

## G-SEC WORKING PAPER No.22

### The prevalence of the worship of Goddess Lin Guniang by the ethnic Chinese in southern Thailand

TAMAKI, Mitsuko \*

December, 2007

**Keywords** ethnic Chinese, Thailand, folk religion, charity, ethnicity

#### Abstract

Goddess Lin Guniang is the characteristic deity worshiped by the ethnic Chinese in southern Thailand. From the 14th to 18th centuries, there was an Islamic kingdom named Patani in southernmost Thailand. Today, Malay Muslims still account for approximately 80% of the population there. In the 16th century, Lin Daoqian, a Chinese pirate, defected to Patani from Chaozhou in southern China and converted to Islam. It is believed that Lin Guniang, his younger sister, went there to take him back to China. But she failed and hung herself. It is unclear when this worship began, however it likely began in the late 19th century. At that time southern Thailand saw a massive ingress of Chinese immigrants, and a cultural conflict between Chinese and Malays affected this worship.

The worship of Lin Guniang is prevalent in southern Thailand due to the establishment of Shantang, a Chinese charity foundation, after the 1950s. Recently, Lin Guniang has been introduced to “Dejiao,” a Chinese religious association, in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia through the network of the ethnic Chinese. Because Shantang and Dejiao originated in Chaozhou, it is thus supposed that Chaozhou ethnicity is the main factor leading to the prevalence of this worship.

---

\* Visiting Researcher at Center of Overseas Chinese Studies of Takushoku University.  
E-mail: mtamaki@ner.takushoku-u.ac.jp

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to consider the local worship of Goddess Lin Guniang<sup>1</sup> by the ethnic Chinese in southern Thailand.

Many ethnic Chinese have settled in Southeast Asia. Most of them have already been naturalized in their host country; however, the degree of assimilation into the host society varies by country. It is considered that the difference of religion is one of the main reasons for such variation. Especially in Islamic countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, because of repressive policies toward Chinese immigrants, a comparatively deep division between the ethnic Chinese and the host society is evident. In Thailand, however, which has established Theravada Buddhism as the national religion, the ethnic Chinese have highly assimilated into a host society in Southeast Asia; they have no religious conflict and have freely been marrying into the host society for generations.

From the late 19th to the mid-20th century, there was a large influx of Chinese immigrant workers from south China into Thailand. Currently, ethnic Chinese account for more than 10% of the population in Thailand. The Thai government

---

<sup>1</sup> “Lin Guniang” means “the daughter of Lin’s family” in English.

does not release its population census by ethnic group. According to the statistics by the Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission of Taiwan;<sup>2</sup> however, 7 million ethnic Chinese were estimated to be in Thailand in 2005, which accounted for 11% of the total population.

As in other countries in Southeast Asia, the Chinese community in Thailand is divided mainly into 5 regional dialectical groups (known as “bang” in Chinese), namely, Chaozhou,<sup>3</sup> Kejia (or Hakka), Hainan, Guagzhou (or Canton), and Fujian (or Hokkien). According to an estimate by Dr. G. W. Skinner in 1955, Chaozhou speakers were predominant, and they accounted for 56% of Thailand’s Chinese population. Other groups were as follows: Kejia 16%, Hainan 12%, Guangzhou 7%, and Fujian 7% (Skinner, 1957:211). Basically, these percentages have not changed. The notable predominance of Chaozhou speakers is characteristic of the Chinese society in Thailand. In contrast, in neighboring Malaysia and Singapore, Fujian is the predominant dialectical group.

It is said that Chinese folk religion has syncretic characteristics of Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and animism (Sasaki, 1991:77). South China, the main

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.acac.gov.tw>

<sup>3</sup> In this paper, the romanization of Chinese words follows the Putonghua Pinyin system, except for names that have been incorporated into the English language, e.g., Taoism and Confucianism.

home region of the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, is known as an area where folk religion has been most popular in China, creating various local gods and goddesses. For example, Mazu, the Empress of Heaven, originated from a small district in Fujian and has gradually come to prevail throughout China. Furthermore, along with immigration from China, it spread mainly throughout Southeast Asia. Today, Mazu is professed widely by all Chinese people in Southeast Asia, regardless of their dialectical groups. On the other hand, many local deities are mainly professed by specific dialectical groups; for instance, the Goddess Shuiwei and the 108 Brothers God in Hainan, Master Song Dafeng in Chaozhou, and Master Qingshui in Fujian.

All these local deities originated in China and spread to Southeast Asia. In contrast, Goddess Lin Guniang, whom we will discuss in this paper, is a characteristic deity who originated in a legend of the ethnic Chinese living in Pattani Province in the southernmost part of Thailand bordering Malaysia. From the 14th to the 18th centuries, there was an Islamic kingdom named Patani.<sup>4</sup> Currently, Pattani and the neighboring two provinces, Yala and Naratiwat, are called “Three Provinces in the Deep South,” and the ethnic Malays still account

---

<sup>4</sup> The name of the kingdom is distinguished from the present province. In English, the former is Patani; the latter is Pattani.

for approximately 80% of the population there (see Table 1).

Table1 : Population by province in southern Thailand, 2000

	Population (‘000)	Buddhist (%)	Muslim (%)	Malay speaker (%)
Pattani	596.0	19.2	80.7	76.6
Yala	415.5	31.0	68.9	66.1
Naratiwat	662.4	17.9	82.0	80.4
Songkhla	1,255.7	76.6	23.2	4.6
Southern region*	8,087.5	71.7	27.9	16.4
Total in Thailand	60,916.4	94.2	4.6	2.2

Source: National Statistical Office, Thailand (<http://www.nso.go.th/>)

\* There are 14 provinces in southern region including the above 4 provinces.

