

## RELEVANCE OF THE CULTURE OF TOWN-GOD WORSHIP AND THE TRANSNATIONAL CHINESE COMMUNITY

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### Abstract

*As an important community culture of Chinese society, the Chinese worship culture ties the overseas Chinese together, and the evolution and spreading of that culture in Southeast Asia, the vital habitation of overseas Chinese, have a typical significance to the research on the Transnational Chinese Community.*

*The Town-god worship-based cultural circle initially formed in Southeast Asia created a belief structure centered in the core of the “Chinese mainland-Southeast Asia-Chinese Taiwan” sub-region. The existence of this cultural circle shows the trend of both dispersed development and inoculated development of a dispersed Chinese community. Moreover, the organizational system formed by the internal interaction of the belief and custom systems integrates the origin of such with an ethnic relationship, thus producing an original culture with unique oriental cultural characteristics. This cultural tradition can be inherited from generation to generation through the spread of belief and custom. At the same time, the structure of the Town-god worship culture shifted from a “Differential Mode of Association” to more reflect that of a “Group Structure”. Under the trend of accelerated integration in the region, the Chinese faith and its customs have evolved into an ethnic symbol. In the process of this shift, the modern management mode and the embedded cultural genes of the community have adapted to the demands this development of transnational Chinese groups necessitates/requires.*

**Key Words:** Southeast Asia; Town-god Worship; the Culture of Worship; The transnational Chinese; Chinese Community; Connection.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The word “discretization” is closely connected to immigration and migration. The dispersed Chinese community has become a noticeable existence that beyond the boundary, time and space. In mainland China, this kind of community is usually called the Transnational Chinese Community, but even one person of this kind can be called transnational Chinese. Therefore, the Transnational Chinese Community is used to refer to dispersed Chinese community hereafter.

The culture of worship is an important part of Chinese traditional culture and has deep influence on Chinese Society. It spreads to every corner of the world and becomes the root of culture in Chinese community as Chinese people migrate overseas. It integrates with local culture and passes on from generation to generation.

## **1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

With the development of world Town-god worship alliance, the discussion about Town-god culture and communications around worship in “Chinese Mainland--Southeast Asia-Chinese Taiwan” sub-region is incredibly frequent. The relevant research results is mostly about the folk worship and its festival celebration; Those related to internal interaction and communications of the worship system are mostly about the origin of the worship, and rarely touch upon dispersed Chinese community. This is to base on the observation in field study of cultural anthropology, and the basic research results of the collected papers of Town-god seminars.

## **2. ANALYSIS**

The town-god worship in Singapore and Malaysia will be used as examples to illustrate the local presence and influence of non-governmental organizations of Southeast Asian ethnic Chinese.

### **2.1 The characteristics and local existence of the culture of Town-god worship in Southeast Asia**

Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia are in general linked by the same worship and by blood and marriage. They normally build communities and develop in groups. After their worship systems and clan associations develop and grow to a large scale, they would like to set up charity foundations and run Chinese schools. Through providing charity services, they consistently integrate into every area in countries of residence, including economic, social, cultural areas, and make great contributions to these countries.

The Chinese communities in Southeast Asia are in different forms and circles. People who have the same place of origin establish "guild halls"; those who share the same political interests establish ethnic Chinese parties. Business men organize Chinese chambers of commerce. Organizations such as temples and Taoist associations are established by people who have the same worship. The culture of worship activities promote coherence among the Chinese, and the activity itself has become part of Chinese community's culture. In Indonesia, during Dragon Boat

Festival, temples would offer sacrifice to zongzi, traditional Chinese rice-dumpling. Devotees nearby gather in the temple with their children and erect raw eggs until eggs fall down themselves at 7:30 p.m.

In modern times, it has become a trend that Chinese communities run their own companies. As for the culture of Town-god worship, it changed and integrated with local culture, and emphasized more on promoting and developing the Chinese traditional folk culture, such as Chinese Taoism and Kung fu, so as to manifest and optimize the ethnicity of folk culture. Chinese are working together based on this ethnicity, at the same time. they are consistently making contributions to local economy, society and culture.

### **2.1.1 Changes of Town-god worship in Southeast Asia**

The town-god worship here should be the one whose main body is the southern Fujian ethnic group in the "China-Southeast Asia-Taiwan region" sub-region. Although the town-god worship originated in Shanxi, it is based on the multi-divine cultural characteristics of Minnan and its rich cultural atmosphere. The increasingly frequent sub-regional interaction and alliance promotes the friendship between the town's god temples and forms a letter the vulgar influence center and elite leaders of many places, thus a worldwide network of worship gradually being established.

