On the Relationship between Mazu Culture and Marine Civilization

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Abstract: Mazu belief originated in the Song Dynasty and has never been interrupted for thousands of years as the precious spiritual wealth and excellent cultural heritage of Chinese. Mazu belief is the best embodiment of the profound and rich connotation of Chinese marine culture reflecting the traditional virtues of Chinese. Based on marine culture and spread widely around the world. Mazu belief is closely related to marine culture and marine civilization. Interpreting the relationship between them is of great significance for better understanding of Mazu belief culture and marine civilization. The study of Mazu culture is conducive to better promoting Mazu Spirit and promoting a better construction of a harmonious society.

1. Foreword
Mazu culture is based on the Mazu belief which originated from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), gradually developed to a complete cultural system. As a psychological and emotional belonging of Chinese, Mazu spirit embodied in Mazu culture has enriched the traditional virtues of Chinese and is the driving force for promoting the prosperity and strength of the country, national unity and harmony. Therefore it is a precious cultural heritage of Chinese.

Mazu culture is a special component of Chinese marine civilization. Mazu related stories and legends reflect the characteristics of marine culture which is the spiritual wealth created by the working people through long-term maritime practice as well as the representative of Chinese marine civilization.

"Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" (《勒封天后志》Chifeng tianhou zhi) is an important historical literature for studying Mazu culture. The book is composed of preface, map of Xianliang port, birthplace of Mazu, map of Meizhou Island, memorial to the throne, illustrated handbook, the Goddess site map, ancestral sacred, research report on Meizhou Mazu Temple, donation and surname, etc. This book describes the legends and stories about Mazu revealing the close connection between Mazu and the sea, which is of great significance for exploring the connection between Mazu culture, belief and ocean civilization, as well as the development of contemporary marine civilization.

To interpret the relationship between Mazu culture and marine civilization, a good understanding and command of Mazu culture and ocean civilization is a must with the focus on following aspects: Mazu culture and belief was originated from marine civilization and developed on it; Mazu culture in turn promoted the development of the latter; the significance and role of the close relationship between them to the current. The exploration of the origin, formation, development and its relationship with marine civilization on the basis of interpreting "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" and relevant historical documents is beneficial to the rational use of the ocean, better understanding and command of
Mazu belief culture, and increasing the knowledge of marine civilization so that the concept of "harmony" in traditional Chinese culture will be better reflected.

2. The formation, development and perfection of Mazu culture were based on marine civilization

2.1. Characteristics of China's marine civilization
Marine civilization refers to the spiritual and material civilization formed by the marine practice carried out in human society, [4] including such relevant fields as marine awareness, marine attitudes, and utilization of marine materials. Marine civilization is embodied in the personality and daily habits of the coastal residents, as well as the diet, folklore and artistic creation of the coastal people. China's marine civilization has its distinctive characteristics. First of all, China has a vast territory, a large sea area which covers a wide range of latitude which resulting in significant differences in nature and humanities. Secondly, China's marine civilization has a long history of development. In different development periods and different regions, it has been influenced by different cultures, thus forming a variety of marine civilizations with local characteristics. Finally, in the long history of the Chinese nation, marine civilization has influenced human beings in many ways, and its influence is extremely extensive.

2.2. A brief history of the development of Chinese marine civilization
China is a country with diverse land and sea ecological environment. The sea and ocean occupies an important position in the process of national survival and development, and the use of the ocean was started long time ago. As early as the Neolithic period, the ancient Chinese ancestors began to explore and learn about sea and began to go to the sea, Hemudu culture of Yuyao, Zhejiang is the representative one. The early ancestors used canoes as tools to explore the sea and obtained the foods needed for survival. Although the exploration was at the initial level, it indicated the birth and development of early marine civilization. Since then, China's marine civilization continued to grow and develop and gradually became mature in the Song Dynasty. The coastal areas in the south witnessed the vigorous development of the maritime industry. China's various materials were shipped to countries abroad via sea routes while different products from all over the world were introduced to China. The marine trade was very developed. With the joint efforts of the coastal people, China’s navigation was greatly developed gradually became mature, thus forming a marine civilization with Chinese distinctive development characteristics.

