

The Spread of Mazu Belief in Taiwan

Shi-Hui Pan

School of Media, Film and Television, Huanggang Normal University, China

Article Info

Received: 25 Apr 2025,

Received in revised form: 18 May 2025,

Accepted: 22 May 2025,

Available online: 25 May 2025

Keywords— Mazu Belief; Tuku; Lianzhuang organizations; Community

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Abstract

In the process of Han Chinese migration and settlement in Taiwan, seeking spiritual comfort and support was a primary concern when living in unfamiliar areas. Therefore, once the immigrant community stabilized to a certain stage, they would collectively initiate the construction of village temples based on the consciousness of their village community as a center for faith and a means of communication with the main social groups. Depending on their different life experiences, such as ancestral beliefs or miraculous events, people worshipped different deities. As the settled society progressed to a more advanced stage, it required greater cohesion among the population and stability within society. Consequently, inter-village "lianzhuang" organizations (associations) emerged to meet these needs. Based on actual field research experience in Taiwan, the core spirit of Mazu worship—the great sentiment of "establishing virtue, doing good deeds, and loving greatly"—as well as official titles from "Heavenly Empress" to "Heavenly Queen," even colloquially known as "Mother of Heaven," are more likely to become effective media for uniting people across ancestral origins and beliefs, thus becoming regional contact points beyond the village level. Therefore, many regions in Taiwan choose to build Mazu temples together as a way to connect villages, which is one of the most important basic social structures in Taiwanese society. This article takes the Shun-Tien Mazu Temple in Tuku Town in central and southern Taiwan as an example to illustrate how Mazu worship can unite inter-village lianzhuang organizations for operation. Under the awareness of the village life community gathered by the lianzhuang Mazu

Temple, the group could defend against invasions of the village and subsequently built public facilities such as cemeteries and water conservancy projects like the Tongji Canal, Zhonggang Bridge, Anlv Bridge, and Yizhu, all aimed at seeking greater welfare for the village community. In addition to spiritual comfort through belief, the interaction and development of Mazu worship with Taiwanese social organizations have brought various benefits to the people of Taiwan; hence, Mazu worship has been long cherished by the majority of the Taiwanese population.

I. INTRODUCTION

Residents from the mainland coast moved to Taiwan mainly after the development of maritime technology during the Song and Yuan dynasties, allowing them to safely cross the turbulent Taiwan Strait, known as the Black Water Trench. Immigrants from various coastal areas of the mainland gradually arrived in Taiwan, cohabiting with the indigenous Pingpu tribes, bringing with them a commodity money economy, as well as relatively advanced navigation and fishing techniques, especially agricultural practices such as plowing, fertilizing, and irrigation. This facilitated the gradual spread and popularization of traditional Chinese culture in Taiwan.

In the early days, land transportation in Taiwan from south to north was quite inconvenient, and the development of various regions was significantly hindered by these wide rivers. Therefore, early land transportation within Taiwan mainly relied on river mouths and inland waterways for transportation. Secondly, people had to find places where the rivers were less wide along the hilly areas between mountains and plains to cross them. As a result, ferry crossings located at the edges of rivers with

port functions often became places where people gathered. The study area chosen for this paper, Tucheng Township in Yunlin County, originally served as a ferry crossing for the Houlai River.

During the process of Han immigrants settling and developing Taiwan, the first priority upon arriving in unfamiliar areas was to seek solace for their souls and stabilize their spirits. After stabilizing their residence for some time, based on the collective consciousness of the village, they would collectively initiate the construction of a village temple, serving as the center of village faith and the primary means of social connection. Generally, they would worship different deities based on various life experiences, such as ancestral religious traditions or miraculous events. However, many more complex socio-economic issues could not be resolved by a single village alone, such as land economy, water resource utilization, and common defense. Therefore, as social organizations within the region gradually matured, there was a need for a greater cohesive force to unite people and stabilize society. Multiple villages would organize together to form inter-village associations, which served as regional cooperative organizations at a higher

level than individual villages to address common socio-economic challenges. Thus, inter-village associations emerged in response to societal development needs.

This article is based on the principles of communication studies to explore the process of the spread of Mazu belief to Taiwan. The main method used is the document analysis method, which involves analyzing local gazetteers and temple steles from the Qing Dynasty in Taiwan. Additionally, a case study approach is employed by selecting the Shun-Tien Mazu Temple in Tuku Town, Yunlin County, as the primary subject for analysis. This is complemented by fieldwork to complete the research on the spread of Mazu belief in Taiwan.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

2.1 Literature Review

In traditional China, the most important interpersonal relationships were based on kinship. Maurice Freedman (1920-1975) achieved significant results in his studies of lineage in southern China in 1958 and 1966, concluding that lineages were the most crucial social structures in traditional China [1].

