk custom, or it can be said that this kind of moral education was packed with folk customs so that they can be retained for thousands of years. For example, there is a folk custom in Putian that when a child is born or when a person dies, a large-collared shirt is worn. This clothing is a kind of clothing style of Ming Dynasty. This kind of custom can still be seen everywhere in the folk even today. This custom was formed after Ming Dynasty, it is to show the spirit that people still do not surrender after Ming Dynasty was wiped out. These folk customs can be formed because the beliefs that they convey

have been recognized and supported by the general public. It shows that the Putian people attach great importance to traditional morality and the education of national integrity. This kind of traditional morality and the education of national integrity, which was strengthened by using folk customs as a carrier has indeed got the effect that everyone knows, they are always new, and can pass on from generation to generation.

Another practice of the Putian people's moral education in ancient times was to respect the loyal and virtuous people, who appeared in the locality. For those who are loyal and courageous, Putian City in addition to applying to the court for commendation, Putian people will spontaneously build temples to worship them. This kind of temple is not dedicated to the gods of Buddhism, but some loyal officials and heroic martyrs who were born and respected by people themselves. The temples of Mazu belong to this category. These temples played an important media role in the inheritance of folk morals in Putian. Even today, there is a temple dedicated to worship Yuan Lushan, who is the official leader of building the Dongzhen Reservoir for common people. Actually, Mazu belief is the product of this folk behavior.

In history, females in Putian not only accepted the influence of traditional morality, but also expanded and tenaciously continued their unique moral image. In history, the traditional women in Putian are well-known for their kindness, gentleness, hardworking, thrifty, simple, tenacious and persevering, these are recognized by everyone.

From the group image of traditional women in Putian, we can see that the essence of Mazu spirit is the typical and concentrated expression of the traditional moral image of the traditional women in Putian. Mazu's spirits of compassion and kindness, saving people in need, tenacity, dedication and sacrifice all have the typical characteristics of Putian's women. Mazu is an outstanding representative of Putian's women.

#### 3.4 The social development and economic factors of Mazu belief

The Song Dynasty was the peak of the development of China's feudal society. At that time, the economy and culture of Fujian Province were already in a leading position in the country. As a result of the proactive marine policy, sea transportation at home and abroad was prosperous. Fujian and even Putian, have become a leader in both

economic and culture from behind position. In particular, Putian City, which is the origin of Mazu, has been known as the ‘Famous Literature State’ and ‘Seaside Zoulu’<sup>84</sup> since ancient times. Its economy and culture are developed and it ranks first in Fujian Province. In the fifth year of Taiping Xingguo<sup>85</sup> in the Northern Song Dynasty (980), Putian was upgraded from a county to Xinghua region, which shows that Putian has entered a new period of development. Since then, Putian has been on the same level as Fuzhou, Quanzhou and other regions, it becomes one of the eight cities in Fujian Province.

Xinghua region<sup>86</sup> is one of the four largest centers of shipbuilding in Fujian. By the end of the Southern Song Dynasty, the number of ships owned by the Xinghua region was astonishing. Developed commerce will inevitably promote the prosperity of the port, and produces many towns. In Song Dynasty, the sea transportation of Ninghai, Jile, Gangli, Fengting, and Baihu ports in Xinghua had already taken on a considerable scale. These ports are all gatherings of merchant ships from north and south, thousands of ships were gathered together. It is fully qualified to become the starting point of the sea route for spreading Mazu belief. With the grand development of shipping, there are many ships, if sailing down the wind, it can reach Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Hubei and other places within a few days. So, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Guangdong and other places have built Mazu temples in the earlier time. This is as a result of the close contact between the ports of Xinghua region and these places.

Fujian's coastline is one of the longest in the country, its tortuosity rate of coastline ranks the first place, and it has many natural harbors. Xinghua region is located in the middle of the coast, with three bays. Meizhou Bay, Xinghua Bay and Pinghai Bay. There are Ditou Peninsula, Zhongmen Peninsula, Xiuyu Peninsula, and

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<sup>84</sup> It means coastal cultural prosperous place, it broadly includes Fuzhou, Putian, Quanzhou, Zhangzhou, etc.

<sup>85</sup> Taiping Xingguo ( 976 - 984) was the reign period of the emperor Taizong of the Northern Song Dynasty, which lasted nearly 8 years.

<sup>86</sup> Xinghua Army is the name of an ancient military-level administrative region in Fujian, China. It existed between 980 and 1277, its jurisdiction is equivalent to today's Putian City, Fujian Province.

more than 150 large and small islands between these three bays. On the opposite side are Taiwan Island and the wider area of the Pacific Ocean, which has rich marine resources.

The coastal people who live in the area of Meizhou Bay always treat the sea as their land, they usually engage in economic activities, such as fishing, shipping, and overseas trade. They always on the sea all year round, they have to endure the influence of many complex factors that are different from those on land. Such as marine natural environment, hydrological and meteorological changes, and so on. They sail for a long time in the vast sea, the space for activities is small, they are separated from family and social groups, their life is monotonous, stressful, labor-intensive, and physically exhausting. This special living environment has exercised people's living skills, courage and perseverance. In addition, the psychology of blessing for smooth sailing and praying for safety is quite strong.

Mazu came into being because of the people's desire for being protected, being safe, and defeating disasters. The commercial trade and navigation industry in Putian had already had a considerable scale in Tang Dynasty. The business of commerce and navigation occupied an important position in history after Song Dynasty. In Song Dynasty, countries and regions that traded with Putian included Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asian countries. In Song Dynasty, on the one hand, the development of fishery, commerce, and navigation in Putian made local people have closer relations with the sea, and they had more frequent exchanges. On the other hand, in the background of poor science and technology, there was no weather forecast, no modern navigation equipment. Sailors need to face the ever-changing climate on the sea, and they also need to face frequent storms. In front of the mighty and elusive sea, the difficulties and dangers can be imagined.

Making a living at sea is a matter for men. However, when men sail to the ocean, the women in the family have always been concerned and worried. Frequent shipwrecks have claimed the lives of many people, including the life of Mazu's brother. All these undoubtedly stimulated the compassionate and kind-hearted Mazu, who grew up by the sea, this also inspired Mazu as the woman who stays at home, to come forward and use her intelligence and wisdom, as well as her advantages in knowing knowledge about the sea, and maritime experience, to navigate for sailors and rescue them in

distress. Mazu's rescue and navigation at sea carry the great hope of survival at the sea of the coastal people, and it carries the wholehearted support of family women to the men who sailed to the sea for a living. Mazu's spirit is also a kind of spiritual assistance that people expect to obtain help in the process of sailing to the sea. In this sense, Mazu's maritime navigation and shipwreck rescue have become the spiritual sustenance and source of strength for sailors. She endues sailors the courage and strength to conquer the ocean. The extremely frequent maritime activities and overseas trade along the coast of Fujian in Song Dynasty made those who made a living on the sea become early believers of Mazu, and they were the enthusiastic spreaders of Mazu belief in the early period.

### 3.5 The religious environment in Song Dynasty

In history, Song Dynasty is an era that deserves special attention. It has made great achievements in economy, culture and technology. Modern scholars generally believe that the achievements of Song Dynasty in both material and spiritual aspects have reached unprecedented heights. The cultural environment of Song Dynasty was relatively relaxed. In the early Song Dynasty, freedom of belief was advocated. Taoism and Buddhism were both respected. In the period of Songzhenzong, morality was advocated, and the god-making movement started. In the period of Song Huizong, the emperor believed in wizards and Taoists. In this background, Putian folks had the chance to put some people onto the altar, those people had done many good deeds for common people. Folks built temples and shrines for worshipping, and created some gods who were believed by the local people. In Putian, in addition to Mazu, who is famous for rescue at sea, there are also Qian Siniang<sup>87</sup>, who built Mulanpo<sup>88</sup>.

It was in such a social environment that Mazu belief came into being in Putian in Song Dynasty, and the sea protector god in China was thus done by an ordinary folk

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<sup>87</sup> Qian Siniang, a native of Changle, in the first year of Zhiping (1064) in the Northern Song Dynasty, she was 16 years old and brought her family assets to Putian to build dam.

<sup>88</sup> Mulanpo was the largest water diversion project in Fujian at that time, and it was also one of the most complete existing ancient dam projects in China.



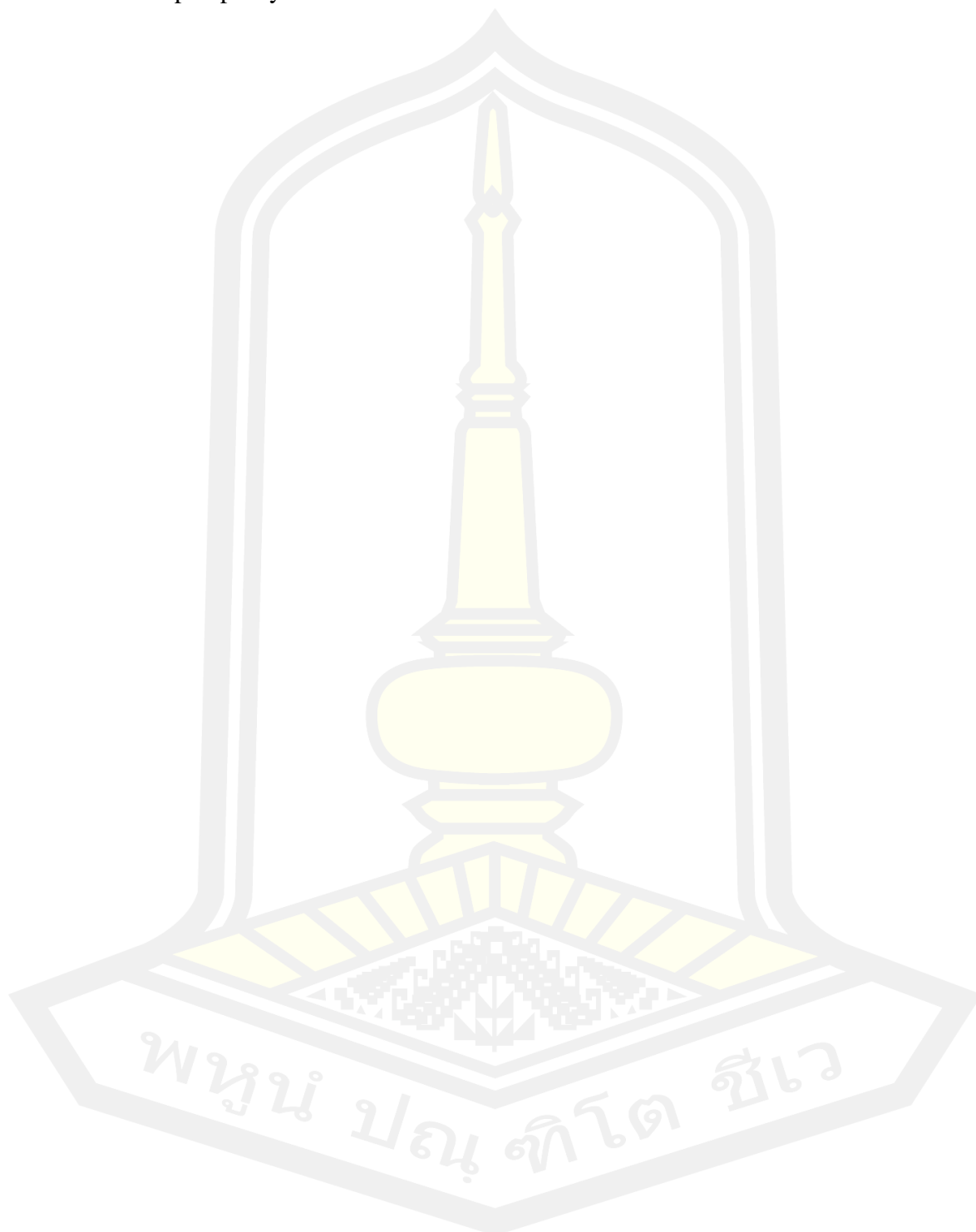
woman. As the spiritual sustenance of the ancient marine ancestors fighting against nature, Mazu belief is inseparable from Chinese navigation, maritime trade, and the development of coastal ports since Song Dynasty. Mazu gradually moved to a wider area, from Putian on the southeast coast of our country, to the place where has the footprints of Chinese people all over the world. Mazu has become a famous sea goddess at home and abroad.

### **Summary**

The connotation of Mazu culture is setting up morals, doing good deeds, and great love, which embodies the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation, and it has formed a powerful spiritual force till now. Mazu culture is an outstanding folk traditional culture of the Chinese nation, with far-reaching influence. Mazu culture is a precious spiritual wealth of Chinese traditional culture. It covers a wide range of fields, including economy, politics, military, art, etc., with rich historical materials and high value of research. After thousands of years of inheritance, Mazu culture is not only recognized by the general public as a folk belief, but also a mark of the roots of overseas Chinese. It has the characteristics of folk, extensive, compatible and maritime. Mazu culture has an important position in the cultural structure of the contemporary world. Mazu culture belongs to not only China, but also the world. As a product of marine civilization, Mazu culture is easier to integrate with the market economy than other cultures, and is more adapted to the modern process of social development.

The goal of 'The Belt and Road' is to promote the harmonious development of the entire region. Therefore, it must adhere to the humanities exchange first, implement the strategy of cultural openness, promote dialogue between different cultures, and promote and build our own cultural self-confidence and cultural consciousness. In the context of 'The Belt and Road', it needs to strengthen the conscious exploration of Mazu culture and the integration of Mazu cultural resources, formulate strategic plans for Mazu cultural exchanges, and enrich the content and carriers of Mazu cultural exchanges in countries and regions along 'The Belt and Road'. Adopting a combination of government's establishment and private participation to actively provide various guarantees and services to promote the conscious development

of Mazu culture in the construction of 'The Belt and Road' and promote harmony and common prosperity.



## CHAPTER III

### Mazu Artifacts and the Meaning of Mazu Statue and the Place

Mazu artifacts have various kinds and were filled with a vivid life atmosphere, they are the main component of Mazu culture as the physical entity. This chapter starts with the representative Mazu artifacts, enumerates and analyzes the artistic characteristics of folk customs, Mazu clothes and architecture of Mazu temple. In addition, this chapter will deeply analyze the artistic and cultural characteristics of Mazu statue, analyze the new image of Mazu in the context of the new period, including people, society, etc. To explain the significance of Mazu statue as the landmark of Meizhou Island.

The structures of this chapter are as follows.

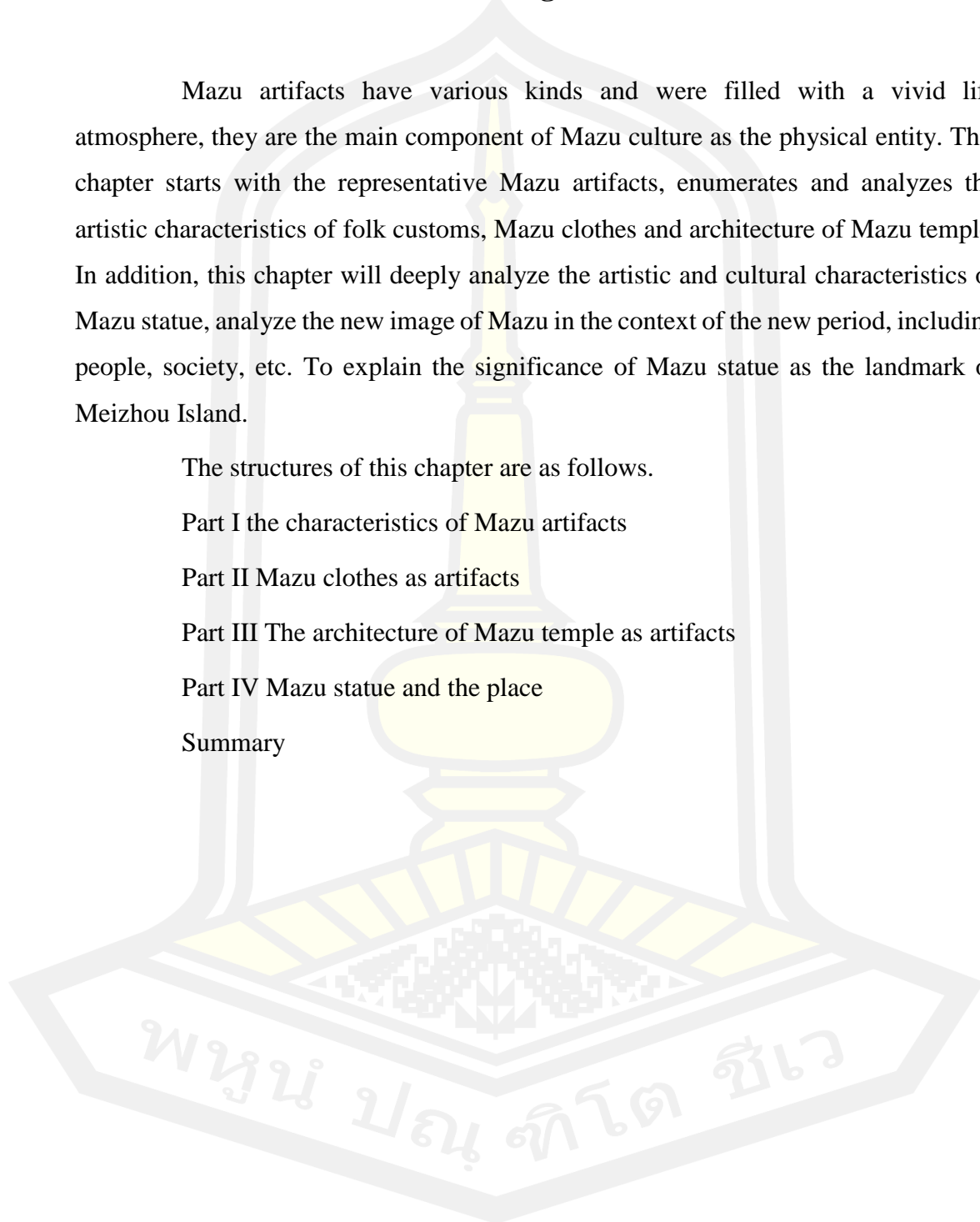
Part I the characteristics of Mazu artifacts

Part II Mazu clothes as artifacts

Part III The architecture of Mazu temple as artifacts

Part IV Mazu statue and the place

Summary



## **Part I The characteristics of Mazu artifacts**

### **1.1 The functions of Mazu artifacts**

Mazu culture is the general term for the material and spiritual wealth that left over and passed down in the process of admiring and believing Mazu by the working people for more than a thousand years. It is one of the important cultural treasures of the Chinese nation. Mazu spirit is an important manifestation of Mazu belief, and Mazu artifacts present Mazu culture more intuitively in the external manifestation of spirit, it conveys Mazu spirit through tangible materials. The material and spiritual aspects complement each other, blend into one, and set off each other so that they have written a beautiful scene of Mazu culture.

Mazu artifacts are an important part of Chinese traditional culture. It integrates practicality, functionality and aesthetics. Many aspects of it can reflect the historical origin and the characteristics of the social culture of a certain period, it can also reflect from the side about the thinking and living conditions of working people.

“Artifacts are one of the oldest types of art, covering a wide range of categories, including many earliest forms of artistic creation, such as jade carvings and traditional paintings and so on. Artifacts refer to a kind of aesthetic creation that aesthetically processing materials through production methods, it takes a function as a premise in the field of life. It is an art that beautifies daily necessities and the living environment.” (H Ruiguo, 2013: pp 440)

Mazu artifacts refer to all artworks or art phenomena which are related to art during the process of Mazu belief. “Artifacts are an important part of the material and cultural life of the human, as well as a materialized form of spiritual material of human. As a cultural symbol, it inherits the politics, economy, culture and religious belief of a nation-state in a certain historical period, and it also reflects the inheritance, development and innovation of traditional skills themselves.” (H Xiulin, 2012: pp 245)

The origin of Mazu artifacts can be traced back to the Song Dynasty. It is a type of plastic art that beautifies daily necessities and living environment, it is based on the needs and experience of ordinary people's actual life and belief, and it is directly integrated with people's daily life. Mazu artifacts are rooted in a profound cultural layer. They have been accumulated through generations over thousands of years. It is the

awakening of people's subjective consciousness and spiritual concepts. Mazu artifacts represent people's pursuit of a better life.

Mazu artifacts emerged under specific historical conditions and developed with the growth of people's belief in Mazu. Its many art forms are mainly used to serve Mazu folk culture, enrich and strengthen the atmosphere of Mazu folk activities so that the activities of Mazu belief can be displayed tangibly, not purely aesthetic motivation. But in addition, it reflects social reality and embodies the cultural and artistic achievements reached by Mazu followers.

Mazu artifacts have a strong feature of inheritance, a strong collective consciousness and regional characteristics. The occurrence and development of various folklore activities such as Mazu folklore, mythical stories and festival sacrificial customs are inextricably linked with Mazu artifacts. The development of Mazu artifacts often changes with the changes of these folk cultural ecology, they are full of randomness. The materialized production of folk artifacts continuously gives birth to the emergence of new substances. Mazu artifacts not only affect and enrich Mazu folk culture and the emergence of new themes and forms but also adds new vitality and blood to the entire folk culture and even human culture, forming an organic whole of mutual relationship.

### 1.2 The uniqueness and symbolic features of Mazu artifacts

Putian is located at the coast of Fujian Province. Meizhou Island is an island, and people living here have been dealing with the sea all their lives. Under the social background of a harsh environment and underdeveloped science and technology at that time, people would naturally wish to pray for the blessing of gods, and Mazu belief came into being. "As soon as the Mazu belief comes into being, a variety of Mazu artifacts will be needed to match it. Because Mazu belief is produced under a specific marine culture, Mazu artifacts also have strong marine cultural characteristics. It is a result of the combination of people's material production and spiritual production. Currently, there are more than 300 Mazu temples preserved in Putian city, almost in every village, and many people also serve statues of Mazu in their homes." (H Ruiguo, 2013: pp 443) The resulting Mazu artifacts have complex and diverse artistic styles, which have added a lot of luster to the prosperity and development of Chinese folk art.

“Putian city has a long history and is well-known as the hometown of Chinese folk art. It is known as ‘the City of Chinese Woodcarving’, ‘the City of Classical Crafts and Furniture’, ‘Jewelry Characteristic Industrial Base’, and ‘Hometown of Chinese Silver Ornaments’. Folk artists have solid modeling skills, and many elements of Mazu culture are constantly being discovered, this more often shows the spiritual characteristics and cultural connotation of Mazu.” (H Xiulin, 2012: pp 246)

In Mazu artifacts, specific symbols have specific meanings, they are used in specific Mazu folk activities. For example, the wavy pattern of the sea often seen in Mazu artifacts is a prominent manifestation of marine culture. The decorative patterns on Mazu clothes imply blessings and embody the pragmatic expression of good desires from Mazu's followers. The decorative elements of Mazu statue usually use auspicious clouds, waves, sailing boats, dragons, phoenixes and other patterns as background. The colors are bright and festive, reflecting the believers' longing for a better life. The paper-made characters in the activities of Mazu sacrifice have distinctive personalities and exaggerated colors. Men are generally tall and mighty, while women are generally lovely and beautiful. They are the unique aesthetics of Putian people and a microcosm of Chinese traditional culture. Such works all reflect that the activities of Mazu artifacts carried out around Mazu belief, relying on the development of Mazu folk activities, have not only the morphological characteristics of marine culture but also the commonality of folk art.

As a branch of Chinese traditional artifacts, Mazu artifacts play a special role in its own application fields. It was produced in response to the needs of Mazu folk activities. It was mainly created by working people that were based on their pursuit of beauty. Mazu artifacts originated from people's daily life, and they have poured their simple and true emotions and aesthetic interests. They do not pursue the use of precious materials when selecting materials, and they do not pay attention to the technique of expression. Therefore, they are closer to people's lives and are more human. For example, the carving of Mazu stone statues are rough, the marks carved by chisel, knife and axe are obvious, it shows a strong romantic atmosphere. The paper-made horses incinerated in Mazu sacrifice were painted on square-inch rough-edged paper by improvisation. The shape was immature, clumsy and bold, but economical and



affordable. Putian's traditional folk embroidery<sup>89</sup> in Mazu artifacts usually uses trees, flowers, fruits, and auspicious birds and beasts as themes. The stitches of embroidery are not too exquisite, reflecting a simple and natural pleasure.

As an important part of Chinese traditional culture, artifacts are moving towards industrialization, becoming an important carrier for the great development and prosperity of socialist culture under market economy conditions. As the birthplace of Mazu culture, Putian city has rich artifacts resources, long history and culture. Its location is special, and its industry personnel is skillful. Putian artifacts have formed a certain scale. With the continuous improvement of material living and spiritual living standards, the craftsmanship of Mazu artifacts has been continuously combined with practicality and aesthetics. Its form has been enriched with the development and spread of Mazu culture and the continuous changes in its connotation and extension, its form has produced a rich variety of different expression forms and category characteristics.

This chapter will deeply analyze through Mazu clothes, Mazu architecture, understand and explore the spiritual connotation of Mazu culture from each detail, and how they fully reflect people's enthusiasm and wisdom. In addition, with the symbolic characteristics of Mazu statue as a starting point, analyzing its artistic characteristics and symbolic meaning. With the changes of the times, the functions of Mazu belief are also constantly developing. Therefore, it is necessary for us to combine the current development of tourism on Meizhou Island to discover the contemporary significance and characteristics of Mazu as the goddess of peace on the sea.

## **Part II Mazu clothes as artifacts**

Mazu clothes is an important evidence for the inheritance of Mazu culture and has the characteristics of strong Mazu culture. As a Mazu artifact, Mazu clothes embodies people's wisdom and profound connotation.

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<sup>89</sup> Embroidery is the general term for various decorative patterns embroidered on fabric by needles and threads.

## 2.1 The introduction of Mazu clothes

Mazu clothes are Meizhou women's understanding of life, their feelings of life, and the thoughts and blessings for their relatives. It has a profound cultural background. "As a traditional form of artistic expression, it has artistic aesthetics, artistic expression, unique connotations and important aesthetic value. Mazu clothes is an important part of Mazu culture, and it is also a part of the world's intangible cultural heritage. They are cultural resources with the great value of the development." (L Lifang, H Chaohui, 2018: pp 63)

"The formation of life's customs and living habits are inseparable, long different environments of life have formed different ways of wearing and habits. In a specific environment and the process of historical development, clothes customs are also a sign of human adaptation to the environment. People on Meizhou Island have also formed a unique clothes culture during their long-term seaside work and life. Due to the relatively closed cultural environment, this regional culture is relatively well preserved."(S Xuemei, 2016:pp 126) "According to relevant historical records, Mazu clothes originated from the special geographical environment and living habits, and its maturity period was in the Song Dynasty. Therefore, the features of Mazu clothes are similar to clothes of the Song Dynasty, the features of the style are simple, natural and practical. In the legendary story of Mazu, texts are depicting that Mazu wore red clothes to save people on the sea, and this has also become the source of material for future generations to re-design Mazu clothes." (W Yachi, J Bowen, W Yue, 2019: pp 49)

## 2.2 Analysis on the features of Mazu clothes

"Mazu clothes have become a unique clothes culture after inheritance and evolution for more than one thousand years. So far, there is still a popular local folk song like that 'sailboat hairstyle, sea shirt, red and black trousers to keep safe'. This is a vivid portrayal of Mazu clothes customs. This sentence covers the characteristics and connotation of Mazu's hairstyle and clothes." (X Sujia, 2018: pp 40)



Figure 15 Mazu clothes

Source: <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%B9%84%E6%B4%B2%E5%A5%B3>,  
2019

### 2.2.1 The hairstyle and hair accessory of Mazu clothes

“‘Mazu bun’ is a hair bun that resembles a sail, it means that Mazu's heart belongs to the sea, Mazu is determined to not marry forever. The characteristic of Mazu bun's combing is that coiling up the hair, and combing a sail-shaped hair bun at the back of the head, which symbolizes sailing smoothly. This is commonly known as the ‘sailboat hairstyle’. Mazu clothes is a blue jacket with a semi-collared collar, using sea blue as the main color. Mazu trousers are commonly known as ‘red and black three-piece trousers’, which are composed of two pieces of red and black colors.” (S Xuemei, 2016: pp 126)



Figure 16 Mazu bun

Source: <https://image.baidu.com/search/detail?ct=503316480&z>, 2019

Mazu clothes are the external expression of Mazu clothes culture. Through the analysis and interpretation of Mazu clothes, it is helpful to refine people's understanding of life. Mazu clothes permeate people's identity of Mazu belief in traditional artworks. People often wear Mazu clothes in ordinary life. It feels like Mazu is by side. It can always urge people to firmly believe in Mazu, and use their behaviors and norms to practice Mazu spirit. It will influence the people around them, thus forming a good social culture, inheriting and developing Mazu culture.

Since ancient times, the living habit of people on Meizhou Island is that men go to fishing at the sea and women stay at home. Therefore, in order to hope that Mazu can bless their relatives who go to the sea will return safely, women waiting at home combed the 'Mazu bun', praying to be protected by Mazu, blessing their relatives will back home safely and smoothly.

"The legend of 'Setting ambition with a hair bun' shows that Mazu bun was designed by Mazu when she was alive. When she was 18 years old, her parents prepared her marriage, but Mazu was very determined to save the fishermen, and she vowed never to marry. She locked herself in her room for three days and nights, then set the 'Mazu bun' and came out, she told to her parents, this bun was the sail and this line is the cable. She had already promised the sea. In this life, she just wanted to serve

her parents and rescue the fishermen. And she was already satisfied. Later generations admired and imitated her, they commemorated Mazu with this hairstyle and expressed their devotion to Mazu. From this, we can also see the rich historical and symbolic meaning contained in the ‘Mazu bun’.” (Y Xiaoli, C Dongsheng, 2010: pp 80)

The combing method of ‘Mazu bun’ is very complicated and exquisite. First, divide the hair into three parts, left, middle and right, then comb the middle part on top of the head, fix it with a long red cord, and twist it into a round hair. And then pass a silver hairpin horizontally to fix the hairpin. The next step is to comb the hair on the temples on the left and right, loosely comb out the arched shape, and then fix it with two wavy hair clips, after that, tie the remaining hair to the back of the head, and use 5-10 small hair clips to fix them together, comb them into a sail-like bun, and then insert a large sewing needle or silver needle on the top of the head. There is a red thread hanging on the needle. Finally, some red flowers are decorated on the hair to make the hairstyle more beautiful.

The overall shape of ‘Mazu bun’ is a flat hair bun, which like a sail and stand from the top of the head to the back of the head. The whole hairstyle is combed from real hair and clamped with clips. The sail-like hair bun has a wave-shaped hairpin on the left and right side, representing the oars on the boat. A round hairpin on the top of the head represents the rudder of the boat. The red-headed rope coiled in the hairpin represents the rope on the ship. A silver hairpin crosses the hairpin horizontally, representing the anchor on the ship. The hairpin and hairline represent the parts on the ship. All the essentials are combined to represent the entire ship, meaning smooth sailing. It can be seen that a small ‘Mazu bun’ contains the wisdom of working people, it is the artistic sublimation of people's lives, and it also carries rich emotions of thousands of women of Meizhou Island.

### 2.2.2 The clothing style of Mazu clothes

Mazu clothes belong to the local folk costumes of Han nationality<sup>90</sup>. They are concise, simple, with exquisite headdresses and cumbersome craftsmanship, and they have deep and extraordinary connotations.

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<sup>90</sup> The Han nationality is the main ethnic group in China, named after China's Han Dynasty. The Han nationality is a nation with a long history that has never been



The clothing style is the most important feature of clothing. “The clothing style of Mazu clothes are basically the same as the traditional costumes of Han nationality, it is divided into jacket and trousers. The jacket is a slanted jacket, without embroidery and piping, it is very simple. The jacket is a hip-length, round stand-up collar, sleeve length is one-tenth shorter than ordinary clothes, the cuffs are slightly loose, but it is easy to work. The structure mainly follows the traditional features of a stand-up collar and disc button. Mazu trousers are wide-leg trousers, with a wide waist, and the trouser legs up to the ankles. There are no plackets, pockets, and no distinction between front and back parts. In order to save fabric materials, Mazu trousers are usually sewn with white cloth of general quality. It has a wide waist. When wearing it requires that the sides of the waist be folded inward, and the waist should be tightened with the help of white cloth strips. The design of wide-leg trousers is because people will work at the beach for a long time, and the trouser legs often get wet by seawater. The wide trouser legs are designed to facilitate the drying of wet trouser legs with the help of sea breeze.” (X Sujia, 2018: pp 40)

### 2.2.3 The colors of Mazu clothes

Traditional Mazu clothes are dyed with handmade plant indigo blue, the overall color of clothes is mainly indigo blue. The people of Meizhou Island have always lived by fishing in the sea, it is derived from the worship of the sea, that is the color of the natural environment in which they live, that is the color of sky and sea. In addition, the people of Meizhou Island are industrious and simple, this is consistent with the calm, rational, broad, and loyal image which is represented by blue. It can be said that the color of clothes is the most direct expression of Meizhou women's personality and clothes preferences.

“In addition to using a large area of indigo blue, Mazu clothes also choose red as auxiliary color. As the carrier of Chinese culture, red color contains rich and profound cultural significance, it is a symbol of auspiciousness, well-being and joy. According to legend, Mazu likes to wear red clothes to protect and rescue people at sea.

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interrupted, it is also the most populous nation in the world. As of 2009, the population of Han nationality is about 1.3 billion, accounting for about 19% of the world's total population. Han nationality distributed all over the world.



Red can make it easier for navigators to distinguish the direction of navigation. The splicing application of red and blue in Mazu trousers not only breaks the visual boringness of large areas of blue but also avoids the abruptness and inconsistency of large areas of red. In addition, the lower part of Mazu trousers are often soaked in seawater for a long time, it is easy to get dirty, fade and change color. Therefore, the choice of blue for the trouser legs is more ingenious and more suitable than red. This is a practical aesthetic which is produced in labor.” (S Xuemei, 2016: pp 127)

#### 2.2.4 The clothing fabrics of Mazu clothes

Fabric is an important factor that directly affects the color and styling effect of clothing. Different fabrics interpret different clothing styles and characteristics. Mazu clothes are clothes worn in daily labor. So, the comfort of clothing must be considered, and soft fabrics should be used. Mazu clothes are made of traditional pure cotton fabric, which has good air permeability, moisture absorption and comfort. Although it is easy to fold and shrink, and it is not beautiful in appearance, but the soft fabric adopts a linear and simple shape can reflect a beautiful curve, this will improve its beauty. The folding effect produced by fabric during work can reflect the sense of the flow of fabric. The color-blocking over-the-shoulder and corner's patchwork in Mazu's jacket were originally used to sew patches on damaged parts, and then gradually evolved into a decorative method of clothing, which looked simple and unique. The stitching of the red and black trouser legs of Mazu's trousers is also to facilitate the replacement of fabric when the fabric is worn out, so as to save the fabric materials. This has a direct relationship with the economic situation of ordinary people at that time.

#### 2.3 The cultural connotation of Mazu clothes

The custom of women's hair accessories in the ancient society of China is flower appreciation on the head, it prevailed in the period of Tang and Song Dynasties. “In the Song Dynasty, women used fresh flowers or silk and cotton-like paper flowers as decorations for daily hair decoration. Corollas can be freely matched in various kinds of flowers and shapes, according to different hobbies. The commonly used flowers at that time were peach, apricot, lotus, chrysanthemum and plum, etc. About shapes, there were a single flower, double flowers, multiple flowers and so on. In the Song Dynasty, regardless of men and women, regardless of monarchs and ministers, almost everyone

loved flowers. Hair accessories on their heads were normal things. Even when the emperor went out, all of his guards wore hair accessories. The emperor of the Song Dynasty gave flowers according to the rank of official position. In the folk society, people bought flowers, hair accessories, and used them to make friends. Therefore, the custom of women on Meizhou Island that wearing hair accessories is also a continuation of traditional custom, which has been retained until now.” (S Xuemei, 2016: pp 128)

Mazu clothes are representative of ordinary people's clothing, with simple and generous shapes and basically unchanged clothing. However, Mazu clothes change with her status and titles. Mazu clothes have changed from simple clothing patterns to dragon and phoenix patterns, which are complicated and luxurious. The people of Meizhou Island put people's yearning for wealth and power on Mazu, reflecting their worship and awe of Mazu. The dragon pattern or other auspicious patterns on Mazu clothes imply that Mazu has the power to resist disasters and conquer nature. The peony pattern gives the meaning of wealth and auspiciousness, it highlights Mazu's noble identity, and also expresses the beautiful pursuit and yearning of life of Mazu believers and ordinary people.



Figure 17 Some women wear Mazu clothes

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

### 2.3.1 The artistic value of Mazu clothes

Mazu clothes is an important carrier of Mazu culture, which has specific cultural connotations. Its artistic value is reflected in its originality. The residents of Meizhou Island devote all the details of their lives and deep understanding of life to the creation of Mazu clothes and express it through clothing culture. Their artistic creation comes from life, it is close to life but above life.

Mazu is a typical representative of women on Meizhou Island. The image design of Mazu is closely related to the lives of the residents of Meizhou Island. It is a true portrayal of the lives of the residents of Meizhou Island, conveying people's love and respect for the sea and miss for their relatives. From the culture contained in Mazu clothes, we can see that the residents of Meizhou Island have no pretentious or exaggerated modifications, it can be verified from the colors of the clothes. They use their own life emotions and ingenuity to create, the expression is simple and natural, not deliberate, and has a unique color personality.

The clothes that Mazu usually wore during her daily time became the source of inspiration and creative material for people to design Mazu clothes. "People incorporated Mazu spirit into Mazu clothes and fully expressed their miss and respect for Mazu. Mazu clothes are rich in connotation and profound meaning. It is not a simple copy of Mazu's external clothes, but it is based on China's traditional cultural connotation, combined with modern aesthetic habits and design language to expand and innovate. It is simple and atmospheric, and highlights Mazu spirit, such as 'setting morality', 'doing good deeds', 'great love'. This refinement and re-creation of the connotation of a traditional culture incorporate modern people's thoughts and wisdom, can satisfy people's emotional and cultural needs, and reflects the inheritance of traditional culture." (L Lifang, H Chaohui, 2018: pp 64)

At present, Mazu clothes are regarded as a kind of artifacts with high cultural value. In Mazu ceremonies and usual folk festivals, people are radiantly wearing Mazu clothes, participating in performances, or worshipping Mazu. On important occasions such as 'the Mazu Forum' and 'the Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival', the history of Mazu clothes is regularly promoted. By wearing Mazu clothes, a strong atmosphere of Mazu culture is created, this helps people to deeply appreciate the meaning of Mazu belief. It allows visitors to understand Mazu clothes and Mazu

culture while enjoying performances that are rich in the connotation of Mazu culture so that Mazu clothes and Mazu culture can be better inherited and carried forward.

### 2.3.2 The modernity of Mazu clothes in the context of the new period

Mazu clothes have high modernity. As Mazu folk culture is gradually being valued, a large number of resources about Mazu clothes has been gradually developed. As an important part of Mazu culture, Mazu clothes will become a new modern industrial resource.

Now, Mazu clothes is a beautiful landscape on Meizhou Island. Sailboat hairstyle, sea skirts, red and black trousers contain profound historical heritage. Black and blue are the main colors of Mazu clothes, which are solemn and simple. The bright red is incorporated on the basis of black and blue, which has a good contrast effect and has a rhythmic beauty. The colors of Mazu clothes are very coordinated, giving a novel visual effect. The deep marine cultural hue makes people bright and impressive. The formal beauty of Mazu clothes is a valuable source of inspiration for modern design. The most typical of these are the beauty of symmetry and balance, and the beauty of rhythm, which have a strong appreciation and aesthetic value.

The cultural value of clothing is based on practicality. Mazu culture is a local culture with distinctive characteristics. Mazu clothes are one of the external manifestations of Mazu belief and an important window for people to taste Mazu belief and Mazu culture. It integrates the characteristics of art, culture, and practicality. It can be touched in a close distance and has a firsthand experience. The evolution of Mazu clothes reflects the profound cultural heritage of Mazu clothes in terms of styles, fabrics, colors, and decorative techniques. It is the crystallization of people's wisdom. Inheriting and carrying forward Mazu clothes will help spread and exchange Mazu culture.

In modern society, Mazu clothes have been developed and sold as a clothing product, realizing economic value by selling cultural products of clothing in the market. Mazu clothes have a long history and rich connotation, it is a rare cultural resource. In addition, Mazu clothes also have re-creativity. "As people's conscious awareness continues to increase, there are more and more new requirements for self-positioning and the pursuit of clothing. Therefore, under the premise of maintaining the features of Mazu clothes, the appreciation of Mazu clothes can be improved, and it can

also pay more attention to the practicality of Mazu clothes. For example, paying attention to the combination with Mazu culture in the development of special tourism and ecological tourism services on Meizhou Island, applying the features of Mazu clothes to the clothes of guides, the clothes of hotel service staff, hotel and the supporting soft decoration facilities of a hotel, such as curtains, bedsheets, quilt covers, sofa covers, etc., referring the aesthetic characteristics of Mazu clothes, such as color, splicing, symmetry, to further reflect the cultural characteristics of Mazu on Meizhou Island. This can be designed to enhance the cultural atmosphere of Mazu, and use life's products to show the characteristics of Mazu clothes more cordially, spreading Mazu culture naturally, and making people feel as if they are in the world of Mazu.” (L Lifang, H Chaohui, 2018: pp 65)

Mazu clothes formed under the continuity of history and the accumulation of local culture. For the sustainable development of the industry of Mazu clothes culture, innovation is essential. While continuing the inheritance of Mazu culture, Mazu clothes can be innovatively designed in terms of clothing style, color, structure, and craftsmanship. Through the enterprise of clothing, it can produce clothing products that meet the aesthetic taste of modern people and have the charm of Mazu culture. Creating an original clothing brand that taking Mazu culture as its design orientation, which brings Mazu clothes to the market for more modern people to accept and love.

*Mazu culture is a living fossil in the intangible cultural heritage. The industry of Mazu cultural clothes is a modern new kind of industry, which has a strong attraction and a lot of space for development. In addition, it is also very challenging. It is necessary to fully tap the unique artistic characteristics of Mazu clothes while maintaining the heritage of traditional culture, it also need needs to distinguish product features, enhance the uniqueness of scenic spots, and promote the development of more cultural and creative products. In addition, attracting more outstanding professionals who are concerned about the development of Mazu culture to participate in the development of cultural industry, tapping more elements that can conform to the aesthetics of modern people, and enhancing Mazu cultural products' adaptability and potential development of the market.*

As a cultural resource that blends material culture and spiritual culture, Mazu clothes are a cultural resource that can highlight regional cultural characteristics



and has certain artistic value and potential development. We should absorb the nutrition of Mazu clothes culture, make full use of modern conditions to effectively develop and create the industry of Mazu clothes culture, enhance people's recognition of traditional culture, deepen people's understanding and recognition of Mazu clothes culture, and promote the inheritance and development of Mazu clothes culture.

### **Part III The architecture of Mazu temple as artifacts**

The architecture of Mazu temple is the crystallization of people's architectural art. It has strong characteristics of ocean culture. It is very meticulous and serious from the whole to the details. It is an important manifestation of Mazu's artwork. Studying the architectural and artistic characteristics of Mazu temple is conducive to seeing people's identification with Mazu belief and conveying it through artworks.

#### 3.1 The introduction of the architecture of Mazu temple

“As a material wealth, architecture not only produces a material shell but also a beautiful image in the process of human creation. When people build their houses, they also create original architectural decorations. These decorations continue to become complete and enriched with the development of architecture. The historical and cultural heritage is profound, including people's various efforts and wisdom. People also cultivated and developed its own concepts of architectural beauty and architectural art throughout the process.” (K Lihong, 2006)

The architectural art of Mazu temple is an important part of Mazu culture, including the overall layout, architectural structure, decoration design, color, and other aspects. It has obvious features of religion, and it is rich in subject matter, full of meaning, and has unique and distinctive features of expression form. Architectural art has regional characteristics and a reflection of local folk culture. In addition, it also contains the hard work and creation of the craftsmen in Putian City, they use their own methods to express their love and follow Mazu belief.

The architectural art of Mazu temple is a precious cultural heritage of Fujian Province and even China, it is an important carrier for people to express their yearning and admiration for Mazu. It is born along the coast of Fujian Province and has important features of marine culture. As a heritage of architectural art, it is also an important part



of China's excellent traditional culture. Therefore, the interpretation of the architectural art of Mazu temple will help us to more deeply understand the essence of Mazu culture and Mazu spirit.

### 3.2 Analysis on the architectural art of Mazu temple

#### 3.2.1 The overall design of Mazu temple

The complex of Mazu temple on Meizhou Island is located on Meizhou Island, Putian City, Fujian Province, backing mountains, facing the sea. The main buildings of the ancestral temple of Mazu are built along the hillside, with a height difference of more than 40 meters. A series of courtyards and buildings of different shapes and sizes are arranged symmetrically or asymmetrically along the depth direction, thereby highlighting various environmental atmospheres, making the main buildings look extraordinarily magnificent.



Figure 18 The overall design of Mazu temple

Source: [https://www.sohu.com/a/340760476\\_687809](https://www.sohu.com/a/340760476_687809), 2016

The complex of Mazu temple on Meizhou Island is the largest complex of Mazu temple in scale in the world today. Its whole layout is planned and constructed with the central line of the main hall as the axis of symmetry, the landscape axis is 300

meters long. From the foot of the mountain to Mazu Temple, you have to go through a long corridor to the mountain gate, pass the decree gate, and reach the main hall with a total of 323 steps. On both sides of the square in front of the main hall, there are bell towers and drum towers which have the architectural characteristic of Mazu temple. Passing the main hall and continuing upward, it is Mazu's Ascension Pavilion. When you reach the top of the mountain, you will see a giant Mazu statue, 14.85 meters high, with a jade Ruyi in her hands, a hair bun face upward, and wearing with phoenix crown. Mazu statue faces the sea, with a dignified manner, a kind demeanor, and an extraordinary aura.

The complex of Mazu temple on Meizhou Island is built on a mountain at an altitude of 80 meters. The complex has three symmetry axes, taking the Mazu statue on the top of the mountain as the center point, and extending in three directions, south, west, and north. The north axis is more than four hundred meters long. On this axis is the site of the first Mazu temple in history. It was built in the early Song Dynasty and began to be called the 'Goddess Temple'<sup>91</sup>. In the next thousand years, a number of Mazu temples and buildings were built on this axis. It is the axis where the main palace of Mazu is located. Along the western axis from bottom to top, and from the square at the main gate to the top of the mountain, passing through the square, you will see the new archway, the east-west display gallery, the mountain gate, the Decree Gate, the stage, the festival square, the symmetrical bell tower, the drum tower, the main hall, the Chaotian tower, the Ascension Pavilion, and finally the Mazu statue on the top of the mountain.

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<sup>91</sup> The first temple on Meizhou Island in the history of Mazu belief.





