

CHINESE TEMPLES AND SHRINES :  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON ITS FUNCTIONS

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SIPNOSIS

Latihan Ilmiah ini adalah satu percubaan untuk "explore" fungsi dan kepentingan Tokong-tokong Cina kepada komuniti orang-orang Cina.

Kerja lapangan dijalankan di Petaling Jaya selama 3 bulan, dari April 1984 - Julai 1984, di mana sebanyak 18 buah Tokong telah dilawati.

Di dalam bab pertama, tujuan, kaedah dan masalah penyelidikan akan dibincangkan.

Bab dua merupakan suatu "review" tentang bahan-bahan mengenai Confucianisma, Taoisma and Buddhisma dan menyentuh tentang ciri-ciri sincretik Ugama Cina. Satu perbincangan tentang fungsi Tokong-tokong juga di masuki dalam bab ini.

Bab tiga ialah mengenai latarbelakang sejarah, ciri-ciri, organisasi dan kewangan tokong-tokong tersebut.

Dalam bab empat, kita akan diperkenalkan kepada berbagai jenis perayaan yang dirayakan. Oleh kerana perayaan-perayaan ini biasa diadakan untuk merayai kelahiran dewa-dewi, maka satu descripsi mengenai latarbelakang dewa-dewi, akan diberikan. Perkhidmatan-perkhidmatan yang disediakan oleh Tokong-tokong kepada orang ramai akan dibincangkan juga.

Di dalam kesimpulan, suatu penganalisan bab-bab yang lepas akan diberikan. Juga, suatu percubaan untuk menerangkan kepentingan rumah-rumah berhala kepada komuniti Cina akan dibincangkan.

This academic exercise is a modest attempt at exploring the functions and significance of Chinese Temples and Shrines to the Chinese Community.

Field study was carried out in Petaling Jaya for a duration of 3 months, from April 1984 - July 1984, where a total of 18 temples and shrines were visited.

In Chapter One, the aims, methodology and problems of search is discussed.

Chapter Two, is a review of materials on Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, touching on the syncretic nature of Chinese Religion. A discussion on the functions of Temples and Shrines is also included here.

Chapter Three is a write out on the historical background, characteristics, organization and finances of Temples and Shrines.

In Chapter Four, we are introduced to the various types of festivals that are celebrated. Since these festivals are usually held to celebrate the birthday of deities, a brief description on the background of some deities will be included. Temple services that are usually provided for the public will also be dealt with.

In the conclusion, an analysis of previous chapters will be given. An attempt to explain the importance of these public places of worship to the Chinese Community will also be included.

List of Illustrations:

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of the Chinese Religion, unlike other great Religions of the world, for example Islam and Christianity, is syncretic and polytheistic rather than monotheistic. "The Character of religious expression in China is above all a manifestation of Chinese culture." (Thompson 1961:1). The religion of the Chinese people is part and parcel of their way of life. It is intricately interwoven into the customs and traditions of the Chinese and it is not an institutionalised religion.

It is commonly accepted that Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism represent the traditional religions of China. Confucianism and Taoism are indigenous to China whereas Buddhism entered China from India in the 1st Century A.D. However, the religious beliefs and practices of most Chinese in Malaysia do not fall readily into any such known categories as Confucianism, Taoism or Buddhism. Chinese Religion involves folklore, magic and superstitions. The deities of the Chinese Religion includes historical figures such as warriors, judges, heroes and nature spirits, both of Taoist and Buddhist origin.

The Chinese Religion is maintained by ritual and oral traditions. According to Topley (1956:77), who equates Chinese Religion with Anonymous Religion, "..... Anonymous Religion has an unwritten tradition and lacks any specific organization for the handling down of its practices and beliefs. They are passed down rather, by word of mouth, imitation and observation ....."



In spite of its lack of any specific organization, the Chinese Religion is unified by a "symbolic system that is collectively shared" (Wee, 1977:9). The Chinese adhere to a set of unwritten rules or patterns (though there may be slight variations) when it comes to performing rituals during celebrations of festivals. As Wee puts it, "[Chinese Religion] is a systematic religion."