This has encouraged many researchers to follow up, resulting in numerous valuable research outcomes. In studies of the Han Chinese society in Taiwan, blood relations (especially clan studies) have long been a widely focused topic. There are some villages in Taiwan where people with a single surname live together, which scholars call 'single-surname villages' or 'monosurnamed villages.' However, due to the early difficulty of crossing the sea to Taiwan,

large-scale family migrations were rare, and the history of clan-based geographic groups developing in Taiwan is not long. Therefore, forming large clans similar to those in southern China is not easy and requires corresponding social and economic conditions, so 'single-surname villages' or 'monosurnamed villages' are not common. Many researchers have continued Friedman's clan studies and proposed various revisions to Taiwanese clan research. Numerous scholars' field investigations (such as Gallin 1960, Wang Songxing 1967, Dimond 1969, and Pasternak 1972) show that mixed-surname villages are more common in Taiwan, suggesting that the clan social structure is not as significant as the geographic social structure maintained by geographic relationships [2].

Burton Pasternak (1972) observed villages in southern Taiwan and pointed out that historical facts show that early immigrants often used kinship ties within the same hometown but different clans as a means of ethnic identity, constructing cross-clan regional defense systems to resist external shocks and dangers [3]. In his research, Wang, Songxing (1981) from Taiwan concluded that the settlement pattern of Taiwan is based on geography, with bloodline clans developing on this foundation [4]. Huang, Shumin's (1981) study of central Taiwan also indicated that Han Chinese clans are not as important in Taiwan as ancestral recognition or identification by geographical units [5]. Lin, Meiyun (1993) conducted extensive surveys on trans-clan religious circles and belief circles, finding that such social organizational forms are characteristic of Taiwanese society [6]. Wang, Mingming's (1997) fieldwork in Fujian also confirmed that clan villages are often part of

larger regional organizations [7].

When discussing geographical studies, one cannot overlook G. William Skinner (1925-2008). Skinner's (1964, 1965) research on towns also begins with 'villages,' defining them as residential settlements without markets from a trading perspective [8]. Above the village level is the 'basic market town.' From a trading standpoint, Skinner believes that basic market towns serve to exchange farmers' products to meet their needs, as well as their financial and transportation requirements [9]. However, Skinner's focus was primarily on higher-level market towns, with less discussion on those below the basic market town level.

In the study of Taiwan, Shi, Tianfu (1989) once used administrative and military levels as criteria to divide Taiwan's urban streets, thus stratifying Taiwan's urban hierarchy [10]. Chen, Meiling (1999), while studying the settlements in the Chiayi Plain, divided the Qing Dynasty's Chiayi area into the highest level of Chiayi City Street, the second level of Bunhang, and the third level being various military centers or regional transportation hubs such as Damao Street, Shuihuo Tou Street, Dapulin Street, Puzijiao Street, etc. However, she skipped the level of 'Lianzhuang' and directly believed that 'the lowest level is composed of village clusters from all over the region.' [11] In terms of research approach selection for this paper, the 'Lianzhuang' at the county level is chosen as the unit of study. On one hand, it breaks away from the framework of political administration, and on the other hand, it is more suitable for the actual living scope of the Taiwanese people. For the study of Taiwan's social history, using this cultural influence area as the research scope has

an advantage in selecting the research area.

2.2 Theoretical Exploration

The Chinese term 'community' originates from the Japanese word 'きょうどうたい', which is a liberal translation of the English word Community, tracing back to Latin vocabulary such as *Communit* (community) and *Communis* (common). The word Community is formed by combining the prefix *Com-* with *Unity*, where the suffix *unity* comes from the Latin word *unus*, meaning one, and shares etymology with the word *one*, implying union or agreement. In sociological research, the term 'community' was first introduced by the German classical sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) in his book 'Community and Society'[12]. Tönnies believed that the types of communities are mainly based on natural foundations within groups (families, clans), realizing blood kinship communities. Blood kinship communities develop into and separate into geographical communities (villages, cities), which directly manifest as living together. Meanwhile, Geographical communities can further develop into spiritual communities [13].