Figure 19 The Decree Gate  
Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020



Figure 20 The Chaotian tower  
Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

From the bottom to the top, there are a total of 323 steps from the mountain gate to the Mazu Ascension Pavilion, symbolizing that Mazu's birthday is on March 23. There are 99 steps from the Ascension Pavilion to the Mazu statue on the top of the mountain, it symbolizes that Mazu ascended to heaven on the ninth day of September. The Mazu's bedroom is the core building on this axis. It is located directly in front of the ceremonial square and it is also the main hall of Mazu temple. The existing building was rebuilt on the basis of the Mazu Pavilion built in the fourth year of the Song Dynasty in 987 A.D. It enshrines three Mazu statues and 4 subordinates, as well as multiple gods and assistant gods. Such as 'Chuxun Mazu', 'Mazu Stone Statue in Song Dynasty', 'Zhendian Mazu'<sup>92</sup>, 'Qianliyan and Shunfenger'<sup>93</sup>. The inner pillars in the main hall are also symmetrically engraved with two couplets, they mean 'protecting the sea in Putian' and 'the ancestor of every temple is Meizhou'.



<sup>92</sup> It refers to the most precious statue of Mazu.

<sup>93</sup> They are figures of monsters in Chinese myths and legends with fierce face and tall stature. They are later subdued by Mazu, and set them as Patron saint to protect society and people.



Figure 21 The main hall of the ancestral temple of Mazu

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

“The southern axis of the complex of Mazu temple on Meizhou Island is designed by Tsinghua University and started to build in 1997. Its axis is 466 meters long and 99 meters wide. It is an imitation of the Song architectural style with a total of five arrays, including Mazu’s bedroom, stage, celebration square, archway, bell tower, drum tower, etc. The entire complex is magnificent, surrounded by mountains and the sea, traditional elements of architectural decoration and modern construction techniques are perfectly combined to form a perfect and magnificent a complex of Mazu temple.” (H Ruiguo, 2013: pp 161)



Figure 22 Bell-drum towers

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

### 3.2.2 The architectural structure of Mazu temple

Mazu temple has typical features of Chinese traditional architecture. It uses stone as the foundation of the building. The complex structure of the building is built with wood, granite is used as the wall base, and masonry is used for the wall. The overall structure of the building built in this way is firm, even if the wall collapses, the architectural framework will still stand. The architecture of Mazu temple emphasizes the combination and connection of building components, each building component can exist independently. The wall of the building uses solid stone as the material for the wall corners, wall skirts, and wall foundations. The parts below the eaves of the walls are mostly built with red bricks with strong decorativeness, the internal partition walls are generally made of gray lime soil. The exterior wall of a traditional building of the temple is composed of multiple parts, and each part can become a 'wall block', this forms the basic appearance of the building.

“The construction method of the wall of Mazu temple is built with the bricks alternately horizontally and vertically. The biggest feature of this technique is that it reduces the construction cost while not weakening the wall's bearing capacity for the building. In addition, it has a good effect on sound insulation and moisture-proof. It alternately builds a row of bricks horizontally and vertically, and then fills the hollow space with a mixed sand mixture or broken bricks, gravel, etc. Some buildings are filled with mixed masonry of pebbles, red tiles, red bricks, and stones. This method is very decorative. They are made of different colors, the bricks and stones are alternately built. It forms a contrast of sharp color, and the uneven surface of the wall makes the walls of temple buildings have different texture effects. In terms of function, this masonry method makes the wall more resistant to wind and rain, making the building more resistant to typhoons, and not affected too much by bad weather. Also, the waste materials are effectively used. This kind of architectural culture originated from the special geographical environment of the coastal area, adapted to the climatic characteristics of the coastal area of Meizhou Island, adapted measures to local conditions, selected local materials. It brought into playing the ingenuity of the local craftsmen, with the regional cultural characteristics of Meizhou Island.” (X Huiying, 2011: pp 61)



“The architecture of Mazu temple emphasizes the arc of the roof and takes this as its special feature. The ridge of the building is unusually tall compared to the temple buildings in other areas. The exaggerated curved shape of the ridge is connected to the high-rise ‘swallow<sup>94</sup>-tail’ roof ridge<sup>95</sup>, which makes the roofline appear very smooth. This changes the visual effect of the building, makes it feel light, gorgeous, and delicate. The vertical ridges and return bands on the edge of the roof form an elegant curve on the side elevation, making the multi-sloping roof more lightweight and smarter. The ‘swallow-tail’ roof ridge not only has a strong sense of form but also has beautiful lines and a strong decorative effect. It means that swallows return to the nest safely, symbolizing the expectation and prayers of family members to the relatives who are out fishing and entrusting a goodwill to hope relatives return safely. This exaggerated and exquisite appearance not only reflects the characteristics of Chinese traditional temples, it is an architectural form with typical characteristics of maritime culture in coastal areas, but also reflects the good wish of coastal people for life, it has typical characteristics of the region and architectural modeling.” (X Huiying, 2011: pp 63)

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<sup>94</sup> The swallow is a symbol of good luck. Spring is its breeding season. It often builds nests under the eaves. People believes that the swallow will bring good luck and wealth to the family. The swallow generally appears in pairs, so it often symbolizes beautiful love.

<sup>95</sup> The roof ridge, also known as the middle ridge, the two ends of the ridge extend outward and bifurcate.



Figure 23 The swallow-tail roof ridge  
Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

### 3.2.3 The decoration design of Mazu temple

The decoration design of the buildings of Mazu temple includes various wood carvings, stone carvings, brick carvings and colorful painting decorations and furnishings. “The most representative of the architectural decoration features of Mazu temples are colored painting and carving. They have a long history and diverse techniques, and they are ubiquitous in architectural decoration design. The architectural decoration design of Mazu temple is actually the most important part of the folk decoration design of Mazu belief. It includes all the themes and styles of the folk decoration design of Mazu belief, ranging from dragon pillars and painted walls to small window grilles and door noses.” (X Huiying, 2011: pp 63)

The patterns of the architectural decoration design of Mazu temple in different periods and dynasties in history have a different emphasis, they are mostly related to the main themes of plastic art in that period. “Some patterns express a certain symbolic meaning, such as the ‘aoyu<sup>96</sup>’ pattern and seahorse<sup>97</sup> pattern on the ridge of

<sup>96</sup> This means a kind of divine animal, with a dragon's head, a fish's body, and four feet, it is often used as mascots.

<sup>97</sup> The seahorse symbolizes the mighty virtue of royalty, it can fly to the sky, jumps

the roof, most of them are designed to symbolize the aquarium, wishing to prevent the wooden building from catching fire. Themes such as bats, sika deer and peaches are also related to ‘Fu<sup>98</sup>, Lu<sup>99</sup>, and Shou<sup>100</sup>’, their pronounces are similar and they are regarded as auspicious patterns. Through the generations, the craftsmen blended historical stories and folklore, and added a lot of their own insights and expectations, making them play an aesthetic role.” (L Mingtai, L Chenxi, L Youmei, 2018: pp 24)



Figure 24 The dragon statue on the ridge of the roof

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

into the sea. In Chinese ancient mythology, it is also the incarnation of auspiciousness. The seahorse symbolizes loyalty and auspiciousness, wisdom and mighty virtue.

<sup>98</sup> The pronunciation of bats is same as Fu, it means wealth and auspiciousness. In ancient times, people placed bats on doors and windows, which would bring wealth and fortune. It was also a sign of good fortune. Its blessings can extend to future generations and ensure peace and happiness for generations.

<sup>99</sup> In ancient China, sika deer was a symbol of good luck. The pronunciation of deer is similar with Lu, Lu means power and wealth, so deer also represents wealth.

<sup>100</sup> The peach represents longevity. It also symbolizes happiness and health and good luck. It is generally used as a food for celebrating the birthday of old person. People often give it as a gift to the elderly. It is a very suitable gift and a good blessing to the elderly.



Figure 25 The Bats, dragons and phoenix patterns on the roof

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

Putian City is the birthplace of Mazu belief. The craftsmanship in Putian city is very famous throughout the country. It is known as the ‘City of Chinese Woodcarving’, ‘The Capital of Chinese Classical Crafts and Furniture’, ‘Chinese Jade and Jewelry Characteristic Industrial Base’, and ‘Hometown of Chinese Silver Ornaments’, etc., it is one of the cities with the most regional brands of artifacts in China. The carving craft industry in Putian, from the time when the works were handed down, can be traced back to Tang and Song Dynasties. The art of carving is widely used in daily life and is deeply loved by people. Since the reform and opening up, under the guidance and support of the government and the promotion of the market, the carving craft industry in Putian City has developed rapidly, and gradually developed from the countryside to the township, from the township to the city, from the local to the outside, and from the handcrafted workshop to the modern enterprise, it has created a new glorious combination of various traditional carving culture, and the atmosphere of the times.



Among carving craftsmanship in Putian, the most representative one is wood carving. “The wood carving craftsmanship of Putian is known for its ‘microscopic openwork carving’. It rose in Tang and Song dynasties and flourished in Ming and Qing Dynasties. It has a unique style and is widely used. At present, Putian City has become the largest production center and distribution center of woodcarving Buddha statues and woodcarving crafts. The woodcarving in Putian is the leading industry in the artifacts industry, and Putian is therefore known as the capital of woodcarving. Therefore, various woodcarving techniques are widely used in the architectural decoration design of Mazu temple.” (R Qinghua, 2016: pp 112)

Wood carvings are often used in the architectural design of Mazu temples to carve door lintels, eaves, doors and windows, partitions, sparrow, hanging flowers, etc. According to different decoration parts and different decoration themes, the woodcarving design of Mazu temple building adopts different techniques. For example, hollowing out techniques is used in railings, flying covers. In the partitions and removable windows, they use the method of carving flowers. The techniques of embossing and concealed carving are mostly used on screens, door dangling, beam heads, etc. And some techniques such as carving, nail convex, and mixed wood carving are used on door covers and screens. The wood carvings on the upper frame of the buildings are generally decorated with dragons and phoenixes, unicorns, and lions. Door and window carvings take historical myths, drama stories, or folk scenes as a theme, with auspicious symbols such as auspicious animals and *Ganoderma lucidum*. The panes are mostly abstract geometric patterns, some small patterns interspersed in the panes include flowers, birds, vegetables, lions, and figures. It is difficult to deal with the details of the building and parts such as the closure and interface of the components.

“Through the delicate and complex decoration of wood carving can not only reflect the beauty of the wood carving craft itself, but also decorate the parts that are difficult to deal with. The use of wood carvings in the architectural design of Mazu temple can be seen everywhere, with fine craftsmanship and rich contents, lifelike flowers, plants, landscapes, insects, fish, birds and beasts, various shapes.” (K Lihong, 2006: pp 27)

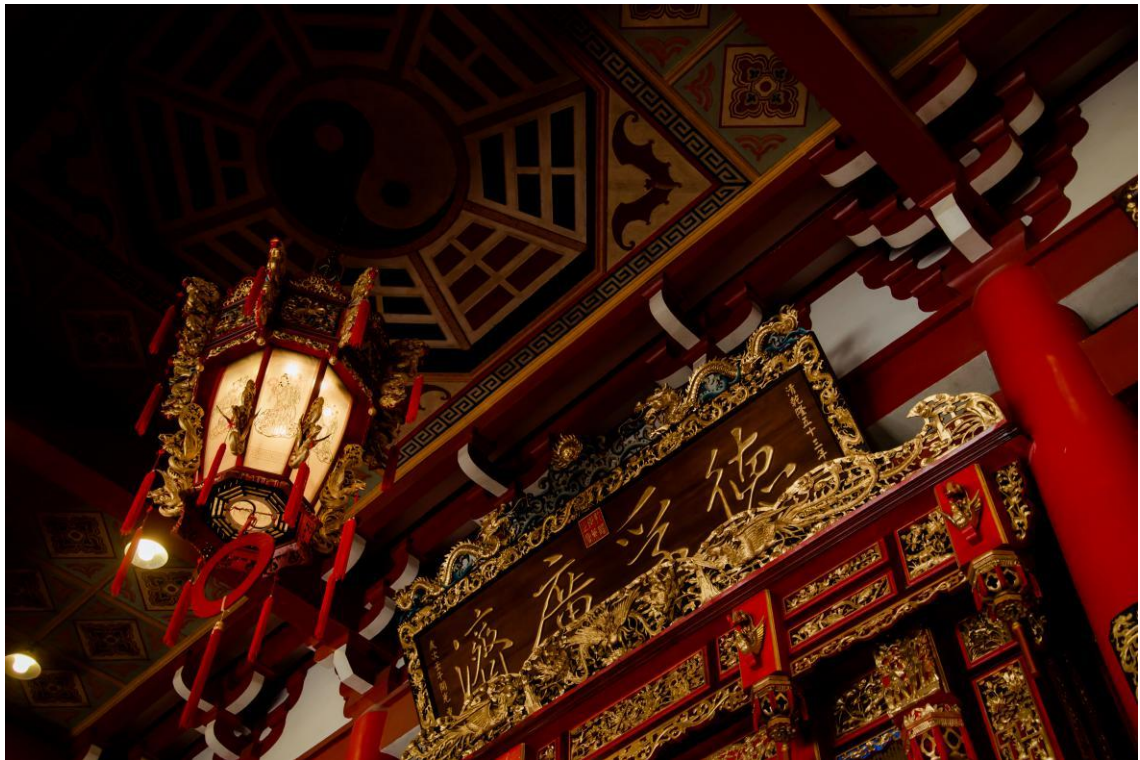


Figure 26 The decoration of Wood carving inside Mazu temple

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

In addition to wood carving, stone carving is also an important category that cannot be ignored in carving craftsmanship of Putian City. Stone carving is often used to decorate pillar foundations, column heads, doors and windows, stone tablets, stone drums, etc. In the architectural design of Mazu temple, stone carving is also used to make stone lions and stone elephants. “The archway is the most concentrated place in the stone carving design of Mazu temple. In addition to using fret patterns, ribbons, curly grass, mat patterns as the foundation for the decoration, many animals are also used as themes, such as Chinese unicorns, deer, lions, cranes, tigers, and leopards. In ancient times, Chinese unicorns, deer, and cranes were treated as benevolent animals, which were usually used to represent literary talent person, they represent auspiciousness. Lions, tigers, and leopards were ferocious beasts, they represent martial arts, and expressed a kind of power. Fierceness is the characteristic of a lion. The image of the ‘king of the beasts’ is portrayed into a fierce and mighty posture, acting as a guardian of the gate of Mazu temple. Through different carving designs and craftsmanship, some lions are slightly docile, some are smiling, and some are serious,



they can give people a sense of solemnity. All the different carving designs often carry the deep thoughts of the craftsmen, hoping that the carving craftworks can convey beautiful wishes.”(K Lihong, 2006:pp 31)



Figure 27 The stone carving used in windows

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

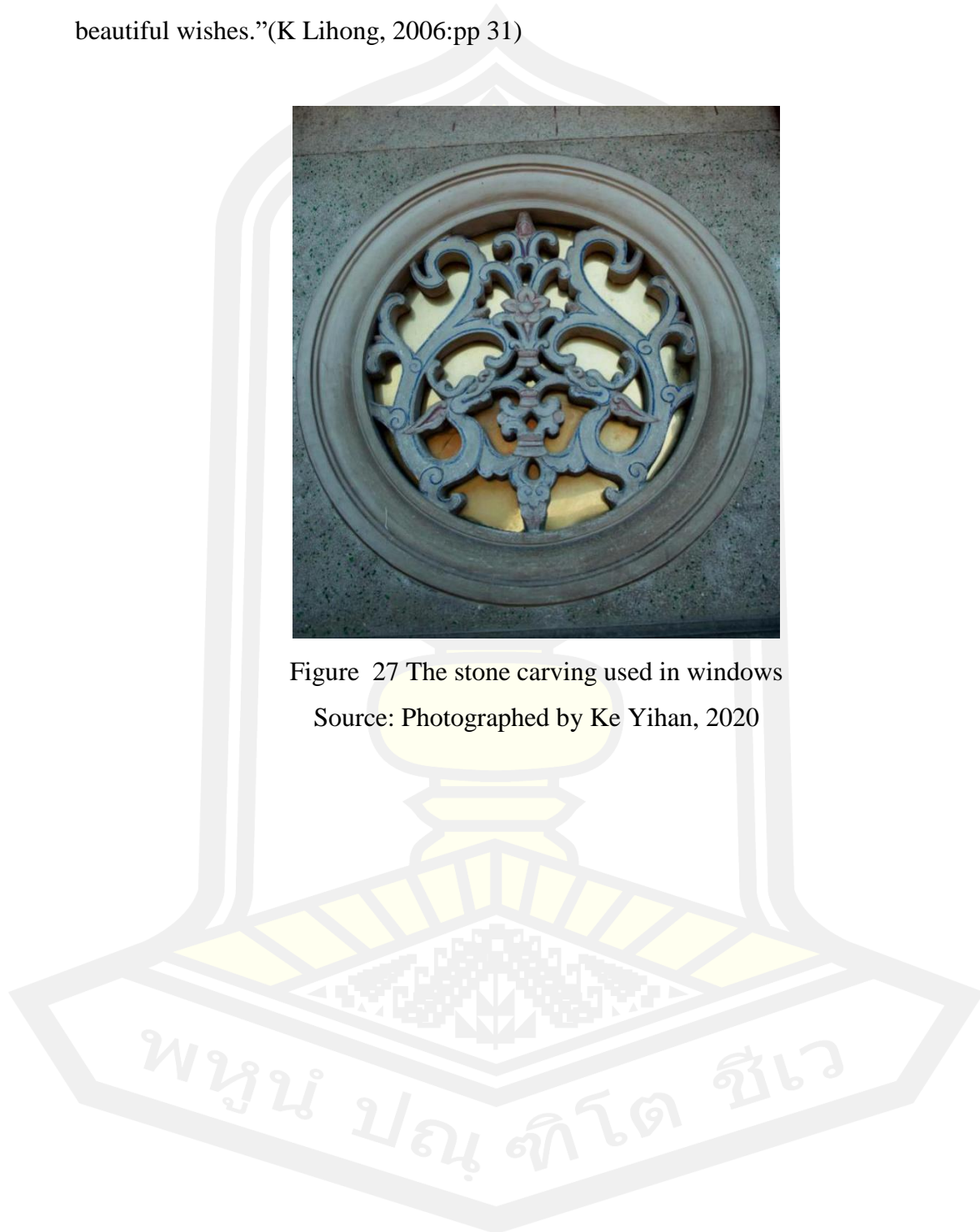




Figure 28 The stone carving used in stone pillars

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

The brick carvings in the buildings of Mazu temple are often used for archways, flower windows, shadow walls, gables, wall eaves, roof ridges and other exterior wall decorations, because of their sturdiness, durability and performance which are comparable to stone, relatively simple production technology and low cost. The character stories are derived from history, or based on local operas, and there are also literati activities and pastoral life such as touring, playing chess and other real life. It not only enriches and beautifies the buildings but also makes them stronger.

The bricks used to make brick carvings need to be specially made, they are generally made of fine mud that has been elutriated. First, craftsmen need to paint a complete pattern of flower and a bird figure on the bricks and determine the level, then use the techniques of embossing, chiseling, picking, and grinding to carve. If want to create a high-relief effect, sometimes they also use the method of pasting, finally finished after polishing and planning.

Among the brick carvings, there is a hand-made glazed red brick, which uses pine branches and branches of acacia to burn red bricks with dark red and black stripes in various shapes. The shapes of the bricks are hexagonal, octagonal, round, ancient coin, begonia flower, etc. The hexagon looks like a tortoiseshell, which represents longevity, the octagon represents auspiciousness, the circle represents perfection, the coin represents wealth, there is also a shape of a lotus and a shape with religious letters. The various patterns built by bricks add a colorful atmosphere to the architectural design of Mazu temple, they achieve a pleasing decorative effect, and also convey a beautiful meaning.

The architectural decoration design of Mazu temple popularly decorates the roof or wall with the gray statue, porcelain inlay, intersecting-toe ceramics, waterwheel pallets, and other decorations.



Figure 29 The architectural decoration design of Mazu temple

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

The gray statue is first made with stucco as the base, and then according to a predetermined pattern, inlaid colorful porcelain become lifelike Chinese unicorns, lions, dragons, phoenixes, flowers, fruits and vegetables, birds, animals, insects, and fish, etc. This gives people a dazzling appearance, it looks delicate and gorgeous. Grey statues have also become clay statues or colored statues, and colored statues can be seen in the Dunhuang Grottoes of the Tang Dynasty. It is widely used in the folk architecture of Mazu. In addition to the stacks and heads of the roof ridge, the ridge pendant of the gable wall, the waterwheel pallets under the eaves and the large decorations on the wall can all be seen in gray statues. The themes are the most popular contents and patterns that are widely circulated among the folks, there are always some auspicious blessing patterns, such as ‘surplus every year’, ‘prosperity and longevity’, ‘hundred blessings’. The main material of the gray statue is stucco. In addition to the light gray of lime, other colors can also be mixed with, such as black smoke or earthy vermilion, or painted when it is about to dry, make it sucks into the surface so that the clay statue can become a colored statue. The freshly painted color will look a bit flashy and tacky, but after a long time, the color will fade a little, the saturation will be reduced, and the color will not reflect light, then it will look simple and elegant.

Porcelain Inlay is a kind of technique of ceramic inlay for on-site construction. First, it needs to use stucco to shape the embossed rough embryos of figures, animals or flowers and plants, and use special scissors to cut colored ceramic pieces such as bowls and dishes into the required shapes, then use brown sugar water or glutinous rice water to be as a viscous material, which will be embedded in the wet stucco. There are two types of porcelain inlay, which are stick flat and embossed. After bonding, they are very firm, and they are not afraid of wind and rain. Folk craftsmen cut multicolored porcelain bowls into small pieces and paste them to be various embossments pattens of human objects, animals, flowers and other patterns. After that, the clay statues that can be seen from the outside are less, they are mainly covered by colorful ceramics. After being washed by the rain, the luster is bright under the sun or reflection, so the color looks particularly bright. The decoration of porcelain inlay looks a little complicated and cumbersome, but this kind of decoration is concentrated on the upper part of the roof ridge, which makes the whole roof looks gorgeous and not messy, which becomes the characteristic of folk architecture of Mazu.



Intersecting-toe ceramics is a ceramic art that is glazed first and then fired in a kiln. Its glaze is rich in color and can be used for delicate artistic expression, but it is not hard enough and easy to break. Therefore, the size cannot be enlarged when the potter is making it. To make a larger object or animal, it is usually broken down into several small pieces and fired separately, and then fit together after completion. In order to avoid collisions, porcelain inlay and intersecting-toe ceramics are mostly placed on higher positions, such as waterwheel pallets, wall stacks, and roof ridges. Intersecting-toe ceramics is also placed on the front wall of the building's entrance. The above three techniques are also used interactively to produce more effects.

“The waterwheel pallet is a horizontal band-shaped architectural decoration design, it is divided into a stack head and stack core. Making a stack head is a very difficult process. The patterns of stack head are mostly butterflies, bats, or clouds and thunder patterns, and the lines are extremely fine, usually only two or three centimeters wide. The stacked core is the main part of the decoration. It is designed above the wall of the building, where is close to the wooden structure. Inside the stack core, there has clay statues or intersecting-toe ceramics which are used to arrange landscapes, flowers and birds, figures, pavilions, pavilions, etc., they can express loyalty, filial piety, righteousness, or auspicious scenery. Some of them create a small garden and then arrange characters, tell a story, which is quite vivid. Some are also inscribed with poems and stamped. The waterwheel pallets also have the functions of closing the edges of the wall head, stopping water, overhanging, and pressing tiles, so that the wall has a roof and becomes the edge of the wall. On top of the waterwheel pallets usually connect to tiles or beam-column structures. Because it has the function of overhanging, the brick lines that emerge one after another are like steps, they make a clear distinction between light and dark under the sunshine, they are quite beautiful.” (K Lihong, 2006: pp 28-30)

There is a decorated archway at the entrance of the mountain of Mazu temple, which is specially designed to be placed in front of the buildings of Mazu temple, it has the characteristics of an entrance gate. This decorated archway has a roof on the pillars, there is also a kind of archway without a roof on the pillars, which is called an a memorial arch. The type of decorated archway can be divided into three kinds according to different building materials, wooden decorated archway, stone

decorated archway and glazed decorated archway. The decorated archway of the buildings of the ancestral temple of Mazu on Meizhou Island is the stone decorated archway. As the entrance building of the overall temple, it is magnificent and solemn. The dragon-shaped carvings on the top of the roof, as well as the details of the decoration, all are meticulously carved and vivid, it reflects the super high level of craftsmanship of craftsmen. This decorated archway can make people feel the sacred and majesty of Mazu when they just step into the gate of the mountain, it gives people a sense of reverence. It is rigorous, with a sense of ritual. When you step into the gate of the mountain, you will feel Mazu in a closer distance, achieve spiritual sublimation, people will demand themselves in a higher standard, and pay attention to their words and deeds. This decorated archway not only adds strong artistic expression to the buildings of Mazu temple with its special image but also creates an atmosphere of belief for Mazu followers to express their emotions. This effect has far exceeded the role of the image itself.



Figure 30 The archway at the entrance of the mountain of Mazu temple

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020



“Drama is a traditional form of drama in China, it is one of the artistic styles with the most national characteristics and styles in China. Drama originated from primitive singing and dancing; it is an art style of the comprehensive stage with a long history. Through Han, Tang to Song and Jin, it just forms a relatively complete drama art, which is composed of literature, music, dance, fine arts, martial arts, acrobatics and performing arts. Drama is characterized by aggregating many forms of art with one standard, it reflects their respective personalities in the common nature.” (B Du, 2020)

During the Southern Song Dynasty, under the influence of Song sideshow, Xinghua sideshow shows by acting a story that combined singing, dancing, and reading together, which appeared in Putian City and Xianyou. This later formed the Puxian drama. “Puxian drama (formerly known as Xinghua drama), which is a traditional local drama in Fujian Province, it is one of the national intangible cultural heritage. The Puxian drama was developed on the basis of the ancient ‘Baixi’<sup>101</sup>. The performance of Puxian drama is simple and classy, many actions are deeply influenced by a puppet show, and it has a unique artistic style. The singing tune in Puxian drama is rich, it combines the artistic characteristics of Puxian's folk songs and slang songs, ten notes and eight music, Buddhist music, Song and Yuan lyrics and grand song and dance. It sings in dialects, and has a strong local flavor.” (B Du, 2020)

An important function of the ancients acting was to entertain the gods. In ancient society, wherever there is a certain public place of ritual and gathering, it is indispensable to set up a theater. This is because the functions of performing drama are not only to enrich people's spiritual and cultural life, the original intention of performing dramas by working people in ancient times was to worship and entertain the gods. The ancient working people believed that playing the gongs and drums to rehearse drama can make the gods notice the human world. In addition, the drama performances can convey the good wishes of the working people to the gods, to seek blessings and avoid disasters. People hope to let the gods feel happy and joyful through this method so that gods will confer a favor and blessing on the people on earth. Therefore, the theater is indispensable in the construction of the buildings of Mazu temple.

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<sup>101</sup> Baixi is a general term for the folk performing arts of the Han nationality in ancient China. The term "baixi" originated in the Han Dynasty.

The theater of Mazu temple on Meizhou Island is located directly opposite the main hall. The theater is set up here to face the main hall, this main hall enshrines the statues of gods. When performing drama, the place where the statues of Mazu are enshrined is the best viewing point. The decoration of the theater focuses on the top of the theater, the edges around the base, the beams and columns inside the theater. The pillars on the front of the theater are decorated with couplets, the beams on the pillars are also painted with bright colors. The contents are mostly about the deeds of Mazu protecting the country and people. “Around the base of the theater, the forms of carving are used to tell the legendary story of Mazu about Mazu changed from human to god, and about Mazu's appearance and saving people. All this shows that the theater plays an important role in the architecture of Mazu temple. Drama is a special form of art and folk activities; people convey their ardent hope to Mazu and the eager yearning for a better life through drama.” (X Huiying, 2011: pp 76)



Figure 31 The theater of Mazu temple on Meizhou Island

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

The algae well is the essence of the decoration of the interior top space of Mazu temple. The algae well is a unique part of the decoration of the interior top space of Chinese traditional temple buildings. The decoration of the algae well is usually a well-shaped decoration that bulges upwards. The shape is mostly round, square. The

surrounding decorations are decorated with various paintings, carvings, patterns, etc. It is often set in the top of the important places in the buildings of Mazu temple, such as the main hall, the theater, the throne of the gods. The decoration of the algae well is a cumbersome traditional craft of combining wooden components.

“The algae well in the main hall of Mazu temple on Meizhou Island is a combination of square and polygonal construction. The algae well in the main hall has four floors. The first floor is square, which consists of twelve wooden grids of various sizes, each grid is divided into a mi-shape by an arc-shaped wooden frame and they are divided into two layers. The second floor is the algae well structure with a regular octagon that is folded upwards. It is divided into eight parts by a bucket arch, which is connected to the wooden skeleton of the third floor. The nodes of each bucket arch are decorated with statues of gods. The fourth floor is the top of the algae well. It is made of wood strips to form a Bagua<sup>102</sup> shape, the inner circle is painted into a Taiji<sup>103</sup> pattern, and the inner edge of each layer is decorated with exquisite painted patterns. Taiji and Bagua are both symbols in Taoism, which also reflects the inclusive characteristics of Mazu culture. the algae well with a regular octagon reflects people's love for auspicious numbers, this also symbolizes Mazu's divinity of blessing all people be safe and keeping far away from disasters and sick. The construction craftsmanship of the algae well is very exquisite, the craftsmen can create such a complicated interior decoration without a nail and a rivet. It is the essence of Chinese traditional decoration craftsmanship.” (H Ruiguo, 2013: pp 166)

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<sup>102</sup> Bagua is the classification of things when the ancient Chinese knew the world. It is also a profound concept in Chinese ancient culture and a set of philosophical symbols.

<sup>103</sup> A symbol of Chinese ancient culture, its shape likes that two fishes are entangled with each other.





Figure 32 The algae well in the main hall of Mazu temple on Meizhou Island

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

The color of the architecture of Mazu temple reflects a kind of collective aesthetic consciousness that is rich in unique folk customs and Matsu culture. In the aesthetic concept of Chinese traditional art, yellow has always been regarded as a symbol of the royal family and the nobility, red represents the meaning of prosperity, harmony and joy, meanwhile, green represents wealth and flourish. Therefore, yellow, red, and green are all widely used architectural colors in the architectural decoration design of Mazu temple. These colors meet the psychological needs of the people who yearn for a happy life, as well as the decorative colors of the public's aesthetics.

“The decorative colors used in the buildings of Mazu temple on Meizhou Island are very bold, and the proportions of color matching are also very particular. The largest area in the buildings of Mazu temple is the wall, and the craftsmen use a lot of vermilion bricks and vermilion lacquer when decorating the walls, making the whole buildings present a warm color, giving people a warm and auspicious feeling. On the roof of the eaves laid by the dark orange tiles, this makes the buildings look extraordinarily dazzling and sacred in the sunshine, it also makes people feel that the

whole buildings glow with golden light. The decoration on the top of the outer wall and under the eaves uses blue-green in cool tones. The use of contrasting colors makes people look cool and comfortable in the shadow of the buildings. In addition, the contrasting colors will not look glaring, tacky, because the difference of the contrast between the cold and warm tones is big in the building. In the details of the buildings' decoration, such as beams, eaves, etc., brighter colors are used as the decorative colors of colored paintings, which makes the architecture of solemn temple reveal lively and vigor. The partial decorative lines are painted with golden borders or depictions, and the wooden components are brushed with tung oil to make these decorative colors clear and dazzling. From the side of architectural color, the buildings of Mazu temple appear more noble and respectable.” (X Huirong, 2011: pp 81)

In addition to paying attention to its own color matching and visual effects, the architectural color of the buildings of Mazu temple also takes into account the coordination between the entire building complex and the surrounding natural environment. The warm-toned buildings are particularly conspicuous against the blue sky, white clouds, and green trees. The gray bricks, white walls, and green tiles in the buildings also echo the rocks, sky, and plants in the natural environment, the buildings are integrated with nature, set off each other.

#### **Part IV The giant statue of Mazu and the place**

The giant statue of Mazu has become a new landmark of Meizhou Island in the new era. It is majestic and has important symbolic significance. The artistic characteristics of Mazu statues represent the high level of carving art in the Putian area. It is the classic work of Mazu artworks.

##### 4.1 The introduction of the giant statue of Mazu and the place

The giant statue of Mazu stands on the highest peak of Meizhou Island, at the highest point of ‘Zumiao mountain<sup>104</sup>’ that is in front of the main hall of the ancestral temple of Mazu. The statue was designed by Professors Li Weisi and Jiang Zhiqiang from the faculty of art of Xiamen University, it was built on the Millennium day of

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<sup>104</sup> The mountain where the ancestral temple of Mazu is located.



Mazu, the 9th day of September in a lunar month, 1987. The statue of Mazu was not placed in the temple for worship, but she stood on the top of the mountain, looking at Taiwan Island across the sea from far. As the spiritual sustenance of believers, the giant statue of Mazu has become a new landmark of Meizhou Island with its unique image and special meaning.



Figure 33 The giant statue of Mazu on Meizhou Island

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

The giant statue of Mazu is 14.35 meters high, the figure symbolizes the area of Meizhou Island is 14.35 square kilometers. The statue is so tall that it can be seen from far away. In fact, people hope that Mazu can lead the lost people home. The statue is made up of 365 pieces of pure white granite, the figure '365' represents 365 days a year, it means that Mazu can bless people being happy and safe every day. The face of Mazu statue is amiable, showing the image of a woman in her thirties. The face and posture are round and plump, graceful and luxurious. She looks serene and majestic,

staring into the distance and looking at the strait. The crown on the top of her head represents the godhood and honorable status of Mazu. She wears an elegant clothing, the skirt is naturally gathered and drooped, and the carving lines are smooth and powerful. The Mazu statue holds Ruyi<sup>105</sup> in her right hand and rests gently on it with her left hand. The body is dynamic and elegant, with a sense of beauty. The statue is made of white granite. This kind of stone is not easy to weather, the color can be maintained for hundreds of years, the material is hard, wear-resistant, and has a strong sense of line. It is the material of the first choice for outdoor statues. The white color is holy and beautiful, it is in line with the sacred identity of Mazu.



Figure 34 The part of the giant statue of Mazu on Meizhou Island

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

<sup>105</sup> The traditional auspicious thing of the Chinese nation. In ancient times, "Ruyi" has a wide range of uses. As an auspicious thing, it is widely used in the folk and the court. Before ordinary people travel far, family or friends will send "Ruyi" as a sign of good wishes.

“The giant statue of Mazu on Meizhou Island was sculpted by the craftsman named Zhu Boying from Jinshan Village, Huangshi Town, Putian City, who stood out in the bidding competition of the stone carving of Mazu on Meizhou Island in 1988. The colossal statue of Mazu in Chaotian Palace of Beigang<sup>106</sup> across the sea is also his statue work, both of them are the highest aesthetics level of folk hand-made stone carving. This reflects the characteristics of carving craftsmanship of Putian City from the side, that it emphasizes realism, rich layers, fresh shapes, strong decoration and exquisite details. The new form of Mazu statue has not only become a landmark of Meizhou Island, but also a new standard that has been imitated and misappropriated. Through the evolution of the past dynasties, Mazu statues have gradually transitioned from a simple and plain folk aesthetic to a gorgeous and aristocratic one. The traditional folk craftsmanship has absorbed western styling techniques and contemporary forms of expression to create a new form with contemporary aesthetic standards. The Mazu statues are the embodiment of contemporary aesthetic standards in folk beliefs. The form changes of the outlook of the giant Mazu stone statue on Meizhou Island and the diversion of its symbolic meaning also gave it contemporary aesthetic significance.” (G Guanglei, 2018: pp 56)

#### 4.2 The meaning of the giant statue of Mazu and the place

The scientific, digital, and multimedia era has changed the way of interpersonal communication and the expression of meaning, showing the language world increasingly multi-modal trends. The symbols such as images, colors, sounds, and actions in modern communication and language symbols form a broader symbol resource to participate in the construction of meaning, they all have social significance. The giant statue of Mazu, as a visual image resource, and the location of the statue as a symbolic geographical resource, both of them have formed a specific modal of social resource in the process of social use, which has social significance. The visual symbols in the image can reflect various events occurring in the objective world, the subjective world and the connections between them, they can express various interpersonal

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<sup>106</sup> It is the main temple of Mazu in Taiwan Island. It is built in the 33rd year of Kangxi in Qing Dynasty.

relationships, form a specific cultural circle, and form a special social network. Therefore, the Mazu statue and its location not only have formal meaning but also have very important semantics. It constructs the interconnection between social reality and people's psychology.

When the image conveys meaning, there is an image behavior, this image behavior is realized by the gaze system of the participant. Participants establish an imaginary contact relationship with the viewers through the direction point of their gaze. The giant statue of Mazu creates a contact relationship with the interaction between Mazu's sight and viewers. The Mazu statue faces the sea, Taiwan, and the world. She gazes at the sea, looks out over Taiwan. Her kind and benevolent sight express the common aspirations of the Chinese people for loving peace, her eyes are full of expectation.

In daily communication, the rules of social relations determine the distance that people need to keep from each other. The kinship between the participant and the viewer in the image depends on the social distance of the image. The relationship between the giant statue of Mazu and the viewer is a close distance of society, we can see the entire modelling of the participant (Mazu). This design of close distance of society shows that the participant (Mazu) and the viewer are not an intimate private relationship, but a social interpersonal relationship. People can see the whole modelling of the Mazu statue, but they also need to look up at Mazu, to draw the image of Mazu, which is a huge energy and powerful protective ability in their mind. This can express the worshippers' respect for Mazu. This positioning of the social relationship between participants and viewers is in line with facts. Mazu is the 'goddess of peace on the sea' that protects the safety of navigation. It is not only worshipped as a kind of folk belief but also a spiritual carrier and cultural identity of overseas Chinese. Mazu belongs to the Chinese nation and belongs to the whole world.

The giant statue of Mazu faces the sea and looks at Taiwan from a distance. It shows that the participants (Mazu) and the viewers (Taiwan compatriots) are at the same level, it is integrated into the same social life of the viewers, and establish an equal social relationship with the viewers. The attitude shows the equal social relationship between the two sides of the strait. This is an expression of self-emotion, with strong response and interaction. The people on both sides of the strait have the same roots, the

same origin, they are connected by blood. The common belief of Mazu has closely linked the hearts of the people on both sides of the strait. Mazu is regarded as the 'goddess of peace', she is the bond of peace across the strait. She resonated in the hearts of the people on both sides of the strait who love and pursue peace. She conveyed people's good wishes of piety, kindness and longing for peace. On the other hand, the relationship between participants (Mazu) and viewers (believers) is unequal. Mazu can be versed in astronomy and weather, she can heal diseases and eliminates disasters, and has extraordinary ability. Therefore, her followers cannot be equal to her. When people look up at this tall and magnificent statue, their respect for Mazu will emerge spontaneously. In addition, they will be deeply educated and enlightened.

The giant statue of Mazu has three dimensions. In addition to the dimension of height and depth, she also has light and shadow, it is natural and real. Mazu's back on the vast land of the motherland, stands high on the mountain in Meizhou Island. The simple background gives the statue rich emotion and meaning. "From the perspective of color saturation, she adopts naturalistic high-saturation colors, that is, the whole is carved from pure white high-quality granite, showing a pleasant emotional meaning. The white color means bright, graceful, brisk, pure, noble, peaceful and holy. This highly saturated color perfectly reproduces Mazu's manners, dignified, virtuous and solemn. It fully represents the noble and holy appearance and heart of Chinese women. She is kind and filial, both in ethics and in the relationship of people has the embodiment of Chinese national morality." (L Lijuan, 2009: pp 19-20)

The giant statue of Mazu reproduces the relationship between abstraction and detail to the greatest extent. The whole is a single-piece three-dimensional round statue, with vivid images of the front, back, left, and right, and it is carved in part and assembled as a whole. Mazu's posture is perfect, round, mighty and grand. The clothing of Mazu statue has smooth and clear lines. The phoenix crown, tassel and shawl of the head are carved very carefully, which is an expression technique of naturalism, highlighting Mazu's integrity, kindness and benevolence, showing her image of affinity for virtue, good deeds, and great love.

The giant statue of Mazu and its location have formed specific symbols, which are rich in symbolic meaning. The social relationship that formed has formed a good interaction with people, and it has far-reaching significance. This great statue of



‘the Goddess of Peace on the Sea’ has both a historical traditional image and a deified image, it becomes the incarnation of truth, goodness, and beauty. The statue can be passed on from generation to generation, it can be admired and worshipped by future generations at home and abroad, praying for family's safety, social harmony, and world peace, it can be appreciated and visited as well.



Figure 35 The giant statue of Mazu on Meizhou Island and the place

Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

In the context of the strong development of Mazu cultural tourism on Meizhou Island, Mazu belief, as a folk religion, has attracted a large number of pilgrims to come for pilgrimage tourism. With the development of the times, religious tourism has shifted from simple pilgrimage activities to religious tourism activities that use religious buildings as ‘tourist attractions’, and focus on visiting religious sites as a center to enhance the purpose of purifying the spiritual realm. Anyone who travels to Meizhou Island can experience this kind of religious tourism. As a new landmark building on Meizhou Island, the giant statue of Mazu has assumed more of such a function. With its greater reputation and influence, it is attracting a large number of tourists to come to travel. Whether it is for leisure, or a certain spiritual pleasure and sublimation, or to see the respectful appearance of Mazu, or to find psychological sustenance. With its unique image, unique geographical location, and unique

symbolism, the Mazu statue is bound to give full play to the important function of Mazu belief and develop Mazu culture.

### **Summary**

Mazu artifacts are the carrier and an important part of Mazu folk culture. They directly reflect the people's spiritual pursuits and thoughts and feelings. They can be passed down for a long time without passing into oblivion by history, because attaching to folk activities. Mazu artifacts are conceived in people's production and life in various forms. The production and development of stylings are bound to be restricted by materials, crafts and practical functions. Many styles of Mazu artifacts are branded with practical functions, such as the stone carvings in outdoor buildings are used as wall pillars, they must always be firm and stable, sculpted boldly, and can withstand wind and rain. While wood carving of indoor furniture requires fine carvings, and the legendary stories and auspicious patterns be shown on them are sufficient to let people watch carefully without getting bored.

In Mazu artifacts, many stylings emphasize the effect of visual aesthetic, and most of them have a strong rustic flavor, with a sincere, true, and optimistic emotional feeling. The simple and beautiful stylings reflect the aesthetic ideals of the people, and they contain a deeper symbolic meaning. After a long period of history, the various symbols and images of folk art in Mazu belief are deposited in the architectural decorations and folk decoration patterns of the Mazu temple. Most of the time, what they show is a kind of aesthetic consciousness with folklorist, which can reflect the common aesthetic taste of people's life.

The artifacts in Mazu belief are the emotional expression form that derived from life, they are the material manifestation of the love and beauty in the creation of life. They are poured into the fierce and simple emotions of believers, which are rarely affected by the power and money of the nobility. Therefore, in the creation of beauty, they are naturally sincere and unpretentious. After the re-creation of generations, they have aroused spiritual and emotional resonance, thus determined the pure character of artifacts in Mazu belief.

This perceptual aesthetic function not only has the effect of pleasing people's body and mind, but also inspires people's rich imagination, gaining stronger and deeper

experiences and feelings than in real life, it can symbolically change the world, forget tiredness and hardship, as to get the beautiful enjoyment of spirit. This is a kind of proactive imagination, with a double imagination of personal emotion and belief worship, which can promote and improve people's imagination.

When the craftsmen of Mazu artifacts design patterns, they advocate the content of celebration and auspiciousness. They want to pursue the composition of prosperity and consummation. They also tend to be rich and complete in styling, possessing Chinese traditional aesthetic consciousness and creative ideas. Artifacts are the externalization of people's ideals for creating a better world, reflecting the working people's desire to seek happiness in pain, seek wealth in poverty, and relief from inferior situations. They need to alleviate the pain in real life through belief and compensate for some psychological trauma through the fictional creation of art, so as to achieve a spiritual and psychological balance and inspire their courage for continuing to struggle.

Moral propaganda and education have always been the social functions of Mazu artifacts. For example, in the murals of Mazu temple, one side reflects folk culture, with almost no political factor. The other side is based on the theme of depicting beliefs and the world of ghosts and gods, playing a decorative and beautifying role in the architecture of Mazu temple, also making the environment of Mazu temple shrouded in the glory of god. It not only highlights the belief atmosphere of Mazu temple, but also contains the principle of mural creation of Mazu temple, that is moral education.

The moral education of the artistic style of Mazu artifacts is also manifested in sacrificial offerings. For example, the figures of paper-made are exaggerated and bright. The men are brave and strong, women are delicate and graceful. Also, about the color matching of the mask and facial makeup, red represents loyalty, white represents traitor, black represents uprightness, gray represents bravery, etc., which not only reflects the characteristics of figures but also be consistent with the value judgment of people and aesthetic requirements.

All of these, whether it is the creative concept of Mazu artifacts or the subject matter, form skills, and style characteristics, all reflect the moral concepts and emotional aesthetic pursuits of Mazu believers, they make people actively accept some content of beliefs in a calm attitude, when appreciating the art. Then this will naturally

affect their values and behavior orientation. Therefore, it is the spiritual blending of people and artwork, it is the intimacy of the oneness of life. This kind of moral education will affect people's practice, form certain social norms and patterns of behaviour, become a standard of truth, goodness, and beauty, which has universal social significance.

Mazu artifacts were passed down from generation to generation in the long-term production and life of Mazu believers. Each era has its own style. Inheritance is not a static one to follow. In modern society, people's subjective consciousness has gradually increased, the atmosphere of social culture has become stronger, Mazu belief has been endowed with connotations and characteristics of a new era. People begin to advocate more virtues and promote the spirit of humanistic care, Mazu artifacts will be along with Mazu belief and bloom more brilliance in the new era and play a greater role and value.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **The Construction of Self-Identity of Chinese People in Meizhou Island, China**

This chapter starts with the concept of self-identity, analyzing the construction process and construction mode of the relations of contemporary Mazu belief, the important influence of Mazu belief on the self-identity of different groups, exploring the performance of contemporary Chinese self-identity of Mazu belief. In the era of globalization and the current background of building a harmonious socialist society and the policy of ‘The Belt and Road’, it has a great practical significance for Chinese people to construct their self-identity in Mazu belief.

The structures of this chapter are as follows.