The Chinese Town-god worship originates from ancient times. The Chinese ancestors had great worship towards their town and cities. In the earliest stages, they held initial sacrifice activities for their town and cities. Then they personalized their town, and created Town-god. Finally the image of humanistic spirits, such as Mr. Town-god and Mrs. Town-god, were brought to the world. Nearly all the Town-gods are sages or saints who have made huge contributions to common people and they have become the idol to common people and officers, but individual Town-gods are ghosts or gods that protected the country and people according to the legend.

Therefore, the culture of Town-god worship lasts for thousand years, which is because it actually represents the values of families and nations. The organizational system of Town-god temple was always matching to the political system of the dynasty at that time. It has generally acknowledged truth Dept., law and justice Dept., supervision Dept. and etc. It is said that Town-god is in charge of the Hades.

Southeast Asia is the habitation of overseas Hokkien ethnic group. The Hokkien folk beliefs, including Town-god belief Town-god belief was given power to spread and inherit by its characteristics of de-politicalization and folksy charm, as well as the legends of miraclesThe Town-god temple in Southeast Asia is closely related to the ancestral temple in China. The ancestral temples are basically at the place of the ancestral home of early immigrants. Moving the god from the place of ancestral home to the country that they live in is the beginning of spreading and changing of Chinese traditional culture of worship.

There are two ways in the spreading of Town-god worship. Dividing into different streams according to their origin ancestor is the main aspect. In this way, both the organization and the title of their temple are nearly the same with that of their ancestor's temple. The other way connected more with the local culture, for they established a title system according to the local political system. For example, in South Vietnam, the town-god was called the Town-god Empire, which reduces the connection between local town-god temple and the ancestor temple. Another example is that the earliest Chinese temple in Pontianak, Indonesia is the Tua Pek Kong Temple, and two accompanied temples-- Goddess' Palace and Prince Temple were built later. The funny thing is,

like most Chinese temple in Pontianak, Tua Pek Kong Temple is right next to the temple of Na Tuk Kong, the god of Malay. This kind of local multiple inclusiveness of worship is also an important characteristics of the changing of worship.

Obviously, trying to judge Chinese loyalty to their motherland or place of origin through the changing of the culture of worship is farfetched. The characteristics of globalization of transnational Chinese are based on the need of their own existence and development, which has nothing to do with their nationality and race. However, the preference and inheriting of Chinese traditional culture highlights the ethnicity of Chinese, especially the Hokkien ethnic communities which are deeply influenced by Hokkien multiple culture of worship. Through the spreading of worship, generations of Chinese Hokkien integrate into local society while maintaining their traditional ethnic character at the same time. The preservation of ethnicity is a reflection of the pride and confidence of Chinese people, and is also a distinctive trait of ethnic existence.

For example, the rise of Singapore's Leek Bacheng Temple has benefited from elite leaders and deep-rooted ancestral ancestors' foot-holding strategies. First of all, under the leadership of Chen Tianlai, the president of the Singapore Taoist Association, he initiated the reform of his own governance structure and successfully operated the governance structure of the council of the Leek Bacheng Temple. Secondly, Singapore formed close contact with the Qingxi Ancestral Temple, attached great importance to absorbing the cultural elements of the ancestral temple to establish its orthodox status, and at the same time promoted the restoration of the folk worship activities like "Town-god's spring tour" of the Anxi Ancestral Temple. Then, by consolidating the economic foundation and cultural influence, Singapore deliberately innovates in the promotion and management of its worship culture, and expands the system of charity, education and service system. "From the initial Taoist and Taoist courses to the establishment of town-god health care, the Town-god Academy, the Town-god Art Institute and even the Taoist College." After 2000, it set up the Charity Service Entity Hougang Family Service Center, the Hougang Town-god School Student Care Center and the Macpherson City Care Center, and also hosted the First World Town-god Conference successfully.

At the same time, Qingxi Town-god Temple has sub-furnaces in Malaysia, Brunei Sands Dongyue, Indonesian New Pasar and other places. Malaysian Johor Bahru God Temple, Ai Dahua Town-god Temple, Zhenlin Mountain Town-god Temple, and Lin Luo Eastern Prison Town-god Temple are representative sub-furnaces in Malaysia. Every year, when the Anxi Town-god patrols in spring, a large number of worshippers will make pilgrimages to the Qingxi Ancestral Temple from Southeast Asia. This worship to the ancestral source is developing ceaselessly. The Shishi town-god, which is divided into the Quanzhou area, is also influential in Myanmar, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Kaohsiung, Xinhua, Tainan and Taichung in Taiwan. As a result, the Qingxi Town-god Temple was linked to the Shishi Town-god Temple and the sub-furnaces in Taiwan and Southeast Asia, and the spiritual Town-god worship culture circle gradually formed.

