Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to study the spread of "Kai Zhang Sheng Wang (开漳圣王)" cult from its origin in Zhang Zhou (漳州) region, China to Penang and Singapore. It seeks to gain an insight of the adaptation of this local cult in the migration society of early Chinese and its development.

I attempt to use the concept of “communal worship (祭祀圈)” and “religion cult (信仰圈)”, suggested in Lin Mei Rong’s works, to explain the tangible development of this cult in both Penang and Singapore, as well as the “superscribing symbols” concept of Prasenjit Duara as a theoretical framework for the intangible part of this thesis. The cult’s image is shaped by the changing context in which it is embedded. It also demonstrates its transformation with the historical changes among the social groups and institutions in order to ensure its continuity. Thus, I hope to show that the dynamics change is far more complex as a social force than what it is normally perceived.

The first chapter of this thesis is a general review on the research by scholars, followed by the second chapter which is a historical overview of the emergence of the cult. The subsequent three chapters examine on the respective development and adaptation of the cult in the Zhang Zhou region, Penang and Singapore. The last chapter is a conclusion.