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THE STUDY ON CHINESE TEMPLES IN MELAKA

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SINOPSIS

Kajian tentang tokong-tokong Cina menolong kita untuk mengkaji dengan lebih mendalam, pelbagai aspek agama Cina, misalnya, kebudayaan, kepercayaan dan praktisnya. Latihan ilmiah ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji aspek-aspek sosiologi tokong-tokong Cina yang memainkan peranan yang penting dalam kehidupan komuniti Cina. Dalam bab 2, kita akan membincang tentang aspek-aspek tokong Cina dan teologi agama tersebut yang menjadi dasar bagi kebudayaan, praktis dan agama orang-orang Cina. Dengan pengetahuan ini adalah diharapkan yang ia akan dapat memberi jawapan kepada sebab-sebab perayaan-perayaan atau aktiviti-aktiviti yang dijalankan dan tentang struktur dan organisasi sosial tokong-tokong tersebut. Bab 3 akan memberi satu penerangan yang mendalam tentang tokong-tokong Cina di Melaka di mana kajian ini dibuat. Ini termasuk aspek-aspek seperti ciri-ciri taburan, pembangunan dan plan-plan untuk masa hadapan tokong-tokong tersebut. Dalam bab 4, kita akan mengkaji jenis-jenis perayaan dan aktiviti yang dijalankan di tokong, ini dan di sini juga akan ditekankan signifikasinya berdasarkan teologi agama Cina. Dalam bab 5, akan dibincangkan organisasi sosial tokong-tokong itu. Sebagai penutup, dalam bab 6, kita akan membincangkan tentang penerusan tokong-tokong Cina dalam keadaan perubahan sosial dalam masyarakat ini.

The study of Chinese temples helps us to examine in greater detail on the various aspects of the Chinese religion , culture, belief and practises. This exercise seeks to explore, specifically, on the sociological aspects of the Chinese temples, which play a very important role in the lives of the Chinese community. Chapter 2 aims to describe on the aspects of temples and the theology of Chinese religion upon which the practises, beliefs and culture is based. With this knowledge, it is hoped that we can throw some light on the reasons why such celebrations or activities take place and on the structure and social organization of the temples. Chapter 3 will give a detailed description of the Chinese temples in Melaka on which this research is being conducted. This includes aspects, such as characteristics, distribution, development and future plans of the temples. Chapter 4 on the other hand, aims to discuss on the types of celebrations and activities of the temples, whereby in the course of describing how these celebrations take place, we will touch upon the significance of such celebrations, activities and ceremonies based on the theology of Chinese religion. Chapter 5 seeks to discuss on the social organization of the temples. In conclusion, we discuss on the continuity of the Chinese temples in the midst of the social changes in society.

Chapter One : INTRODUCTION

Chinese religion is part and parcel of Chinese ways of life, a Chinese tradition inherited from the ancient past. It includes the worship of Chinese deities of both Taoist and Buddhist origins, nature spirits and ancestors.

Chinese Malaysians refer to their religion as equivalent to the Mandarin Chinese terms "baishen" (拜神) or "baifo" (拜佛). The former means worshipping deities and is more grand, referring to the worship of any kind of deity with the Chinese religious system including those of Buddhist origin. The latter means worshipping Buddha/Bodhisattvas but in practice when the Chinese say that, they may be including the worship of all deities be they of Buddhist or Taoist origin (Tan 1983,p 219)

Shen is the general name for any deity. The term "shenism" is used by Elliot (1955 p.29) to describe the Chinese religion. According to him,

"..... few Chinese concur with the tripartite division of their natural religion into Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and that they explain their religion as a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism and the worship of local deities "

Chan (1953 : 141) has in fact, described the religion of China. He says that,

"..... most Chinese do not follow 3 separate parallel and conflicting religions at the same time but a syncretic religion embracing the ancient cult as its basis and Buddhist and Taoist

elements as secondary features. Even when they visit a strictly Buddhist or Taoist temple, they do so not as Buddhist or Taoist but as followers of the religion of the masses"

With regard to the above, Topley used the term "anonymous" to describe the Chinese religion. According to her,

"..... anonymous religion has an unwritten tradition and lacks any specific organization for the handing down of its practises and beliefs. They are passed down, rather, by word of mouth, imitation and observation. It requires no entry, it is rather there for anybody to believe in or use." (Topley 1956 : 76-77)

Therefore, the traditional religion of the Chinese Malaysians is above all syncretic, it is a loosely unified system which is a product of the intermixing of various religions throughout the centuries of Chinese and civilization. In other words, Chinese religion cannot be accurately described by any one of the categories of Buddhism, Taoism or Confuciousnism.

According to Yang (1961), Chinese religion is a diffused religion which means that it may not feature prominently but may function well to fortify the various social system and has an influential grip on the whole social order. The diffused religion will have to depend on institutionalized religion (ie Buddhist, Taoism and Confuciousnism) for the formation and development of theological and mythological concepts, i sorting out its pantheon and procedures for ritual commitments.

Chinese religionists are often not aware of the existence of the religions they utilise, just as they treat these different religions as parts of a single Chinese religion, so they consider the different place of worship they visit as temples of the same religion.

Temples here can be defined as a religious building primarily for devotees or Chinese religionists to communicate with the gods. Wee (1977 : 41) describes temples as sites of power because they are bridges between the Human World and the Non Human World. Many of the temples frequented by Chinese religionists belong to other religions. These temples are not haphazardly picked but chosen on the basis of their location and their physical structures.

Chinese temple devotees may visit as many temples as they please. They believe that different gods have different powers and different areas of efficacies. For example, Guān Yīn (Goddess of Mercy) is believed to be able to help barren women to conceive, whereas Tu-Ti (God of Earth) is believed to be able to help people against hazards of droughts and fire. Therefore, in order to receive blessings, devotees pray to many deities and visit many temples.

Another reason for visiting temples is that there are no temples which house all the gods or some gods. Therefore, this makes it necessary to visit as many temples as possible to worship the gods.

1.1 : Aims of research

Chinese temples have been in existence for some hundreds of years ago to cater for the Chinese community. According to Yang (1961), the temples and shrines dotting the entire landscape were a visible indication of the strong and pervasive influence of religion in Chinese society; for they stood as symbols of a social reality. There is not one corner in this country where one cannot find temples, shrine^s, altars and other places of worship.

Due to the wide distribution of temples, this research is concentrated on Chinese temples in Melaka. The writer selected only 40 major temples from the centre of Melaka.

For this exercise, the area of study is basically concentrated on the sociological aspects or social organization, structure and functions of the Chinese temples.

The second chapter will focus on literature review of the Chinese religion. Topics such as short discussions of Buddhism, Taoism and Confuciousniam will be included. This will be followed by a brief discussion on Yin Yang and the 5 elements. Since this exercise is on Chinese temples, therefore, topics such as temple geomancy, social functions of temples and characteristics of temples will be discussed.

Chapter 3 will concentrate on the historical background of Melaka in relation to the establishment of the temples. This, of cou^rse, includes the history of the temples, their distribution and developments and the future plans of these temples.

Major festivals which are celebrated in the temples, for example, the traditional Chinese festivals, birthdays of deities, temple anniversaries will be discussed in the 4th chapter. Emphasis will be placed on the significance of such celebrations and on how these festivals are celebrated, eg whether in a grand or minor scale. Activities of the temples will also be discussed here. These activities include educational and dhamma classes, publication of religious materials, charitable acts, etc.

The aim of Chapter 5 is to study in greater depth the roles of religious specialists of mediums, temple keepers, etc. Apart from this, we will also touch on the medium's background and the type of services which they offer to the public. Details on management of the temples ie whether it is run by a committee, mediums, private owners, temple keepers, priests, nuns or a vegetarian body will be included here. Since temple funds is important for the functioning of temples, a discussion on sources of funding for temples will also be included here.

The final chapter, ie Chapter 6 will give an analysis of chapters one to five. The continuity of Chinese temples ie whether Chinese temples will still continue to function in the midst of social changes in society will be discussed in this chapter.

1.2 : Methods used

The methods used were principally survey, key informant interviewing, photograph documentation, observation and literature review.

Before the fieldwork was conducted, a pilot survey was done to check whether the writer had contacts or friends including relatives who have information or know anybody from any of the temples in Melaka.

Fieldwork was conducted from 1st of June to 7th of July. The survey samples consist of 40 major temples which are mainly found at the town centre in Melaka ie in Jalan Tokong, Jalan Lorong Panjang, Jalan Bachang, Jalan Tranquerah, Jalan Semabok, Jalan Mata Kuching and Jalan Ujong Pasir.

The fieldwork was done from 10.00am to 12.00pm and from 2.00pm to 4.00pm everyday except on weekends. Sometimes, the writer had to go to the temple at night in order to observe the activities of the temple especially on the services provided by the mediums. For example, at the Hock Soon Keong temple in Jalan Tranquerah, the medium goes into a trance only after 7.30p.m. Photographs were also taken while observing such activities.

Most of the key informants were interviewed in the vicinity of the temples and in cases where not much information can be obtained from the caretakers of the temple, the writer would go to the residences or offices of any of the committee members of the temples concerned because the committee members are usually not available at the temple.

Questions, eg on the activities of the temple, management and history, the various deities worshipped, significance of festivals, etc were put forward to the key informants. No questionnaires were given because of most of the key informants, especially the caretakers of the temples are illiterate. Therefore, informal interview was conducted. All the interviews were conducted in a very casual manner so as to get a favourable response from the key informants. The temples who were at that time busy, or not available at the temple, or for the committee members.

The language or dialects used for conducting the interviews are in Hokkien and English. Since most of the temple keepers converse in fluent and pure Hokkien or Mandarin, the writer had to use a Chinese educated interpreter.

There were the problem of language which led to the hardship of getting information. Although the writer is of Chinese origin, the difficulty was that the writer was unable to speak fluent Hokkien. The weakness of the writer was especially found while interviewing older informants. However, this problem was sufficiently reduced by recruiting a friend who could speak fluent Hokkien and was used as an interpreter.

Another problem which can be grouped under language barrier is the writer's inability to read Chinese and converse in Mandarin. This restricted the freedom to consult with the Chinese referential texts and religious articles given by the temples. Due to this also, the key informants, especially the older informants were not willing to converse

1.3 : Difficulties faced

One of the main difficulties was getting the right key informants to obtain data and information.

Since the focus of this exercise is on the sociological aspects of the Chinese temples in Melaka, much information can only be obtained from the committee members and the caretakers of the temples who are at times busy, or not available at the temple. As for the committee members, usually the writer will have to go to their residences or offices in order to interview them. But in the case of the temple keepers, it is not difficult to see or interview them as compared to the committee members because the caretakers live in the temple and therefore, the writer could go to the temple at the times which are convenient to them.

Also there arose the problem of language which led to the hardship of getting information. Although the writer is of Chinese origin, the difference lies in that the writer was unable to speak fluent Hokkien. The acuteness of this problem was especially faced while interviewing older informants. However, this problem was sufficiently reduced by resorting to a friend who could speak fluent Hokkien and who acted as an interpreter.

Another problem which can be grouped under language barrier is the writer's inability to read Chinese and converse in Mandarin. This restricted the freedom to consult with the Chinese references; texts and religious articles given by the temples. Due to this also, the key informants, especially the older informants were not willing to cooperate

with the writer because according to them, a Chinese must be able to speak Mandarin. However, with the assistance of a Chinese educated friend who acted as an interpreter, the writer was able to obtain sufficient information.

Another difficulty arose when the key informants, especially the older caretakers of the temples became suspicious of the writers' motives. Therefore, they refuse to cooperate or give vague answers. This was because they thought that the writer is from the Income Tax Department. At such, not all answers are considered to be genuine. This problem was quite sufficiently solved by reassurances from the writer and a permission slip to conduct the research from the University was shown to them. However, in cases where the key informants still refuse to cooperate, the writer had to resort to other sources of getting information eg from neighbours living nearby or in the vicinity of the temple.

2.1 : Chinese Religions

a) Confuciousnism

The elements in Confuciousnism that raises it to the level of religion is not simply an ethical system, was its acknowledgement of the desirability of the necessity for worshipping ancestors. The cult to worship Heaven, funeral rites and ancestor worship were not created by Confucious. These cults and rituals were already extant at the time of Confucious. His philosophy is based on the idea of unity and harmony of families.

It is the attitude of upholding Li (礼) or existing code of etiquette, the way of sages, which accounts for his strong support of the system of ancestor worship and funeral rites for to do so otherwise would be a violation of Li and this is considered infilial. He was more concerned with the reality of the performance of deities and spirits.

According to him, the basic reasons for practising the mortuary and sacrificial rites was to "express gratitude towards the originators and recall the beginnings" (Yang, 1961, p44). Such rites, he added, help to cultivate moral values, especially filial piety, foster refinements of human sentiments and also strengthens the emotional root of kinship values and family ties. Therefore, by interpreting the religious rites, by substituting human sentiments for supernatural belief, he hoped to retain the ancient cult and transform it in an enlightenment non theistic ritual for the purpose of stabilising and perpetuating the kinship as a basic unit of organization.

Besides ancestor worship, it can be said that the main theme of Confucious teaching is ren (人) : humanity, benevolence and perfect virtue. The other is shen, tolerance or reciprocity. Confucious also listed 5 virtues namely courtesy, magnanimity, good faith, diligence and kindness. The Confucious system of ethics, particularly in the aspect of human relation has become deeply embedded in Chinese culture.

Confucious, as a deity is associated with education and is worshipped in many Taoist temples today.

b) Taoism

Taoism as a system of religion is known as daojiao (道教) Creel (1970:7) calls it 'Hsien Taoism' because of the belief of the early followers was to become immortals called hsien (仙) and this distinguished it from daoia (道家) ie the Taoism school of philosophy.

Dao (meaning way) is an important concept in Taoism. It refers to the attainment of non-differentiation with nature. When one has achieved this dao, one is eternal and there is no place in him for death, since dao, the unnameable is eternal.

In its popular form, Taoism has a very strong hold upon religious thoughts, practice and symbolism. The Taoist influence is strongly visible in most temples even though they may be reputed to be Buddhist. Among the popular deities worshipped by the Taoist are the 3 Pure Ones, God of Literature, Wealth, Medicine, Kitchen God and Kwan Yin.