It can be concluded that civil organizations like temple systems are representative of the Chinese people's organizations in Southeast Asian countries. In the 8 major dramas during the Qingxi Town-god Spring Petrol in 2016, there were 6 funded by Singapore believers and each costed RMB 3,200. Among them, one was donated by Singapore Pu'an Palace, one was donated by Singapore Yuqiang Trailer and Yuqiang Trading Group, and the other four were donated by Singapore citizens. This manifests that the Town-god belief has sprawled into the "ethnic Chinese" society in Singapore and even Southeast Asia, especially in West Malaysia, where Chinese families generally worship it.

## 2.1.2 The local influence and contribution of the spreading of Town-god worship in Southeast Asia

The celebration of Town-god worship has become a platform for communication of Chinese traditional culture, economy and trade for overseas Chinese. The interactions between the leading organizations and node-mechanisms on the platform are frequent.

As a vital node-city of cultural communication of Hokkien at home and abroad, Xiamen is also an area where transnational Chinese play an active role. Nowadays, Town-god temple in Xiamen has served as the bond of “Chinese mainland- Southeast Asia-Taiwan” sub-cultural circle. As a result, it itself participates in many specific domestic and oversea activities about Town-god worship exchange and Chinese folk culture. (See Table 1)

Table 1 Overview of the exchange of worship and folk customs between Xiamen Town-god Temple and Southeast Asia (2014-2017)

		Singapore	Malaysia	Thailand	Oversea academic groups and individuals
Town-god worship system pilgrimage groups (times)	2014	3	2	1	17
	2015	4	2	1	25
	2016	4	3	2	10
	2017	4	3	0	1
World Wu Clan association	Actively participating in various activities, cultural festivals and ancestral ceremonies of the Wu Family Clan Association in the world has gradually become one of the exchange points of the World Wu Clan Association in Xiamen. And a large number of overseas countrymen make root-seeking tours every year. In 2016, Xiamen Town-god Temple participated in the Wu clan association activities for 11 times, two of which were for overseas exchanges. In 2017, it participated in the Fifth World Wu Clan Conference held in Malaysia.				
National culture inheritance	From the initial folk martial arts exchange to the development of the program studying Chinese ancient civilization, the public welfare exchange on the traditional culture of the Chinese nation has gradually formed a pattern. In 2017, the “Folk Culture Research Association” was listed in the Xiamen Town-god Temple.				

Source: sort out according to the folk customs customs and academic exchange activities data of Ximen Town-god Temple from 2014 to, worship 2017.

The Town-god Temple in Xiamen successfully extended the gathering function of traditional temples to more than the believers and clan, and harmoniously blended the folk beliefs and foreign cultures in the localities to create a multi-ethnic worship customs and cultural field with a global vision. In 2003, Xiamen Town-god Temple took the lead in establishing a website. Many overseas believers make pilgrimage tours after getting access to the website. With the expansion of influence at home and abroad, in 2007, the Penang Town-god Temple made pilgrimage to the Town-god Temple in Xiamen to seek its root. The establishment of the status of the node and the use of modern network technology have made the node function of Xiamen Town-god Temple increasingly perfect. In the exchange and dissemination of folk beliefs and cultures, the embedding of new technologies enables the intergenerational inheritance of the Town-god worship culture. "It is no longer a one-way teaching and learning, but mutual inspiration and support." Colliding with new culture and the cultural carrier, this small Town-god temple has a unique vitality and prospects.

The grassroots and folklore insistence makes Xiamen Town-god Temple an ideal non-governmental exchange node. The Southeast Asian Chinese who return to the Chinese mainland

to seek their root and the overseas southern Fujian people who go to the mainland to worship the ancestral temple usually travel via Xiamen. With the frequent exchanges of customs and festivals, the Xiamen Town-god Temple is actively integrated into the exchange of the world's Town-god belief system, especially the festivals of Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia's Town-god temple system, with the aim of deepening its node function. According to the records of the activities of the Xiamen Town-god Temple over the years, from the participation of the Singapore Town-god Belief System in 2015 to the participation of the Indonesian Town-god Belief System in 2016, the festivals on both sides of the Strait have developed into world-level festivals and regional folk cultural events, which enables the worship culture to interact and spread in the sub-region.

