Words from the Tainan City Mayor:

"The Holy Mother - Ma Tsu - is the Guarding Goddess for all fishermen and sailors on the South of China. Long time ago, the immigrants cross the ocean to Taiwan almost depend on Ma Tsu to protect them for safety. To thank for the protection from the Ma Tsu those immigrants built the temple for her. After developing more than 300 years, Ma Tsu has the most temples, and the most people believe in her. (5,000 temples - 200 million people)

Temple I
- My Turtle -

Happiness, Handsome Salary,
Long Life and Joy

Card 3 of 3

During the worship ceremony the believers also ask for favors or seek guidance from these divine creatures. Others are here to show their appreciation for granting their wishes the previous year."
I want to express my sincerest thanks to I-Junn Cheng, a contributor of this presentation, for making it possible for me to accompany him in February to the Pengan Islands, where we spent 70 hours non-stop visiting 5 temples to witness the turtle sacrifice ceremonies. Profound experience.

Card 2

And also voice appreciation to the people of Pengan for warm hospitality and unconditional acceptance into the temples of their gods.

Temple 2, 1592, Ming Dynasty
Tien-Ho (Matsu) - (Oldest Temple)

Sign: Matsu was the most respected navigation god in the south part of China. Matsu religion spread to Pengan with the arrival of immigrants from Fujien Province at the end of the Ming Dynasty. Later on, spread to Taiwan, and the to other parts of Taiwan. Matsu has gradually converted into a patron saint to the people.

Min-Ling translation.
Lin-Wan-Ang was a girl from a coastal province of China. One day her father and other brothers went out to sea and met with disaster. The girl invoked the Goddess of Mercy and rescued them. Later she obtained enlightenment and became the Goddess Ma-Tsu, who helps fishermen in danger. In Taiwan, mariners' lives are in constant peril. (As sea turtles are today in many areas)

At this moment, the temples in Penghu are alive with people coming and going, praying to turtles—seeking guidance and good fortune, safety and peace, venerating Ma-Tsu.

The sea turtle symposium coincides with the Chinese lantern festival and Penghu Sea Turtle Sacrifice ceremonies, coupled with veneration of Ma-Tsu.

And even if this happens more often than 1000 years, it will only be once that Bai, Jie, Cheng, and Wang bring this before you, as happening today.
I'll close now by pointing out that the Penghu people, and those of us here at this symposium today, a half a world apart, share common elements in our beliefs in the mysteries and wonderment of sea turtles. And that, at this moment, as I speak, we are both expressing those views in the manner that our culture and circumstances have shaped us to do so.

In our own ways, we pray for safety and peace and longevity— for ourselves, and for these sea turtles.

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PENGHU FROM: TOURIST GUIDE BOOK

"When you travel here, it seems you are in paradise. She is the hometown of the sea, a pretty archipelago, the "Hawaii" of Taiwan."

TEMPLE 3

"SHAN-SHUI" TEMPLE

Famous for Golden Turtles

118 ounces (7 1/2 lbs) moving turtle
MANY TEMPLES IN PENGHU CONDUCT SEA TURTLE WORSHIPPING RITUALS DURING THE LANTERN FESTIVAL, THE MOST IMPORTANT FESTIVAL IN PENGHU. LANTERN FESTIVAL IS THE 15TH DAY OF THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH (2-3-4 March of this year). THE RESIDENTS OF PENGHU BELIEVE THAT THE SEA TURTLE IS AN AUSPICIOUS CREATURE BLESSED WITH GOOD FORTUNE. THIS IS WHY THEY WORSHIP FOR PEACE, PROSPERITY, AND GOOD FORTUNE.

MOVE!

"WE ARE THE PATTERN-MAKERS, THE WATCHERS OF THE WORLD, SORTING THROUGH THE ENTRAILS OF THE EARTH IN AN ENDLESS SEARCH FOR MEANING. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY, AS THOUGH CONSCIOUSNESS CARRIES WITH IT THE PENALTY OF A PRESSING NEED TO KNOW. SO WE LOOK FOR SIGNS IN EVERYTHING, READING NATURE LIKE A BOOK, HOPING ALWAYS TO COME ACROSS SOME SORT OF MESSAGE HIDDEN BETWEEN THE LINES, SOME CLUE, SOME HINT OF DIRECTION, ANYTHING THAT WILL MAKE IT EASIER TO UNDERSTAND WHO WE ARE, AND WHAT ON EARTH WE SHOULD BE DOING. THERE ARE NO EASY ANSWERS."
THE PENGHU PEOPLE - 15 days after the 1st new moon during the Lantern Festival of the month, offer images of sea turtles as sacred symbols to their temple gods - and venerate Ma-siu, the sea goddess, guardian protector of mariners for protection from the sea, longevity, peace, prosperity, and good fortune.

