CONNECTING WITH DEITIES: THE PRACTICE OF SPIRIT MEDIUMSHIP AMONG THE CHINESE IN KUANTAN, PAHANG

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ABSTRACT

The belief towards the spirit medium is one of the oldest beliefs in Chinese folk religion. This research explored spirit mediumship practices among the Chinese in Kuantan, Pahang, and interviewed 10 spirit mediums by applying interpretive phenomenological analysis. The findings indicate that the ability to interact with deities is either due to unavoidable illness, hereditary, naturally acquired, or learned. Indeed, a spirit medium may or may not convey messages to the audience or the deities from ritual performances. However, the ritual had revealed an "indispensable and official" status among mediums and worshippers. Although some expectations of this practice have faded due to modernity, it is still popular among the Chinese, especially in bonding the Chinese together as one community.

Keywords: Chinese folk religion, spirit mediumship, spirit medium

INTRODUCTION

According to cultural traditions, the local medium must vicariously experience three distinct stages of identity transition—pre-arrival, encounter and preservation—before getting certified as an eligible and trained medium. With such embodied knowledge as a necessary foundation, the spirit mediums have promptly received extraordinary skills and techniques of healing and divine