Meanwhile, the fact that the world town-god system attaches great importance to the headstream of town-god worship and the Chinese tradition of eagerness to find their roots and ancestors promote the transnational communications of Chinese worship groups. The communications deepen the interaction and alliance in the Town-god worship system, and relevant economic and trade linkages as well.

The town-god worship system in Singapore is a typical one. It devoted to reform in organizational structure since 1980 and has become one of the top organizations that leads "Chinese mainland--Southeast Asia-Chinese Taiwan" integrated alliance of sub-region worship system. So far, it has continuously held successive "World Town-god culture" activities, in which the elites from all the areas and every ethnic group in Singapore take part. They show the leading role of ethnic Chinese among several ethnic groups in Singapore. The annual "World Town-god Culture" activity not only expands and deepens the worship alliance's network of ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, but also increases the local consumption. Therefore, the town-god worship system in Singapore has made huge contributions to the communications of Chinese town-god worship culture, the local economy and trade, the harmonious interaction between different ethnic groups and other social, economic and cultural constructions in Singapore. It receives recognitions from Singapore government and other ethnic groups, and also wins praises from the world Town-god worship system. Many Chinese even win prizes for their contribution to the society. The worship contributions also set a model for other countries in Southeast Asia.

Through ten years of unremitting efforts, Singapore Town-god worship system took a lead in building a cultural circle of world Town-god worship. In particular, the Town-god worship cultural circle of "Chinese mainland--Southeast Asia-Chinese Taiwan" sub-region is developing rapidly and has an actively inside interaction. It imperceptibly promotes the process of sharing, promoting and coordination in economic, social and cultural areas between countries and regions in the sub-regional cultural circle. It also demonstrates a way of development in which organizational management promotes the worship cultural communication and further influences the world worship cultural circle. What's more, it presents the development prospects that culture and influence of temple expand to economic, trade, cultural areas and many other regions in full scale. This kind of diffusion highlights itself in 2016. For example, the Qing Xi Town-god Spring Celebration in 2016 has become a presentation of Hokkien worship culture as well as a traditional folk culture. It attracts far more participants than the numbers inside the Town-god worship system. The representatives from Qingshui Tan in Xiamen and Bao Zheng Temple also attended. The new generations of Chinese came to Anxi to participate in the activities with their whole families. During the Spring Celebration, plenty of public temples in Southeast Asia even respectfully move their Town-god to Qing Xi Ancestor's Temple to attend the celebration. In 2016, the Qingxi Town-god ancestral temple was completed expanding. The donation list shows that there are 69 gods to be enshrined and each receives donation from 6,000 to 30,000 yuan, and nearly 80% (54) have been pledged. Among them, Singapore believers pledged 37, accounting for 70% of the total amount of pledges. In addition, Malaysian believers pledged 3, Brunei believers donated 1 and Anxi local believers donated 13. Although this set of figures does not prove the relationship between pledges and the degree of belief, it reflects to some extent the strong economic strength and active participation of the Singapore Town-god worship system, as well as the closer connection among the world Town-god worship cultural circle.

The Town-god worship system in Malaysia is one that has more complete inherits than most of other systems. Its Town-god worship system insists on the positions that based on simple Chinese traditional culture and charity, and improve the local influence and recognitions of Town-god worship system.

The large Town-god temples in Malaysia mainly concentrate in West Malaysia. It is also the area where most of the southern Fujian ethnic group live. The Chinese community here is often a village-based unit that completely preserves the traditional Chinese society and Chinese cultural customs, rather than fusing various ethnic groups and cultures like Singapore. The Western Malaysian Chinese community is the most traditional Chinese southern Fujian ethnic group settlement, so the Chinese traditional etiquette is well passed down here, especially the culture in Southern Fujian. The Town-god worship organizations of the various regions in Malaysia also have their own features of beliefs and customs. The gods and accompanying gods are different. The Malaysian government is laissez-faire to freedom of belief. Although there is still a hidden worry about the estrangement between Malaysian Chinese and Malays caused by political factors, the ethnic integration of the people is very pleasant.

The offspring of Chinese and multiracial people are influenced by what they constantly see and hear especially in west Malaysia, and their connections and friendship are further improved by the culture of worship.

