

再思Femininity：以東南文化媽祖信仰審視 基督宗教「上帝作為母親」模型的不足

1155144772 Lam Ngan Yiu

題目構思

- Sallie McFague
- Male-biased image - “Gender Differences in Images of God”

字眼定義

- Femininity 女性特質
- Femininity is a set of attributes, behaviours, and roles generally associated with women and girls.
- Femininity can be understood as socially constructed.
- Rupaul:” We're all born naked, and the rest is drag”

Caption

- Theologians attempt to supplement traditional “God as a father” model by “God as a mother”. Is that sufficient to complete the female point of view in Christianity? Recently, Tin Hau/Mazu becomes a judge in Fujian, China. Judge is a traditional male role of Christian God image. By this case, I would like to rethink the female role of God (Goddess).

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A DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND
CHINESE FOLK RELIGION



GOD IS FATHER?
OR MOTHER?

A CRITIQUE OF GOD MODEL



WHY SHOULD WE CONCERN ABT GOD MODELS?

Due to the incontinuity of profane and heavenly realm, humans are unable to fully understand the heavenly realm and depict a clear god image. A metaphorical and relational model can help humans understand the relationship between God and themselves.

Theologians believe that the establishment of God models helps reconnection with God. To understand a series of question like what does God do, what should humans do.



The *Lord's Prayer* refers to God as "Our Father in heaven". God as a father is a traditional metaphorical model used in Christianity to interpret the relationship between humans and God. However, it is realized that this model actually embeds the "traditional domination" (Weber,2020) of patriarchal society. God as a father represents not only a personal experience of a father figure but also the embodiment of power in a patriarchal society. The "father" possesses authority, dominates followers, and establishes and enforces rewards and punishments. The sins of Christians also require forgiveness from the Heavenly Father in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

In the 1970s, social movements such as LGBT rights and feminism gained momentum in Western societies, and during this era, the metaphor of God as a heavenly father came under criticism from feminists.



Sallie McFague (1933-2019)

An American feminist theologian, best known for her analysis of how metaphor lies on the heart of how Christian may speak of God.

To response the feminist criticism of God models, she did not firmly reject the idea of “God as a father”. She believes that the root problem is patriarchalism but not the model itself. “God as a father” is still useful for Christian to understand God, but it should not be the only one model. Base on this argument, she supplements the God model by “God as a mother”.



God as a mother

McFague states that Christian rejecting a female metaphor of God model is because the image of female is closely linked to sex and desire, which is sinful in Christianity. To dissolve this negative feelings, she suggests to focus on female's mothering function. Mother gives birth and nurture babies, it is as grateful and holy as God.

However, isn't this model too concentrated on mothering symbols and it neglects other female natures? Obviously, female, especially in modern society, are more than "mother". This model is no longer the best solution to complement female perspective and provide female followers a mental comfort.



Recently, there is an interesting news in Fujian, China. Since most of Fujian people believe in Mazu (the sea Goddess), police officers in Putian set up a Mazu Assessment Room. The facility successfully helps police to resolve disputes among residents. This is indeed a remarkable case to demonstrate female nature other than mothering in Chinese folk religion.



Mazu belief, is one of the popular belief in Southeast coast of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The earliest existing document states that Mazu belief began in Nansong Dynasty. Although she initially started as a regional deity, she still gained imperial recognition. In the Song Dynasty alone, she received 15 official titles, and in the Ming Dynasty, since Zhenghe voyages to the West, she officially became a national deity.



In the earliest document in Nansong Dynasty, Mazu was only a shamaness surnamed Lin, capable of foreseeing blessings and disasters. After her death, people built a temple to worship and honor her.

Later popular legends combined with folk imagination. In these tales, Mazu's father and brothers encountered a shipwreck at sea, and Mazu embarked on a solo mission to rescue them. As Mazu reached a suitable age, she vowed not to marry, and her parents did not force her. Subsequently, in later folk legends, Mazu's role as a savior expanded to the community, making her a guardian deity of the sea, blessing residents' voyages, and warding off pirates.

Mazu's legends are changing by time, but all of these legends share a common feature that confer Mazu virtue and expand her roles and responsibility.

HERE IS A CALL-BACK IN THE END

The name of mazu: Mazu means elderly in mother's family in Hokkien. In some era, believers called her "holy mother" or "heavenly holy mother". Mazu also plays a mother role in Chinese folk religion. With Mazu's virtues, roles, and responsibility, can this be an inspiration of Christian's God model?

Limitations

- Not good at operating social media
- Outsider

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