According to Elliot (1955), Taoism had degenerated to an institutionalized religion with temples, a priesthood and a pantheon, drawing many of its ideas from Yin Yang and is chiefly concerned with the systems of archery, divination and sorcery.

Lip (1979) agreed with Elliot that Taoism encourages the belief in superstition, geomantic divination, fortune telling and the usage of charms. He added that Taoist charms comprise of all kinds of fu (福) or paper with special magical powers. Their function is to ward off evil spirits. Therefore, the practise of divination is a common daily activity found in many Taoist temples.

Other symbols depicting Taoism are the 8 Triagrams or bagua (八卦) the old brass mirror and the tiger's claws. The former is for protection and the latter is for the blessings of courage and fortification.

c) Buddhism

In its early phases of development, Buddhism was mainly a magical occult, the claim of magical power for Buddhist deities being a major reason for its ability to attract patronage from the ruling groups and followers from the common people in China. Buddhism is responsible for many positive contributions to religious ideas, but the greatest is the attaining of Enlightenment and thereby salvation through the merit of Bodhisattva.

One of the fundamentals of this religion is that misery is felt as it is part of existence and the normal happening of life. Every kind of

desire felt by man and animal causes suffering and in order to overcome this suffering, desire must be eliminated. This desire may be overcome by following the 8 paths to Nirvana (a state of perfect peace and freedom from suffering). The 8 paths are achieved and obtained by modifying and moderating one's views: feelings, words, behaviour and the memory of meditation (Lip 1979).

In some respects, Indian ideas, eg. karma i.e. the feeling of resignation to the overwhelming power of fate has been incorporated into Chinese Buddhism. But in most other ways, Buddhism has been adopted to an essentially Chinese form. The countless Buddha and Bodhisattvas have also been given Chinese characteristics. According to Tan, the Chinese Buddhism in Malaysia exists as an independent system of religion and its distinctiveness is to be found only in certain Chinese Buddhist temples and associations. The Buddhism in Malaysia is essentially derived from the Pure Land School of Mahayana Buddhism.

Therefore, from the discussion above, on Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, we may say that Buddhism has managed to a certain extent retained its separateness from the general mass of religious practices and pantheon, but it has fused many foreign elements throughout its history and it is likely to become more and more absorbed into the general mass of Chinese religion and suffer the same fate as Taoism (Topley, 1977, p. 92).

Taoism has absorbed many rites and religion today that it is hardly more than a handy term for non-Buddhist religion. To the Buddhist, any non-Buddhist practice including the rites of "naamma lo" and "sai kong" medium practices and the many personal rites performed by women without the aid of a priest, are "Taoism". To the Chinese, worshippers who is not a particularly strong Buddhist, they are just "religion", a mass of tradition handed down mainly by word of mouth and of practices learnt in childhood by observation and imitation (Topley, 1977).

There are very few Pure Buddhist temples but majority of temples house both Buddhist and non-Buddhist deities but whose patron deity is of Buddhist origin. These temples have been described by various people as Buddhist temples and the Chinese word 'si' (寺) which refers to Buddhist temples is used to describe them.

2.2 : Yīn-Yáng (陰陽) and the 5 elements (五行)

As early as 1000 - 500 BCE, the Chinese were able to develop a coherent theory of the cosmos. Nature was seen to operate through the interplay of light and darkness, heat and cold, male and female, etc. The Yáng (as represented by the first of each pair) and Yīn (the 2nd of each pair) were not in absolute and permanent opposition to each other. They might best be described as definable phases in a ceaseless flow of change.

Therefore Yīn-Yáng is thought to be the 2 fundamental principle of life and the sustenance of all that exists. By their interaction, Heaven and Earth were created and all of the creatures of the universe.

As a consequence of the principle of constant transformation embodied in the Yīn-Yáng theory, the Chinese concept of the primary element focused on the fundamental qualities observed in things. These qualities were not static but were ceaselessly interacting, transforming and replacing each other. There were 5 "xīngs" (elements) namely water, fire, wood, metal and earth. The "hsīng" has an active nature.

The worship of Heaven by the Chinese is based on this theology of Yīn-Yáng and the 5 elements. This theology provided a mystical explanation for the relationship between the heavenly force and the affairs of state. The succession of dynastic powers was thought to be predetermined by the rotation of the 5 elements. The same theology also interpreted the predetermination of all personal events by the set of forces of Yīn Yáng and the 5 elements which were connected with the movement of the stars in directing the mystical operation of time, which in turn determined the nature of personal events. In other words, the theology of Yīn Yáng and the 5 elements provided the mystical explanation for the relationship between the supernatural forces and fate of man.

Each time unit, for example, stood for a certain combination of heavenly and earthly forces at work. The meeting of these forces at a certain hour in a certain year might be harmonious and lead to good luck whereas another combination might mean an antagonistic meeting of forces and lead to misfortune. A man born at a certain time, because of the rare combination of harmonious forces at that time, might be predestined to mount the throne, while another person born at a time when there was a antagonistic meeting of the mystical forces might be fated to die of starvation. The result of human action were similarly predetermined by the particular time such action took place.

The same theology of Yīn Yáng and the 5 elements also underlay the theory of fēng shuǐ (風水) which interpreted the effect of a certain space or the location of a building, temple or grave upon which the luck or misfortune of the affected individual. Space, no less than time, was involved in the operation of the mystical forces of Yīn Yáng and the 5 elements.

Therefore, it can be concluded here that Yīn Yáng and the 5 elements served as a link between the supernatural basis and the state of affairs and the intimate life of the people. This theology and divination are both devices for knowing Heaven's wish and for peering into the secrets of this preordained cause so as to help man attain well-being and avoid calamity.

2.3 : Temple Fēng Shui

Fēng Shui (Fēng = 風 = wind, shui = 水 = water) as a single term stands for the power of the natural environment, the wind and the airs of the mountains and hills, the stream and rain, and much more than that, the composite influence of the natural processes. Behind it is a whole cosmology of meta physical concepts and symbols.

Skinøer (1982) defines Fēng shui as the art of living in harmony with the land, and deriving the greatest benefit, peace and prosperity from being at the right place at the right time.

Lip (1979) defines fēng shui as the art of divination based on geographical features, the surrounding water courses, landscape and the orientation of the building.

From the 2 definitions of fēng shui, we may say that by placing oneself in a favourable environment, fēng shui will bring good luck, fortune, peace and a longer life.

The chief implements of the geomancer's expert are the divining rods, almanac and geomancer's compass or luō pán (羅盤). Therefore, he is trained to use both his instinctive feelings for the changing patterns of the landscape as well as the compass to diagnose the prevailing good or bad influences and their likely effects on any particular man made or natural structure.

The building of temples is closely connected with the practice of geomancy. Temple decorator's, contractors and designers firmly believe and adhere to good luck numbers of geomancy practice in the design of room sizes, the allocation and numbering of rooms, the colour rendering and sequence of erection. According to Lip (1979), the best and most appropriate orientation for temples is to face southwards. In Malaysia many prominent temples are orientated with the front facing the sea and the rear facing a hilly site or higher ground.

Lip also adds that in the roof construction and design, the ridge decoration is most important. Dragons, phoenixes, unicorns, lions and other quadrupeds of good omen are to be incorporated on the ridge design to bring auspicious significance and heavenly blessings to the dwellers and users of the building.

Colour rendering is also important. Not all colours can be used to paint temples. Only geomantic shades and hues of yellow, green and blue are applied to symbolize power, longevity and blessings. For temple buildings, red is used on columns as it suggests the festive mood of joy and symbolizes the sun and the yang principle. Temple ceilings are usually painted gold or red, for representing power and glory. Green is usually applied to roof tiles and to wall rendering for it signifies longevity, the ever green quality and the yin of the duality principle. Yellow represents royalty and prestige while blue signifies heavenly blessings.

Also, when building temple roofs, one should start the laying of tiles from the centre of the roof and work towards the left and right sides. It is most important to start laying the shallow curved tiles at the centre of the roof first before any other line of tiles if blessings and good luck are expected.

The correct mathematical calculations and numbering are most desirous in planning the number of rooms or holes. One, five and nine are considered desirable and good, while 8 is to be avoided at all cost. The shallow curved tiles of the roof at the centre line must not be the 8th, 18th, 28th/38th line of the tiles counting from any side, the sides or corners of the roof. Staircases, too, should be odd in number in terms of steps or treads. The measurement of rooms should be checked by a geomancer's ruler.

The entrance to a monastery or temple is usually south for geomantic reasons. North east or south west directions are avoided as they are considered the directions of the devils. Usually, the front entrance is protected by a screen with the 8 trigrams or patterns of good omen to ward off evil influences. The doors of temples are painted red with door gods to guard the temple against evil spirits. The main prayer hall houses the main deity of the temples.

Therefore, from the above, it is obvious that geomancy plays a very important role in the construction of Chinese temples.

2.4 : Functions of Chinese temples

Temples play many important functions. The importance of religion to the Chinese society may be seen in the wide range of functions served by the temples. In monotheistic religion, people prayed to one God for all their spiritual or magical needs but in the Chinese polytheistic tradition, people prayed to different gods for different purposes. C.K. Yang (1961) has classified temples with regard to their functional roles according to the nature of the main gods in each temple.

Under the category of social organization, there are 3 groups, namely kinship group, local community protection and the state. In the kinship group, temples concerning family are mainly of fertility cults e.g. Goddess of Mercy. It is believed that this deity will help barren women to conceive. Other cults related to the family are those dedicated to legendary personalities who symbolized kinship values of filial piety and chastity.

Temples devoted to protection and welfare or interests of the local community include such as common cults of huǒ shén (火神) for the prevention of fire. Many categories of temple cults can be included under the group. An example of this is T'u-ti (God of earth) which is commonly found in temples and roadside shrines. Their important function is to protect community against fire and in crisis.

Temple cults that emphasized the operation of the state or political order include many deified personalities or symbols of civic, political and military values of the legendary figure of Admiral Cheng Ho. Another cult is that of Confucious and the patron gods which can be grouped under the patron of the scholar official class and literary tradition.

Temple cults devoted to the support of the general moral order of society include heavenly deities and the underworld authorities. According to Yang, in the religious life of the common people, the predominant idea of heaven and the underworld was the moral note of reward for good by the higher deities in heaven and punishment for evil by the fearful authorities of the underworld. Therefore, by offering hope for the good and deterrants for the bad and by supernatural explanation for undeserved success and morally unjustified misfortune, the cults of heavenly powers and underworld authorities performed the important function of upholding society's moral order.

There are also temples related to economic life which are dedicated to patron gods and spirits of crafts and trades who gave magical blessings for the success of occupational activities; and served as spiritual nuclei for integration of occupational groups. An example of this is the God of wealth which helps individuals overcome the hazards of chance in the general struggle for prosperity.

Crafts and trade cults developed in close relation to local occupation while the cult of god of wealth is a popular one, the particular gods worshipped for the purpose of general economic prosperity by the common people especially the merchants varies in different places. Usually, Kwan Yin, the god of righteousness and war are worshipped for this purpose.

Under the category of health, there are also temples dedicated to deities specializing in medicine or in overcoming epidemics. But there are also deities which have many functions. Therefore, people pray many gods to heal sicknesses. This is because it is a common belief that all gods are magical healers.

Another category of function include temples which are devoted to general public and personal welfare. Many temples fall into this category. These temples have deities which did not emphasize any specific function but give general blessings to individuals who come to seek help of any nature.

Buddhist or Taoist monastries or nunneries form another category. Usually they are open to the public. They can be regarded as temples for the welfare of the general public. They also served as residences for monks and nuns who try to lead a life completely dedicated to the teaching of god in the hope of salvation of their souls. These residence served as a place for the religiously

devout and also as a centre for the training and ordaining of priests. In this way, we may say that monasteries and nunneries can be regarded as the integrating centres of the Chinese religious life.

Therefore, due to the multifunctional active of deities, temples perform many social functions. Yang, gave the example that although the temples of the health category ranked among the lower in number among the functional categories of temples in China, yet L. Newton Hayes's study disclosed that 96.6% of 500 prayer slips in the temples were related to the healing of diseases. This, he explains is the result of the belief in the omnipotency of all deities; the appeal to almost any god or spirit was believed to be efficacious for good health.

Therefore, the functions of temples range from protection of community, the welfare of the family to maintenance of moral order in society. Under the economic category, patron gods of trade guilds as well as general gods of wealth are also related to the integration of social groups and successful human relations. Monasteries and nunneries are designed for the reform of social relations in an imperfect world.

Chapter 3 : CHINESE TEMPLES IN MELAKA

3.1 : Historical background of Melaka

Chinese contacts with Melaka began during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) when Emperor Yǒng Lè (永 乐, , 1403 to 1424), one of the most powerful of the Ming rulers sent a number of naval expeditions to South East Asia and beyond to establish commercial relations. In 1403, he sent to Melaka the eunuch Yuán Qīng (元 清) for this purpose. The gesture was allegedly reciprocated by the ruler of Melaka, Parameswara, who sent his envoys to China in 1405 and 1407 with tribute and presents for the Chinese emperor and a request that his country be recognised as a dependency of the Middle Kingdom. Following the initial exchanges and the visit to Melaka of the Ming admiral Cheng Ho in 1409 (when Melaka was raised to the status of kingdom), a loose political connection was inaugurated between Melaka and the Chinese empire accompanied by an exchange of gifts and the general acceptance of Chinese suzerainty by Melaka rulers.

The increase of Chinese settlers in Melaka was especially rapid in the first few years under the British. For example, in 1827, the Chinese were still concentrated in the north western part of the town and numbered 3989 which is approximately half of the 12,687 free people. This represents an increase of nearly 300% over the Chinese population of 1817.

It was mainly trade in the earlier stages that attracted the Chinese to Melaka. Chinese traders, according to Sandhu (1981), were the most determined in pursuit of wealth. By 1820, if not earlier, almost all of the retail and much of the wholesale trade of Melaka was in their trade. In addition, they were also the principal artisans, craftsmen and manufacturers.