2.3. Mazu belief culture was gradually formed on the basis of marine civilization
The Song Dynasty witnessed the great development of marine activities in China and marine activities became more frequent. The call for going out further into the ocean became stronger and stronger. However, due to the constraints of social productivity, the knowledge about the ocean and the technology of navigation were not enough to resist the turbulent waves of the ocean, the unpredictable sea weather, and the far-off ocean routes. What manpower could achieve at that time did not surpass that of nature. Faced with the vast sea, people needed more than anything else a kind of spiritual comfort, and were seeking a kind of supernatural help. The sinister natural environment and the psychological state of people in this environment provided the soil for the formation of Mazu belief. It was on this basis that the belief in the sea-god came into being, which gave people spiritual comfort as well as courage and confidence. That explains the fact that in China's coastal areas, the belief in the god of the water and god of the sea is most developed, Mazu belief was gradually developed on the basis of the specific background of the times and the knowledge of the ocean, coupled with the development of coastal religious, "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" describes "the wind and waves kept changing. Sometimes the sky was clear with a bright sun. All of a sudden, it became cloudy with crazy wind roaring and waves surging like boiling water." When the voyagers were in danger, "they would immediately pray for blessing. Then the Sea Goddess would be descending from the heaven with the brilliant light and fragrant smell and the rough sea would calm down and the hurricane would turn into gentle breeze."
"When sailing in rivers and seas, the Goddess were worshipped for blessing." [5] All these descriptions
reflect the earnest longing of people when facing the harsh environment of the sea and ocean for seeking spiritual comfort and help from the goddess to save them out of danger.

2.4. The spread of Mazu belief culture was based on marine civilization

The global spread of Mazu belief is inseparable from the development of marine civilization. [6] After the birth of Mazu belief, the marine industry in the coastal areas of southern Fujian became stronger and China's marine activities developed rapidly and the scale continuously expanded, thus forming some important ports for foreign trade with Quanzhou as a representative one. Under this situation, different marine Goddess in the coastal areas were highly respected, and economic exchanges in different regions were gradually enhanced. Some local Goddess' beliefs were widely spread via the sea among different regions. On this basis, Mazu beliefs was spread from Fujian to other coastal areas. When recognizing the importance of maritime economic activities to China’s political stability and economic development, the imperial court vigorously praised and respected the folk beliefs of the sea goddess, promoted the spread of Mazu beliefs from the local to the whole country. The government promoted it from the national ideological perspective, which accelerated as a catalyst the enthusiasm for the worship of Mazu in the coastal areas. "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" records in great length the official praises, honorary titles, workshop ceremonies for Mazu by the imperial courts. For example, during the Song Dynasty, Mazu was praised as "LingYing Furen (Mighty Lady)" and then "Xianji Fei (Heavenly Concubine of Relief)". [7] The Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) saw the official praise and honorary title for Mazu increased in number and higher in rank. In 1289, Mazu was conferred the title XianYou. [8] In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the imperial court attached greater importance to Mazu. The court not only sent officials to Meizhou Island for worshipping Mazu, but repairing the temple as well. [9] Through these historical records, we can see that the imperial courts payed more and more attention to Mazu. Mazu is also inseparable with ancient China's marine development. The official attention to promote the widespread spread of Mazu belief, with the upgrading of its ranking, Mazu belief gradually developed into a unique cultural belief system, which is a convincing proof of Chinese culture extending from land to the ocean.

In general, the origin and spread of Mazu beliefs are inseparable from the marine civilization. The sea and ocean are the carriers for its growth and development. Mazu belief is the spiritual culture under the high development of the Chinese national marine civilization. It is the banner of the marine civilization with Chinese characteristics and the symbol of China's development from land to the sea.
3. Mazu culture promotes the development of marine civilization
Mazu belief culture is a representative of marine civilization with Chinese characteristics as well as a cultural product under the high development of Chinese marine civilization. The Mazu spirit embodied in it has enriched the connotation of Chinese marine civilization. The birth of Mazu belief has greatly promoted the vigorous development of China's marine civilization.

3.1. Mazu culture is the banner of China's marine civilization
First of all, Mazu culture enables people to learn about the ocean from a new perspective so as to obtain courage for further exploring the ocean. From the development of human civilization, we can see that during the whole process of evolving from primitive society to highly civilized modern society. Each historical period experienced by human beings was based on the further understanding of nature. In the early days of the China's marine civilization, the ocean was full of unknowns and people could not get rid of the fear of the harsh environment of the ocean. They would lose their lives when encountering extreme weather, because of the inner fear, people created the Dragon King and other water Goddess. The majestic Dragon King can rain to relieve the drought, it can also make waves. Therefore, people yearned for a caring and mighty sea god that could help people relieve the disaster. The emergence of Mazu belief well satisfied the spiritual consolation of the people at that time. The legend about Mazu in "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" says she could either sit in her room while her spirit leaving her body to save the victims at sea, or dress in red with a red lamp in her hand to pilot the sea vessel. She could easily bring the marine demons under control or punish the wicked immortals with the order of the emperor. "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" contains a story about Mazu's spirit leaving her body to save her father at sea. "Suddenly, she closed her eyes while weaving cloth and her face color changed."[10] And "Goddess appears in red, sitting on top of a mast." These descriptions reflect the yearning for psychological comfort as well as the role Mazu belief plays in promoting marine activities.