As a minority group in West Malaysia, the West Malaysian Chinese with a population of less than 30% do not have a large surname, so the local influence of the Town-god belief system is far less than that of Singapore Chinese with a population of 80%, but because they manifest their insistence on national culture through the internal assistance and external charitable participation of the Chinese people's organization, the West Malaysian Chinese have also formed a distinct national characteristics of local presence and integration. Mutual assistance in the Malaysian Town-god belief system has continued to the present as a tradition. The annual temple celebration has deepened the mutual recognition and the sense of organization existence in the believers, and has bestowed the spiritual destination and organizational identity on them. For example, the believers who have difficulties can submit the application for relief to the temple. In addition, the public temple also represents the believers to make donation to well-known charities in the society for disaster relief and school establishment in order to demonstrate the responsibility and existence of Chinese society. In the 1980s, the Town-god temple in Muxi, New Town, Johor, Malaysia, divided from Qingxi ancestral temple, upheld the spirit of mutual assistance and public welfare. For one thing, it united the Chinese, and for another, it actively participated in local undertakings, as a result, its strength and influence are strengthening and expanding in recent years because of good operation.

Therefore, the worship system in Chinese group represents the culture of the ethnic Chinese in organizing themselves and getting united in Southeast Asia. The significance of the existence of worship groups, lies beyond the worship itself and even beyond the connotation of the group. It serves as an important platform and way for Chinese to develop together and integrate with the local society.

### **2.1.3 The interaction between ancestor temple and branch temple brings along the interaction between culture and economy in worship area**

The Qing Xi Town-god temple in Anh Xi town, Fujian province is the ancestor temple of the branch temple in Singapore, Malaysia, Wen Sha Dongyue in Brunei, new brake in Indonesia and many other places. This ancestor temple has an important position inside the worship system in “Chinese mainland--Southeast Asia-Chinese Taiwan” sub-region. A large part of the charity fund used to rebuilt and expand the Qing Xi ancestor temple is donated by the believers in Singapore.

At present, the interaction activities between ancestor temple and branch temple are mostly held in public temple. Because of the folk festival, the communications between Taoist priest

group and folk art groups, such as Taiwanese opera, the traditional art of the voice in Southern China, the waist drum team and the bass drum team, and the communication of worship culture between the believers in Hokkien area and Southeast Asia is increasingly frequent. People from the branch temples in Southeast Asia would take part in the annual Town-god Spring Celebration that is held by the Qing Xi ancestor temple. (Table 2)

Although the statistics in Table 1 could not prove the connection between the donation situation and degree of faith, it reflects to a certain extent the situation of strong economic strength as well as active participation of Singapore, and the closer association inside the world Town-god worship cultural circle. After 2013, the Town-god temple in Indonesia officially began to participate in the big events of the world Town-god worship system. This kind of participation, to a certain degree, brings the Indonesian Chinese folk groups closer to the communication of culture, economy and trade inside the system and that of “Chinese mainland--Southeast Asia-Chinese Taiwan” sub-region.

Table 2 List of donation of branch temple in Southeast Asia during the 2016 Qing Xi Town-god Spring Celebration

	Singapore	Public Temple	Enterprises	Family believers
Performance	6 times (¥3200/each time )	1 time (Pu An Palace)	1 time (Singapore Yu Qiang Truck and Trade Co. Ltd)	4 times
Subscription for the extension of the Ancestor Temple	Singapore	Malaysia	Brunei	Indonesia
	donation for building 37 Buddhists	donation for building 3 Buddhists	donation for building 1 Buddhists	-

Source: Author’s illustration

The data sources are derived from the 2016 Town-god temple Spring Celebration in Qing Xi Town.

Meanwhile, because the believers focus a lot on talking about their worship, not focusing on the economic investment that is not relevant to their worship and political topics, the interaction inside the worship system is generally small in scale, and the number of projects is limited. However, the Southeast Asian Town-god system actively participate in the worship culture celebration held by Fujian Town-god system, and the two systems are closely connected. Most of the sponsors of Town-god culture celebration in “Chinese mainland--Southeast Asia-Chinese Taiwan” sub-region are Chinese groups, and it would form a pattern of inside interaction. The function of attracting investment of the celebration has been neglected by the culture and folk communication activities.

The folk festivals also promote the increasingly frequent exchanges between the public temple Masters and the folk art groups, especially the folk songs of southern Fujian, the Nanyin, the waist drum team, the drum team, etc., which are popular in Southeast Asia, and the folk art groups have become messengers and beneficiaries of communication of folk culture.

In Singapore and Malaysia, the Zhangzhou Folk Songs Troupe is invited to be stationed all the year round, and a one-year visa between the two countries provided convenience for that. It is understood that there are more than 20 people in the Zhangzhou Opera Troupe. They usually perform at night and can perform an average of 20 times a month. Because the temple fair of the Malaysian public temples have a tradition of making songs unit and singing operas, the troupe often tour among villages, and remuneration for each performance is higher than that of a performance of 2,000 yuan to 3,000 RMB in the southern part of Fujian. Nearly 40% of the Chinese who come to see the show are young people, which shows its popularity. The folk drum team and the singing team from Southern Fujian province are also often invited to perform, so



those believers who go to the Qingxi ancestral temple to make pilgrimage will also donate the traditional operas such as the song station and the opera. Hence, they invisibly revived the folk art and art groups that is still active in southern Fujian.

