

## Separation with the Dead—A Case Study of Funeral Rite in a Teochiu Fishing Village, Malaysia.

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In this paper I analyse the funeral rite in a Teochiu fishing village by using my field data collected from 1980 to 1982 in Malaysia. Among Malaysian Chinese who do not have patrilineal descent groups in the strict sense, ancestor worship functions as a key factor to preserve cultural tradition and to maintain ethnic identity, rather than to strengthen the kin group's solidarity.

In the village we cannot find ancestral tablets, but rather incense pots which are identified with particular persons such as the household head's parents or paternal grandparents in the household altar. Ancestors do not appear in genealogy but in household altars and in tombs. They are worshipped as long as their descendants remember their existence. Ancestor worship which is inherited from parent's generation to son's generation creates chains of cultural tradition. Funeral rite is a critical point by which a chain is linked. Sons establish their independent status in the first time after the funeral rite of their parents.

In the process of separation with the dead, village integration is manifested in the former period. Villagers cease their economic activity and the dead's house becomes the center of the village during the funeral rite. At the hearing of the news of a villager's death, household heads gather to the house of the deceased. Villagers who belong to the same mutual aid association for funeral as the kin of the dead watch the dead overnight. Next day a coffin is brought to the dead's house. After simple ceremony the corpse is put inside the coffin with a pile of "paper money" by villagers. At the night the kin of the dead per-

form Teochiu "funeral drama" led by a funeral troupe which is sent from outside the village. In this "funeral drama" the relatives of the deceased symbolically send his soul to the other world with the help of a Buddhist deity. Before the "funeral drama" villagers as well as friends and acquaintances of the dead's relatives bring condolence money to the house where the death has occurred. They become spectators of the drama. In the next morning the corpse is carried to the cemetery led by a funeral procession consisting of friends and acquaintances of the dead and the kin of the dead. At the cemetery the dead body is buried by the villagers.

Villagers separate with the dead at the burying. They return to their normal life at that time. But the relatives of the dead have to continue to worship for the deceased during 100 days (counted from the day of death). In this latter period of the process of separation with the dead, the dead's house is isolated from the rest of the village. During this period the kin of the deceased have to obey several kinds of taboos. They gather and worship at the dead's house on particular days of lunar calendar. Villagers do not participate in these worship sessions at all. On the 100th day they perform the rite of closing mourning period, after which they can return to their normal village life. The dead is then installed at the household altar and the tomb as an ancestor.