Shen, Zhenmin (1973) pointed out that Mazu is the most widespread deity in Taiwanese folk beliefs. Mazu can be the main deity of village temples and often transcends regional boundaries. Due to the thriving incense offerings at Mazu temples in Taiwan, there are numerous large-scale Mazu temples across various regions. Many Mazu deities originate from branch temples, forming a unique subordinate relationship within the Mazu deity system. Mazu more frequently becomes a higher-level regional deity beyond the village level. The central temple of the alliance of seventy-two Hakka and

Zhangzhou clans in the Changhua region is the Tianmen Palace Mazu Temple [14]. Based on actual field research in Taiwan, the core spirit of Mazu belief—'establishing virtue, doing good, and great love'—along with official accolades ranging from 'Heavenly Consort' (Tianfei) to 'Heavenly Empress' (Tianhou) and even 'Holy Mother of Heaven,' easily serves as an effective medium for uniting people across different ancestral backgrounds and faiths. It facilitates regional connections beyond villages, making it common for many areas in Taiwan to choose to build Mazu temples together when selecting shared beliefs, thus fostering inter-village ties. This historical background explains the emergence of inter-village Mazu temples.

Inter-village clan organizations often develop alongside settlements. As settlements mature, inter-village clan organizations also develop simultaneously. The connection between villages, or inter-village cooperation, is often the moment when inter-village clan organizations form. The formation of inter-village clan organizations not only enhances the strength of individual villages but also tends to foster a collective consciousness among villages, thereby strengthening social integration. This is an important social force that cannot be ignored in traditional Taiwanese society. The formation of inter-village clan organizations is not just about improving the living conditions within villages; it also increases their ability to handle unexpected events.

2. Tuku Shun-Tian Palace Mazu Lianzhuang Temple

Tuku Street in Tuku Town, Yunlin County, is located on the north bank of the Houtu Creek, at a crucial point for north-south transportation.

The 'Yunlin County Survey' specifically records under the 'Marketplaces' section: 'Tuku Street is twenty-two li (1 li \approx 576 meters in the Qing Dynasty) west of the county, established in the eleventh year of Daoguang era (1831).' [15] This indicates that by the early 19th century, Tuku had already developed into a market town. Situated on the alluvial plain of Houtu Creek, the area is flat with abundant agricultural products such as rice, sweet potatoes, peanuts, and asparagus. According to records in the 'Chronicles of Shun Tian Temple' and the 'Second Part of the Temporary Taiwan Old Customs Investigation Committee Report on Economic Data,' Tuku rose as a marketplace centered around the collection and distribution of agricultural produce from the plains of southern Taiwan [16]. However, due to this, it frequently faced raids by bandits. During the Daoguang period of the Qing dynasty, many nearby villages united to defend against bandit attacks. The history of the Shun-Tian Temple in Tuku is essentially a history of village associations in the surrounding areas resisting bandit disturbances.

Tuku Shun-Tian Temple is located on Tuku Street, which is the most populous market in the eastern fortress of Dazhutian. According to the 'Yunlin County Survey Book' compiled at the end of the Qing dynasty, Tuku Street had 407 households, accounting for 21.09% of the total population of the entire eastern fortress of Dazhutian. There were 1,154 registered males, making up 23.88% of the total male population of the entire eastern fortress of Dazhutian [17]. It is evident that Tuku Street was a significant town in northern Taiwan's Jia Nan Plain at that time.

According to records, Tuku Shun-Tian Palace was built in 1834 during the Qing Dynasty's Daoguang era. However, before this, there were already beliefs in Mazu around Tuku. According to the temple's compiled 'Chronicles of Shun-Tian Palace,' residents near Tuku would invite the Mazu from Beigang Chaotian Palace for worship during festivals (known in Min Nan dialect as 'zuoke') before the construction of Shun-Tian Palace. This practice continued until the early years of the Daoguang era. It is said that during one festival, when the head of the ritual, Xu, Yin Chang, was returning the Mazu statue to Beigang, he delayed due to unforeseen circumstances and was publicly humiliated by the people of Beigang without any inquiry into the reason. After returning to Tuku, Xu, Yin Chang, in response to this humiliation, gathered local leaders and proposed the creation of a new Mazu statue. To stand up against Beigang and assert their independence, he informed the believers that the newly made Mazu statue was a spiritual descendant of the Mazu from Lugang, not the one previously brought from Beigang. From then on, the people near Tuku no longer had to travel far to worship the Mazu, and the Mazu did not disappoint their sincerity, blessing the area with peace, agricultural and commercial development, and making the once quiet town shine year after year. Xu, Yin Chang then united over fifty nearby villages to raise funds for the construction of a Mazu temple belonging to Tuku [19]. Although the initial reason for wanting to build a Mazu temple seemed trivial, the real reason might have been that the villages around Tuku had developed to a certain extent, with a growing sense of community identity, hoping to break free from the constraints imposed by the

people of Beigang and establish their own Mazu temple.