Part I The relationship between Mazu and self-identity

Part II The construction process of contemporary Mazu belief

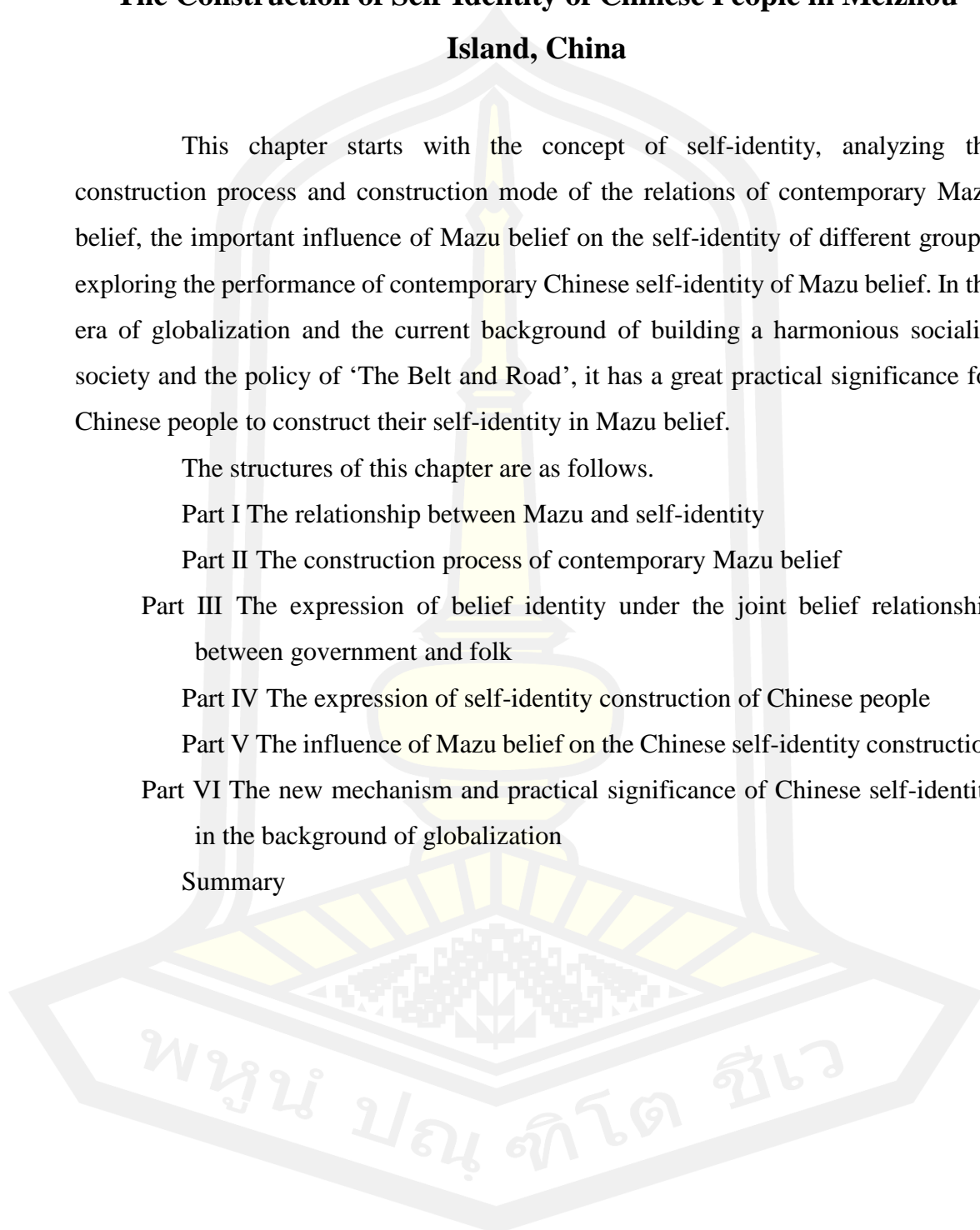
Part III The expression of belief identity under the joint belief relationship between government and folk

Part IV The expression of self-identity construction of Chinese people

Part V The influence of Mazu belief on the Chinese self-identity construction

Part VI The new mechanism and practical significance of Chinese self-identity in the background of globalization

Summary





### **Part I The relationship between Mazu and self-identity**

With the continuous progress of reform and opening up, China is in a period of rapid development, it has undergone major changes in economic, political, and cultural aspects. Mazu belief has also taken a new look and better development trend, it is advancing by leaps and bounds. At the same time, the social functions and roles of Mazu belief are constantly adjusted and improved. What needs to be mentioned is the great influence of Mazu belief on the Chinese self-identity construction, Mazu belief brings significant impacts to the socialist harmonious society development and the common prosperity promotion of countries along with 'The Belt and Road'<sup>107</sup>. Mazu has a profound role in guiding people's values, moral concepts, behaviors, etc., which is conducive to promoting the world peace.

The construction and expression of individual self-identity play a key role in the development of Mazu belief. Based on the complex construction and practical relationship of Chinese beliefs, different groups demonstrate different attitudes and identity characteristics due to their own value orientation, personal preference, interest relationship, network and other factors, showing through different characteristics and identity performance. Especially for Mazu belief, which is shared by local members of society, as the public knowledge and folk customs, people's identification is the vitality of Mazu belief.

"'Identification' was originally the concept of individual psychology, and was later used in anthropology, sociology, political science, and social psychology. It refers to a psychological mechanism produced by individuals, connecting self and ethnicity, society, country, and various groups. Through 'identification', we can clearly see the process in which the external environment shapes the individual and establishes an emotional connection with the outside world." (Wu Ying, 2016, PP: 3)

"The self is a thing that can grow. It does not exist when a person was born, but is produced in the process of social experience and activity. That is, an individual

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<sup>107</sup> The Belt and Road (abbreviated as B&R) is the abbreviation of "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road". In September and October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed to build the "New Silk Road Economy Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" cooperation initiative.

is connected with the social process which is as a whole, in this process, there is also a connection with others, the result is that self grows in an individual.” (Thomas Hylland Eriksen, 2008, PP: 56)

The self is connected with the group through identity, forming a new whole, realizing self-expansion, and making personal life meaningful. The Identification itself is a cognitive process, during which the boundary between the self and the other will gradually become blurred, and complete transcendence occurs at the junction. Meanwhile, it is also a process that requires repeated construction. Alexander Wendt, a representative of constructivism, believes that the term ‘identification’ has three meanings: identity, characteristic and identification (unification). The formation of identification is the result of social construction. It is a kind of self-image based on the social recognition of others. The content of this self-image must be consistent with the re-representation of others. In other words, the individuals know their own identity from the eyes of others, the identity exists in the relationship with others.

“Sociologist Anthony Giddens believes that identification is a historical product of the continuous development of society. It not only refers to a certain continuity of a society in time but also the society creates and maintains something conventionally in reflective activities. That is to continuously absorb events in the external world and incorporate them into the ongoing 'narrative' that concerns the self.” (Wu Ying, 2016, PP: 10)

“The construction of self-identity is the process of individuals' balance between the inner self and between self and environment, through cognition and self-synthesis to organize and construct a unified overall self. Self-identity is the individuals' inner continuity of 'past me' and 'present me' and 'future me', it is also a manifestation of the consistent relationship among the individual's ‘real self’, ‘true self’ and ‘ideal self’.” (Ji Jing, 2008, PP: 8)

Mazu belief has formed a rich and diverse material and spiritual culture in the process of people's respect and inheritance for more than a thousand years, it is one of the important cultural treasures of the Chinese nation. Mazu belief is a product of history, working people is are the builders and participants of Mazu belief, they play a vital role in the formation of Mazu culture. Through the formation of self-identity, the

Chinese know that they are Chinese and should learn from Mazu culture, carry forward Mazu spirit, and help others in society.

“The spiritual connotation of Mazu belief is the construction of the meaning of life corresponding to human existence. Its ethical connotation makes a value argument for human existence and guides a meaningful life direction for human existence. Mazu culture is a kind of ‘root’, which precedes the specific individual, and in the form of ‘collective unconscious’ through inheritance, it innately constructs a certain ‘prototype’ for the spiritual structure of the individual. After the individual is socialized, he lives in the cultural context corresponding to this archetype, naturally showing a kind of cultural continuity. As a cultural community with historical continuity, Mazu belief is also a geographical community on Meizhou Island. It integrates various identities of people and is psychologically equivalent to affirming the existence value of individuals and communities.

In this regard, Mazu belief is not only associated with the 'self' of people, but also with the 'existence' of people, and even the concept of 'people'. Not only that, Mazu belief is the content of life. In the process of human socialization, the process of implanting Mazu belief into one's self-structure is also a process in which an individual continuously discovers himself, confirms its his connection with the world, and constructs his own meaning of life. Whether it is the acquisition of language, the acquisition of social customs, or the acquisition of value norms, they have all been internalized into things of ‘self’.” (Clifford Geertz, 1999, PP: 10)

Mazu culture is closely related to the identification. Mazu culture has a direct effect on people's thinking and behavior. Mazu culture has its own characteristics of considerable permanence, universality and independence, forming a complete set of the independent, complete and organized system. In this system, a group of people is permanently gathered together, with specific rules and systems. Mazu culture affects the opinions and identification of individuals with its specific functions, and it has a relatively strong influence on some people, this identification maybe is inherent and is given at birth. But it has a weaker influence on some people, this kind of identification can also be obtained through the learning of each individual. Mazu culture provides a place where many contents in the concept of self can be obtained through meaningful

exploration, compatible with other identifications, they can get mutual discovery and common progress.

“Peter Berger<sup>108</sup> and Thomas Luckman<sup>109</sup> pointed out that identification is a social phenomenon. In other words, identification is constructed by society. All types of identification are manifested by symbols of social reality, individual identification is nothing but just rooted in the individual society. Paul Katz<sup>110</sup> pointed out that the essence of identification is that inter-existence with the role, identification is the inner emotion, the role is the outer behavior, a person's identification can coexist in multiple kinds and multiple levels, all individual identification constitutes the identification of whole society. And Mazu belief is the outward result of the sanctification of the inner sense of identification. The sanctification of the inner sense of identification is an explicit belief. From the outer belief of a person, one's inner identification tendency can be figured out. This kind of self-identity is the identification of individual belonging, it constructs the boundary of the group. The construction of boundary is the result of the institutionalization of individual identification orientation and social group identification.” (Zhang Xiaoyi, 2015, PP: 11)

At present, China is focusing on the great development of economic construction, the breadth and depth of reform and opening up have further increased. Tradition and reality, ignorance and civilization, backwardness and development, closure and openness are impacting people's hearts to varying degrees. People need to adapt to the new environment, deal with the various changes that may occur, correctly understand themselves, find their position in society, and unify ‘real me’ with ‘past me’ and ‘future me’, to form a sense of self-identity. In this context, Mazu belief will help people build a stable sense of self-identity, help individuals find a psychological balance, and directly affect the stability and development of society, affect the realization of China's goal of building a well-off society in an all-round way.

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<sup>108</sup> Famous American Sociologist.

<sup>109</sup> Famous Sociologist.

<sup>110</sup> Ph.D. in East Asian Department of Princeton University, now is a researcher at the Institute of Recent History, Academia Sinica.

## **Part II The construction process of contemporary Mazu belief**

The contemporary construction model of Mazu belief is the product of the development of the times. It has been developed and adjusted for a certain time. Mazu originated from the folk. Its folk characteristics determine the particularity of the construction model, even the government has to compromise to a certain extent. In the context of globalization, Mazu belief is of special significance to the country's construction of a harmonious socialist society and global strategy.

### **2.1 Folk belief elites promote the development of contemporary Mazu belief**

As the birthplace of Mazu belief, each dynasty of Mazu temple in Meizhou Island has dedicated clerics responsible for the temple's major and minor affairs. With the influence of political movement, in 1966, most of the main buildings of Mazu temple in Meizhou Island were destroyed and demolished, leaving only the Youde shrine, the Bedroom hall and the main hall. Under the influence of this uncertain policy, the local islanders have been worried about can worship Mazu again, let alone rebuilding Mazu temple. However, in the self-proclaimed dream of Meizhou Islander Lin Congzhi (commonly known as 'Aba'), she was appointed by Mazu to rebuild the ancestral temple and took the lead in starting the reconstruction of Mazu temple. Since it was impossible to obtain official approval and support for the reconstruction of Mazu temple at that time, it was naturally lacking in the aid of architectural drawings and other materials, and the reconstruction work was unsustainable for a while. People had to dig out the patio of the Bedroom hall to determine the position of the original foundation, but the height and width could not be determined. A carpenter suggested that as long as can get the main beam of the main hall which was stored in the commune warehouse, the original building scale could be calculated. As a result, the daughter of Lin Congzhi stole out the main beam smoothly when she got the opportunity of moving the cinema's seats which were stored in the commune warehouse. Sure enough, the construction plan was determined based on this main beam. The islanders said, when the ancestral temple was demolished, this main beam could not be sawed and split, so no one dared to destroy this holy artifact, that's why it was preserved intact.





Figure 36 Lin Congzhi and other participants participated in the groundbreaking ceremony of the ancestral temple

Source: [https://www.sohu.com/a/309344120\\_120059808](https://www.sohu.com/a/309344120_120059808), 2019

However, because Mazu temple was under the jurisdiction of the garrison on Meizhou Island at that time, the garrison and the local residents had great different opinions on the rebuilding of Mazu temple. Later, the board of directors of the ancestral temple ran around and received instructions from the secretary of the provincial party committee to suspend the demolition of Mazu temple, so the Bedroom hall of Mazu temple was preserved. Under the leadership of Lin Congzhi, the Bedroom hall was rebuilt on the original site in 1981, followed by the construction of a 14.4-meter-high giant stone statue of Mazu, and more than ten Mazu temples were rebuilt in Meizhou Island, making the development of the ancestral temple of Mazu begin to take shape. Since then, the Lin family has also established an important core position in Mazu belief in Meizhou Island. In recent years, with the development of cross-strait relations and the rise of intangible cultural heritage projects<sup>111</sup>, Mazu belief has become a world-class intangible cultural heritage, Mazu temple has also become a cultural protection unit,

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<sup>111</sup> Passed at the 32nd session of the UNESCO General Conference in October 2003, it aims to protect the intangible cultural heritage represented by tradition, oral expression, festival etiquette, manual skills, music, dance, etc.

and the development of Mazu belief in Meizhou Island has entered into rapid development, up to a new stage.

“From 1987 to 1997, Chairman Lin Congzhi overcame all kinds of unimaginable difficulties and gradually restored the traditional rituals of Mazu Temple to become a systematic and standardized traditional ritual model. She also cultivated a group of inheritors of Mazu culture, such as Lin Jinbang, Lin Jinzan, Zhuang Meihua, Zhu Ruirong, Zhu Jinchu, Tang Jinchu, Gao Jinqing, Zhou Yaqing and Shi Jinchun. Under her careful and strict training, these inheritors at that time have become the backbone of the current board of directors, laying a solid foundation for inheritance.” (MZMAZU, 2019)

## 2.2 The government involves in the construction of Mazu belief

Mazu temple is an important carrier of Mazu belief. At the beginning of the reconstruction of the ancestral temple of Mazu, the Board of Directors was managed by the family, which exposed problems such as nepotism, financial opacity, and lack of long-term planning. In this situation, the local government (Meizhou Island National Tourism Resort Management Committee) tried to involve in the daily management of the ancestral temple of Mazu. Taking into account the extensive influence of Lin Congzhi, whom who has the reputation of 'living Mazu', the government finally adopted the belief construction model of jointly building Mazu belief by government and folk. After Lin Congzhi became chairman of the board of directors of Mazu temple, her eldest son Mr. Lin was appointed the chairman. The directors have not only her younger son, but also the related leaders of Meizhou Island Management Committee. The process is not entirely smooth. “As Director Tang of the Management Committee of Meizhou Island said, he (Mr. Lin) also works in government. He knows that this is the general trend. No matter how big your family is, you can't fight against with government. In the past few years, he was also given some honors. He was promoted from an ordinary village cadre to a cadre of section rank. Now that he retired, he was promoted again before retiring. It was not easy.” ( Zhang Xiaoyi, 2015, PP: 28-31)

As a result, Mazu temple combined the previous family management and government management, and reorganized the board of directors of Mazu temple in the form of a civil community. The members of the board include representatives of the

original family management system, as well as government officials and some social talents promoted in other management positions in the ancestral temple of Mazu. This reorganization method uses the civil community as the organizational shell, wrapping folk belief elites and government officials in, achieving a smooth transition from pure family management to half-officials and half-folk.

As far as the current management model is concerned, the chairman who is the representative of the elite family of folk beliefs can fully exercise the management power of Mazu temple, while several directors who are government officials have unanimously stated that they will not interfere with the daily work of Mazu temple, they are only carrying out guiding large-scale events of Mazu. Therefore, as the main body of decision-making of Mazu temple, the chairman of the board is presented as the top daily manager in the foreground, while the directors who are government officials usually hide behind the scenes and don't express their opinions. As a political force that cannot be ignored, they restrict the daily performance of managers.

The political tone of the background influences the direction of the management and belief construction of the front office, the personal style and family authority of the front office will surely shape the background. Although the two roughly the same action goals and the already formed cooperative consensus enable each other to cooperate by mobilizing their own resources in the event organization, the action goals and styles of individuals and government officials as managers can't be exactly the same. There must be some compromises and games. The form of joint construction between the government and the folk makes the local township party and government cadres closely connected with the operation of Mazu belief. Mazu temple attaches great importance to the management ability of retired party and government cadres in Meizhou Island, the leadership positions of many departments are held by retired party and government cadres.

“As Director Tang who is the Management Committee of Meizhou Island said, after the retirement of some administrative village secretaries, Mazu temple continued to ask them to take charge of management work in some institutions and departments of Mazu temple, such as the Department of Environmental Sanitation, Tianfei Palace, and Mazu Cultural Park, etc. The effect is very good. The person in charge of Mazu Cultural Film Park was also the secretary of Mazu Middle School and

the vice principal of Meizhou First Central Primary School. Obviously, Mazu belief under the co-construction of the government and the folk has brought together the human resources of many political and cultural elites and the material resources, social relations and power tendencies behind them, and this has promoted the rapid development of Mazu belief.” (Zhang Xiaoyi, 2015, PP: 28-31)

### **Part III The expression of belief identity under the joint belief relationship between government and folk**

Yang Fenggang<sup>112</sup> and Hu Anning<sup>113</sup> divided Chinese folk beliefs into three types: community type, sectarian type, and individual type. They believe that community-based folk beliefs are those located in the local community and mainly serve the local community. As the origin of Mazu belief, Mazu belief has a strong religious capital in Meizhou Island. If regard Meizhou Island as a community, Mazu, which is believed by most community members, can be regarded as a typical community-based folk belief, and the most prominent one is based on the identification of local beliefs and traditions. The formation of this belief tradition is inseparable from the profound inheritance of the thousand-year history of Mazu in Meizhou Island and its historical significance as the origin of Mazu.

#### **3.1 The government's identification of current Mazu belief**

For the government and the folk belief elite families represented by Lin Congzhi and Mr. Lin, the current folk belief construction model which is jointly constructed by the government and the folk has emerged from scratch, although there are various reluctances and compromises. But as far as the results of the current construction of Mazu belief in Meizhou Island are concerned, it is obviously a win-win situation. Both parties agree with the current way of operation and function of Mazu in Meizhou Island. Through cooperation with the Lin family, the government intervenes in the operation of Mazu belief in the form of joint construction and reorganization of

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<sup>112</sup> Professor of Sociology in Purdue University.

<sup>113</sup> Doctor of Sociology, Professor of School of Social Development and Public Policy, Fudan University.

the board of directors, without affecting the expression of the sacredness of Mazu by folk authority, the government usually hides in the background. The daily work of Mazu temple is carried out by the management tasks of the chairman of the board and the director of the scenic area management office.

This form not only facilitates Mazu to communicate with folk society as an identity of the folk community, but also allows the original civil authority to continue to be retained. The cooperation is smoothly transitioned. Relying on the ingenious method of joint construction between the government, Mazu belief flourished after government participation. The government's identification with Mazu in Meizhou is mainly reflected in the recognition of the current construction model of Mazu belief, there is also identification of an excellent united front function of Mazu belief as a local cultural tradition.

### 3.2 The folk elites' identification of current Mazu belief

For Lin family as the folk belief elite of Mazu belief, the self-proclaimed that Mazu entrusted dream, to make it initially initiate and participate in the reconstruction of Mazu belief to obtain a certain degree of sacredness and legitimacy of action, subsequently because of her contribution to the restoration of Mazu in Meizhou Island, she obtained the reputation of 'living Mazu', and made her further gaining prestige among the believers. Even the government had to consider the Lin family when initially attempting to participate in the organization and operation of Mazu belief, and then adopted the joint construction model of the government and the folk.

Although the Lin family no longer has full control over the overall operation of Mazu temple, since the chairman and the director of the scenic area management office are both from the Lin family, the daily work and contacts of Mazu temple have not been greatly affected. Especially after the government's intervention, due to the increasingly prominent united front function of Mazu belief in Taiwan and overseas Chinese, Mazu belief has been increasingly valued by the government, the material investment from government and reputation for Mazu temple has also increased day by day, making Meizhou Island a good fame and fortune. This is also what the folk elites like to see and hear. Therefore, the current identification with Mazu in Meizhou Island includes both the identification of Mazu belief itself (this identification is manifested



through the identification of Mazu's spirituality), as well as the self-identity of the joint construction model of government and folk. Especially, the Lin family is also one of the constructors. Among them, the identification of itself being as one of the constructors of Mazu belief is the most obvious.

### 3.3 The identification of employees of Mazu

temple to current Mazu belief. For employees, since the vast majority of employees are locals in Putian city, they have a sense of belonging of belief and have an emotional involvement of Mazu. Due to the various types of employees' positions, including civil servants, business employees, corporate workers, temporary workers, and rotating workers, the salary package is relatively unbalanced, sometimes there is also different pay for the same work. For many grassroots employees, the monthly salary income is not high.

However, many employees have shown their identification of working in Mazu temple. As an employee of the Finance Department said, working here is actually quite good. It is quiet, and she does not care about remuneration. It is like doing things by Mazu's side, blessing people's work smoothly. Therefore, many employees associate their work with their beliefs. Mention to current Mazu in Meizhou Island, almost all employees agree and identify her, especially the rapid development of Mazu in Meizhou Island and the changes that have taken place in Meizhou Island due to Mazu. The employees also identify that. This identification includes not only the identification of Mazu belief itself, but also the identification of the current construction model and the constructor of Mazu belief. The most prominent of these identification elements should be Mazu belief as a key element of local traditional culture.

### 3.4 The volunteers' identification of current Mazu belief

Volunteers have also become a group that strongly identifies with Mazu belief, and there is almost no situation of disagreeing with Mazu belief. First of all, the main body of volunteers are enthusiastic and devout believers, they already identify with Mazu belief. As a volunteer, volunteers themselves have a certain official identity. Volunteers unconsciously identify with this kind of folk belief construction model

through participating in the activities of Mazu belief. Meanwhile, their belief also produces an identity with the folk construction model and the current Mazu constructor.

On September 27, 2020, the inaugural meeting of Putian Mazu Volunteer Team was held at the Putian Hall of Meizhou Mazu Temple. Putian Mazu Volunteer Team was initiated and supervised by the Putian Municipal Committee of the National Revolution of the People's Republic of China, it was jointly formed by the Putian Hall of Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island, the Putian Entrepreneurs Association of the National Revolution, the Square Dance Association of Putian, and the Cheongsam Association of Putian. At present, there are about 12,000 registered volunteers, composed of three teams, bringing together the young elites of the volunteer service team of Putian, they are daring to take responsibility, good at coordinating, helpful and diligent in service.

These volunteers took the initiative to join the Mazu Volunteer Team out of their wishes, and selflessly served the islanders and tourists within their own capacity. They practiced the spirit of Mazu's morality and good deeds through their own actions, most of them have gradually formed the habit of coming to Meizhou Island regularly work after the first volunteer service. Whenever there are activities, they may have to temporarily put aside their work or family. What drives them to take the initiative is not only their willingness to contribute, but also the internal drive of the belief and spirit of Mazu. They can feel the sense of group identity and social identity felt in the volunteer team.





Figure 37 Mazu volunteers carried out activities at the square of the ancestral temple on Meizhou Island

Source:

[http://www.wenming.cn/zyfw/2018sg100/zjzyfwzz/201811/t20181128\\_4914199.shtm](http://www.wenming.cn/zyfw/2018sg100/zjzyfwzz/201811/t20181128_4914199.shtm)

1, 2018



Figure 38 Mazu volunteers provide assistance to the disabled who come to visit the ancestral temple of Mazu

Source:

[http://www.wenming.cn/zyfw/2018sg100/zjzyfwzz/201811/t20181128\\_4914199.shtm](http://www.wenming.cn/zyfw/2018sg100/zjzyfwzz/201811/t20181128_4914199.shtm)

1, 2018

They use the common identity of ‘Mazu Volunteers’ to strengthen the sense of identity and social belonging of the volunteer group. Mazu volunteers have developed well, the number is increasing, and they are mainly young people. At present, more young people are due to their respect and love for Mazu. They are also inspired by Mazu's selfless contribution of loving the country and people, so that they volunteer to be Mazu volunteers, through the process of volunteering service to experience and learn Mazu culture, it also reflects the fashion characteristics of current Mazu cultural belief. Many young people have been affected by Mazu's virtues and deeds. Infected by the spirit of love, volunteers consciously promote Mazu's spirit by participating in volunteer work. This enthusiasm is often full of the sense of lasting and inspiring.

The emergence of this kind of ‘faith culture hot’, here particularly refers to the ‘Mazu cultural hot’, because Mazu was originally dedicated to the country and people because of protecting dangers and difficulties. The spirit of love, tolerance, and good deeds showed by Mazu, in today's advocating construction harmonious society, this spirit will undoubtedly be identified by young people and gradually internalized into their moral act and habit. Judging from the psychological attributes of Mazu culture, young people are easier to produce this kind of belief and identity psychology, this kind of psychological driving force also drives them to be Mazu volunteers. People can know more information from each other through service, which reflects more humanization characteristics of Mazu and the organization. This kind of communication is also two-way and interactive. The volunteer team can provide a good communication platform, through practical communication, playing a stronger cohesion of Mazu culture and Mazu folk belief.

### 3.5 The believers' identification of current Mazu belief

For believers, Mazu temple is extremely sacred and efficacious. Many believers do not hesitate to travel far, but also come to worship during Mazu festival. Both local residents and believers from other places can tell some efficacious stories after worshipping Mazu. In Meizhou Island, believers identify with the spirituality of Mazu, also highlight it through the tradition of specific sacred spaces. Worshipping the ancestral temple and admiring the giant Mazu statue has become their inevitable itinerary. For other Mazu temples in the world, being able to invite Mazu to cruise and

communicate will not only enhance cooperation and exchanges between Mazu temples, but it is also a metaphor for improving the spirituality of their own Mazu temples.



Figure 39 Believers from all over the country came to worship Mazu  
Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2018

“In fact, it is not only the driving force of spirituality. For some believers, going to the ancestral temple to worship Mazu every year seems to be a responsibility and obligation that cannot be shied away. Through the interviews with overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, most of them agree that they come back to worship Mazu mostly because of the ‘root tracing’ factor. Their parents or grandparents were from Fujian or even locals in Putian. At that time, there was a tradition of believing in Mazu. Therefore, Meizhou Mazu always became an important stop for them to visit and miss their hometown.” (Zhang Xiaoyi, 2015, PP: 68)

#### **Part IV The construction of self-identity of Chinese people**

Meizhou Island is a small island with an area of only 14.35 square kilometers. There are about 40,000 permanent residents on Meizhou Island, most of them believe in Mazu. The social environment and social influence play an important role in shaping the local residents' self-identity of Mazu belief.



#### 4.1 The period of childhood

Everyone on Meizhou Island has been in touch with Mazu belief from after they are born. During their infancy, they need others to help them recognize who they are, mainly from their parents. Among them, due to the traditional feudal social and cultural society of Meizhou Island, normally men go fishing and women stay behind to take care of their families. Therefore, the important task of raising and educating children belongs to the mother.

Mazu is a female role in the traditional family. Since the formation of Mazu belief, she has been loved and identified by many women. They all received the education of traditional ideas, such as taking care of their families, educating their children, and supporting their parents. The image that people set up for Mazu is based on this cultural background. Under the mother's words and deeds, they listened to Mazu's stories since they were young, people gradually developed self-awareness, and the image of Mazu always exists in this self-consciousness.

##### 4.4.2 Influences from others

Others are those who are independent of the self. People need to confirm their identity through others. Without them, people cannot develop the self-consciousness that most people have, that is, as an individual who is independent of a large social group.

The people of Meizhou Island have been continuously influenced by Mazu belief and Mazu culture during the period of the growth stage. Since childhood, parents will take their children to participate in some Mazu folk activities. The stage in front of Mazu temple has become an important place for children to gather and play. This is an important memory of people's childhood. The various traditional festivals on Meizhou Island are closely related to Mazu belief. Whenever such a time of celebration, the residents of Meizhou Island will always gather at Mazu temple to talk about interesting pictures and details of activities.

People always consciously or unconsciously participate in the activities of Mazu belief under the influence and drive of others. For example, the sense of ritual when worshiping Mazu, queuing one by one when offering incense, completing the procedures and prescribed steps, triggering the emotion of missing and admiring Mazu.

This emotion cannot be described by words. This is an inner sense of security, excitement, calmness and stability.

This is a sense of existence that spreads and swells from individuals, a sense of detachment from life, all of these are given by collective rituals. Meanwhile, this is also a silent transforming influence, no special form is needed to confirm the self-identity of Chinese people by Mazu belief. The vast majority of individuals in Meizhou Island influence others to construct their self-identity with Mazu.

Meizhou Island is a relatively closed island. In ancient times, it was extremely inconvenient to travel, it was only possible to travel by boat. People in such a social environment often cooperate in life, these people meet almost every day. In sociology, it is called face to face group, that is, face-to-face community. People learn from each other, influence each other, support each other, and trust each other. This has become the habit of daily life, including the identification and choice of belief, the habit formed by society dominates the 'self'.

In other words, in such a society, if there are a common belief, language, habits and other customs, it will be regarded as the same group. On the contrary, it may be regarded as an 'aberration', which will cause a psychological distance from Mazu's believers. Over time, it will gradually break away from the circle of Mazu believe. We have reason to believe that this is the social language of Meizhou Island. People share the same experience, contact and use the same belief and symbol in similar environments. Mazu is the special social language of Meizhou Islanders.

#### 4.3 The power of group---the identity construction and expression of Mazu folklore

After more than a thousand years of inheritance, Mazu has stepped out of the pure folk belief hall and formed an extensive folk culture. Folk culture is the local custom and life culture, which is created, shared, and inherited by local people. It is a collection of a series of material things formed during the production and life of ordinary people, including people's daily life. The folk customs of Mazu are unique and self-contained. Based on the identification of Mazu belief, people construct a series of folk activities to convey their inner thoughts and emotions, which is an important channel for belief individuals to build self-identity.

Mazu folklore is a kind of conventional folk beliefs and customs gradually formed from people's admiration for Mazu. It is a component of Chinese excellent culture and a common treasure of people all over the world. These folk activities contain people's good wishes for believing in Mazu, as well as the inner thoughts of devoting to Mazu, which can express people's emotions and express people's miss and respect for Mazu.

#### 4.3.1 Living customs

##### 4.3.1.1 Fishing is prohibited on Mazu's birthday

Within a few days before and after the 23rd of the third month of the lunar calendar, fishermen cannot go fishing in the sea. Local fishermen believe that in the next few days, there will be a dragon king<sup>114</sup> to worship Mazu, and the tide is raging, so fishing is not allowed. People do this to be a memory to Mazu. In addition, according to field surveys of the hydrological environment, in the days before and after the 23rd March, there were indeed many sea creatures cruising around Meizhou Island to lay eggs. This may be a coincidence between legends and celestial phenomena.

##### 4.3.1.2 Sticking Mazu's talisman on the gate

Believers stuck yellow paper with Mazu image and scriptures on the gate, some of them also carved Mazu image on wooden boards to bless safety for the family. Mazu believers believe that Mazu charms have the function of blessing safety, so they are posted on the gate of their homes, and some are posted on cars, shops, or carry it when they travel far away.

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<sup>114</sup> Dragon king is the king who ruled the clan in the water in ancient myths and legends, and is in charge of clouds and rain. It has a legend that the dragon king can control clouds and rain, eliminate disasters and bring good luck, symbolizing auspiciousness.



Figure 40 Mazu incense bag with incense ash and amulets  
Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2021

4.3.1.3 When people go to sea, they hang straw mats on the boat, when fishermen on Meizhou Island go out to sea, they always hang straw mats on their masts to pray for blessing. This is one of the folk customs that has changed from the ancient Mazu legendary.



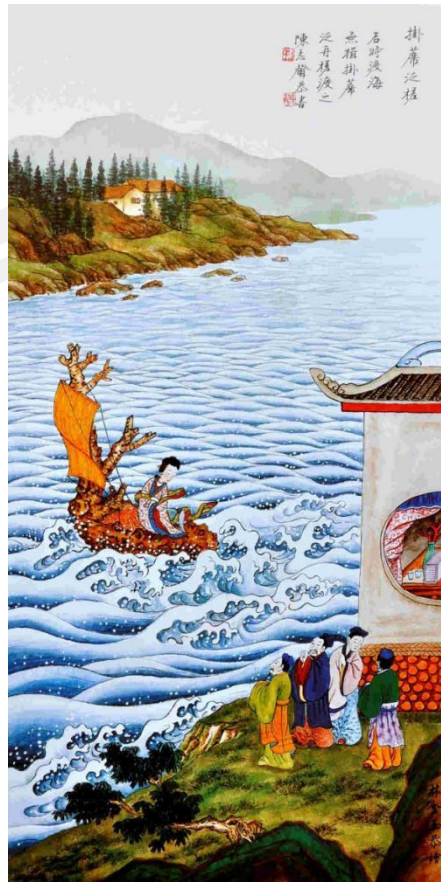


Figure 41 Mazu hung straw mats and sailed to save people  
Source: Painted by Lin Jinyu, 2016

4.3.1.4 Believers worship Mazu and offer incense to thank Mazu for help

This is a ritual held by the family to thank Mazu. It refers to people praying to Mazu for the blessing when they encounter difficulties, and the family holds a ritual to thank Mazu after the difficulties are resolved. Generally, the whole family will wear uniforms and line up to Mazu temple to invite Mazu, thank the holy grace of Mazu.

4.3.1.5 Customs of launching new boats and making models of boats

The people of Meizhou Island have lived on fishing for generations, fishing boats have been the main tool of production. The finished fishing boat is painted white, with two giant eyes painted on both sides of the bow, two blue dragons painted on both sides of the boat. A certain ritual must be held when the new boat is launched. The owner of the boat must enshrine Mazu statue on the boat, with tribute, fruit boxes,



wine, and burning incense. The blood taken from the cockscomb of the rooster is also ready to be used for painting giant eyes on the bow and blue dragon's eyes on the sides of the boat.

Its function is to make fishermen psychologically feel that there has Mazu's escort and the guidance of dragon's eyes, so that they are not afraid of strong winds and waves on the sea. This custom, which has been passed down since Song Dynasty, reflects the ancient fishermen's confidence in conquering nature with the help of divine power. Until now, people have always retained this custom, which is the result of mutual influence and interaction between social groups.

Before the new boat is launched, a model of a fishing boat will be made and enshrined in Mazu temple. The meaning is to be with Mazu, there has Mazu's escort. This will pray for safety.

#### 4.3.1.6 The special meaning of Mazu's sachet

In the local folk society, parents often go to Mazu temple to pray for sachets for their children to wear, to drive out demons and ghosts to ensure safety. This kind of sachet is generally made of cloth, the size of 2 inches. The front side is red, the pattern of Taiji-Bagua is embroidered in the middle, and the four characters 'Meizhou Ancestral Temple' are embroidered in the gaps in the four corners. The edges of the four corners are tied with yarn wool, the backside is grass green, with a red embroidered in the middle, and a red cover is added on one third of the corners, embroidered with the words 'Mother of Heaven'. The Inside sachet has charm and incense ashes, it punches a buttonhole on the edge of the front for easy to thread and hang.

In addition, there are customs such as wearing jade around the neck and entrusting children to Mazu temple. Wearing jade around the neck refers to that believers wear the jade statue of Mazu on the neck, which means that Mazu always accompanies and protects them. Entrusting children to Mazu temple refer to when believers are out, people entrust children to Mazu temple, because Mazu is their most trusted protection god.

#### 4.3.2 The custom of Mazu clothes

Mazu clothes are a characteristic embodiment of Mazu culture. Most middle-aged and elderly women in Meizhou Island often wear a special kind of trousers. The upper part is red and the lower part is black or blue. This is to imitate

Mazu's clothes. Modern Mazu clothes have made certain innovations based on inheriting Mazu traditional clothes, it is added people's identification and understanding of Mazu belief, and uses Mazu clothes to spread Mazu culture, this reflects the characteristics of Mazu belief. People use Mazu clothes to show respect for Mazu.

Mazu bun is a bun in the shape of a sailboat. In ancient times, men dominated the outside and women dominated the inside. In Meizhou Island, women are at home when men go fishing in the sea. To pray for Mazu to bless their relatives to return safely from the sea, the women of Meizhou Island, especially the middle-aged and elderly women, made their hairstyles combed into the shape of a sailboat. This custom was formed to imitate Mazu. On the one hand, shows that they are residents of Meizhou Island, on the other hand, they also hope to be protected by Mazu.

#### 4.3.3 Marriage and childbearing traditions

The custom of 'exchanging flowers' for women. In Meizhou Island, there is a peculiar custom called 'exchanging flowers', that is, married women those who have not given birth after two or three years, so they are suspected of being infertile, then their families will start the ritual of 'exchanging flowers'.

The date of 'exchanging flowers' is on the night of the 16th day of the eighth month in the lunar calendar, when the moon is at its fullest. Women who have not yet given birth planted a leafy white-flowered tree in advance, such as magnolia, jasmine or white chrysanthemums. The folks say that white flowers represent boys and red flowers represent girls. In ancient times, the residents of Meizhou Island preferred boys to girls, so white flowers were their first choice.

Under the white moonlight, the women who have not yet given birth placed fruit wine and sacrifices in front of the flower tree in front of Mazu temple, burning incense and worshipping Mazu, silently praying for the blessing of Mazu, and using the flower tree to replace the flower tree in front of Mazu temple. In order to look forward to having children in the coming year. This custom shows people's devotion to Mazu and also brings spiritual comfort to women who have not given birth.

#### 4.3.4 Diet custom

##### 4.3.4.1 Mazu cake

Mazu cake is with the size of 6 cm in length and about 2 cm in thickness. Each piece is wrapped in soft white paper with white sugar cake, and writes the

vermilion mark 'Mazu cake', 'happy life and health'. Mazu cake was originally a traditional pastry made by farmers in Meizhou Island. It is made with glutinous rice and winter rice using an ancestral formula. It tastes sweet and delicious, soft but not sticky, sweet but not greasy. It is still soft and delicious even in winter.



Figure 42 Mazu cake  
Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

#### 4.3.4.2 Mazu Noodles

When relatives and friends visit, Meizhou Islanders will always bring out a bowl of delicious Mazu noodles, which symbolizes the peace, wealth and longevity bestowed by Mazu. It is used to welcome distinguished guests and demonstrate the sincerity and good wishes of the host.

Mazu noodles are hand-made slender noodles that are unique in Putian city. The selection of materials for its products mainly includes fine white noodles, peanuts, shiitake mushrooms, dry daylily, eggs or duck eggs, freshly fried tofu strips, fresh pork and seaweed etc. Mazu noodles look simple and generous, with a tangy fragrance, refreshing and delicious. Anyone who comes to worship at Mazu temple wants to eat this dish.



Figure 43 Mazu noodle  
Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

#### 4.3.5 Festival

##### 4.3.5.1 Mazu Lantern

When there are Mazu's birthday and major festivals, a special large Mazu lantern is hung in each Mazu temple, with the words 'Mazu in the heaven' and 'Mazu temple' written on it. When Mazu travels and parades, there will always be special people carrying big lanterns together.

พหุบัน ปณุ ทิโต ชีเว



Figure 44 Lanterns hanging at Mazu temple  
Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

#### 4.3.5.2 Dragon boat hanging flags

During the Dragon Boat Festival in China, there is a custom of dragon boat racing in Meizhou Island. During the dragon boat racing, the local people will hang flags with the words of 'Mother of Heaven' and hang Mazu statue on the dragon boat. The purpose is to exorcise evil spirits, protect the dragon boat, and protect the safety of the sailors.

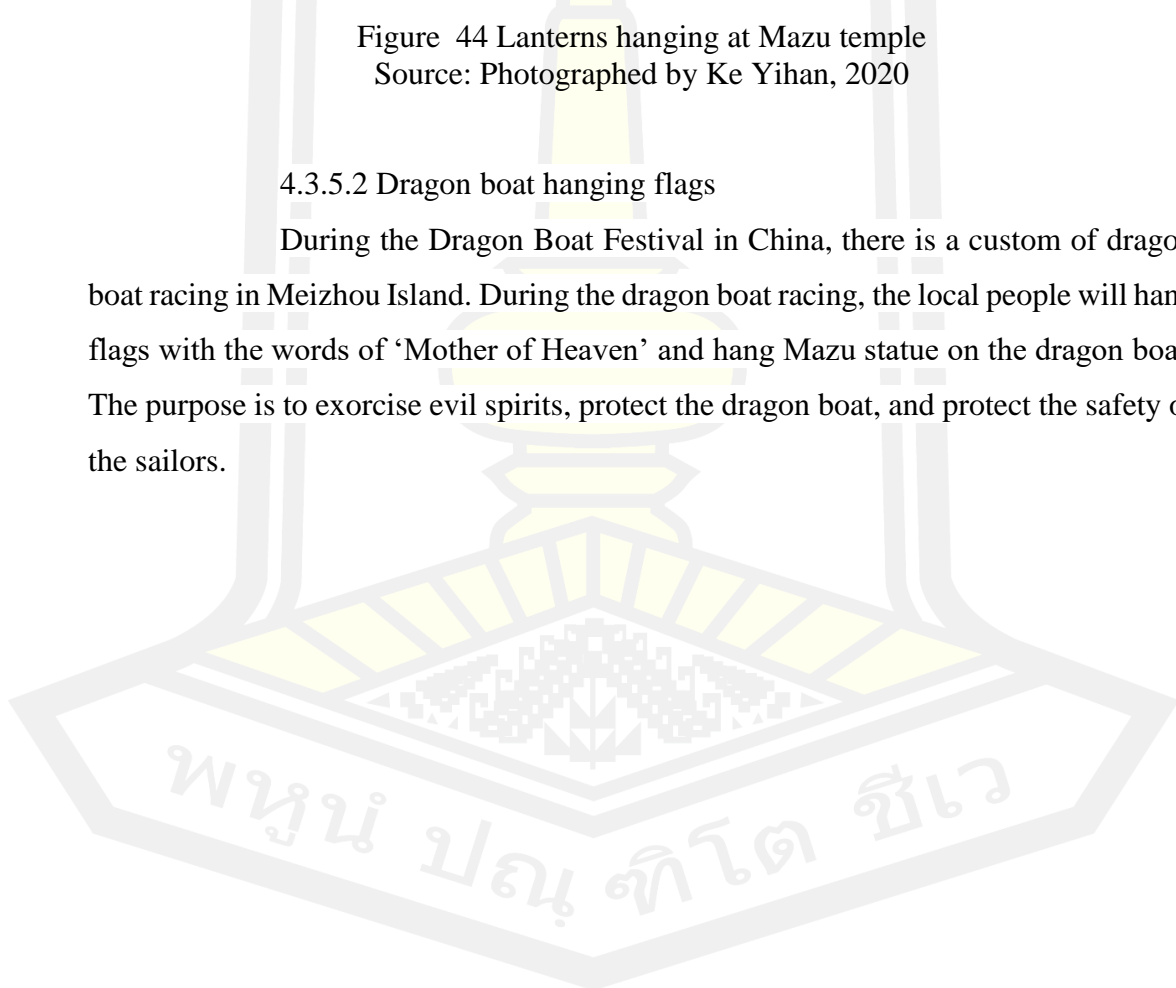






Figure 45 Partial decoration of dragon boat  
Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

#### 4.3.6 Mazu game customs

##### 4.3.6.1 Swing a sedan chair

The sedan chair is a sedan chair tied with palm fibers. The palm sedan chair is a kind of 'Mazu dance' with folk traditional characteristics. It is said to be created according to the picture that Mazu once entrusted to someone in a dream. The specific dance according to its unique movements, accompanied by percussion instruments such as drums, gongs, and cymbals. Knocking out special music under a unique melody picture. When playing the palm sedan chair, people will set up firewood and light a fire. 18 adults carried the palm sedan over, lift and down, according to a unique picture. Generally, when Mazu moves, people will carry the palm sedan chair accompanying Mazu as Mazu's entourage.

พหุบัณฑิต ชีวะ



Figure 46 Swing a sedan chair

Source: <http://www.ptwhw.com/?post=10486>, 2015

#### 4.3.6.2 Playing knife sedan

Playing knife sedan is one of the important Mazu activities during the Lantern Festival. The design of the knife sedan was made in the form of a sedan in ancient times, the pedal, backrest, and armrest of the sedan were equipped with three knives, so it was called a knife sedan. During folk activities, four strong men would carry sedan, and there were a number of people beside them supported the sedan, or followed Mazu, or circled the fire. When playing the knife sedan, people play close to the fire, approaching the fire, stepping, raising and lowering the sedan, while playing along the edge of the fire, centered on the fire, the brawny man and people follow the actions of the previous carriers, always maintaining a straight-line outward with the fire as the center. The purpose of playing the knife sedan is to create a lively festival atmosphere. At the protection of Mazu, everyone will drive away evil and bad luck, and hopes that all will be well in the coming year.



Figure 47 Playing knife sedan  
Source: <http://www.ptwhw.com/?post=10486>, 2015

#### 4.3.7 Mazu golden statue parade in Meizhou Island

Mazu golden statue parade is an important part of Mazu belief customs. The custom of Mazu parade of Mazu temple in Meizhou Island appeared almost at the same time as the construction of Mazu temple. According to the local custom of worshipping gods in Putian city, temple sacrifices are partial or individual acts, while Mazu parade is the activity that all people take part in. Regardless of rich or poor, old or young, wherever Mazu pays a visit, people will gain blessings and safety. Therefore, Mazu parade is very popular with the public. Meizhou Mazu temple is the ancestor of all Mazu temples in the world, the Mazu golden statue enshrined in the ancestral temple is the only Mazu golden statue in the world, Mazu golden parade is regarded as the highest-level Mazu parade in the world.

“From the fourth year of Xuanhe in Song Dynasty (1121) when Mazu was given the title of ‘Linghui furen’ for the first time, Mazu golden statue parade began. Since then, with the continuous increase of Mazu's titles and the improvement of Mazu's status, the treatment of Mazu golden statue parade has also been continuously improved. After the reform and opening up, with the loose and free policies of religious belief in China, people's enthusiasm for Mazu belief continued to rise, in 1985, the custom of Mazu golden statue parade in Meizhou was restored, it was favored by local



people, generally welcomed by Mazu believers around the world. In recent years, Mazu temples in various places have invited the golden statue of Mazu in Meizhou Island to visit their local areas.