PENG-HU FROM: TOURIST GUIDE BOOK

"Penghu is an oceanic county. Most of the residents live off fishing. Facing the changeable nature, it is more violently required for them to pray to gods. So they respect heaven and earth and are afraid of ghosts and gods. Due to this factor, the density of temples in Penghu is the number one in Taiwan, and the temples are very luxurious."

*Penghu's coastline is very long and most of the residents live on the sea, so they have to face the challenge of evil winds."
PENGHU - TAIWAN STRAIT
- 700 MILES ACROSS -
64 ISLANDS of which
20 POPULATED ISLANDS
49 SQUARE MILES - CORAL AND BASALT.
96,000 PEOPLE - MAKUNG CITY 60,000
THAT CAN BE VISITED
97 VILLAGES - 174 TEMPLES - BUILDINGS
(BUT THOUSANDS OF TEMPLES SMALL AS 1M²)
800 YEARS - 400 YEARS
FISHING - SQUID/SAND FIsh; PESCADORES ISLAND.
TOURISM - 2 MILLION A YEAR; AGRICULTURE
PENGHU ISLANDS DIVIDING POINT
EAST CHINA SEA/SOUTH CHINA SEA
HOT SUMMERS/COLD WINTERS. STRONG NEMOSON.

CARD 2 OF 2

WHEN CHINESE EMIGRANTS CAME TO
PENGHU 800 YEARS AGO, AND 400 YEARS
LATER TO SETTLE TAIWAN, THEY
Brought WITH THEM THEIR TRADITIONS
AND BELIEFS. INCLUDING THEIR
BELIEF IN MA-TSU WHO WOULD
Guard THEM THROUGH THE HARDSHIPS
OF THEIR NEW LIFE.

People and turtles do not give up -
Good morning - relatively simple

The message my talk is intended to
Convey to you is that the cultural
Heritage relating to sea turtles is
DIVERSE, DEEP AND SIGNIFICANT

And that more
Information of this nature needs
to be presented at the sea turtle
Symposium, published in the
LITERATURE, AND USED TO INTEGRATE
(Appropriate) Sea Turtle Conservation
Practices with local culture, customs
And beliefs. As a example
In partaking vanilla from
Tahiti, Honiara, Bora Bora.
- Penghu Settlement - Turtle Sacrifice

(The Han (Chinese) people first settled in Penghu some 800 years ago, more than 400 years before setting foot on Taiwan. Chinese culture transmitted to Taiwan via the Penghu Islands.

Today, most of the Penghu residents are descendants of Chien Chao, Fujian Province of China. Despite changing times, many of the traditions, cultural practices and beliefs still remain.

(Chinese Lanqun Festival)

15th Night of the First Lunar Month. Chinese New Year: February 16

When the moon is full for the first time in the lunar New Year, celestial spirits roam the skies. To help people spot these spirits, especially when clouds or fog hide the moon, the ancients carried torches. With time, the torches were replaced with lanterns.

Today, dazzling celebrations - 2-4 March 99, three days - light, color, lasers, Taipei.
Auspicious
  - affording a favorable auspice
Auspice - divine

Divination - the art or practice of foreseeing or foretelling future events or discovering hidden knowledge usually by the interpretation of omens or by the aid of supernatural powers

Taiwan -

86 gods - 9 are major

God = groupings at time
  = official position (and not always time)

C. Thompson
EARLY IMMIGRANTS

WHY DID THEY HAVE TO TAKE THIS BIG RISK TO CROSS? NOT TO EXPAND CHINESE TERRITORY, NOT TO EXPAND THE CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY, THEY WANTED TO ESCAPE THE MISERY OF LIFE IN CHINA.

THE AMBIGUITY PERMEATES EVERYTHING IN TAIWAN TODAY. EVEN RELIGIOUS LIFE. AT THE ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF THE GODDESS MA-TSU'S BIRTHDAY, PEOPLE ARGUED WHETHER MA-TSU SHOULD BE VENERATED AS A LINK TO CHINA, OR IF THE MANY MIRACLES SHE HAD PERFORMED FOR HER FOLLOWERS MADE HER TRULY TAIWANESE.

