

## Article

# Locality from Hybridization to Integration: Cultural Politics and Space Production of Taiwan Mazu Temples in Mainland China

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**Abstract:** An upsurge in Taiwan-based Mazu temple buildings has been observed in China (Tianjin, Kunshan, and Xiamen, etc.) recently. This paper applies qualitative research methods, including participatory observation and semi-structured interviews, to explore the development of Mazu temples in Tianjin, Kunshan, and Xiamen, China in terms of cross-regional connectivity, materiality, and cross-regional locality, to explore the process of transplantation and construction in the mainland. This paper finds that Mazu culture is a reproduction of the vision of “one race one culture” in the cultural space, and this spatial reproduction is realized through cross-strait religious and cultural exchanges. Informed by the perspective of the political and cultural context, three interconnected dimensions—cross-regional connectivity, materiality, and cross-regional locality—have influenced why, where, and how Taiwan Mazu temples have been transplanted and constructed. This kind of hybrid locality is an integration of urban space and religion, as well as an organic, complex process that integrates religious functions, local politics, and the cultural economy. With the ingenious localization efforts of Taiwanese businessmen, these new Mazu temples promote homogenization in the sacred space and create a unique mixed locality—a more-than-state.



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**Keywords:** hybridity locality; Mazu temple; spatial production; Chinese religion

## 1. Introduction

Economic globalization is a double-edged sword under which collision, conflict, and fusion of the global and the local create a sense of place that presents the characteristics of coexistence as continua between homogeneity and heterogeneity, singularity and diversity (Robertson 1995; Van Der Bly 2007). On the one hand, homogenous and standardized economic space presents a sense of place as something to be neutralized and dissolved, creating “placelessness” (Cresswell 2008; Meyrowitz 1986); on the other hand, in response to globalization, localities construct new values through the process of conflict, negotiation, and co-creation, promoting the development of collective memory and cultural identity, and thus carving out a unique local identity. Homogeneity and heterogeneity exist everywhere, such as in western Chinatowns (Anderson 1987, 2018), and commercial spaces where domestic standardization and local differentiation go hand in hand, such as McDonald’s. The way places function and operate in social space is complex. From the perspective of phenomenology and geography, the locality is not only the experienced constitution of an endogenous emotional attachment to collective memory, but also the relational and flowing process of social construction (Harvey 1993; Massey 1994; Tuan 1991). While globalization will lead to delocalization and homogenization of different places (Escobar 2001), some studies have pointed out that locality is characterized by inclusiveness, internal and external co-construction, and multiple localities (Chang and Pan 2014; May 1996; Wang 2015).

Academic discussions on locality focus on (1) the closure and openness of locality/globality, exclusivity and diversity, internality and homogeneity, mobility and fixation; (2) economic globalization and local spatial production. For example, under the dominance

of economic globalization, examinations of the Disney landscape (Zukin [1993] 2010) and Shanghai Thames Town (Shen and Wu 2012), which are focused on the topic such as Disney theme parks and neglect religion-related topics, existing studies rarely discuss the issue of the transplanting and reproduction of religious and cultural spaces. It is difficult to explain the reproduction of religious space in different places such as temples to the God of Wealth (Tudi Gong) and Mazu. In recent years, Taiwan-based Mazu temples have successively built descendent (i.e., branch) temples in Jiangsu, Fujian, Tianjin, Shandong, Guangdong, and other places. Taiwanese Mazu temples are descended from the Meizhou Mazu temple in mainland China, and its devotees gradually established the phenomenon of the parallelization of Mazu culture and economic activities in the process of spatial reproduction carried out in Mainland China. This process presents not only the construction of a local cultural identity in Taiwan but also the local identity of Taiwanese businessmen who operate in China. Therefore, Taiwan Mazu presents local practices and discourses that differ from those of Mainland China. The spatial characteristics of these descendent Mazu temples and their stakeholders, including patrons and devotees, create forms of religious and cultural activities that present a potent mix of endogenous and exogenous co-construction manifested in the diversity of actors and their multiplicity of cultural identities, along with the hybridity of social construction under the influence of the political-economical context. Religious space is one of the most important carriers of cross-strait cultural exchanges. By what process are religious spaces transplanted to different places, and how can their unique localities be constructed through the material expression of space and the performance of activities related to religious traditions?

After the Vietnam War, Taiwan relied on the global production network (GPN) centered on the United States and Japan to quickly establish a competitive industrial advantage, thereby achieving economic take-off. In the 1990s, Taiwanese industrial production increasingly transferred to the mainland, and a large and growing number of Taiwanese businessmen and Taiwanese workers emigrated to China, gradually transplanting elements of Taiwanese society, eventually creating entire streets, markets, and communities that reflected Taiwanese culture. At the same time, Taiwan's Mazu temple, which is central to the spiritual life of Taiwanese, rapidly expanded its presence on the mainland, building a branch temple at the Lingzi Temple, thereby breaking traditional regional boundaries (J. J. Zhang 2017). Therefore, this study takes locality as a perspective to understand Mazu temples constructed in different places, and proposes the following research objectives: (1) To examine the process by which three major Mazu temples in Taiwan constructed descendent temples on the mainland, and to summarize the characteristics of the different places of Mazu temples shared by mainland China and Taiwan; (2) from the perspective of spatial production, it explores how the religious spaces, representations of various religious traditions, and multi-actor communities of the Mazu temple's cross-regional development shape and construct localities; and (3) from the factors influencing the locality of religious traditions, we interpret the cross-strait local co-construction process of Mazu culture. The results of this research will provide a deeper understanding of local cross-domain spatial reproduction and offer suggestions to non-governmental organizations such as tourism bureaus and religious groups to think about local construction and thus promote cross-strait exchanges.

## **2. Literature Review: Locality Shaping from the Perspective of the Political and Cultural Context**

### *2.1. Locality and Local Social Construction*

The locality is both a personal experience and a socially constructed collective identity, co-constructed by endogenous and exogenous factors. Therefore, the operation and practice of place in social space is complex. Phenomenologists, geographers, and humanists generally believe that locality is constituted by experience, and locality itself is a form of experience. Locality is a continuous endogenous emotional attachment to collective memory (Tuan 1991). Some scholars point out that place is not entirely endogenous but is

also socially constructed. [Harvey \(1993\)](#) discusses the meaning of place in the context of a gated community in Baltimore. He regards place as a kind of fixed capital. In the process of capitalization, marketization, and socialization, a place is affected by the political and cultural context. It is shared internally and externally, producing a place with a feeling of familiarity. According to a relational perspective, spaces are relational, fluid, and socially constructed ([Massey 1994](#)). Although inherent structural conflicts exist under the “global vs. local” context, the cultural conquest that accompanies economic globalization often leads to delocalization/local micro-homogenization ([Escobar 2001](#)). However, many studies have pointed out that local resilience, focus on cultural identity, local attachment, and the construction of collective memory are inclusive and co-constructed ([Chang and Pan 2014](#); [May 1996](#); [Wang 2015](#)). In other words, locality and local construction are not only part of the endogenous nature of place, but also part of the internal and external co-construction of its interaction with other societies. Moreover, the construction of local identity is inherently diverse, and the multiple constructions of different ethnic groups in the same place are essential features of local identity.

Globalization has a magnifying effect on locality, either leading to greater local homogeneity or intensifying local differentiation. Developed and developing economies are linked together by economic globalization and international divisions of labor, resulting in collision, conflict, and merging into a global village. This trend is particularly evident in the economic space. On the one hand, globalization erodes local culture and creates a homogeneous economic space where locality is lost ([Cresswell 2008](#)). The phenomenon of global consistency and standardized homogeneity has produced broad-based anxiety about a crisis of cultural identity in which globalization undermines and destroys unique local and regional characteristics. On the other hand, when economic and cultural spaces collide, some resistance factors appear, with examples including the localization of Starbucks, McDonald’s, and KFC or the constructs of the western Catholic church in East Asia. The reaction of local culture also raises hope for the resilience of cultural differences. In addition, places are fluid because of their differences in different contexts and changes in discourse power. [Anderson \(1987\)](#) pointed out that from 1886–1920, as a racialized constructed political Western landscape, Chinatowns also gave birth to Chinese identity. With the rise of China in the 21st century, Chinatowns began to “de-Sinicize” and were no longer used as a reference to a purely Chinese landscape, but rather as a place where multi-ethnic cultures interact and connect.