The other main attraction for the early Chinese immigrants to Melaka was its mineral wealth which though negligible, was quite important in the first half of the 19th century. Tin and gold were the principal minerals mined in Melaka. Initially, the mining of these minerals was exclusively a Malay monopoly but as the number of Chinese increased more, more of them became interested so that by the 1860s, mining became largely a Chinese undertaking.

But the chief mining activity was tin. The first tin mine in Melaka was worked by a Chinese in 1793 at Titian Akar which is approximately 11 miles from Melaka town. In 1840, several mines were established in areas such as Tunggal, Air Panas and Kesang areas.

The rapid expansion of rubber industry also gave a new lease of life to Melaka and led to a fresh influx of Chinese cultivators and labours. In the initial stages, the Chinese were the main source of labour for rubber estates. But soon after 1905, a large number of South Indians were recruited for this purpose.

Therefore, the Chinese played a leading role for they were pioneers in trade, agriculture, mining and industry. They laid the foundation for the towns of the state of Melaka besides cultivating the first tapioca, pepper and rubber plantations which brought new life to the state. At the same time trading and mining settlements elsewhere in the Peninsular were often developed by Chinese from Melaka, many of who later retired to Melaka.

According to Sandhu, for the few itinerant merchants and craftsmen, the Chinese of Melaka increased their number through migration in the earlier phases and later by natural increase to 160,084 out of a total population of 404,135 for the state in 1970. Nearly 45% of the population was below 15 years of age then. If the rate of increase of the past few years is maintained, the 200,000 mark is expected to be passed within the next 5 years. Furthermore, unlike the transient character of the earlier population, almost all of the present Chinese population in Melaka is highly stabilized and locally born. There is no reason why this trend should not continue especially in view of the virtual cessation of immigration and the balancing of sex ratio. (Sandhu, 1981, p. 49).

Therefore, with the exodus of the Chinese to Melaka which was mainly due to economic attractions, it is not surprising that this has led to the construction of many Chinese temples in Melaka.

For example, one of the oldest temples in Melaka, in fact, in Malaysia is the Cheng Hoon Teng Temple (青云亭) which is also a Taoist temple. This temple is about 504 years old. The founders of the Cheng Hoon Temple are Li Kup and Tay Kup. Li Kup, a fugitive who fled from China to escape from the Manchus on the downfall of the Ming dynasty was born in 1614 during the reign of the Ming emperor Wan Li. Tay Kup, on the other hand, was born in 1632 in the Chiang Chiew district of Fukien in the reign of the last Ming emperor, Zōng Zhèng (崇, 正). Both of them, Captains China of Melaka and Chan Lak Koa collected and established funds and made gifts of land for the promotion, propagation of the doctrines, ceremonies, rites and customs of the Buddhist and other Chinese religion, commonly professed by the Hokkien Community in Melaka as for such charitable purposes for the benefit of the Hokkien Community. The founders acquired land largely through the generosity of Chan Lak Koa (who also donated the Bukit China cemetery in Melaka) leading to the erection of the present temple. The temple is dedicated to Kwan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy.

Another temple which has a long history is the Poh San Teng temple which is situated at the foot of Bukit China in Jalan Panjang. It is about 200 years old. It was founded by a captain China, Chua Su Chong and is dedicated to Imperial Admiral Cheng Ho, the 3 jewelled eunuch of the Ming dynasty who served under Emperor Yung Lo as his trade ambassador. Admiral Cheng Ho was born in Yunan China and therefore, he professed the Islamic Faith. He was well-received

when he visited Melaka in 1409 by Parameswara, the founder of Melaka. It is said that on one of his trips from China to Melaka, his ship was almost wrecked as there was a hole in the keel. He said a prayer to the Deity of the Ocean and he was surprised to see the water stopped gushing in. On his arrival in Melaka port, there was a great surprise for him, for after saying a prayer of thanks, he noticed that a fish plugging itself to the hole. The fish was still alive before setting it free. Admiral Cheng Ho tenderly touched the fish as a token of appreciation but to his amazement, his finger prints appeared on both sides of the fish i.e. 5 finger prints on each side. To the Chinese, this is known as "Sam Po" fish and this fish do still appear in abundance in the Straits of Melaka and in the South China Sea. Therefore after his death, a temple was erected at the foot of Bukit China to commemorate him and is named the Sam Po Kong temple. (Tourist Development Corporation, 1983). Recently the name of the temple has been changed to Admiral Cheng Ho temple or Poh San Teng temple by the committee of the temple.

Other old temples in Melaka include the Yong Chuan Tian temple in Jalan Bandar Hilir which was built to dedicate "Tee Hoo Ong Yah" and is about 300 years old: Cheng Wah Kiong temple in Jalan Kandang which is dedicated to "Choo Hoo Ong Yah" and was built in 1784 and the Wah Teck Kiong temple which is dedicated to Oon Hoo Ong Yah and which is about 100 years old.

Besides discussing the historial background of these old temples which were built by the early Chinese immigrants in the 18th century, it is also interesting to look at the reasons for setting up Chinese temples in Melaka. These reasons differ from each temple.

For example, from what the writer obtained from a key informant at the Kim Sun Kong temple in Jalan Mata Kuching, the temple was formerly a residential house. Like any ordinary Taoist home, this house has a Taoist deity named "Huat Chu Kong". It happened one day that a family friend came to the house to pray to the deity in order to ask for help to solve a problem. While praying, the owner of the house, who was standing beside the altar suddenly went into a trance and helped the man. After this incident, word spread to the neighbourhood and many people came to seek help from the deity. In return, the owner received gifts in terms of images of deities and cash. Later he decided to turn the place into a temple so that more people could come to pray to the deity.

Therefore, it is true that if a household image comes to be regarded as especially powerful (for example when it manifests itself in spirit mediumship), by the same logic, that particular household may be converted into a temple. This is in fact how many spirit-medium temples came to be founded. (Wee, 1977, p.41).

The Teh Koon temple in Jalan Gajah Berang also has an interesting background. This temple is dedicated to the deity, "Teh Koon". Initially, there was an association called The Gi Ho Hoey Association which was set up in 1893. This association consists of especially elderly people who believe in the deity. Every year this association has to ask a medium, representing the deity, on where the deity should be placed. Therefore, this deity circulates among the committee members. This is because the association does not have a fixed place to house the deity. Later, after collecting enough funds, the association built a temple in Jalan Gajah Berang so that it is easier for the public to come and pray the deity.

Another reason for setting up of temple is the inability to maintain the house. This is especially true for poor families. For example, at the Pak Tian Keung temple in Jalan Bachang, the temple was formerly a wooden house. Since the owner could not afford to maintain the house, he decided to turn the place into a temple. He rented the house to the new committee formed for the temple and he himself acts as the temple keeper.

Therefore, from the above reasons given for setting up Chinese temples, we can say that Chinese temple may be privately owned or connected with a clan or guild or other clubs and associations. Those which are privately owned may be set up by mediums, laymen or even priests or nuns or a vegetarian body. For example, the Che Wye Am Temple in Jalan Bukit Serindit is actually a vegetarian house which was built in 1944 by a priest.

The land on which these temples are built may be purchased by the temple or sometimes rented out from the owner. In some case, the land may be donated by some wealthy people. An example of this is the Wat Phrya Buddha Jinaraja Thai Buddhist temple in Jalan Batu Berendam. The land on which it is situated was donated by a wealthy lady from Melaka who is also one of the committee members of the temple.

Also, for most temples, the deities are either bought by the committee or donated by the public for the services rendered by mediums as a token of appreciation for the help that they have received.

Generally, it can be said that temples seemed to be relatively independent units. Most of them had been erected by people living in the neighbourhood. The building is sometimes financed by people through subscriptions i.e. funds and occasionally by individual who had acquired wealth and wanted to do something for his neighbourhood. When built the temple is usually dedicated to the deity who offered the type of protection that the people felt they needed or who personified the characteristics they honoured or revered.

3.2 : Distribution of Chinese temples in Melaka

Out of the 40 temples which the writer visited during this research, about 90% are Taoist temples whereas the rest are Buddhist temples.

Out of this 10%, only 7% are Buddhist temples of Mahayana sect. Only 2% is of Theravada sect and 1% is the Thai Buddhist temple of Theravada sect in Melaka.

The distributions of Chinese temples in Melaka can be related to the historical background of the state.

Except for localities, namely Portuguese Settlement, the police flats, Kg. Morten and Kg. Durian Daun, all sectors of Melaka have Chinese majorities. In fact, it is true to say that the Chinese constitute an overwhelming proportion of the population and are dominant within the urban area.

The heaviest concentration of the Chinese occurs within the central business district when the Chinese proportion of the total population exceeds 90%. This is also one of the most densely populated area in town. This high densities in the central business district are associated with the traditional urban Chinese habit of living in shophouses. Since this is a busy business area, it is obvious that there are no Chinese temples situated in such areas.

But the area lying in the west of Melaka river particularly along Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock, Jalan Gelanggang and Jalan Tokong forms the core of the old China town while a more recent counterpart has developed along the southern section of Jalan Bunga Raya and Jalan Munshi Abdullah. The houses having been built as long ago as the 17th and 18th centuries.

From this area, we can find that there are many Chinese temples especially in Jalan Tokong. In fact, the name Jalan Tokong was given because there are many Chinese temples along the road. Examples of this include the Cheng Hoon temple, Wah Teck Kiong temple, Siow Ann temple and San Toh temple. The temples here are few of the oldest temples which can be found in Melaka.

Also, at least one temple can be found in each housing estate in Melaka where the Chinese predominates. These temples are either situated in a residential house or are small shrines which can be found near the roadside. They may be a small building by itself with simple architecture or may be made of wood. For example, at the Bukit Serindit housing estate, there are 2 temples namely Chin Boo Tian temple and the Che Wye Am temple which is actually a vegetarian hall. At the Sinn Garden in Jalan Ujong Pasir, there is a Taoist temple, ie. Nam Hai temple which was converted from a residential house. There are also two small shrines which are found at one of the roadsides in the housing estate. It is not to certain whether these temples are established to core for the new communities there by plan or by accident.

There is no district pattern in the distribution of the various types of Chinese temples, namely Buddhist and Taoist temples.

But the distributional patterns of the Chinese temples is likely to be further modified as the government's programmes to industrialize and further develop the state, is put into effect. The implementation

of the government's developmental programme has caused a few temples to be shifted to new areas. For example, the Pak Sian Kong temple was formerly situated at Bukit Terendak. But when the place was turned into a military camp by the government in 1971, the temple was shifted to its present location in Sungei Udang.

Another reason for change in the distributional pattern of Chinese temples in Melaka is due to their funds. When small temples have acquired enough funds, they will probably move to a new and bigger area if their present limited space does not permit expansion of the temple. An example of this is the Wah San Keng temple which was actually situated in a small wooden hut. But after collecting enough funds, the committee of the temple rented the land opposite its temple and the present temple was erected. The old location, at present, is used for showing Chinese operas and film shows during its main deity's birthday anniversary.

But once a temple is established in a definite locality, it is very difficult to dismantle it unless to replace it by a new one or to move it to a new location.

Generally, it can be said that there is a heavy concentration of temples in the old part of Melaka, namely in Jalan Tokong and Jalan Mata Kuching while others are scattered near or in housing estates. These old and established temples are unlikely to be moved or shifted to a new area due to their historical value. In fact, some of these temples are under government's protection in the sense that these temples cannot be dismantled and the architecture

and structure of the temple must be maintained. An example of this is the Cheng Hoon temple in Jalan Tokong.

3.3 : Characteristics of temples

Chinese temples range from shrines which can be found by the roadsides, small wooden huts to huge and beautifully carved buildings with spacious courtyards. Although there are variations, they share a similarity in appearance because all Chinese buildings, sacred or secular derive the same architectural principles. Therefore, a temple is just a more or less elaborately ornamented version of the "Chinese basic building". It must be noted here that the similarities mentioned below refer to temple buildings and not to residential houses which are converted into temples.

One of the most distinctive feature is that the building is situated in a compound surrounded by a wall. It usually has a spacious courtyard.

The main entrance is usually in the south face of the wall. Due to geomantic reasons, all Chinese temples wherever possible have been oriented along north south axis, the master-emperor, household head or god sits in the north facing south. The entrance way is a triple gate of which each doorway is closed by heavy double wooden door leaves. The whole of this entrance way is recessed within the wall and covered by a truncated version of a building roof. It is raised above ground level, and one enters by ascending several

stone steps. A good example of this is the Cheng Hoon Teng temple in Jalan Tokong. The doors are usually painted or carved with guardian figures or animals of dragons which are believed to be able to ward off evil spirits.

After entering the gate, one looks with a square of buildings with a courtyard in the middle. The buildings running longitudinally on the east and west are subsidiary. They are usually used as residential houses for temple keepers or for putting other images of deities. Sometimes these buildings may be used as nunneries. The main hall is usually divided into a larger room in the centre flanked by siderooms on the east and west.

Also, all these buildings are raised off the ground or platforms and are entered by ascending stone steps.

The buildings are essentially wooden frames whose most important features are the rows of sturdy round pillars, beams and brackets which support the roof. The walls whether internal or external act as screens. On external walls, mouldings and patterns of creative of good omen are also cast. The most popular is the bat (蝠) which has the same pronunciation in Chinese as the word "luck" (fú 福) and it is used to symbolize luck and prosperity. The tortoise is well known for its shell is popularly used. According to one legend, the tortoise was "the base of the beginning of things" and it has been considered an emblem of infinite time (Lip, 1977). Geomantic signs, e.g. the 8 trigrams and the Yin Yang principles are often depicted on

screen walls. All these signs are supposed to have mystical powers against evil forces. The outside wall is usually made of brick and the inside walls may be made of brick or wood.

The most striking feature of the temple is the roof which usually has a "Chinese feature". The roof is not only the most obvious and important feature but also the most expensive ornamental element. Usually, the roof ridge of a well-established temples are adorned with dancing dragons or sometimes with figurines of warriors and saints. This can be seen at the Cheng Hoon Teng temple in Melaka. To the Chinese the dragon is not a monstrous or destructive element but it is regarded as the guardian of treasure and symbol of strength, justice and authority. Fish dragons, on the other hand symbolize success and achievement.