In previous times, the Kingdom of Patani prospered as the base of East-West trade, and many Chinese people emigrated there from southern China. In the middle of the 16th century, a Chinese pirate named Lin Daoqian defected to the kingdom and worked for the Queen of Patani. It is believed that Lin Guniang, the younger sister of Lin Daoqian, came to Patani to take her brother back to their homeland. However, she failed and ultimately hung herself in grief.

Currently, the ethnic Chinese in southern Thailand have a deep faith in Lin Guniang as a goddess, despite the absence of concrete evidence corroborating her

existence. It is unclear when the worship of Lin Guniang, as we know it today, began. However, it is considered that it dates to the late 19th century, the time of a massive ingress of Chinese immigrant workers into southern Thailand. Since the 1950s, this worship has prevailed in other cities in southern Thailand, and recently it also came to be known in Bangkok and Northern Malaysia through the network of Chinese associations.

The worship of Goddess Lin Guniang has been scarcely studied. Dr. Skinner (1957:4-5) refers only to Lin Daoqian and Lin Guniang briefly in his classical work about the Chinese society in Thailand. And some Chinese scholars introduce the worship of Lin Guniang in their articles<sup>5</sup>; however, they do not seem to have made field surveys, and their analyses are not quite satisfactory. Moreover, the prevalence of its worship has never been studied.

In this paper, I will first present an outline about the worship of Lin Guniang in southern Thailand. Next I will examine why this worship has prevailed in several cities of southern Thailand, resulting from the establishment of the “Shantang” charity foundations by the ethnic Chinese after the 1950s. In conclusion I will consider that Lin Guniang recently has been introduced to regions other than

---

<sup>5</sup> e.g., Gao (2001) and Li (2004).

southern Thailand: to Bangkok and to northern Malaysia.<sup>6</sup>

## **I . Background of the worship of Lin Guniang**

### **1. The Kingdom of Patani and a Chinese pirate Lin Daoqian**

As mentioned above, from the 14th to the 18th centuries, there was an Islamic Kingdom named Patani: the sultanate of this kingdom extended over the present provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun, and parts of Songkhla in southern Thailand and over Kedah, Klantan, and Terengganu in Northern Malaysia. This kingdom prospered as the base of East-West trade with countries including Ayuttaya, China, Ryukyu and Japan. Many Chinese merchants from southern China settled there. It is unclear when Chinese people began to immigrate to Patani. However, it is considered that it was after 1567, when the Ming Dynasty modified the maritime bans that full-fledged immigration from China began. In the middle of the 16th century, a famous Chinese pirate, Lin Daoqian, defected to the kingdom from southern China. At that time people living in the southeastern coastal district in China suffered from attacks by Wakou. Wakou was a Japanese

---

<sup>6</sup> The basic data of this paper are based on the author's continuing fieldwork in Thailand and Malaysia from 2004 to 2007.

gang of pirates as originally defined, but later it consisted mainly of armed groups of Chinese contraband traders.

Lin Daoqian is considered to have been one of the powerful ringleaders of Wakou. There are several mentions about him in Chinese chronicles, such as “Ming Shi” (the official chronicle of Ming Dynasty) and “Chaozhou Fu Zhi” (the local chronicle of Chaozhou Province). The biography of Lin Daoqian in “Chaozhou Fu Zhi,” volume 38, describes that he was smart, but sly and cruel. He was originally from Huilai in Chaozhou Province and later moved to Quanzhou in Fujian Province. In 1563, Yu Dayou, a famous commander of the Ming Dynasty, subdued Lin Daoqian. Lin and his thousands of followers were forced to escape to Taiwan, staying there for years and finally defecting to Patani in 1578 (Xu, 1946:118).

According to tradition, it is said that Lin Daoqian became a Muslim and married a princess after his arrival in Patani. From 1584 to the late 1680s, four queens had ruled the Kingdom of Patani. At that time, the kingdom was one of the small countries having tributary relationships with the Kingdom of Ayutthaya in central Thailand. Ayutthaya was the most powerful kingdom in the area and had contrived to rule Patani. To counter potential attacks from Ayutthaya, the second



Queen Raja Bill (Queen of Blue), commanded Lin Daoqian to produce cannons (Teeus and D.K.Wyatt, 1970:225-227). It is said that Lin made three cannons for the queen. In Kru Se village, which was the capital of the kingdom, the ruins of a military factory are considered to be where he produced these cannons. Furthermore, Lin Daoqian is believed to have died from an accidental explosion of one of the cannons he made.

## 2. The legend of Lin Guniang

The legend of Lin Guniang in Pattani is as follows.

After the exile of Lin Daoqian, his aged mother and Lin Guniang, his younger sister, were left at home. His mother was worrying herself sick about her son, so Lin Guniang resolved to sail for Patani to find her elder brother and to persuade him to return to their hometown. She swore to God that she would never return until she had her brother back home. Lin Guniang and her group experienced difficult sailing to Patani, but eventually arrived there without serious incident. However, Lin Daoqian, who had converted to Islam and had married a princess, would not listen to the persuasion of his younger sister. On the contrary, he began to build a mosque in Kru Se village to show his devotion to Islam. Lin Guniang abandoned her hopes, and wishing to remonstrate with him by her own death, hung herself on a cashew nut tree near the mosque under construction. Because of a curse by Lin Guniang, the roof dome of the mosque was doomed never to be completed. The Chinese people in Patani mourned her death and made a wooden statue of Lin Guniang in the tree on which she hung herself, and

they also built a small shrine in Kru Se village for her.

