

Kaiji Mazu Temple

開基天后宮



History of Kaiji Mazu Temple | 歷史沿革

Kaiji Mazu temple is the oldest Mazu temple in Tainan, and possibly in all of Taiwan. The temple was first built in 1662 by Chinese General Koxinga (Jheng Chenggong) when he liberated the island from Dutch rule. The temple's Mazu effigy was brought over from the Chinese mainland with the invasion fleet. The effigy was carved in 1640, during the reign of the Chongzheng Emperor, the last emperor of the Ming Dynasty. The bricks for building the temple were also brought over from the mainland with the second fleet of ships.

The temple has two small worship halls with a covered courtyard between. Mazu is enshrined in the main hall. In 1777, the rear hall was added to house the Listening Guanyin, a beautiful and unusual effigy that seems to be listening to worshipers' prayers.

Kaiji Mazu Temple has been renovated several times. The temple was severely damaged in allied bombing during World War II, and was rebuilt in 1948. The effigies of Mazu and Guanyin are the originals, as are the two dragon columns. The columns were very nearly lost after they were stored in an air raid shelter during a 1973 renovation. They were reinstalled in 2003 after being found and examined by experts who determined from the unusual carving of the three-toed dragons that spiral down the pillars that these columns were most likely created around 1683, when the Kangxi Emperor declared Mazu the Empress of Heaven.

開基天后宮為臺南歷史最悠久的媽祖廟，為鄭成功於1662年所建，內奉鄭成功渡海來臺時隨船的媽祖神像，以及「傾聽觀音」。開基天后宮分為兩殿，中間由庭院連結。1777年新建後殿，內奉傾聽觀音。二戰期間，開基天后宮毀損嚴重，僅媽祖與觀音神像，以及宮中的石雕蟠龍柱保存至今。開基天后宮的石雕蟠龍柱是臺灣僅有的一對三爪龍柱，於1973年整修時暫存於附近的防空洞，險些被遺忘，直至2003年經專家協助才重立於宮中。專家研判三爪龍柱約於1683年間雕刻完成，亦即康熙帝封媽祖為天后之時。

Mazu | 媽祖

The story of Mazu dates back over a thousand years and has its beginnings in the historical Lin Moniang, a real woman who lived in China's Fujian Province in the 10th century. Some sources speculate that Lin Moniang was a Hokkienese shamaness. Because she lived so long ago, there are a number of different stories of her life, but most agree on certain specifics.

It is said that she did not cry at birth and was always very quiet; thus her given name Mo, which means "silent." Mazu showed an interest in religion from a young age and studied religious scriptures. By the age of thirteen, she was seeing visions of the future and far-off events.

Mazu's father and brothers were fishermen, and she often stood on shore clothed in red to guide fishing boats home. When she was sixteen years old, a sudden typhoon struck while her father and brothers were out at sea. Mazu was weaving at the loom when suddenly she fell into a trance in which she used her spiritual power to lift her father and brothers and save them from drowning. Her mother, unaware, thought that she had fallen asleep and woke her, causing her brother to fall into the sea and drown.

After Lin Moniang's death, fishermen in the area began to pray to her spirit to keep them safe at sea, and she was eventually deified. Due to typhoons, monsoons, and unpredictable weather, the seas of the Taiwan Strait were fraught with danger for fisher folk or those travelling between the mainland the outlying islands, so it is no surprise that Mazu soon became an important protector goddess to people in the area. Mazu was promoted to the rank of Empress of Heaven in 1683, and now wears a royal diadem with nine strings of pearls hanging down in front.

據傳媽祖真有其人，於十世紀生於福建，誕生時未如一般嬰兒啼哭，因此取名為林默娘，自幼即十分虔誠，十三歲開始便能預知未來。有一日林默娘在家中編織時出神，看見自己的父兄出海遇颶落水，透過集中心念救起父兄。誤以為林默娘睡著的母親此時打斷了她，於是林默娘其兄再度掉入海中身亡。林默娘過世後，當地的漁民出海前都會拜請林默娘保佑。有鑒於林默娘對出海人的重要性，康熙帝於1683年封林默娘為天后。