From January 24 to May in 1997, Meizhou Mazu golden statue visited Taiwan island for 102 days, she travelled to 19 cities and counties, stayed at 35 Mazu temples, received 1 million pilgrimages from Mazu believers in Taiwan, this sets a record of the largest scale and widest influence of Mazu culture exchanges after the resumption of cross-strait exchanges.

On May 8, 2002, at the invitation of Kinmen Mazu believers, Meizhou Mazu golden statue visited Kinmen, she was worshipped by more than 30,000 people in Kinmen Mazu. The scene was extremely enthusiastic.

In October 2004, Meizhou Mazu golden statue visited Macau, there were many spectators crowding the streets. At that time, there was no rain in Macau for more than five months and the drought was serious. It just so happened that it had continuously rained after Mazu visited Macau, people of Macau were all amazed that Mazu brought the timely rain.



Figure 48 Mazu golden statue parade in Meizhou Island  
Source: [https://www.sohu.com/a/224130726\\_99960645](https://www.sohu.com/a/224130726_99960645), 2018

Mazu golden statue parade in Meizhou Island has a history of more than a thousand years since the Song Dynasty. Its rich folk activities are the embodiment of Meizhou people's traditional cultural form of entertaining, self-entertaining, and having fun with gods. It is an important carrier for the inheritance of traditional folk arts and customs in Putian city, it's a vivid form of the spread of Mazu culture around the world. Mazu golden statue parade is also an important manifestation of people's identification with Mazu belief. The huge sensation caused by Mazu golden statue parade is the best proof, its influence and significance is huge.” (Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 230-236)

#### 4.3.8 The custom of worshipping Mazu and offering incense to Mazu

The custom of worshipping Mazu and offering incense to Mazu is a kind of ritual act that other separated Mazu temples pilgrimage and offer incense to the ancestral temple. Holding the deity statue back to Mazu temple in Meizhou Island to search for their roots is a very glory act that Mazu believers at home and abroad dream of. As a customary form, worshipping Mazu and offering incense to Mazu has been spreading continuously. It has been passed down since Song Dynasty, it has a history of thousands of years.

“Regardless of official or folk, when there is Mazu's birthday or ascension anniversary, or usually choose auspicious days through divination, they will go to Mazu temple in Meizhou to worship Mazu in different ways. According to records such as ‘Tianhouxianshenglu’, ‘History of Yuan Dynasty • Sacrifice History’, ‘History of Ming Dynasty • History of Rituals’, the courts of the past dynasties went to worship Mazu in Meizhou Island for praying for seals, plaques, peace, smooth transportation, smooth navigation, and military victory for more than 300 times.” (Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 239)

In ancient times, most local believers in Putian city often walk in groups to Mazu temple for offering incense, show their devotion. Now, every year, there are millions of Mazu believers traveling to Mazu temple to find roots and ancestors from a far way, including many people from overseas.

“According to incomplete statistics, since 1978, Mazu temple in Meizhou Island has received groups from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Southeast Asia, Japan, the United States, New Zealand, Australia and other countries and all over the country more than 21,000, there are more than two million believers worshipped Mazu and



offered incense.”( Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 240) The custom of worshipping Mazu and offering incense to Mazu is an important part of Mazu culture, it is an important carrier of cultural exchanges between China and the world.

The most essence and vital point of Mazu belief is its tradition. Many folk activities come from imitating the habits of the ancients, or commemorating the rituals and customs of the ancients, or producing from legends and stories, but after spreading a long time, these customs are endowed with strong national flavor and rich cultural content, they are the concentrated expression of people's wisdom.

Mazu belief is a kind of social psychology. It is people's admiration and respect or some certain wishes for Mazu as the sea god (actually is Mazu herself). Among them includes people's reflection and expectations of themselves. With the needs of social psychology, the connotation of belief has gradually developed and expanded. In modern times, Mazu belief will surely win the consensus of people in China and the world, carry forward Mazu's spirit, lead the motherland to prosperity, lead the world to peace.

These are the self-identity and expression of individuals constructed through Mazu folk customs.

#### 4.4 The power of environment---activities organization and belief expression of Mazu belief

Regarding the belief identity of social groups, belief rituals have three main functions, first, to establish a strong sense of belonging to the individual. Second, to free individual actions from daily constraints. Third, to affect the mental state of the participants in the rituals. Mazu belief is the sanctification of individual self-identity, the rituals are one of the operating mechanisms that strengthen identity by connecting the past and the present, filling in the structures and rational gaps.

“Durkheim believes that religious rituals can bring individuals together, deepen the relationship between individuals, and make each other more intimate. This kind of spiritual reshaping can only be achieved through ways such as gathering, party, etc. In these occasions, individuals are closely connected, further deepen their common emotions, so rituals are produced.” (Zhang Xiaoyi, 2015, PP: 23)

The performance of religious rituals is an important way of expressing folk beliefs, and this is an important manifestation of people mobilizing various resources with folk beliefs. In Meizhou Island of Putian city, there are two formal and large festivals every year to commemorate Mazu. Local residents, farmers and fishermen will give marine animals to sacrifice, perform various sacrificial dances and other performances. In nearly 10,000 Mazu temples and private homes around the world, various other sacrificial activities, including visiting Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple, inviting gods, offering flowers, burning candles, offering incense, and setting off firecrackers, and so on. These forms are also in the process. Believer's worship Mazu for seeking children, happiness, peace, and seek solutions to solve problems.

Mazu belief has been integrated with the daily life of individual believers and passed on from generation to generation. People participate in the process of Mazu rituals and activities through various methods, they have obtained and proved their identification of Mazu belief in their behaviors and psychology. Through participation in rituals and activities, they can experience the sacredness of Mazu belief, meet their own demands, and achieve their spiritual distillation.

Officials and belief elites play an important role in the construction of belief identity. They usually need to create a good social environment of belief, so that people can immerse themselves in the cultural atmosphere of belief. The closer they are to the belief's center, the higher their identification of Mazu belief. Therefore, through holding various large-scale festivals, more people can get closer to the belief's center, learn more about Mazu culture, and then identify with Mazu belief, construct their own self-identity.

#### 4.4.1 The festival on Mazu's birthday

The festival on Mazu's birthday, which is also called Mazu festival, is mainly organized by the ancestral temple of Mazu itself, Meizhou Island Management Committee and the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association guide and co-organize Mazu festival. It is mainly divided into the sacrificial ceremony and believers compete for the first incense. In the sacrificial ceremony of the ancestral temple of Mazu, the part of theatrical performances is mainly supported by students of Putian University. In the sacrificial ceremony, the chairman of the board of the ancestral temple of Mazu be the key man to sacrifice, and the officials of the party and

government from various departments in China also attended, most of them are the officials of Putian city. In the ritual expression, the religious and cultural features of Mazu belief are more completely retained. Especially in the competition of first incense activities, which are dominated by believers overseas Chinese, not only sacrificial elements such as the sacrifice of cattle and sheep are retained, but also Taoist elements such as ceremonial performances by Taoists.



Figure 49 Mazu golden statue parade in Meizhou Island

Source: [http://www.taihainet.com/news/fujian/puti/2019-11-03/2323761\\_6.html](http://www.taihainet.com/news/fujian/puti/2019-11-03/2323761_6.html). 2019

The festival on Mazu's birthday is held in Tianhou square, it is almost only open for officials, the public cannot enter this ritual space. It can be said to be an official ritual. However, since the evening of the 22nd in the March of the lunar calendar, the activity of offering incense to Mazu is more public to ordinary believers. Believers can enter and leave the main hall of the ancestral temple of Mazu freely, hold incense and worship and offer tributes, some believers can sit on the ground in the temple. Even they bring their straw mats to lie on the aisle outside Mazu temple is also allowed. Especially on the night of that day, Mazu temple is crowded with people and smog, there was an endless stream of believers who knee and worship Mazu, which is very popular and infectious. Therefore, contemporary Mazu festival, take Mazu's birthday as the main content, and take the temple as the main area, take Mazu festival and

folklore as the main support, which can promote economic and trade activities, give Mazu belief a new era significance.

#### 4.4.2 Meizhou Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival

“Meizhou Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival was held by Putian Municipal Government in 1994. It was the first creation in the country in the field of Mazu culture. It was then held again in 1997, usually every two years. Start from 2007, Meizhou Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival was sponsored by the Fujian Provincial People’s Government, with the Ministry of Culture as the supporting unit. The board of the ancestral temple of Mazu undertook this festival, and the Chinese Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, the All-China Federation of Taiwan, the China Tourism Association, and the Association for Cross-Strait Relations as the guidance unit. There are six well-known tourism associations in Taiwan island participating as co-organizers, while the National Tourism Administration and the Fujian Provincial People’s Government co-hosted it. Therefore, Mazu cultural tourism in Meizhou Island has been upgraded to a national festival.

Leaders who attended the festival included the vice chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, the member of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, and the chairman of the National Taiwan Federation, the Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan Overseas Chinese Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, as well as government’s leaders of Putian city. Because of the support of the Ministry of Culture of China, the National Tourism Administration and Fujian Provincial Government, the scale of activities of Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival in Meizhou city is the highest in the country, and the momentum is the most magnificent.

Certainly, due to different subjects of the performance of the festival, the subjects of such activities are mainly leaders at all levels and the principals of main Mazu temples in China, aiming to build the popularity and influence of Meizhou Mazu and highlight the value of Meizhou Island as a national tourist resort. Using Mazu belief to play an important function of unity. The same belief is undoubtedly the most touching thing for individuals.



Figure 50 Ceremony scene of Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival

Source:

<https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1682197417841896772&wfr=spider&for=pc>. 2020

Meizhou Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival restored ‘Mazu festival’, based on ancient classical records, combined with expert guidance to form a new set of ritual procedures, the chairman of the board of directors of the ancestral temple served as the chief priest. The subject of each Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival is roughly the same, such as the fourth ‘Mazu temple prays for new blessings, the festival welcomes the prosperous world’, the sixth ‘Worship Mazu together, share peace commonly’, and the seventh ‘Heart linked to heart on both sides of the strait, all Chinese hold hands together’. They highlight the cultural connotation of peace and harmony in Mazu cultural tourism and the political demands for maintaining cross-strait relations and the feelings of people. The cultural tourism activities led by the government and the participation of the people can enable more people to understand and participate in the activities of Mazu belief, it can guide people’s belief identity, help people learn Mazu’s virtues, restrain themselves and regulate their words and deeds. Meanwhile, it can help people establish their own ideological and moral system, promote virtue, and influence people around them.” (Zhang Xiaoyi, 2015, PP: 31-33)



## **Part V The influence of Mazu belief on the Chinese self-identity construction**

The influence of Mazu belief on the Chinese self-identity construction can be reflected in many aspects. Understanding and analyzing the influence of Mazu belief, will not only help knowing oneself more clearly, getting along with Mazu better, but also make people stay firm in their decisions and choices. These influences can make individuals have a complete and harmonious cognition of the status quo of the self, physical self, social expectations, past and current experience, future hopes, and contribute to the construction of self-identity.

### 5.1 The influence of Mazu belief on the construction of self-identity at the individual level

Mazu believers are individual undertakers of Mazu belief and are the embodiment of belief behavior, they generally process dual identities. Believers are often able to construct a symbolic boundary of 'self and others' based on Mazu's belief and express it in the form of group's symbols. As a kind of folk belief, individuals' identity with Mazu's spirituality has become an important factor that affects self-identity.

#### 5.1.1 Man and god living in harmony

Mazu is a fisherman, an ordinary woman who makes special and significant contributions to the community and people. The process of the folk masses deifying Lin Mo after her ascension to heaven and portraying Mazu into a dignified and kind heroic female image, is turning the humanistic form, god, mind, and attitude into the essence of her godhead. This transformation can be said to determine the inner meaning of Mazu's godhead in a personified way.

Believer's worship Mazu, or pray for Mazu to help them get a good harvest, or pray for Mazu to help them treat illness and eliminate disasters, or ask the gods to remind and bless them in advance to avoid some accidents in life. It can be expressed through sacrificial rituals, this shows that the believers are strengthening their own life security and improving their living conditions through that. The ultimate goal is to satisfy their own psychological demands. Therefore, people also have strong utility and purposefulness when they believe in Mazu. Meanwhile, the psychology of

believing in Mazu also demonstrates the divine essence of human's nature of tolerance, peace and love under the understanding of human motherhood.

#### 5.1.2 Restraining individual behavior

Culture is created by people, and culture is also creating people. Mazu culture promotes the spirit of truth, kindness and beauty. As a kind of folk belief, Mazu spirit has become a cultural accumulation and implanted in the deep psychology of Mazu believers. When believing in Mazu, people will have dual emotions, that is admiration and fear. The admiration for Mazu's kindness and love, fearing that their bad behaviors will be punished by Mazu, a kind of invisible potential psychological pressure and psychological set are born. To a certain extent, this has prompted Mazu believer's individual to adjust their behaviors to conform to the behavior norms of a social group. To a certain extent, this has a constraint effect on individual behavior.

#### 5.1.3 Releasing people's psychological pressure

Society is complex and changeable. People who live in society will inevitably encounter various contradictions and psychological anxiety, and even unpredictable setbacks. Especially in today's society where material desires and competition exist everywhere, people's pressure to survive is even more predictable. The negative reactions shown by ordinary people are attack, indifference, fantasy, and degradation. Among them, fantasy means are using unrealistic fictional methods to solve problems.

Most believers of Mazu are fantasizing about Mazu, hoping to express their hopes in their hearts through the lingering incense, to seek Mazu's blessings, to obtain a kind of psychological dependence, compensation or balance, enhance the confidence and courage to overcome difficulties, change their attitudes towards life and pursue more positive, healthy and good somethings. Mazu believers often use Mazu festival, sacrificial ceremonies and other activities to express their psychological pressure. On the one hand, it is to entertain Mazu, on the other hand, it is to entertain people. It not only adjusts one's own life status and psychological pressure, but also makes individual lives in the society harmonious and orderly.

#### 5.1.4 The function of individual education of Mazu belief

Mazu culture is a unique culture rooted in the soil of traditional Chinese culture. Mazu is both a human and a god. It is a god created by people according to the

universally recognized standards of good and evil, and gives the deified Mazu the image of a hero. “There are many fine traditions and positive ideological factors in Chinese culture, such as ‘the benevolent love others’, ‘saving others in distress’ and ‘protecting the country and people’, these can all be reflected in the legends of Mazu’s life and deeds. The myths and legends of Mazu, Mazu’s spirit, and the charm of the divinity of Mazu continually pass down today from generation to generation mainly through oral and behavioral inheritance. This is a kind of imperceptible education on the road of inheritance for thousands of years. For example, now many fishermen sail in the sea, whenever other boats encounter a shipwreck, people always try their best to help or rescue them. Whenever people see floating bodies on the sea, they always pick up them and carry them to the coast for burial. Although they don’t know the name, but also mourn them to comfort the souls of the dead, this is a concrete manifestation of Chinese Confucian culture---benevolence. The benevolence reflected by Mazu’s belief is not only a standard requirement for interpersonal relationships, but also a requirement for ethical behavior.” (Huang Xiulin, 2012, PP: 41)

## 5.2 The influence of Mazu belief on the construction of self-identity at the social group level

Mazu culture is a common social experience maintained by a symbolic system and personal memory. At the social level, as a kind of folk belief, Mazu belief and Mazu culture permeate various social structures, and have more or less and varying degrees of connection with culture, religion, tourism, politics, economy and other social fields. Especially in the context of the transformation of contemporary folk beliefs, the government tries to strip away the superstition and deification of beliefs as much as possible, and package it as a cultural phenomenon. Therefore, factors such as the construction method of Mazu belief, the type of belief constructors, the construction goals, the elites of folk beliefs, and the ritual contractors evolved from it play a pivotal role in the transformation of Mazu belief. These may become some of the key factors that influence the individual's identity of Mazu belief at the social level.

Mazu belief has been integrated into people's daily life as a unique local folk tradition and public knowledge in Meizhou Island. Believing in Mazu in Meizhou Island is a matter of course and as it should be. Mazu belief is endowed by nature.

Therefore, the identity of Mazu belief is the identity of folk customs and local folk traditions.

Mazu belief plays a special role at the social level, it also has a profound impact on the belief groups.

5.2.1 Mazu belief is an intermediary that integrates the power of social groups

Because of its unique historical development conditions and spreading scope, Mazu belief not only has the characteristics of spiritual relationship culture, but also integrates the factors of kinship, geography, career, and material relationship. Overseas Chinese all over the world have a strong ethnic complex. In places where many Chinese people gather, they often build guild halls or Mazu temples.

These Mazu temples are not only a place for them entertaining gods, but also the core of community organizations. They are also the cultural symbols of overseas Chinese communities. They have become the spiritual banner of Chinese communities and the Chinese to work together and create a prosperous world. Under the premise of rejuvenating the country and the nation, integrating the social forces of these groups will help realize modernization in the name of a national community.

From 31 October to 2 November, 2020, the Fifth World Mazu Culture Forum and the 22nd China • Putian Meizhou Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival were held in Meizhou Island, Putian city, Fujian province. During the forum, some activities such as the performance competition of Mazu bun were also held. The theme of this event is ‘Mazu Culture and the Community of Human Destiny’, highlighting the new functions of Mazu culture in the new era. Mazu culture has become an important medium for building a community of human destiny and an important bond that unites people's hearts.

The performance competition of Mazu bun held on the afternoon of 31 October aims to encourage more young people to learn this skill. While fully demonstrating the unique charm of Mazu bun, it also cultivates younger Meizhou women inheritor of Mazu bun's skills, to further promote the protection of Mazu belief and intangible cultural heritage project. The people who participated in the Mazu bun's performance in Meizhou used a WeChat group as the main contact method to form a special group with common hobbies, common skills, and common beliefs.

In Mazu festival, it often becomes a necessary performance, and it is an important means to show Mazu culture. The performers are women from all levels of society. They learn the skills of Mazu bun and participate in performances. It is for them to understand Mazu culture, to gain interest and identity with Mazu, and then to form self-identity and establish an important channel for their belief in Mazu. They are another important social group that develops and inherits Mazu culture.

#### 5.2.2 Mazu belief has the function of promoting tourism communication

The pilgrimage to Meizhou Island is one of the common tourism motives of Mazu believers' travel. First of all, Mazu culture contains rich material culture. The numerous material cultural heritages in the Mazu temple are the material carriers of ancient social economy, culture, art, folklore, and foreign exchanges and trade. There are many reliable original materials of history, ethnology, and folklore. Mazu temple is also an ideal tourist destination for Mazu cultural inspection tour, the more important is a pilgrimage, this will bring people psychological relaxation and spiritual sublimation.

Secondly, Mazu's grand festival is the most attractive in Mazu's pilgrimage. Numerous Mazu believers around the world provide sufficient tourist sources for pilgrimage. Finally, Mazu belief can also promote the development of business tourism. "In recent years, the cultural content of Mazu belief has been choreographed into artworks in the form of dramas, TV dramas, movies, musicals, dance poems, etc., many works have received a good social response. "For example, the large-scale dance poem 'Mazu', which was created and performed for the first time by the Nanjing Frontline Chorus was unanimously affirmed and appreciated by people in the industry and abroad, and won the gold medal of 'Lotus Award' of the Chinese dance in 2000. There are also animation works with a strong product lineup that was jointly produced by both sides of the strait. In Japan and other regions and countries, there have been quite friendly and cute crafts as 'Mazu dolls' etc., which shows that cultural and economic entities have already integrated Mazu culture, Mazu culture has been designed as a cultural product, this enriches the content of tourism's products." (Huang Xiulin, 2012, PP: 40) Therefore, Mazu believers can strengthen mutual cultural exchanges and business cooperation through tourism, and achieve the purpose of mutual understanding and mutual support.



### 5.2.3 Mazu belief has the function of maintaining market integrity

Under the conditions of a market economy, in the circle of Mazu belief, trust and economic manifestation form not only become the content of their production relations, but also a key factor in their internal cohesion. This has become the main cultural psychology in the circle of Mazu belief. This psychological feature has inestimable value in the operation of today's market economy.

The modern market economy is a credit economy. Market transactions are based on a certain credit. The transaction fee theory believes that the operation of the market mechanism has cost. If the integrity is low, the cost of supervision will be higher, and the corresponding transaction costs will also higher, and the transaction utility is relatively low, so the level of credibility directly affects the achievement of the market economy. In the cultural community of Mazu belief, trust is not based on clear rules and regulations, but derived from a set of ethical customs and moral obligations that have become a common psychological identity. This kind of belief is more in line with human nature than any form of the social contract, more stable as well.

“With the implementation of the strategic concept of ‘Building an Economic Zone on the West of the Strait’ proposed by Fujian Province in 2004, economic and trade activities on both sides of the strait have become more frequent. With the prosperity and economic dynamism of both sides of the strait, Mazu culture will surely inspire more overseas Chinese to return to the motherland for investment and business. At present, the importance of emphasizing the function of Mazu belief in maintaining credit in the economy is particularly significant in the times. Money Worship is prevalent in today’s society. The incidents of breach of contract, commercial fraud, counterfeit and inferior products, and mismanagement under the market economy reflect another phenomenon, that is, the weakness of the constraint of tangible rules and regulations. The cultural identity of modern society and market economy in people’s habits and psychology can impose inherent constraints on the economic system. Therefore, we have reasons to incorporate the essence of Mazu culture and one of the quintessences of Confucianism which is called ‘credit’ into the theoretical guidance level of market economy system construction and carry it forward, promote social groups forming a consensus.” (Huang Xiulin, 2012, PP: 41)

### 5.3 The influence of Mazu belief on the construction of tourists' self-identity

Culture is the soul of tourism; tourism is the carrier of culture. The combination of culture and tourism is a win-win process. The combination of Mazu culture and tourism not only enriches the types of cultural tourism, but the development of tourism also promotes the protection and inheritance of Mazu culture.

“After the reform and opening up in 1978, Fujian province listed Meizhou Island as one of the key development areas for constructing. In 1988, it was approved as a tourist economic zone for Fujian province to open to the outside world. In March 1991, it was approved as a scenic spot in Fujian province. In October 1992, it was approved as a national tourist resort. On 24 August 1993, the Management Committee of Meizhou Island National Tourism Resort was formally established. In March 2002, it was promoted to a national 4A tourist area. The ‘National Eleventh Five-Year Tourism Development Plan’ lists the tourist area on the west coast of the Straits as a priority tourist area for planning and construction. In 2004, Fujian province put forward the strategic concept of ‘building an economic zone on the west coast of the straits. In 2009, ‘Some opinions on Supporting Fujian Province to speed up the Economic Zone on the west side of the Straits’ by the state council, strategically positioning the west side of the Straits as an important natural and cultural tourism center of China.” (Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 547)

“As of 2018, Meizhou Island’s annual number of tourists exceeded 6.72 million, a year-on-year increase of 19.4%, the total social tourism revenue was 4.1 billion RMB, a year-on-year increase of 16.8%.” ([https://www.sohu.com/a/293041491\\_99960645](https://www.sohu.com/a/293041491_99960645))

The rapid development of tourism in Meizhou Island is inseparable from Mazu culture and Mazu believers. As a component of strait tourism, Mazu culture will further promote Mazu spirit. Mazu cultural tourism and economic and trade development will form a benign interaction, which can not only provide common spiritual support for the prosperity of Fujian’s economy, but also regulate the contradictions and conflicts in human social life. The function can play a role in social stability and social harmonious development.

Many people travel to Meizhou Island for pilgrimage. The self-identity of tourists has a good role in promoting the sustainable development of the tourism

industry in Meizhou Island, it affects the overall development and long-term development of tourism resources.

Tourists' self-identity includes place identity and internal self-identity.

### 5.3.1 The place identity

Place identity is a spiritual sense of belonging and identity generated by an individual to a place. It is a person's memory and experience, feelings and values, goals and experiences and other emotional factors, which generate a sense of self-identity for a place, and thus interact and interact with the local environment on the emotional level. In a simple word, place identity is individual emotional identity and mental belonging to a certain place, the individuals can distinguish this place from other places.

The core of place identity in Meizhou Island is Mazu belief. The strong vitality of Mazu belief and Mazu culture has attracted many tourists. In the process of continuous interaction with Mazu culture, tourists have accumulated and learned more traditional culture. For example, some people believe that Meizhou Island has better protect and inherit Chinese culture and cultural landscape. People can understand more about folk activities and festivals of Mazu, etc. This reflects the identity of Mazu culture by tourists.

The rendering and creation of the overall atmosphere of Mazu belief in Meizhou Island also give tourists a better emotional experience. According to interviews, most people think that Mazu has a strong cultural atmosphere, Mazu relics are worth sightseeing, Mazu is very efficacious, and the new architecture complex of Mazu temple is beautiful and distinctive. This reflects the preservation and special significance of Mazu culture brought by Meizhou Island to tourists.

### 5.3.2 The internal self-identity

People will be related to the place at the cognitive and emotional levels, and incorporate place into the structure of their internal self-identity. Therefore, the internal self-identity has an obvious predictive effect on tourists' place identity. The place becomes a part of the inner self. In other words, the internal self-identity is the result of people's active self-regulation of place identity. Tourists' emotional attachment to Meizhou Island, when they are on Meizhou Island, they will feel more secure. When they are in close contact with Mazu, the spiritual needs of tourists are easy to meet, they feel that they can help themselves explore the inner and other

feelings, this reflects tourists' emotional recognition of the spiritual level produced in Meizhou Island. If possible, many tourists are willing to take this identity of Mazu belief to contribute to the tourism development of Meizhou Island in the future.

In addition, the residents of Meizhou Island are warm and friendly, the social order is good, which can give tourists a sense of belonging to the social group and a sense of home, it is also an important factor in the construction of tourists' self-identity.

#### 5.4 The influence of Mazu belief on the self-identity construction of overseas Chinese

Mazu belief originated from Meizhou Island in Putian city, Fujian province. With the continuous expansion of people's footprints, Mazu belief was spread throughout the country and the world. With the continuous expansion of Mazu's influence, wherever there is Chinese, wherever there has Mazu belief. According to the characteristics of the changes in the situation of overseas Chinese affairs at home and abroad, we should formulate a pragmatic overseas Chinese affairs policy that is conducive to the survival and development of overseas Chinese in the local area, and promote the overseas Chinese to make contributions to China's economic and cultural construction.

General Secretary Hu Yaobang<sup>115</sup> said at the National Provincial Meeting of Directors of Overseas Chinese Affairs Offices on 20 April, in 1984, "The 30 million overseas Chinese are a great force. If done well, they can become the force of the promotion of the four modernizations, the reunification of the motherland, and the expansion of the influence overseas country and win international friends." Xi Zhongxun's speech on behalf of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee at the National Meeting of Directors of Overseas Chinese Affairs Offices at the provincial level basically represents the Chinese government's specific understanding of overseas Chinese. He pointed out, "The Central Secretariat believes that: overseas Chinese are a very important force. Overseas Chinese and we have a common national sentiment,

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<sup>115</sup> Served as Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China from June 1981 to January 1987.

most of them and we have a common language and writing. They also have feelings of patriotism and love for their homeland, they are willing to contribute to the prosperity, prosperity and civilization of their motherland and homeland.’ In 2006, the General Secretary Hu Jintao emphasized that the Party Central Committee places high hopes on the work of overseas Chinese, in terms of uniting the hearts of overseas Chinese, exerting their power, and contributing to the realization of the grand goal of building a well-off society in all respects, promoting the peaceful reunification of the motherland, carrying out non-governmental diplomacy and dissemination, spreading the excellent Chinese culture. The work of overseas Chinese affairs has made great achievements in terms of the expansion of friendly exchanges between the Chinese people and people from all over the world.

“The report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed to establish a powerful maritime country, become a country with strong comprehensive strength in terms of developing the ocean, using the ocean, protecting the ocean, and controlling the ocean. With the continuous development of the marine economy, Mazu belief will also accompany people to the wider ocean. Mazu is recognized and believed by people as the goddess of navigation and protection. The voyagers and fishermen who are engaged in the marine economy have deeply realized the efficaciousness of Mazu from personal experience, they can deeply feel that they are protected by Mazu. Whether it is people who go to sea to earn a living or emigrate overseas for various reasons, Mazu shelters and protects their maritime safety until they live and work in peace. Therefore, people choose to regard Mazu as a guardian god as psychological and spiritual sustenance.

Mazu belief and customs have become the world's intangible cultural heritage, as well as the spiritual wealth of Chinese and overseas Chinese around the world, forming a common language and common customs. Mazu has become an intermediate link that contacts the development of civilization of the members of the Chinese nation. The virtues such as benevolence, compassion, filial piety, morality, and good deeds advocated by Mazu have also become important factors in safeguarding families of overseas Chinese and promoting the unity and struggle of overseas Chinese. The various activities carried out by overseas Chinese around Mazu belief help Chinese and overseas Chinese all over the world to live in harmony with people in the country



where they live, and contribute to the development of society, politics, economic, culture, and ecological civilization. Mazu belief also helps the Chinese and overseas Chinese to follow the traditional virtues of solidarity, mutual assistance, mutual benefit, gentleness and humility, and contribute to the promotion of local social and economic development.

The ancestors of overseas Chinese brought Mazu belief abroad, which contained their love for their hometown and longing for the motherland, their descendants would also carry forward Mazu belief. This kind of people's character is the continuous driving force of Mazu belief from overseas Chinese. Every year, there is a large number of Taiwanese compatriots and overseas Chinese come to Mazu temple in Meizhou Island for pilgrimage. This is not only a pilgrimage to Mazu by Chinese and overseas Chinese at home and abroad, but also an emotional return, which fully reflects Chinese historical complex and national sentiment. At the same time, it is also the promotion of national culture and traditional culture, reflecting the emotional connection of common blood and the common root.” (Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 154-155)

With the development of society, people's dependence on gods has gradually weakened, and their religious belief has become weaker, while folk festivals have increased. The social functions of Mazu temples built around the world tend to diversify, such as Mazu tourism, Mazu culture, Mazu belief, associations, public communication, and Mazu festival. Many of the various folk activities carried out in Mazu temples have also actively invited relevant government departments to provide guidance, such as the Mazu festival, Mazu parades. Every time, they are grand and spectacular. With the continuous deepening of economic development, the activities of non-governmental exchange have also continued to heat up. Mazu temples outside around the world went to the ancestral temples of Mazu in Meizhou Island for offering incense and returned to their hometowns, that prompt Mazu to become an important link of regional culture, economic culture, political culture, economic culture, and ecological civilization. The activities of Mazu belief can help meet the psychological demands of Mazu believers and become the focus of people's attention. The economy guides folk beliefs, that are suited to the construction development of socialist has

become a strong support for building a harmonious socialist society and ecological civilization.

### **Part VI The new mechanism and practical significance of Chinese self-identity in the background of globalization**

From the perspective of the influence of globalization on culture, globalization is a process of diverse cultural interactions and the continuous expansion of spaces of cultural exchange. From the perspective of the influence of globalization on politics, globalization is a diversification of political systems, which may have an impact on national concepts and national consciousness. 'Due to the changes in daily life caused by the introduction of modern systems, so that it can intertwine with personal life and also with the self in a direct way. On the one hand, there are many effects of globalization, and on the other hand, there are changes of personal qualities.' (Anthony Giddens, 1998, PP: 8) Therefore, in the era of globalization, the issue of self-identity has found new connotations. Constructing Chinese self-identity and enhancing their psychological sense of belonging and cohesion are of great practical significance for building a harmonious society and promoting world peace.

The construction of identity comes from the common culture of human society, from the memory of the group, and also from the machine of power. It is individuals, social groups and each society level that rearrange them based on the social elements and cultural planning that is rooted in their social structure and temporal and spatial frameworks, then it can form identity and cultivate the necessary institutional forces. In the era of globalization, Mazu's influence continues to expand. At the national level also made political construction of identity for Mazu belief. In fact, this is an introduction of the socially dominant system to expand and rationalize the state's domination to social actors. The state takes the guarantee of public power and financial capacity, provides public service of culture, and develops the realization of a 'consistent' identity in the form of a system. The main purpose of the political construction of identity is to establish a stable social order and cultivate a source of legitimacy. This has a positive internal promotion effect on the growth of individuals society, which stems from a set of organizations and systems, and a series of structured and organized social actors. Numerous social actors produce the identity that

rationalizes their sources of structural domination in a specific way, thus realizing the construction of self-identity in the form of institutions.

Mazu belief is not just an abstract symbol. It has been internalized as a part of human existence, transformed into people's lifestyle, behavior pattern, value concept, way of thinking, emotional expression, etc., its psychological and spiritual meaning has become the self of people. At the same time, Mazu belief will profoundly affect people's self-identity, it will affect people's self-identity towards people's life attitudes, values, and political attitudes. Therefore, the government regards Mazu culture as an important strategic resource to develop and utilize. This necessity has actually become more and more obvious in the era of globalization.

People's self-identity is the beginning of every identity. The generation of human self-consciousness is directly related to the cultural influence it receives, and it is the foundation and prerequisite of self-identity that culture has laid. Mazu belief and Mazu culture play a crucial factor in answering questions such as 'who am I', and also affects the individual's value judgment and choice of behavioral value. For the Chinese nation, Mazu belief can build the identity of all Chinese, it is an important carrier for helping Chinese establish their identity. Mazu belief is an important link that Chinese contact the nation and country.

People are people in a society, living in a certain society, people always have to determine their identity through certain social connections. Treating oneself as a Chinese, a member of the Chinese nation, it will produce a sense of belonging in sentiment and consciousness, it is an important force to cohere and organize people. These are important manifestations of the cohesion of Mazu belief, that can show through Mazu temples and Mazu cultural circle and Chinese circle in the country and around the world.

To realize the modernization process in today's China under the background of globalization, it must maintain political stability, economic development, cultural prosperity, and renewal of social structure. In the process of social change, constructing the self-identity of Chinese identity and correctly creating a good Mazu cultural atmosphere will have a positive influence on individuals' consciousness, inner emotions and psychological consciousness.

The importance of self-identity has been showed, the government will have more wishes to take on more responsibilities in the political construction of self-identity. Who can organize politics, who can control the future. The construction of self-identity, as a practical ability, will be included in a more important strategic consideration by the current government.

### **Summary**

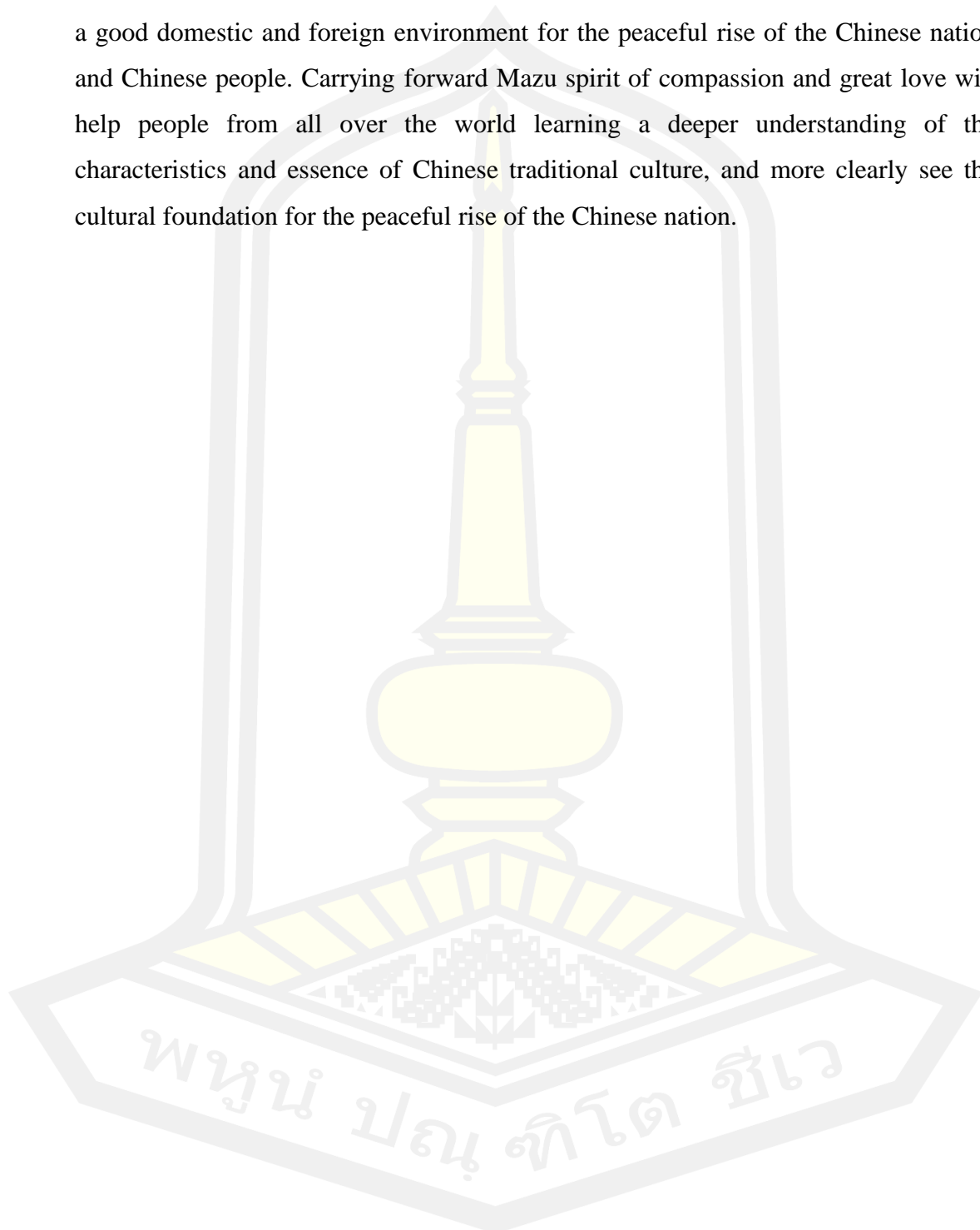
Constructing Chinese identity with Mazu belief, constructing individuals' internal self-identity, and carrying forward the compassion and great love which is the core connotation of Mazu spirit, this has strong vitality and practical significance for contemporary China in the transitional period and gradually realizing modernization.

For the vast majority of Chinese people who are suffering from the social disorder and moral anomie during the transition period, Mazu's compassion and great love can become the best model for people to maintain people's goodness and love, and can become a spiritual power to prevent moral degradation and the collapse of humanity. People who work hard in the market economy will inevitably be restless, fame and fortune are hard to refuse. However, people's life is short, inheriting Mazu's traditional virtues of kindness and simplicity, individual interests should subordinate to public interests, hard work to get rich. The inner emotional consensus formed by individuals will help to awaken the national consciousness of social groups and the Chinese nation, it will help to establish a socialist view of honor and disgraces, it will also help achieve the gradual realization of the goal of building a harmonious socialist society.

Modern Mazu is the spiritual pillar of the harmonious coexistence of Mazu belief community. In the hearts of devout Mazu believers, Mazu's position is very clear. People express the simple moral consciousness of the area of Mazu belief through Mazu parade and other rituals. This moral consciousness has increasingly prominent functions in respecting the elder, uniting people and other aspects.

For the mainland and overseas Chinese who live in different parts all over the world, today's Mazu believers respect Mazu not only praying for blessings and preventing disasters, but also a kind of spiritual nostalgia and rely upon, which is the source of culture. Mazu's affinity, charm, and the sense of common identity shared by

overseas Chinese towards Mazu culture are conducted to the unity, cohesion and harmonious coexistence of multi-ethnic Chinese at home and abroad. This thus creates a good domestic and foreign environment for the peaceful rise of the Chinese nation and Chinese people. Carrying forward Mazu spirit of compassion and great love will help people from all over the world learning a deeper understanding of the characteristics and essence of Chinese traditional culture, and more clearly see the cultural foundation for the peaceful rise of the Chinese nation.





## CHAPTER V

### **The Construction of Social Network of Chinese People in the Process of Globalization**

This chapter is divided into two aspects. On the one hand, it is based on Meizhou Island, which is the birthplace of Mazu belief, analyzes the central influence of ancestral temples and the characteristics of related organizations of Mazu, studies the relationship between Mazu temples on Meizhou Island, and studies the local social network and interaction relationship that based on Mazu belief. On the other hand, this chapter discusses the significance of Mazu belief to overseas Chinese, and expounds the broad sense of connection, weak connection, and indirect connection of Mazu belief among overseas Chinese. It clarified the important role of Mazu-related organizations, country and policies in the process of globalization, and analyzed the role of Mazu belief in the construction of social network of overseas Chinese.

The structures of this chapter are as follows.

- Part I The concept and relationship between globalization and social network
- Part II The social network constructed by Mazu belief that take Meizhou Island as the center
- Part III The role and interaction of Mazu organizations that centered on the ancestral temple of Mazu on Meizhou Island
- Part IV Take non-governmental organizations as the important tie
- Part V The role of Mazu belief in the construction of social network of overseas Chinese
- Summary

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### **Part I The concept and relationship between globalization and social network**

“The term ‘globalization’ was first proposed by T. Levy in 1985. T. Levy used it to describe the tremendous changes of the world economy in the previous 20 years.” (Guo Jing, 2006, PP: 20) It is also a process of phenomenon in the development of human society. Globalization currently has many definitions. Globalization in the usual sense refers to the continuous enhancement of global connections, human life develops based on a global scale, and global consciousness rises. Countries and countries are interdependent in politics, economy and trade. Globalization can also be explained as the compression of the world and regards the world as a whole. After 1990s, with the expansion of the influence of globalization forces in human society, governments of every country have gradually paid attention to their politics, education, society and culture.

With the rapid development of science and technology in the world, the inevitability of economic globalization and cultural globalization is unstoppable. “Culture is constantly developing along with the process of economic globalization. The cultures of various nations and countries flow and penetrate each other across regions and countries in a global scale. The study of globalization itself has become a global cultural phenomenon. Globalization is a product of modern civilization, the relationship between modern society and culture is obvious. The famous cultural scholar Tomlinson once said, ‘Globalization is the center of modern culture, cultural practice is in the center of globalization.’” (Guo Jing, 2006, PP: 20)

Mazu culture is a special cultural phenomenon in China. Under the special social situation, the state emphasizes and highlights the cultural characteristics of Mazu belief based on cultural, political, ethnic, economic and other considerations, because Mazu belief is also based on a specific society cultural groups, based on a common value goal, share or choose common value ideals or value promises.

The concept of social network is derived from the proper description of social interaction in sociology and refers to social actors or a relatively stable relationship system formed by interaction between individual members of society. Social network is a collection of connections between multi-points (social actors) and each point (relationships between actors).

“Sociologists use social network to represent various complex social relationships of varying degrees, pay attention to the interaction and connection between people, because social interaction affects people's social behavior.” (Xu Hong, 2016, PP: 115) These behavioral relationships constitute a variety of relationship structures, and these structures affect individuals within groups and the function of groups.

“Social network is constructed by the relationships of individual actors. Individuals are in multiple relationships, their relationships with others are connected with both microscopic and macroscopic connections. Microscopic connection refers to the connection relationship that individual establishes with people around him in his limited social life environment, such as belonging to a certain company, participating in a certain association, studying in the same school, having a marriage relationship with someone, etc. Macroscopic connection likes being the same Chinese, speaking the same dialect, and having the same belief.” (Zhang Yunjiang, 2017, PP: 97)

The Chinese social network based on Mazu belief refers to that Chinese and overseas Chinese believe in Mazu in terms of self-identity and identify themselves as Chinese in terms of ‘ethnic group’. They form a ‘social network’ based on cultural identity. They gather together because of their common belief, help and influence each other, and form a relatively stable social relationship. This chapter will analyze the social network formed by Chinese people centered on Mazu temple in Meizhou Island and the social network formed by overseas Chinese who believe in Mazu as the center, and study the construction method, characteristic, role and significance of their respective social network.

## **Part II The social network constructed by Mazu belief that take Meizhou Island as the center**

As the birthplace of Mazu belief, Meizhou Island has become the core area of Mazu belief. This is a worldwide formed consensus.. The greatest wish in the hearts of the majority of Mazu believers is to be able to personally go to Meizhou Island to worship Mazu and pay tribute to Mazu's god statue. Therefore, analyzing the unique

local social network based on Mazu belief in Meizhou Island and understanding its history and current situation is of great help for studying Mazu belief.

## 2.1 The distribution and interaction of the temple group of Mazu in Meizhou Island

Mazu belief is the most common belief in Meizhou Island. In this small island, in addition to the famous ancestral temples of Mazu at home and abroad, there are other fourteen Mazu temples and a rebuilding palace. The density of the construction of Mazu temples is extremely high. These Mazu temples are distributed in all corners of Meizhou Island. Each Mazu temple has its own corresponding local organization inside its village or community. It is responsible for the incense affairs of the temple. They maintain a certain interactive relationship related with the ancestral temple of Mazu, relying on the unique ‘pavilion<sup>116</sup>’ system of Meizhou Island. This forms a folk community that takes Mazu belief as a link.

The current administrative division in Meizhou Island, like other places, is based on administrative village as basic administrative unit. However, in the cognition of folk community, especially in terms of the relationship between belief level and temple fair activities, the ‘Lishe<sup>117</sup>’ system of Ming and Qing dynasties and the unique system of ‘four pavilions’ centered on Meizhou ancestral temple are still play an important role.

### 2.1.1 The influence of ‘Lishe’ system of Ming and Qing Dynasty

“The traditional social organizations of folks in Fujian Province are mainly manifested in sacrificial organizations of temple, most of them evolved from the system of ‘Lishe’ of Ming and Qing Dynasties.” (Zheng Zhenman, 2003, PP: 335) ‘Lishe’ means that twenty-five families form a community. Only dozens of households live together. “In the early Ming Dynasty, in order to incorporate various civil religious

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<sup>116</sup> The folk division method of community. In ancient times, Mazu temples were called the ‘Pavilion’, this is an internal community organization which is formed spontaneously around Mazu temple, its members were consisted of residents living next to Mazu temple.

<sup>117</sup> It is a form of household registration institution that began in Zhou Dynasty.

activities into the official unified norms to restrict the freedom of civil assembly and association, it was stipulated that civil society must establish a 'Lishe' in every fixed range, and regularly hold social sacrifice ceremonies.

As a result, a social system with respect to the gods and harmony in the village was formed. After the mid-Ming Dynasty, the original ritual activities of Lishe were gradually replaced by the ceremonies of welcoming god, and 'Lishe' also gradually evolved into a temple, combining the two into one. Although there are no traces of the shrines on Meizhou Island, there are still existing some shrines dedicated to the god of community in Mazu temples on the island, that is, the folks call the mother of community. In Qing dynasty, the function of Lishe as a basic administrative organization had no longer existed. In the late Qing dynasty, 'Lishe' gradually tended to be family, community or association. Although various organizations have different forms, structures, and functions, they are all closely related to 'Lishe' system which is official statutory.

In fact, the establishment of 'Lishe' system, and the ritual organization and activities of 'Lishe' system developed from it, have been passed down to today, it has experienced historical environmental changes for hundreds of years. With the change and succession of the feudal dynasty, 'she' is no longer the unit organization of current national political system. For the peasants who have been farming on the land for many years, they still maintain a nostalgia for the god of land. Therefore, the traces of influence of the social system of 'Lishe' can still be seen in Meizhou Island, and corresponding social relationship have been formed on this basis.