Some Chinese literature reports that Lin Guniang is named “Cizhen (meaning mercy and woman’s honor)”. However, in the Chinese chronicle “Chaozhou Fu Zhi,” neither her existence nor her name is mentioned. So we cannot prove whether she really went to Patani to take her brother back to their homeland. Dr. Xu Yunqiao (1946:19) denied the possibility of her existence because her sailing from Chaozhou to Patani suggests that she was a great woman pirate. If the stories about her travels, her devotion to her family, and her suicide were true, she would surely have been mentioned in history books.

The Kru Se Mosque, which is believed to have been hexed by Lin Guniang, is still at its original location without a roof dome. Next to the mosque is the "grave" of Lin Guniang and a large Chinese garden. They are in contrast to the Malay villages in the surrounding area. It is unclear when the grave was built because the gravestone has no date. However, it seems to have been placed there in the early 20th century as a result of donations from Chinese immigrants in Patani (Xu, 1933:84). It is uncertain whether a kind of grave for her had originally been there rebuilt along with the garden, or if a grave had been newly built in keeping with the legend of her death.

It may be worth mentioning that there is another legend about Lin Daoqian and his younger sister in Taiwan, where it is believed Lin Daoqian used to find temporary shelter. In this story, Lin Daoqian hid treasures in Mt. Dagou near Gaoxiong in southern Taiwan and ordered another younger sister, Jinlian, to keep them. Eventually, Lin Daoqian killed Jinlian with a sword and sailed alone to a southern sea on a boat made of a large banana leaf. This story has other several mythical elements, and it is unclear whether it has any connection with the legend in Pattani. However, because of the legends of Lin Daoqian and his younger sister in Thailand and Taiwan, it is worthy of notice.

### 3. Formation of the worship of Lin Guniang and its relation to the ethnic Malays

The Lin Guniang Temple (Ling Ci Gong) in Pattani is located on Arnoaru Street, which used to be a “Chinatown” in the Kingdom of Patani. This temple was originally called “Zushi Gongci,” a temple of Master Qingshui established in the late 16th century. It is considered to be the oldest Master Qingshui Temple in Southeast Asia (Li, 2004:136). Master Qingshui, a Buddhist monk and medical doctor in the Song Dynasty, is one of the characteristic local deities in southern Fujian. Thus it proves that there were many Chinese people from Fujian living in

Patani during the 16th century.

In the main hall of this temple is mainly enshrined Master Qingshui, Mazu, Fude Zhengshen (a land guardian god in Fujian and Guangdong), and Lin Guniang. In the side hall is also enshrined Guanyin (a Deity of Mercy) and Guangong (a famous general in the “Romance of the Three Kingdoms”). It was in the late 19th century that Lin Guniang came to be dedicated in this temple. During the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910) of the Chakri Dynasty, a Chinese leader proposed to move the statue of Lin Guniang from Kru Se village to its present location.

The temple was partly reconstructed in 1912 and again in 1969. The temple in itself is not very big, yet they have related facilities, including an open space with tiered bleachers and a three-story building for the reception of worshippers across a street. Every year three large festivals based on the lunar calendar are held there, which many Chinese people come to see not only from neighboring areas, but also from Bangkok, Malaysia, and Singapore. It is unclear when these festivals, as we know them today, began to be performed. However, on the first page of “Beidianian Shi (the history of Pattani),” written by Dr. Xu in the 1930s, is a photograph of the festival of Ling Ci Gong Temple, so it is indubitable that the

festivals have been continuing since before the 1930s.

Actually, the reality of the worship of Lin Guniang before enshrinement began in Ling Ci Gong Temple in the late 19th century is not clear. We have no evidence that there used to be another temple that enshrined Lin Guniang around Pattani except for Ling Ci Gong before late in the 19th century. This suggests that the worship of Lin Guniang, as we know it today, could have been formed in the late 19th century.

In 1785, the Chakry Dynasty of Siam conquered the Kingdom of Patani with force, which then was under the rule of Siam. However, the sultanate was preserved until 1909 when an Anglo-Siamese treaty set a borderline between Siam and Malaya, and three Muslim-majority provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Naratiwat came to be authorized territories of Siam. The conquest and immediate dominance by Siam triggered a backlash of Malay Muslims and resulted in a series of insurgences of Muslim separatists that continues today.

The ethnic Chinese at the time of the Kingdom of Patani, as typified by Lin Daoqian, adopted Islam and married Malay women. Some of them became high officers and blended into the Malay society. On the other hand, after the end of 19th century a tide of mass immigration from south China poured into southern

Thailand for work in tin mines or rubber plantations. Most of the newcomers were poor and needed to unite for survival. The folk religion could hold them together and confirmed their ethnic identity. Thus a question arises—was the legend of Lin Guniang made by Chinese newcomers after the 19th century?

Among the ethnic Chinese in the Malay Peninsula, we can see the worship of “Datu-kong,” said to be a fusion of Dabo Gong, a typical land guardian god in South China, and Datu, an intrinsic Malay god. Sakai (1983:340) notes that Datu-kong is a transformation of Chinese folk religion in the Malay Peninsula. Kubo (1987:35) states that it is the only case in which Chinese people who immigrated into Malay Peninsula created a fusion between their folk faith and local faith. Lin Guniang is not that which absorbed the faith of Malay like Datu-kong; however, they have a similarity because both are deities generated from contact between Chinese immigrants and Malay society.