According to the 'Inscription on the Construction of Shun-Tian Palace' from the 2nd year of Xianfeng, the fundraising scope included Tuku Town, Yitong Township, Dongnan Town, Yuanzhang Township, and other places in present-day Yunlin County, with a total collection of more than seven thousand two hundred and forty yuan. At this time, local consciousness among nearby villages gradually rose. In the 14th year of Daoguang (1834), under the leadership of local leaders Wu, Kechi, and Chen, Bihu, and dozens of nearby villages formed an alliance organization and used the establishment of Shun-Tian Palace as the main symbol of their alliance. The disturbances encountered by Tuku Street during this period are also recorded in the 'History of the Evolution of Tuku Shun-Tian Palace,' indicating that villagers have always been concerned about this matter [20].

The phrase 'Mazu's Red Lantern Drives Away Thieves' illustrates the miraculous deeds of the Mazu deity in Tuku. Historically, there are many instances where Mazu has appeared to save people with a red lantern. For example, cases related to this phenomenon are recorded in Ming Dynasty's 'Wu Za Zu, Volume Four, Earth Section Two', 'Tianfei Xian Sheng Lu' (Records of the Divine Manifestations of the Heavenly Empress), and the 'Imperial Inscription for Hong Ren Pu Ji Tianfei Palace' within the Tianfei Temple under Yifeng Gate in Nanjing. When facing danger, as long as one prays sincerely to Mazu, it is often seen that a goddess holding a red lantern appears in the sky, instantly calming the wind and waves, ensuring safe navigation for

boats. The 'red lantern' has become one of Mazu's most distinctive visual symbols [21].

The 'Chronicles of Tuku Shun-Tian Temple' also includes ten verified stories: 'Xi Shan Man's Eyes Healed Without Medicine', 'A Filial Woman Honored Under Divine Protection', 'Divine Guidance Led a Merchant to Profit', 'Miraculous Pill Saved a Pregnant Woman', 'Incense Ensured Safety During Conscription', 'Divine Revelation Prevented Farmers' Losses', 'Miraculous Pill Resolved Litigation for a Family', 'Wish Fulfilled for Passing Exams', 'Vow Realized with Verification', and 'Deity Performed Surgery to Save a Woman'. These stories clearly demonstrate the perceived efficacy of Tuku Mazu among her devotees.

However, when the temple compiled its historical records, it did not associate 'Mazu's Red Lantern Driving Away Thieves' with the establishment of the Mazu Temple. Through comparison of documents, one can still understand the reasons behind this historical event of 'Mazu's Red Lantern Driving Away Thieves.' It is important to note that when compiling this historical record, the temple attributed the reason for building the temple to conflicts between Tuku Mazu and Beigang Mazu. This suggests that many temples built by different factors coming together have, over time due to changes in both subjective and objective conditions, retained only their religious significance while gradually forgetting their original social purpose.

However, this disturbance caused the construction of Tuku Shun-Tian Temple to halt. It wasn't until the second year of the Xianfeng

era (1852) that the village association worked together again to renovate the temple, build the rear hall, the Holy Pavilion, and the left wing, thus completing the full architectural layout of the temple. Today, there is still an inscription in Tuku Shun-Tian Temple that records this difficult history [22].

In Xianfeng 2nd year (1852), the 'Record of Constructing Shun-Tian Temple' mentions that sixteen merchant firms, including Yi De, contributed to the construction of the Mazu temple [23]. Another inscription from March 1852 (Xianfeng 2nd year), titled 'Record of Completing the Zen Room and Building the Holy Pavilion at Shun-Tian Temple,' also records that forty-two merchant firms, including Rong Mei, participated in the construction of public facilities within the temple during the expansion of Tuku Shun-Tian Temple [24]. The presence of numerous merchant firms reflects the prosperous commercial scene in Tuku at that time.