However, existing research on locality pays little attention to the production of Chinese religious space and the shaping of locality. In the process of spatial production, the cross-regional flow of Chinese religions differs from the spatial construction of Catholicism and Islam. This type of Catholic and Islamic religious space has a high degree of consistency in the process of transplantation. By contrast, Chinese religious space is different. The ancestral halls/temples associated with the religion’s origins are transplanted into an unfamiliar local community, transforming it into a place of immigrant ethnicity and cultural identity in a new environment, resulting in a high degree of overlap between diaspora immigrant ethnic groups and religious temples. It is more likely to become a place of immigrant ethnicity than a Catholic or Islamic religious space. The localization practice of Mazu temples is characterized by the use of new material elements, a religious tradition mixed with local religions, diverse cultural forms, and diverse populations of devotees. Therefore, this research discusses the local construction of religious space in the process of transplantation and reproduction.

## *2.2. Local Material Construction under Hybridity*

The concept of hybridization is itself vague, open, and fluid ([Kraidy 2002](#)). Hybridity is creative, and it generates new products based on the fusion of heterogeneous elements; hybridity is also dialectical, and the constant resistance to fixed boundaries determines that it is a continuous process rather than a result. The study of postcolonialism has raised issues of hybridity, and cultural pluralism and cultural hybridity have opened up

an interweaving dialogue and infiltration between different cultures (Bhabha 1994; Kraidy 2002; Kumar 2006; Wang and Yeh 2007). As cultural globalization empowers other ethnic groups, diversification and differentiation emerge, and locality demonstrates hybridity. At the same time, hybridity also entails the functions of challenge, resistance, negotiation, and compromise, generated by the complex and dynamic interaction between the global and the local (Kumar 2006). In the existing research on hybridity, some scholars focus on the cultural industry, showing the hybrid characteristics of cultural products in the process of globalization, such as de-culturalization, cultural hollowing, and re-culturalization (Bernards 2013; Wang and Yeh 2007; Zemanek 2020).

Materiality is deterministic, closed, and fixed, an assembly of heterogeneous mixtures. Rather than disordered chaos, it has a particular texture and structure, and is imbued with uncertainty (as opposed to randomness) through transformation (Wang 2015; McFarlane 2011). Other scholars focus on the hybrid aspects of the production of physical space, especially the reproduction and representation of architectural space from the perspective of materiality. Chiang (2008) refers to the contemporary Chinese architecture of monumental public buildings in Taiwan from the 1950s to the 1980s as “Ming and Qing Dynasty Palace Revival Styles”, reflecting the style of northern Chinese palaces, and demonstrating a nostalgia for northern traditions despite the relocation to a southern locality, and this can be seen as a modern expression of Chinese nationalism.

Architecture has commemorative significance in that it is a local material expression and a carrier of emotional attachment and inheritance of spiritual culture. The manifestation of Taiwanese Mazu culture on the mainland is an extension of Taiwan’s cultural identity, a modern representation of regionalism (Bernards 2013). In other words, those Taiwanese living and working far from their hometowns in Jiangsu, Tianjin, and other places, whether seeking regional recognition externally or expressing collective consciousness internally, are undeniably enmeshed in a religious system, seeking emotional attachment through accessing collective memory. Like places, cultural hybridity is ubiquitous (Burke 2009), and many scholars have studied the new religions, general new religions, new age religions, etc., from the perspective of religious-cultural and cultural hybridity (Engler 2009; Nagaoka 2020). Moreover, some focus on the hybridity of Buddhism (Skriletz 2019). This study attempts to identify the boundaries of hybridity in Mazu religious tradition and discusses the Mazu religious space from the perspective of local social construction and the materiality of religious spaces.

### *2.3. The Production and Representation of Religious Space*

The production of space refers to the production of space as a kind of society. Through the representation of space, people can change the meaning of space through the reconstruction of symbolic space, creating space through imagination, adaptation, or appropriation (Lefebvre 1991). Spatial production theory is specifically divided into three areas, including spatial practices, spatial representations, and representation space. (1) Spatial practices include production and reproduction. Corresponding to a particular place and overall space of each social formation, spatial practice ensures continuity with a certain degree of cohesion that implies a specific competency and performance in the social space, and in the relationship between each member of a society and that space. (2) Spatial representation is a conceptualized space, which tends to verbal sign (knowledge, signs, codes, etc.). It is a space for scientists, planners, urban planners, technocrats, and social engineers, who all construct their lives and perceptions through conceived ideas. (3) Representational space is directly lived through related images and symbols, so it is the space of residents and users. It has a complex symbolic function, connected to the secret or underside of social life, and is also linked to art. In the end, art may not be defined as a spatial code, but rather a symbol of representational space (Lefebvre 1991, pp. 38–39; Wang 2009).

Chinese architecture has a long tradition of imitation in the process of space transplantation, from the imitation of Soviet architectural styles in the Mao Zedong era to the imitation of famous western architectural landscapes following China’s reform and opening

up. This kind of architectural imitation and community replication is called a simulacra scape. But this approach has been criticized for sacrificing local culture in the creation of “controversial theme parks and cultural landmarks” (Bosker 2013).

Religious temples are used as religious spaces, and a considerable amount of previous research has examined the construction of temples as the production and transplantation of religious spaces and the dissemination of religion. Religion becomes a mediator of cultural conflicts and negotiating space for effectively reorganizing/readjusting social relations between immigrants and locals (Salzbrunn 2011). Previous work mainly focuses on the religions of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, with north-south movement trajectories, such as the movement of European religious culture to Africa, the Americas, and South Asia. For example, in the case of Islam and the transplantation of mosques, Islamic space-making should be seen as the creation of a more general rather than idiosyncratic religious space (Sunier 2013). It is necessary to place/root the transplanted symbolic space of Islam in a more extensive social process, with its enclave-like spatial reconstruction as part of the home (even domestic Islamic infrastructure networks), both as a connection between local society and local social structures. From the perspective of religious culture, the spread of Islam across a region requires Muslim immigrants to build local Muslim spaces suitable for local production and lifestyles (Sunier 2021). As far as the transplantation of religious space in Southeast Asia is concerned, the cross-border movement of immigrants and migrant workers is a very common demographic phenomenon, and the production of religious space in the cross-regional transplantation and integration of different ethnic groups often occur simultaneously. Research on Burmese immigrants in Thailand has shown that they created religious spaces that connected their imaginary home to the local community, serving as a cultural intermediary between different ethnic groups, and allowing the migrants to better integrate into the local community through the formation of a trans-locality (Pocapanishwong 2016).

Regarding the issue of the cross-regional transplantation of Chinese religions, on the one hand, most overseas Chinese follow the religious customs of their place of origin, thereby establishing a place and space for establishing racial and cultural identity, integrating ethnic groups, and creating a complex local network of temples/ancestral halls as a source of community cohesion (Chen 2008). Existing studies primarily focus on spatial production, the construction of a discourse of religious deification, and localization strategies (Y. Zhang 2019, 2021). The scope of these studies is generally confined to a single region or makes comparisons between different regions (Choi 2019; Lee 2019). On the other hand, in terms of the cross-national transplantation of Chinese religions, Chinese religion in the Philippines has been expanded to include Catholicism, through three types of syncretic religious practices, which are the display and worship of religious images from different faiths side by side, and the use of Chinese ritual styles to worship a non-Chinese god. It identifies Chinese deities with Catholic ones (Dy 2014). Chinese religions in the US have exhibited the flexibility and adaptability to conform to American society, especially in Jonathan H. X. Lee’s research. One case is the Buddhist Tzu Chi organization from Taiwan, which expanded in California, US, but has not yet developed its doctrine or languages, nor has it fully localized, still only absorbing Taiwanese immigrants rather local people among its devotees (Lee and Chang 2013). Another case is the Marysville Bok Kai Temple (Lee and Nyitray 2012; Lee and Nadeau 2013). Firstly, Bok Kai Temple itself conforms to traditional Chinese religious architectures, both in terms of construction and decoration. Secondly, the explanation<sup>1</sup> for the name Bakdai from the name Bokkai shows that this temple is understood to house the Emperor of the North, renowned for the ability to quell floods and offer protection to the Chinese community. In addition, the Marysville temple is dedicated to another water deity, the goddess Maz. The San Francisco Mazu no longer does pilgrimage but instead participates in the annual Chinese New Year’s parade (Lee 2011; Nyitray 2000, p. 176). Nevertheless, Mazu’s celestial sovereignty also exists, and continues to exercise her sovereign right to mediation between distinct communities, serving an

ethnically Chinese but complex immigrant society from East and Southeast Asia (Nyitray 2000, p. 177).