The roofs of Chinese temples are also made of coloured tiles, matched by the walls, posts and interior decoration of the building. The Chinese preference is strong colours eg. red, blue, green, gold, white and black. The post and doors are usually painted in bright Chinese red. The pillars, too, are sometimes carved with mythical birds or with quotations from sacred books.

If the compound has more than one hall, then the main deity of the temple will be enthroned in a rear hall. The other halls will be used to house the other minor deities.

Another similarity is the position of the objects of worship on the altar of temples which are located in a shrine hall. The position on which the images are put plays an important role. The usual positions are namely the 4 corners of the hall and the centre of the hall directly facing the main door. The latter is important because no shrine hall is complete without the image of the deity in that position. Sometimes 5 deities may be put, each of the positions may be occupied by several deities in a row. The main deity is situated in the middle. Each deity may be accompanied by the images of his or her attendant pages or hand maidens. A god may be represented by more than one image. But most temples in Melaka have quite a mixed company of the gods including those from the Buddhist and Taoist pantheons as well as the particular deities favoured by the local community.

Stone lions are usually placed in front of the Chinese temples in pairs of female and the other male. This can be seen at the entrance to the Cheng Hoon Teng temple in Jalan Tokong. They are portrayed with their mouths open as if they are roaring and warding off evil spirits. They signify justice and uprightness.

But for small temples, eg. shrines which normally house local earth gods or other spirits, they are usually found everywhere in the busy streets of town. In such shrines, there is usually only an altar to house the deities but no ornamentation. Sometimes, the deity may be represented by no more than a tablet or an inscription on a stone or wooden block.

3.4 : Development of Chinese Temples

The development of Chinese temples can be said to include 3 aspects:-

1. Size of the temple in the physical sense
2. Management of the temple
3. Properties owned by the temple

For the first aspect, development in this sense refers to renovations which are carried out in the temple with the objective of widening, restructuring or beautifying the temple. This also includes the change of temples from road side shrines or dilapidated wooden huts to imposing carved wood and stone stone work buildings. For all temples, this depends principally on the funds available. But for some temples, especially spirit medium temples, the public would, in return for the services rendered by the medium to them, pay for the repairs for the temple. An example of this is the Siaw Ong Kong temple in Jalan Tokong in which payment for repairs that were needed for a leaking roof last year was settled by a man who frequents the temple to seek help. In some cases, payment could be made in terms of services offered to the temple. For example if he is a carpenter, he would repair the leaking roof himself without any charge. But payment in such terms is only limited to minor repairs.

Renovations on a large scale is usually carried out by temples which have enough funds. These funds may be derived from public donations or from some wealthy people, association, etc. In such cases, the name of the main donor will be written on the wall of the temple or sometimes engraved on a copper plate and put in the temple. In one Taoist temple in Melaka i.e. the Wee Hian Keng temple, the names of the main donors who have contributed towards the construction of this temple are written on the beams found in the temple.

An example of a temple here which underwent a major renovation is the Hian Tian Keong temple in Jalan Bandar Hilir. This temple was formerly a small wooden hut. Since it has many devotees, a campaign was launched by the temple committee to collect donations from the public. Therefore in 1983, a major renovation took place. The small wooden hut was dismantled and a 2 storey building was erected. The ground floor is used for staging puppet shows during festivals.

Another example is the Wat Phrya Buddha Jinaraja Thai Buddhist Temple in Jalan Batu Berendam. This temple was formerly situated in a rented house in Jalan Tranquerah. When there was enough funds and devotees, the Thai monk who was in charge of the temple decided to shift the temple to another site. In 1975, a piece of land was donated by a wealthy lady to the temple. In that year also, plans for the temple was sent for approval to the Government. On 4th October, 1979, a new temple was built in its present location.

From the above, it can be said that the construction and repair of temples are an indication of the continual vitality of functional gods in the life of a community. Building of temples may slack in modern times, but major repairs and renovations serve to retain the usefulness of the old ones. Temples are built or repaired by either permanent organized social groups or by temporarily organized community campaign or individual efforts. Therefore, ancestral temples were built by family groups and temple of patron gods by trade guilds. Also the continual building and repairs of temples show the religious influence in the Chinese society.

Development in the aspect of management of the temple refers to the organization of temple. As temples developed in size and structure, its organization sometimes becomes more systematic and organized.

For the Cheng Hoon temple, a Teng Choo or President of the temple was elected to be the head of the temple and also head of the Chinese community of the settlement when the temple was first built 504 years ago. Later, a board of managing trustees was instituted soon after the office of the last Teng Choo ceased to exist. This Trustee Board also includes an Advisory Committee which consists of district representatives appointed to represent the various districts of Melaka.

Development of temples in relation to properties owned by the temple also includes properties such as images of deities, land, temple buildings, etc. A good example would be the Cheng Hoon Teng temple in Jalan Tokong.

This temple through its trustees purchased or otherwise acquired other lands in Singapore and Melaka which were used and are used as sites of the temple and as burial grounds for the Hokkien community of Melaka. The trustees also, from time to time have by mutual consent of the persons interested, requested to takeover the control, administration and management of the various Chinese temples and deities in Melaka. The temple at present, controls and manages a group of 6 other temples in Melaka, consecrated to non Buddhist deities, namely:

1. Yong Chuan Tian temple in Jalan Bandar Hilir, dedicated to "Tee Hoo Ong Yah"
2. Wah Teck Kiong temple in Jalan Tokong, dedicated to "Oon Hoo Ong Yah"
3. Cheng Wah Kiong temple in Kandang, dedicated to "Choo Hoo Ong Yah"
4. Poh San Teng temple in Jalan Bukit China. dedicated to "Sam Poh Kong"
5. Geok Ee Kiong temple in Jalan Klebang Kecil, dedicated to "Siong Tay Yah"
6. Keoh Kang Bio in Jalan Ujung Pasir, dedicated to "Tua Pek Kong"

The above temples are under its management because they are either built on the properties i.e. land owned by the temple or have been requested to control the temples.

In the course of its long history, the Cheng Hoon Teng temple and its subsidiary temples have been well endowed with valuable house properties in Melaka and in Singapore which were gifts of adherents and rotaries in the past and which form today the source of its income amounting to a gross sum of about \$4000 a month. For example, the houses owned by the temple in Jalan Bukit China have been rented to the public at a low rate.

It also own the land on which the temple is situated i.e. an area of 49,520 square feet including the substantial brick built theatre house with a large open space in front of it for spectators when plays are occasionally staged on special festival days.

Besides these, the temple also owns the enormous Bukit China which was donated to the temple by Chan Lak Koa. This Bukit China cemetery with Bukit Gedung and Bukit Tempurong has an area of more than 106 acres and which is believed to be one of the most extensive burial grounds outside China. It also represents the cultural roots of the Chinese in Malaysia with its 12,500 graves.

But unfortunately, there has been a lot of conflict concerning the Bukit China issue between the government, the opposition political party and the board of trustees of the temple. The Malacca State Government plans to level and develops the hill into a housing and commercial centre and use the earth for land reclamation projects. But the opposition political party and the board of trustees oppose these plans saying that the hill should be preserved since it represents the historic, cultural and religious contribution of the Chinese to Malaysian nation building in the past 500 years and it is the trust property for the Chinese community handed down by the ancestors. They also demand the government abandonment of the decision to level and develop the hill and also the full recognition and respect of the Government for the full ownership and determination right of the Chinese community through the trustees of the Cheng Hoon Teng temple committee over the future of the Bukit China. At the time of doing this research, a final decision has not been reached on this issue.

Besides these, other properties owned by most Chinese temples also include the images of deities. These deities are brought in to the temple from time to time. They are earlier bought by the committee of the temples or are donated by the public or devotees who came to seek help from the mediums in the temple.

3.5 : Future plans

For small temples, their plans would be to renovate the temple or expand it or sometimes shift it to a bigger area. This, of course, depends on the financial status of the temple.

As for the big and well-established temples, their plans are not to do a major renovation but rather towards beautifying the structure of the temple and to have more Chinese shows e.g. operas and puppet shows during festivals. For example, renovations are taking place at the Sam Tiong temple in Jalan Semabok in order to beautify the temple. According to one key informant from the temple, this renovation will include carvings on the walls and pillars in the temple. The key informant also added that such major renovations take place every 25 years before the temple celebrates its temple anniversary.

Other plans of majority of temples especially Buddhist temples include having more dhamma (religious instructions) a classes or improving facilities or services which can be offered to the public. An example of this is the Wat Phrya Buddha Jinaraja Thai Buddhist temple in Jalan Batu Berendam. This temple plans to have dhamma classes for the public. At present the temple does not have enough space in the temple for conducting such classes and the committee members are too busy to act as part-time teachers for these dhamma classes.

Another Taoist temple i.e. the Wee Hion Keng Temple plans to cut down expenses spent during festivals so that enough funds can be channelled towards buying the land on which it is situated instead of having to rent it from the owner.

It should also be noted here that the future plans of the temple would sometimes be changed with the government's developmental programmes, This is especially true if the government plans to develop the area on which the temple is situated.

Therefore, it can be concluded here that the extent to which the plans of these temples, whether Buddhist or Taoist temples, could be implemented in the future depends principally on the funds of the temple.



PLATE 1 : A geomancer's compass from the collection in the Musée de l'Homme, Paris.
 (Picture borrowed from François Martel's *Les Boussoles Divinatoires Chinoises*, in
Communication 19, 1972)



PLATE 3: THE CHENG HOON TENG TEMPLE



PLATE 4: THE ENTRANCE TO THE MAIN ALTAR OF THE CHENG HOON TENG TEMPLE. NOTE THE INTRICATE AND CARVED DESIGNS ON THE WOODEN WALLS AND ALTAR.



PLATE 5: THE CHONG ANN TENG TEMPLE AT JALAN TRANQUERAH



PLATE 6: THE HOCK ANN TENG TEMPLE AT JALAN TRANQUERAH



PLATE 7: THE MAIN ALTAR OF SAN TOH TEMPLE AT JALAN TOKONG WHICH HAS DABŌGŌNG AS ITS PATRON DEITY.



PLATE 8: A BEAUTIFULLY CARVED ALTAR FOUND AT THE SAN TOH TEMPLE.

Chapter 4: CELEBRATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Celebrations in Chinese temples are innumerable. If a list were made of every festival available for celebrations by the Chinese including traditional Chinese festivals, there would hardly a day in the year in which there was ^{no} celebration. Generally, celebrations and activities of the temples depend greatly upon the amount of temple funds available.

4.1 : Birthday of patron deities

Moese (1979, p. 345) describes the relationship of the Chinese to the deities as prosaic and objective. He added that, ".....their religion, as they practice it, apparently means nothing in the way of communion with their deityThis idea seems to be one of reciprocity. You do something nice for the god, and he being a gentleman, will do something nice for you"

Therefore, it is not surprising to find that birthdays of deities are celebrated in temples of all dialect groups; the birthday of the deity to which the temple is dedicated being made the occasion for the most elaborate celebration, with all of the colour and excitement that appeal to popular taste. Celebrations may last for three or four days and nights and even extend to a week. It attracts crowds of worshippers. Regular devotees came to pay their respects including those who have heard of the efficacies or special powers of the deity and wish to honour hi. Temple funds swelled on these

occasions by gift purchases of talisman and other monies ostensibly given for the purchase of candles, incense and lamp oil. Chinese opera and theatrical companies may be hired to perform in connection to the festival.

One of the most popular celebration here in Melaka is the birthday of Guān Yīn or Goddess of Mercy (觀音). It falls on 19th day of the 2nd lunar month. Due to a confusion of ideas, most of the Chinese laymen say that Guān Yīn has 3 birthdays. But in actual fact, the other 2 days are the day when she attained enlightenment which is on the 19th day of the 6th lunar month and her death day on the 19th day of the 9th lunar month. In other words, these 3 days are indiscriminately known as here birthday anniversaries.

Guān Yīn is also sometimes known as Guānshīyīn (觀世音). Guānyīn "looks on" (kuan) the region (shi) of sufferers, whose "voice" (yin) of many tones, all acknowledging misery and asking salvation, touch the heart of the pitiful Bodhisattra. Today, Guānyīn is worshipped as an idealization of womanhood and symbolizes the deification of the idea of infinite pity, which was the chief attribute of ~~Saky~~²amuni Buddha.¹

One main reason for her popularity is that she is also the Goddess of Children to whom female believers, who are desirous of begetting

children especially male offspring, offer prayer. This belief in child gift is traceable to a passage in the Lotus of the Good Law (妙法蓮華經) of which the translation reads,

"If there be a woman who desires a male child, and prays to Kwan Yin, the goddess will cause her to become the mother of a well endowed and highly gifted child; or if she desires a female child, she shall become the mother of one extremely beautiful, endowed with every gift and beloved of all."²

Another reason for her popularity, according to one key informant from the Cheng Hoon Teng temple, is that she has a profoundly merciful heart of tenderness, helping people everywhere. If any living creature who is in trouble or in pain addresses a prayer to this "púsà" (菩薩) of love and mercy and is true faith, calls her name, then will the "púsà" immediately hearten to his cries and bring him deliverance from his woes.³

Therefore, due to the special functions of Kwan Yin, it is not surprising to find many temples in Melaka which are dedicated to this deity and Kwan Yin is also worshipped in many households. The best known temples dedicated to this Goddess of Mercy are the Cheng Hoon Teng temple in Jalan Tokong, Nam Hai Temple in Sinn Garden, Jalan Ujong Pasir and Mew Yēw See Temple in Jalan Semabok.

In the Cheng Hoon Temple for example, the birthday of Kwan Yin is celebrated on a grand scale. In the morning, prayers will be conducted in the temple premises. The public is allowed to join in the prayers which are led by one monk from the temple. From what the writer observed at the temple last year on Kwan Yin's birthday, the public who joined in the prayers are all elderly women in their late forties and fifties and all of them are dressed in black robes. On that day also, extremely large crowds will throng the temple with varieties of cooked food, fruits and flowers to make votive offerings. The food offered consists of only vegetarian food. Also, the fumes from the burning of joss-papers, lighted candles and incense sticks turn the places of worship into veritable smoke houses. A Chinese theatrical company is also hired to perform at the theatre opposite the temple. This will last for 5 to 6 days. According to the key informant from this temple, this theatrical company hired to perform on Kwan Yin's birthday is paid by the temple promoters from the temple funds.

