

## Abstract

Religious life in Taiwan has experienced a great revival since the political relaxation in 1980's; especially the popular religion and new religious movements have been blooming. Temple festivals are growing again; restored or newly established events organized by temples emerge. There is usually one main deity in the centre of the temple cult, but there are many other deities worshipped in a particular temple as well. The temple is often a centre of a town or a village, especially in the countryside. Temples organize or at least support many activities (not only religious ones, but also sport and educational activities etc.) in villages and towns. The thesis introduces temples and their work in the field of belief. At the same time it looks at the ways a temple help people to create a local community, and what is the relationship between the state and temple cults. There is an attempt to see the potential of traditional temple religions to fulfil function similar to function of modern civil society.

The thesis also introduces the development of the status of temple cults in Taiwan on the background of political and social changes during the 20<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During this period, the popular religion gradually transforms from a superstition that should be annihilated into an important part of the culture and the identity of Taiwan in the view of the government of the state. A brief reflection on the restoration of religious traditions during the boom of popular religion in 1980s and 1990s is an inseparable part of the thesis. This process and operation of a temple is exemplified with a case study of the temple *Fengtian gong* in Xin'gang.