The research on the transmission path of temples has also gradually diversified (Tat 2007). After the 2000s, Taiwanese businessmen on the mainland worked to develop organized communications channels between the Chinese Mazu Cultural Association and the Taiwan Mazu Association, and Mazu religious tradition has gradually become a key medium for cross-strait communication through folk belief (Yang 2004). In mainland China, Mazu is worshipped as the “Goddess of Peace in the Straits”, and this role has contributed to the accelerated growth of Mazu religious tradition there (Sunier 2021). While China remains nominally atheist, Taiwan’s Mazu Temple has successively installed sacred images in Tianjin, Jiangsu, Fujian, and other places. The construction of descendent temples in mainland China by the three major Mazu temples in Taiwan has both political and economic implications, in addition to its value for cultural exchange. Ku and Hung (2020) called the spread of Taiwan Mazu temples on the mainland “the de-religionization and politicization of Mazu culture, replacing religious development with cultural dissemination”, which is a strategy for culturalization. The Mazu religious tradition was constructed in different ways by different communities (Y. Zhang 2021), and thus the use of Mazu religious tradition as a medium for cross-strait communication entailed a cultural construction strategy. The current cross-regional flow of Mazu religion across the Taiwan Strait, and its attendant production of descendent temple spaces and community organization entail the construction of a culturally instrumental Mazu religious tradition.

Therefore, this study adopts the perspective of locality to investigate the development of Mazu temples in various places (Figure 1). First, the construction process of the three major Taiwan Mazu temples in China is used to explain the different construction characteristics of Mazu temples between mainland China and Taiwan. Second, from the perspective of local space production, we discuss religious space, the representation of religious tradition, and how a multi-actor community shapes and constructs locality. Finally, based on the factors that influence the locality of religious traditions, we explore how Mazu culture completes the process of locality co-construction on the mainland in the context of cross-strait exchanges.

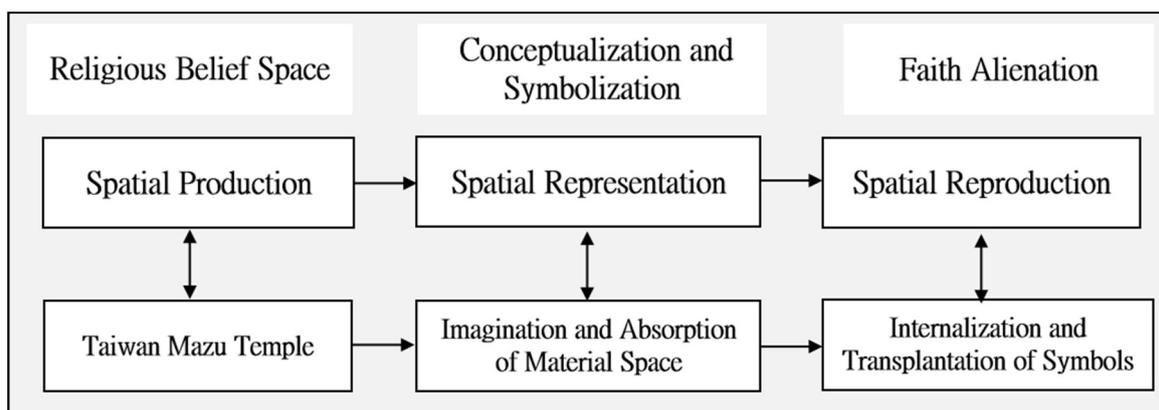


Figure 1. Research frack from the production of space perspective. Source: Compiled by author.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Site

The Mazu religious tradition is the most important folk belief in Taiwan (Chang 2012), and the Lukang Tianhou (Lugang Mazu Temple), Peikang Chaotian (Peikang Mazu Temple), and Dajia Zhenlan (Dajia Mazu Temple) are Taiwan’s three largest Mazu temples. These temples were established by devotees from the Meizhou Mazu Temple, and are also the ancestors many new Mazu temples in Taiwan and China. This study focuses on the descendants of these three temples in Kunshan, Xiamen, and Tianjin, namely the Kunshan

Huiju Temple (Kunshan Mazu Temple), the Xiamen Minnan Ancient Town Chaotian Temple (Xiamen Mazu Temple), and the Tianjin Mazu Cultural Park (Tianjin Mazu Temple).

### 3.2. Interviewees

This study explores the local collective memory and local identity imagination of Mazu temple devotees by intentional sampling. This study emphasizes the locality and group identity diversity of the research objects, using intentional and snowball sampling to find respondents. From 2017 to 2021, the researcher conducted fieldwork in Kunshan, Changhua, Taichung, Xiamen, Tianjin, and elsewhere using snowball sampling to identify potential interviewees. As interviewees were found through recommendations from friends who shared their religious traditions, the researcher found a high degree of participation from respondents, which was conducive to the smooth development of the research and the implementation of in-depth interviews. A total of 22 individuals were interviewed at least once, with follow-up interviews with three individuals. Each interview session lasted between 30 min and 1 h (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Interviewee Data.

#	ID	Respondents	Times	Respondent Characteristics	Location
1	V1-V7	7	10	Mazu temple volunteer	Kunshan, Xiamen, Tianjin, Taichung
2	G1-G3	3	5	Mazu Cultural Association, public facing personnel	Kunshan, Xiamen, Tianjin
3	B1-B10	10	10	Mazu devotees	Taichung, Lukang
4	P1-P2	2	2	Religious studies scholars and experts	Taipei, Taoyuan

Notes: Most of the Mazu temple volunteers were interviewed in Kunshan; in Jiangsu, almost all are Mazu devotees, and while some are from China Mainland we met on the Taiwan Mazu pilgrimage; one part were devotees from Kushan Mazu on the way back to their families—Lugang Mazu Temple in 2016; the other part are devotees from Xiamen Mazu Temple at Taichuang in 2018, 2019.

### 3.3. Research Tools and Data Collection

Data for this qualitative research was collected through participatory observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Some aspects of human life cannot be quantified, but participatory observation can provide insight into their social and cultural contexts (Jorgensen 1989). For in-depth interviews, the researcher drew up a semi-structured interview outline based on the study structure and research theme, explored the in-depth content with tracking questions, and expanded the breadth of the interview with probing questions while remaining focused on the main axis of the research, following up with additional questions as needed to produce a more in-depth discussion. After the interview, the researcher created a verbatim transcript that was then organized into the case database. In participatory observation, the researcher adopted the role of peer bystander as different actors pursued daily activities related to the Mazu religious tradition at the three Mazu temples in mainland China. The researcher took contemporaneous field notes, later augmented by recordings or memory in the compilation of a written record.