Secondly, Mazu belief culture provides spiritual comfort, enabling people to make further marine exploration. For thousands of years, people have built up confidence from legends about Mazu's rescuing people and their personal experience of being sheltered by Mazu. As a result, they expanded their exploration of the ocean and learnt more about the oceans. "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" offers a lot of examples to describe Mazu's blessings to people which helps people understand the ocean better and explore the ocean farther. In addition, it gives a profound explanation on the close relationship between Mazu belief culture and marine civilization from different aspects, from which we can learn about the history of the Chinese people's exploration of the ocean after the Song Dynasty. These vivid examples fully demonstrate that the Mazu belief culture is indeed a symbol of Chinese marine civilization.

3.2. Mazu culture enriched the connotation of marine civilization
Mazu belief culture developed with the Chinese marine civilization. Its core spirit reflects the attitude of Chinese marine civilization and the spirit of the oriental marine culture, which are specific as follows

3.2.1 Peaceful exchanges. During the Tang and Song Dynasties, China's ocean-going cause grew rapidly and steadily, with great effort in developing harmonious maritime trade with overseas countries. Wherever they were, Chinese business people were very popular. Many countries took various measures to promote bilateral trade and hoped that the bilateral relationship continue for a long time. Since only purpose of the Chinese business people who traveled overseas was for doing business, posing no threat to other countries, they were popular. From the perspective of historical development, ever since the formation of Mazu culture, China has been living in peace with those countries in the South China Sea. In the history of China, any attempt to fight against other countries had been strongly resisted. It is based on principle of the peaceful exchanges advocated by Mazu Spirit that Zheng He successfully commanded the seven great voyages to the East Africa via Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia. Wherever they arrived, they lived and traded in peace with the local people, creating a brilliant feat in
China's marine civilization.

3.2.2. Free trade. Beginning from the Song Dynasty, China’s foreign trade was dominated by individual businessmen. With their unremitting effort, they gradually took the edge in foreign markets. However, Chinese businessmen did not use their existing advantages to form a monopoly on the local trade markets. Instead they followed the consistent principle: free trading and peaceful coexisting with the local businessmen. At the same time, China also implemented the policy of opening to the outside world, encouraging people from all countries to trade with China, even settle down in China permanently, which greatly promoted the development of free trade. This is just advocated by Mazu spirit.

3.2.3. Shared prosperity. The Chinese advocate a harmonious culture. The Mazu spirit based on Chinese traditional culture is also compatible and conclusive. It can be integrated with other cultures. As a result, Chinese marine civilization is also compatible, which is conducive to the exchange between various marine cultures and the development of different cultures. [11]

3.2.4. Seeing others as equals. This is the externalization of the Mazu Spirit as well as that of the marine civilization. Seeing all nations as equals is not only a vivid manifestation of national culture, but also a distinct feature of Mazu Spirit. Therefore, we can see in Southeast Asian countries there are many overseas Chinese and their hybrid decedents.

3.3 Mazu culture is inseparable from marine civilization

The birth of Mazu belief culture promoted the development of Chinese marine civilization and enriched its spiritual connotation. [12] Mazu belief culture is inseparable from the marine civilization, which is reflected in many aspects.

3.3.1. First of all, Mazu Spirit is closely related to the history of Chinese maritime culture, which gives the voyagers strong spiritual support so that they managed to complete the voyage adventure again and again. She is the patron saint of the voyagers. As a unique phenomenon of Chinese marine culture, Mazu culture is closely related to the development of China's ocean shipping, and is an important psychological support for the century-long ocean shipping cause. It was based on this that Chinese engaged in maritime trade kept increasing. Thanks to the development there was the great feats of Zheng He’s seven voyages, which promoted the friendly exchanges and trade between China and the countries in Asian and Africa. "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" tells a story about Mazu saving Zheng He, when he was in danger at sea.

3.3.2. Secondly, Mazu Spirit is closely related to the history of marine war. She is the source of faith supporting warriors in the ancient naval battles. In "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress", there is a legend about Mazu helping Zheng Chenggong(Koxinga) to break into the Luermen and assist Shi Lang recover Taiwan. Mazu Spirit provided psychological consolation to the majority of soldiers and played a certain spiritual role in the reunification of the motherland.

3.3.3. Thirdly, Mazu Spirit is linked to the history of China's river trade. Mazu Spirit promoted not only the prosperity of China's maritime trade but also the development of commercial trade along the Grand Canal and became the emotional pillar of the people along the Canal. Mazu Spirit also promoted the development of commerce and trade in Putian, and promoted the economic and trade prosperity of China’s mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao. "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" repeatedly mentions Mazu's help in canal shipping, which confirms the relationship between Mazu Spirit and China's river trade and its important role in it.

3.3.4. Finally, Mazu Spirit is related with the history of China's foreign exchanges. With Mazu Spirit as a bridge, China made great effort in developing economic and cultural exchanges with Japan and
Southeast Asian countries. "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" involves quite a number of stories about Mazu helping China's foreign ambassadors out of danger and spread Mazu belief overseas. The Mazu belief culture has greatly promoted the development of China's marine civilization, and has made it more harmonious and compatible.

4. The Realistic Significance
Mazu belief originated in Putian, Fujian and keeps spreading to other areas. Its influence extended from the initial coastal area to the inland port cities and even inland areas; from China's mainland to Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan and spreads to the vast regions of the five continents and four oceans. It is the cultural attribute of the Chinese cultural circle, and an important medium for the sense of belonging of the Chinese nation. The Chinese marine civilization represented by it is an important part of the Chinese national culture. [13] In spite of its long history, Mazu belief culture still has great vitality and practical significance today. "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" mentions that Mazu belief had been widely spread in China's mainland and Taiwan with a great number of believers. A large number of stories show that the Mazu belief was highly respected on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and was a shared religious belief between the two sides. Today, Mazu plays her unique role in promoting cross-strait economic and cultural exchanges and safeguarding the reunification of the motherland. The image of Mazu is very affable with a strong cohesive force for the Chinese at home and abroad so that they would inherit and spread better the fine traditions of Chinese.

The 21st century is the century of the nationalities in the East and the century of the ocean. [14] The hope of the 21st century lies in the ocean and the peace of the ocean can better promote the development of mankind. Consequently, it is of great realistic significance to vigorously advocate Mazu Spirit, promote the spread of Mazu belief, and build a marine civilization. China's development calls for China's maritime civilization to occupy an important position in the world. Mazu belief culture will greatly
promote the building a marine civilization and a harmonious and prosperous world at large.

Table 1: Tourist statistics of major Mazu Temples in Taiwan in recent years

| Year | Beigang Chaotian Temple | Dajia Jennlann Temple | Great Empress of Heaven Temple | Taichung Wanhe Temple | Hsinkang Fengtian Temple |
|------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 2008 | 6,118,500              | -                    | 401,975                       | 307,910              | -                       |
| 2009 | 6,273,200              | -                    | 561,470                       | 305,400              | -                       |
| 2010 | 5,166,650              | -                    | 627,650                       | 307,430              | 3,050,000               |
| 2011 | 6,303,650              | -                    | 586,762                       | 323,880              | 9,960,000               |
| 2012 | 7,051,600              | -                    | 666,328                       | 718,264              | 28,340,000              |
| 2013 | 6,162,400              | 3,195,160            | 625,214                       | 394,740              | 3,460,000               |
| 2014 | 6,161,900              | 3,593,077            | 1,209,154                     | 362,343              | -                       |
| 2015 | 6,081,000              | 2,296,550            | 689,534                       | 322,870              | -                       |
| 2016 | 6,231,250              | 1,436,765            | 610,468                       | 302,350              | -                       |
| 2017 | 4,938,700              | 904,650              | 565,842                       | 290,540              | -                       |
| 2018 | 5,811,100              | 923,900              | 532,257                       | 306,180              | -                       |

Source: Taiwan Tourism Bureau.

5. Conclusion
An analysis of the formation and development of Mazu Belief with the help of "Record of State Conferred Heavenly Empress" and other historical literature, reveals that the development of Mazu culture is closely related to the ocean. In return, Mazu culture has also greatly enriched the marine civilization, promoted the development of marine civilization, and deepened the connotation of marine civilization. Interpreting their relationship is of great practical significance to the current building of harmonious marine civilization and harmonious marine culture as well as the inheritance of the fine tradition of the Chinese nation.

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