

How Macau Got Its Name



“Macau” and Tin Hau

Macau is a peninsula off of Guangdong province on the southwest end of the Pearl River estuary. It belongs to the People’s Republic of China as a Special Administrative Region (SAR). Known for its casinos, it is Asia’s gaming capital, the “Las Vegas of Asia”... but 7 times larger.

In the 16th Century, Macau became one of the entry points for European trade with China. When the Portuguese traders landed on the shore of this peninsula they asked the local fishermen, “Where are we?” The locals replied, “A-ma gau” meaning the bay of A-ma, goddess of the seas. What the traders heard was “Macau” so that name stuck with them.

High on the mountain top is the Temple of A-ma, Goddess of the Seas, built in 1488, is the oldest and most famous temple in Macau. In Taiwan, they call the goddess of seas, “Mazu”. For the Cantonese and us at Lum Sai Ho Tong, we call her “Tin Hau”. Tin Hau is an important deity for many coastal areas of

China,. Born a Lum maiden, Lin Moniang is known for, out of selflessness and compassion, helping those in need. She is famously known for attempting to save her father and brother who were shipwrecked in a terrible storm. This and many other acts of heroism continued. Although she died at an early age, many seafarers would say they can see a young maiden appearing to them in the ocean and saving them. Her actions became well-known and people started worshipping her for protection. Later, the Chinese emperors started giving her official imperial titles. One of them, which we at LSHT use is, “Tin Hau”, which translate to Queen of Heaven.



*Statue of Tin Hau,
goddess of the seas,
Queen of Heaven, at the
Temple of A-ma in Macau.*