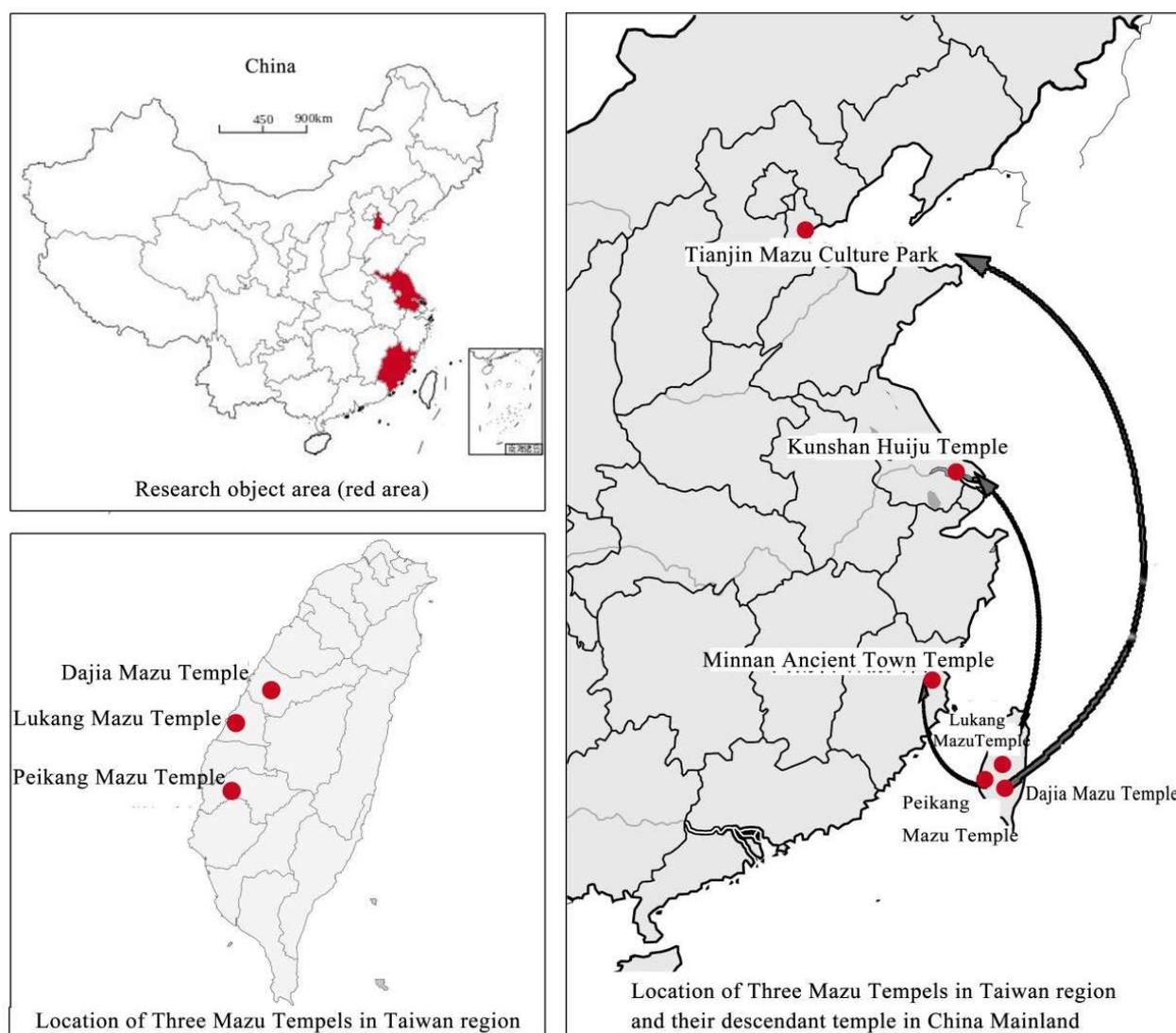
## 4. Research Findings and Discussion

### 4.1. Cross-Regional Taiwanese Mazu Transplantation and the Maintenance of the Religious Tradition Management System Hierarchy

Mazu was born during the Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE) and was gradually deified under the Yuan (1271–1368 CE), Ming (1368–1644 CE), and Qing (1644–1912 CE) dynasties. From the end of the Ming Dynasty, the smuggling of immigrants from Quanzhou and Zhangzhou, and Shi Lang's military operations, promoted the spread of Mazu religious

traditions to Taiwan, resulting in the designation of Mazu as an official recipient for ritual sacrifice. For the most part, Taiwan’s Mazu temples are organized around traditions and regulations for worship originating in the Jingshi Tianhou Temple and Meizhou Mazu Temple (Y. Zhang 2019). Over time, Mazu’s presence expanded from that of a local temple god to the chief religious tradition of more than 60% of Taiwanese<sup>2</sup>. According to the website of the National Religion Information Network, there are 1352 Mazu temples registered in Taiwan, the most prominent of which are the Lukang Mazu Temple, the Peikang Mazu Temple, and the Dajia Mazu Temple.

With the deepening of cross-strait exchanges, Taiwan’s three major Mazu temples have established descendent temples in the East, South, and North of mainland China. The Lukang Mazu Temple established the Kunshan Huiju Temple (also known as Kunshan Mazu Temple) in Jiangsu. Meanwhile, the Peikang Mazu Temple established the Minnan Ancient Town (also known as Xiamen Mazu Temple) in Xiamen, and the Dajia Mazu Temple established the Mazu Cultural Park in Tianjin (also known as Tianjin Mazu Temple) (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Location and migration map of three Mazu temples from Taiwan to mainland China. Source: Compiled by the author.

The results of participatory observation, along with interview data for respondents V1, G1, G2, B5, G3, B9, and V6, and secondary data such as government documents,

indicate that the construction of the Mazu temples in Kunshan, Xiamen, and Tianjin was undertaken by Taiwanese businessmen through the Taiwan Business Association (TBA), which coordinated with local governments and local representatives of the Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) to secure land grants or policy support. Construction funds for the temples came largely from donations (including capital contributions) from the Taiwan Business Association and individual Taiwanese businessmen, who also recruited architects and construction engineers. They organized online social actor networks for better operation in Mazu temples through Line, Wechat, Facebook Messenger, etc. Devotees mainly included locally based Taiwanese businessmen and their families, Taiwanese officials, and mainland laborers and tourists working in Taiwanese enterprises.

As Figure 3 shows, Taiwan's three major Mazu temples are all descended from the Meizhou Mazu Temple, and they, in turn, have established descendent Mazu temples in Kunshan, Xiamen, and Tianjin, thus continuing the Meizhou Mazu lineage. The Kunshan Mazu Temple is a descendant of the Lukang Mazu Temple. In 2005, Lin Rongde, president of the Kunshan Taiwan Business Association (Kunshan TBA), proposed "building a Mazu temple on the site of an existing Buddhist temple" (G2) with the support of the Kunshan Municipal Government which, along with the Kunshan Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Affairs, authorized the transfer of the land and the demolition of the existing Kunshan Huiju Temple. Individual Taiwanese businessmen and the Kunshan TBA donated funds, and provided design plans and construction teams, and construction was completed in 2010. The Xiamen Mazu Temple is a descendent of the Peikang Mazu Temple in Peikang, Taiwan. In 2013, Chen Youhao, a Taiwanese businessman in Xiamen, sought to build a Mazu Temple at a scenic spot owned by his company in a town in southern Fujian. He envisioned "building a Mazu temple to serve the needs of Taiwanese worshippers and Taiwanese culture" (G2). The project won the support of local Xiamen authorities and the Taiwan Affairs Office. With the assistance and guidance of the Peikang Mazu Temple, the Xiamen Mazu Temple was opened to the public in March 2015. The Tianjin Mazu Temple is a descendent of the Dajia Mazu Temple, which in 2008 established the Taiwan Mazu Association. "Tianjin has attracted a large concentration of businessmen from central Taiwan. Thus the Dajia Mazu Temple has a lot of influence there. Since the 1990s, we've taken responsibility for assisting the staging of the Tianjin Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival" (V6). In 2009, the Tianjin Hangu District Government and Dajia Mazu Temple reached an agreement whereby the Hangu District Government provided land for the development of cultural and tourism resources, and the Dajia Mazu Temple, with investment from Hong Kong businessmen, funded the construction of the Tianjin Mazu Temple, which opened to the public in August 2019.

Pilgrimages in which sacred statues of Mazu travel to their temple of origin and back are an important means of maintaining Mazu's spiritual power. However, from 1895, with the Japanese occupation of Taiwan, local governments suspended these pilgrimages until 1987, when Taiwan's Dajia Mazu returned to the Meizhou Mazu Temple, returning home to Ilan Country in 1989 on a direct flight that launched the resumption of such flights between Taiwan and mainland China. The opening of direct flights for informal religious purposes reflected the relaxation and improvement of cross-strait relations, and facilitated the development of cross-strait Mazu exchanges (Katz 2003). Moreover, the Dajia Mazu Temple has emerged as one of three main Mazu temples in Taiwan by surreptitiously establishing pilgrimages to the Meizhou Mazu Temple in 1987, usurping the status of its ancestor temple, the Peikang Mazu Temple, in the established hierarchy (Chang and Chu 2012; Shen and Wu 2012). This pilgrimage promoted competition between Taiwan's major Mazu temples, each sending representatives to the Meizhou Mazu Temple to invite the Meizhou Mazu icon to come to Taiwan, thereby maintaining Mazu's spiritual power and belief status (see Figure 4). Figure 4 shows the changes in the Taiwan Mazu Temple hierarchy according to the temples' connection with the Meizhou Mazu Temple; the closer the link, the bigger the power wakan<sup>3</sup> of Mazu, and the higher the level of Mazu in Taiwan.