### 1.1 AIMS

The Chinese Religion can be seen in 2 spheres i.e.

- a) domestic worship.
- b) public worship.

Domestic worship or private worship refers to the statues or pictures of deities on the altars of most Malaysian Chinese homes. They are prayed to daily by members of the family or household. Public worship, which is the main focus of this paper refers to temples, shrines and other public places of worship.

This paper aims at finding out the functions of Chinese Temples and the kind of roles they play in the Chinese community. From my research on these Chinese Temples in Petaling Jaya, I will attempt to show the extent to which these temples serve the needs of the Chinese community.

Also, from my research, I will attempt to show that there are very few Buddhist Temples that are purely Buddhist and very few Taoist

Temples that are purely Taoist.

The areas of study includes the historical background and the characteristics of the various temples; the reasons for the temples' existence; the types of services performed, ie. the presence of spirit mediums, monks and nuns; the social and structural organization of the temples in relation to the Chinese community at large; the types of people who patronise the temples, to see their purpose for visiting these temples and the background of the mediums found in the various temples. The study of the mediums is to see how and why they took up spirit mediumship, whether it is an acquired skill or a calling.

The celebration of festivals and rituals which is part of the Chinese Religion will be dealt with as well. In this paper, I will attempt to show the significance of such festivals and rituals plus also the functions that it serves.

The background of the deities will be included whenever possible to show why and how "they", who were humans to begin with, attained the status of a deity. Elements of hero-worship can be traced from these histories. Also it is hoped that a better and clearer picture of these deities can be grasped with a run down on their histories.

I aim to find out if the various Chinese Temples in Petaling Jaya are "connected" in any way with each other, ie. to see if they are organized into a bigger body or organizations that unite these temples or if they are individual units, owing no allegiance to any organizations.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The principal methods employed include the interviewing of Key Informants, through the use of unstructured interviews, photo documentation, observation and participation.

I started off my research with search for temples in the Petaling Jaya area. Later, I marked down the location of each temple onto the city map to ensure easy reference. Most of the temples visited were found along the railway track in Section 1 of Petaling Jaya. Temples in other parts of Petaling Jaya were also visited, example, along Jalan Selangor and Jalan Gasing.

Key Informants that were used included the people that are most involved in the activities of the temples, i.e. the temple keepers, the owners of the temples, the spirit mediums and anyone else connected with the activities of the temples.

Interviews were conducted in Cantonese and Mandarin, in a casual manner. The idea was for them to talk openly and to ensure a more favourable response from them. The bulk of the interview was carried out through the use of unstructured interview. No questionnaires were used at all. However, specific questions such as the background of the temples, the various kind of celebrations, the characteristics of the temples and its social and structural organizations, were asked.

Photo documentation was employed as another method to show the

physical structure (interior and exterior) of the various temples. Also, from the photographs can be seen the statues of the various deities and with this it is hoped that the reader will have a clearer idea of these deities. Furthermore, some of these photographs were taken during the festivals celebrated by different temples, example they were taken during Wesak Day in the Qīngliántáng Temple and the birthday celebration of the deity Bāogōng in the Leng Toh Temple. Photo documentation serves the purpose of providing visual effect/impact and aids the reader in his understanding of the subject at hand.

### 1.3 PROBLEMS FACED DURING REASEARCH

The main problem faced was to get the "correct" people to talk to, namely the Key Informants. Sometimes these Key Informants were very difficult to track. Either they were not in or they were too busy. The medium of a temple in Section 14 is one such case. She operates in a temple in Kuala Lumpur in the mornings and in Petaling Jaya in the afternoons. It was very hard to get hold of her and when I did she had too many clients consulting her.

Sometimes I had to go back to the same temples a few times before I could obtain more information. This happened when my informants did not have complete knowledge of the temple. For example, the medium would know the ceremonial aspects of the religion, but he was not sure about the history or the organizations of the temple.

Getting these Key Informants to cooperate was another problem.