#### 2.1.2 The division of four pavilions in Meizhou Island

The 'pavilion' is a concept of geographical distinction in Meizhou Island, it is different from the 'community' which has historical origins derived from the state system, it has nothing to do with present administrative system. The 'pavilion' in Meizhou Island is a geographical division centered on Mazu temple. The residents of Meizhou Island, based on their belief in Mazu and respect for the ancestral temple of Mazu, automatically and collectively agreed to organize the community in Meizhou Island, according to the geographical environment and the size of population. It takes 14 local Mazu temples as basic leadership unit, which is unifiedly divided into four indicator blocks, as a unique division unit that is responsible for sharing human labor



and economic expenses of the ancestral temple of Mazu in taking turns separately every year.

The system of four pavilions established by local conventions is as, one pavilion: Shangxing Palace, Shanglin Palace, Shangying Palace; two pavilion: Zhaishan Palace, Longxing Palace, Huilong Palace, Jinfu Palace; Three Pavilion: Lianchi Palace, Hushi Palace; Four Pavilion: Wenxing Palace, Baishi Palace, Tianli Palace, and Linkai Palace. This system was formed during Qing dynasty and continues to today.

The four pavilions in Meizhou Island also have certain obligation to support the activities of Mazu ancestral temple and incense cost. The system of four pavilions reflects the weakening of blood ties and the outstanding geographical tie of family organizations in the coastal areas of Fujian Province since Ming and Qing Dynasties.

Surrounding various interest relationships, in the process of socialization of family organizations and familization of social organizations, beliefs have gradually become the bond of folk society, or a spiritual symbol of specific region. And geographic relationship is cleverly expressed through divine relationship. Conversely, the folk belief that divine relationship coheres geographic relationship has strong linking effect inside community relationship.” (Yao Wenqi, 2007, PP70)

“Mazu temples in Meizhou Island are normally located at inside village or community. They are activity places for community believers to sacrifice, gather, and discuss matters. There are corresponding organizations in different villages to take charge of incense affairs of Mazu temples. There is a certain interactive relationship between Mazu ancestral temple and other 14 Mazu temples. Therefore, a folk community with Mazu as the bond has also been formed, which makes the distribution of Mazu temples to show a certain ‘community’. Generally, the place which is closer to Mazu ancestral temple, the greater distribution density of Mazu temples. The place which is further to Mazu ancestral temple, the lower distribution density of Mazu temples. The main cause of this reason is that Mazu temples generally have a development form from private family worship to community public worship.” (Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 132) The structure relationship of local community that formed by the ancestors of the people in Meizhou Island, which have passed down Mazu belief

for thousands of years is revealed in the distribution of Mazu temples and various folk activities.

## 2.2 Constructing an interactive relationship between Mazu belief and local communities

“On 25 March, 2011, the Comrade Li Changchun, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, accompanied by secretary of the Fujian Provincial Party Committee Sun Chunlan and Governor Huang Xiaojing, visited Mazu temple in Meizhou Island, learned about the development process of Mazu culture and its extensive influence both at home and abroad, and pointed out that ‘building a common home requires a common cultural atmosphere’.” (Yang Pengfei, 2012, PP: 94)

“In March 2013, when the General Secretary Xi Jinping participated in the audit of the Fujian Delegation of the National People’s Congress, he emphasized that Mazu culture is not only one of the local cultures, but also an important tourism resource, it is a bond that unites compatriots. It need to fully paying attention to the important role of Mazu belief in promoting the cooperation of cross-strait exchanges. Mazu belief is the most important part of region culture of Meizhou Island. In the process of interacting with the local society, Mazu belief can form a binding force and guiding force on people’s behavioral norms. It can not only help people form a positive, healthy and reasonable lifestyle, but also play an irreplaceable role in maintaining social norms, promoting social development, promoting rural governance, and government administration management. It is an inherent requirement for the implementation of rural revitalization strategy and a need for the cultural soft power of building a new socialist countryside.

The interaction between Mazu belief and local society of Meizhou Island and its role in local social management mainly rely on the power of the temple organization. As a folk social organization, Mazu temple is an important grassroots support force for participating in social management. Because of the cultural authority of Mazu temple organization itself, the community relationship based on Mazu temple organization and common Mazu belief can be better used in the practical activities of social

management.” (Song Jianxiao, Cao Yuening, 2019, PP: 121) The places of Mazu temples have also become a network link point for developing regional culture, economic culture, political culture, economic culture, and ecological civilization.

Community is defined by Ferdinand Tnnies<sup>118</sup> as a group of people established through blood, neighbors and friends relationship. Its foundation is ‘essential will’. In his view, the entire cultural development from the Middle Ages to the modern age is the evolution from ‘community’ to ‘society’. The community defined by Ferdinand Tnnies is an evolved concept. In an agricultural society, people live in the same village, stay and help each other, live and work almost is in one. Because there is a common spiritual life and social interaction, the basic spiritual life and social interaction can be completed within the village. However, the industrial revolution, urbanization, and the market have changed people's traditional community life. Ferdinand Tnnies proposed the problem of community is mainly based on a sense of alienation. The subtext is to worry about the disappearance of the community of spiritual life and life communication. Community is not a simple concept of physical geographic area, it is also not a concept of social organization or social group that people often said, it is a combination of social space and geographic space. From the perspective of cultural development, the function of community has surpassed the stage of reshaping interpersonal relationship and entered a new period of promoting people's self-development and self-realization.

With the gradual establishment of the socialist market economic system, the various systems of China's economy and society have undergone changes, and the social structure has also undergone corresponding changes. With the transition from ‘unit person’ to ‘social person’, community has increasingly become the main space for people to live. It is a living community of people gathered in a certain area. It produces various social relations and social activities in a certain area, it has a specific lifestyle, and it is relatively independent social entity composed of people who have a sense of belonging among members.

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<sup>118</sup> A well-known sociologist, one of the founders of modern German sociology.

The interpersonal relationship of community is inseparable from the background of China's large social relationship. "'Guanxi' is a special Chinese idiom in social network, which connects other components of China's society from a whole level, such as Ganqin<sup>119</sup>, Renqing<sup>120</sup>, Mianzi<sup>121</sup>, and reciprocity. To a certain extent, the change in our views is based on that relationship depends on the institutional environment and its future in the reform era." (Thomas Gold, Doug Guthrie, David Wank, 2002, PP: 15) "The differences of social structures causes different moral concepts. Moral concept is the belief that people who live in society should abide by social norms of behaviors consciously. It includes behavioral norm, belief of actors and social sanction. Its content is the behavioral norm of relationship between people and people, which is determined by the shape attached to the society." (Fei Xiaotong, 2013, PP:42) In this process, Mazu belief has become an important moral element, it is firmly rooted in the heart of every resident in Meizhou Island, it is connected through each individual's private relationship, and pushed outward.

In Meizhou Island, the sense of belief identity is an important prerequisite for the formation of community culture, it is the basis for the formation of effective community capital, and it is also the direct reason for inner community using the existing cultural resources to construct a public cultural service system. The integration function, guiding function, inheritance function and development function of community culture determines that community should become an important participant in the construction of public cultural service system. Community has naturally become one of the executive subjects in the construction of public cultural service system, and has begun to play the most extensive basic role.

In folk activities related to Mazu or every previous celebrations, the staffs of each temple can use the interpersonal relationships in their own communities to gather

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<sup>119</sup> A Chinese vocabulary. The relatives who are not linked by blood or marriage.

<sup>120</sup> A Chinese vocabulary. It refers to the expression of human feelings, also human general feelings and common feelings, such as friendship, affection and so on.

<sup>121</sup> A Chinese vocabulary. It is a social psychological construction rooted in culture. Mianzi is formed and expressed in interpersonal communication. Mianzi will change in specific situations. Mianzi is a manifestation of a person's self-esteem and dignity.

residents with common cultural belief to participate. These residents also maintain a high degree of enthusiasm for Mazu belief, most of them are women, and most of these women are middle-aged and elderly. The women of this age level, once they accept the task, can arrange well about affairs of their own lives. Some of them who still rely on operating shops to make a living, can also temporarily close the shops for Mazu festival, and participate in Mazu's activities voluntarily.

This kind of interpersonal relationship of community takes equal consultation and contact as the main form of connection, and has the following characteristics. First, there has extensive information of exchange. Its content not only involves organization or work task itself, but also includes a wide range of free topics, such as personal private affairs, interests, current affairs and so on. In the gathering of these groups, people from various temples gather to talk about various topics related to themselves and Mazu. Second, there is equality of communication. Most of this communication takes place face-to-face, everyone has the opportunity to express their views. Third, The characteristics of original intention communication and emotional communication are prominent. Most communication of individuals in the community exchange the content that is filled with human interest, spread quickly, and they are not limited to the form, also have diversified channels. They are not restricted by organization's schedule as well. In the old society, in the local social form of Meizhou Island and even in China, women was the main force in the spread of Mazu belief. Usually, the way of life in the countryside was that men played with men, women played with women. Men usually didn't stay at home no matter they had anything to do or not, and those men who stayed at home are said to be worthless. Women usually stayed at home and took care their children, so when they had time they would gather in their spare time to talk about family life and Mazu.

“As a native and native folk culture, Mazu can also serves society, plays an active role in helping the poor and people in trouble, mediating disputes, easing interpersonal relationships, and maintaining social stability. The Meizhou Island Propaganda Committee introduce that in the past there have two villages on the island which had cut off communication for several years due to disputes. Later, because of Mazu's parade activities, the two villages began to try communicating. The village cadres sat down to do face-to-face friendly consultations. They built the road for



Mazu's parade together, and then resolved the disputes for many years. If people encounter disputes in their daily lives, they will also turn to Mazu for help. They mediate problems through rural belief. Every year in Chinese traditional festivals, Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple will arrange staffs to visit needy and poor families in Meizhou Island, send life comfort, and bring Mazu's grace and the care from Mazu temple. Mazu ancestral temple insists on practicing Mazu spirit with practical actions, and plays a leading role in maintaining a good social atmosphere.

In recent years, Mazu folklore activities have become normalization. The older generation has led the younger generation to participate in various activities of Mazu belief. People have become more closely connected with Mazu belief, they have achieved great success in generations. For example, Mazu parade, Mazu festival, etc. In addition, school education also inherits Mazu spirit. Many primary schools in Meizhou Island make full use of Mazu cultural resources and integrate into Mazu culture through various methods, so that students can learn about Mazu culture from an early age, the atmosphere of Mazu culture is strong.

For example, in the class of art, teacher cultivates the students' aesthetic ability through showing Mazu's clothes and tributes, combines the legends of Mazu to students for appreciating, and builds a good Mazu cultural circle. Through compiling local textbooks and setting up Mazu cultural courses, strengthening the ideological and moral education of children, and through these students to lead the elders, relatives and friends around them to learn Mazu spirit together, and form a benign interactive relationship.” (Song Jianxiao, Cao Yuening, 2019, PP: 121)

The power to stabilize social relationships is not feelings, but understanding. The so-called understanding means accepting the same meaning system. Because of mutual understanding, a stable social relationship in Meizhou Island has been formed, this social relationship is linked by Mazu belief, it has produced various interactive relationships, which are constantly repeated in daily life and interact with local society and culture, and is integrated and fixed, becoming an important part of social culture in Meizhou Island.

### **Part III The role and interaction of Mazu organizations that centered on the ancestral temple of Mazu on Meizhou Island**

The ancestral temple of Mazu on Meizhou Island is the first Mazu temple in history, which was built by the local residents of Meizhou Island for worshipping Mazu. It is of extraordinary significance. Mazu temple is the most important carrier of Mazu belief, and it is the external manifestation of Mazu belief. In the social network based on Mazu belief, the ancestral temple of Mazu on Meizhou Island is the central point. Its influence and function are constantly expanding outward under the influence of people from all walks of life.

As the management unit of the ancestral temple of Mazu, the Mazu Temple Board of Directors exists in the form of a social non-profit organization. It is responsible for handling all daily affairs of the ancestral temple, with the purpose of developing and inheriting the Mazu culture. Mazu organizations all over the world exist in different organizational forms and have their own organizational characteristics. They have made significant contributions to the development and inheritance of Mazu culture.

#### 3.1 The characteristics of Mazu organization

“From the perspective of management disciplines, an organization in a broad sense refers to a system that many elements is interconnected in a certain way. From this perspective, organization and system is concept of the same degree. In a narrow sense, organizations refer to collectives or groups that people cooperate with each other to achieve certain goals, such as party and league organizations, trade union organizations, enterprises, and military organizations. In modern social life, people have generally realized that organization is not only the cell of society, the basic unit of society, but also the foundation of society.” (Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 174)

Any kind of culture is a part of a society or a country, so the cultural public management system must be incorporated into the political system and public management system of each city and country, and subject to the latter's management. After continuous exploration, Mazu culture has formed a set of effective civil organization management system that is suitable for the development of Mazu culture.

“In addition to the characteristics of a general organization, Mazu organization also has its own characteristics.

### 3.1.1 Commonweal

Commonweal is an important attribute of Mazu organization, it is the fundamental criterion and core capability of the development of Mazu organization. As non-profit social organizations, they are between the government and the market, realizing social autonomy, and improving social governance service mechanisms. Take the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association as an example. Over the years, the association has actively carried out various Mazu cultural research and exchange activities on the one hand, and on the other hand, it has actively advocated members and the majority of believers to carry out various charitable assistance activities to practice morality, benevolence, and great love of Mazu spirit. When major disasters such as the ‘Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami’ and ‘5.12 Sichuan Wenchuan Earthquake’ occurred in 2004, the association issued timely initiatives to call on members and believers at home and abroad to donate money and materials to the disaster areas. The Mazu temple in Meizhou Island has carried out the activity of ‘light of charity’ to send warmth, awards for teaching and education, and poverty alleviation. In recent years, more than 5 million RMB has been spent for charity and public welfare. Mazu temple also helps raising funds of cultural engineering construction.” (Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 175)

“10 September, 2020, is the 36th Teacher's Day in China. On this special day, the 2019-2020 School Year Meizhou Mazu Temple Board of Directors Award Teaching Award Grants Conference was held at Mazu Hall in Mazu ancestral temple, Meizhou Island. The conference awarded excellent students who get a good grade in the entrance examination, teacher and student teams, high school, supporting objects of university recipients and related institutions in a teaching award (bursary) of 2,264,400 RMB, including the condolences of the Teacher’s day of 280,000 RMB, thanks for those teachers who work hard in the development of education career. For many years, the Board of Directors of Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island has strongly supported the Mazu Charity Foundation to do a good job of charity, promoted Mazu spirit of ‘dedication, benevolence, and great love’, and actively cooperated with governments and education authorities at all levels to assist education. Since the start of the teaching

and scholarship activities in 2001, the investment has been continuously increased, and the coverage has been gradually extended from the island to outside the island.” (Meizhou Mazu Temple Official Website, 2020)

### 3.1.2 Normality

“Lester M. Salamon, a professor at Hopkins University in the United States, pointed out that organization refers to legal registration, with a written charter and system, a fixed organizational form and personnel. As a non-profit organization, Mazu organization is an institutional entity with an organization charter, organization operation system, staff, or other relatively persistent indicators. Take Meizhou Mazu temple as an example. In 1986, the ancestral temple had passed the ‘Meizhou Mazu Temple Board of Directors Regulations’ by the congress of all Mazu believers. The constitution established the highest status of the Congress, and at the same time it established the status and duty of the Board of Directors and Scenic spot management office. This meets all the requirements for the legitimacy of a modern organization.

### 3.1.3 Independence

That is autonomy. This is the lifeline of the Mazu organization as a non-profit organization. Professor Lester M.Salamon pointed out that autonomy refers to the ability to make independent decisions and exercise, and to be able to manage itself. In other words, Mazu organization is an organization that manages and controls its own activities which are independent of government departments. It is not a subordinate organization of government. It is generally not controlled by the government. Mazu organization has its own board of directors, and it can independently completes its organizational mission.

### 3.1.4 voluntary

Voluntary means that the participation of members and the concentration of resources are not mandatory, it is voluntary. The Mazu organization is the result of voluntary participation of group members (members). No matter at the beginning of the establishment of Mazu organization or the process of the organization achieving its mission. When all members perform services, they are usually voluntary, free, and conscious. Their donations are also entirely voluntary. The constitution of Association of the Board of Directors of Mazu Temple stipulates that the source of funds for the Association is voluntary donations from Mazu believers at home and abroad.

### 3.1.5 The organization does not distribute profits

As a non-profit organization, it does not mean that the organization cannot rely on its own business activities to create income and profit, but to distribute the profits to those members who manage and operate the industry. The constitution of Meizhou Mazu Temple Board of Directors Regulations stipulates that the purpose of fund income is that all of them is used for the construction and development of Mazu cultural undertakings.” (Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 175)

### 3.2 Types of Mazu organization

“Mazu organizations are distributed all over the world with different names, their systems and mechanisms slightly different, and their respective functions and roles are different.

#### 3.2.1 The type of temple affair

This is mainly dominated by nearly 10,000 Mazu palaces and temples around the world, which are responsible for the internal management of the palaces and temples, the Mazu sacrifices, the exchanges and cooperation between temples, and the management of the scenic spots. Such as the board of directors of Mazu temple in Meizhou Island.

#### 3.2.2 The type of communication and exchange

This mainly includes various research associations, exchange associations, and some cultural institutions which are affiliated to government departments. They revolve around the idea of ‘promoting Mazu spirit with Mazu culture and spreading Mazu culture with Mazu spirit, and conduct the activities of research and exchange of Mazu culture.’ Among them, the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association is the most famous.

#### 3.2.3 The type of fund management

This is mainly based on the fund foundations, centered on the theme of promoting Chinese Mazu culture and inheriting the spirit of Mazu’s great love, with Mazu belief as the umbilical cord, using Mazu belief and customs as the link, and Mazu culture as the bridge, and extensive contacts, and worldwide communication. To unite and serve Chinese and overseas Chinese at home and abroad, mainly engage in charity fundraising, and this is committed to protecting Mazu cultural heritage and supporting Mazu cultural public welfare undertakings. In 1998, Macau established a folk



organization with Mazu culture as its core, it is the Macau Chinese Mazu Foundation. The foundation will promote, carry forward and research Mazu culture, and spread Mazu spirit with the global Mazu believers. The foundation adopts another unique method in its management model, that is the combined management of the Guild Hall and Mazu Temple.

#### 3.2.4 The type of community organization and association

The key point of the type of community organization and association is the common belief of people, it is established according to the person, so all power belongs to the member assembly or the member representative assembly, and the president who is indirectly elected, is the legal representative and the top person in charge. Such as some regional chambers of Commerce.” (Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 185)

#### 3.3 The internal organization relationship of the Board of Directors of Mazu Temple

Mazu belief is a unique folk belief that originated from the folk and developed from the folk. In 1986, under the leadership of Lin Congzhi and others, people spontaneously elected the first Board of Directors of Mazu Temple to fully manage the work of the ancestral temple of Mazu. As a folk organization, the Board of Directors of Mazu Temple has complete organizational elements and a clear management system and goals. A series of characteristics and bonds can interact and achieve self-integration, self-coordination, and self-sustainment.

“The model of management of the board of Mazu temple constructed by the government and folk is under the leadership of the Meizhou Island Party Committee and the Management Committee. The leadership and supervision agencies of Mazu Temple are the board of directors and the board of supervisors, with a total of 24 people, a term of 5 years. This leadership team usually comes from the Meizhou Island Management Committee, Meizhou Town Government and representatives of 14 Mazu temples in Meizhou Island, and is elected by the believers congress. Therefore, Meizhou ancestral temple has formed a belief construction model that based on half-officials and half-folk as the ‘board of directors’ of folk organization.

In the development process of more than 20 years, Mazu temple has formed a management model of ‘two signs, but one team’. The scenic spot management

office, that is, the Scenic Area Management Office of the Meizhou Mazu Ancestral Temple, it is an institution under the management committee of the Meizhou Island National Tourism Resort, and is the direct management responsible agency, which is responsible for the daily management and maintenance of the ancestral temple of Mazu. It has to do the management and maintenance of hardware of the scenic spot, and also be responsible for external charity work, etc. It is worth mentioning that the director of the scenic spot management office is not a normally appointed government official, he the second son of Lin Congzhi. The board of directors of Mazu ancestral temple is composed of the chairman, vice chairman, executive director and general directors. As far as the administrative organization is concerned, it includes 17 departments, including office, financial department, logistics, security department, computer room, etc., with a total of more than 320 employees. Among them, the employees of the scenic spot management office are composed of civil servants, business employees, enterprise workers, temporary workers and shift workers, and other post establishment. Its administrative characteristics are particularly obvious. In particular, the Security Section of Mazu temple and the police station of Meizhou Island are co-located in the same office, that reflects the characteristics of the integration between public resources in Meizhou Island and the administrative organization of Mazu temple. In the management and decision-making of day-to-day affairs, the scenic spot management office is mainly responsible for the management of day-to-day affairs, but on issues involving important matters, such as finance, activity organization, it needs to be discussed by the board of directors and approved by the chairman.

Obviously, the current management logic form of the ancestral temple of Mazu is to separate important matters from complex daily affairs of the ancestral temple, such as major financial control and event organization, and hand over to the scenic spot management office. Since the scenic spot area management office is a public institution under the Meizhou Island Management Committee, its finance, human resources, and resource allocation can be guaranteed, and then integrated with the daily management of the ancestral temple, maximizely promote the normal operation and future development of the ancestral temple of Mazu. About the related important matters need to be collectively discussed and formulated by the collective members of the board of directors, including government officials, and finalized by the

chairman who is representing the elites of folk belief before reaching an agreement. This management method not only allows most members of the board (especially the government officials who are also as executive directors) to avoid the cumbersome daily affairs in the daily management of the ancestral temple, but also can show their rights to speak in front of important matters.

Mazu belief which is under the joint construction of the government and folk, has brought together the human resources of many political and cultural elites and the material resources, social management and power tendencies behind them, and has flourished under this impetus. The belief relationship of Chinese is constructed through multiple relationships, such as individual belief, power, ethics, holy ethics, and interpersonal relationships.” (Zhang Xiaoyi, 2015, PP: 30)

“Mazu belief is a sublimation of social relationships and a transcending form of social relationships.” (Georg Simmel, 2003, PP: 5) “For Mazu belief, the administrativeization of the organizational structure and the logic of resource allocation indicates that it has surpassed the scope of organization and expression of folk forces, and has become a symbol of belief and culture that is shared by the government and non-government, it integrates multiple resources of both the government and folk. At present, the government and the folk have a relatively independent ritual system. To a certain extent, both sides have a part of interweaving and co-prosperity, but in many cases it also reflects the characteristics of separation and autonomy. This situation is the harmonious coexistence and orderly organization of the government and the village customs of folk.” (Zhang Xiaoyi, 2015, PP: 53)

#### **Part IV Take non-governmental organizations as the important tie**

Mazu’s non-governmental organizations have constructed social relations with Mazu belief as a link, under the influence of each node, they have continuously expanded the scale of social network which is based on Mazu belief. It takes palaces and temples as the nodes of belief space, takes individuals and organizations as the nodes of social space, they are intertwined vertically and horizontally, interacted and closely connected, and jointly promote the development of Mazu belief.

#### 4.1 The promotion role of national policies, social culture and other external environment on Mazu organizations

Social capital refers to the disposable resources of individual or groups in social network. It contains three elements. The first one is the number of people who are willing or obliged to help you in the social network. The second one is the intensity of these people's willingness to help. The third one is the resources that these people have, including information resources, action capabilities, such as influence. National policies, social and cultural atmosphere are social capital outside the organizations surrounding the Mazu social network.

As a kind of folk belief, Mazu belief is closely related to the social system and cultural policies of the country. The cultural atmosphere of religious belief created by the country for the people has played a key role in the development of Mazu belief. These effects can be reflected in the history of the development of Mazu belief which described earlier in this article. The following are some important points about Mazu's cultural policies.

“On March 31, 1982, ‘the Basic Viewpoints and Basic Policies on Religious Issues in my country’s Socialist Period’ clarified the policy of freedom of religious belief and comprehensively explained the roots of religion's inevitable long-term existence under socialist conditions.

In 2001, General Secretary Jiang Zemin clearly pointed out at ‘the National Religious Work Conference’ that religious issues have never existed in isolation. They are always intertwined with historical and realistic contradictions in politics, economy, culture, ethnicity, etc. They have special complexity.

After the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Hu Jintao, based on the new social practice, fully implemented the party’s policy on freedom of religious belief and actively guided religion to adapt to the socialist society.”(Wang Jun, Long Qun, 2009, PP:42)

The party and state leaders have also visited the ancestral temple of Mazu many times, they highly affirmed Mazu of Meizhou Island and placed high hopes. In October 2005, the Central Civilization Committee awarded the Mazu Temple Scenic Area Management Office the title of National Advanced Unit for Spiritual Civilization Construction.

In 2009, Mazu belief was listed in the World Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, becoming China's first faithful world intangible cultural heritage. The ancestral temple of Mazu has attracted the attention of the world.

In May 2009, the State Council's 'Several Opinions on Supporting Fujian Province to Accelerate the Construction of the Economic Zone on the West Coast of the Taiwan Straits' pointed out that Fujian should be built into an important natural and cultural tourism center in China, which will provide a solid society basis for the further development of Mazu belief.

"On October 3, 2013, President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech at the Indonesian National Assembly, proposing an initiative to build the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Mazu culture is one of the indispensable cultural resources for China to build the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road."(Xinhua News Agency, 2013.10)

In 2016, Mazu culture was included in the national 'Thirteenth Five-Year Plan' outline. At the same time, Putian City, as the hometown of Mazu, whom is the protector of 'the Maritime Silk Road', was included in the alliance cities of the Maritime Silk Road for declaring the World Cultural Heritage. The ancestral temple of Mazu on Meizhou Island was selected as one of the first batch of cultural relics in China's 'Maritime Silk Road·Chinese Historic Sites' application for World Cultural Heritage. Especially the first 'World Mazu Culture Forum' was successfully held in Putian City in November 2016, all of these show that Mazu culture will definitely play a role of cultural ambassador in the construction of 'The Belt and Road' advocated by the Chinese government, it will also promote people-to-people bonds and common development in the countries and regions along 'The Belt and Road'.

In recent years, the development momentum of Mazu belief has become more rapid, which is inseparable from the role of the good Mazu cultural atmosphere that created by the state and government. The culture and policies outside the organization play an important role in Mazu's social network as social capital. Of course, the state intends to use Mazu belief as an important link to connect with Chinese people around the world. At the same time, the model the board of directors of the Mazu Temple in Meizhou that jointly constructed by the official and folk, which is the core of Mazu,



also determines that the government will must make good use of Mazu belief, and the government will play a key role in developing Mazu culture..

Currently, as a new force, folk organizations are actively participating in Mazu cultural service activities. “In Western developed countries, various folk organizations have become the main producers of public cultural products (services). With the continuous development of social form, in addition the government and enterprises acts main objects in the public and private spheres, there many independent social organizations that outside the government, non-profit-making, voluntary, autonomous and dedicated to public welfare began to appear.

Although these organizations have different forms in China, including associations, chambers of commerce, and societies, they are generally similar in nature. Theorists generally believe that folk organizations are the third social intermediary force outside the government and market, and their existences themselves are the supplement and balance to the government and market. Among them, the participation of folk organizations with cultural activities as the main action content in public cultural services has greatly activated the development status of the entire cultural undertakings.

Under the guidance of the government’s cultural policies, folk organizations can independently or cooperate with cultural institutions to complete various types of public cultural services, they are a participating force in the public cultural service system. In the current process of constructing a public cultural service system in China, folk organizations should and must become an important subject of the construction, with their unique advantages, and fully play their organizational and coordination roles in promoting public cultural services and the supply of public cultural products.” (Yu Nan, 2018, PP: 25)

#### 4.2 The influence of high-level leaders of the country as a political resource promotes the construction of social network based on Mazu belief

“In November 1987, when Comrade Yang Shangkun, then President of the People’s Republic of China, listened to Fujian Province’s report on the reception of Taiwan compatriots who had returned to the motherland to visit relatives, he enthusiastically said, ‘Mazu temple can be rebuilt! This is more meaningful than building other temples.’ In the 1980s, these words from the top decision-makers in the

country was shocking and touching. Under the social background at that time, these words contained strong courage, reflected the broad mind of the leadership, played a positive role in the revival of Mazu culture.

In 1991, when Comrade Jia Qinglin, then governor of Fujian Province, visited Meizhou Island in Putian City, he said, 'Chinese culture has a long broad and profound history, and is the spiritual bond of all Chinese people.' After Jia Qinglin became chairman of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 2003, he still cared about and valued Mazu culture very much. In October 2004, Jia Qinglin sent a congratulatory message to congratulate the establishment of the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association. This explains the status of Mazu culture and social organizations in the framework of the national system.

In 1993, Jiang Zemin, then General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, instructed that the reconstruction of Tianhou Temple is very important, and it must be done well. This has also attracted great attention from leaders at all levels, it produced a strong response in society.

In 2006, when Hu Jintao, the then General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, made an important speech during his inspection work in Fujian, he said that Mazu belief is deeply rooted in the spiritual life of Taiwan people. Fujian should use these rich resources to play a better role in promoting the cross-strait communication .

The current President, Comrade Xi Jinping, has always cared about and valued Mazu culture. On November 17, 2017, General Secretary Xi Jinping cordially met with representatives in Beijing, who attending the National Spiritual Civilization Construction Commendation Conference, and cordially shook hands with Lin Baojin, who is the Secretary of the Putian Municipal Party Committee, and urged him to protect Meizhou Island.”(Huang Guohua, 2018, PP: 38-39)

National leaders' emphasis on Mazu culture has played a key role in the inheritance and development of Mazu culture. In a good social environment that promotes Mazu culture, governments at all levels and the general public use Mazu as a link, combine social, political, and personal resources to promote the continuous development of Mazu culture.

#### 4.3 The Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association as the center of folk organizations

On 29 October, 2004, Jia Qinglin, who was the member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee and chairman of the Tenth National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, he sent a congratulatory message and congratulated the establishment of the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association. The congratulatory message pointed out that, Mazu culture is an important part of Chinese excellent traditional culture, it is an important bridge and tie to promote the cross-strait exchanges and cooperation. For a long time, Mazu cultural institutions and individual at home and abroad have made important contributions in promoting Mazu culture, inheriting Chinese virtues, connecting Chinese and overseas Chinese in the world, and promoting cross-strait exchanges.

On the afternoon of 31 October, 2004, the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association was grandly established in Meizhou Island, Putian City, Fujian Province. This is the first national society organization in the area of Mazu culture which is approved by the state, marking that the phenomenon of Mazu belief has been officially named as Mazu culture by the state. The venue of the association is located at Mazu ancestral temple in Meizhou Island.

“The Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association takes the promotion of exchanges as the purpose, takes the prosperity of academics as the carrier, takes the development of activities as the main line, and takes the enrichment and improvement as the theme. It actively and deeply promotes the protection of the Mazu cultural heritage, resource integration, academic research, social exchanges, charity activities, project constructions and other tasks. It provides an important platform for Mazu cultural institutions and individuals at home and abroad to carry out academic research, contact and exchange, promote Mazu culture, and enhance understanding and consensus. The association is a non-profit folk cultural social group that formed voluntarily by Mazu cultural institutions and Mazu cultural researchers at home and abroad. So far, it has 376 group members and 26 individual members.” (Yang Pengfei, 2012, PP: 94) The establishment of the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association is conducive to further developing the brand of Mazu culture, uniting the descendants of the Chinese people at home and abroad, promoting non-governmental exchanges and

cooperation on both sides of the strait, and working together to inherit and carry forward the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and revitalizing the Chinese nation. Zhang Kehui, who was the vice chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the chairman of the Central Committee of the Taiwan League, was elected as the first president of the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association.

In October 2004, after Zhang Kehui became the president of the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association, he put forward the concept of “the world's Mazu is the same one, the world's believers are the same family”, this is widely praised by Chinese and overseas Chinese at home and abroad, and by the compatriots on both sides of the strait.

#### 4.4 Publication ‘China Mazu’

“On May, 2005, the publication ‘China Mazu’, a magazine sponsored by the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association, was officially started and released to the public at home and abroad. Zhang Kehui, the vice chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the chairman of the Taiwan League Central Committee, and the president of the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association awarded the inaugural issue of ‘China Mazu’ as a gift to some Mazu cultural institutions at home and abroad.

The issue number of ‘China Mazu’ is CN-35(Q) No. 0071, a bimonthly issue with 16 format. The title of the magazine was inscribed by the famous 100-year-old calligrapher, Liang Piyun. The Vice Chairman, Zhang Kehui proposed in the opening words of starting publication, ‘let Mazu culture go to the world’ that this publication should be made into an authoritative publication with international, academic, knowledge and readability, so that it can be used in constructing a platform of Mazu cultural exchange, inheriting and developing Chinese excellent traditional culture, uniting Chinese and overseas Chinese at home and abroad, reviving the Chinese nation, and promoting the construction of the economic zone on the west side of the Straits, and other aspects, it will give full play to the role of cohesion and promotion.

Since its inception, 'China Mazu' always adheres to the publication purpose of 'using Mazu culture to promote Mazu spirit, and using Mazu spirit to spread Mazu culture', grasps the guidance of operating magazine, improves the quality of publication, and expands the distribution of publication. Putian Municipal Party Committee and Municipal Government regard it as a brand medium and cultural gift to promote Mazu culture and the hometown of Mazu, and present them to guests at home and abroad who come to Putian, which is widely praised by readers and believers at home and abroad." (Yang Pengfei, 2012, PP:96)

#### 4.5 Chinese Mazu Culture Research Institute

"In order to better carry out the protection of Mazu cultural heritage, further consolidate the academic research strength of Mazu cultural experts and scholars at home and abroad, and facilitate the organization of Mazu cultural institutions and experts and scholars to conduct academic seminars on Mazu culture, display academic achievements, and provide an important platform for communication. With the attention and support of the Putian Municipal Party Committee and Municipal Government, the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association decided to build the Chinese Mazu Cultural Research Institute on the northwest side of Dongyan Mountain Scenic Area in Putian City.

The Chinese Mazu Cultural Research Institute was built with donations by all sectors of society, and the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association is the owner. It was completed on 18 September, 2008. The research institute covers an area of 6.5 acres, with a building area of 5282 square meters, and the project cost is about 16.8 million RMB. It is located at the northwest side of Dongyan Mountain Scenic Area in Putian City, in the ancient cultural square of Dongyan Mountain. The overall building is built with the style of Putian ancient dwellings, and is basically arranged symmetrically along the central axis. It is another exquisite work of Mazu culture on architecture.





Figure 51 Chinese Mazu Culture Research Institute  
Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

The Chinese Mazu Cultural Research Institute is the core institution for the academic research of Mazu culture. It aims to organize Mazu cultural research and academic exchanges, hold Mazu cultural training and seminars, collect and display witnesses of Mazu cultural activities, collect and show witness of Mazu cultural activities, compile Mazu cultural articles and the historical data, cohere the academic research power of experts and scholars at home and abroad, explore the profound connotation of Mazu culture, improve the academic level of Mazu culture, and expand the exchanges of Mazu culture at home and abroad, including both sides of the strait.” (Yang Pengfei, 2012, PP: 120)

#### 4.6 The official account of WeChat of Mazu ancestral temple

Nowadays, WeChat has become an indispensable tool for the daily communication of Chinese people, and even when Chinese people around the world want to get in touch with China, WeChat is also one of the most convenient and economical methods. WeChat is closely related to people’s lives. To adapt to the development of modern technology, Mazu temple in Meizhou Island has launched an effective and practical WeChat official account at an appropriate time, opening an important window for Mazu believers around the world to understand and know more

Mazu culture. The construction of cyberspace is crucial to the spread of Mazu culture and the transmission of information.

Due to the common belief and collective memory, Mazu believers tend to form closeness on the Internet. Through the official account, Mazu believers can overcome the barriers of time and space to quickly and intuitively obtain first-hand information about Mazu. Even through live broadcast and other functions, you can simultaneously participate in various folk activities of Mazu, just like coming to the scene, this effect shocks the hearts of believers more strongly. The official account of WeChat connects the global belief groups of Chinese Mazu, it can be more easily spread to relatives and friends around them, and can also be closely connected with believers with common beliefs. Whenever there is an activity, they can send messages in the group of WeChat for announcement. It is often the hundred responses to a call, gathering the believers together to form a stable social relationship.

#### 4.7 The influence of the World Mazu Cultural Forum

The World Mazu Culture Forum, founded in 2016, is held once a year to provide a diversified, open and inclusive platform for the research and exchange of Mazu culture, it can help the worldwide spread and development of Mazu culture.



Figure 52 The permanent meeting place of the World Mazu Cultural Forum  
Source: Photographed by Ke Yihan, 2020

“From 31 October to 2 November, 2016, the first World Mazu Cultural Forum was held in the hometown of Mazu, Meizhou Island, Putian City, Fujian Province. The theme of the forum is ‘Mazu culture, the spirit of sea silk and cultural exchanges’. It aims to promote Mazu spirit of ‘dedication, benevolence, and great love’, promote the worldwide spread and development of Mazu culture, show the sincere wish of China’s peaceful development and cooperation, and promote the economic trade and cultural exchanges and cooperation of countries and regions along ‘The Belt and Road’. There is more than 1,300 people participated in the forum, including leaders of relevant state ministries and commissions, some foreign state officials, diplomatic envoys to China, UNESCO experts, and experts and scholars at home and abroad.

In 2017, the permanent site of the World Mazu Cultural Forum was completed in Meizhou Island, Fujian Province, marking the highest, most authoritative and core position of this forum in the circle of Mazu culture. On 2 December, 2017, the 2nd World Mazu Cultural Forum was held in Meizhou Island, Fujian Province. There are more than 300 Chinese and foreign representatives from 116 government agencies, academic units and social organizations from 24 countries and regions gathered in Mazu’s hometown. The forum issued the ‘Meizhou • Marine Civilization Initiative’, calling on countries and regions along the Maritime Silk Road and people from all sectors of society around the world to work together to integrate into the construction of ‘The Belt and Road’, to inherit and promote Mazu culture.

From 18 to 19, November, 2018, the 3rd World Mazu Culture Forum was held in Meizhou Island, Putian City, Fujian Province. This forum activity mainly includes 1 keynote forum, 6 parallel forums, and 8 matching activities. The Parallel Forum of ‘Mazu Culture and Overseas Media’ was held for the first time. At the same time, there were also the 20th China Meizhou Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival, the first batch of world intangible cultural heritage, such as the performance of Mazu Festival, the third ‘the skill performance of Meizhou Mazu bun’, the light show of Mazu culture, the Mazu cultural oil painting exhibition of Sino-Korea, the complete ceremony of the movie ‘Mazu Going Home’, and Meizhou Mazu's parade to the Philippines. The ‘Meizhou Initiative of the Third World Mazu Cultural Forum’ was announced at the forum.

On 1 November, 2019, the 4th World Mazu Cultural Forum was opened in Meizhou Island, Fujian Province. The forum is co-sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Central Committee of the Chinese Revolution, the Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region and the People's Government of Fujian Province. There were a total of more than 800 entrepreneurs and people from all walks of life gathered together, including government officials, experts and scholars from 42 countries and regions and international organizations on five continents in the world, centering on the theme of 'Mazu Culture • Marine Civilization • Humanities Exchange', advocating the Mazu spirit and sharing the feelings of Mazu. The forum released the 'Consensus of the 4th World Mazu Culture Forum', held the signing activity of economic and trade projects, held the "Mazu Culture and Marine Ecological Civilization" sub-forum, and a series of activities, including the opening of the 21st China Meizhou Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival, the 4th 'Meizhou Mazu Bun' Exhibition Competition, the Cultural Tourism Promotion Conference, the Mazu Cultural and Creative Exhibition on both sides of the Strait." (Meizhou Mazu Temple, 2020)

On 1 November, 2020, the Fifth World Mazu Culture Forum and the 22nd China·Putian Meizhou Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival was grandly held in Meizhou Island, Putian City, Fujian Province. The theme of this forum was 'Mazu Culture and the Community of Human Destiny'. There were many Chinese and foreign representatives, experts, scholars, and artists from government agencies, academic units and social organizations from many countries and regions gathered in Mazu's hometown.

As a cross-border cultural symbol, Mazu culture is particularly important in the process of advancing the construction of the '21st Century Maritime Silk Road'. Putian City actively integrates into the national development strategy, serves 'The Belt and Road' initiative, and further expands the influence of Mazu culture overseas through the World Mazu Cultural Forum and other activities, builds a platform centered on Mazu culture for cohering people and organizations with consensus from all sectors of society, construct a social network took Mazu as a core, lets the common cultural

heritage of mankind to be continuously and widely spread around the world, and has a positive effect.

#### 4.8 The important role of the organizational characteristics of social network in the process of Mazu's application for intangible cultural heritage of mankind

“According to the decision of the Committee for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, it is considered that ‘Mazu belief’ meets the conditions for being included in the list, including: first, ‘Mazu belief’ has been recognized by different social groups as a symbol of identity and continuity, and has passed down from generation to generation for several centuries. Second, the inclusion of ‘Mazu belief’ in the list will promote its visibility as an intangible cultural heritage and increase its international attention, thereby promoting cultural diversity and human creativity. Third, the activity of applying the Intangible Cultural Heritage includes a variety of current and planned measures to ensure the feasibility and probability of success of the application activity, such as investigation and research, raising awareness, and establishing a conservation organization, thus show that all sectors of society pay their attention and efforts to protect the object of heritage. Fourth, This application activity for heritage was first initiated by social groups and organizations, village committees and each Mazu temples. They participated in the process of application by providing relevant documents and cultural heritage, reviewing the content of nomination documents, accepting interviews, and planning protection measures. They showed a spontaneous, known in advance, and valued attitude of agreement to the object of application. Fifth, the object of application for heritage has been included in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List and is under the direct supervision of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Department of the Ministry of Culture.” (The Board of Director of Putian Meizhou Mazu Ancestral Temple, 2012, PP: 137)

The above conditions listed by the Committee for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage focus on the social influence of Mazu belief, the identity of Mazu belief and behaviors by social organizations and various groups, thereby confirming the necessity for studying Mazu from the perspective of social network. Under the global environment that all the world pays attention to the intangible heritage projects, Mazu



belief will develop rapidly in a brand-new attitude, and will make greater contributions to human society.

The relationship force played by Mazu organizations has been importantly reflected in project of the World Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mazu belief and other activities and organizational behaviors. In particular, non-governmental organizations all over the world can promote and develop Mazu culture as their purpose, unanimously identity with Mazu belief, with common ideals, beliefs, and values. This can play an important role of non-governmental organizations. Through friends, fellow villagers, languages, and industries, forming the bond between all Chinese people to gather together all Chinese people, and finally forming a stable and huge social network based on the common Mazu belief.

Under the background of the new era, the social network based on Mazu belief will play an important role, and Mazu belief will also become a powerful means of self-management and self-education with brand-new functions and new demands. At the same time, Mazu belief has strong social cohesion, and the stable social relationship formed around Mazu belief is conducive to promoting the development of a harmonious society. As a carrier of traditional folk beliefs and culture, Mazu temples are also folk cultural communities. They have unique role in gathering the interests of the believers, reflecting the demands of the believers, and promoting interpersonal relationships in the communities.

Mazu belief uses a unique social method to restrict believers' behaviors, coordinates the relationship between people and society and the relationship between all parts of society, maintains social order, and ensures the normal operation of social system. Its social functions are multifaceted. Through the process of that the ancestral temple of Mazu merges, influences and supports each other with people's social life, Mazu belief has realized the orderly integration of social resources, the reproduction of social values, the internal integration of social elites, and the positive strengthening of social relations, etc. Mazu belief establishes a solid foundation for the development of society, culture, economy, etc.

## **Part V The role of Mazu belief in the construction of social network of overseas Chinese**

“With the increasing importance of Chinese government on the status of overseas Chinese and the focus of the party and the country after 1978 on economic development. The goal of overseas Chinese affairs of China's policy is to cooperate with the central task of the party and government, its general policy is to protect legitimate rights and interests of overseas Chinese, to carry forward the tradition of patriotism and loving hometown, to encourage overseas Chinese joining local nationality voluntarily, and play a role in promoting the economic prosperity of the host country and the cooperation and exchanges between the motherland and the host country. The goal is also to protect the legitimate rights and interests of returned overseas Chinese and their relatives, give proper consideration to their characteristics, and play their advantage of contact with overseas, make contribute to the motherland.” (Zhuang Guotu, Liu Wenzheng, 2009, PP: 250)

In the mid-nineteenth century, with the rise of immigration tide, many residents along the coast of Fujian and Guangdong chose to emigrate overseas. Due to the restriction of traffic condition, they chose to travel by boat. Due to the long-term voyage, the environments on sea are changeable, and shipwrecks occur from time to time. This gives a great pressure on the psychology of people who choose to go abroad under the particular situation. In order to seeking psychological comfort, Mazu as the maritime protection goddess with local folk belief has become people's psychological sustenance. People also brought Mazu belief abroad, and took root and sprouted in the local area, thus forming a social network centered on overseas Chinese who believe in Mazu. It has made significant contributions to the social harmony and economic development of local Chinese and communities, as well as exchanges and cooperation with China.

“The social network of overseas Chinese refers to the Chinese and their descendants who have emigrated overseas for hundreds of years. Although the worldview and sense of belonging, as well as the language, living habits, ancestry, and other aspects have undergone tremendous changes, they can still identify themselves as Chinese and ethnic Chinese. They form a social network with basic cultural identity. Such a group of Chinese people is so persistent in maintaining the customs of their

ancestors, although they have lived with the aborigines of local country for generations, they still keep their old customs and habits carefully.” (Zhang Yunjiang, 2017, PP: 97)

Such a special social network of overseas Chinese still exists after hundreds of years. Mazu belief has played a full role in the social network of overseas Chinese.

### 5.1 Mazu belief constructs a broad sense of connection

Mazu belief is closely related to the development of China's marine civilization. It is closely related to the people going to sea to earn a living in the southeast coast. It spreads overseas with the migration of Fujian and Guangdong immigrants. Mazu belief provides the most extensive connection point for the construction of social network of overseas Chinese. Through this connection point, now Chinese from different regions of China, belonging to different classes, and scattered overseas, that can connect to form a social network of Chinese in a broad sense.

Actually Mazu provides overseas Chinese a belief complex characterized by pray, sacrifice, spirituality, blessing, etc. With the development of the times and changes in social environment, people's belief needs, spiritual comfort and secular requirements have also changed. The function of Mazu belief has also been continuously improved and sublimated. Mazu spirit has also been internalized into the general emotional experience and behavioral pattern of common people. The difficulty of reality come from the limited existence of human life. People may encounter various difficulties, especially live in overseas, especially in the early stage of development. Overseas Chinese people not only have to bear the pain of homesickness, but also have to face various survival challenges. Their hearts are full of anxiety, pressure, fear, etc. In fact, Mazu belief plays a role in spiritual sustenance and psychological comfort in people's life.