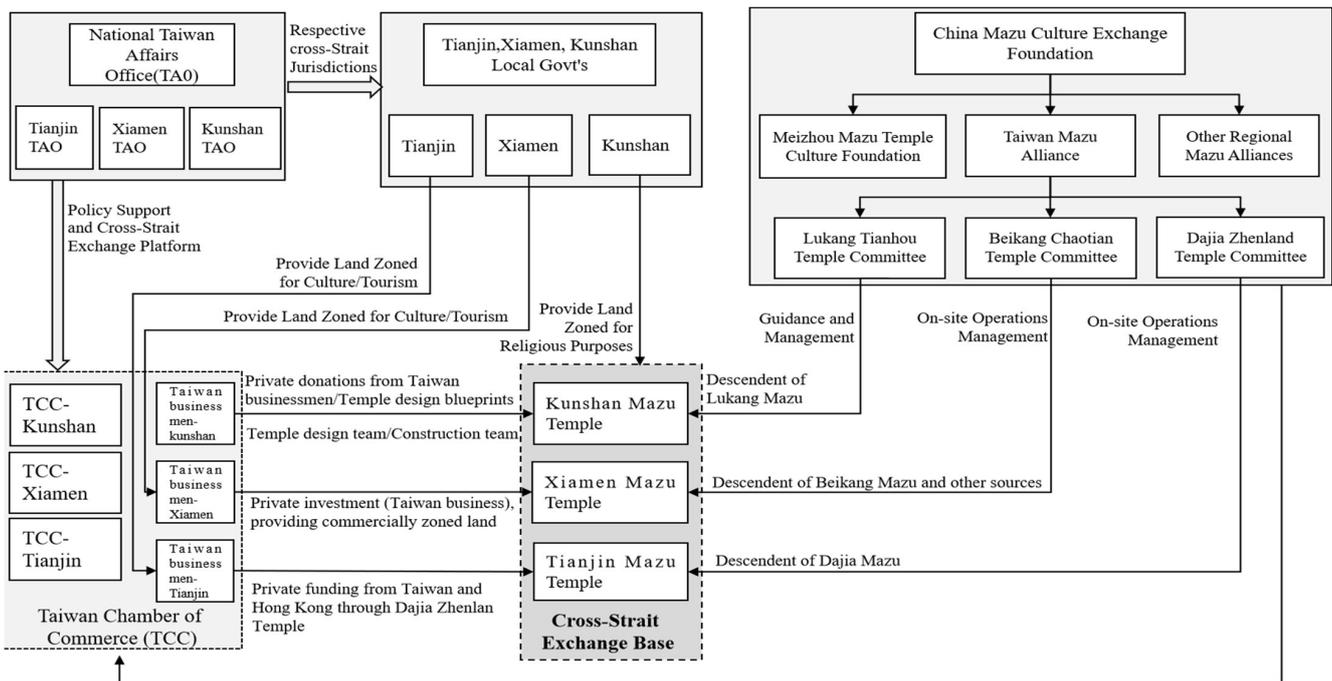


Figure 3. Network of actors of Taiwan Mazu temples in mainland China. Source: Compiled by the author.

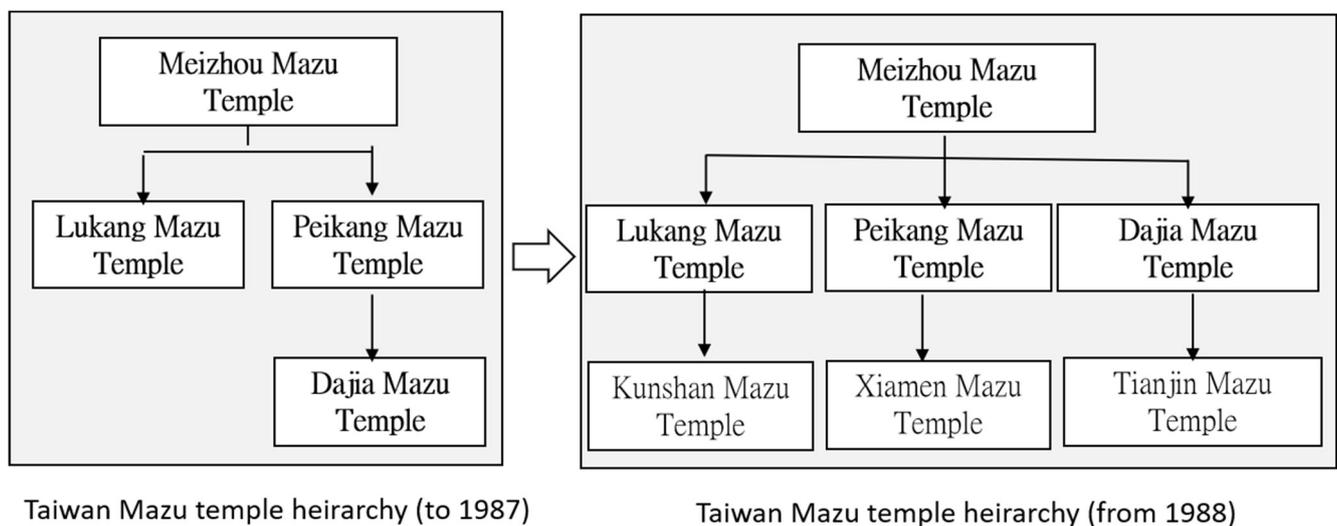


Figure 4. Change in Taiwan Mazu temples after pilgrimages/returns to ancestral home. Source: Compiled by the author.

The Mazu religious tradition has become part of the global intangible cultural heritage (Zhu et al. 2020). Former PRC President Hu Jintao’s “Six Principles of Cross-Strait Exchange” policy incentives (Kuo 2009) jointly promote the development of Mazu temples in Taiwan and mainland China, along with the attendant temple construction and regular pilgrimages. Respondent G2 noted: “The promotion of cross-Strait exchanges is an inherent part of the intangible cultural heritage of Mazu . . . In places where Taiwanese businessmen invest and do business, Mazu culture exchange and Taiwan Mazu temple pilgrimages have become important for Taiwanese businessmen, the Taiwan Business Association, and the Mazu temples”.

4.2. Local Material Construction and the Fusion of Diverse Religious Practices

In the context of spatial practice, the movement from spatial representation to representational space is an effective tool for understanding space and materiality (Lefebvre 1991). Figure 5 shows three periods of religious space production. From the materiality perspective of spatial production, this study interprets the spatial behavior of the off-site replication and construction of the Mazu temple as a material space, a spatial representation, and a reproduction space. The original material space is symbolized, imitated, transformed, internalized, transplanted, grafted, and realized through the spatial reproduction process of the construction of the Mazu temple. Then, the reproductive space of Mazu culture is realized through religious and cultural activities, and the replication of the temple organization and management system.

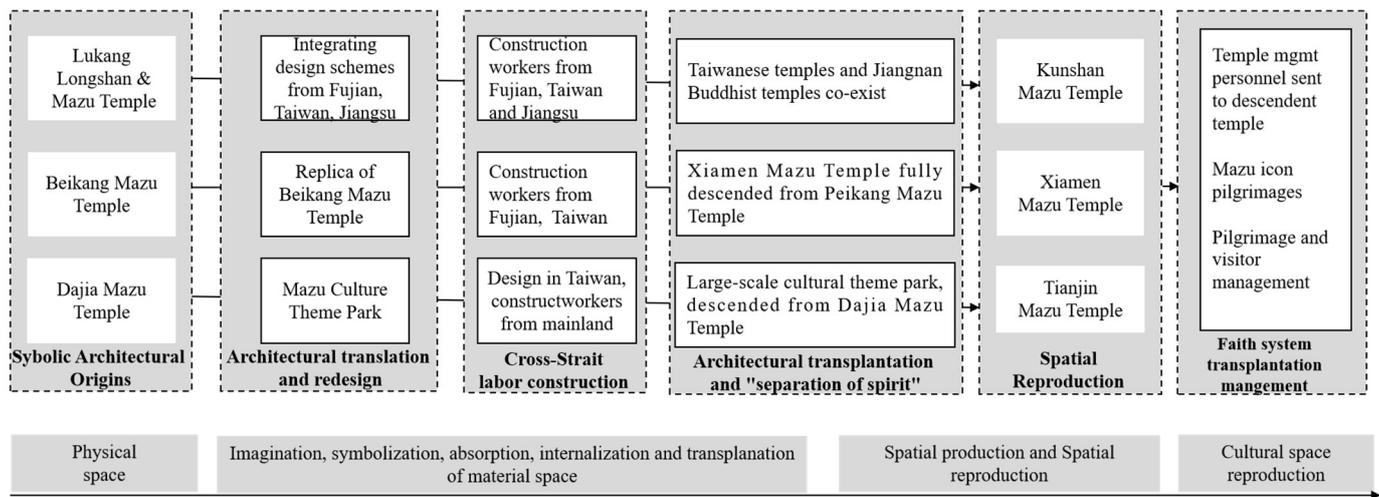


Figure 5. Physical practice and space production of three Mazu temples. Source: Compiled by authors.