I came across a few informants who were very suspicious of my motives, despite the fact that I told them I was a student doing research on Chinese Temples. The informants, mainly those from the older generation kept insisting that there was nothing to study about their temples. They did not understand why anyone would want to do research on temples. I found it very difficult to convince them that my motives were purely academic. There were even some temple keepers who did not allow me to go inside the temple. Conducting an interview through the gates was not easy.

Since most of the temples I visited were located on lands belonging to the railway (those in Section 1), some of these temple keepers were afraid that I was from the government, perhaps to give them notice to move out. Some were afraid that I was there to find out about their income for the purpose of taxation. Some of them probably gave me set answers, so that I will leave them alone. Furthermore, I had no way of checking the validity of their statements.

Some of these temple keepers were very old people who came from China. Even though we spoke the same dialect, ie. Cantonese, they sometimes used words that I was unfamiliar with. This makes it difficult for me to grasp the meaning and significance of the subject under discussion. Since I am a non-speaker of the Hokkien dialect, I found it very difficult to carry out a conversation with a Hokkien respondent.

Finally the location of the temples were not marked on the city map. I had to search out the temples in my research. Since most of the Chinese temples were housed in residential areas, especially in the newer

areas, this made locating them more difficult. Sometimes these "residential temples" do not have any outward features to show that they are temples and this made the survey very time consuming. I had to obtain help from family and friends to tell me where these temples were.

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CHAPTER TWO

2. CHINESE RELIGION

The Chinese are practitioners of a syncretic religion which consist among its components, Chinese folk beliefs, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. In the words of Chan wing-tsit, "The majority of China's millions ..... follow a religion which combines and overshadows Buddhism, Taoism and the ancient cult. They do not follow three separate but a syncretic religion embracing, the ancient cult as its basis and Buddhist and Taoist elements as secondary features .... [they are] followers of the religion of the masses." (Chan : 1953:141).

There has been in the entire religious movement not a single attempt to replace all religions with one. Professor Chan, in his book Religious Trends in Modern China (1953) showed that an understanding of the real meaning of syncretism in Chinese Religion can be traced to the conflict between the Taoist and Buddhist. He pointed out the significance that each faction "conceded a degree of truth in other religions and could not help admitting that other religions also offered a good way of life", even at the zenith of their conflict.

As a result of this, the three religions are able to co-exist harmoniously. In the words of Professor Chan, "the fact that practically all continuing religious cults have perpetuated the tradition of religious synthesis clearly indicates that syncretism is a mandate of the Chinese people." (Chan:1953:183).

### 2.1.1 CHINESE FOLK BELIEFS

Early Chinese texts (during the Chou era) revealed that there were nature deities and deities which were fully human in origin. This latter divinities were the mortal souls of mortal men, souls which, as ancestral spirits retained contact with the human sphere, watching over the affairs of their descendants. Rooted in this idea of deitifying the souls of mortal men is the cult of deitified men which will be discussed later in this chapter.

In this part of the paper, I would like to bring in a common and popular feature of the Chinese Religion i.e. the practice of sacrifices as part of a religious ritual. As such, I will refer to some aspects of the practice of state sacrifices during the Chou era.

State sacrifices refer to offerings, usually of food and drinks (generally copious) that the rulers or their deputies give to the deities in return for the material benefits, blessings and good fortune which the deities could confer upon China's rulers and through her rulers upon the land and its people. These state sacrifices were given at regular intervals for example, at the beginning of every new year. There are also others which are held irregularly as need for them arose, usually before battles or after natural calamities occurred.

In sacrifices, the deities and spirits should be entertained with food, songs and dances. Presentations must be given with utmost sincerity and not merely given in exchange for blessings, services and



protection.

The idea or practice of sacrifice which begun before Confucian times is still very much practiced by modern day Chinese. It can be observed that during any Chinese festivals, food and drinks are always offered to the deities. In Taoist temples, one can find offerings in the form of meat, poultry, fruits and wine. In Buddhist temples, vegetarian dishes, fruits and cakes can be found on the altars on festive days. Opera shows are sometimes also staged as part of the entertainment programme for the deities as well as the public.

#### 2.1.2 CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism, the state cult for many centuries, is considered a religion by some and as a system of ethics and philosophy by others.