Another popular celebration is Wesak day. Wesak day marks 3 incidents i.e. the birthday of Buddha, the day when he attained enlightenment and his death day. These 3 incidents fall on the same day which is the full moon day of May or 15th day of the 4th lunar month.

In Melaka, this day is celebrated on a lavish scale in all Buddhist temples especially at the Seck Kia Eenh Temple in Jalan Gajah Berang.

At this temple, prayers and chanting will be held in the morning. All those who join in the prayers are devotees of the temple and some members from the public. The monks will lead in the prayers. As soon as this is over, (usually the prayers end in the afternoon), a vegetarian lunch is served to devotees. According to one key informant, the devotees have to pay a certain amount of money for the lunch which is about \$2.00. The lunch is prepared by devotees of the temple.

In the afternoon, donations will be made to the old folks' homes or orthopaedic homes. Donations to these charitable organizations are usually given in terms of foodstuffs, for example, biscuits, tinned food and clothes. This is usually done by the devotees and not by the monks. Last year the temple donated biscuits, milk power and clothes to the old folks home in Jalan Bukit Bahru.

At night, the statue of Buddha from the temple which was cleaned and put on a float on Wesak eve, will then be decorated with bright and colourful lights and flowers. Besides this float, there are also other floats e.g. the Dhamma school of the temple will put a float of their own. Usually, a huge hand made logo of the school which is made of cardboard will be put on a float and carried during the procession. Also, there will be a float with a man-made Bodhi tree (made of coloured papers), representing the Bodhi tree where Buddha attained enlightenment.

The procession will start from the temple and passes through certain parts of Melaka town and will end at the temple. Its route changes every year. The public is allowed to join in the procession.

Usually, this mammoth procession attracts large crowds of worshippers and on-lookers. The devotees who join in the procession wear white clothes as a symbol of purity. They usually go on a vegetarian meals for a week before Wesak Day.

The procession may also be joined by other Buddhist temple. For example, when this temple holds the procession on every Wesak day, the Wat Phrya Buddha Jinaraja Thai Buddhist temple in Jalan Batu Berendam also joins in the procession because it is difficult to obtain a permit to hold a procession from the authorities concerned. Buddhist societies from schools in Melaka may also join in the procession. Usually each school will make and bring their own floats.

Another celebration which is popular in Melaka is the birthday of Dàbōgōng (太伯公) which falls on the 2nd day of 2nd lunar month. Tua Pek Kong like Kwan Yin, is very popular among the Chinese in Melaka especially among the Hokkiens. This can be seen by the images of Tua Pek Kong in many temples and on altars of many private dwelling houses. Although there are only 3 temples which the writer visited during this research which have Tua Pek Kong as their patron deity, but his portrait, a beaming old man with a flowing white beard is enthroned in almost every Taoist temple beside the patron deity of the temple.

According to one key informant from the Heng Seng Temple, which has Tuo Pek Kong as the main deity, Tua Pek Kong is believed to confer riches, luck and wealth. This belief is so deep rooted that the words "Pek Kong" have become synonymous with luck. He is also relied upon to bring prosperity, cure diseases, becalm the ocean and avert danger. Tua Pek Kong is also consulted for forecasting the lucky numbers.

Before the birthday of Tua Pek Kong is celebrated at the Heng Seng Temple is Jalan Padang Temu, devotees go on a vegetarian meal. This will last for about 10 days. On the day of his birthday, many devotees will come to the temple to pray. The number of people who came on this day is exceptionally large in numbers as compared to other days. Cooked food, fruits and flowers are offered and put on the altars. On this day, also, can we see many devotees seeking help from the deity through divination. Donations are also made to the temple.

In the afternoon, free lunch will be provided by the temple to devotees and close friends. One key informant told the writer that the ingredients for this lunch are bought by using temple funds and cooked by the temple keeper with the help of some regular devotees of the temple.

At night, the temple will be crowded with people who came to see the film show which will be screened at the vacant land beside the temple. Usually, the show starts at 8.00 pm. and ends at 12.30 am. The types of show screened are usually Hokkien and

Cantonese shows. This will last for about 3 days. Also at night, many people will come to seek help from the mediums. Since Tua Pek Kong is believed to confer wealth, luck and riches, it is not surprising that majority of the people who came to seek help are businessmen. Questions put forward for the medium include making decisions on certain business deals, solving problems and predicting on the forth coming results of the 4 digit draws. Besides these, there are also people who come to see the medium wishing to cure diseases protection against evil spirits, etc. For curing of diseases, the medium will give the person who come to seek help, a yellow coloured amulet. With this, he has to burn it and the ashes are to be diluted in water and then, the person has to consume it. As for protection against evil spirits and diseases, a talisman may be given to the person and he is supposed to wear it.

Dàshèngyé (大聖爺) or commonly known as the Monkey God is also prominent among the Chinese temples in Melaka. Among the popular temples with Dàshèngyé as their patron deity are the Chek Tian Wu Temple in Jalan Panjang, and Hwa Kor San temple in Jalan Ujong Pasir. Dàshèngyé's birthday is celebrated on a grand scale. His feast days are celebrated on the 18th day of the 5th moon and on the 18th day of the 8th moon.

When asked what is the special function of Tye Seng Yah, one key informant from the Hwa Kor San Temple told the writer that the deity is extremely powerful and has granted various requests and one can appeal to the deity with requests of any nature. This ranges from curing of diseases, protection against evil spirits to solving of family problems and removing bad luck.

On Dàshèngyé's birthday at the Hwa Kor San Temple, sacrificial offerings are made to the deity by devotees. Incense sticks and papers are also burnt. As usual, free lunch will be given to devotees on the deity's birthday. At night, sometimes, films shows are screened but according to the key informant, this depends on the temple funds. For example, there were no film shows screened last year because the temple funds were not enough and the temple could not get a sponsor.

At night also, 2 mediums will come to the temple, one of which is a regular medium to the temple. Both would go into a trance after the temple assistants start beating the drums and gongs faster and faster. Sometimes on-lookers will also go into a trance.

One source told the writer that the mediums, when in a trance would behave "like a monkey". This is because he represents the Dàshèngyé which is also known as the Monkey God. On trance, the medium will jerk and quiver in an uncontrolled fashion. He will also scratch his head, legs and arms. The source also added that a "genuine" medium representing the deity can even jump up to the roof or beams whereas a "false" one would just "jump up and down"

on the ground. This will last for about 15 minutes after which he would be helped by the temple assistants to a chair in front of the altar. Then, those who come to ask help from him may put forward their problems to the medium through the temple assistants.

Generally, it may be said here that the birthdays of the patron deity in Chinese temples are celebrated on a grand scale. But for Taoist temples which have many deities, the birthday anniversaries of these deities besides the main deity are celebrated on a grand scale.

Also, the extraordinary significance assigned to the birthday of a deity is the performance of popular operas and plays. Moese adds that, ".....the purpose of this is to honour and please the deity. Often, the reputation and esteem of the temple and its deities may depend on the quality of its dramatic performance. (Moese, 1979, p.310).

4.2 : Other celebrations

Besides the birthdays of deities, there are also celebrations which are organized by temples. An example of this is the great Huáng Chuán festival. To the Hokkiens, this is known as the Wang Kang festival.

The Huáng Chuán (艘 舢) festival was occasionally held about 3 centuries ago in Melaka. Huáng Chuán means a war junk about the size of an ordinary sampan ornamented with gold silk and jewels. It originated in China. It was held here in Melaka soon after many Hokkien people emigrated from China about 3 centuries ago. Some of them sailed to Malaya and the first country that they reached was Melaka. They settled down there and worshipped the Wáng yé (王 爺), as they had been used in their own country. Their descendants, the Straits born Chinese followed their steps in worshipping 5 Ong Yahs and this is why Melaka is the only place where the Wang Kang procession is held.

The 5 Ong Yahs according to their seniority are:

1. Choo Hoo Ong Yah
2. Oon Hoo Ong Yah
3. Tee Hoo Ong Yah
4. Lee Hoo Ong Yah
5. Pek Hoo Ong Yah

At present, Choo Hoo Ong Yah is the patron deity of the Cheng Wah Kiong Temple in Jalan Sungai Udang. Oon Hoo Ong Yah is being placed at the Wah Teck Kiong temple in Jalan Tokong. Pek Hoon Ong Yah and Tee Hoo Ong Yah are put at the Yong Chuan Tian Temple in Jalan Bandar Hilir. Lee Hoo Ong Yah on the other hand is put at a Hokkien Association in Jalan Hang Jebat.

The legendary account of the Ong Yahs is quite interesting. During the reign of the Ming dynasty, there lived a man who was famous for his supernatural powers, named Tee Tian Joo. The Emperor, wishing to test this ability got together 300 Chin Soos or scholars to play music. At the height of the music, the Emperor asked Tee to stop the music but he replied that the musicians could only be stopped if death overtook them. He then sprinkled a handful of mixture of salt and rice on the floor and struck it with his magic sword resulting in the beheading of 360 scholars. On that very night, the dissatisfied souls appeared before the Emperor and demanded their lives of him.

However to prevent the king from being killed, Tee captured the souls and confined them into a casket. The casket was then thrown into the sea. It was found ashore by a beggar who opened it, thus liberating the souls. On advice of Tee, the Emperor deified the souls as Ong Yah with the title Tye Tian Soon Jiew (Power of Imperial Justice) and decreed that they should be prayed to in whatever part of his domain they might visit. (Wong, 1967, p.6).

Therefore the idea of the Huáng Chuán procession is to capture all evil spirits which are responsible for the epidemic scourges and chaotic conditions of the world and send them away in the Huáng Chuán to the unknown and to pray for prosperity and peace of the whole world.

According to one source at the Yong Chuan Tiān temple in Jalan Bandar Hilir, the first Huáng Chuán procession was held 87 years ago in Kandang and from that time up to 1880, it took place every 5 to 8 years. In 1891, after a lapse of 11 years, when the outbreak of cholera was very virulent, it was again held and since then, it has been taking place every 14 years. The last Wangkong procession held was on 29th November, 1933.

But unfortunately, the Huáng Chuán festival has ceased to exist now. The writer's father who has witnessed this procession in 1933 said that the reason for abolishing it is that it is expensive and it is difficult to get enough funds to hold this procession.

Although the Cheng Hoon Teng Temple, which is a "rich" temple, is in charge of this procession, yet it could not come up with enough funds to hold the procession.

The essential feature of the procession was the Cǎi Lián Jiǎo (採蓮腳) or "the waterlily squad" formed by 25 couples whose members wore gorgeous white garments with red silk girdles and white hats. Barefooted, they marched two by two each carrying a wooden paddle which was swung to and fro to the rhythm of the Cǎi Lián song (the waterlily song). Immediately following the squad were floats in the form of sampans called Huáng Chuán and the 5 statuettes representing Wángyé (王爺). After the procession which went round the town, the Huáng Chuán was finally set on fire and allowed to drift out to the sea. (Wong, 1967, p.6).

The last of the Huáng Chuán festivals held in 1933, lasted from November 27 to December 8 (12th of the 21st day of the 10 moon).

The writer's father also said that years later after the last procession, there were attempts to revive the festival but was abandoned owing to inadequate funds.

However, on all Souls' Day, a procession is organized by the Wah Teck Kiang Temple in Jalan Tokong whose patron deity is Oon Hoo Yah. The purpose of this procession is to bring together all of the 5 Ong Yahs put at various temples in Melaka. Therefore during this procession, the 3 temples and one Hokkien association which the Ong Yahs as their patron deities will join in the procession. Unlike the Huáng Chuán Festival, this procession only lasts for one night and is not as elaborate as the Wong Kang procession.

Other celebrations besides the birthdays of deities and the Huáng Chuán festival which are celebrated on a grand scale include temple anniversaries. One key informant told the writer that birthdays of deities and temple anniversaries are the times when the temple can collect large amounts of money for the temple funds, although the temple has to pay a lot for the celebrations.

For small temples, usually their temples anniversaries are celebrated on a smaller scale as compared to well-established temples. For example, the Hian Fong Than temple in Jalan Bachang celebrates its temple anniversary by giving free lunch to regular devotees and

committee of the temple in the vicinity of the temple itself. The food is cooked by the caretakers themselves. The ingredients for this lunch are bought by using temple funds. In return a small amount of "ang-pow" is received from those who came for the lunch and this money will go to the temple funds. But on the other hand, the birthday anniversary of the temple's main deity, Siong Tek Kong is celebrated on a much larger scale.

But for bigger and well-established temples with a large amount of funds, their temple anniversaries are celebrated with all the colour and excitement. For example, at the Pak Tian Keung temple in Jalan Bachang, invitation cards are sent out a week before the actual day to close friends. This includes regular devotees of the temple. The dinner is usually held at one of the major restaurants in Melaka. In return, "ang-pow" will be given to the temple. During this dinner, an auction will be held in which items from the temple e.g. lanterns and flags will be auctioned. Usually people would buy these items because it is believed that whoever buys them will receive prosperity and good luck. Foodstuffs especially peach buns are also auctioned. The buns are coloured pink and shaped like peaches. This peach is a symbol of longevity among the Chinese.

According to one key informant, the price of one peach bun could come to about \$50.00 each. Besides buns and items from the temple which are auctioned, cigarettes may also be auctioned. The writer's neighbour who attended the temple anniversary dinner of the Pak Tiam Keung temple told the writer that he bought a cigarette for \$1000 during the auction. Therefore, it is not surprising that temple funds swell during temple anniversaries. In fact one

source from the Pak Tian Keung temple told the writer that the temple funds collected from "ang-pows" and auctioning of items during the temple anniversary dinner last year came to about \$6,000.

On the day of the temple anniversary, a lion dance company is usually invited to perform at the Pak Tian Keung temple. Besides this, a Chinese orchestra is also invited to perform during the dinner. Sometimes, when there is enough funds, local singers may be paid to perform.

