

**ANCESTOR WORSHIP PRACTISED
BY CHINESE LIVING IN YANGON CITY, MYANMAR
-FROM RELIGIOUS ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES-**

MA (THESIS)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is entitled to Ancestor Worship Practised by Chinese living in Yangon City, Myanmar from Religious Anthropological Perspectives. The aim of this study is to explore the Chinese people who practice ancestor worship in Kheng Hock Keong Temple and Guanyin Gumiao Temple in Yangon, Myanmar. And the objectives are to investigate the concept of Chinese ancestor worship, to identify the meaning and significance of ancestor worship, to describe the persistence of traditional belief system of Chinese ancestor worship and to analyze the nature their cooperativeness and social unity through their ceremonies. To meet these aim and objectives, the study was made by using qualitative research methods including participant observation, direct observation, key informant interview, informal interview, individual interview, oral history and visual anthropology. There were two key informant interviews and 70 informants of Chinese people who believe in ancestor worship and perform rituals in Kheng Hock Keong Temple and Guanyin Gumiao Temple to collect the data concerned with ancestor worship practised by Guangdong, Hokkien and Myanmar-Chinese. Many Chinese households in Myanmar still practise ancestor worship. They believe that deceased family members have a continued existence and ability to look after remaining family members and their descendants and influence the fortune of the living things. They offer various kinds of worship to their ancestors who live in spiritual world to be happy and satisfied. In return, they hope to get blessing from their ancestors who passed away. In Myanmar especially in study areas, house wife and her mother-in-law lead this ceremony by preparing for necessities of festival. When they celebrate festival, all family members participate in the ceremony. They accept ancestor worship is one of the duties of offspring toward parents. They believe that ancestor worship is traditional culture which is transmitted from generation to generation and it must be maintained. Their belief on ancestor worship is reinforced the unity of the family through events and festivals. They accept their ancestors as still alive in their mind forever who are actually death. It makes the amorousness among their relatives or kin group. It is a kind to pay back for gratitude toward parents.

Keywords: Chinese, Ancestor, Ancestor Worship, Veneration,
Religious Ceremony, Traditional belief system, Social unity

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CHAPTER (1)

INTRODUCTION

The Chinese have been a presence in Myanmar for over a thousand years. Sharing a 2171 km border with China, Myanmar has experienced a long history of Chinese migration and Chinese contact. After World War 2, the Chinese took over many of the trading and retail jobs that were left when Indians departed the country (Mya Than, 1997).

Most Chinese people from Myanmar believe in Theravada Buddhism and practise Buddha teachings (Dhamma), besides they also accept and practise Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism beliefs, such as the worship of Guanyin (Guanyin: is an East Asian spiritual figure of mercy, and a bodhisattva associated with compassion as venerated by Mahayana Buddhists, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guanyin, 2016). In Myanmar, there are many of the Chinese temples and clan associations. They maintain and preserved Chinese culture. Most of the festivals and rituals are celebrated in respective temples. There are several notable Chinese temples in Yangon, including Fushan Si Temple (a Buddhist temple), Kheng Hock Keong Temple (a Taoist temple dedicated to Goddess Mazu) (Goddess Mazu: Chinese Goddess of the Sea, Erin de Satiago, 2014) and Guanyin Gumiao Temple (a Buddhist temple dedicated to Guanyin).

Today, there is still a Chinese community in Myanmar. The area around Yangon and Lower Burma was traditionally populated with Han Chinese (such as Hokkien and Guangdong) from Fujian and Guangdong provinces. And then, Han Chinese from Yunnan province live in Mandalay and Upper Burma (such as Kokang). Each ethnic group has its own particularities that have enriched their ancestor practices.

Chinese were immigrated into Myanmar since their progenitor reign and being Myanmar citizenship. They live in the Myanmar community as a long time, they still maintain their traditional practice. They believe in the spiritual life after death.

Many Chinese households in Myanmar still practise ancestor worship. They believe that deceased family members have a continued existence and ability to look after remain family members and their descendants and influence the fortune of the