The Zhangzhou Opera Troupe and the Fujian Opera Troupe, which once performed in the Qingxi Town-god Festival, were all invited to the Singaporean Bacheng Town-god Temple to make a special performance, which also drove the consumption economy of both sides. According to the exchange statistics of the past five years, the Qingxi Ancestral Temple has been visited by believers from Singapore and Malaysia almost every day. The size of the pilgrimage group is often about 50 people and sometimes may be as little as three or five. The largest number of pilgrimage groups even reaches hundreds of people. There are at most 5 pilgrimage groups during the Spring Festival. When two important festivals, Qingxi Town-god Petrol Day and the Town-god's birthday overlap, the overseas temples must organize pilgrimage groups to go back to the ancestral temple. Over 10,000 people will come to the temple fair. These pilgrimage groups from Southeast Asia consume about 2,000 RMB per person in worshipping the Anxi Ancestral Temple. Apart from expenses on donations, money used to thrive the temple, worship, etc., they eat, live and entertain themselves here and bring Anxi local products like tea, rice noodles home as gifts, which, also somewhat stimulates local consumption. At the same time, the believers' round-trip airfare and tour group expenses also boost the country's tourism economy to a certain degree. The Anxi group, which is invited to participate in the Town-god temple fair in Southeast Asia, is usually around 10 people. On the return trip, everyone will also bring local specialties such as wine home. It can be seen that the frequent exchanges between the Southeast Asian Town-god worship system and the folk belief system of the Qingxi ancestral temples have strengthened the cultural ties between Fujian Province and Southeast Asian countries.

In this way, celebration, which is the core of simple worship culture, and economy and trade, which are the extra activities based on the trust and worship communication, keep relevant independence, then the worship culture would become more closer to people and happier.

Table 3 Exchanges of major festivals in the World Town-god belief system

Time	Sponsor	Topic	Participants
2007	Singapore Amaranth Patong Temple	The 1st World City Town-god Faith Friendship Conference and the 1st International Town-god Culture Symposium	The Town-god temples in mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and other cities arranged celebrations simultaneously to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Amaranth Patong Temple enshrining the Qingxi Lord, held activities like the Town-god cultural exhibition, the Asian folk culture night and launched the World Peace Prayer Conference and Race Harmony, mutual trust
2008	Singapore Amaranth Patong Temple	The 2nd World City Town-god Faith Friendship Conference and the 2nd International Town-god Culture Symposium	The Town-god temples in China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and other cities
2009	Sodality of Town-god Temple in Taiwan	The 3rd World City Town-god Faith Friendship Conference and the 3rd International Town-god Culture Symposium	The Town-god temples in Fujian province, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and other cities take part in it; Undertaken by Town-god Temples in Taipei, Hsinchu, Chayi, Kaohsiung and jointly run by Taipei City Government, Civil affairs department of Taipei City government, Cultural Affairs Bureau of Taipei City government and Secretariat of Taipei City government.
2010	Singapore Amaranth Patong Temple	The 4th World City Town-god Faith Friendship Conference and the 4th	The Town-god temples in mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and other cities

Time	Sponsor	Topic	Participants
		International Town-god Culture Symposium	
2011		The 5th World City Town-god Faith Friendship Conference and the 5th International Town-god Culture Symposium; The 1 <sup>st</sup> Cultural Festival of Fujian Province and Taiwan	46 Town-god Temple in mainland China, Taiwan, Hongkong, Singapore, Malaysia and other cities and more than 200 people took part in. Undertaken by Fuzhou Town-god Temple management committee.
2012	Town-god Temple management committee in Shishi, Quanzhou	The 1 <sup>st</sup> Shishi Yongningwei City& Town god cultural Festival	An Investment signing ceremony has also been held before the ceremony.
2013	Town-god Temple management committee in Qingxi, Quanzhou	The 6th World City Town-god Faith Friendship Conference and the 6th International Town-god Culture Symposium	115 Town-god Temple in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and other cities and more than 500 people took part in. Undertaken by Fuzhou Town-god Temple management committee.
2015	Fujian Cultural & Economic Exchange Center; Fuzhou municipal Taiwan affairs office; Fuzhou Gulou district people's government	The 5th World City Town-god Faith Friendship Conference and the 5th International Town-god Culture Symposium; The 2nd Cultural Festival of Fujian Province and Taiwan	Undertaken by Fuzhou Town-god management committee, the town-god system in mainland China, Taiwan and Malaysia, and more than 400 people attended.
2015	Xiacheng Town-god Temple management committee.	352th anniversary celebration of building of Town-god Temple in Xiacheng, Xiamen	The town-god system in mainland China, Taiwan and Malaysia, and almost 1500 people attended.
2016	Xiamen Xia city Town-god Temple management committee.	353th anniversary celebration of building of Town-god Temple in Xiacheng, Xiamen	The town-god system in mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia take part in. Besides amazing Folk show, the "Weekend Market" was also hold, which attached citizens from Southern Fujian area.
annually	Qingxi city Town-god Temple management committee.	Qingxi "Town-god's Spring tour activity" and Birthday	