In 1852 (Xianfeng 2nd year), the 'Record of Constructing Shun-Tian Temple' recorded the residence areas of the contributing believers, totaling thirty-seven villages near Tuku. Similarly, in March 1852 (Xianfeng 2nd year), the 'Record of Completing the Zen Room and Building the Holy Pavilion of Shun-Tian Temple' also recorded the residence areas of the contributing believers, involving thirteen villages. These villages were almost entirely located within the Dongbao of Qing Dynasty Dachuntian, which allows us to glimpse the scope of the interconnected villages around Tuku Shun-Tian Temple (Figure 1~ Figure5).



Fig.1 Tuku Shun-Tian Temple



Fig.2 Tuku Shun-Tian Temple "Ultimate Origin of the Earth" Inscription

Inscription on the plaque: "The Ultimate Origin of the Earth", in Xianfeng 2nd year (1852), on an auspicious day in the third lunar month, this stele/plaque was jointly erected by all disciples/devotees of the entire community. Data Source: Pan, Shihui, ed., 'Final Report on the Survey of Ancient Relics in Seven Plains Townships of Yunlin County,' Yunlin County Government, June 2013.



Fig.3 Inscription on the Construction of Shun-Tian Palace (1852)



Fig.4 Preface to the Inscription of the Renovated Shun Tian Palace (1852)



Fig.5 Inscription on the Stele Dedicated to the Construction of the Holy Pavilion in the Zen Room of the repaired Shun-Tian Palace (1852)

Data Source: Pan, Shihui, ed., (2013).

When the renovation of Tuku Shun-Tian Temple, the symbol of the united villages, was completed, the sense of identity among the united villages was further strengthened. In the third year of the Xianfeng era (1853), during the Lai, Zong incident in Jiayi, Tuku Street was attacked by Zeng, Jiajiao, who claimed to be the "Central Route Marshal." Under the leadership of Chen, Shiju, the united villages near Tuku Street "gathered the elders and young men, blocked the passes," and "united to defend," successfully repelling Zeng, Jiajiao's repeated attacks and maintaining local peace [25].

By the first year of Tongzhi (1862), even greater turmoil arose! The Dai, Cháochūn incident was the largest and longest-lasting peasant uprising in Taiwan during the Qing Dynasty, starting in April of the first year of Tongzhi (1862) and lasting until April of the third year of Tongzhi (1864), spanning three years. The spread of the Dai incident was essentially the resistance of various local self-defense groups. In the area north of the Bagazhi River, the self-defense groups supporting Dai had the upper hand, while south of the river, there were few self-defense groups that supported him. Therefore, the two sides basically used the Bagazhi River as the boundary for their confrontation. Initially, the Dai's camp could not cross the Bagazhi River to continue advancing towards Tainan City, and the government troops could only face them across the river. Once the government troops overcame difficulties to cross the Bagazhi River into Jiayi City, they found themselves unable to move further north due to the widespread support for Dai's camp among the self-defense groups. Even when General Lin, Xiàngróng ventured north deep into Douliu (now

Douliu City, Yunlin County), he was surrounded by enemy self-defense groups and suffered a complete defeat.

In the areas around Tuku, there were also uprisings in response to Dai's incident, led by Lin, Ming from Xizhouzai Village, and Chen, Yuan from Xinzhen Village. They brought along Dai's generals, Chen, Long, and Yan, and Ban, intending to attack Tuku Street. By this time, Chen, Shiju had already gained fame and was known alongside Wu, Zaiying, Chen, Ruiji, Wu, Hanzai, and Wang, Ming as the 'Five Tiger Generals.' Moreover, the dozens of surrounding villages all obeyed his commands. Thus, he led his own 60 to 70 personal soldiers and about 600 to 700 people from nearby villages who followed his orders, forming the 'United Qing Bureau,' becoming a brave fighting force that defended their hometown from the ravages of war [26].

The force from Tuku provided significant resistance to Dai's camp. When General Lin, Xiangrong, the Taiwan Town general commander, led his troops north to Douliu Gate (now Douliu City, Yunlin County), and the grain stored in Shigu (now Dounan Town, Yunlin County) could not be delivered due to unforeseen circumstances, Chen, Shijun, frequently led this force, engaging in battles such as 'seven fights in one day and three raids on enemy camps' to escort grain to aid the garrison at Douliu Gate multiple times. During the Dai's incident, the force from Tuku's joint village maintained their position and launched attacks on areas like Puzhaling (now Baozhong Township, Yunlin County) and Yuanzhang (now Yuanzhang Township, Yunlin County), causing considerable trouble for Dai's forces [27].