At the Seck Kia Eenh Temple in Jalan Gajah Berang which is a Buddhist temple of Theravada sect, a special service is usually conducted on special occasions e.g. national day and governor's birthday. The purpose of this is to give blessings to the country. On such days, chanting and prayers will be held at the temple and the public is allowed to join in the prayers. This temple also celebrates Bodhi day. Bodhi is the name of the tree where Buddha attained enlightenment. For example, the Seck Kia Eenh Temple celebrated the 25th year (Silver Jubilee) of the Bodhi tree last year with an all night chanting led by one of the monks in the temple.

But at the Wat Phya Jinaraja Thai Buddhist temple in Jalan Batu Berendam which is of Theravada sect, the festivals that are celebrated differ from other Buddhist temples in Melaka, although the only similarity is the Wesak Day celebration. The reason for

this is that it is a Thai Buddhist temple and the monk who is in charge of the temple is a Thai monk and therefore, all ceremonies and festivals are celebrated according to the Thai Buddhist religion and customs. For example, the types of festivals celebrated besides Wesak Day are the Songkram festival, pangse month festival and Loy Krathong festival.

The Songkram festival falls on the 13th of April. The significance of this festival is to clean the Buddha statues in the temple. In the morning, prayers and chanting led by the monk from temple will be held. When this is over, the devotees will carry out all the statues of Buddha to the courtyard of the temple. Then the statues will be put on a netting placed on top of a huge container. The function of the container is to collect the water when the statues are cleared. After this, one layman, usually a regular devotee of the temple representing the others, will pour "holy water" which is a mixture of perfume, water and flowers, onto the statues and clean it with a piece of cloth. When this is over, the monks will then step into the container and clean themselves with the holy water. The same water will then be used by elderly devotees to clean themselves; then followed by the younger devotees. The purpose of using the same "holy water" to clean themselves is to wash away all sins and receive blessings.

Pangsa month, which starts in November will lasts for 3 months.

It is believed that this period is the raining period and therefore all monks will stay in the temple. This is also the time for any layman to give offerings to the temple. The offerings given are usually yellow robes for the monks and other personal things like toothpaste, soap, etc. These offerings will be placed on the altar for a few days and are taken away on the last day of the pangsa month where there will be prayers.

The Loy Kramthong ceremony is also an interesting festival. This festival originated in Thailand during the Sukhothai period some 700 years ago. The Thai King at that time was cruising down a river when he saw krathongs made from banana leaves and flowers set adrift by his wife. Fascinated, he declared that full moonlight or Loy Krathong night. Since then, it has been the custom of Thai communities to observe Loy Krathong.⁴

The Wat Phrya Thai Buddhist temple in Jalan Batu Berendam celebrates Loy Krathong on 15th of October. On this day, the temple will make paper lotus of which the petals are imported from Thailand. These lotus will be put and pasted on float boards and later sold to member or devotees who came to the temple. Names of relatives or friends who have passed away can be written on the small card pasted on one of the petals of the lotus. The significance of this

There is a legend attached to this festival. During the Yuan Dynasty (1271 to 1368 AD) the Mongols conquered China from Peking. When Kublai Khan died, his successors were incapable of ruling the country. This led the people to revolt against him near the temple. The devotees also believe that the floats can carry away their sins and bad luck.

Although these 3 festivals follow the Thai Buddhist religion and customs and are celebrated only at the Thai Buddhist temple, yet, according to the monk from the temple, the people who come to join in the celebrations are Taoist and Buddhist and not Thai Buddhist.

4.3 : Traditional festivals

Traditional festivals include festivals of Mooncake festival, Ching Ming, 7th Moon Festival, Chap Goh Mei and many others. Such celebrations are normally celebrated at home but celebrations also do take place in temples.

Moon cake festival, also known as the Mid Autumn Festival (中秋節) falls on 15th day of the 8th lunar month of the Chinese calendar

because it is believed that the moon is at its fullest and brightest so that people can see the Goddess of Moon (月娘娘) clearly. Usually, a week before the event, people buy a special cake called moon cake and offer it to deities in the temple or at home and also to their ancestors. At night, they pray to the Goddess of Moon.

There is a legend attached to this festival. During the Yuan Dynasty (1279 to 1368 AD) the Mongols controlled China from Peking. When Kublai Khan died, his successors were incapable of controlling the country. This led the people to revolt against the Mongols. The Mongol emperor was afraid and therefore, he sent a soldier to every 10 Chinese homes to spy on the family. Conditions became intolerable. One day a Chinese man thought of an idea. He put a short note in every moon cake because he knows that people would buy these cakes. The note was to ask the people to get ready to revolt against the Mongols on a certain night at a certain hour. Each soldier was killed and the rebellion was successful. Therefore the mooncake festival is observed every year. (Rotary Club, 1973, p.15).

On Mooncake festival at the Seck Kia Eenh Temple in Jalan Gajah Berang, celebrations begin at night with prayers and chanting. After this, a gathering will be held, organized by the School of Dhamma, and all devotees are invited to join in the gathering. Usually only the younger devotees would join in the gathering. Activities which take place during this gathering include games and talentime and mooncake will be served.

At the Cheng Hoon Teng, on the other hand, this festival is celebrated by offering moon cakes to the deities in the temple and also to soul tablets. Incense sticks and papers will be burnt.

Another traditional festival is the Qīng Míng festival. Qīng Míng (lit, bright and pure, (清明)) is celebrated 106 days after the winter solstice which is about the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd moon. (Purcell, 1958, p.135). On this day, honour is paid exclusively to the dead. All graves mounds must be repaired, rounded and cleaned. Relatives put cooked food, buns and fruits on the grave and incense papers and joss-sticks are burnt. Besides these, imitation money is also burnt. This ceremony is concluded with a series of bowing towards the ground.

For those who stay far away from graves of their deceased relatives, food will be offered to the soul tablets of their deceased relatives put in temple. But for certain temples, for example the Cheng Hoon Teng temple, a monk from the temple will conduct the correct ritual on this day on the altar of the soul tablets. This includes the offering of food especially fruits and flowers and burning of incense papers and joss sticks. In some temples, the temple keeper will conduct the ceremony.

The Festival of Hungry Ghosts, also called Guǐ-jie (鬼节) is on the 7th moon. It is the most important and most widely observed festival in Malaysia second only to the New Year. These ghosts fall under the category of neglected shades. who have not been cared for by their living relatives and who are prone to be malignant and mischievous (Wong, 1979, p.136). The Taoist believe

that on this day, the rulers of the lower world will allow the hungry ghosts to leave and try to get food. They are allowed to mingle with human beings for a period of 30 days till the last day of the 7th moon. Therefore to appease these straying destitute ghosts, the Chinese generally make a preliminary offering on the evening of the 1st day of the 7th moon.

At the Chee Teong Beow in Jalan Bachang, on this day, the temple would put a few tables outside the temple for devotees to put their sacrificial offerings. The sacrificial offerings range from cooked food, flowers to bottles of beer and biscuits. Therefore, one can see a colourful display of offerings to the "ghosts" on the table. Later, candles, huge incense sticks, incense papers and made money are set ablaze by the side of the street. Some believers go to step further by providing the ghosts with passes or passports as an act of hospitality (Wong, 1976, p.132). These, too, are set ablaze by the side of the road.

From the above celebrations, the social aspect is in greater evidence than the religion (Topley, 1955, p.104). Respects are paid by devotees and visitors and food set up for the use of the shen. After the "soul substance" of these offerings have been consumed by the shen, it is taken down and packed away. Worship over, people wander round with friends, buy small snacks and cold drinks from hawkers that flock to the festivals. If a theatrical

show or puppet performance is to be shown, they will settle down in their seats to wait for the play to begin. The temple itself must spend especially if a Chinese opera company has been hired. It is also hoped by the controllers of the temple that those that come will be generous in "oil and incense" money. A good festival thereby may help to increase its number of regular patrons in the years to come.

On the other hand, Wong says that one salient feature that exists if we try to analyse the cycle of festivals is the religious piety of the celebrants (Wong, 1969, p.170). He adds that it is this piety that motivates them to make sacrificial offerings to the deities of Chinese polytheism. As a scholar has aptly explained, ".....the average Chinese laymen believe in the friendly and ordered co-existence of all gods, regardless of their religious identification. The layman's spiritual world comprises gods and spirits from Taoism, Buddhism and the worship of Heaven and its associated cult of Yin Yang and the 5 elements, ancestor worship and numerous cult of magic animism. In this grand pantheon, the boundary between religions hardly exists, and the gods and spirits are arranged in a hierarchy according to their magical powers. (Kang, 1959, p.287).

Therefore, ruling over this hierarchy is the "Supreme Being" and devotees make annual offerings to him and members of his hierarchy to express their gratitude for the blessings they enjoy, ask for forgiveness for their errors and pray for protection and the better things of life.

4.4 : Activities

Activities that place in most Chinese temple range from religious activities to social activities. Generally, from this research, it has been found that the Buddhist temples have more activities organized by their committee as compared to Taoist temples.

The publication of religious articles is a common activity found in many temples. The committee of the temple is usually in charge of this activity. These religious materials are usually for distribution to the public during festivals. The religious materials include pamphlets and articles, newsletters and sometimes monthly magazines. For example, the Seck Kia Eenh temple has a sub-committee which is in charge of publishing their annual magazine, "The Bliss". Expenses needed for the publication of such materials are taken from temple funds.

Charitable acts such as donations to the needy and charitable organizations and offering of help to these organizations are examples of activities which take place at Chinese temples mainly Buddhist temples. Usually such charitable acts take place during grand festivals. The Wat Phrya Buddha Jinoraja Thai Buddhist temple in Jalan Batu Berendam donates gifts or cash to the old folks' homes on every Wesak day.

Marriage ceremonies may also be solemnised at some Chinese temples here and is considered legal in the eyes of the law. In Melaka, there are only 3 temples which have been authorized to perform this function. These temples are the Seck Kia Eenh Temple in Jalan Gajah Berang which is a Buddhist temple, the Chee Teow Beow in Jalan Bachang and the Hian Tian Kong temple in Jalan Bandar Hilir which are Taoist temples. Those who planned to have their marriages solemnized in these temples have to give their names to the temple concerned a month before the actual day. Forms have to be filled and a certain amount of money must be paid. These forms will be sent to the Registrar of Marriages after the marriage has been registered and solemnized.

Education classes for example, giving tuition to the members of the temple are also being conducted at some temples. This is especially true at the Seck Kia Eenh Temple. The classes are specially organized to cater for the members who are taking their school examinations and are conducted by senior members of the temple on a voluntary basis. No fees are charged for attending such classes but they must be members of the temple. This temple also has a library and study room which is open to all members of the temple. Religious and school books may be borrowed out by these members. This library is run solely by members of the temple themselves.

Activities such as dhamma classes or religious instructions are commonly found in most Buddhist temples. These classes are usually either open to the public, members or devotees of the temple. No fixed amount of fees is charged for attending these classes but they must be members of the temple. At the Seck Kia Eenh Temple, dhamma classes which are conducted in English, Malay and Chinese are held every Sunday commencing at 10.30 am. after the Sunday religious service. Members are also trained in Pali chanting during these classes. One can also sit for the local Buddhist examinations if he has attended the full course. Certificates and prizes will be given to those who have excelled in this examination.

The Seck Khia Eenh also have annual activities e.g. Holiday Work Camps which is usually held in December and lasts for a week. This activity is open to the public and not limited to members of the temple only. Activities which take place during this camp include talentime, games, sketches, camp fires and also debates on religious issues. Other annual activities include Buddhist Youth Fellowships where religious issues will be discussed. Camp fires are also organized so as to promote interaction and harmony among the members of the temple.

Besides these, the Seck Kia Eenh temple also has a sub-committee which is in charge of recreation and games for its members.

This includes games like football, badminton, volleyball, etc. which are usually played in the temple courtyard.

4.5 : Divination

Many devotees come to temples to seek help from the deities which are believed to have special functions. One of the popular ways of seeking help is through divination by use of divining sticks and blocks.

On the altars of temples can be found these boxes of spill or divining sticks which are ready for use. To seek advice, one has to shake the cylindrical box until a stick falls to the ground. If more than one should fall, the whole process must be re-started. Each spill is numbered and the one that falls to the ground will be taken to the priest or temple keeper who, from a box of pigeon holes hung on the wall behind this counter, extracts a slip of paper of the same number as that on the spill. On this slip of paper will be found some poetically written sentences of vague meaning that can usually be interpreted in several ways to fit any situation on which advice may be sought. If one finds difficulty in interpreting the slip he may ask help from the nuns or temple keepers there. Divining blocks may be thrown after the box has been shaken and are spill fallen out. This to check whether or not the particular spill meets with heaven's approval.

An approving answer is obtained when the blocks fall one up and one down. The fee charged for this form of divination is very small, quite often, depending more on what the person seeking advice thinks the information he receives is worth satisfactory answers, perhaps resulting in greater generosity. At the Cheng Hoon Teng temple and majority of other Chinese temples in Melaka which provide this form of divination service, the worshippers pay about 20¢ to 50¢ after receiving the slip of paper. According to one source, this payment goes to the temple funds for printing of the slips.

A more elaborate system of divination practiced at the Cheng Hoon Teng temple is to consult the I Ching (The Book of Changes). I Ching (易经) is one of the canonical works containing the truth upon the highest subject from the ancient sages of China. The compilation of this book, according to one source at the temple, is attributed to Confucious. The author of the I Ching was Chou Kung Kong; the Duke of Chou (often called Wen Wang), the paragon of Confucious and father of the founder of the Chou dynasty.

The science of I Ching is not based on the causality principle of western science but on the assumption that things or events can be connected by another sequence which is Jung has tentatively called synchronism, according to which whatever is born or done this moment of time has the qualities or basic conditions of this

moment of time. (Rotary Club, 1973, p.24).

One can seek help from the nuns, monks or temple keepers at the Cheng Hoon Teng temple if one finds difficulty in understanding the contents of the book. A small amount of 20¢ or more is usually donated to the temple after consulting the I Ching.

Chapter Notes:-

- 1 : Source: A religious phamplet taken from the Cheng Hoon Teng temple, Jalan Tokong, Melaka (1983)
- 2 : Source: A religious article taken from the Cheng Hoon Teng temple, Jalan Tokong, Melaka (1983).
- 3 : Source: A religious article published by The Mew Yean See temple, Jalan Semabok, Melaka (1982).
- 4 : Source: The STAR, 23rd November, 1984.