Source: sort out according to News, activation record & interview data

#### 2.1.4 The structure of worship culture in Town-god worship circle in Southeast Asia

The improving of the structure of worship culture definitely promotes the gather of Chinese worship group. To this end, Du Weiming's "Cultural China" three-layer symbolic world model is used as the basic model. According to the source stream structure, the world Town-god worship system is a organizing and cultural model connected with the "Town-god worship and Chinese cultural identity". In the first symbolic world of the model, it is the cultural system in ancestral hometown of the Town-god worship, the Chinese mainland. The second symbolic world is the Town-god cultural system in the Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao regions of China, Singapore and Malaysia, and their localized culture. The third symbolic world is the cultural system of worldwide Town-god belief and customs and other localized beliefs and customs scattered in Southeast Asian countries and regions, as well as cultural changes caused by non-Chinese and mixed-race people who are associated with the belief. The cultural difference between the three layers of the city's belief system is consistent with the spread of the world's Town-god belief and its influence, thus together constituting the influence space of the world's Town-god belief and culture. We could name the places that are influenced by both world Town-god worship culture and Chinese traditional culture as "Region A" (Fig. 1).

As stated previously, both the multiple expansions and integration of Xiamen Town-god temple and the organizational integration pattern of Qing Xi Town-god temple integrating into the world Town-god system present the character of headstream and folk. Both these two characters have provided support for the consensus of national unity for the process of the federalization of Chinese folk organizations. In this way, inside Region A, there could be the local spreading, changing and integrating of the core value of ethnic groups, the natural process of value transformation from “hometown” recognition to ethnic recognition and the ethnic cultural orientation of multi-dimensional as well as sticking to tradition. All these situations could be considered as the beginning and development of overseas Chinese culture.

Therefore, with the structure of world town-god culture developing, the Singapore Town-god system is rising and leading a developed pattern of organizational structure, management structure, worship culture and its relevant industrial development, social responsibility and charity activity in “Chinese mainland--Southeast Asia-Chinese Taiwan” sub-region, Region A shows that a particular innovative pattern of world Town-god worship culture called “Differential Mode of Association” has been created. Through organizational alliance, contract guarantee, donation and some other ways, Singapore Town-god worship system is penetrating into Qing Xi ancestor temple and is dominant in operation of its system pattern. This situation would lead the structure of Town-god worship culture changing from “Differential Mode of Association” to “Group Structure”, and further promote to form a worship cultural structure that is both united and pluralistic.