Beliving in Mazu and worshipping Mazu, is not only enables people to meet their tangible and practical needs, such as reaching overseas safely and smooth career development, they can also be protected satisfactorily. In the intangible spirit, it can cultivate the spirit of personal morality, good deeds, and great love. People will overcome the psychological difficulties caused by the reality with a positive attitude, friendly attitude and broad mind. Under the guidance of Mazu, overseas Chinese with common belief can also rely on each other, help each other, and tide over difficulties

together. This is a kind of trust based on belief. Although they maybe come from different places, but gather together for various reasons. The cultural structure in the belief level is an unconscious mechanism and logical relationship, it is hidden in people's deep heart, and connect people together through external social events and behaviors.

Mazu solved the spirit and belief problems of overseas Chinese in a greatest extent, accommodated the spirit and thinking of Chinese traditional culture and folk belief. Mazu belief innovatively integrated into the local country's location, stayed and took root, and completed the re-creation of culture and belief. And belief model expressed a habitual and lasting behavioral model, that is the social network.

#### 5.2 Mazu belief provides a weak intensity of connection

The so-called connection intensity is defined by a combination of time, the degree of emotional investment, the degree of intimacy (trust by each other), and reciprocal services, which is spent on a connection. The connection intensity has weak connection, that is, frequent occurrence, lasting and emotional relationship. According to the hypothesis of weak connection, connection with weak intensity is more likely to bring diversified information. Some certain types of strong connection may help spread complex knowledge.

Mazu can act as a certain kind of weak connection in the network of overall overseas Chinese people. In the place where overseas Chinese gathered and settled, there are many Chinese, there also have various organizations of different types, such as the chamber of commerce in a certain area. There are also existing other beliefs, such as Guanyin<sup>122</sup> and Guangong<sup>123</sup>. Some organizations maybe usually have fewer contact, but great love in Mazu spirit is extremely inclusive, it can connects people together with

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<sup>122</sup> One of the Four Great Bodhisattvas of Chinese Buddhism

<sup>123</sup> It is a traditional folk belief. He is also called Guandi, his real name is Guan Yu. He was born in 160 AD and died in 219 AD. He was recommended and promoted by later generations as a moral model combining “loyalty”, “faith”, “righteousness” and “courage”, and became an idol worshipped by everyone in the later period of Chinese feudal society.

different beliefs and organizations, and make everyone producing a sense of collective identity in a certain extent.

In many temples in Thailand, there are many temples that Mazu and other gods are worshipped together. Whether it is the main god or auxiliary god, no matter it is Guanyin, Yuhuangdadi<sup>124</sup>, Buddha or Bao Gong<sup>125</sup>, Mazu is able to blend in and live in harmony. The spirit of compassion and great love of Mazu can contains everything, and can inspires people in reality. This is to the greatest extent conducive to the coordination of relationship with other faith organizations. Mazu spirit can makes overseas Chinese realize that everyone is Chinese, there is no need to fight for some interests and occur internal conflicts. Therefore, the role of weak connection of Mazu plays a decisive role in the unity of the entire Chinese community.

“For example, in the Shunfu Palace in Thailand, Mazu and Guanyin together serve as the auxiliary god of the local land god "Shufu Lord". in Bentougong temple in Thailand, Mazu is the auxiliary god as well, in Guangling Temple in Thailand, Mazu is the auxiliary god of Guangzezunwang with Bentougong, in Bentou ancient temple in Thailand, Mazu and Guandi have always been the auxiliary god of Bentougongma. All these fully reflect the characteristic and tradition of Mazu belief.” (Li Tianxi, 2016.5)

In Tianfu Palace in Singapore, Mazu is the main god of main hall, while the back hall is dedicated to various folk gods, such as Guanyin and Guan Gong. Tianfu Palace was listed as a national monument in Singapore in 1973. The largest restoration project started in 1998. At that time, it cost more than S\$4 million to complete this huge restoration project that lasted three years. The Tianhou Temple of Hainan’s Guild Hall in Kuala Lumpur welcomes back a statue of Mazu from Mazu ancestral temple in Meizhou Island, Fujian Province every year, and conducts a parade to welcome and worship the Mazu statue with great fanfare, and the parade team was spectacular and lively. In the process of worshipping Mazu, they contacted the friendship of fellow countrymen to increase their feelings and seek common well-being. Meanwhile, they contacted business friendship and resolved disputes, effectively promoting the harmony

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<sup>124</sup> In Taoist myths, he is the leaders of the gods and buddhas.

<sup>125</sup> Famous officials of the Northern Song Dynasty. Because of his probity impartiality and other high qualities, he was worshipped as a god by future generations.



and unity within the guild hall of the fellow countrymen, and forming the ethnic identity of Chinese. The Mazu temple in Malaysian Guild Hall is not only a place for discussing affairs, but also a place where teachings and rituals are emphasized. It has the function of inheriting Chinese traditional culture and cultivating people. The inclusiveness of Mazu belief has adapted to the diversity of beliefs of overseas Chinese groups. According to the environment and actual need, different regions expand the function of Mazu belief to the range of seeking wealth, curing diseases, seeking children, and seeking marriage. Mazu temple also embodies the social management functions that Chinese contacts feelings and discusses affairs.

### 5.3 Mazu belief provides a certain indirect connection to strengthen the cohesion of its structure

The construction of social network requires continuous communication in people's daily life. In the process of continuous network construction and creation, regular and continuous social groups give people the opportunity to overcome privacy and sense of strangeness to build connections. People have many opportunities for daily communication. Participating in activities of belief rituals makes people feel that inner mind of everyone has the common cultural concept. When everyone worships the gods in the same way, it can enhance the inner cohesion in the structure of a social network.

In Mazu temples around the world, many Chinese, especially those Chinese who go to sea for business, must go to Mazu temple to worship and pray for a safe return. This tradition still remains today. Every year on the 23rd of March and the 9th of September of the lunar calendar, every major commemoration of Mazu's birthday and ascension, grand ceremonies of worship are held in Mazu temples everywhere. People come consciously from all over the world, they actively take a part in the ceremonies as a member of belief. They entrust the feeling of missing Mazu and hometown.

In the early Chinese society, there usually had a Mazu temple first and then had a community. Mazu temple provides such a platform for people to gather together, forms a strong inner relationship, enhances understanding by each other, and even lays the foundation for joint entrepreneurship.

According to the theory of social relationship, the cohesion of a social circle is not based on the face-to-face contact of its members, but on the basis of a shorter chain of indirect relationship, which formally connect people together. Holding activities of worshipping Mazu, or Chinese participates in fellowship activities with secularity organized by Mazu-related organizations, that can help bring overseas Chinese together to form a stable social circle.

“As stated in the ‘History of the Chinese Society in Singapore and Malaysia’, in the Chinese society in Singapore and Malaysia during this period, these festivals and gods have a more important social effect that promotes the unity of various Chinese groups. They provide a common basis for people to participate in these activities. All these festivals make the Chinese people with different dialect groups having common happy days, and their celebrations activities are the same. This has at least showed to the outside world that the Chinese society is a whole common image in some extent. In this way, the customs and traditions of Chinese can be maintained, it makes the Chinese society in Singapore and Malaysia forming a unique ethnic and cultural group.” (Collaborative Innovation Center for the Inheritance and Development of Mazu Culture in Fujian Province, Board of Directors of Mazu Temple, Meizhou Island, Putian City, 2016, PP: 244)

#### 5.4 The influence of Mazu culture at overseas

“Mazu belief spread to various places abroad. The origin of spread to foreign countries is that some of Mazu statues or incenses carried by those who go abroad are enshrined in their homes, and some are because overseas Chinese have a strong belief in Mazu when they were in their hometowns. In order to meet the requirement of overseas Chinese belief, the fellow countrymen association built Mazu temples for people to worship in the place where they live.

Mazu belief advocates the the power of goodness and love. Over time, overseas Chinese have expanded it into the category of ‘peace and harmony’. Chinese who travel and stay at overseas, under different worldviews and values, experiences a cultural atmosphere that is completely different from Chinese culture. It is Mazu belief that promotes the unity and harmony within the Chinese. So far, the areas of spread of Mazu culture has reached 46 countries and regions. Among them, Asia are mainly

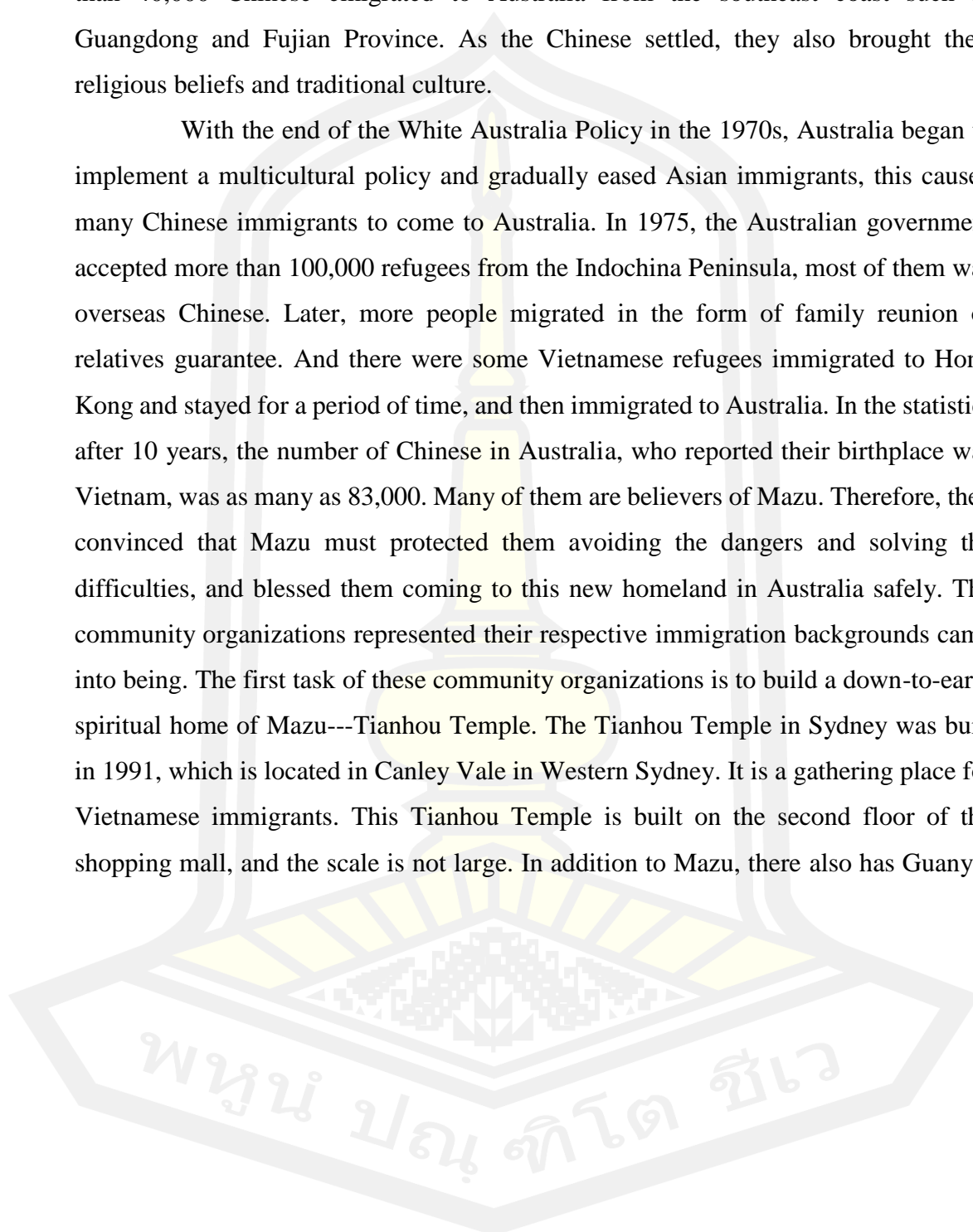
include: Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, North Korea, South Korea, Cambodia, Laos, India, Brunei. Europe areas include: France, United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark, Russia, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain. The America areas are: the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Suriname. Oceania areas include: Australia, New Zealand, Vanuatu, Tonga. Africa areas include: South Africa, Mozambique.

Many places abroad are carrying out Mazu cultural activities. The American Mazu Cultural Foundation is set up in San Francisco of USA, every year Mazu parade is held around 23rd March of the lunar calendar, so as to unite the Chinese and expand their influence. The Australian Mazu Cultural Exchange Association carried out a series of activities during Mazu Festival to strengthen contacts with local communities in Australia. The folk activities of Mazu culture in Southeast Asia are even more grand. During the Lantern Festival in the first month of the lunar calendar each year, Japan regularly organizes Mazu parades to showcase traditional Chinese culture. Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and other countries also carry out relevant activities every year to promote exchanges and cooperation among nations and countries.

Mazu that entered Japanese mainland was originly brought in by navigators (or 'Tang boats'), its spread route was roughly from Goto, Hirado, and Nagasaki in Kyushu, and then followed the coastline developing to the northeast, reached the area of Mito in eastern Japan, Isobara in Ibaraki, and then reached the northernmost Aomori Prefecture. The majority of believers are fishermen, sailors, builders, shipbuilders, carpenters, and businessmen from Quanzhou, Zhangzhou, Fuzhou and other places. These immigrants brought the original production technology of shipbuilding, agriculture, architecture, etc., and also spread Chinese traditional culture, living customs, and folk beliefs to Japan. According to historical records, only in Ming and Qing Dynasties, there were more than 100 Mazu temples built by overseas Chinese in the Japanese islands. In Japan, Mazu belief was first mixed with Buddhist temples, and then transformed and merged with Buddha and Guandi. The overseas Chinese in Japan has gradually localized their belief in Mazu, giving Mazu the function of the god of grain, and looking forward to the harvest of grains, people worship Mazu together. In the area of Mito City in the eastern Japan, Mazu was also enshrined in a shrine as a Japanese belief. The introduction of Mazu belief and customs into Australia originated

in the 1850s during the period of gold rush. During the golden age at that time, more than 40,000 Chinese emigrated to Australia from the southeast coast such as Guangdong and Fujian Province. As the Chinese settled, they also brought their religious beliefs and traditional culture.

With the end of the White Australia Policy in the 1970s, Australia began to implement a multicultural policy and gradually eased Asian immigrants, this caused many Chinese immigrants to come to Australia. In 1975, the Australian government accepted more than 100,000 refugees from the Indochina Peninsula, most of them was overseas Chinese. Later, more people migrated in the form of family reunion or relatives guarantee. And there were some Vietnamese refugees immigrated to Hong Kong and stayed for a period of time, and then immigrated to Australia. In the statistics after 10 years, the number of Chinese in Australia, who reported their birthplace was Vietnam, was as many as 83,000. Many of them are believers of Mazu. Therefore, they convinced that Mazu must protected them avoiding the dangers and solving the difficulties, and blessed them coming to this new homeland in Australia safely. The community organizations represented their respective immigration backgrounds came into being. The first task of these community organizations is to build a down-to-earth spiritual home of Mazu---Tianhou Temple. The Tianhou Temple in Sydney was built in 1991, which is located in Canley Vale in Western Sydney. It is a gathering place for Vietnamese immigrants. This Tianhou Temple is built on the second floor of the shopping mall, and the scale is not large. In addition to Mazu, there also has Guanyin



Bodhisattva, Guanshengdadi<sup>126</sup>, Tudigong<sup>127</sup>, Caishenye<sup>128</sup>, Taisuijun<sup>129</sup> and Huye<sup>130</sup>.” (Meizhou Mazu Temple, 2020.11)

“In June 2016, Malaysian and Chinese economic and trade representatives, and Malacca Datuk Yan Tianlu visited Mazu temple in Meizhou Island and stated that the spread and development of Mazu culture in Southeast Asia has a long history and has passed down a long time. Today, the promotion of Mazu culture and the spread of Mazu spirit in Southeast Asia not only helps to condense the strength of overseas Chinese, but also promotes the harmony between overseas Chinese and Southeast Asia. It is an important carrier and indispensable force of unity.” (Meizhou Mazu Temple, 2020.7)

“On 30 June, 2019, the first Mazu parade in Southern Hemisphere was held in Sydney, Australia. That day, there was nearly 1,000 people from Australia, China, Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vanuatu and other countries and 30 local artist groups, the scene was lively. Wu Guiguang, the chairman of the Australian Chinese Friendship Association, said that Mazu parade is the dream of the people from Tianhou temple in Sydney for more than 20 years. The mayor of Fairfield city, Frank Carbone and the member of New states, Nick Lalick said that the activity reflected the history, religious beliefs and culture of overseas Chinese in Australia, and reflected the harmony and multiculturalism of the local community.” (Meizhou Mazu Temple, 2019.7)

These activities of ceremony or celebration are of great significance to the construction of social network of overseas Chinese. In various activities for celebrating

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<sup>126</sup> Same as Guangong

<sup>127</sup> This is a god in ancient Chinese legend who is in charge of a land. He lives underground, relies on incense and absorbs energy, and is the lowest level of the gods. This is one of the most common gods in the Han folk beliefs. As a local protector, it is popular all over the country.

<sup>128</sup> The god in charge of the wealth in Chinese Taoism.

<sup>129</sup> The gods of Chinese folk beliefs. In charge of the good and bad luck of the human society.

<sup>130</sup> A deity of Chinese folk belief, it has the function of guarding villages, cities and temples.



the birthday of Mazu, overseas Chinese often happily gathered, exchanged feelings, enhanced cultural identity and national cohesion, strengthened the unity of relatives in various villages, and thus strongly promoted the formation and development of overseas Chinese society.

## 5.5 The key role of Mazu temples and community organizations

### 5.5.1 The autonomy of organization

The above we mentioned the classification of organizations of Mazu. In general, they can all be called social groups. “In the past, the Mazu statues brought by early Chinese immigrants are often enshrined at home, until they settle down and become economically prosperous. Then, they will initiate initiatives, and contact Chinese people with common beliefs or common national consciousness to build Mazu temples, or set Mazu statues inside guild halls, chambers of commerce, or fellow villagers associations for believers to worship.

In order to commemorate the sages to overseas Chinese who made outstanding contributions, to make the ancestors being quiet and feeling comfortable, and to worship the ancestors, these guild halls or Mazu temples dedicated to Mazu often set up grave-hills to bury the dead compatriots and for future generations to worship. All these show that Mazu temple is an important spiritual home for overseas Chinese, which tightly gathers people and closely unites the hearts of people.

There are 13 of the 54 guild halls or Mazu temples in Malaysia, which regularly or irregularly participate in supporting charities, such as setting up clinics, etc., they can not only to help overseas Chinese, but also to establish contacts with local people or governments in a special way to enhance integration and understanding, to enhance trust relationship, and to promote social friendship and harmony.

Some Mazu temples even set up schools or fund schools in the name of charity to support the education Chinese language. It plays an important role in educating Chinese children, stabilizing Chinese groups, and enhancing Chinese national identity, and other aspects.

For example, in 1949, Chinese leaders Cai Jincheng and Lin Zhenkun generously donated the ice factory to Mazu temple to manage and operate. The only condition is that they must preferentially use the profit of the ice factory to maintain

and develop the local Chinese primary school---Yucai Primary School.” (Collaborative Innovation Center for the Inheritance and Development of Mazu Culture in Fujian Province, the Board of Directors of Mazu Temple, Meizhou, Putian City, 2016, PP: 243)

In community organization, the connection between individuals relies on a common shelf. It is firstly to have a shelf, and then everyone connects to the shelf and be connected with each other. The Mazu temples or related guild halls are not only the center of belief activities of overseas Chinese, but also help overseas Chinese people solve problems, eliminate disputes, and even maintain social public order for overseas Chinese people. The overseas Chinese actually represent the image of the Chinese in a certain extent, Mazu belief at overseas also assumes the function of educating people.

#### 5.5.2 The active promotion from the government level

The community organization is an important non-governmental channel for contacting overseas Chinese. The only national folk organization of Mazu is the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association. The purpose of the association is to contact social groups or individuals that shared by the same Mazu belief at home and abroad. Since its establishment, it has played an important role in the relationship between overseas Chinese and Mazu, and has established long-term ties with intertemporal organizations around the world. Mazu cultural exchanges are very close. By contacting the association, overseas Mazu associations often organize delegations to Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island to find their roots and ancestors. At the same time, the association is often invited to participate in various Mazu cultural activities abroad.

“In May 2006, the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association was established in Putian City. Nearly 300 Mazu associations and representatives of more than 40 countries or regions from all over the world participated in the founding ceremony. The association integrates all Mazu believers from all over the world, holds the annual meeting every year, holds the Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival, and develops Mazu cultural exchanges.

For example, Meizhou Mazu visited Kuala Lumpur of Malaysia in 2016. The scene was magnificent, the grand occasion was unprecedented. On October 20, 2017, Meizhou Mazu Temple organized a escort group of more than 2,600 people and took the ‘Costa Atlantic’ cruise again to voyage to the Southeast Asia and parading

Manila, which is the capital of the Philippines, this parade aroused a widespread concern.

Mazu's visit to countries that along 'The Belt and Road' is an exploration of promoting Chinese excellent traditional culture going out. Lin Jinzan, the chairman of Mazu temple in Meizhou Island, said that in 2017, Mazu in Meizhou Island visited the Southeast Asia, which greatly promoted Mazu. Mazu culture going out has expanded the influence of Mazu culture in countries and regions along the Maritime Silk Road, and strengthened folk exchanges, cultural exchanges and people-to-people bonds between China and the countries along 'The Belt and Road'. In recent years, with the increasing demands of overseas Chinese for Mazu culture, Mazu culture has accelerated the pace of 'going out'. Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, the United States, Japan, and many other temples, community organizations, and Mazu believers all over the world have issued invitations, hoping that Mazu can parade the area and bless the people.

In addition, Mazu temples and overseas Chinese from all over the world have organized groups to go to the hometown of Mazu for pilgrimages, worshipping ancestors and offering incense. According to data provided by the relevant person in charge of Mazu temple in Meizhou Island, there are nearly 40,000 overseas Chinese who return home to worship Mazu each year. The prosperity of Mazu culture at overseas is inseparable from the improvement of China's comprehensive national strength. On the one hand, China vigorously promotes traditional culture and provides opportunities for the inheritance and development of Mazu culture. On the other hand, overseas Chinese have become more confident in Chinese traditional culture, they have more motivation to promote Mazu culture." (Jia Pingfan, 2018.09)

On 16 August, 2019, Zhuang Meihua, the Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island, and a group of 8 people came to Bangkok, Thailand, and visited local Chinese associations and Mazu cultural institutions in Bangkok, Thailand, for visit and exchange and lasted 5-days. Chen Zhenzhi, the chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Thailand, expressed that he would fully promote and support the activity of Mazu parade in Thailand, he would ensure the successful completion of the event. He also said that Mazu culture has a long history, not only has extensive influence in the coastal areas of China, but

also many believers in southern Thailand, and there are more than 100 Mazu temples in various sizes. Believers all over the world have the same feelings of China's Mazu, proves that Chinese people and Thai people are same family. Chinese and foreign Chinese had a blind date and love and cultural integration. Meizhou Mazu Parade to Thailand was of great significance. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Thailand was obliged to assist the activity. He hoped that in the future, they would have more contacts and more walks, so that the China-Thailand folk relationship would be close to each other and made positive contributions to China-Thailand folk cultural exchanges.



Figure 53 Zhuang Meihua and a group of 8 people visited to Bangkok, Thailand

Source: [https://www.sohu.com/a/334693160\\_120059808](https://www.sohu.com/a/334693160_120059808), 2019

Accompanied by Yang Yanfeng, the President of the Thai Security Association, the exchange delegation visited the Thai Fujian Hall, the Thai-Chinese Business Association, the Thailand Chinese Youth Chamber of Commerce, the Thailand and China Peaceful Reunification Promotion Association, the Thai Security Association, and the various Chinese organizations, visited and talked with them and had an exchange discussion. Afterwards, the visiting delegation of Mazu temple in Meizhou Island also visited the Quanzhou Jinjiang Federation of Thailand, the Nanyao Palace of Thailand, the Lin Clan Association of Thailand, the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Importers and Exporters, etc. They visited some local Chinese

institutions, palaces and temples, understood and knew the spread and other aspects of the local Mazu culture among communications, for establishing a solid foundation for the implementation of Meizhou Mazu Parade to Thailand and the Mazu cultural exchange activities of Thailand and China.

Since the Covid-19, Mazu temple in Meizhou Island has actively responded to the call and issued initiatives to Mazu believers at home and abroad. There are many packages that represented the wishes of Mazu believers are gathering from all over the world. Mr. Hong Zhuangyan, the former chairman of the Cihang Temple in Manila of Philippines, the Zhenlan Palace in Taizhong of Taiwan, the Zhenhai Palace in Malaysia, the Jiaying Hall of Malaysia, the Mazu Board of Directors in Vietnam, the Putian Chamber of Commerce in Australia and Mazu Cultural Association of Australia, the Mazu Cultural Board of Directors in Spanish and the Tianhou Palace in Hainan Hall of Malaysia, and others units, they traveled across the ocean and reached Mazu's hometown in Meizhou Island for worshipping Mazu. Exploring the source, we can see the caring of overseas Mazu believers to their hometown, as well as their strong feelings of Mazu. Batch after batch of love materials and batches of love funds cross the mountains, rivers and oceans, carrying the consistent patriotism and Mazu love of overseas Mazu believers. Like the warm sun in the cold winter, with a holy light, it is dispelling the haze that brought by the Covid-19.

Under the organization of Meizhou Mazu Temple and major local associations, people and groups from all walks of life gathered together to discuss matters, commonly concerned and discussed the development of Mazu culture. Because of Mazu, people have a reason to get together, and they will also carry their devotion to Mazu culture and pride in serving Mazu. At this special moment, people often spare no effort to treat each other frankly and cooperate sincerely. Mazu plays an important role as a link, built a good communication and exchange platform, and built a solid relationship of social network.

Overseas Chinese associations are spread all over the world. Under the trend of globalization, the development and convenience of transportation and communication tools have greatly increased the possibility of overseas Chinese regularly traveling back to their home country. This not only increases the frequency of Chinese transnational travel, but also helps them practice more connotations in the



transnational field. Especially the overseas Chinese who believe in Mazu can come back to Mazu ancestral temple more conveniently during the major festivals of Mazu, and face-to-face pin the thoughts and demands of Mazu. At the same time, when they return to foreign countries with a strong friendship of Mazu, they can also participate in Mazu cultural life and other economic and social life at multiple levels and channels through modern methods. They can bring their home country and Mazu culture more tangible and intangible valuable resources.

In recent years, Mazu-related associations are actively participating in China's economic and trade network. Establishing connections through Mazu belief, increasing mutual trust, seeking better business opportunities, and conducting international cooperation on the basis of common belief, language, and culture. The local government is also actively attracting investment and implementing a series of effective policies to help overseas Chinese invest in China in the greatest extent. This is a deeper structural relationship of social culture. This is not only the identity of belief, but also the identity of Chinese culture. It is also an important way for overseas Chinese to maintain close contact with the great motherland.

### **Summary**

In summary, Mazu belief plays a special role in the construction of social network of Chinese people. As an excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, Mazu culture is rooted in the folk. As the birthplace of Mazu culture, Meizhou Island has permeated all aspects of people's daily life, and profoundly affects people's thinking, values and behavior habits. In overseas Chinese communities, Mazu belief can also become the spiritual pillar of the Chinese community. The social relationship with Mazu belief as the bond is strong in cohesion, solidarity and mutual assistance, and a good social atmosphere. People is full of spiritual strength and full of expectations for life. Everyone is willing to closely unite in a common circle of belief.

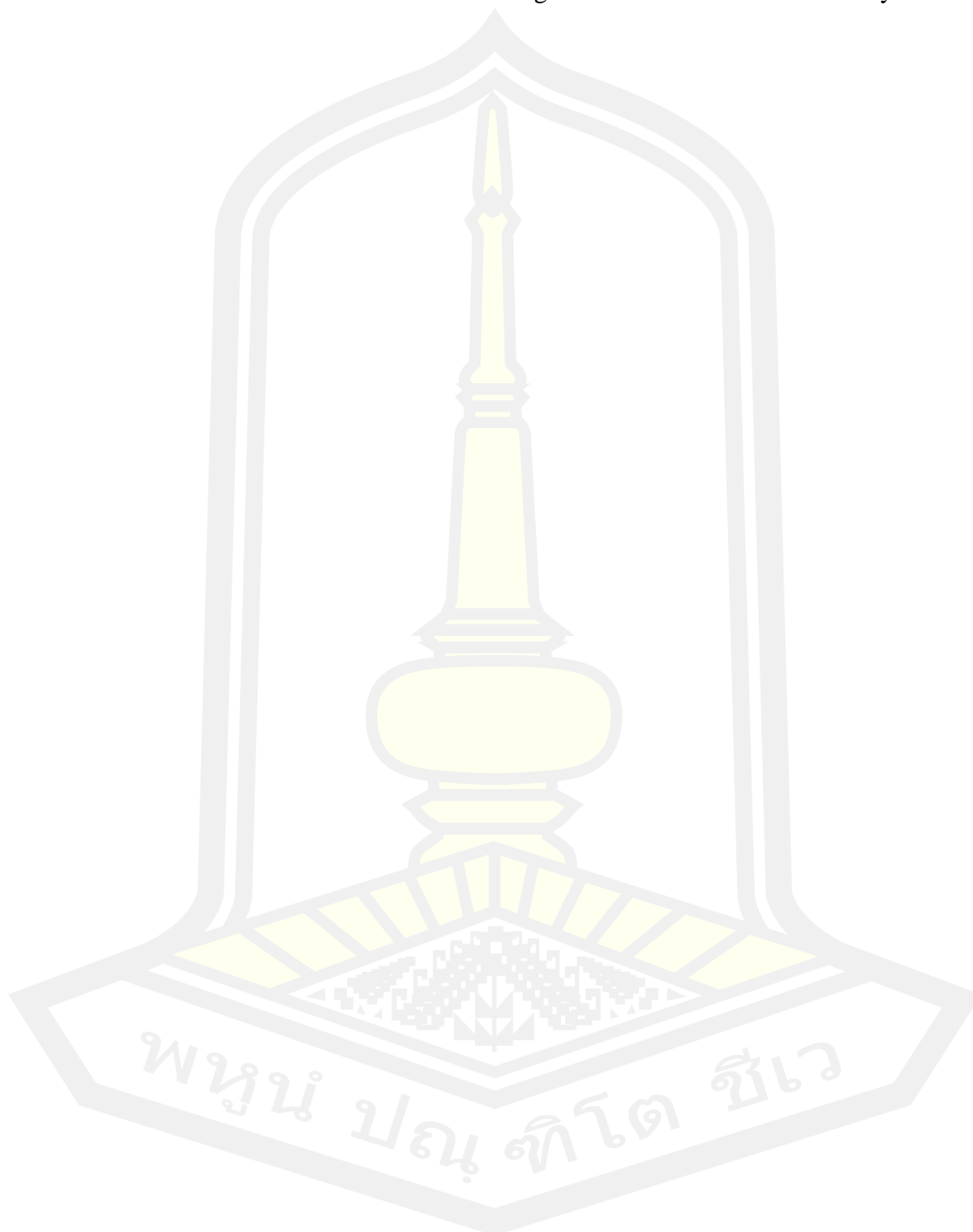
Mazu is the most trusted protector god by people. Under the common belief, people can be self-discipline and self-management, and use their behaviors to influence others to form consistent values and form stable social relationships. The Chinese social network constructed by Mazu belief maintains the fundamental beliefs and national

complex of Chinese, and unites people firmly. Mazu is not only the patron saint of Chinese navigation, but also an important spiritual force for people.

Religious organizations, industry associations, sororities and other community organizations play a very important role in the development and dissemination of Mazu belief. Their functions in politics, economy, culture, society can play an agency role in conveying government's decree and the will of folk, and they has played a huge role in the application of intangible cultural heritage, the protection of cultural relics, the development of folk activities, and economic and trade exchanges. There are two main functions. On the one hand, through temple fair celebrations, such as worshipping ancestors and offering incense to Mazu, Mazu pilgrimage, and the Mazu festivals, they actively carry out the exchanges of Mazu culture around the world. On the other hand, the community-based organizations are committed to making Mazu belief further extends and develops under the spread of traditional channels. It is committed to do standardized management, strives to integrate the resources of Mazu temples, and promotes the resources of Mazu ancestral temple to other Mazu temples around the world. At the same time, through the joint worship of Mazu temples, exerting the power of secularity of Mazu, making the activities of community-based organizations far beyond the scope of religion, and making greater contributions to safeguarding the interests of Mazu belief.

At present, in the context of building a socialist harmonious society and the policy of 'The Belt and Road', the government will play the important role of Mazu and folk organizations to promote the integration of social order, maintain social harmony, stability and healthy development, strengthen the interactive relationship between the government and folk organizations, coordinate and cooperate with other social organizations through Mazu organizations. Through integrating resources, promoting the collaboration of cultural scholars, private individuals, artists, scientific researchers, and others, playing the subjectivity, enthusiasm and initiative of believers to participate in the construction of a complete social network based on Mazu belief, creatively use Mazu culture, and integrate Mazu spirit into the construction of a socialist harmonious society. Mazu temple of Meizhou Island has the function of congealing heart and cohering people. It can bring together the power of Mazu believers from all over the world, to promote the development of world peace and implement of 'The Belt

and Road' initiative on a higher level, broader field, and broader scope, so as to make new historical contributions for constructing a mankind common community.



## CHAPTER VI

### The unit analysis of Mazu Festival

This chapter analyzes Mazu Festival, which is an important part of Mazu belief as to the world's intangible cultural heritage. Starting from the exploration of the birth and historical development of Mazu Festival, it elaborates on the brand-new form of Mazu Festival presented in modern society. This chapter analyzes the elements of the sacrificial ceremonies, costumes and props in the ceremony of Mazu Festival, and deeply analyzes the self-identity constructed by Mazu believers. From the perspectives of the organizers, the chief worshiper, the main worshipers, folk organizations, and official organizations of Mazu Festival, the Chinese social network and their interactions based on Mazu belief were discovered in Mazu Festival. These are of profound significance for promoting the development and inheritance of Mazu Festival in the context of globalization.

The structures of this chapter are as follows.

Part I The introduction and historical development process of Mazu Festival

Part II The modern form of Mazu Festival of Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple

Part III The construction and interaction of self-identity of Chinese people among Mazu Festival

Part IV The construction and interaction of a social network of Chinese people among Mazu Festival

Part V The significance of Mazu Festival in constructing self-identity and social network of Chinese people

Summary

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## Part I The introduction and historical development process of Mazu Festival

“According to the declaration template when applying for the intangible cultural heritage of human beings, Mazu belief and customs are interpreted as Mazu belief and customs are also called ‘Niangma<sup>131</sup> belief’, ‘Niangniang<sup>132</sup> belief’, ‘Tianfei<sup>133</sup> belief’, ‘Tianhou<sup>134</sup> belief’, ‘Tianshangmazu<sup>135</sup> belief’, ‘Meizhou<sup>136</sup> Mazu belief’, it is a folk culture that worships and extols Mazu spirit, takes ‘setting morality, doing deeds, and great love’ as its core, with Mazu palaces and temples as the main venue, and it takes temple fairs, customs and legends as its manifestations form. Mazu belief and customs are composed of three parts: sacrificial ceremony, folklore, and legends.” (Zhou Jinyan, 2013, PP: 41)

### 1.1 The introduction of Mazu Festival

In 2006, Mazu belief was included in the national ‘intangible cultural heritage list’. In 2009, Mazu belief was included in ‘The List of Representatives of Human Intangible Cultural Heritage’ by UNESCO<sup>137</sup>, becoming China’s first human intangible cultural heritage about belief and customs. It marks that Mazu culture has risen from an important part of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation to the height of the world, becoming the commonwealth of all mankind. Among them, Mazu Festival is the most important part.

Mazu Festival is the abbreviation for the ‘large ceremony for offering sacrifices to Mazu’. Mazu Festival refers to a grand ceremony to worship Mazu that is formed and continuously passed on during the development of Mazu belief. Mazu belief is a kind of folk belief, which is essentially different from official religions, such as Buddhism and Taoism. In the course of more than a thousand years of communication

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<sup>131</sup> The highest respect for female elders in southern China.

<sup>132</sup> The highest respect for female elders in northern China.

<sup>133</sup> The honorific title for goddess in ancient times.

<sup>134</sup> The honorific title for goddess in ancient times.

<sup>135</sup> The honorific title for goddess in ancient times and the title of Mazu.

<sup>136</sup> it is abbreviated form of Meizhou Island.

<sup>137</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.



and development, based on folk beliefs, Mazu belief has been continuously infiltrated and influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, but it also preserves its unique worship concepts as a folk god, its behaviors, customs and corresponding sacrificial ceremony system. Mazu belief has its special status in the system of folk belief. The first time that the imperial court of Song Xuanhe (1123) gave a title for Mazu, marking the nation's recognition of Mazu belief, it has since been incorporated into the national sacrificial system, and has been constantly admired.

Mazu sacrificial ceremonies are divided into family sacrifices and temple sacrifices. Family sacrifices mean that believers set up a statue of Mazu in their homes, they will punctually worship during festivals, and also serve fruits and vegetarian dishes, which is more flexible and convenient for believers. Temple sacrifices are divided into daily sacrifices and temple festival sacrifices. Temple festival sacrifices are held during the festivals. The two most grand and solemn temple festival sacrifices each year are Mazu's Birthday (March 23rd in the lunar calendar) and Mazu's Ascension Day (September 9th in the lunar calendar).

This article will analyze Mazu Festival as a unit, describe the historical development and evolution of Mazu Festival, focus on analyzing the modern and contemporary ceremonies of Mazu Festival, and explore the role of the sacrifices and ceremonies on the construction of self-identity and social network of Chinese people. This article points out the important modern significance of Mazu Festival.

## 1.2 The historical development of Mazu Festival

Mazu Festival came into being with the emergence of Mazu belief, and continued to develop with the changes of dynasties and social systems. With the continuous spread of Mazu belief, the scale, time, and location of Mazu Festival have also changed accordingly.

According to ancient etiquette, anyone who can withstand catastrophes, defend and resist catastrophes, and contribute to the country can receive sacrificial rituals. Therefore, since Song Dynasty<sup>138</sup>, the emperors of successive dynasties not only praised Mazu frequently, but also issued ceremonies. Ever since the Emperor Gaozong

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<sup>138</sup> Dynasties in Chinese history, 960-1279, A.D.

of Song Dynasty made the sacrificial ceremony to Mazu in the southern suburbs of Hangzhou<sup>139</sup>, the ceremony has been closely linked to Mazu belief. After the emergence of Mazu belief in Song Dynasty, the ceremonies of Mazu Festival continued to be enriched after continuous spreading. The ceremonies to worship Mazu are relatively simple and not large in scale.

In Yuan Dynasty<sup>140</sup>, one time, the emperor ordered the eunuch Song Benyi to issue thirteen sacrificial texts to worship Mazu, which were handed down from Zhigu<sup>141</sup>, Huai'an<sup>142</sup>, Hangzhou, Meizhou Island, and Quanzhou<sup>143</sup>. The sacrificial ceremonies of all temples are the same. The chief sacrificial officer is the envoy of the imperial court, and the accompanying sacrificial officers are all important local officials. The reliance on sea transportation in the Yuan Dynasty created Mazu's special status in the national system of sacrificial ceremony. At the same time, it also showed that Mazu's sacrificial ceremony was raised to a new height. During this period, the scale and specifications of Mazu were improved, and the specifications for worshipping Mazu also expanded accordingly.

In Ming Dynasty<sup>144</sup>, the imperial court admired and respected Mazu mainly in the political and economic events, such as Zheng He's voyages to the west<sup>145</sup>, canal and sea transportation, and bestowing Ryukyu<sup>146</sup>. The imperial admiration inevitably

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<sup>139</sup> Hangzhou is the capital of Zhejiang Province; Hangzhou is located in East China.

<sup>140</sup> Dynasties in Chinese history, 1271-1368, A.D.

<sup>141</sup> Ancient place name. Today's Tianjin City, it is located in North China.

<sup>142</sup> A coastal city in eastern China.

<sup>143</sup> A coastal city close to Putian City, Putian City is the seat of Mazu on Meizhou Island.

<sup>144</sup> Dynasties in Chinese history, 1368-1644, A.D.

<sup>145</sup> A sea voyage in Ming Dynasty, sailed to the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean, and visited more than 30 countries and regions. This is the largest sea voyage in ancient China, the largest number of ships and seafarers, and the longest time. Zheng He was the eunuch, navigator and diplomat in Ming Dynasty.

<sup>146</sup> It is located between the Taiwan Island and the island of Kyushu in Japan. In 1372, the Ryukyu countries became the vassal states of the Ming Dynasty of China.

made Mazu a certain position in the national system of the sacrificial ceremony of Ming Dynasty. Among them, “Zheng He’s voyage to the West is a feat in the history of world’s navigation. From 1405 to 1433, many activities of worshipping Mazu were held. Zheng He also personally went to Meizhou Island to pay homage to Mazu, which further enriched the content of the ceremony. When sailing to the West, there will be sacrificial ceremonies at the beginning of the journey in Nanjing<sup>147</sup>, also before the journey in Taicang<sup>148</sup> again, even until waiting for the wind direction in Chanegle<sup>149</sup>. After the return from the West, some related Mazu sacrificial ceremonies will also be carried out in Nanjing.” (Zhou Jinyan, 2013, PP: 41) “The emperor’s emphasis on voyages was reflected in the recognition of Mazu sacrificial ceremonies, and gave Mazu the highest courtesy, who is the goddess of the sea. The imperial court built a temple in the capital at that time to receive national sacrificial ceremonies. Mazu sacrificial ceremonies have also expanded overseas with the spread of Mazu belief.

In Qing Dynasty<sup>150</sup>, the imperial court of Qing Dynasty paid great attention to the construction of the national system of the sacrificial ceremony. The development of Mazu belief in Qing Dynasty reached an unprecedented level of prosperity, which is greatly related to the attention and support given by the state. The reasons for the recognition of Mazu in Qing Dynasty were mainly reflected in the rule of Taiwan, bestowing Liuqiu and sea transportation. Because Mazu made great contributions to the major events of the imperial court, the emperor issued an edict and ordered the local officials to be the chief worshiper of the Mazu sacrificial ceremony, which was formally incorporated into the national system of the sacrificial ceremony. Mazu Festival was held in the Spring and Autumn, and written in the national book about sacrificial ceremonies. This pushed Mazu Festival to a higher level and the sacrificial specifications have also been continuously promoted.

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<sup>147</sup> The capital of Jiangsu Province, it is located in the eastern coastal area of China.

<sup>148</sup> A coastal city in eastern China, located in the southeast of Jiangsu Province.

<sup>149</sup> It belongs to Fuzhou City, Fujian Province, a coastal city in southeast China, which is across the sea from Taiwan Island.

<sup>150</sup> Dynasties in Chinese history, 1636-1912, A.D.

In the early years of the Republic of China<sup>151</sup>, after the feudal dynasty was overthrown, the sacrificial ceremony system was severely impacted, but it was not completely abolished, and Mazu belief and ceremonies were stagnant.

After the founding of New China<sup>152</sup>, all kinds of religious beliefs were suppressed under the voice of ‘Posijiu’<sup>153</sup>, and Mazu belief was no exception. Not only most of the palaces, temples and cultural relics were destroyed, various religious activities including ceremonies were also stopped. After the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, under the wave of reform and opening up, the freedom of religious belief was restored, and the activities of Mazu belief were resumed.” (Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 187-210)

## **Part II The modern form of Mazu Festival of Meizhou ancestral temple**

Mazu belief has a long history and far-reaching influence. Especially in the coastal areas of China’s mainland, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Southeast Asia, worshipping Mazu has become an important custom in people’s lives.

“The Mazu ancestral temple in Meizhou Island is the birthplace of Mazu belief. Mazu’s sacrificial ceremonies in each dynasty have high standards and prominent status. Its ceremonies are the paradigm of the world’s ‘Mazu Festival’, which is especially valued by the people. In 1993, the People’s Government of Fujian Province and the People’s Government of Putian City decided to hold the first ‘Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival of Meizhou’ of Putian City on the birthday of Mazu on March 23 of the following year, and decided to hold the Mazu Festival as the most important event. This project was prepared by Jiang Weitan<sup>154</sup>, Gao Yangmei<sup>155</sup>, and Zhu Hepu<sup>156</sup>.

<sup>151</sup> Asia's first democratic republic, 1912-1949, A.D.

<sup>152</sup> Founded on October 1, 1949, A.D.

<sup>153</sup> It refers to get rid of old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits.

<sup>154</sup> The Deputy Secretary-General and Director of the Academic Department of the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association, and a well-known research expert of Mazu culture.

<sup>155</sup> The Secretary General of Putian City Political Consultative Committee.

<sup>156</sup> The member of Fujian Writers Association, Advisor of The Board of Directors of

Based on searching historical materials, investigating Confucian temple ceremonies, absorbing local folk culture, and referring to the ceremonies of major Mazu temples in Taiwan, the preparatory team went to the Meizhou ancestral temple to observe and survey many times to determine the location of ‘Jiyan<sup>157</sup>’, the arrangement of ceremonial guards, and the music and dance performers. Finally, the ‘Meizhou Mazu Festival Note’ and the ‘Mazu Festival ceremony List’ were drawn up. And it was adjusted and revised continuously during the rehearsal process, until to complete the creation performance of Mazu Festival at the Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple. After that, in 1997, 2000, and 2011, some artistic processing and improvements were carried out on Mazu Festival three times, which roughly formed an inherent model, and became the target of imitation for holding ceremonies in various places.

Mazu belief and customs have liveness. After years of inheritance, innovation and practice, a new set of ceremonies and paradigms have been formed in the contemporary Mazu Festival in Meizhou. From content to form, compared with the ancient Mazu Festivals, there are many innovations and reforms. These include personnel composition, musical performers of singing and dancing instruments, styles of costumes and appliances, display of sacrificial offerings on the altar, and innovation in ceremonial text.

The sacrificial ceremony of Mazu Festival in Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple takes about 45 minutes and has strict regulations.

### 2.1 The date of Mazu Festival

The Mazu Festival of Meizhou ancestral temple is generally held on the spring festival of Mazu’s birthday on the 23rd day of the lunar calendar and the autumn festival of Mazu’s Ascension Day on the 9th day of the lunar calendar. Later, the autumn festival of Mazu Festival was held at the opening ceremony of the China Meizhou Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival.

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Meizhou ancestral temple.

<sup>157</sup> Generally, it refers to a pavilion built temporarily for sacrifice, under which is used to it mainly houses Mazu statue and incense table, etc.



## 2.2 The location of Mazu Festival

The earliest ceremonies were held in the square in front of the main hall of Mazu ancestral temple. After the completion of the Tianhou Square in front of the new hall of Mazu temple, it was generally held in the spacious Tianhou Square.

