Abstract

The Chin Kong religion was established in the nineteenth century in China, with a social objective of helping opium addict recover through religious practice. In the twentieth century, it flourished as a New Religion (新兴宗教) in Southeast Asia. Few studies have been undertaken to examine the development of this religion in Singapore.

In this paper, the author focused on understanding the development of the Chin Kong religion in Singapore and the reasons for its gradual decline upon reaching its peak popularity in the 1960s. The paper begins with a brief understanding of the establishment, as well as its successful propagation in China. In the second part of the paper, the reason of its widespread propagation in Singapore since twentieth century is discussed. Information of the development of the religion in Singapore is collected from interviews with the representatives from each Chin Kong temple.

The reasons of its decline is discussed from the following aspects,

1) Its organizational and administrative operation
2) The degree of its social influence
3) Impact of societal development and changes towards religion
4) People’s religious needs
The author observes that there is a diversion of its original mission of facilitating recovery of opium addicts to conducting the religious ceremony, known as “Fang Hua”. This ceremony serves as a means to attract believers, but could have contributed to its decline, as the original mission was forgotten.