After the Dai's incident, Chen, Shijun was

rewarded with the title of 'Wearing blue feathers and serving as a battalion commander' for 'self-funding, firmly defending the Tuku Street area, and assisting the army in battles where he never failed' [28]. This reward also signifies the government's recognition and emphasis on the joint defense organization in the Tuku region.

After this incident, there was a concentrated development of public facilities on Tuku Street. The establishment of such facilities also represents a sense of community awareness. Local elites often use such 'cultural power networks' to consolidate their social status and foster group identity [29]. Among these, the public facility known as the charity cemetery on Tuku Street was established by Chen, Bihu, the younger brother of Chen, Shiju, in 1860 (the 10th year of the Xianfeng era). Zhou, Xianghe (1994), once summarized that during the Qing dynasty in Taiwan, charity cemeteries were divided into two types: one funded by wealthy individuals to provide land for those too poor to afford it, and the other formed naturally from previously unused mountainous or wasteland areas where people buried their dead, creating communal graveyards[30]. The charity cemetery set up by Chen, Bihu, was likely built for the Righteous People who died in 1853 (the 3rd year of the Xianfeng era) in the Zeng, Jiajiao incident. By advocating the establishment of the charity cemetery, Chen, Bihu aimed to honor the local Righteous People who had perished in battle, thereby strengthening the sense of community awareness in the Tuku region [31].

In 1873, during the Tongzhi era, the public construction of the Tongji Canal was completed in the Daciutan Fort 'Hebao' (specifically referred to as the collective body of all residents

within a particular territorial unit, reflecting the tradition of grassroots self-governance and collaboration), which encompassed twenty-five li in circumference, surrounded twenty-eight villages, and irrigated over eight hundred hectares. Chen, Shijun also added ten rooms to the right corridor of the Tuku Shun-Tian Temple at this time. In 1875, Chen, Shijun separately funded the construction of the Zhonggang Bridge and the Anlv Bridge. In 1876, Chen, Shijun and the 'Hebao' jointly established a charitable school in the left corridor of the Tuku Shun-Tian Temple [32]. The collective consciousness of the surrounding villages near Tuku Street reached its peak at this time.

In the Tuku area of southern Taiwan, under the consciousness of the collective village life fostered by the Shun-Tian Palace Linked Villages Mazu Temple, the linked villages have repeatedly defended against attacks on their village and successively built public facilities such as communal tombs, water conservancy projects like Tongji Canal, Zhonggang Bridge, Anlv Bridge, and charitable schools, seeking greater welfare for the village community. Beyond providing spiritual comfort, the interaction between Mazu worship and Taiwanese social organizations has brought tangible benefits to people's lives, thus earning Mazu worship the enduring affection of the majority of the Taiwanese population.

III. CONCLUSION

During the process of Han immigrants settling Taiwan, they sought solace and spiritual support when entering unfamiliar areas. Once their lives became stable, they collectively initiated the construction of village temples based on a sense of community, serving as the

faith center and primary social contact point for the village. Depending on their different life experiences, such as ancestral religious traditions or miraculous events, they worshipped various deities. As the settlement progressed, there was a need for greater cohesion and stability among larger groups, leading to the formation of inter-village "lian zhuang" organizations. Based on field research in Taiwan, the core spirit of Mazu worship—virtue, benevolence, and great love—along with official accolades from 'Heavenly Consort' (Tianfei) to 'Heavenly Empress' (Tianhou) and the common folk term 'Holy Mother of Heaven' (Shangtian Shengmu) easily became effective mediators for uniting people across different ancestral backgrounds and beliefs. This facilitated regional connections beyond individual villages, making the collective construction of Mazu temples a common method for linking villages. This is one of the most fundamental social structures in Taiwanese society.

This article uses the example of the Mazu Temple at Shun-Tian Temple in southern Taiwan to illustrate how Mazu worship unites cross-village associations for operation. Under the consciousness of the village life community formed by the joint Mazu temple, the joint village groups can defend against attacks on their villages and gradually build public facilities such as fortresses, collective tombs, water conservancy facilities like the Tongji Canal, ZhongGang Bridge, Anlv Bridge, and charitable schools, seeking greater welfare for the village community. Besides providing spiritual comfort, the interaction between Mazu worship and Taiwanese social organizations has brought tangible benefits to the people's lives, thus

earning long-lasting admiration from the majority of the population in Taiwan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was supported by a grant from the National Social Science Foundation of China on Mazu Belief Communication and Taiwan Social Development in the Qing Dynasty, No. 19BZS134 by Pan Shi-Hui.

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