## 2.3 The composition of people participating in the sacrificial ceremony of Mazu Festival

Compared with the ancient festival, the design and arrangement of people participating in the sacrificial ceremony of Mazu Festival have both inheritance and innovation. Participants in Mazu Festival mainly are the chief worshiper, the main worshipers, the accompanied, attended worshipers, and the deacons.

The chief worshiper is the chairman of the board of directors of Mazu ancestral temple in Meizhou Island or a particularly important guest. The main worshipers generally choose some respected guests or the chairman of some important Mazu temples. The accompanied and attended worshipers must choose some representatives of Mazu temples and Mazu believers. The deacons include ceremony service personnel, dancers, performers, bells and drums personnel, wind instrument personnel, as well as ‘Qingdao flags<sup>158</sup>’, big gongs, title flags, guards of honor, and ceremonial guards, there are more than 20 kinds of personnel.

## 2.4 The types of Mazu Festival

The scale of Mazu festival in Meizhou Island has historically been different, so the number of people participating in the festival also depends on the scale of the festival. According to different places, specifications, or festivals, the scale of Mazu Festival in Meizhou ancestral temple can be divided into four types, super large, large, medium, and small, with the number of 456, 308, 168, and 72 people.

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<sup>158</sup> The flag held by the guard of honor when the ancient officials went out.

## 2.5 The composition of song and dance music in Mazu Festival

There are strict level classifications of ancient music and dance. Regarding the singing and dancing of Mazu Festival, the Southern Song Dynasty Liao Pengfei<sup>159</sup>'s 'Shengdun Ancestral Temple Reconstruction of Shunji Temple' has recorded 'the song for welcoming the god' and 'the song for sending the god'. In Ming Dynasty, Lai Ju had written 'Rebuilding Tianfei Temple'. In Qing Dynasty, Qi Shun<sup>160</sup> have written 'Record of Tianfei Temple'. There are records of lyrics in some other historical materials, for instance 'Welcome the god', 'Enjoy the god' and 'Send the god' and including the above two. It can be seen that in Mazu Festivals of the past dynasties, singing and dancing have always been matched to set off the grand and lively atmosphere.

The songs of the modern Mazu Festival are created regarding the traditional songs for sacrificing to the gods, focusing on embodying the characteristics of the sacrificial rites and the characteristics of Putian folk music. The lyrics in Mazu Festival of Meizhou Island are expressed in five chapters, namely 'welcoming the god', 'sending the god', 'first offer', 'second offer' and 'final offer'. The lyrics form a set of completed ceremonial chapters, with long content and simple and elegant words, highlighting the local characteristics of Mazu's hometown and adapting to the appreciation requirements of modern people.

The dance of the Mazu Festival is also very important. Historically, various gods and ceremonies have singing and dancing. The inheritance and development of music and dance in the new Mazu Festival are quite difficult to grasp. The dancers are composed of 64 people, dividing in the ratio of 50 – 50 between male and female, singing and dancing to celebrate Mazu's merits with a combination of strength and

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<sup>159</sup> In the ancient Chinese imperial examination system, those who passed the final central government imperial examination were called Jinshi. Liao Pengfei is Jinshi in the Southern Song Dynasty.

<sup>160</sup> In the ancient Chinese imperial examination system, those who passed the final central government imperial examination were called Jinshi. Qi Shun is Jinshi in Qing Dynasty.

softness. The main point of Meizhou Mazu Festival is to inherit the ceremony system as the principle, absorb many traditional dance elements of Putian City, and ingeniously and naturally incorporate many elements of the Putian Opera<sup>161</sup> into it, for instance the turned posture, gestures and footwork. The dance of Mazu Festival emphasizes beautification and appropriate changes in the formation and composition. The whole dance is closely integrated with the solemn ceremony of Mazu Festival. The dance performance is warm and rhythmic, accompanied by the majestic chorus music, showing people's expectations and praise for a harmonious life.

## 2.6 The composition of clothing equipment in Mazu Festival

The costume design of Mazu Festival in Meizhou Island is based on tradition, combined with the actual conditions of the festival, referring to the styles of Tang and Song dynasties, and considering the beauty and operability of the performance, it has been adjusted, designed and improved. The costumes of Mazu Festival pay attention to the cultural connotation of colors, styles and timeliness, pursue the sense of simplicity, harmony, weight, and luxury. They are changed based on the official costumes and the costumes of the ladies in the Tang and Song Dynasties. The costumes of the participants of the festival can be divided into 5 series. The overall colors are mainly yellow, red, gray and sea blue. The design effect strives to achieve to be primary and secondary, harmonious, simple, generous and colorful.

The utensils used in Mazu Festival in Meizhou Island mainly include nine-layer yellow umbrellas<sup>162</sup>, sun-moon fans<sup>163</sup>, lanterns, furnaces, title flags, and various antique weapons. These artifacts are very sophisticated in craftsmanship and material selection, striving to be simple and elegant, highlighting the characteristics of local

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<sup>161</sup> Puxian Opera, formerly known as Xinghua Opera, is a traditional local opera, and it is popular in Putian, Xianyou and the adjacent areas where use Xinghua dialect. Puxian Opera is known as the Song Yuan Southern Opera, due to its ancient performance forms, rich repertoire, and delicate performing arts.

<sup>162</sup> A prop used to symbolize royal majesty when the statue of Mazu travels.

<sup>163</sup> Ancient sacrificial props, which are used to welcome and send off the gods. The shapes of the fans that symbolizes the sun and the moon.

traditional craftsmanship. The most prominent of the team of Mazu Festival in Meizhou is the guard of honor. The appliances of the guard of honor are transformed and designed from more than a dozen ancient weapons. These ceremonial guards are used to guard and impose the troop's travels. They are based on the ancient court's 'Lubu'<sup>164</sup>, combined with the guard of honor of Mazu travel in Putian folk traditions and deacon customs.

### 2.7 The altars, 'Jiyan' and sacrificial offering in Mazu Festival

The sacrificial supplies of Mazu Festival in Meizhou include more than 1,000 pieces of sacrifice mats, sacrifice vessels, sacrificial offerings, ceremonial honor, costumes, musical instruments, props, head ornaments, etc. In 1994, they were designed and produced by Yao Zhenlin, who is a folk craftsman in Putian.

There is no clear record of the altar of Mazu Festival in history. The design idea of the altar in the new Mazu Festival emphasizes the inner connection with heaven, earth and people. The design of the altar adopts a square altar base, with an 8m\*8m wooden structure. The number of 'eight-eight' in the square altar implies climate change in the four seasons. A round altar (5m in diameter) is set up on the highest level of the altar, with a circle as the top, which conforms to the ancient saying that 'the sky is round, the ground is square'. Four large incense pillars and an incense burner were erected in front of the square altar to strengthen the mysterious and solemn atmosphere of the ceremony, and it symbolizes prosperity.

'Jiyan' is an antique wooden structure, shaped like a roll shed on the top of a mountain. The roof imitates the design of the imperial palace, and is made of yellow glazed tiles and square wooden rafters. 'Jiyan' was set up on a pavilion-style altar built on the platform in front of the main hall. The area extending from 'Jiyan' to the 'Shengzhi'<sup>165</sup> gate' is the area where the ceremony is held. When the festival is held in

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<sup>164</sup> The ordinance system of major state activities for heads of state, which is a rule system that integrates honor guards, dance performances, vehicle services, military bands, traffic safety, and public security, etc.

<sup>165</sup> It refers to the orders or statements made by the emperors in the feudal society of China

Tianhou Square, the inside ‘Jiyan’ is mainly set Mazu statue and the incense table. In front of the incense table is the place for offering tributes and reading the sacrificial text. In front of ‘Jiyan’, there is the place for the chief worshiper and the main worshipers, and the place for washing hands is set on the right. There are music seats on both sides of the front of the square, the center of the square is dance floor, and the back to the ‘Shengzhi gate’ is the area of ceremony guard.



Figure 54 The ceremonial performance in front of ‘Shengzhi’ gate square

Source: Screenshot of video, taken by Ke Yihan, 2020

The sacrificial offerings were made following the traditional ritual system of the Qing Dynasty, using ‘Shaolao<sup>166</sup>’ sacrifices. That is, the whole pig and the whole sheep were removed their internal organs, and they were framed on the wooden chopping board and were placed on the left and right sides in front of the incense table. Other sacrificial equipment, five kinds of dried and fresh fruits, are also offered. Among

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<sup>166</sup> It refers to the sacrificial offering in the ancient society, this is called Shaolao, which only use sheep and pig these two kind animals to sacrifices.



the activity of ‘Sanxianli<sup>167</sup>’, they were offered in the form of ‘Jue<sup>168</sup>’, fruit, silk and so on.” (Huang Ruiguo, 2013, PP: 210-213)



Figure 55 Sanxianli

Source: Screenshot of video, taken by Ke Yihan, 2020



Figure 56 The sacrificial offering

Source: Screenshot of video, taken by Ke Yihan, 2020

<sup>167</sup> This is a traditional etiquette of the Han people to sacrifice to their ancestors. When offering sacrifices in ancient times, the offerings were displayed first, and then offerings were made three times, namely, the first offering, the second offering, and the final offering. This is the origin of Sanxianli.

<sup>168</sup> The drinking vessel in ancient society.

## 2.8 The sacrificial text

“The sacrificial text of worshipping Mazu, is also called ‘Zhuwen<sup>169</sup>’, it is a praise text to express respect and prayer to Mazu during the activities of worshipping Mazu. It is usually based on rhythmic passages. The sacrificial text of Mazu Festival has existed throughout the ages, but the content varies with different eras and different ritual regions.

In the ceremony of Mazu Festival of Meizhou Island Mazu ancestral temple, reading the sacrificial text is also an important relief for the sacrificial offerings. The content of the sacrificial text generally varies with the festival season and the needs of prayer. The sacrificial text is recited by the chief worshiper or host.

For example, the sacrificial text of ‘Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple commemorates the 1026th Anniversary of Mazu’s Birth’ is that, “the chief worshiper, Lin Jinbang, the Vice President and Secretary-General of the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Mazu ancestral temple in Meizhou Island. The main worshipers, the representatives of the worshipers of Mazu temples and the broad masses of benevolent men and women, religiously hold the ceremonies of Mazu Festival, respectfully prepare the singing and dancing, and offer the best sacrificial offerings to ‘Tianhou<sup>170</sup>’, pray for ‘the climate is pleasant and the country is peaceful. Society is stable and the world is peaceful. Everyone’s career is successful. The economy is developing and the wealth is increasing.’”

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<sup>169</sup> It is same as the sacrificial text.

<sup>170</sup> Mazu’s respectable name in the folk.



Figure 56: The chief worshiper Lin Jinzan reading the sacrificial text

Source: Screenshot of video, taken by Ke Yihan, 2020

## 2.9 The ceremony process of Mazu Festival

The ceremony process of Mazu Festival is arranged according to the history of Mazu Festival and concerning some other religious ceremonies. It is the main thread that runs through the Mazu Festival.

When Mazu Festival is about to begin, the Drum Tower will first hit three groups of drums, each of which will be hit 36 times from slow to fast, for a total of 108 times.

Then, the 81 salutes were fired, this indicates the beginning of the ceremony of Mazu Festival.

And then, the guards of honor, ritual guards, musical performers, and singer is in place successively.

The ceremony service personnel guide the chief worshiper, the main worshipers, the accompanied worshipers, and the dancers.

Play the song of 'Welcoming the god', and offer incense.

Then, there is the part of reading scripture, reading the sacrificial text of Mazu Festival, and sending memorial paper.

Giving 'first offer', 'second offer', and 'final offer'.

Incinerating the sacrificial text and memorial paper.

Sending the god, and then finished the ceremony.” (Zhou Jinyan, 2015, PP: 90-91)

### **Part III The construction and interaction of self-identity of Chinese people among Mazu Festival**

The ceremony of Mazu Festival contains many manifestations of the self-identity of Chinese people. From the formulation and execution of the ceremony process to the costumes, props, and sacrificial offerings in the ceremony, they all condense people’s understanding and inheritance of Mazu belief. Participation in the ceremony is also a manifestation and proof of people’s recognition of Mazu belief.

#### 3.1 The relationship between ceremony and identity

“Rituals are the behavior ways and symbolic expressions that most reflect the essential characteristics of human beings, they occupy an important position in human’s social life. The famous French anthropologist Émile Durkheim pointed out that, above all rituals are means by which social groups regularly reconsolidate themselves. When people feel that they are united, they will gather together and gradually realize that they are a group of moral unity. This unity is partly because of blood ties, but the more important reason is that they have formed a community of interests and traditions. Indeed, people hold rituals to preserve past beliefs and maintain the normal appearance of the group. Society is inseparable from rituals, because rituals can maintain material and spiritual order, they provide humans healthy lives and all the characters that they respect.

In the anthropological sense, rituals are usually defined as a set of behaviors with symbolic, performing, and prescribed by cultural traditions. Ritual refers to an arrangement or procedure in which a certain cultural tradition gathers a series of behaviors with symbolic meanings. Mr. Peng Zhaorong<sup>171</sup> summarized the ritual as the following characteristics.

3.1.1 The ritual is expressive, but not limited to expression.

3.1.2 The ritual has formal characteristics, but not only a form.

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<sup>171</sup> Professor, Ph.D, supervisor of Ph.D, Anthropological research expert.



3.1.3 The efficiency of the ritual is reflected in the ritual occasion, but much more than that occasion.

3.1.4 The ritual has a form of performance, but it is not only a kind of performance.

3.1.5 The role of the ritual performance is personalized, but completely beyond a certain individual.

3.1.6 The ritual can store social memory, but it has an obvious discourse color.

3.1.7 The ritual has a cohesive function, but it truly shows social changes.

3.1.8 The ritual has extraordinary narrative capabilities, but has a leading role in strategy.

He summarized these characteristics into two aspects. Firstly, the social and cultural system endows a certain kind of ritual with a special stipulation. In other words, the functions of many rituals are presupposed by predetermined social meanings. Secondly, the power and energy of rituals not only rely on the meaning and value, which is given and stipulated by the social and cultural system, but also the form itself plays an important role. All participants of rituals seek spiritual comfort and sustenance in the time and space which is available in the specific form that they are committed to creating.

Paul Connerton<sup>172</sup> said that the ritual is not a diary, nor a memo. Its dominant discourse is not just telling stories and recollecting, it is a performance on the object of worshipping. The holding of the ritual is a practice. The entire process of ritual is to simulate the imaginary world in the form of performance, and then connect the two worlds together through a series of symbolic actions. In the ceremony, the living world and the imaginary world are merged into the same world through a single set of symbolic forms.

Specifically, the ceremony of Mazu Festival has always been a traditional Chinese custom for thousands of years. Mazu worship first existed in the hearts of people, it was a kind of survival consciousness and a survival need. Now it has been extended and developed into the needs of historical identity, cultural identity, and

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<sup>172</sup> American famous sociologist, anthropologist.



social identity. The ceremony of Mazu Festival has become an individual's identification with the common historical and cultural origin. The identification with the common ancestor is the most basic and important self-identity, that is, the identification of the individual's social identity. Cultural identity is the foundation of national identity. Mazu culture is a unique and widely recognized cultural tradition formed by the Chinese nation in the course of long-term historical development. It has a long history and exhibits great affinity, cohesion, and centripetal force. Mazu culture has become a link of the relationship between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and has become an important part of Chinese traditional culture.

Therefore, the ceremony of Mazu Festival also has become a symbol, a code, a symbol that everyone agrees with, and more importantly, it has an important right to speak and interpret. Whoever passes this ritual is recognized, and whoever participates in this ritual is an affirmation of self-identity. It's just like going through the coming-of-age ceremony, since then, the qualification and right to join the adult society have been obtained.

The passers and participants of the ritual have retrieved proof of identity here and obtained an authentic status. As Turner said, they transformed from one state to another, from one identity to another. All those who participated in the ritual gained a sense of pride of identity recognition that they had never had before. Especially those Chinese people who stayed overseas, finally found what they were missing in the past, but fulfilled a wish and got great spiritual satisfaction.” (Meng Jianhuang, Shuai Zhiqiang. 2016. PP: 102-104)

### 3.2 The construction and interaction of self-identity of Chinese people among the ceremony of Mazu Festival

Mazu Festival expresses individual or collective memories of the past through performances. The object of memory is a historical event, and memory itself is also a history. The folks believe that the most primitive Mazu is the most effective. Mazu Festivals are inherited and continued from history, this process itself constitutes forming a history. The performance of the ceremony of Mazu Festival is based on the Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple. It is not only a memory facing the past, but also a prospect towards the future. Through the experience of the ceremony's performance,

people share the meaning of common communication and share common goals that are cherished by people.

This experience is based on an understanding of the past, it transmits knowledge and information in the legitimization of the existing social order. When the ritual interprets the imagined common community, it mainly serves the needs of the present, serves to affirm its collectiveness and commonality. More accurately, it is a shared expression of past events to strengthen its affinity, to better obtain a certain degree of identity, outline the memory stored in the imagined common community. Through the ceremony of Mazu Festival, reminiscing about the past, it will make it possible to shape individual self-identity and build a community of belief.

### 3.2.1 Sacrificial offering

Sacrificial offering is an intermediary of communication between humans and gods. Levi Strauss<sup>173</sup> said that the communication between humans and gods is the exchange of information between people of unequal status, which needs to be realized through an intermediary, and this intermediary is the sacrificial offering that people offer to the gods in rituals.

The so-called sacrificial offerings, such as tribute, firecrackers, incense candles and so on. Generally speaking, they are bribes that are offered to the gods by people in an attempt to obtain greater benefits at a relatively small price, such as safety, prosperity, and promotion. Sacrificial offerings are not simply a transaction of profit, but also reflecting people's devotion and sense of awe to the gods. If an individual does not spend enough money on the ritual, it is tantamount to disrespect for destiny, ancestors and gods, in turn this is tantamount to that it is a potential threat to people's happiness. If the wish is fulfilled, it will be repaid with richer sacrificial offerings, otherwise, it will attract criticism from other villagers, because they believe that if not thanking the gods will make the gods angry, and will bring disaster to the village.

Mazu's tribute has been preserved from Song Dynasty to the present. The category of tribute is mainly divided into three parts. In the middle are 'five plates of fruits' and 'six plates of vegetarian dishes'. The left and right sides are respectively

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<sup>173</sup> Famous French social anthropologist and philosopher.

‘Wen Yan<sup>174</sup>’ and ‘Wu Yan<sup>175</sup>’. The dishes of ‘Wen Yan’ are relatively flat, exquisite and compact, and are commonly used foods in people’s daily lives., such as lilies, shiitake mushrooms, daylilies, etc., it represents Mazu’s kind and simple quality. Among them, the fruit plate placed with oranges represents the peace of the four seasons and the peace of the world.

Mazu pastries, which are made in the shape of circles and squares, represent the place where the sky is round, and symbolize peace and harmony. The shapes of the dishes of ‘Wu Yan’ are more three-dimensional, with different shapes, like waves rolling on the sea, they represent Mazu’s bravery and the quality of saving the country and the people. The fruits are the important component of Mazu’s tribute. There is a fruit tower built up layer by layer with apples or oranges, representing fruitfulness, peace and auspiciousness. On both sides of the tribute table are towers built with Mazu pastries, the most famous in local is ‘Ping An Gao<sup>176</sup>’, totaling 3,230 pieces, which symbolizes Mazu’s birthday and implies status rising step by step. These tributes are full of people’s creative wisdom, and they place people’s thoughts and wishes on the tributes.

The sacrificial offering must follow some unwritten rules, particularly pay attention to the category and quantity. If someone makes sacrifices to the gods indiscriminately, he will be laughed at, and may offend the authoritative elders in the village in this regard. Therefore, the candidates of various families who prepare sacrificial offerings are generally older women, who are often knowledgeable and prudent in offering sacrifices. The sacrificial offerings used in Mazu Festival are carefully made by specialized craftsmen. Each kind of sacrificial offerings is very particular and has a specific meaning. People use sacrificial offering to express their

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<sup>174</sup> They are tributes prepared by believers for sacrifice, and they are composed of many vegetarian dishes.

<sup>175</sup> They are tributes prepared by believers for sacrifice, and they are composed of many meat dishes.

<sup>176</sup> It refers to apple. The Chinese pronunciation of the word ‘Ping’ is the same as ‘Ping An’, which means safety and peace. Therefore, people use apples to imply auspiciousness.

inner desires, sacrificial offerings become a symbol, which is rich in profound cultural connotations. Believers express their respect and missing for Mazu through the intermediary of sacrificial offerings, which is what people often call piety. People regularly hold the ceremonies of Mazu Festival to obtain Mazu's approval of people's behaviors, thereby maintaining and confirming the affiliation between humans and gods. People have verified the legitimacy of the affiliation by regularly offering sacrificial offerings to Mazu. The relationship between humans and gods is the relationship between humans and the collective or between humans and society. This kind of sacred contract and order between humans and gods established through the interaction of symbolic has spread in the local or Chinese settlements of Meizhou Island. It is an important basis for people to build self-identity, and it has become the important principle of compliance for most people in the community. It is conducive to promote harmony, stability and unity within a community.

The ceremony of Mazu Festival is the most solemn, with the largest scale. The sacrificial offerings used in the ceremony have the best materials, the most amount and exquisite shape. The sacrificial offering that can best reflect the local people's inheritance of the original Han nationality is the 'Shao Lao'. The so-called 'Shao Lao' refers to one whole pig and one whole sheep used in ancient sacrifices. The cost of sacrificial offerings is donated by believers and handed over to the board of directors for unified management. People voluntarily donate money to express their hearts to Mazu and recognize the effectiveness of the board of directors and related staff. After the sacrifice, the volunteers of the board of directors distributed the sacrificial offerings to all households, to enjoy and share the blessings brought by Mazu. This practice is passed on from generation to generation, and it is the common belief of people. It has become a principle followed by people in the group and reflects people's recognition of Mazu belief and the form of the ceremony of Mazu Festival.

### 3.2.2 Costumes and props

The costumes used in Mazu Festival in Meizhou Island are reorganized and designed following the style inherited from ancient traditions, combined with the actual conditions of modern ceremonies, and taking into account the aesthetics of modern people and the operability in design and practice. They are costumes with Tang and Song style.

The costumes of the ceremony of Mazu Festival pay attention to the use of colors and the cultural connotation of clothing styles. The costumes present a feeling of magnificence and luxury as a whole. When worn and performed in the ceremony, they are harmonious, unified, and amazing. For example, Si Lisheng's costume is made of light yellow with dark patterns, mainly made of soft fabrics. Among them, yellow symbolizes imperial power in ancient times and represents supremacy. Here, it expresses people's identity of the status of Mazu belief, and immense respect for Mazu. The costume of the guard of honor is mainly based on the style of the armor of the Tang and Song Dynasties. The colors are matched with magenta and gray, which can be better integrated with other costume colors, and the integrity and coordination are very strong.

“There are more than 300 participants in the large-scale performance of Mazu Festival. The costumes are divided into 5 categories. The overall colors are mainly yellow, red, gray and sea blue. The design effect strives to achieve a distinct and harmonious unity, simple and generous and colorful.” (Zhou Jinyan, 2013, PP: 300) Among them, the red color represents auspiciousness and joy, and the sea blue color symbolizes Mazu's identity as the sea god. When people wear such costumes, they seem to be in the transition of time and space of Mazu belief, intoxicating themselves and sublimating themselves. People seem to have forgotten themselves, as if they feel that they are the spokesperson of Mazu, which symbolizes the true existence of Mazu, and can deeply feel the supreme glory of serving Mazu. The individual's inner emotions reached the peak of satisfaction at that moment, so that they will be immersed themselves in it for a long time, enjoying the identity and happiness brought by the ceremony of Mazu Festival and Mazu belief.

“The props of the ceremony of Mazu Festival mainly include nine-layer yellow umbrellas, sun and moon fans, lanterns, ‘Qing Dao’ flag, title flags, and various antique weapons. These props are very sophisticated in craftsmanship and selection of materials, they strive to be simple and elegant, and highlight the characteristics of local traditional craftsmanship of Putian City.” (Zhou Jinyan, 2013, PP: 300) These props are hard to see in modern society. They can only be seen during performances of Mazu Festival. People are often surprised by the creative wisdom of the ancients when viewing them, if they are lucky enough to participate in the performance, such



as performing with certain props. This can realize the transformation of self-role; he will be able to strengthen awe and trust in Mazu.

### 3.2.3 The sacrificial text

The sacrificial text refers to a writing style for expressing respect to the gods and praying blessings in the activities of offering sacrifices to Mazu. Sometimes it is called 'Zhu Wen'. the history of Mazu sacrificial text can be traced back to Song Dynasty. Since the birth of Mazu belief, there has been corresponding sacrificial text. The writing styles are all under the archaic style, concise and rigorous wording.

In the ceremony of Mazu Festival, reading the sacrificial text is one of the important parts of the sacrifice. The content of the sacrificial text is generally determined according to the will and needs of praying for the gods, and the chief worshiper or the host will pray and read. Usually, the contents of prayer include praying for the prosperity of the country, social peace, people's health, economic development, helping the weak and people in need, etc. Expressing Mazu spirit through sacrificial text to bless the public and the country.

The sacrificial text represents people's desire to pray for blessings. People in society will always encounter all kinds of annoying things, or have troubles in their careers, troubles in life, or various natural and human-made disasters. People are surrounded by the uncertainty of the surrounding environment and all kinds of risk, even somethings can't be solved by scientific methods. Therefore, people hope to ask the gods or Mazu to protect and bless them, and solve the troubles psychologically and spiritually. If after praying, the troubles can be eliminated, and people's desires can be realized, people will be more grateful to Mazu, and strengthen their belief in their hearts.

Mazu sacrificial text can not only express Mazu spirit, but also reflect the functions of Mazu belief. From the text, people can feel the power of Mazu belief and the essence of Mazu culture. The sacrificial text will also be adjusted with changes in different periods. The sacrificial text can also reflect the current social development, the changes in people's demands in a specific period, and the current degree of people's identity of Mazu belief, it has important practical significance.

#### **Part IV The construction and interaction of a social network of Chinese people among Mazu Festival**

The ceremony of Mazu Festival most obviously and intensively reflects and expresses people's current understanding, interpretation and views of Mazu belief, and explains the relationship between Mazu culture and social life, social rules, operational norms and order. At present, people regard the ceremony of Mazu Festival as a location for emotional expression. People are surrounded by the atmosphere of Mazu belief, remove all burdens and precautions, and their souls are sublimated. The ceremony of Mazu Festival is like a performance stage. At this stage, the individuals, groups and society form a close interactive relationship. The ceremony of Mazu Festival is also a process of communication between humans and the sacred power. People regard the ceremony of Mazu Festival as a way of communication, but it is not only the communication between humans and gods. To a certain extent, there is also a process of communication between people participating in the ceremony, including body communication and language communication, etc.

Fundamentally speaking, the communication between humans and gods and the communication between people can be attributed to the symbolic interaction between individuals and society. In this interactive relationship, people have constructed a meaningful way of life, an independent self-identity, a broad and stable social network. This kind of meaning system permeates the daily life of families and regions. The daily life of families and local residents are infiltrated and supported by this paradigm of meaning. The older generations discuss the situational experience that they share through this paradigm of meaning. In the process of socialization, especially within the scope of family, community, and country, this meaning system is constantly being reproduced and constitutes the basic framework of imagination. Through this framework, people get closer to their social experience and gain a certain label of personal identity, people can find the organization, and integrate into it.

The ceremony of Mazu Festival is a stage for individual social actors to perform, as well as a stage for social interaction, and a presentation of the social network of Mazu. Each role participating in the ceremony can realize true self-identity, recognize their position in the social structure, fulfill their respective obligations, and give play to their due role relationships. The ceremony of Mazu Festival embodies the

organizational norms, the role of the organization, compliance with the rules and other aspects, which are orderly and integrated. Through the folklore performance of Mazu, Mazu culture has been fully integrated into the local culture and people's lives.

In the performance, the definite walking route and ceremony division of labor undoubtedly strengthened the cohesion of society in Meizhou Island and enhanced the sense of identity of Mazu belief. Meizhou Island, as the core geographic space of the ceremony performance, it is a symbol. The ceremony of Mazu Festival in Meizhou Island has become the reference paradigm of Mazu ceremonies in the world. Mazu Festival also continues and strengthens the common memory of the Chinese and overseas Chinese, forming belief identity centered Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple. Mazu Festival builds a social network with confirmed time, place, equipment, sacrifices, regulations, performance procedures, and specific groups of people.

We can explore the role of the ceremony of Mazu Festival in the construction of the social network through the Mazu organizations, ceremony, participants, and community interaction in the ceremony of Mazu Festival.

#### 4.1 Mazu organizations

The theme of the Spring Festival Ceremony to commemorate the 1060th anniversary of Mazu's birth in 2020 is that Chinese national people fight the 'epidemic' together, Meizhou Mazu blesses the common people. The ceremonial activities are organized by the Board of Directors of Meizhou Mazu Ancestral Temple as the organizer and sponsor of the ceremony of Mazu Festival, and they are guided by the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association and the Management Committee of the Meizhou Island Party Working Committee.



Figure 57 The ceremony of Mazu Festival in 2020

Source: Screenshot of video, taken by Ke Yihan, 2020

The Board of Directors of Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple is at the core of Mazu belief, it is responsible for the overall coordination of activities and the implementation of the ceremony activities, including arrangements of volunteers, various information announced to the outside world, the organization and planning of activities, the report of activities and other large and small matters. During major festivals, the members of the board of directors are very busy making the events to be completed smoothly.

As the highest level of national social organization, the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association occupies the core and key position in the Mazu social network. It plays an important function and role in organizing event participants, contacting the masses of Mazu believers, enterprises, and social groups at home and abroad. The association uses its own platform advantages, with the help of the power of the country and the media to give full play to the bond of Mazu belief, to bring together the Chinese people who believe in Mazu at home and abroad. The Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association increase contact and exchanges for the Chinese people who miss their hometown and love the motherland. Before Mazu's major festivals, the majority of Mazu believers, caring enterprises, and Mazu civil organizations will actively contact the association to express their desires to participate in activities and give love. The association can also release event information and contact information promptly, so that people can have the opportunity to participate in

the event, return to the motherland, or get closer to the belief center of Mazu, and can also contribute their own strength.

As the main body of the government, the Management Committee of the Party Working Committee of Meizhou Island is a government department directly managing Meizhou Island. As a supervisory and guiding department, it has played an important role in playing the government's resource advantages, power output, coordinating the relationship between the board of directors and relevant government departments at all levels and the development of work. Although Mazu belief itself has a unique advantage of emotional support, and people are willing to serve Mazu and facilitate various activities of Mazu, but it will be easier to coordinate many affairs or official work with the official background.

These related Mazu organizations play an important role in the activities of Mazu Festival, they are important nodes in the social network of Mazu belief, which play a key role as a link, and build a good communication platform for connecting Mazu and the public.

#### 4.2 The connections in the ceremony of Mazu Festival

The ceremony of Mazu Festival refers to various procedures in the ceremony, including shaking divination sticks, hand washing, kneeling, offering incense, 'Sanxianli', burning silk, and burning the first incense. Social anthropologist Victor Tunner believes that these sacrificial rituals can bring personal feelings of detachment, comfort, safety, and even ecstasy, or a sense of intimacy for the people who participate in the rituals together. The purpose of sacrificial rituals is to help people to pass some hurdles more easily in their lives, such as birth, old age, sickness and death.

Sacrificial offerings mainly reflect the communication between humans and gods, the sacrificial ritual is based on the exchanges between humans and gods, and adds more aspects of communication between people. Sacrificial ritual, as a symbolic sign, promotes the interaction between people and society or community, which in turn generates cultural identity.

On March 23rd of the lunar calendar in 2020, the ceremony to commemorate the 1060th anniversary of Mazu's birth was grandly held in Meizhou Island. Lin Jinzan, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple, served as



the chief worshiper and represented the majority of believers in front of the Mazu altar and did a series of ceremonies of Mazu Festival, such as reading the sacrificial text, offering the incense, kneeling, offering rituals, burning silk and burning the sacrificial text, he was sincere and respectful to Mazu. This kind of ceremony is a collective memory that exists in the hearts of all believers. In the ceremony, it is used as a symbol, which contains a deeper meaning and symbolizes people's understanding and awe of Mazu belief.

At the same time and space, people participating in sacrificial rituals have similar or common perceptions of themselves and the world, so they have a cultural identity with each other, at the same time, after discovering self and determining self, they form self-identity. Due to the performance and repetitive nature of the ritual, the ritual itself is inherited over time and space, and the worldview symbolized by this ritual can be passed down to later generations in the form of collective memory. People also realize exchanges and cultural inheritance with the help of symbolic signs of sacrificial rituals. In such a process of creating, sharing, correcting and preserving reality, the realization of self-identity established based on Mazu belief by individuals has been strengthened, and it has provided a powerful force for reshaping the common culture of ethnic groups and provide strong support for forming stable group relations.

In recent years, the ceremony items of 'the first incense' have been added to the ceremonies of Mazu Festival. Before the ceremony of Mazu Festival, the Board of Directors of Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple will receive donations from Chinese and overseas Chinese all the world, local private entrepreneurs or villagers, or know their donation intentions, and then, during the ceremony, these donors or their representatives will be arranged to worship Mazu in front of the Mazu altar under the leadership of the chairman, while other believers can only worship Mazu under the Mazu altar. In such a ceremony, if we regard the donation of 'the first incense' as a kind of sacrificial offering, then the symbolic meaning is that the person who offers 'the first incense' is praying for Mazu to approve that his property has a sacred origin. The subordination relationship between humans and gods is the root of this legitimacy. The donors of 'the first incense' formally expressed their recognition of the subordination relationship through this ceremony to obtain the legitimacy of the property in the current life and the possibility of property in the future. The donors regard 'the first

incense' as an honor and a sense of pride in their self-identity. They dedicate money to Mazu, pass on the sincerity and message of respect to Mazu, realize dialogue with Mazu through the intermediary of money, and look forward to receiving Mazu's protection. They are often the most devout believers. They recognize their identity as Mazu's citizens from the bottom of their hearts. They use various actions and channels to establish multiple connections with Mazu. They are active people and a major power in the social network centered on Mazu belief, who form an important bond, and contribute to the promotion of the development of Mazu belief and the stable development of the circle of Mazu belief.

“James W. Carey<sup>177</sup> once pointed out very wisely that ‘authenticity’ is continuously adapted and reconstructed to adapt to humans’ goals, including the transformation of humanity himself. But science is not a set of privileged and basic reappearances, science is just part of our cultural exchanges.”(James W. Carey, 2005, PP: 13) “Chen Jinguo<sup>178</sup> also pointed out that modern people have no reason and qualifications, bringing with dogmatic thinking and God's vision, continuously showing the unwarranted pride of criticizing the wisdom and taste of the ancient Chinese and the common people in understanding the world, although the poetic wisdom of the common people is full of surprises and schemes.”(Chen Jinguo, 2005, PP: 65) The interaction of these sacrificial rituals as symbolic signs has effectively promoted the identity within the ethnic group and promoted the development of human society. Moreover, it will still play an important and active role in a certain period and within a certain range in the future.

“The ceremony of Mazu Festival is a large-scale activity of collective mobilization, through a certain ceremony to convey and promote the ritual experience of interactive sense between humans and gods. Concepts and experiences are mostly internal and abstract conscious activities, which must be manifested through external physical actions and language forms. Under the long-term inheritance and cohesion,

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<sup>177</sup> American famous scholars.

<sup>178</sup> The researcher of the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and now he is the deputy director of the Institute of Contemporary Religions.

these behaviors have inevitably formed a procedural, standardized and institutionalized etiquette system, which can reflect the communication network of activities between Mazu in various places, Mazu and believers, believers and believers.

The ceremony of Mazu Festival is the main body of Mazu belief. It closely links people and gods through symbolic rituals. People express their prayers and reliance on gods. Mazu transmits the universality protection and relief to all living beings, strengthen the religious emotions that can be shared by each other. People can receive and feel the sacred atmosphere of Mazu, hope to receive Mazu's help or inspiration in the process of ritual procedures, enhance the energy of life's existence, solve difficulties and avoid disasters, and bring prosperity to life and family. The ceremony of Mazu Festival takes the inheritance of offering incense as the core. It uses the ritual behavior of humans to god to obtain the protection and rescue of god to humans. God and humans are active objects of constantly interactive sense. Mazu's spiritual grace is prominent, and people's thanks to Mazu's grace has caused the temple to flourish and Mazu's efficacies spread far and widely, this produces a lively and close landscape of temple fair.

This kind of ritual with efficacious interaction as the main body is not superstition, it is self-selection after people have established their self-identity. It is the reintegration and re-creation of people's spiritual activities. It assembles the essence of traditional inspiration and culture. Through holding the ritual activities, it can exert the belief function of uniting social groups, build people's identity with Mazu culture and self-identity. It actively attaches to the social network system of the circle of Mazu belief, expresses common aspirations through group activities.” (Peng Wenyu, 2012, PP: 13)

#### 4.3 The important nodes and influences in the ceremony of Mazu Festival

The ceremony of Mazu Festival includes the performances on Tianhou Square and cruising across the entire Meizhou Island.

The cruising across the entire Meizhou Island is purely public. During the cruising, some men carry the sedan chair that enshrines Mazu statue. It is equipped with a high-standard guard of honor, knocking the gongs. There are also performers on the team. The entire team is large and the scenery is spectacular and shocking. The route

of the cruising is to connect the other 14 Mazu temples in Meizhou Island in series, closely link the ‘four pavilions’<sup>179</sup> in Meizhou Island, and consider the relationship between each pavilion, to be fair, to ensure that everyone in Meizhou Island can be protect and blessed by Mazu. Mazu’s cruising allows the public from all over the island to participate. When Mazu passes by, believers burn incense, worship, set off firecrackers, speaking words of the prayer in their mouths, looking forward to Mazu’s blessing. The participants of the ceremony include all the people of Meizhou Island, and they constitute the protagonist of the ceremony.



Figure 58 Mazu’s cruising

Source: Screenshot of video, taken by Ke Yihan, 2020

During the event, folklore teams from all over the world will bring various local folklore performances of intangible cultural heritage. At the same time, there will also be performances of Puxian opera, dragon-lion dances, cart-drums, walking on stilts and other folklore programs of Putian City. Many islanders who do business outland have rushed back to Meizhou Island to set up 23 love stations and volunteer service points along the route of Mazu cruising. They spontaneously purchase mineral water, cakes, beverages, etc., and distribute them to tourists from all over the world.

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<sup>179</sup> This is the organizational form of the community in Meizhou Island in ancient society.

The participants, various links and content of the performance on Tianhou Square have been previously discussed above. The atmosphere of the performance is more serious and formal. It has political intent, and it intends to express the government's views and positions to Mazu believers at home and abroad and people from all walks of life, intending to make good use of Mazu belief, which is a folk belief, and fully playing the role and special significance of Mazu in the process of China's socialist harmonious society.

#### 4.3.1 The chief worshiper

The chief worshiper of the ceremony for the 1060th anniversary of Mazu's birth in 2020 is Lin Jinzan, the chairman of the board of directors of Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple. The chief worshiper, as the representative of all believers, is elected by the folk people. As the closest person to Mazu, he stood in front of the altar, it appeared to be sacred and solemn, the important position is obvious. At the same time, he shoulders heavy trust, praying on behalf of all believers, people place all their hopes for a better life on him. His inner piety, his words and behaviors may directly affect Mazu's spirituality and sacredness. When holding the ceremony, everyone's eyes were focused on him. He is a representative of Mazu believers, and this is a status symbol. He is also the spokesperson of Mazu belief and has decision-making power when implementing various important matters related to Mazu. The chief worshiper, the chairman of the board of directors of Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple, is an elite of belief in Mazu belief and plays an important role in negotiating the development of Mazu belief and culture with the government. Therefore, his own degree of belief of Mazu belief and self-identity is crucial to the development of Mazu belief.





Figure 59 The chief worshiper, Lin Jinzan

Source: Screenshot of video, taken by Ke Yihan, 2020

#### 4.3.2 The main worshipers

The main worshipers are Lin Zhaoshu, former Chairman of the All-China Federation of Overseas Chinese, Vice Chairman of the First and Second Session of the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association. Liu Jianyang, Secretary of the Putian Municipal Party Committee of the Communist Party of China. Li Jianhui, Mayor of Putian Municipal People's Government. Ruan Jun, Director of the Standing Committee of Putian Municipal People's Congress. Zhou Qingsong, Putian City CPPCC Chairman. Wu Guifang, Putian Municipal Committee Standing Committee Member, Publicity Department Director. Shen Bolin, Putian Municipal Committee Standing Committee Member. Shen Mengya, Secretary-General Putian Municipal People's Congress Standing Committee Deputy Director. Chen Huiqian, Putian City Deputy Mayor. Peng Lijing, Putian City CPPCC Vice Chairman, Yu Jianzhong, Executive Vice President of the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange, etc. They presented flower baskets to Mazu together and bowed three times to Mazu. The first bow, wishing the elements were propitious, the country prospered and the people enjoyed peace. The second bow, wishing there will be no disasters in four seasons, and there will be good things in an entire year. The three bows, wishing the prosperity of China and the safety and peace of the world.



Figure 60 The main worshipers

Source: Screenshot of video, taken by Ke Yihan, 2020

The main worshipers are basically composed of officials from government departments, they symbolize the official attitude and policy direction towards Mazu belief. Because the chief officials of cities often change, some of them may do not know Mazu at first. With the contact of work and the understanding of Mazu, they began to gradually establish the identity of Mazu culture. From the perspective of work's needs and personal emotions, they have produced heartfelt respect for Mazu belief, which is the awakening of self-consciousness.

As a local business card of Putian City, Mazu is the most important cultural symbol for the development of tourism in Meizhou Island. The identity and affirmation of Mazu by local officials is an important measure to promote and introduce Mazu belief and Mazu culture to the outside world and the rest of the world. It is conducive to the formation of the social atmosphere of Mazu belief, and it is beneficial to promote the rapid development of Mazu belief with the help of official power and authority.

The composition of the chief worshiper and the main worshipers also verifies the model of Mazu belief jointly constructed by officials and the folk from another perspective. The folk elites act as the protagonists and lead the masses of believers in common belief. The official acts as an auxiliary force to guide the correct political direction and the development path, which can give full help in organizing large-scale activities, funds, and personnel. This model not only avoids the

government's excessive intervention in folk beliefs, which may arouse the disgust and worry of the general believers, and enables the folk beliefs to meet the general needs of the general believers. At the same time, it can also use the form of civil organizations to bring civil elites and other social forces to gather together, allow Mazu to adapt to the new needs of the current state and social development, to carry out functional changes opportunely, and to guide a good social atmosphere. The status of folk elites is often inseparable from official support and recognition. They can better understand the official intentions. In the various activities and development of Mazu belief, they adhere to the national policies as important guidelines, abide by the law, and abide by various rules and regulations, from self-acceptance to influencing others, form a consensus, then form a series of stable social relationship, and promote the harmonious development of society.

#### 4.3.3 The performers

As the most influential and largest ceremony of Mazu Festival, there were 456 performers in the ceremony, including singers and dancers, etc. The main personnel of the performance are students from Putian University, local residents of Meizhou Island mainly participate in knocking gongs and drums performances and carrying the sedan chairs. During the grand festivals of Mazu, local residents always put everything away and participate in Mazu's festivals wholeheartedly, especially middle-aged and elderly women. In recent years, under the promotion of the government and the drive of their parents, the believers of Mazu tend to be younger, more young people are also willing to participate in Mazu's folk activities and dedicate their efforts. This is also a manifestation of their identity of Mazu belief.

After young people learn about Mazu belief through various channels, they sublimate to their inner emotional identity, and finally give actual belief actions. The participation of students of Putian University is objectively an act of integration of social resources. Putian University is an important base for the study of Mazu culture. It opens special Mazu classes to teach Mazu culture systematically and scientifically. As a university, it can organize large-scale performances. When the Board of Directors of Mazu temple negotiated with Putian University to allow students to participate in the performance of Mazu Festival, Putian University's emphasis on Mazu belief and Mazu culture played a key role. Due to Putian University has an official background,

everything is easier to communicate, the leaders and students also are proud to be able to participate in important activities of Mazu Festival.

Therefore, Putian University does its utmost to support Mazu's various activities. Meanwhile, all aspects of the activities can also form a good record and be better preserved, so that scholars from all walks of life can better conduct research on Mazu. As a voluntary job, the students of Putian University participated voluntarily. The performance rehearsal cycle was long, and it has a long way from the University to Meizhou Island, it needs to spend one hour on the way by car. But they did not hesitate to take up the study time to do these meaningful things. For students, it is a brand-new experience, which is an improvement of self-emotion and cognitive level. After students come into contact with Mazu, they unconsciously join the team to promote Mazu culture. They are excited to tell their experience to friends, parents, classmates. In future study and life, they can study harder, consciously abide by the University's disciplines, and use Mazu spirit to guide their ways forward.

Local residents of Meizhou Island also play the role of performers in the ceremonies. In addition to participating in activities and performances, in the environment where they live, for foreign tourists, local residents are also performers. During the ceremony, lanterns and festoons were hanging everywhere on Meizhou Island, creating a very good festive environment and atmosphere. The Management Committee of Meizhou Island also organizes various folk festivals, such as the collection of Mazu cultural works, large-scale creations and paintings of Mazu culture, and organizing hundreds of national photographers entering Meizhou Island. These festivals enhance social interaction, and greatly enriching the daily life of local residents, allowing them to relax and entertain in their work and daily life.

This is a very good inheritance of Mazu culture, which can mobilize the participation of residents and help them better understand and identify with Mazu culture. The ceremony of Mazu Festival is not only a sacrifice ritual to worship Mazu, but also a folk carnival for self-entertainment. It has a strong appeal and local characteristics, and is loved by the residents of the community. The involvement and emotional attachment of the residents can be perceived by others in terms of the voice and expression of dialogue with them, and self-awareness has become an important source of subjective perception.



The contemporary ceremony of Mazu Festival has been carefully planned and designed, such as the selection of the host and the participation of students from Putian University. These are all to make the effect of the ceremony present a certain sense of beauty. Skilled performance, uniform costumes, and shocking scenes can strongly grasp the audience's hearts and arouse strong resonance, which is what the organizer wants to see. But it also makes it impossible for performers to fully appreciate the natural mood swings that immerse themselves in.

Certainly, this has a certain difference from the initial sacrificial activities. The initial sacrificial activities were pure to express their reliance on and respect for Mazu. Every household of the local residents had the opportunity to participate in sacrificial activities. It is also a kind of honor when seeing their own family members appearing in sacrificial activities and assuming some duties. This kind of emotion will give the interaction of the traditional sacrificial ritual into a sense and value of self-satisfaction and self-realization. This special meaning will make residents extremely invested and prone to emotional fluctuations.