Figure 5 shows that the material construction of a Mazu temple manifests the integration, absorption, and imitation in the process of producing architectural space, the local design of the symbols of gods and beliefs, and the religious tradition and cultural activities that are performed and combined by various actors. There are three aspects, as follows: (1) The fusion and imitation of architectural space is reflected in the overall layout of the sacrificial space, the architectural patterns, the replication and transplantation of the main form of construction, and the mix of the local cultural characteristics of Fujian and Taiwan in the composition of the architectural elements. (2) The local design of religious symbols shows that the local geographical indication is transformed into religious elements, and integrated into the symbol design of sacrificial ritual objects. This means that some local architectural styles from Taiwan and Quanzhou are applied when building the temple or its decorative elements. For instance, the dovetail-shaped roof, the stone pillars of the temple with carved oriental dragons and phoenixes, and snail-shaped pillow stones in Chinese religious architectures are regarded as personified things, and they are carved into oriental dragons and phoenixes in the process of transplantation. (3) The religious and cultural activities performed by diverse actors are manifested as different cultural activities integrating the Mazu religious tradition, Buddhism, and Taoism for different groups of visitors, including Taiwanese devotees, local devotees, and tourists, and symbolic religious traditions are expressed through religious and secular cultural activities.

“Baocheng (a Nike subcontractor) was responsible for raising and donating nearly NT\$300 million, allowing for the smooth restoration of the Longshan Temple in Lukang. Later, after communicating with the government, President Sun of the (Kunshan) Taiwan Business Association said that building a Mazu Temple in Kunshan would require experience in a range of different kinds of problems, such as determining the origin of the

religious spirit to be installed in the new temple, drafting construction plans, determining the building type and materials, and finding workers with suitable experience in temple building and repairing . . . ” (V1)

“The planning of the Kunshan Mazu Temple is based on the style of the Longshan Temple in Lukang, with reference to the Manga, Lukang Longshan and Lukang Tianhou Temples. The chief architect, Fu Hongren, is also from Taiwan and restored the Longshan Temple . . . ” (G1).

#### 4.2.1. Mixed Taiwan and Mainland-Based Spatial Production

In the 1990s, Taiwanese businessmen replicated religious spaces and objects such as the Tudi Gong and the Guan Gong Temple as they moved westward into China. But these did not turn into the mimetic spectacles that Bosker (2013) feared. The reason is that this kind of off-site landscape transplantation was based on the generational religious needs of the local Taiwanese. “We Taiwanese in Kunshan have worshipped Mazu for generations. I have been here (in Kunshan) for several years, but I can’t worship (Mazu) because there is no Mazu temple” (V2). This kind of construction based on the needs of local Taiwanese is described in Figure 5. Figure 5 shows that the designs of the Kunshan, Xiamen, and Tianjin Mazu Temples all follow the original sacrificial space (including the main hall, the Prince temple, the Guanyin temple, and Wudi Temple dedicated to the five guardians of Taoism, etc.). The design of the parent temple was absorbed and internalized. Professional temple construction personnel were recruited by the Taiwanese patrons to oversee the construction of the descendent temple, thus ensuring that the three new Mazu temples would retain their original “Taiwanese flavor” in the spatial reproduction of religious culture.

“The (Xiamen) Mazu Temple was designed and constructed according based on the Peikang Mazu Temple. The spatial layout is basically the same. There are five halls in the temple, respectively dedicated to the Heavenly Mother, the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, the Wenchang Emperor, Zhusheng Niangniang, and Fude Zhengshen. The operation of the halls and enshrining of the icons is also performed in accordance with the practices of the Peikang Mazu Temple . . . ” (G2)

In terms of religious cultural space, there is a high degree of similarity between the ancestral and descendent temples in terms of overall spatial patterns (a main worship area with pavilions), along with their various architectural forms, elements, and materials, the use of color, interior decorations, and iconographic carved elements of religious space (sacred animals, etc.).

However, in terms of scale, the descendent temples are considerably larger than their antecedents. “Everything is very large in the mainland. The Lukang Mazu Temple in Taiwan measures 3 mu (approximately 2000 square meters), which is already considered a large area in Taiwan, but the Kunshan Mazu Temple covers 104 mu. Therefore, the architectural styles and scales are all different. Changes included changing the original three gates of the main hall to five gates, and the size (of the new temple) is several times that of the original” (G1). “Tianjin’s Mazu temple features the tallest Mazu statue in the world at 42.3 m high” (G3).

While there is some flexibility in the specifics of the material design, “there have also been some changes, such as the octagonal central dome (“bagua caisson”). This traditional craft is basically lost, and the Kunshan temple features a simplified design . . . Other elements were also altered during the design and construction phase, such as the temple courtyard, the main gate, the five interior gates, the stage, the atrium, the main worship hall, and the apse, along with the mountain gate and the five gates . . . ” (V1).

Other differences between the ancestor and descendant temples are not only reflected in the scale and spatial details but also internalized in the spatial practice of assembling and combining local cultural symbols. As part of its integration into the local area, the copied and transplanted architectural space adopts some spatial and cultural features of the locality. For example, the wooden and stone carvings decorating the Kunshan Mazu Temple are derived from traditions in the Xiangshan area of Suzhou. In addition, as

noted by respondent V1, “The Kunshan Mazu Temple is also a Buddhist temple”, so the religious space it enshrines also presents the characteristics of mixed religious traditions such as Taoism, Buddhism, and Mazu worship. Because both the Xiamen and Tianjin Mazu Temples are positioned as theme park-style local cultural, scenic spots, they adopt architectural styles and layouts that differ slightly from their ancestral temples in that they intentionally integrate cultural and tourism functions. “Minnan Ancient Town incorporates 5-star hotels, high-end restaurants, convention and exhibition centers, and large-scale urban complexes. It is a tourist attraction integrating aspects of the culture and tourism industries. The Mazu temple was built on this basis, and the Mazu culture also contains unique aspects of southern Fujian culture” (G2). “Tianjin Mazu Temple is a cultural theme park centered on the theme of marine culture and Mazu culture . . . ” (G3). But at their core, the temples all follow Taiwan’s Mazu religious tradition management system (see Figure 4 and Table 2). The Xiamen Mazu Temple is fully separated from the Peikang Mazu Temple, and the Tianjin Mazu Temple is separated from the Dajia Mazu Temple<sup>4</sup>. In terms of temple management, they follow the management mechanisms established by the ancestor temples in Taiwan, and organize religious and cultural activities transplanted from those of Taiwan’s Mazu temples.

**Table 2.** Features of the construction process of the Kunshan, Xiamen, Tianjin Mazu temples.

Region		Northern China	Eastern China	Southern China
Name		Tianjin Mazu Temple (Tianjin Mazu Culture Park)	Kunshan Mazu Temple (Kunshan Huiju Mazu Temple)	Xiamen Mazu Temple (Xiamen Minnan Ancient Town Mazu Temple)
Year Built and Opened		31 August 2019	19 September 2010	24 March 2015
Mazu Temple Features		World’s tallest Mazu statue	Largest Mazu temple in East Asia	Descendent of Peikang Mazu Temple
Funding		Private funds from Taiwan and Hong Kong	Private funds from Taiwan (primarily Baocheng Corp., Taichung, Taiwan.)	Taiwan Xianglu Petrochemical Ltd., Xiamen, Mainland China.
Land Zoning and Ownership		Culture and tourism/Foreign corporation owned	Religion and culture/State owned	Culture and tourism/Taiwan corporation owned
Ancestor Temple		Dajia Mazu Temple	Lukang Mazu Temple	Peikang Mazu Temple
Taiwan Mazu Influence	Taiwan	Taiwan’s most prosperous Mazu temple, with millions of adherents worldwide	Home of the world’s only remaining Meizhou Mazu icon	First descendent temple of the Meizhou Mazu Temple in Taiwan <sup>5</sup>
	Mainland China	Few local devotees, theme park in outer Binhai New District suburb	Gradually increasing numbers of local believers, Taiwanese spiritual home	Located in scenic old town, few local devotees

Table 2. Cont.