Then the question remains, why was the legend of Lin Guniang born, and why did it become worshipped by the Chinese people in Pattani? In the legend of Lin Guniang, the purpose of her sailing all the way to Patani was to take her brother home and to make him fulfill his filial duties. Today, especially in Chinese documents, she is honored as a patriotic woman who had a firm will to uphold

Chinese traditional moral values. On the other hand, according to the Chinese traditional sense of values, her elder brother Lin Daoqian is considered to be a traitor who abandoned his family and homeland and married a heretic. Therefore Dr. Gao Weinong (2001:169) considers that the legend of Lin Guniang reflects Chinese traditional ethics.

This may be a reasonable explanation. However, I consider that it was not the ethnic Chinese who had been assimilated into the Islam culture in the era of the Kingdom of Patani, but the Chinese immigrant workers after the 19th century who had circulated the legend of Lin Guniang. For the Chinese people in the Kingdom of Patani, Lin Daoqian was a kind of hero who represented them, so they had no need to positively emphasize his disloyalty.

That is to say, it is assumed that the origin of the worship of Lin Guniang dates to the late 19th century. At that time southern Thailand saw a massive ingress of Chinese immigrant workers, which resulted in some sort of ethnic conflict between the Chinese and the Malays.

Dr. Xu, who stayed at Pattani in the 1930s, introduced another story about Lin Guniang, as narrated below (1933:83-84).

In her search for Lin Daoqian, Lin Guniang came to Patani with her soldiers. She was outraged because her brother refused to return home with her and therefore attempted to annihilate all Malays in Patani. She fought hard with the Malay soldiers, but unfortunately she lost the battle and finally hung herself as a result of her shame and rage.

In this story, Lin Guniang is depicted as a belligerent woman pirate who abhorred the Malay Muslims. As I mentioned above, there is an old mosque with no domed roof in Kru Se village. It is believed that the curse of Lin Guniang had thwarted the construction of this mosque. Actually, it should be attributed to the lack of building technology at that time (Izumida, 2006:66). This story indicates the antipathy of the Chinese people toward the Malay Muslims. Next to the Kru Se Mosque is a “grave” of Lin Guniang where many Chinese people visit to offer prayers. From the position of the Malays, it can be offensive that the Chinese people adore the woman who is said to have put a curse on their historic mosque.

Dr. Xu (1933:84) also said that the miracles of Lin Guniang told by the ethnic Chinese in Pattani do “nothing but punish the Malay and protect the Chinese.” Furthermore, he noted that the Malay in Pattani consider Lin Guniang as taboo. For example, one day they had planned to build a large new mosque in Kru Se village. However, when they started the construction, several workers died in an



accident, and so they became frightened of the curse of Lin Guniang and abandoned the project. That story may or may not be true, but it provides evidence that people regarded the curse of Lin Guniang as reality in the 1930s.

As can be seen from the above examples, it is supposed that there was some sort of conflict between the Chinese immigrants and the Malay Muslims around Pattani, at least in the 1930s. This conflict seemed to affect the formation of the worship of Lin Guniang. However, there is no space for an extended discussion. It is an issue in the future that investigates how social relations between the Chinese immigrants and Malays influenced the formation of this worship.

## **II . The prevalence of the worship of Lin Guniang**

### **1. The prevalence through Shantang charity foundations**

#### **(1) In southern Thailand**

The Goddess Lin Guniang is originally a local deity that has been worshipped by the ethnic Chinese around Pattani, which is an isolated Islam culture region in Thailand. Before World War II, it seemed that there were no other Chinese temples enshrining Lin Guniang except Ling Ci Gong Temple in Pattani. It was

only after the 1950s that it began to be enshrined in other Chinese temples in southern Thailand.

First, Lin Guniang is enshrined in Pattani in the temple of “Huaqiao Huzhushe (or Mutual Aid Society of Overseas Chinese)” established in 1950 on Arnoaru Street close to Ling Ci Gong Temple. Huaqiao Huzhushe is also a member of “Dejiao,” a Chinese religious-charitable association, as described later. The reason for enshrining Lin Guniang in Huaqiao Huzhushe is very likely because it is the neighboring Ling Ci Gong Temple and naturally has a close connection. There are two other Chinese temples in Pattani, Chaozhou and Hainanese, yet neither enshrines Lin Guniang.

Second, besides Pattani, the worship of Lin Guniang is prevalent in several cities in southern Thailand, a result of the establishment of Shantang charity foundations by the ethnic Chinese after the 1950s. According to my current investigations, there are six Shantang charities that enshrine Lin Guniang in southern Thailand, as follows: Ci Shantang (Yala); Tongsheng Shantang (Hatyai in Songkhla Province); Wande Shantang (Trang); Yangde Shantang (Surat Thani); Ci Shantang (Betong in Yala Province); and Dade Shantang (Nakhon Si Thammarat). Songkhla and Yala are bordered by Pattani, but the other three

provinces, especially Surat Thani, even though they are in southern Thailand, are quite distant from Pattani. Thus it is unlikely that the worship of Lin Guniang was directly transmitted from Pattani to these cities.

## (2) The origin of Shantang charities

Shantang charities in Thailand originated in Chaozhou, and their temples mainly enshrine Master Song Dafeng and other deities, such as Fude Zhengshen and Guanyin.

Master Song Dafeng is a characteristic local god in the Chaoyang district of Chaozhou. He was a nameless Buddhist monk from southern Fujian who lived in the 12th century and has been admired by local people because of his benevolence of building a bridge across an easily flooded river. It is said that the local people dedicated a shrine after he died; however, this temple had once collapsed in the Ming period and was rebuilt in the middle of the Qing Dynasty as a Buddhist temple (Lin, 1996:41).