PLATE 9: STATUE OF ADMIRAL CHENG HO (CENTRE
AND HIS PAGES FOUND AT THE POH SAN TENG TEMPLE



PLATE 10: TIEN HOU OR MA CHOR POH (QUEEN OF HEAVEN)



PLATE 11: JADE EMPEROR



PLATE 12: SAKYA MUNI BUDDHA



PLATE 13: AN ACTOR & ACTRESS FROM A
CHINESE OPERA COMPANY PERFORMING
ON STAGE AT A TEMPLE CELEBRATION



PLATE 14: A CHINESE OPERA PERFORMING ON STAGE



PLATE 15: DEVOTEES SETTING KRATHONGS ADRIFT ON LOY
KRATHONG FESTIVAL

Chapter 3: RELIGIOUS SPECIALISTS

3.1. Religious specialists

Was (1971: 55) defines religious specialists as persons perceived by the laypeople as persons who possess special religious knowledge or power.



PLATE 16: A MONK LEADING WORSHIPPERS IN PRAYER
DURING A TEMPLE FESTIVAL

Created a Univ are folk religious specialists, some then are Chinese Religious while others are Malay who practitioners of Malay folk religious employed by the Chinese temple on the occasion arises.

The above are known as "religious specialists" who provide services to the temple and to the devotees who come to the temple. They are perceived to have a special power which is not available to the layman. Some of these religious specialists especially the Taoist priests are sometimes considered as gods and goddesses.

Chapter 5: SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

5.1 : Religious specialists

Wee (1977 : 54) defines religious specialists as persons perceived by the laity to be apart and different from themselves who provides various types of religious services for the general laity and who meditates in one way or another between them and the sources of power.

This includes spirit mediums, Theravada and Mahayana clergy, Buddhist and Xiāntiān Dàdào (Great Way of Former Heaven) members, Taoist priests and diviners e.g. fortune tellers and geomancers. Buddhist monks and nuns, Xiāntiān Dàdào members and Taoist priests are ordained clergy of canonical religion. Buddhist members who go on vegetarian meals are not ordained clergy although they are treated as specialist by the laity. Spirit mediums and diviners are folk practitioners, some of them are Chinese Religionists while others are Hindus and practitioners of Malay folk Religion employed by the Chinese laity when the occasion arises.

The above are known as religious specialists who provide services in the temple and to the devotees who came to the temple, they are perceived to have an excess power which is not available to the layman. Some of these religious specialists especially the Taoist priests are sometimes considered as gods and others,

potential gods. Wee states that the logic of this is that ordinary people accept their fate and try to modify its effect somewhat with the help of the gods or resign themselves to this life and seek for a better rebirth. Other more ambitious people, however, seek to transcend the cycle of fate altogether by attaining godhood which may be achieved in 2 alternative ways, i.e. through purity and through knowledge. These ambitious people are the religious specialists.

Religious specialists play many important functions. One of the main functions is that they may be called to perform rituals. Examples of this are life and death rituals. The specialists who are connected with life rituals are of all the different types. But only certain specialists are called perform death rituals. Examples of this are the Mahayana monks and nuns, Buddhist nuns and Taoist priests. These specialists occupy the higher ranks of the scale of power. When any of these rituals are performed by the specialists, a small amount of fee, put in red packets "ang-pow" will be given to them, as a token of appreciation for their services.

Another important function of the specialist is the maintenance of the temples. Specialist resident in a temple may act as caretakers or temple keepers and they perform the function of keeping the temple clean and neat. At a deeper level, the ritual purity of a temple also has to be maintained, only these

specialists who are considered pure i.e. the Mahayana monks and nuns and the vegetarians can perform this function.

There are some temples which are privately owned by the religious specialists, especially Buddhist monks and Taoist priests. These temples are built through donations from the public but are controlled by the specialists. All decisions are made by the specialists themselves. An example of this is the Che Wye Am temple in Jalan Bukit Serindit which is actually a vegetarian hall. This temple was built by their spiritual master who is a monk. According to one source at the temple, the spiritual master has already passed away and at present, this temple is run by 12 female resident vegetarians.

The religious specialists are also regarded as teachers to the unlearned laymen. Some of the terms of address are suggestive of this:- monks are called "shifu", Taoist priests are called "sai kong" (teacher grandfather) and male vegetarians are known as "laoshi" (old teacher).

Questions which are directed to religious specialists usually concern rituals and personal problems. Mahayana clergies (including vegetarians) are both ritualists and mentors. They give practical advice. Most Taoist priests act as ritualist. Diviners, on the other hand, are consulting physicians. Since their advice usually come with prescriptions and cure,

Rituals are performed to help solve their problems. Wee (1977: 72) states that the advice which they give are fittingly mystical e.g. abstinence from beef, avoidance of people born in a certain year and avoidance of certain colours and numbers.

Although the Chinese are not positively interested in the Theologies of various religion but they have absorbed ideas from those theologies. Since most of the Chinese laymen are illiterate, their ideas are derived from religious specialists. They not only spread concepts from their own religion but also spread ideas peculiar to Chinese religion that they themselves had learnt from their clients.

Mediums, as religious specialists also do play an important role in temples. Topley (1956) describes mediumship as the temporary possession by a shen of a man or woman. There are also mediums who become possessed by deceased persons and hold private seances for relatives of the deceased. Such seances, however, usually take place in private homes. Mediumship is not uncommon in Melaka and from this research, it has been found that this is particularly popular among people of the Hokkien dialect groups.

From this research also, it has been found that majority of these mediums are not full time priests and are often, in fact, people having ordinary employment outside the hours set for medium performance. Most of them work as labourers, carpentars, construction workers and some are even pensioners. These people

are either from the middle or lower classes of society.

Not all of these specialists become mediums voluntarily but some are believed to have been chosen by deities. They are believed to have been brought into a state of trance through the worship of deities (or demons) in which they are possessed by their guardian spirits. There are also mediums who are forced to go into a trance. According to one source at the Yong Chuan Tien temple in Jalan Bandar Hilir, the medium goes into a trance "involuntarily" only on the main deity's (Tee Hoo Ong Yah) birthday. This is because it is believed that he is being punished for his misdeeds.

From the temples which the writer visited while conducting this research, there is not even one female medium. Most of the mediums are males. They are usually in the age range of 30 to 40 years old.

Mediums are especially popular in spirit medium temples. Such temples where medium performances take place can usually be recognised by the special equipment of the medium which will be housed therein. Another indication that the temple has a medium cult attached to it is a black flag which hangs outside the temple when cult activities are in progress. Inside the

temple can be seen the range of spikes of knives used by the mediums for cutting himself during the period in which he is in a trance. This is being used only on festival occasion. In some temples, a spiked ball may be seen hanging at the altar which is used by the "tang ki" (when possessed, a medium is called a "tang ki") for swinging on a length of cord against himself on festivals, particularly onto his back. In addition to such kinds of equipment, there will also be spiked chairs used by the medium when he is carried in procession.

The task of a medium is to establish communication between human beings and deities. Therefore, when they are in a trance, their very words and actions are vital. They are quite approachable and questions may be put to them concerning a variety of matters. According to Comber (1958, p.7) they are "a brain trust par excellence". Frequently consulted on problems which trouble and perplex people all over the world, sickness, misfortune and family problems quite naturally loom large. Consultations usually take place in private within the temple. Usually, after consultations have been made, a small amount of fee will be given to the temple concerned as a token of appreciation for the help rendered by the medium.

The difference between the Buddhist or Taoist priest and spirit medium lies on the fact that these Buddhist or Taoist priest do not have powers of mediumship. They can only chase evil

spirits away. The Buddhist priests reason with demons and try to persuade them not to cause trouble. His approach is described by Comber (1958, p.7) as the pacifist one. On the other hand, the Taoist priest, according to Comber, uses his occult knowledge to fight with the demons and put them to flight. This type of approach is described as the militant one.

In certain temples, the mediums come only on the birthdays of the patron deity of the temple unlike in other temples, especially the spirit medium temples, the mediums normally come regularly i.e. about 2 or 3 times a week. One reason for this may be that not many people or devotees come to seek help or consult him. This is especially true at the Fit Fatt Than temple in Jalan Bachang. According to one source, this is because of the public's belief in the magical efficacy of the temple's main deity Chor Su Kong. The source added that the temple used to have many devotees coming in to the temple to pray a few years ago but the number reduced when the devotees did not receive effective answers to their prayers. Therefore, at present, the mediums come to this temple only on the birthdays of its patron deity.

Besides these, there are also temples which are owned by mediums and are managed and controlled by themselves.

Even lay persons can carry out, though to a certain extent, the 3 functions i.e. performing rituals for others, maintaining

temples (though only in a material sense) and giving advice to others e.g. in family ceremony.

In certain temples, the caretakers or temple attendants also come to assume a "quasi specialist" (Wee, 1977, p.59) role by virtue of performing at least one of the above functions, e.g. Chinese laity may sometimes be ignorant of the names of gods represented in a temple and the proper form of worship. Caretakers can usually supply the necessary information which may or may not be correct.

In temples with resident specialists, it may not be necessary to employ or hire caretakers. This is because the monks, nuns or priests may have domestic servants who help to maintain the temple. These servants are usually vegetarians. In the Mahayana temple, the servants have to be vegetarians and celibate in order to live in the temple. These servants play the role of temple attendants and help the specialists in their ritual duties and sometimes even substituting for them.

Therefore, temple keepers are hired only for temples which do not have resident specialists. Almost anyone can qualify for this role, some without homes who need a roof over their heads.

A temple may have more than one caretaker who are not necessarily paid. By virtue of long residence in a temple, a caretaker is considered to know more about religious matter than the average

layman and his help and advice may be sought.

Therefore, quasi specialists include almost anyone who seems to be closely connected with the maintainance of a temple; musicians who provide the accompaniment for the clergy in their chants, the flower and joss-stick sellers who conduct their business in the temple compound, the reader of fortune slips, those who pour oil on behalf of the lay persons, etc. (Wee, 1977, p.75).

5.2 : Management of temples

Temples are usually administered by committee, trustee or associations and let out, sometimes, or tender to a caretaker or controlling monk who will be responsible for the daily management and income. From this research, done on the major temples in Melaka, it has been found that majority of these temples are run under a committee and others are privately owned.

If a temple is under a committee, then the president and the rest of the Committees are usually chosen each year after the annual festival from a selection of names of people professing their willingness to stand for election.

The "election" technique consists in the throwing of diving blocks in front of the altar for each name submitted. These divining blocks consist of 2 blocks of wood or bamboo, roughly kidney shaped and meant to represent Yin and Yang symbols of positive or negative; good and bad. They have one side flat and one rounded. A negative answer is implied when both blocks fall, when thrown on the ground, with either the flat or the rounded side up, the answer is positive when one falls with the rounded side uppermost and one with the flat side uppermost. For this election technique, the names against which there is the greatest number of positive falls for a specified number of throws becoming committee members, with the one with the greatest number of all becoming the president.

Normally, the temple master and elders are elected for a year from the circle of wealthy religious followers. But in certain temples, election of a new committee takes place every 2 or 3 years. This means that the committee will hold their respective posts for 2 or 3 years before the next election takes place. This is true at the Chee Teong Beow in Jalan Bachang where the committee holds their posts for 2 years only and the next committee will consist of new members. A member is allowed to be in the committee for more than 2 years if he is elected again.

Usually, the number of members in the committee ranges from 15 to 25. Meetings are usually held once every one to three months. For some established temples, minutes may be taken during such meetings. If there are any grand festivals which are just around the corner, more meetings may be held. But it is compulsory for the committee of any temple to have an annual general meeting. For example, in the Cheng Hoon Teng temple's constitution, it is stated that the standing committee must meet at least once every 3 lunar months for the despatch of business and to discuss the management and affairs of any matters of interests to the corporation. Minutes are taken during all meetings. The committee must also, at least once in every Chinese lunar year, not later than the last day of the 6th lunar month, according to the old Chinese calendar, hold an annual meeting of its members. Extra general meetings can also be held.

The office bearers are representatives of the temple. Their most important duty is the preparation and execution of birthday ceremonies for the deity (in particular the performance of plays). Also, the temple master must sacrifice incense sticks on the first and 15th day of each month. On special occasions such as birthdays of deities or during sacrificial rites, he performs the rites together with a priest.

The members of the board of a temple are also expected to set an example for others during the annual collection of offerings. Usually, the president of the board, traditionally, should contribute the highest sum. Therefore, it is common to find that in the committees of most temples, especially the well-established ones, the office bearers are usually wealthy people. Should a deficit prevail, however, then the president of the committee concerned must provide the balance from his own personal resources.

According to the Chinese, it is a special honour to be elected as temple master or to be in the committee. These office bearers place the small incense basin on altars in their homes or hang up lanterns in the hope that the deity may protect them (Moese, 1979, p.354).

Also, the success of the management of the temple affairs depends largely on the cooperation of the committee or board of trustees or the reputation of the controlling monk or layman renting the place or tender or on the honesty and business sense of the caretaker.

According to Topley (1958, p.100), temples built for wealthy donors who give money in return for some supernatural favours are usually run by a board of trustees. This is to ensure that the building will continue to be used for the purpose for which it was built.

Temples also give scholarships to students. For example, 2 scholarships were given by the Cheng Hoon Teng temple to two students last year who went to pursue their studies in Taiwan.

Ad-hoc committees are sometimes formed by worshippers at the temple, the temple forming the head quarters and the purpose being to raise money for private celebrations at festivals or for hiring of a theatrical troupe. They may be organized by temple owners or by groups of neighbours usually women who pray regularly at the temple. Money for the celebration of one of the Kwan Yin festival days is often collected this way at the Nam Hai Temple in Jalan Ujong Pasir.

Besides forming an ad-hoc committee for the purpose of collecting funds, they may also be formed for other purposes, e.g. a working committee for the Cheng Hoon Teng temple was set up when the Bukit China issue arose recently and which was discussed in the earlier chapter.