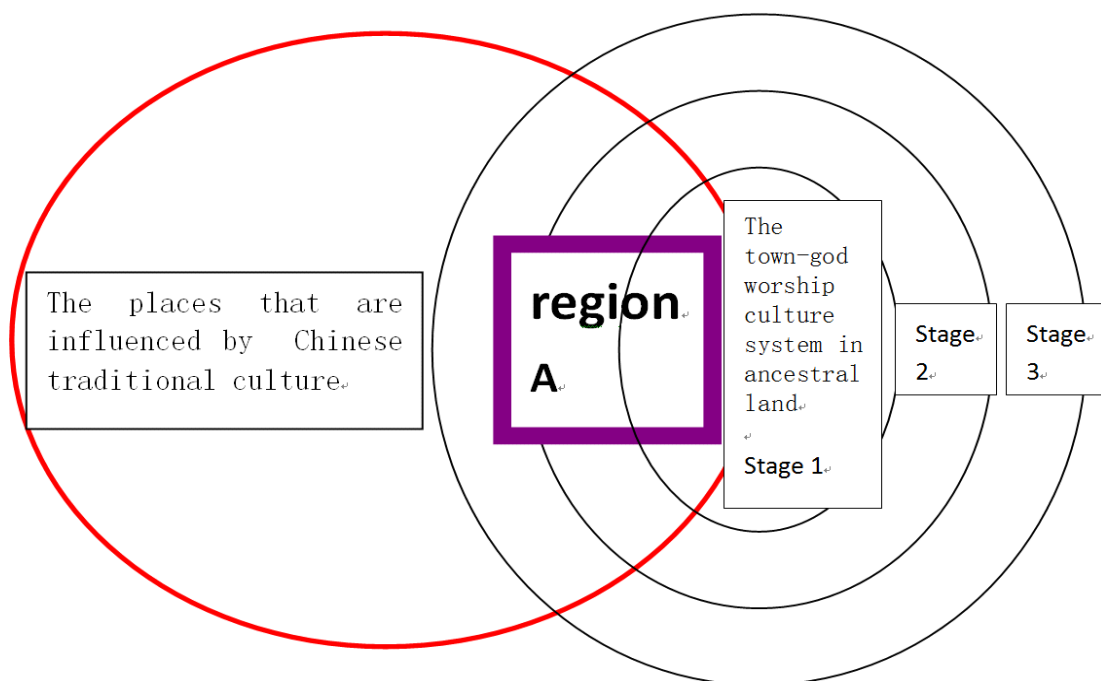


Figure 1. the “Differential Mode of Association” of the world Town-god worship system (Author’s illustration)

Notes: Region A represents the center of influence and innovation that embedded by cultural vitality

## 2.2 Transnational Chinese Community and Global Opening System

In the win-win pattern constructed by China and other countries, Transnational Chinese Community would be the beneficiary as well as the promoter. As the old Chinese saying goes, they will take full advantage of opportunity of “waterfront towers, the first to catch the moon -- first come, first served”, and develop themselves. Therefore, for the development of Transnational Chinese Community, the construction of global opening system is a interest-oriented pattern,

which includes global economy and trade network, transnational family career network and the expand of worship alliance.

### **2.2.1 The rapid development of internet technology quickly adapts to the characteristic of discretization of the Transnational Chinese Community**

The form of Transnational Chinese Community is based on interest preference, worship preference, culture preference and etc. Therefore, discretization is a inherent trait of Transnational Chinese Community. Meanwhile, the recognition and allegiance to the multiculturalism and dual identity of Transnational Chinese Community give the community the global view and universal values, and also play a role of engine, bond and lubricant. China's "new silk road" proposal has provided a wider developed space for the community. For the Chinese that is a part of or participate in the Transnational Chinese Community, the community provides an organizational platform to "going to the outside world"; for the overseas Chinese, it's an access to globalization and an opportunity to communicate with and develop in China. The internet services developed by Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, like the public number 12308, provide the former convenient and timely sense of security that usually could only be provided by the Chinese consulate. Not only that, the internet technology constructs a more discrete framework of the space and organizations of communities. The development of communities is no longer limited by time and space.

### **2.2.2 The inosculated development of Town-god worship culture circle and Transnational Chinese Community**

Southeast Asia is the main habitation of Hokkien Chinese. The characteristics of sea culture and multiple worships in Hokkien culture highlight themselves in Chinese communities in South Asia. Therefore, Southeast Asia is an area that shows great concentrations of worship culture.

There are four motive forces that attract transnational Chinese to join the Town-god worship cultural circle. The first is the international network of Town-god worship cultural circle, which is held together by the Hokkien cultural trait. The second is the purposes of making a profit, keeping oneself safe and searching for development. The third is their ethnic cultural characteristic which is based on Chinese traditional culture that inherits from generation to generation of Chinese ethnics in Southeast Asia. The last one is the functions of social contacting and discussing official business, which is determined by the practicability of Chinese folk culture.

Because the ethnic culture, the needs of development, cultural identity and the blurry boundary of Transnational Chinese Community, the interactions between Town-god worship cultural circle that has relatively clear organizational system and Transnational Chinese Community are inevitable. This kind of inosculated development of communities is also inevitable process of Transnational Chinese Community.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the Town-god worship cultural circle in Southeast Asia is a Chinese folk cultural alliance that consists of local folk organizations and the dispersed folk organizations. It has initially formed a worship cultural construction based on the core of "Chinese mainland--Southeast Asia-Chinese Taiwan" sub-region. The existence of this cultural circle shows the trend of both dispersed development and inosculated development of dispersed Chinese community. At the same time, internet technology and modern management are continually promoting the innovation, evolution and development of the organizational pattern and the culture of dispersed Chinese community.

The Town-god worship cultural circle in Southeast Asia has provided a better organizational platform for ethnic Chinese society to promote global development and make local contributions.

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