According to Fuma (1997:3), Shantang has roots in “Tong Shan Hui,” a membership society established by local gentlemen to provide relief to poor people in Henan Province in the 16th century. In the Qing to Minguo (Republic of

China) periods, Shantang charities had spread throughout China.

These charities were basically secular organizations. On the other hand, after the end of Qing Dynasty, religious societies that performed “*fuji*,” a Chinese traditional planchette divination to get oracles by using a Y-shaped willow stick, were formed throughout China, especially in the southern region. Some were also called Shantang and actively practiced charitable works. In short, regardless of whether they were religious or secular, at that time there were many charitable societies in China named Shantang.

In Chaozhou, social disruption at the end of the Qing dynasty stimulated the establishment of a beneficial association that included Shantang charities. Shantang charities in Chaozhou also had characteristics as religious societies: they conducted the ritual of *fuji* and mainly enshrined Song Dafeng as a symbol of dedication. It is said that in the 1930s there were hundreds of Shantang charities in this area. The divine messages gained through *fuji* rituals were published and distributed by local Shantang groups and called *shanshu*.

### (3) The Chaozhou ethnicity in Shantang

As mentioned before, the Chaozhou speakers are the majority in Thailand’s

ethnic Chinese population. In the early 20th century, Chaozhou-born immigrant merchants introduced the Shantang charity to Bangkok from their hometown Chaoyang and named it “Baode Shantang.” Currently there are many Shantang charities in Thailand. Baode Shantang (also known as Poh Teck Tung in the Chaozhou dialect) was established in 1910 in the Chinatown of Bangkok and is the most famous and influential of all. Baode Shantang is said to be the biggest Chinese voluntary charity association in Southeast Asia, and it contributes to the Thai host society through various charity works such as rescue activities and free clinical services. Its financial source depends completely on donations from members and worshippers. Baode Shantang has been admired for its charitable activities by the Thai people, including the royal family, and currently many Chinese charitable associations that are not from Chaozhou are also named Shantang in Chinese, after Baode Shantang.

Unlike Bangkok and other regions dominated by the Chaozhou speakers, in southern Thailand, the Fujian speakers have held a majority in the Chinese society. After World War II, the Thai government pursued a measure to transplant the ethnic Chinese in the northern region into southern provinces that were dominated by the ethnic Malays (Nakamura, 1995). Although this measure

resulted in an increase of Chaozhou speakers in southern Thailand, the Fujian speakers are still predominant there. According to an estimate by Dr. Skinner in 1955, Fujian speakers accounted for 32% of the Chinese population in southern Thailand, and other groups, in order, are as follows: Chaozhou 20%, Kejia (Hakka) 20%, Hainan 13%, and Guangzhou (Canton) 11% (Skinner, 1957:211-222). It is considered that the establishment of Shantang charities in several cities of southern Thailand after the 1950s reflects an increase of the Chaozhou speakers in this region.

As I described above, there are six Shantang charities that enshrine Lin Guniang in southern Thailand: Tongsheng Shantang (Hatyai) was established in 1957; Ci Shantang (Yala) in 1955; Wande Shantang (Trang) in 1959; Yangde Shantang (Srat Thani) in 1965; Ci Shantang (Betong) in 1962; and Dade Shantang (Nakhon Si Thammarat) in 1990. The temples of these charities mainly enshrine Song Dafeng, Lin Guniang, and other deities, such as Fude Zhengshen and Guanyin. However, they do not enshrine Mazu (the Empress of Heaven), the most popular goddess among the ethnic Chinese living in Southeast Asia. The Ling Ci Gong Temple and Huaqiao Huzhushe in Pattani also enshrine Mazu with Lin Guniang.

Is there any particular reason why Shantang did not choose Mazu as a religious object? It is said that Lin Guniang shares several features with Mazu (Xu, 1946:119). For instance, they are daughters of Lin's family, they have an elder brother, and their legends are deeply linked to the sea. On the other hand, there exists an essential difference between Mazu and Lin Guniang: the former is from Fujian and the latter is believed to be from Chaozhou. Compared with the Fujian speakers, the Chaozhou speakers were not only minorities, but also newcomers in southern Thailand in the 1950s to the 1960s. It is assumed that the members of these Shantang charities have therefore consciously selected Lin Guniang as a religious object instead of Mazu to emphasize and reconfirm their Chaozhou ethnicity.

Currently, Lin Guniang has been "upgraded" to "Ying Ling Xian Gu." (or Goddess of the spirit of war dead) through the *fujū* ritual that conducted at Tongsheng Shantang in 1992. Actually Lin Guniang is a common noun in nature that means "the daughter of Lin's family." On the other hand, Ying Ling Xian Gu could be considered a Taoist title. This upgrade of name reminds us of the case of Mazu, which is also a common noun, and lines of emperors have given it holy titles for authorization.

The six Shantang charities that enshrine Lin Guniang are core members of “Federation of Disaster Relief in the 14 Provinces of Southern Thailand” (hereinafter abbreviated as FDST). This federation consists of private Chinese voluntary associations in the 14 provinces in southern Thailand, and its purpose is literally the relief and rescue of disaster victims and the promotion of charitable activities in 14 provinces of southern Thailand. The head office is in Tongsheng Shantang in Hatyai, which is the largest Chinese charitable foundation in southern Thailand.

