

Traditional Theatrical Entertainments of Chinese Colonies in South-East Asia

Festivities and Local Theatricals during the months of July,
August and September (on Agricultural Almanac)

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During the three months last year (Sept.–Nov., 1979), we have made a preliminary survey and tried to select several places and times most suitable for the general investigation of Chinese festivities which have been handed down among the Chinese people scattered over the whole area of South-East Asia. The report in the end will cover not only the traditional festivities themselves, but their relevance to the sponsors (whether they are linked together by clannish, provincial, professional or religious ties), which are to be elucidated from historical, ethnological, literary and linguistic view-points. The result of our investigation will be published in four parts.

The present report is concerned with the Festival of Hungry Ghost in Singapore and is intended to give a fair idea how and why we have selected the following places and times for our investigation of it which is customally held there in July. Chinese residents of Singapore have their origins mostly in Fujian 福建 Fuzhou 福州, Guangdong 廣東, Chaozhou 潮州, and Hainandao 海南島, among whom only those who came from Fujian 福建 Guangdong 廣東 and Chaozhou 潮州 are still holding their festivities in some splendour. In the course of our preliminary survey, we had a rare opportunity of observing the Festival from the beginning to the end on Tangjong Pagar Rd, Singapore. It was sponsored by Fuyi Gongjian Pudu 福邑公建普度, the members of which are of minority group from Fuzhou 福州 and they explained to us

minutely how it came down to them. We managed to hear directly from main actress of the dramatic company, who told us how actors (and actresses) used to be and are trained for several roles and how they conceived the relation between festivity and theatre. The present report mainly consists of these materials we have collected.

The remaining three parts will report respectively the results of our work on (II) the festival and theatricals on the birthday of Gods (especially of Qitian-Dasheng 齊天大聖), (III) those of Jiuhuangye 九皇爺 and their relation with the sponsors in Malaysia (inquiries made on Penang Island), and (IV) the relation between the clans and the festivities of their patronizing deities in Thailand.