-TUG OF WARS-

IT IS, INDEED, SPECIAL THAT A MOHAVE DESERT BOY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TRANSPANTED TO THE MID-PACIFIC HAWAIIAN ISLANDS 35 YEARS AGO CAN TEAM UP WITH TWO CHINESE FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES FROM TAIWAN TO BEING TURTLE SACRIFICE RITES AND THE SEA GODDESS MA-TSU OF THE PEN-HU ISLANDS TO A SEA TURTLE SYMPOSIUM IN TEXAS.
T'IEN-SHANG SHENG-MU

"Holy Mother in Heaven"

Obscure cult origins, but generally accepted story: born 960 (60) Sung Dynasty, island of Meichou - Fukien Province. Birth attended by auspicious portents. Exceptionally pious. Presented with certain charms and secret lore by Taoist master at 13. At 16 manifested her magical power by saving mother and father whose boat capsized. Died 987 (27) temple built to attract her continuing favors.

L. Thompson "Chinese Religion"

As decades then centuries passed, stories of miracles wrought by the goddess accumulated up and down the SE seaboard, and she became a familiar guardian spirit, particularly among seafarers. 13th century imperial court gave official recognition as a deity of national importance. The cult continued to grow until the goddess became one of the major deities of SE China, and the most important deity of sailors, fishermen, and all who must hazard their lives upon the sea.
SHE RECEIVED HIGH TITLES BY IMPERIAL DECREES:

1409 "Tien Fei" Imperial Concubine of Heaven. She
"protects the country and shelters the people. Looks after those who call on her with mysterious long, an saves universally by her great kindness."
Title 1683 "Tien Hou" Consort of Heaven.

To the people, she is more familiarly known as MA-TSU, a Fujian word for grandmother.

TAIWAN
Portuguese
ILHA FORMOSA "Beautiful Island"

230 MILES LONG
130 MILES WIDE
>2/3's OF ISLAND = FOOTHILLS & MOUNTAINS.

100 MILES FROM CHINA. TAIWAN STRAIT
2 MILLION REFUGEES - 50 YEARS AGO.
21.5 MILLION POPULATION.
Chinese Religion

...is a manifestation of the Chinese culture. To attempt to understand religion in China as several systems of doctrines is to read Western experience into a quite different set of circumstances.

Religion in China is so woven into the broad fabric of family and social life that there was not even a word for it until modern times (when one was coined for it to mark the Western term).  

Seventh Month

15th Day of Seventh Month.

During entire month the gates of purgatory stand open and the souls of those who have no ancestral sacrifices - the bereaved spirits - are free to wander about in the invisible dimension that impinges upon the mortal world. During this month many special measures are taken by the living to placate these ghosts and avert harm.
Kaula - Hawaiian Mystical Sea Turtle
Protective Spirit
Born at Hulacau Black Sand Beach, Island of Hawaii - offspring of two kinds of supernatural sea turtles.
At will, she was able to assume human form and play with children and watch over them along the shoreline so they wouldn't be hurt. The people loved Kaula for this and because her underwater spring gave them drinking water.

From: Ecology and Cultural Significance of Sea Turtles - 14th Proceedings - Symposium

The Pengu folk favorite is to make red turtle cake for increasing good luck and longer life. There are many kinds of turtles such as flour turtles, thin noodle turtle, peanut candy turtle, cake turtle, rice package turtle, coin turtle, and gold turtle.
I THINK ONLY PEOPLE IN PENGHU WILL BELIEVE BOTH MA-TSU AND SEA TURTLES BECAUSE TURTLES HAVE APPEARED IN PENGHU SINCE LONG AGO. IN SOME CHINESE LEGENDS, PEOPLE BELIEVE TURTLE CAN PROTECT PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY IN THE OCEAN. SOME STORIES SAID TURTLE CAN TAKE PEOPLE ON THEIR BACK AND SWIM THEM TO A SAFE PLACE SAME WITH MA-TSU. THEY BOTH CAN SAVE PEOPLE IN THE OCEAN AND PROTECT THEIR LIFE.

Amy

MY PRESENTATION WILL INCLUDE
- TEMPLE VIEWS OF A
  - 6,000 kg sea turtle of Rice flour
  - A 7½ lb pure gold sea turtle - mechanized
  - 180 lbs Rice cake turtle - and -
  - Descriptions of the Taiwan Seagoddess Ma-Tsu and her close association with sea turtles in the Penghu Islands.

AS SEEN AND UNDERSTOOD THROUGH EYES AND MIND AS A VISITOR FROM THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS.