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Propertied Religious and Ancestral Associations in the South Taiwan Meinong Region during Qing:

Organization, Management, and Membership

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Date: 17, Dec, 2015

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Venue: Room 220, Fung King Hey Bld

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During Qing, a multitude of land-owning, share-based corporate organizations were formed and thrived in the southern Taiwan Hakka-speaking regions, including in what is present-day Meinong. Very early (1902) Japanese surveys show that these corporations owned about one-third of the very best wet rice land. Within the Japanese-imposed administrative boundaries of Meinong there were well over 200 such organizations, some dedicated to particular ancestors, and others to various gods. The vast diversity of worship objects was framed by a shared cosmological orientation from within which these objects were chosen, be they gods or ancestors. Likewise, diversity gives way to shared patterns with respect to organization, an aspect of associational life that hitherto has received less attention. From an organizational perspective I deal with the formation of corporate groups; the creation and recording of shares; membership lists and membership categorization; share transfer through sale and succession; association management; annual meetings for accounting, feasting and worship; dividend distribution; lending and credit; purchase and sale of land; corporate shares as commodities. I then consider the implications of these data for a broader understanding of late imperial Chinese management culture. This talk is illustrated with slides of key corporation documents.



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