Such emotional fluctuations will also be passed on to the performers, which will further stimulate their desires to perform and make them engage in performance with their self-emotions. Due to changes in actual needs, regardless of the purpose, the ceremony will convey to people a positive and up-to-date culture that is shared by the whole people. Multiple interactions can form the Chinese identity of Mazu culture. "On the overall level of a community, the villagers have a sense of being a member of the whole by participating in the ritual, they have found their roles positioning and mutual relationship in the process of symbolic interaction." (Zeng Wei, 2013, PP: 23) through this, they have completed the psychological construction of the group's sense of belonging, formed the identity of the group and other members, and also established the identity of themselves. They will inevitably express this sense of pride and identity through sharing videos, pictures, chats and other ways to their friends, classmates, and parents, etc. This will add potential nodes and weak connection relationships to build the social network of Mazu belief. Through individual networks convey effective, correct and intuitive information about Mazu Festival and Mazu culture.



#### 4.3.4 The audiences

The audiences in the ceremony of Mazu Festival refer to the local residents who participated in the scene, tourists from other places, and netizens who watched the ceremonial activities through live webcasts.

In 2020, due to the worldwide spread of the COVID-19, no guests and overseas Chinese at home and abroad were invited to observe the ceremony of Mazu Festival, there had not been a lively scene of crowds as the same as in the past, but the ceremony of Mazu Festival was still held, following the principle of reducing the scale but not reducing the specifications, reducing the procedures but not reducing the inheritance, and reducing the intensity of publicity but not reducing the intensity of epidemic prevention and control. It is different from previous Mazu Festivals, this year increased the part of online interaction. The ceremony was broadcast simultaneously through CCTV News, CCTV, Xinhua Live Cloud, Toutiao, Baidu, Sina, Youku, E-Live, and the official live broadcast platform of Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple and other platforms. All of the worldwide Mazu believers can worship and respect Mazu through the online video, and jointly pray the blessing for the victory over the COVID-19 and the sharing of peace.

The usual number of people participating in the ceremonies of Mazu Festival is limited, most people can only watch the ceremonies through computers, TV or mobile phone. “At the ceremony’s site, people will consciously show their actions, both as the audience and as part of the performance. Just like many documentaries and many painters, they turn something that is originally not a performance into a performance.” (Liu Jing, 2018, PP65) For example, the audiences’ behaviors of taking photographs, gaze, folding hands and so on often affect each other, forming a strong atmosphere of presence sense. The sense of sacredness, participation, and interactive experience at the scene is relatively strong. The sacrificial ceremony pays great attention to the restoration of traditions and innovations in music and dance, costumes, sacrificial vessels, and tedious etiquette, to establish a sacred cultural space. The space in front of the electronic screen cannot force the audiences to abide by the same etiquette rules as on site, and maintain a pious and solemn emotion and state. Because the space in front of the screen is an unstable spatial environment, the audience can be distracted, laugh and even leave the scene at will. However, modern media methods

can display the ceremonies from multiple angles, take close-ups of the overall environment and layout from multiple angles. The overall visual effect is better. It allows concrete images to enter the audience's hearts, rather than letting abstract concepts stay in the audience's minds. During the important festivals of Mazu, there are always many devout believers and tourists who travel far to Meizhou Island to worship Mazu, experience Mazu culture, and participate in Mazu celebrations. They regard themselves as Mazu's family members, and Mazu's festival is regarded as family affairs and the most important thing. Participating in that is not only due to responsibilities and obligations, but also a self-identity and lofty belief in Mazu.

In 2020, the ceremony of Mazu Festival attracted many Chinese and overseas Chinese at home and abroad to observe the grand ceremony. Representatives of Mazu cultural institutions in the United States, Spain, Japan, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Canada and other countries and regions also used online video to connect 'clouds' to worship Mazu, expressing the common desire of carrying forward Mazu spirit, helping each other, working together to defeat the COVID-19. At the same time, they also organized corresponding folklore activities to worship Mazu and passed them to the organizers through online video. These materials would be preserved well and become precious memories. These activities reflect people's devotion and emphasis on Mazu belief. The rituals are collective memories and become a special symbol with the development of history, and form the rules that people follow together. When important festivals, there is no need to force the believers, they will consciously put aside their work and participate in the activities. This is an important manifestation of self-identity of Chinese people to Mazu belief.

Meanwhile, people who watch the ceremonial performance, will generate some emotional feedback based on the on-site performance activities and actions. It is to be known that Chinese people are used to building their own social networks with self-centeredness. This kind of emotional feedback and information implantation not only easily affects the individual's own social network, but also transmits it to the surrounding environment and individuals through contact with the surrounding people. According to social network theory, the influence of this kind of communication can spread within the 'three degrees', that is, it will have an impact on friends, friends' friends, and friends of friends' friends.

The ceremony of Mazu Festival is divided into two parts, inside the venue and outside the venue. The inside venue can be called official sacrifice. The performance is performed under the rules and process, which characterizes the style and characteristics of ancient official performances. But the number of audiences is limited and there is no interaction with the audience. The outside venue is the folklore performance part of the sacrificial ceremony, including folklore performance teams from all over the country and local folklore of Putian City, as well as the most important Mazu's cruising and other activities. Local residents, tourists, and Mazu believers from all over the country can participate in the interaction and experience at a close distance, and the effect is good and strong. Although there is a large number of people participated in the activities, under the organization and coordination of the Board of Directors of Mazu ancestral temple, the activities were carried out in a peaceful and lively atmosphere. People reaped the joy of participating in the activities and took photos to share with friends from time to time, or sharing videos, photos or words to instant social network platforms, such as WeChat Moments and Douyin, such this they can spread and influence the latest information to a personal social network.

#### 4.4 The interactive relationships in the community reflected in the ceremony of Mazu Festival

The relationship between people in the ceremony of Mazu Festival is also an important aspect of investigating the identity of a community and an ethnic group. Mazu temples and organizations around the world also highlight the social network relationship extended by the relationship between humans and gods.

“Religious belief is a sublimation of social relationship and a transcending form of social relationship.” (Georg Simmel, Cao Weidong, 2003, PP:5) The ceremonial ceremonies all have a part that the chief worshiper reads the sacrificial text. Its symbolic meaning is to show to all believers that we all use the same way to express worship to the gods and ancestors, follow the same moral and social norms. Therefore, every individual can have this kind of self-identity. We all are Mazu people, we all are Chinese, and we all have the same ancestor. In this way, the relationship between humans and gods has been extended to the relationship between people.

The ceremony of Mazu Festival is the greatest and grand event of Mazu folklore. It has the largest scale. In particular, Mazu's cruising around Meizhou Island was almost entirely attended by all the local residents. Various villages and the 15 Mazu temples on the island cooperated, established a good network of friendships and formed a close interactive relationship.

“Fei Xiaotong<sup>180</sup> uses the concept of ‘the structure of grade’ to express the close or alienated relationship between people in traditional society. In a sense, this also confirms the structure of a social relationship that the status difference exists between people in the ethnic groups. The members of the society are different due to their status and identities. In the historical development and inheritance, it has formed a whole set of rules, regulations and moral norms. As long as different people strictly abide by different etiquette, they can get what they want, and society will be stable and prosperous. This kind of etiquette is an abstraction of social hierarchy and ethical order, or a symbolic sign.

Everyone in the ceremony of Mazu Festival must know their identity and exercise different etiquette. The roles and relationships of people in ceremonies can also be seen as a kind of symbol, which metaphors and symbolizes the role played by the individuals in the group and the social relationship with others. The folk belief elites play an important role in the ceremony. They are usually responsible for leading, planning, organizing, determining the scale of the ceremony, who will be assigned to be organizer, how to arrange the funding, etc. This also reflects their positions in the social network. The positions are the affirmation of their identity.

With the development of the times, in Meizhou Island, most of the believers who actively participated in the activities were women, whether it was to worship ancestors or Mazu. This lack of women's right to speak is formed under the long-term traditional society and cultural background. Due to the need for taking care of the family, women generally stay at home, thus forming the traditional thinking that male is in charge of the outside things and female is in charge of the inside things. Therefore, a specific social atmosphere has been formed. During the ceremony, they prepared

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<sup>180</sup> Famous Sociologist, Anthropologist, Ethnologist, social activist, one of the founders of Chinese Sociology and Anthropology.

sacrificial offerings, burned incense, bowed down worshipping, and read blessing words in mouth, without any taboo. Although women have become the main part of participants in sacrificial activities, men still occupy a dominant position in the organization of sacrificial activities, playing the role of organization and leader. This can be judged from the gender composition of the board members of Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple. Currently, there are only 3 women among the 30 board members.

The power struggles, the possession of knowledge, and the difference between men and women in the ceremony can all find their corresponding prototypes in the actual social relationship structure. In other words, the relationship and role positioning between gods and humans in the ceremony of Mazu Festival are just symbolic repetitions of the relationship and role positioning between people in real life. Etiquette as a ritual is the confirmation and practice of the social rules established by society. People who participate in it have found their own role positioning and mutual relationship in the process of symbolic interaction, completed self-identity of the group, self and other members, and on this basis, the corresponding social network relationship has been formed. In this relationship, people remain in their proper sphere, society has been integrated, developed and continued.” (Meng Jianhuang, Shuai Zhiqiang, 2016, PP:119-124)

#### **Part V The significance of Mazu Festival in constructing self-identity and social network of Chinese people**

Mazu belief plays a new social function under the new social and cultural background. It is very important that it conforms to the current country's overall cultural strategy. The Mazu Festival is a collection of the characteristics and external manifestations of Mazu belief, it is also protected and inherited as the world's intangible cultural heritage and the national intangible cultural heritage. Its origin, development, inheritance and innovation contain a series of socially influential factors, such as social capital and cultural policies, etc. The belief system that it builds is of great help in promoting the development of Mazu culture. It has important strategic and practical significance for the country to maintain social stability internally, gather people's hearts externally, and enhance the cohesion and patriotism of all Chinese people.



### 5.1 The role of state power as social capital

In the overall society of China, the state is undoubtedly the largest owner of capital, and state power is also supreme. Bourdieu believes that society can transform symbolic capital into power, and power is hidden in various social relationships and displayed in the form of 'symbolic power'. The transition from feudal superstition to folk culture shows the transformation process of folk beliefs, in essence it is also the process of state power and its capital re-embedding Mazu belief in a new form. The symbolic power of the state has naturally become the core driving force of the transformation of beliefs, it exercises symbolic power through the mobilization of resources and the monopoly of the relationship between gods and humans.

Social movement organization is an important unit of analysis. The higher degree of organization, the greater probability of success. In different political systems, different political structure makes differences in mobilization methods, paths, and requirements for the elite of movement. On the one hand, organizations or individuals that control sacred resources and mobilize resources have the authority to grant the belief and related activities legitimacy, and their actions have the legitimacy that others cannot question. On the other hand, they rely on this control and integration of sacred resources, the core of faith has also been transformed from the traditional supernatural gods to the things that can replace the sacredness of gods.

"China's society can often construct a kind of 'symbolic power', and this symbolic power is a kind of sacred power that can make objects sacred. It shows symbolic power through the god-man relationship of power and its monopoly on sacredness. The sacredness of belief is gradually constructed by this symbolic power. Behind the belief centers of most beliefs in China, there is a kind of characteristic that is closely integrated with state power and relies on the power system to have national ideological characteristics. In the past, the improvement of Mazu's sacredness was not only related to the manifestation of Mazu's supernatural power, but also inseparable from the emperor's recognition. This phenomenon is still existing in contemporary China. Under the intervention of the state power, the folk belief elites who monopolize the sacred resources re-endow the sacredness of Mazu belief with the strategic discourse of folk culture, making it return to the public areas and be accepted by ordinary people and society. Through the reintegration of the sacred resources of Mazu

belief and the social resources controlled by the state, Mazu belief is controlled by the state power, so that the social resources that can be mobilized are more sufficient, and the influence of its activities is greatly enhanced. The extension of the cultural connotation of Mazu belief to Chinese traditional culture is an attempt to construct a value system that can be promoted while enriching the connotation of Mazu belief.

Therefore, as a sacrificial ritual under the full participation of the government, Mazu Festival has become a legal custom. People have to obey its authority. The state power can also integrate the collective memory and belief needs of the general public through the rituals of belief. In the process of reshaping the sacredness of Mazu, the government is using state power to promote the construction of Mazu's sacredness, and this process of construction is also a process of making state power sacred. Mazu belief is respected as a carrier of folklore culture and Chinese traditional culture. When the benefit demand can be met, such as the personal belief needs of the people, the government's use of united front, and the promotion of tourism economy, when in the process of endowing Mazu new sacredness, the pushing of the state's 'symbol power' also put a sacred color on itself. This is the manifestation form of the dual interaction between Mazu belief and state power." (Zhang Xiaoyi, 2015, PP: 45-46)

## 5.2 Cultural policies

In the process of the government's cultural expression of folk beliefs, intangible cultural heritage projects are undoubtedly a very important driving force. At present, a major way for the government to construct the sacredness of folk beliefs is to promote the recognition of folk beliefs through intangible cultural heritage projects, which is believed that the sacredness is stronger than when it has clergy.

"Intangible cultural heritage is defined under the 'Convention for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage' of UNESCO. Intangible cultural heritage refers to the various practices, performances, manifestations, knowledge systems, skills and related tools, objects, crafts and cultural venues, which are regarded as cultural heritage by groups and sometimes individuals. Various groups continue to innovate this intangible cultural heritage handed down from generation to generation along with the changes in their environment, interrelationships with nature and historical conditions,

and at the same time give them a sense of identity and history, so that promote cultural diversity and stimulate human's creativity.” (Baidubaike, 2021)

Intangible cultural heritage is the accumulation of components with lasting vitality in people's living space, its shape is inherited by the collective memory of society and people. On the one hand, its immateriality is aimed at the spiritual world, on the other hand, it is covered and infiltrated in the minutiae of life and is presented through certain scenes. Which emphasizes the former is usually referred to as traditional belief culture. In turn, traditional beliefs and cultures will have counteraction on life itself, or participate in shaping life. Sacrificial custom culture is one of the main forms of spiritual sustenance and spiritual life of ordinary people in folk society. Its development stage is between the development of the form and the mature religion and ordinary folklife with a high degree of internal integrity, but it is more abstract than the specific details of life, it has more imaginative space. Because it occurs in the folklife space, it is more accurate to call it folk beliefs and customs, and it is also closer to the living space and understanding habits of ordinary people.

In the current process of China's modernization, as a folk belief and Chinese traditional culture, Mazu belief has not declined due to the changes of the times and the intervention of modernity. On the contrary, under the situation that materialization increasingly empties people's spiritual authenticity, Mazu belief and customs have found a new mission to rebuild spiritual space and spiritual home. The logic of its occurrence is based on the fact that human's actual activities are the effort that humans transcend finiteness and tend to the world of meaning. The vitality of folk society and people's inner emotions have also been released, vented and deposited with the help of ritual expressions of folk beliefs and customs, thereby strengthening social unity and order in the structural sense. In the rituals, the abstract consciousness is deduced by concrete forms and methods to get close to the celebrating people.

### 5.3 Organizational system with the combination of beliefs

“The ceremony of Mazu Festival welcomes all people to participate in various activities freely. The cohesion and combination of believers are organized by festivals and sacrifices. After the ritual activities, they will return to their own positions. There is no direct jurisdiction relationship between Mazu and believers, but based on common belief emotions. The Board of Directors of Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple,

as the organization of temple affairs, also came into being due to the demand for sacrifices. The relationship between Mazu and the believers is directly restored to the direct interaction between humans and gods. The people are equal subjects and do not belong to each other.

The Board of Directors of Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple serves the god, at the same time, it is eager to obtain more protection from Mazu through its service. Its main purpose is not to deliberately operate an organization of believers. It does not rely on the operation of the organization to propagate the doctrine, but to maintain the interactive relationship between humans and gods by providing sacrificial places. Management committees, Taoists, and masters are also participants in the ceremony. Perhaps it has the ability of sacred interpretation, but there is no secular authority, it doesn't mind that who is a manager and being managed, and who is a leader and being led. There is no need to have a multi-layered organization, they are all serving Mazu.

Mazu believers are equal. There is no different status of rank. There is no need for professional leaders. The clergymen are only responsible for the ritual activities of human and spiritual sympathy. Participants are willing to voluntarily contribute money and contribute labor. People who contribute more money and labor are often given the local higher prestige, but they are not religious leaders, at most they are delegates entrusted by the public. The ritual organization based on the need for belief has a strong geographical color, and Mazu culture is directly displayed in the lively process of the incense ceremony. This divine power is open to the whole people.” (Peng Wenyu, 2012, PP:13) The Board of Directors of Meizhou Mazu ancestral temple emerged based on this background and played a role in the festival ceremony. Its main power is to focus on sacrificial activities and the promotion of Mazu culture, and gathering more and more believers and gathering them together in Mazu temple.

“There are various sacred communication networks between believers and Mazu temple. To gain protection from Mazu, it is their inevitable obligation to participate in sacrifices. Such obligations include giving money to build and repair temples, donating sacrificial offerings, participating in Mazu cruising. It is a duty and a willingness to contribute money and labor. Since they have obligations to do these things, they also have the right to invite God. This is the sacred benefit after the interaction between humans and gods, and people hope to get special favor from Mazu.

In addition to sacred benefits, they can also obtain incidental secular benefits. Through the practices of the activities of Mazu Festival, geographical belief elites can be cultivated. These people can turn to have the authority of local leaders through the planning and participation of sacrificial activities, and become one of the local decision-making cores. This is an organizational operation mode that combines the squire's power and the theocratic power in the traditional society. Through the administrative experience of sacrificial rituals, the prestige of the leadership can be established by theocratic power. This is an important channel for cultivating gentry in traditional society, and local gentry is also particularly keen on sacrificial activities, actively participate in religious affairs, cultivate their local connections by making good connections. At present, the intervention of all parties has led to the pan-politicization of the originally simple sacrificial organization, showing a political trend.” (Peng Wenyu, 2012, PP: 16)

#### 5.4 A social network intertwined with the sacred and secular worlds

The biggest feature of Mazu belief is that in the contemporary secular and sacred gap, it does not eliminate the sacred world, when it enters a purely secular world, its ritual construction and operation continuously expand its sacred experience, show itself and form the feature of the sacredness of the universe. Mazu communicates with the sacredness through sacrificial rituals. The operation of its various incense rituals expresses the correspondence between the participants and the gods, conveys the communication of information, ideas and emotions by each other. In the communication of ceremony, people established the identity of self, found their own positions, and formed self-identity. With the transition from the secular space to the sacred space, humans and Mazu can form a common sense of life, allowing people to enter the core of the operation of the world, integrate with the order of the universe. Similarly, in the process of rituals, people can also transfer from secular time to sacred time. In the joyous time of festivals, the sacred experience of human-divine interaction is once again written and reproduced, showing that sacred time can be infinitely repeated and reproduced, doing this to meet people's psychological needs after participating in the festival, and feel god's existence.



The ceremony of Mazu Festival is based on the structure of the past time and space, giving believers an illusion of a sense of time and space. The entrance of the ceremony space makes the believers leave the real space, and after the ceremony, the believers return to the real space. The deeds of the divine presence of Mazu put the believers in a kind of 'unrealistic' time and space with Mazu. People are searching for themselves, feeling beliefs, sublimating emotions, and establishing identity in the switching of time and space. The ceremony of Mazu Festival has constructed a state of return to the holy realm. By recreating the traditional ritual process, paying homage to the majesty of ancient official sacrifices. The ceremony performance of Mazu's cruising transforms the secular space of life into a spiritual sacred space, extend the realm of human thought to the cosmic order of being with Mazu to obtain comfort and satisfaction.

"The ceremony of Mazu Festival is holding various sacrificial activities on a regular time. It is a fixed-mode cultural performance, but the key point is not on the external form of the performance, but on the expression of culture and consciousness during the performance. In the sacred time of the ceremony, the beliefs and emotions shared by the entire nation are aggregated. The ceremony activities can be said to be the overall display of the content of Mazu belief. A concrete model of the sacred existence of Mazu is constructed through ceremonies. People can admire the external manifestations of Mazu culture instead of merely imagining nothing out of nothing. The act of the ceremony is the reproduction of the memory of Mazu and has a coherent and unified system. The performance content of the ceremony of Mazu Festival is quoted from the myths and legends of Mazu. Myths and legends are the languages of human inspiration and thinking. It directly touches the cultural consciousness of spiritual interaction between humans and gods. It is a narrative system with imaginative image descriptions, which master and experience the world in the way of spiritual feelings.

The ceremony and myths are both the manifestation and function of the sacredness of Mazu. 'The divine presence' is the main connotation of the activities of Mazu belief. It promotes various interactions between gods and humans with its divine power and spirituality. The way of 'The divine presence' of Mazu believe is mainly that praying and drawing divination sticks at the temple, offering sacrifices, etc. People use the role of the interaction of ceremony such as prayer, wishing, and disaster relief

to construct a sacred field for dialogue with Mazu. People convey prayers to Mazu, and Mazu convey information to people without going through a third party, but through ceremony activities such as divination and sacrificial offerings, to construct a multi-operational network of communication between humans and Mazu. The ceremony of Mazu Festival is a ceremony operation that allows people to enter the sacred realm of Mazu through their own experience, receive the feelings of Mazu's compassion and mercy. People believe that this kind of collective behavior can bring people closer to the relationship with Mazu, and can use the power of Mazu to realize the life desires and ideal pursuits that people cannot achieve by themselves." (Peng Wenyu, 2012, PP: 19-23)

In the process of ceremony, people use words and actions to express their reliance on Mazu. In behaviors, such as bowing to the ground, offering sacrificial offerings, they ask Mazu for instructions and prayers, and invite Mazu's grace. This is the process that people are close to Mazu. After Mazu accepts people's worship and sacrifice, she also expresses her attitude to human's prayers, doing response and reciprocation. This is the process that Mazu tends to approach people. People interpret and improve themselves. Mazu helps people overcome disasters with her spirituality. Mazu's compassion and love have become an important spiritual pillar of people's lives. Mazu is admired and recognized by people for her practicality. In the ceremony of Mazu Festival, people spend money and labor in exchange for Mazu's asylum. The interaction of temples, Mazu, incense, spirituality, and believers form a sacred operating network.

### **Summary**

Mazu and Mazu culture is a god culture that originated from the southeast coast of China and affected almost the entire coastline. As the Chinese people emigrated to Southeast Asia and overseas to survive, Mazu culture also spread outwards. Mazu not only served as the image of the messenger of maritime culture from trans-Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia, but also become one of the distinctive marks of the recognition of the Chinese by the others and the self-identity of Chinese people. The image model of Mazu belief has experienced a double reflection from personality to godhead to personality. Mazu, as the goddess of the ocean is condensed with the image

of a goddess with both daughterhood and motherhood. It is the symbol that gives more important meaning to the ceremony behavior. From the in-depth analysis of the culture inside, Mazu belief and custom are a concentrated reflection of the complex emotions of the ocean in Chinese people's inner love and awe. Under the background of the shift of China's cultural-ecological environment and the obscure and fading of the traditional symbol system, Mazu belief and custom have the cultural heritage and practical value of rediscovering and re-refining.

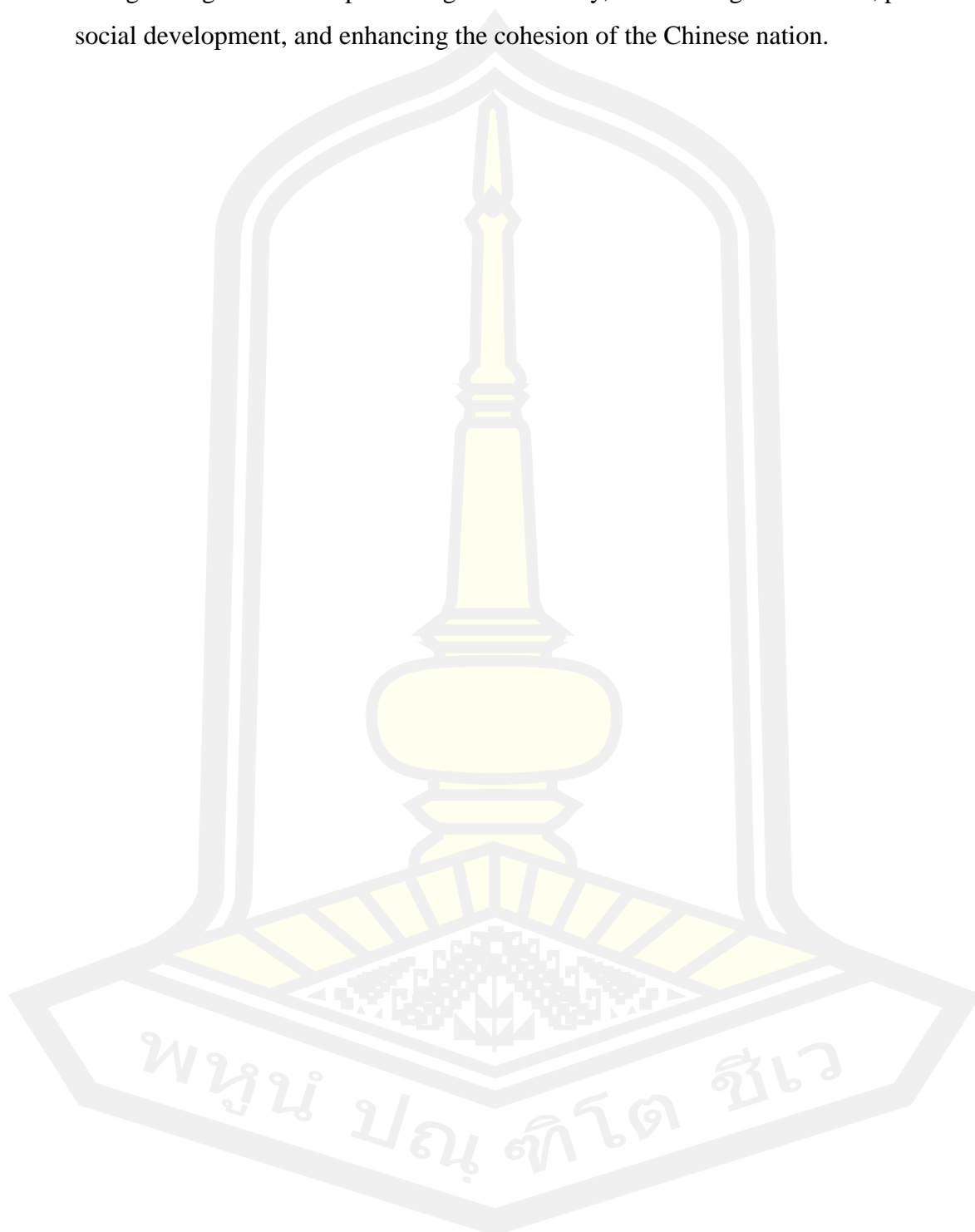
The Mazu culture and custom in Meizhou Island are self-contained, it is unique in content, and is worthy of research and protection. Especially in the context of the policy of 'The Belt and Road', in the context of the promotion and protection of intangible cultural heritage around the world, Mazu culture will further exert her mental strength.

Mazu belief is a self-contained system in form. It is a social organization under the belief of the folk people. With ceremony activities as the main body, it has consolidated and developed the interactive relationship between humans and gods. At the same time, Mazu belief has indeed promoted the integration of the community to a large extent and strengthened the unity among villagers. The myths, legends and historical stories constituted the common historical memory of the villagers and gave rise to the concepts of 'our ancestors' and 'our gods', which strengthened mutual identity and formed self-identity.

The spatial distribution of Mazu temples around the world has given the regional characteristics of Mazu. Under the influence of related organizations, they have strengthened the identity of people in the same ritual circle, and formed community groups with internal unity and external competition at all levels. They unite the community together, make people feel a sense of belonging, share memories, share space, share the sense of participation in the same time and space, construct and maintain an orderly, meaningful cultural world, which can be used to dominate and accommodate human behavior.

Ceremonies can be seen as the interaction of symbolic signs between individuals and society. Sacrificial offerings, ceremonies, and the relationship between people in ceremonies are all carriers of symbolic interaction in the same time and space, forming the so-called presence of belonging. At the same time, in the connection of

specific organizers, a stable social network centered on Mazu belief is formed, which is of great significance to promoting internal unity, maintaining social order, promoting social development, and enhancing the cohesion of the Chinese nation.



## CHAPTER VII

### Research Result, Discussion and Suggestions

#### Research Result

The research topic of this article is “Mazu of Meizhou Island, China: The Construction of Self-identity and the Social Network of Chinese People in the Process of Globalization”. This article adopts a qualitative research method. During the research process, several important and relevant historical documents had been searched, and a long-term field survey and interview work was conducted, a large amount of first-hand information was collected to carry out the research work of this article. The research objectives of this article are as follows:

- 1 To study the historical background of Mazu, the development of society and culture in the place of Meizhou Island.

This chapter introduces a long-term historical development process of Mazu belief from Song Dynasty to modern times. The development of Mazu belief is closely related to the social and cultural environment of a specific period. Mazu belief comes from the folks and takes root in the folks. It is also inseparable from the official recognition of Mazu and its important role in promoting the development of Mazu belief. During the development of Mazu belief, many legends and stories about Mazu have been circulated, and they are still being recited today.

At the same time, Mazu spirit is setting morality, doing good deeds, and great love, which is an important connotation of Mazu belief, and is even more deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. Whether in ancient or modern times, Mazu spirit has played an important role in meeting people’s spiritual needs.

After introducing the social and cultural environment of Meizhou Island, this article analyzes the specific geographical conditions, cultural foundation, moral environment, religious environment, important social development and economic factors of Mazu belief, and it explains that under the current social background, the government’s policy “The Belt and Road”, and the good atmosphere of the world’s intangible cultural heritage, it has an important practical significance of continuing to



inherit and develop Mazu belief.

2 To study artifacts and the meaning of Mazu sculpture and the place.

Mazu artifacts are rich in variety and have strong local characteristics, which are the main component of Mazu culture as a physical presence. This chapter starts with the representative Mazu artifacts, enumerates and analyzes the artistic characteristics of Mazu-related folklore, clothes and architectures. Mazu is a sea goddess that famous in the world and has significant maritime characteristics. It can be seen that Mazu artifacts contain the people's wisdom, also embody the yearning and expectation of people for a better life. Mazu artifacts show the close connection between artifacts, people and society.

Meanwhile, this chapter deeply analyzes the artistic and cultural characteristics of the giant Mazu statue, which is a new landmark in Meizhou Island. Her kind and gentle face conveys the spiritual connotation of Mazu. Mazu statue stands on the beach, looking across the sea, looking forward to the reunification of the motherland, which has important symbolic significance. In the context of the country's vigorous development of tourism in Meizhou Island, the Mazu statue bears more social functions. It is both a sculptural artwork and a carrier of belief. It is likely to have a strong shocking effect on people's psychology and contribute to the development of Mazu culture. It also has an important impact on the development of the tourism economy of Meizhou Island.

3 To study the construction of self-identity of Chinese people in the place of Meizhou Island, China.

This chapter takes the current management method of Mazu ancestral temple in Meizhou Island as the starting point, expounds on the exploration process and characteristics of the current management method that the government and the folk in the joint construction of Mazu belief. As an elite of folk beliefs, Lin Congzhi has played an important role in the power negotiation with the government. The current management of Mazu ancestral temple has formed the best state that both parties agree with and jointly promotes the development of Mazu belief. The support of the government helped to form a good atmosphere of Mazu belief in the society.

The self-identity of Chinese people derives from the guidance of their parents during their childhood, the influence of their friends, the pressure of social groups, the social environment, and the government's policies. People participate in various Mazu custom activities is an important performance of people believing in Mazu belief, such as participating in Mazu festivals, wearing Mazu clothes, etc. The construction of self-identity based on Mazu belief is conducive to restraining individual behavior and releasing people's psychological pressure. At the same time, it also has the function of enlightenment, education, etc. It can promote the harmonious coexistence of people and gods, and it can establish a stable spiritual sustenance relationship. Constructing Chinese people's self-identity with Mazu belief, constructing the individual's internal self-identity, and promoting compassion and love as the core connotation of Mazu spirit has strong vitality and practical significance for contemporary China in the transitional period and gradually realizing modernization.

4 To study the social network of Chinese people in the process of globalization.

Under the background of globalization, China's foreign policies and guidelines are also changing. The soft power of culture plays a more important role in the contest between countries. Therefore, China has also leveraged on the strong social network relationship of Mazu belief to give play to the broad power of believers of Mazu at home and abroad, promote the great unity of the Chinese nation, form a strong cohesion, and promote the common development of Mazu culture and the country.

This chapter deeply analyzes the characteristics and influence of important nodes in the network of Mazu belief, such as Meizhou Island, Mazu ancestral temple, Mazu-related social organizations, and the interaction between them. Mazu belief also plays a special role in the construction of social networks of overseas Chinese.

Having played the important role of Mazu and its social organizations, Mazu is an important link in the social network, which strengthens the connection between Mazu and Mazu organizations with other social organizations and individuals. It can integrate resources, and promote a wide cooperatively connection of Chinese, scholars, artists, politicians, and entrepreneurs at home and abroad. Creatively using Mazu culture, and playing the important role of Mazu belief social network, Mazu can

promote the rapid development of Mazu culture, promote the common development of the country and society, and build a socialist harmonious society.

5 To study unit analysis of Mazu Festival on self-identity and the social network of Chinese people.

This chapter takes the Mazu Festival as an analysis unit, which is an important part of the world's intangible cultural heritage of Mazu belief. It starts from the exploration of the emergence and historical development of Mazu Festival, elaborates on the brand-new manifestations of Mazu Festival in modern society. It uses the components of the sacrifices, rituals, clothes and props in Mazu Festival to explain the wisdom of the people and the deep connotations that it contains, and deeply analyzes the self-identity constructed by the believers in the activities of Mazu Festival.

And from the perspectives of the organizers, chief priests, accompaniers, civil organizations, and official organizations of the ceremonies of Mazu Festival, the social network of Chinese people based on Mazu belief and their interactions were discovered in the Mazu Festival. The different positions of different nodes have special symbolic meanings. They perform their respective duties and obligations, and cooperate as a link in the social network.

With the cooperation of the state's power, policy systems and other social capital, a stable social network centered on Mazu belief has been formed, which promotes ethnic unity, social development, maintains social order and strengthens the cohesion of the Chinese nation.

### **Research Discussion**

This research topic, "Mazu of Meizhou Island, China: Construction of Self-identity and Social Network of Chinese People in the Process of Globalization", uses Mazu of Meizhou Island as the research text, and uses self-identity and social network as the research concept to carry out research. It analyzes the construction process of self-identity and the social network of Chinese people based on Mazu belief in the process of globalization.

First of all, in the existing research papers on Mazu belief, the majority of the research results of researchers focus on the historical development, social function, and

communication characteristics of Mazu, as well as the relationship between Mazu belief and other religious beliefs, and the relationship between Mazu belief and policies, and other aspects. For example, Jiang Jiajun's "An Analysis of the Function of Mazu Belief on Individuals", Zheng Junyu's "On the Relationship between Mazu Culture and the Maritime Silk Road", Chen Zufen's "The Influence of Buddhism on Mazu Culture", and Yu Xiaoli's "The Connotation of Mazu Clothing Culture and Inheritance", etc. In recent years, a small number of researchers have begun to study Mazu from the perspective of identity, such as Tian Qing's "Research on Tourists' Local Identity in Meizhou Island", Chen Zufen and Gong Yifan's "From Meaning to Identity: The Semiotic Construction of Mazu Lantern Customs", etc. The researchers gradually shifted their attention to regions of belief, belief carriers and other aspects, and attached importance to the interaction between beliefs and individuals, but these were still relatively superficial and not deep enough.

Few researchers have combined the perspectives of self-identity and the social network to conduct research on Mazu. The social network is a disciplinary system that has just appeared since the end of the last century, and has now become the most trendy and cutting-edge analysis tool. This is a phenomenon of using internet thinking to understand the individual belief in Mazu. Regarding each person or organization as a node in the network, these individuals of belief as to the nodes in it, through the establishment of self-identity and Mazu belief as a bond, a stable network of relationships is established, and their influence power is used to play a role in this network. This is a new way of seeing the world.

The individual self-identity analyzed in this article, the nodes, bonds, and connection mechanisms in the social network of Mazu belief, have a guiding role in the development of Mazu belief in the context of globalization, the ways and effects of transmission, and the ways to build belief identity. They are very helpful to promote the close contact and cooperation of individuals, enterprises or groups in the relationship of the social network of Mazu belief. At the same time, they allow the builders of Mazu belief and organizations to clearly see the characteristics of the construction model, the existing problems, the organization method, the behavior effect, etc. the social network is a very effective and practical research concept.

Secondly, in the existing work on Mazu research, historical records in the literature are still the mainstay. For instance, “Mazu Festival” edited by Zhou Jinyan in 2013, “An Introduction to Mazu Culture” published by Ren Qinghua in 2016, and “Mazu Culture and Marine Spirit” published by the Office of the State Oceanic Administration in 2017, are generally based on the analysis of historical documents. It is rare to use an interdisciplinary system to study Mazu belief.

The concept of self-identity and social network used in this article is a brand-new attempt. Several pieces of fieldwork, interviews, surveys have been done and several photographs have been taken. A lot of unearthed and first-hand information, obtained from officers and chairman of Mazu organization, have been deeply conducted, including some external and internal organizations and some personal sensitive information, such as salary income, willingness to work for Mazu, leadership care, and personal identity. All of these have laid the foundation for subsequent analysis.

Thirdly, from the perspective of research, since there is no concept of social networks, most researchers can only focus on relatively small areas related to Mazu belief for instance Meizhou Island, Tianjin, Taiwan, Japan, Southeast Asia, Li Hongwei’s “Study on the Path to the Introduction of Mazu Belief to Japan”, Chen Yayin’s “Research on the Creative Development of Mazu Cultural Tourism in Meizhou Island”, Zhang Mu’s “Shenzhen Mazu Culture and Religious Tourism”, and Li Huifen’s “An Exploration of Mazu Belief in Southeast Asia in People-to-People’s Perspective”, and etc.

The relevant information about the development of Mazu belief abroad is that after China’s reform and opening up, with the support of national policies, Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island and the ceremony of “Mazu Millennium Festival” held in 1987, which have set off the enthusiasm of Taiwan’s Mazu believers and Chinese all over the world returning to visit ancestors in Meizhou Island. This has led to the rapid development of Mazu culture and accelerated the pace of international communication. The concept of social network cited in this article extends the research horizon to the world, including the global Chinese community who believe in Mazu. It connects Chinese people all over the world. With Mazu belief being the link, every individual



can find their positions on the network, and can contribute to the overall goal of promoting the development of Mazu culture.

The previous literature and historical data and thesis research are certainly the basis for the research and innovation of Mazu. This is a relationship of the same origin and has a high reference value. The rich values, artistic values and social phenomena contained in Mazu legends and the buildings of Mazu temples, reflect the wisdom and talents of the general public. They are an important basis for research. It will not be listed all here.

The research in this article is also based on the predecessors, combined with the framework of the national globalization strategy, in the context of the national policy---“The Belt and Road”, and in the context of protecting and inheriting intangible culture around the world, constructing the social network relationship of Mazu belief, exerting the cultural soft power of Mazu belief, improving the material and spiritual civilization of all people, building a harmonious socialist society, building a community with a shared future for mankind, and realizing the all-round development of human society, so that Mazu belief will surely be accepted by more individuals and countries in the world. Therefore, the research in this article has a broad theoretical foundation and important practical significance.

### **Suggestions**

1 In the context of globalization, individuals in modern society have been impacted by traditional and Western cultures and ideas. There are also many uncertainties and new risk factors in society. People are always full of anxiety, pressure and confusion. By constructing an individual's self-identity based on Mazu belief, it is helpful to help individuals establish a correct and positive outlook on life and values. A firm belief can help individuals be full of spiritual strength, have psychological sustenance, and seek help from Mazu when encountering difficulties, this can also relieve stress to a certain extent. When disputes arise, people can also use Mazu spirit to regulate their behaviors. In the current society, material and monetary values are flooded in society, and there is some bad ethos in society. The self-identity of Chinese people based on Mazu belief helps to improve people's spiritual wealth and is an important foundation for the formation of stable social relations. Therefore, the country

and society propagate Mazu culture, especially the Mazu spirit, from multiple angles and levels, and help individuals build their self-identity based on Mazu belief.

2 In the context of globalization, the social network of Mazu belief is also a dynamic relationship, constantly changing and adjusting. The entire social network is constantly expanding in scale under the combined effects of time, space, and individuals. At present, the number of Mazu believers in the world has grown to nearly 300 million, and the number of Mazu temples worldwide has reached 10,000. This set of data is the best proof. Under the influence of individuals, countries, organizations, the social network of Mazu belief is also developing. What this brings is the important social function and influence exerted by Mazu belief. Mazu's social network can range from large to small, as large as the world level dominated by the state for instance the Chinese Mazu Cultural Exchange Association is an official organization that contacts Mazu believers around the world, as small as a WeChat group. To unite and mobilize Chinese people all over the world, we can use the power and influence of social capital, such as the state and policies to raise the awareness of the whole Chinese people and form a strong and stable social network based on Mazu belief.

3 Mazu Festival is an important core component of Mazu belief and customs as the world's intangible cultural heritage. The Mazu ritual is rigorous, it is rich in content, and has profound historical value. The Meizhou Mazu Festival is the representative of the official sacrifice and the representative of Mazu Festival, with the largest scale, the most standardized and unified. Since there are still other rituals in the real society, such as offering sacrifices to Mazu at home. A set of standardized and orderly worship content and rituals has not yet been formed. It is recommended to make a simple, easy to master and execute ceremony based on the Meizhou Mazu Festival, which can make it convenient for the masses of believers to worship Mazu at home, company and other occasions. Sacrificial custom activities not only enable believers to strengthen individual self-identity through the implementation of custom behaviors, but also influence and drive other strong and weak relationships in the individual's social network during sacrificial activities, such as company colleagues, friends, neighbors, etc. These are conducive to the spread of Mazu culture.

### **Discovery of This Thesis**

1 The development of Mazu is related to the social and historical development of China, and it is closely related to the specific social environment, such as economy, culture, system, beliefs, customs, etc. Under the long-term historical role and accumulation, a complete and rich system of Mazu belief has been formed.

2 Mazu's artifacts appeared with the emergence of Mazu belief, such as sculptures, clothes, architectures, etc. They gather the wisdom of the local people, they are the crystallization of people's material wealth and spiritual wealth, and have important historical and research value.

3 Self-identity affects the piety of Mazu belief, and then affects individual behavior. Geographically, those close to the core circle of Mazu belief have a higher degree of identification with Mazu belief. Those who have a high degree of involvement in activities of Mazu belief also have a higher degree of identification with Mazu belief. Self-identity based on Mazu belief has a positive effect on people's lives and thoughts.

4 The social network based on Mazu belief is more stable, and the connections between individuals are closer. Because of the Mazu spirit---setting morality, doing good deeds, and great love, individuals are not greedy for profit, but have a spirit of dedication. Individuals, countries, companies, organizations, are willing to invest their social capital and influence into the social network of Mazu belief to jointly promote the development of Mazu belief, and their behaviors are very effective.

5 The Mazu Festival has high research value. Through the ceremony, it can be seen that the construction and performance of the self-identity of Chinese people, as well as the social network constructed through the planning, organization, and implementation of organizational activities, it can clearly reflect the structure and interaction between individuals and organizations. Therefore, this article chooses to use Mazu Festival as the unit analysis.

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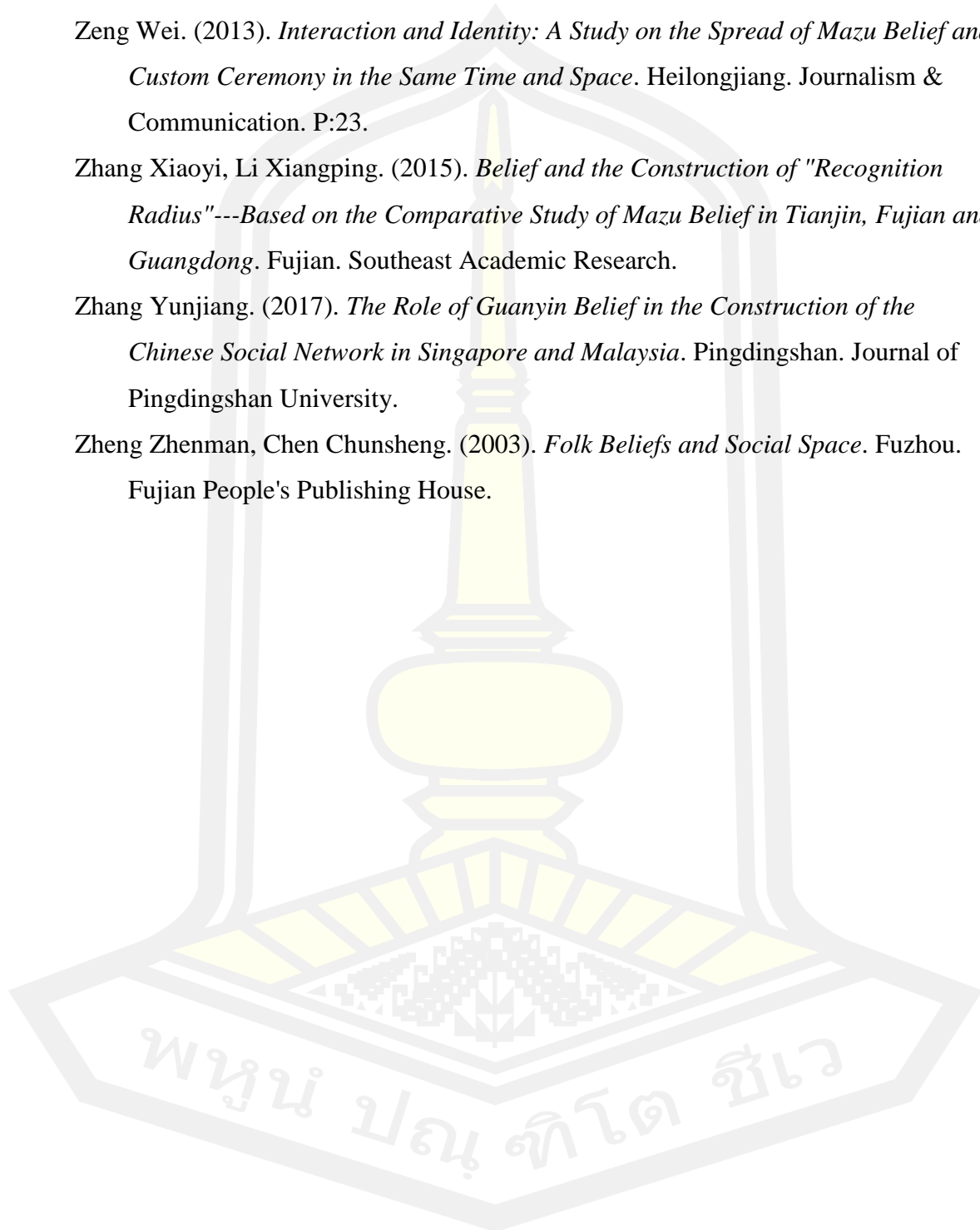


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