The predecessor of this federation was the “Song Dafeng Disaster Relief Union in Southern Thailand” established by Tongsheng Shantang, Ci Shantang (Yala), and Wande Shantang in April 1961. In 1970, they invited neighboring Chinese voluntary associations to join the union to expand their activities. At first, the FDST had only seven member associations, but it has steadily developed in succeeding years. Currently, 54 associations participate in FDST, including the Ling Ci Gong Temple and Huaqiao Huzhushe in Pattani. In fact, all Chinese associations that worship Lin Guniang participate in this federation.



#### (4) Introduction to Bangkok

In Thailand, we can observe that many Chinese voluntary associations, including Shantang charities, develop a nationwide network of charity acts. Baode Shantang, the largest and most well-resourced Chinese charitable foundation in Thailand, has led this network since the 1960s. When at the end of 2004 a huge earthquake occurred off Sumatra, causing enormous tsunamis that devastated beach resorts in southern Thailand, this network made a significant contribution. The FDST in the southern region also links to this network, a relationship that recently has been strengthening more and more.

As mentioned above, the worship of Lin Guniang has spread in southern Thailand since the 1950s with the establishment of Shantang charities. This worship was limited to the southern region until the 1970s, and since the 1980s it has also been introduced to Bangkok. In the early 1980s, Tongsheng Shantang in Hatyai began to make a visit with a statue of Lin Guniang to Baode Shantang in Bangkok. This “sacred visit,” or “pilgrimage,” of Lin Guniang to Bangkok is made annually in the second month of the lunar calendar for 4 days. During this period, a great number of worshippers visit Baode Shantang and make charitable donations.

In China, if people want to establish a new temple, they receive the sacred ashes of the incense from an existing famous temple and place them in the new temple's incense burner. This tradition is called a “sharing of incense,” and the temple providing the ashes is considered the “head temple” of the new temple. In this way, Chinese temples have proliferated systematically. And it is not uncommon that a “branch temple” will visit the “head temple” regularly with a statue of the main deity.<sup>7</sup>

However, according to my own field research, Baode Shantang in Bangkok and Tongsheng Shantang in Hatyai have no such head-branch relationship, though they have maintained a close partnership for years. Because our information on this visit is limited, we cannot say for certain why it was launched; however, it is reasonable to suppose that the establishment of the FDST in the 1970s and a subsequent strengthening of cooperation between the FDST and Baode Shantang influenced it. Baode Shantang is very influential in Thailand. On the other hand, Lin Guniang is one of the most popular deities among the ethnic Chinese in southern Thailand; therefore, Lin Guniang’s visit to Bangkok seems to symbolize

---

<sup>7</sup> The pilgrimage of Mazu in Taiwan is a typical example. Recently, the Mazu Temples of Taiwan began to make visits to Meizhou Island, the “holy place” of Mazu, in northern Fujian Province of China.

the solidarity of the ethnic Chinese community in Bangkok and the southern region of Thailand.

## 2. Introduction of the worship of Lin Guniang to Dejiao

### (1) The origin of Dejiao associations

Now, we shall look at the concern between Dejiao associations and the worship of Lin Guniang. After the 1990s, the worship of Lin Guniang has been introduced to Dejiao<sup>8</sup>, a Chinese religious-charitable association. Dejiao was established in 1939 in the Chaoyang district of Chaozhou. In brief, Shantang and Dejiao have a common origin. Yoshihara (1999) notes that Dejiao is an emerging sect that systematized the Shantang charities. In common with Shantang, it emphasizes charitable acts as a practice for the accumulation of good deeds and performs *fuji* as the central ritual.

In the 1950s, Dejiao was transmitted into Southeast Asia by ethnic Chinese businessmen from Chaozhou. It has developed there, especially in Thailand and on the Malay Peninsula. Currently, Dejiao associations in Thailand and Malaysia each have their own national organization and work to strengthen domestic and

---

<sup>8</sup> “De” in Dejiao means moral and “jiao” means teaching. So in Malaysia it is called “Moral Uplifting Society” in English.

international partnerships. There are about 80 membership associations in Thailand and more than 100 in Malaysia. Many of their members are still the Chaozhou speakers.

Dr. Tan Cheebeng (1984) classifies Dejiao in Malaysia as a syncretic sect that includes Islamic and Christian elements besides the three Chinese traditional religions: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. In China, Deji had no Islamic or Christian elements. This concept of “unification of the five greatest religions in the world” is the characteristics of Dejiao in Southeast Asia, especially in the Malay Peninsula. It is obvious that this concept is made for adaptation to host societies; however, we should notice that their actual religious objects lean heavily toward the popular Taoist deities.

Dr. Tan classifies all the Dejiao associations in Malaysia and Singapore into five groups according to origin and name, namely Zi group, Ji group, Zan (hua) group, Zhen group, and “others”. These groups each have different deities as main religious objects; for instance, the Ji group enshrines Ji Gong (a bizarre monk of the Song Dynasty), and the Zhen group mainly enshrines Master Song Dafeng. Many of the Dejiao temples in Southeast Asia conduct *fujū* as the central ritual. They can get many divine messages from various deities through *fujū*, and

what deities more often appear and possess the spirit medium reflects the popularity of deities in that temple.

## (2) In southern Thailand

The FDST has several Dejiao associations among its members. As I said earlier, Huaqiao Huzhushe (or Zi Ming Ge in the Dejiao associations) in Pattani enshrines Lin Guniang. This is assumed to be the first Dejiao association, which introduced Lin Guniang as a religious object.

