ABSTRACT

The development of Modern Singapore Chinese Poetry can be categorized into three major phases: the Pre-War period from 1920-1941, the post war period from 1945-1965 and the post- independence period from 1965. Among these three phrases, the post-war period is often regarded as the most crucial. It was during this period that Singapore shed its status as a post-war British colony and emerged as an independent nation. For this reason, this period of time possesses unique political, economical, social and cultural significances in the development of Singapore and that of the entire Asia. It was also during these 20 years that a sense of nativity finally took roots in local poets. This period also witnessed the clash between realism and modernism, which resulted in the transformation of the language and style of Singapore modern Chinese poetry.

This dissertation comprises of eight chapters. The objectives, significance and scope of this thesis are highlighted in the first chapter. The subsequent three chapters examine the influence of the sense of nativity on the development of local Chinese poetry from 1920 to 1965. The aforementioned 45 year period can be further subdivided into three stages: the embryonic stage of the sense of nativity from 1920-1942; the developmental stage of sense of nativity from 1945-1958; and the clash between the sense of nativity and the new sense of exile from 1959-1965, which is known as the conflict between realism and modernism. These chapters trace progressively how modern local Chinese poetry had evolved from a migrant culture into a national culture. The development is explained in terms of the clashes between the sense of exile and nativity, the famous poets and their works, as well as the debates that had fundamentally influenced literary development in one way or another in the different stages. The post-war modern Singapore poetry is then analyzed from a cultural aspect, taking into account enlightenment, patriotism, sense of crisis and the selection of aesthetic. The thesis also examines the style of modern Singapore Chinese poetry through linguistic facets involving words and expressions, sentence structure and rhetoric in the sixth chapter. The seventh chapter looks into the common
route of development in Southeast Asia's modern Chinese literature. Finally, the significant achievements and the weaknesses of post-war poetry in Singapore are assessed in the last chapter.

In this dissertation, the writer attempts to examine post-war local Chinese poetry from various aspects and angles. Besides illustrating the development of poetry progressively based on the growth of the sense of nativity, the writer also identifies the main unique Chinese cultural characteristics present in the modern Singapore poetry, which forms the common cultural traits of the world Chinese modern literature. These common characteristics form the basis of comparison between the Chinese literatures of different countries. Most importantly, the writer has adopted a different approach to the study of Chinese poetry style in the period 1945-1965, based on Chinese Linguistic, Social Linguistic and Rhetoric, which is quite unlike the approach used by most researchers. Through its longitudinal illustration and crosswise comparisons in various aspects, the dissertation provides some new and better insights into the development of post-war modern Chinese poetry.