Region	Northern China	Eastern China	Southern China	
Ancestor/Descendent Temple Relationship	Ties to Taiwan	Annual cultural festival	Kunshan Mazu icon returns to her ancestral home (Lukang) every three years	Peikang Mazu and descendent temples send pilgrims to Meizhou
	Local Ties	Theme park-style cultural attractions	Attracts many local residents in addition to deep ties to mainland-based Taiwanese	Urban tourist attractions are linked to the local Mazu temple management system
Reconstructing the spatial–social relationship of place	Key investors	Fully funded by Dajia and Hong Kong real estate investors	Majority donor: Taiwan Baocheng Group Ltd., Taichung, Taiwan.	Taiwan company Xianglu Petrochemical provided land and construction funds
	Local government	Provided religious-zoned land	Provided religious-zoned land	Government monitor
	Local people	Outer suburbs, no local residents; cultural tourism	Cross-strait cultural fusion, Taiwanese spiritual home	Spiritual home of Taiwanese residents; Taiwan Mazu pilgrimage station
	Local Taiwan Affairs Office	Communication coordinator	Mobilize and arrange donations, support organization, coordinate public and business relations	Communications coordinator
Cultural transplant, symbolic meaning	Disneyfied migrating Mazu culture	Inclusive, hybrid, diverse spiritual home of Taiwanese	Diffusion of spirit, tourism development	

#### 4.2.2. Integrating Local Cultural Practices

The “diffusion of spirits” (fenling) of Taiwan’s Mazu temples through establishing descendent temples in mainland China is a process by which Taiwanese people create a sense of belonging and identity through the transplantation of material elements. In the process of transmigrating the religious culture of Mazu across the Taiwan Strait and realizing cross-border transplantation, the establishment of these descendent temples is also a process of production through localized space, and, in the process of redefining boundaries, they construct the discourse of Taiwan’s Mazu culture on the mainland in conjunction with the specific culture and material constructions of the locality.

Local practices in the Kunshan, Xiamen, and Tianjin temples exhibit a kind of hybridity through the integration of temple personnel management mechanisms, inclusive non-denominational activities, and diversified temple business models, that makes these three places into a kind of emissaries for Taiwan. These temples are important strongholds of Mazu culture in mainland China, and essential links for cross-strait cultural exchanges.

In terms of the diversity and inclusiveness of religious tradition, Chinese folk religion is the amalgamation of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism (Dy 2014). Mazu is regarded as a part of the Chinese folk religion. In other words, Mazu and its theology and cultural activities are mixed with various secular cultural activities due to its emphasis on attracting local people as devotees. These activities include Mazu temple fairs, puppet theater, embroidered flags, parades, dragon and lion dances, and pilgrimage. The Kunshan Mazu Temple integrates Mazu religious tradition with Buddhist and Taoist practices, and its religious and cultural activities also integrate aspects of multiple religions.

Regarding the activities for the Kunshan Mazu’s Zhongyuan Feast, respondent V1 said, “The Dragon Gate ceremony, releasing sky lanterns, recognizing outstanding scholastic achievement, these activities are very similar to your Taoist and Buddhist culture south

of the Yangtze River, aren't they? After all, Taiwanese are still a minority here, and for temples to operate well, they must be localized". To attract local people, the Kunshan Mazu Temple's ritual sacrifices integrate Taoist and Buddhist practices from southern China, and actively promote the localization of Mazu culture. During a Xiamen temple event, respondent B5 said, "The people of Xiamen don't much go to the Mazu temple, but rather prefer the Shuixian Temple . . . When I retired, the volunteers and members of the cultural troupe at the Xiamen Mazu Temple would go to other temples from time to time to perform . . . Of course, when there are reception activities in the temple, our troupes would come together . . . ". Similarly, at a Tianjin Mazu temple event, respondent B7 said, "We are outsiders and don't know much about Mazu, but we found recommendations for this cultural park online. Marriage is very spiritual . . . We happened to see this temple sells marriage sachets, so we came to pay homage . . . " This suggests that the Mazu temples in Xiamen and Tianjin have developed a successful focus on sightseeing and tourism through the staging of performances and cultural activities that attract local visitors.

In addition, the Mazu temples in different regions demonstrate similarities and differences in various types of temple economies (Shuo et al. 2009; Y. Zhang 2021). On the one hand, similarities are found in policy measures and positions within the Mazu organizations. Religious leaders on both sides of the Taiwan Strait who participated in the construction of the three descendant temples hold important positions in the local Mazu associations (NGOs). The three major Mazu temples in Taiwan assist in the operation and management of the descendent temples, providing personnel training, and even directly dispatching commissioners to assist in on-site management. For example, the temple management personnel and volunteer system of the Kunshan Mazu Temple was developed based on training from the ancestral Lukang Mazu Committee, while personnel management in the Xiamen and Tianjin Mazu Temples was handled directly by representatives of their respective ancestral temples, developing support and management networks with local volunteers and management personnel.

On the other hand, differences are reflected in the diversification of the temple economy. The Kunshan Mazu Temple focused on increasing the number of believers and the temple economy by attracting local people through religious and cultural activities in conjunction with local Jiangnan and Fujian temples. "Taiwanese here are still a minority, so the temple has become an authentic local temple, and not just a Taiwanese temple. Under these circumstances, it will be difficult to continue operations" (V1). Respondent B1 noted, "Today, the boss gave us half a day off work and brought us here to watch the blessings". This type of public worship space has become the spiritual home of Taiwanese groups, including Taiwanese businessmen and officials. The Tianjin Mazu Temple developed a Disney-style theme park centered around the theme of Minnan culture in Fujian, using a similar business model in which cross-strait exchanges are used as the basis for activities that attract cultural tourism revenue.

In short, by crossing the Taiwan Strait back to mainland China, the religious culture of Mazu has become an intermediary for cross-strait exchanges for the construction of localized space. This kind of transplantation continuously strengthens Taiwanese elements of Mazu religious tradition through the re-delimitation of Taiwan and the locality. Following transplantation, the Mazu temples in Xiamen and Tianjin underwent differentiated material construction in the localization process. Through hybridized local practices, the three descendent Mazu temples have become an important base for Taiwanese Mazu culture on the mainland, and a platform for cross-strait cultural exchanges.

#### *4.3. The Local Co-Construction of "Taiwanese Flavor" and "A Single Mazu"*

The locality is shaped by the characteristics of the place itself, and the attachment human beings have to it (Eyles [1985] 2013). Locality is constituted by social practices and also acts upon and constructs them. The diffusion of Mazu has prompted Taiwanese to cast off their dependence on their hometowns and seek identification and emotional attachment in their adopted homes in a foreign country, migrating with their hometown beliefs according

to their own needs. This includes not only appeals to personal emotion, but also influences from the central and local governments, social capital, cultural consumption tastes and media. This inductive analysis of the three descendent Mazu temples suggests that this phenomenon is not unique to Taiwan but also in line with the localization characteristics of mainland China (Table 2). Table 2 shows the geographical location, temple features, and stakeholders from construction to operation of the three Mazu temples under study, and shows an outline of the Mazu Temples' social construction. As noted, multiple actors shape multiple local imaginations according to the vision of "One Mazu, with Mazu culture on both sides of the Strait". Ethnic Taiwanese derive a sense of place through the symbolic diffusion of Taiwanese Mazu and religious activities originating in Taiwan, bringing the meaning of these beliefs and their association with their hometowns to the Mazu temples in mainland China, thus allowing them to maintain a sense of continuity when living in China and a sense of connection to their homeland through Mazu. In other words, these religious practices act as a cultural intermediary and link for ethnic groups on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, mixing local elements in the deified space of the Mazu temple. This cross-regional integration is defined by the concept of "a single Mazu". On the one hand, the Taiwan Mazu temple retains its status as the source of Taiwan's Mazu religious tradition, but on the other hand, it creates space for creative local entrepreneurship and marketization that contributes to a local business environment better suited to attracting business and investment from Taiwan.

Different actors actively seek stronger cross-regional emotional connections based on their shared nostalgic feelings, building in different localities in various regions of mainland China, with different social backgrounds. This local integration of religion, emotion, economy, and Mazu folk culture drives the interaction between the Mazu communities on both sides of the Strait, not only in terms of religious tradition and culture, but also in terms of the accompanying cross-strait political and economic implications.