Although some temples are in the hands of a committee made up of prominent men, such committee usually hire a caretaker to look after the day to day running of the temple. This includes clearing the niche of the deities, light incense sticks and candles, serve guests, collect "incense and oil" money and perform other simple religious acts. These caretakers either receive a fixed

wage or retain a percentage of their takings. These temple keepers usually either stay in the temple or live in the vicinity of the temple.

Sometimes in large and profitable temples, the temple itself is also, in some cases, rented to a keeper.

".....the temple is leased out to private individual.....He is the temple keeper and he is appointed by the Temple association by tender. Notice inviting tender is published in the local Chinese newspaper once every 2 years which coincides with the election of the new committee of the association." (Yip, 1976, p.22). Yip also cites a Dàbógōng temple in Ipoh as an example. The temple keeper there offered an annual rent of \$12,500 in response to an invitation of tenders. Furthermore, a security of \$300 had to be deposited. After he was selected, he had to pay in advance for the current month and 3 months thereafter. From the temples visited while conducting this research, there is no such temple which is rented out to a keeper.

From this research also, it has been found that most temples which are privately owned are the less established temples or just shrines. Usually, these owners would hire a caretaker to take charge of the temple and to make sure that the temple is well-kept. Sometimes the owner may have domestic servants to run the temple. These domestic servants are usually vegetarians

and they stay in the temple. An example of this is the Chin Sien Tang temple in Jalan Kampung Lapan which is a Buddhist temple of Mahayana sect. A key informant of the temple told the writer that the temple was built by a wealthy person by the name of Mr. Tan Fook Tai. At present there are 10 female vegetarians who stay and take charge of the temple.

Usually, for privately owned temples, all major decisions and matters concerning the temple are made by the owner. This is different from temples under a committee where each committee takes charge of a section of the temple matters. Also, temples under the management of a committee usually have more funds as compared to privately owned temples. Therefore, festivals which take place at such temples are usually celebrated on a grand scale as compared to privately owned temples.

5.3 : Sources of funds

Temple income may be derived from many sources. One of the regular source is the oil and incense money contributed by worshippers.

Every devotee who enters the temple heads towards the temple keeper at the counter near the altar and gives him a small sum where upon the latter, often just as a symbol of gesture pours some oil on the lamps and thereby announces to the deity that one of its adherents has come to worship. Moese (1979) explains that the lamps serve the purpose of illuminating the mental range of the deity and of calling attention to the followers and their

requests. The pouring of oil is therefore often accompanied by the ringing of bells. But it is only at festivals that a temple can hope to make much money in this way. A small profit may be made from the sale of mock money, candles and even the renting of food offerings.

For Taoist temples, payments are made to these temples through their regular mediums who come every 2 or 3 times a week for services rendered by them to the public. Such services include curing of sicknesses and insanity, removing bad luck and protection against evil spirits, fixing of auspicious dates for all occasions and also predicting the forth coming results of the 4 digit draw. Specialist advice may also be sought on the probability of success of certain courses of action in the light of reading horoscope. For such consultations, a small fee is charged. It is usually up to the client to decide on the amount of payment to be given to the temple. But usually payment ranges from \$2.00 to \$5.00 for brief consultations. For serious matters which require detailed investigation of for example, a betrothal requiring more information and investigation of the horoscope of the 2 parties, the contract and a compassion of one with the other, considerable fees can be charged. Furthermore some mediums can be questioned about games of chance, lotteries and horse racing; others refuse to supply such information.

Payments to the temples are also made to the temple when spirit mediums offer their services to hold private seances for relatives of the deceased. An amount of about \$3.00 to \$5.00 is usually charged for such services.

Another popular method of seeking advice on the future offered to the public in practically all temples is the use of divining sticks and blocks. This also forms a regular source of income to the temple. To seek advice, one has to shake a container with numbered bamboo sticks in front of the statue until one stick falls out. This is then checked with 2 kidney shaped fortune telling blocks. If this oracle is confirmed, one has to produce the stick to temple keeper who will then give him a "prescription" costing about 10¢ to 20¢. This "prescription" is a slip of paper with some poetically written sentences of vague meaning that can be interpreted in several ways to fit any situation.

Priests or monks may also be called to conduct certain ceremonies e.g. funeral ceremonies. One key informant from one temple told the writer that for funeral ceremonies an amount of \$50 is charged for "short prayers" chanted but for "longer" prayers, this sometimes would come up to about \$100. For example, during the funeral ceremony of the writer's grandfather two years ago,

a priest from the Cheng Hoon Teng temple was called to conduct the prayers. The writer's father paid him \$40.00, put in a red packet, after the service was over. But after counting the money, the priest told the writer's father that the fee charged for "brief or short" prayers is \$50.00. Besides conducting funeral ceremonies, priests are also sometimes called to solemnize wedding ceremonies.

The Seck Kia Eenh temple in Jalan Gajab Berang offers house blessing service to the public. Therefore if one has just shifted to a new house, he can ask the monk from the temple to perform the necessary ceremonial rites in order to bless the house. The fee charged for this kind of service, according to one key informant from the temple, is \$50.00. This money will go to the temple funds.

The soul tablets of deceased members maybe kept for a specified fee in temples. Some temples have soul tablets or ancestral tablets for the newly deceased as well as the more remote ancestors. They are arranged in tier formation on decorative shrines in front of which often hang boards on which are inscribed the honours bestowed on ancient members of the surname or area. When soul tablets are put in these temples, they can be assured of the continued correct attention which custom demands and which is not always possible to achieve at the private houses. Some temples, ancestral halls or associations burn incense before the tablets in their temple twice daily and put out

plates of food, flowers and wine on the table in front of the table altar on the 1st and 15th day of every lunar month. The spring and autumn festivals are the most important times for ritual attention for soul tablets.

Different amounts are paid according to whether the position given or tablet is important or insignificant. According to Topley, (1956, p.45) one of the smaller associations charge a flat rate of \$20.00 for the worship in perpetuity; another charges as much as \$1,000 for an ancestral tablet or "longevity" tablet to be set up in the centre of the shrine, \$500 for it to be placed on the left side of the altar, \$300 for the left corner, \$400 for the right side and \$200 for the right corner. But at the Cheng Hoon Teng temple, fees charged for soul tablets depend on the type of soul tablets i.e. whether it is gold plated or made of wood i.e. wooden blocks. An amount of \$30 is charged for the wooden soul tablet and \$500 for the gold plated one which will be put on altars behind glass doors. Rites which are performed in front of the tablet shrines are a responsibility of the temple which usually appoints certain persons, e.g. temple keepers for this duty.

But at a Buddhist temple of Theravada sect here, i.e. the Seck Kia Eenh Temple, it provides an ash house or also known as "reliquarium" by members of the temple, for the installation of the relics (ashes) and also ancestral tables for those who have passed away. The ashes of persons whose body has been

cremated are put into small urns at a special place in the temple.

An amount of about \$500.00 is charged for this.

Large monetary gifts may also be donated by some private and wealthy persons. A sole donation from a single individual accounted for the founding or renovation of many religious establishments here in Melaka. An example of this is the Sam Tiong temple in Jalan Semabok which was built from donation by a wealthy man named Mr. Tong Bee. Some of the reasons why some wealthy people donate generously are that because of religious piety or because of the belief that divine assistance has helped them to avert disaster, gain a fortune or beget a male heir. Typically were persons who made large donations because of a warning received in a dream which saved them from going on a boat that sank or to a building that buried. Sometimes, a wealthy person may donate or sponsor a Chinese theatrical show during the celebrations of birthdays of deities.

Gifts to the temple from the public may not be in cash only but also in terms of services which they can offer, e.g. artisans will offer their services to the temple when needed. Therefore, some persons who are craftsmen donate their work in place of monetary aid. Sometimes, repair work may be paid by contribution of the members of the nearby community and when they donated enough to continue the work, they could go ahead but when funds

are used up, then they had to wait.

If a certain temple runs short of funds, e.g. for the project of erecting another building, a campaign may be launched for such purposes. Devotees of the temple will go from house to house to collect funds and receipts will be issued to the donors.

Sometimes, such collections may also be carried out by administrative committees.

For some well-established temples, their regular source of income may come from properties owned by them. For example, the Cheng Hoon Teng temple in Jalan Tokong rents out houses which it owns in Jalan Bukit China. This temple also owns the Bukit China cemetery where the public pay some amount of money to the temple for the burial grounds. The Siang Lin kindergarden in Jalan Bukit Serindit also belongs to this temple and it also derives its source of funds from the kindergarden. Therefore it is not surprising to see that this temple is rich in properties and funds.

In temples which conduct religious classes, e.g. dhamma or meditation classes, usually a small amount of fee may be charged for those who attend such classes and this money will go to the temple funds. At the Seck Kia Een Dhamma School, only members can attend the dhamma classes in which they have to pay a subscription fee of \$1.00 per year. This membership is open to all those who are above 4 years old.

Temple which are associations may also derive their funds from subscription fees paid by members to the temple. At the Seck Kia Eenh Temple which is also the Malacca Buddhist Association, membership is open to the public. An ordinary member has to pay \$3.00 per year whereas a life member has to pay \$50.00 per year.

Another source of income is through auction sales held during dinners or lunches organised by temples, usually on temple anniversaries. A large amount of money can be derived from such auction sales. Items such as flags and lanterns from the temple which are auctioned could come up to hundreds of dollars.

It can be concluded here that there are many ways in which temple can derive their funds. Generally temple funds swell through donations from wealthy people and through dinners and lunches held by the temples on special occasions. In fact, one source from the Wat Phrya Buddha Jinaraja Thai Buddhist temple told the writer that sometimes invitation cards would be sent to devotees for dinners with the pretext of getting together all members of the temple so as to promote harmony among them when actually the main purpose of having this dinner is to collect funds for the temple.

Chapter 6 : CONCLUSION

So far, we have seen the sociological aspects of the Chinese temples in Melaka. This includes the history of the temple, the reasons on which they were built and the organization and management of these temples. From this, we have proceeded to discuss the activities and celebrations which take place in these temples.

From these aspects, we may say that Chinese temples play a very important role as a place of worship for the Chinese people since Chinese religion is part and parcel in the lives of the Chinese people. This can be seen by the burning of incense to deities in the temples. On numerous public and private occasions, visiting mediums or priests for divine guidance on problems of any nature, participating in temple celebrations or religious festivals, consulting the religious almanac for auspicious time for making a major or minor move and reflecting on the supernatural influence on the life and universe.

But on the other hand, one should also question the continuity of such temples, i.e. will these temples still continue to provide this functional role in the future despite the social changes in society?

As we have discussed in the earlier chapters, the cults in such temples are kept alive mainly by the public belief in the magical efficacies of their gods. If for sometime, no one had received an effective answer to his prayers, it is considered that the spirit or god had departed from that temple and the temple ceases to attract devotees or worshippers. These temples may fall into ruins but it may be revitalized if someone's prayers in the temple is answered and others later have the same good fortune of health, wealth and bearing of a male heir. The temple may be revived by the spreading of a mythological story. This will lead to the renovation of old and small temples to renovations of a new one to house the resurrected god.

Therefore, this magical factor is important and the length of life of the temple is dependent on this factor. Thus, the repairing of many old temples is part of the process of the rise and fall of functional god. If a temple is favoured by chance in the sense that from time to time, someone among the large number of worshippers had his prayers fulfilled, the magical prestige of the god is maintained and the temple will last. But on the other hand, if such a fortune happens infrequently and there was no miracle story in circulation, the number of worshippers may drop and thus, leading to the decline of the temple.

Another factor which also determines the continuity of the Chinese temples is the impact of science which has, to a certain extent,

led some of the Chinese people to have little faith in their religion. The impact of science is based upon skepticism, empirical knowledge as against religion founded on faith and non empirical vision. Astrology, biology and its theory of evolution and other physical sciences dismissed the age old myth about life and the answers which underlay religion. Therefore, when the Chinese people have little faith in their religion, the number of devotees of the temple will decrease and the temple may decline and ceases to exist.

Furthermore, many ideas are being introduced into the minds of the modern educated generation whose ideas are different from the traditional moral ideas. This may lead to the formation of new cults by the young intellectuals but they are deeply affected by the notion of omnipotency of science and retained little faith in religion. The modern educated ones abandon the traditional gods not only because of their disbelief in magic and miracles but also because they increasingly reject the traditional religious beliefs of the Chinese. When this happens temples will no longer play an important role to them.

In urban areas, ancestor worship is losing its hold on the intellectuals. The ignoring of ancestral sacrifices, a serious social and ethical offence a few generations ago is far from being uncommon among young students and scholars. Among them,

the ideal of the traditional extended family is being replaced by small conjugal families which, according to Yang, stressed neither the consolidation of extensive consanguinary ties nor the perpetuation of the lineage. Therefore, ancestor worship perform little function for the operation of small conjugal family and this is becoming increasingly more common in urban centres. It is in the more rural areas where the traditional family has remained the basic unit of social life, that the ancestor unit has retained its vitality.

As towns and cities undergo modernization and development, the widening and paving of street mean the tearing and stripping down of wayside shrines and old dilapidated temples that had a sacred camotation for the local community. This may not lead to discontinuity of temples but, instead new temples may be built in other areas or these temples may be shifted to residential houses.

But Wong (1983), on the other hand, agreed that the Chinese religious belief among the Chinese will be maintained in the future. In other words, he has indirectly supported the argument that Chinese temples will continue to function for the Chinese community in the future. This, he explained, is due to our multinational country where there exists the ethnic consciousness of one identity, one custom and one cultural heritage. Although the government aims for national integration in this country, but, on the other hand, some of the government policies have negative

effects on the ethnic relations in the country. As a result, this ethnic consciousness developed, which led to the strong Chinese religious belief among the Chinese.

Therefore, from the above, we may conclude that Chinese temples will continue to exist and to cater for the Chinese people as long as the Chinese religion does not loose its hold on the Chinese community.



PLATE 181. WOODEN SPIRIT TABLETS



PLATE 17: GOLD PLATED SPIRIT TABLETS



PLATE 18: WOODEN SPIRIT TABLETS

APPENDIX



PLATE 19: A MEDIUM LISTENING TO THE PROBLEMS
OF A CLIENT WHO CAME TO SEEK HELP FROM
HIM



PLATE 20: A MEDIUM READING THE PALM OF A CLIENT

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