Besides this, Zi Nan Ge, established in 1971 in Hatyai, is the largest Dejiao association in the southern Thailand and enshrines Lin Guniang as Ying Lling Xian Gu with other deities on its altar. As mentioned above, Lin Guniang has been “upgraded” to Ying Ling Xian Gu through the *fujū* ritual in Tongsheng Shantang in the early 1990s. Dejiao also introduced this renaming in the 1990s. Recently, Lin Guniang sometimes appears as Ying Lling Xian Gu in their *fujū* rituals of both Dejiao temples.

## (3) Introduction to Bangkok

Dejiao associations in Thailand have a national organization established in the

late 1970s and headed by Zi Zhen Ge in Bangkok. Since the late 1990s, this organization has expanded forces and sent visiting parties to local regions. In April 1999, they visited Dejiao and other Chinese voluntary associations in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia to strengthen partnerships and exchange views. Then in November of the same year, the Ling Ci Gong Temple in Pattani visited Zi Zhen Ge with a “gold statue” of Lin Guniang in return. Lin Guniang appeared in the special *f uji* ritual held to welcome her visit. Ling Ci Gong, the original temple of Lin Guniang, is not a Dejiao association; however, it is considered that this visit could contribute to enhancing the publicity of Lin Guniang in the ethnic Chinese community of Thailand. Furthermore, recently the national organization of Dejiao has actively bid other Chinese associations into Dejiao; therefore we cannot deny a possibility that the Ling Ci Gong Temple will join Dejiao association in the future.

#### (4) Across the border

The worship of Lin Guniang finally crossed the national border with Malaysia through the network of ethnic Chinese mainly from Chaozhou who live in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia. There is a Dejiao association named Zi Yang Ge

in Kangar in Perlis Province of northern Malaysia. Perlis is very near the Thai-Malaysian border; it takes only two hours to drive from Kangar to Hatyai. Zi Yang Ge is one of the most active Dejiao temples in Malaysia, conducting the *fujū* rituals three times a week. It once supported the establishment of Zi Nan Ge in Hatyai and has maintained close partnership with it. Zi Yang Ge sends its members to Zi Nan Ge once a month to support them in performing *fujū* rituals.

Through such a strong relationship, Lin Guniang has recently begun to appear in the *fujū* rituals of Zi Yang Ge. This is the first case in which the worship of Lin Guniang has been observed outside of Thailand. Zi Yang Ge also occasionally sends members to several Dejiao associations in northern and middle Malaysia to conduct the *fujū* ritual, and in such cases Lin Guniang also appears and leaves divine messages. This suggests that Lin Guniang has already been recognized to some extent in northern and middle Malaysia. Actually, the ethnic Chinese who live in northern Malaysia and southern Thailand have had close ties with each other across the border; therefore Lin Guniang has not been unfamiliar to the ethnic Chinese in northern Malaysia. In brief, they have a good grounding to accept Lin Guniang. Zi Yang Ge has not yet enshrined Lin Guniang as a deity, though it sometimes appears in its *fujū* rituals. If the presence of Lin Guniang

increases in northern Malaysia, there is a possibility that Zi Yang Ge will enshrine it on its altar.

### **Conclusion**

The worship of Goddess Lin Guniang was born in Pattani, an isolated Islamic cultural region in Thailand. When we say “the assimilation of the ethnic Chinese into the host society in Thailand,” we naturally consider assimilation into the Thai society. However, the ethnic Chinese in the southernmost area of Thailand have been forced to assimilate not only into the Thai culture, but have also had to coexist with the predominant Malay Muslims in the local community. In this respect, the ethnic Chinese in southern Thailand are in a more complicated position compared with the ethnic Chinese who live in other areas of Thailand or Islamic Malaysia.

It is said that relations between the Malay Muslims and the ethnic Chinese in the deep south area of Thailand have been comparatively serene (Guilquin, 2002:60). However, this coexistence is not always peaceful. Because of its specific historical factor, the deep southern area has long been a stronghold of Muslim separatists. The movement of Muslim separatist groups once weakened in



the 1980s; however, violent incidents such as shootings and assaults have recurred in this area since the beginning of 2004 when a large quantity of weapons were robbed from a garrison of the national army, and about 2,000 people, including ethnic Chinese, have been killed during the past three years. Ling Ci Gong Temple in Pattani was bombed in 2004, and it is believed that the incident was also caused by Islamic extremists.

In recent years, the festivals of Ling Ci Gong Temple have been relied on to promote local tourism. Actually, it used to be that huge numbers of tourists mainly from Malaysia and Singapore visited Pattani to see the festivals and enshrine Lin Guniang. However, the escalation and continuance of violent incidents have caused heavy damage to the local tourism market and economy. For now, the festivals in Ling Ci Gong Temple have been continued, but if the situation grows more serious, they will be discontinued. Under such conditions, field research in this area is also difficult to conduct.

As we have noted, we can observe that the worship of Lin Guniang has gradually spread from the small town of Pattani through southern Thailand, Bangkok, and northern Malaysia via Shantang charities or Dejjiao associations. In this process, Lin Guniang seems to lose the original context of conflict between

the Chinese immigrants and the Malay Muslims in the deep south area of Thailand, and has received universality as a common deity. Currently many worshippers of Lin Guniang are not very likely to know the tragic story about Lin Daoqian and Lin Guniang in the Kingdom of Patani. For the worshippers, Lin Guniang is only a miracle-working goddess like other deities. This universality is supposed to be an advantage to a spreading of the worship. Because Shantang and Dejiào originated in Chaozhou, it is thus supposed that Chaozhou ethnicity is the main factor leading to the prevalence of this worship.