As Table 2 shows, the three Mazu temples are in Kunshan, Xiamen, and Tianjin, which feature some of the highest concentrations of Taiwanese investment in mainland China, and are recognized as national-level bases of cross-strait exchange. Firstly, for the Kunshan Mazu Temple, Kunshan Mazu Square has been recognized as a cross-strait exchange base, and "the mainland treats Taiwan compatriots very well, providing great benefits to Taiwan compatriots. The Kunshan Mazu Temple features an inscription "Wisdom of China" originally inscribed by Wang Yi, Director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council (currently the PRC Minister of Foreign Affairs), while the inscription "Wisdom Across the Straits" was written by Chen Yunlin, then Chairman of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS)" (G1). This demonstrates the importance the Kunshan government attaches to the continued presence and investment of Taiwanese businessmen, and the degree to which a favorable local investment environment is critical for the development of Mazu culture. Secondly, at the Xiamen Mazu Temple, Taiwanese businessmen rely on Mazu culture to form the foundation of the tourism, cultural, and creative industries, developing cultural attractions in the old towns of southern Fujian that tie Fujian and Taiwan, and drive the development of cultural tourism on both sides of the Strait. Thirdly, at the Tianjin Mazu Temple, Mazu exchange activities have promoted Tianjin to emerge as the only cross-strait exchange base in the Beijing–Tianjin–Hebei region. A news report quoted the director of the Tianjin Taiwan Affairs Office as saying, "The Tianjin Mazu Tourism and Culture Festival has been held for eight consecutive years. Not only does this event drive cultural exchange specific to Mazu faith, but also promotes exchanges in a wide range of fields between the two sides of the Strait. The Tianjin Mazu Cultural Park is a joint project that brings together Tianjin and Taiwan to further promote the spirit of Mazu".

For Taiwanese working on the mainland, the construction of descendent Mazu temples creates a cross-regional connection that satisfies the need for religious fulfilment as well as nostalgia, making these temples a symbol of the Taiwanese immigrant community's connection with their hometowns and relatives, as well as a material carrier of emotional

sustenance. Respondent G2 said, “Mazu is a key source of spiritual sustenance for Taiwanese. Now the ‘diffusion of spirits’ is of great significance for Taiwanese businessmen who have left their hometowns to start businesses here. From the temple, they derive spiritual sustenance and a sense of connection to home”. As such, the Kunshan Mazu Temple organizes an annual series of festivals around the theme of cross-strait love and family reunion. These festivals include the Mid-Autumn Lantern Festival, the Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival, a Cross-Strait Softball Tournament, and the Cross-Strait Coming-of-Age Ceremony. The Xiamen Mazu Temple has become a channel for communication and exchange between Mazu devotees on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, and is an important platform for Mazu worship as well as a pilgrimage station. At the Tianjin Mazu Temple, Taiwanese businessmen and religious leaders play key roles in religious and cultural exchanges, investing in the development of the Tianjin Mazu Cultural Tourism Scenic Area, and promoting cross-strait religious and cultural undertakings.

“Even if Mazu returned to her ancestral home, bringing the smell of her new home with her, do you understand the local Taiwanese dialect? Is it a branch of Mazu from Meizhou Island? Is it a senior sect or not?” (V1). “Whose Mazu? Whose? Traditional culture? Whose religious ceremony?” (V5). Respondent B5 said, “Mazu is a universal love. It doesn’t matter whether you are an atheist, a Christian or an Islamic person . . . The important thing is that at this time, if you believe, Mazu will bring you peace”. These responses, shown in Table 2 “Reconstructing the spatial–social relationship of place”, suggest that even if Mazu is relocated to a new place, her traditional properties of “protection from disaster and misfortune, and the maintenance of peace” connect worshippers with their distant hometowns through local practice in religious space. Through spiritual power and the co-construction of Mazu culture, the collective memory of the ethnic group is linked with the local identity. This sense of place has the Taiwanese flavor of the collective memory of Taiwan ethnic groups that coexists with new places.

Therefore, the actor network thus formed, this common connection to Mazu allows local political and religious leaders to collaborate with the Taiwanese community, the local tourist economy, and new local devotees to create a flexible space for the integration of religion, politics, economy, and culture. This integration not only maintains the local identity through common roots in Mazu culture, but also creates a spiritual home for the nostalgia of the immigrant ethnic group. It also creates a window by which local people in mainland China can better understand Taiwanese culture and traditions, which in turn gives cultural significance to the shaping of the community of “one family on both sides of the Strait”.

## 5. Conclusions

The operation and practices of places in social spaces is complex; it is related to emotional attachment to a collective memory, and also constituted by experience, society, and relationships. By examining the localization practices of Taiwan’s three major Mazu temples in Kunshan, Xiamen, and Tianjin, this study reveals that, following the migration of Taiwanese Mazu culture from Taiwan to the mainland, these localization practices reduce and shape the heterogeneity of Taiwanese local Mazu culture, spatial practice, and the locality, in a process from hybridity to the co-construction of spatial practice. In terms of the transplantation and reproduction of religious cultural space, on the one hand, the Kunshan Mazu Temple not only ensures the homogeneity of the sacred space, but also serves to effectively and rapidly attract believers from all over China; on the other hand, it creates a unique locality, that is, a new hybrid space for Buddhist, Taoist, and Mazu cultures. Through the ingenious localization design of Taiwanese businessmen, the Lukang Mazu Temple has not only won the support of the local government in Kunshan, previously a blank space where Mazu culture is concerned, but also endowed Kunshan with the mantle of “Taiwanese spiritual home”. The Disneyfication of Tianjin Mazu Temple is also an extension of the carnival atmosphere of Taiwan’s Dajia Mazu Temple, expanding its influence and attracting new believers. The development of the Xiamen Mazu Temple

established a descendent temple in a key tourism area as a station for cross-strait Mazu pilgrimages.

The trans-regional transplantation of Taiwan Mazu temples to the mainland represents an interpretation of local production, that is, the process of transition from hybridity to integration into a community based on the imagination of parties on both sides of the Strait. On the mainland, Taiwanese ethnic groups establish connections with both the locality and their homeland through religion, creating a religious space and seeking the emotional attachment of collective memory through the nostalgia imbued in their deity system. The cross-regional transplantation of the Taiwan Mazu temples to the mainland is not only a process of religious transformation across regions and scales, but also a process of negotiating the relationship between Taiwanese ethnic groups and local communities through the production of religious space. In this process, despite the tension inherent in the interaction of different groups, the religious space associated with both the Taiwanese hometown and the present locality has emerged as an intermediary for cultural exchange between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, creating a shared existence that extends group identity, while providing an important symbol of homesickness, for to be devotee in religious activities has also become a personal identity.

The localized development of the three different Mazu temples collectively reflects “locality”, using the religious and cultural space produced by “spirit separation” to reconstruct a dynamic, hybrid locality that belongs to both Taiwan and the mainland. This creates a cross-strait family of Mazu devotees through religious and cultural exchanges. In addition, the dynamic locality is not a simple urban construction, but rather a complex social connection based on social space—a social product shaped by the dynamic evolution of economic and cultural space. In addition, the mainland transplantation of Mazu culture eliminates the political boundary between “myself” and “other”. The present study has some limitations. From the perspective of the political and cultural context, material practices using religious culture as an intermediary entail dynamic, long-term evolution. Since the Mazu temples in Xiamen and Tianjin referenced in this study were built relatively quickly, the development of their actor networks, along with the associated cultural diffusion, commercial expansion, and their subsequent impacts still require further observation. Besides, the commercialization of temples and the Mazu religious community are mutually complementary and are the key to the temples’ sustainable operations. The degree of integration is related to the resilience and vitality of the specific locality, and further in-depth observation is needed to examine the effect of “mixed localities”.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The possible reason why Bakdai becomes Bokkai is that: “It might have been called informally Bakdai miu—a sound combination in Cantonese that is easily misheard by non-Cantonese speakers due to the glottal stop k followed immediately by the initial consonant d (Lee and Nadeau 2013, p. xvii)”.
- <sup>2</sup> According to the Chairman of the Dajia Mazu Temple, over 60% of Taiwanese are Mazu believers.

- <sup>3</sup> Wakan (ling li) is something akin to the emic term “mana” used by anthropologists.
- <sup>4</sup> “Divided from ancestor”, called “diffusion of spirits (fenling)”, is a Mazu term that indicates both the process of dividing a Mazu to be re-enshrined somewhere else, and the spirit itself produced by the division. In general, it refers to the newly-built temples, which first go to the ancestor temple with a long history and miraculous efficacy to seek the spiritual power of the deity. After a special ceremony, the newly sculpted deities are regarded as the doppelgangers of the ancestral temple gods, with similar spiritual powers, but they must return to the ancestral temple every year to burn incense and mow the fire, so as to maintain their spiritual powers.
- <sup>5</sup> According to the interviewer of Peikang Chaotian Temple, there are more than 6000 Mazu temples, including non-registered temples (devotees that worship a certain deity in their own homes) in Taiwan.

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