The worship of Lin Guniang, which we have examined in this paper, has been scarcely studied in the past, and some questions remain unanswered about it. I will now show the problems that need to be solved in the future.

Firstly, how has the social relationship between Chinese immigrants and Malay Muslims affected the formation of the worship of Lin Guniang?

In the latter half of the 19th century, Lin Guniang began to be worshipped in Ling Ci Gong Temple in Pattani. We have no record of any other temples or shrines that enshrined Lin Guniang around Pattani before this time. Therefore it seems reasonable to suppose that the worship of Lin Guniang as it is known today dates to the late 19th century at the earliest. At that time, the massive movement

of workers began to immigrate into southern Thailand from south China; therefore it is considered that this worship was formed as a result of contacts between the newcomer Chinese immigrant workers and the Malay society. This is a matter that needs to be unraveled through future investigation.

Secondly, what is the process of migration and development of the worship of Lin Guniang in the Shantang charities of Thailand?

In southern Thailand, all Chinese associations that worship Lin Guniang are members of the “Federation of Disaster Relief in the 14 Provinces of Southern Thailand (FDST).” In the FDST, the member associations did not always originate in Chaozhou. However, its leading associations are of Chaozhou origin; therefore, it is supposed that the networks of Chaozhou speakers through the FDST have affected the development of this worship.

It is also necessary to investigate Lin Guniang’s annual visit to Baode Shantang in Bangkok from Tongsheng Shantang in Hatyai. Baode Shantang is the most famous and influential Chinese charitable association in Thailand, and several studies of it have been made in the past, but little attention has been given to the nationwide network of Chinese associations headed by Baode Shantang. The Lin Guniang visit to Bangkok is considered to provide a valuable case study on this

point.

Finally, what is the process of the introduction of the worship of Lin Guniang to the Dejiao association? The introduction of Lin Guniang into Dejiao could be considered in the context of the expansionary trend of the Dejiao association after the late 1990s.

## REFERENCES

- Fuma Susumu (1997) *Chuugoku Zenkai Zendou Shi Kenkyuu* [A Study of Benevolent Societies and Benevolent Halls in China], Kyoto: Dohosha.
- Gao Weinong (2001) *Dongnanya Huaren Xinyang Zhushen Kaoshuo* [The Chinese worships and deities in Southeast Asia], Bangkok: Datong.
- Guilquin, Michel (2005) *The Muslims of Thailand*, Michael Smithies, trans., Bangkok: IRASEC and Silkworm Books.
- Izumida Hideo (2006) *Kaiiki Ajia no Chuukagai: Imin to Shokumin niyoru Toshi Keisei* [Chinatowns in Maritime Asia], Kyoto: Gakugei.
- Kubo Noritada (1987) “Tounan Ajia Zaijuu Kajin no Tochigami Shinkou” [The worship of Land Guardian God by the Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia], In

- Naoe Hiroharu and Kubo Noritada, ed., *Tounan Ajia Kajin Shakai no Shuukyoku Bunka ni Kansuru Tyousa Kenkyuu* [Studies of Chinese Religious Culture in Southeast Asia], Tokyo: Nanto, pp.1-40.
- Li Tianxi (2004) *Huaqiao Huaren Minjian Xinyang Yanjiu* [Studies on Folk Beliefs among Overseas Chinese], Chansha: Wenlian.
- Lin Wushu (1996) *Taiguo Dafeng Zushi Chongbai yu Huaqiao Baode Shantang Yanjiu* [Studies in Chinese Worship of The Founder Dafeng and Poh Teck Tung Charity in Thailand], Taipei: Shuxin.
- Nakamura Mitsuo (1995) “Tounan Ajia no Islam Hukou Undou” [Revival Movements of Islam in Southeast Asia], In Matsubara Masaki, ed., *Sekai Minzoku Mondai Jiten* [Encyclopedia of Nations and Ethnic relations], Tokyo: Heibonsha, pp.774.
- Sakai Tadao (1983) “Shingapoulu, Malaishia Chiiki no Kajin no Shuuzoku Shinkou to Bunka Masatsu” [ The Chinese Folkways, Faith, and Cultural Friction in Singapore and Malaysia], In Sakai Tadao, ed., *Tounan Ajia no Kajin Bunka to Bunka Masatsu* [The Chinese Culture and Cultural Friction in Southeast Asia], Tokyo: Gannandou, pp.322-343.
- Sasaki Koukan (1991) “Kajin shakai no Shuukyoku” [Religions in Societies of the

- Ethnic Chinese], In Tai Kokki, ed., *Motto Shiritai Kakyō* [To Know More about Overseas Chinese], Tokyo: Koubundou, pp.76-98.
- Skinner, G. W.(1957) *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Tan Cheebeng (1985) *The Development and Distribution of Dejiao Associations in Malaysia and Singapore: A Study on a Chinese Religious Organization*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Teeus, A. and D. K. Wyatt (1970) *Hikayat Patani: the story of Patani*, The Hague: M. Nijhoff.
- Xu Yunqiao (1933) “Lin Daoqian Lueju Boni Kao” [A discussion about Lin Daoqian’s Temporary Stay in Boni], *Dongfang Zazhi*, Vol.32, No.1, pp.81-89.
- (1946) *Beidanian Shi* [The History of Pattani], Singapore: Nanyang.
- Yoshihara Kazuo (1999) “Tai Koku ni Tsutaerareta Tokkyō to Sono Henyō” [The Transmission and Transformation of Dejiao in Thailand], In Miyake Hitoshi, ed., *Minzoku Shuukyō no Chihei* [The horizons of folk religion], Tokyo: Shunjuusha, pp.319-331.