Confucianism philosophy came into existence during the Eastern Zhou era, where the feudal lords were trying to gain independence from the "central government." As such, Confucius advocated that the people should use the past as a guide to their behaviour. He believed the study and the observance of the ancient ritual and the cultivation of uprightness is the pre-requisite to attaining good government. As a means of saving and improving society, he sought the cultivation of chūn tzu, or the perfect man." (Lat:57:55)

The importance placed on correct behaviour while performing rites and rituals can be observed till today. However, although the

significance or the functions of certain rites and rituals cannot be traced, there are still being practiced as part of a ceremony. The significance of these rites and rituals which are seldom recorded, are lost during its process of handing down from one generation to another.

Confucianism, while being a philosophy is also viewed as a religion because of its doctrines. The Confucian doctrine contained a subsystem of religious ideas based on belief in Heaven, predeterminism, divination and the theory of Yin-yang and the 5 elements. The subsystem began with the belief in Heaven as the anthropomorphic governing force of the universe, including the human world. Hence, the belief in fate or predeterminism as a course of events preordained by Heaven as the supreme ruling power. Divination and the theory of Yin-yang and the 5 elements were both devices for knowing Heaven's wish and for peering into the secrets of this preordained course so as to help men attain well-being and avoid calamity.

Confucianism has made its greatest contribution in upholding and propagating the concept of ancestor worship, thus providing for a cult which has acted as a pivot around which various Buddhist and Taoist rituals and ceremonies developed.

### 2.1.3 TAOISM

Of the philosophical schools of the Zhōu period, the one next to Confucianism in lasting influence is Taoism. The traditional founder is Lǎozǐ.

Taoism can be distinguished into 2 aspects i.e. the Taoist philosophy which is called Dàojiǎo (the Taoist School) and the religion that has appropriated its teachings, which is called Dàojiào (the Taoist religion).

There seems to be a conflict between Taoist religion and Taoist philosophy because the latter's main concern is to attain the position of a Xiān and this can only be achieved through Wúwéi (non action). Knowledge of the Dào is not to be attained by reason and study but by the mystic's way of contemplation and inward illumination. The ultimate aim was to merge themselves in Nature.

Taoist religion is of ancient origin, growing out of indigenous Chinese beliefs and occult practices which were systematized by the Yin-yang school of thought. These occult practices included astrology, the art of the almanac and the 5 elements, physiognomy, geomancy and various forms of divination.

The naturalistic philosophy of Taoism was turned into a mysticism of a supernatural order during the Hàn period and this was accelerated during the Eastern Hàn dynasty when there was a craving for religious novelty. "The philosophy is essentially atheistic but the religion that bears the name Taoism is highly polytheistic with a deity for almost anything imaginable. Its admonition to treat life and death equally has been supplanted by the search for everlasting life on earth. And its doctrine of simplicity finds a sharp contrast in elaborate rituals and religious paraphernalia. .... its basic teaching of Wúwéi has been negated by a great deal of activity." (Chan:1969:150)

Taoism, the philosophy, had begun gradually to associate itself more with many of the then flourishing magico-religious cults practicing alchemy. The influence of these magico-religious cults can be observed because an important aspect of the Chinese Religion is the belief in superstition, geomantic divination, fortune telling and the usage of charms.

In the next few chapters, I will touch on these features in my analysis of temples with greater emphasis on divination and the usage of paper charms.

#### 2.1.4 BUDDHISM

In its early phase of development, Buddhism was mainly a magical cult, the claim of magical powers for Buddhist deities begin a major reason for its ability to attract patronage from the ruling groups and followers from the common people. Magic as a factor in the rise of Buddhism was enhanced by the predominance of Hinayana sects in its early development in China, for Hinayana Buddhism emphasized attainment of magical power to ward off demonic influence which wrought misery in human world. (Yang 1961:118). This feature of demonic influence was later incorporated into the Taoist religion which was not present before the introduction of Buddhism in China.

However, it was Mahayana Buddhism that gained popularity in China. Mahayana Buddhism advocated pity for all creatures and salvation for all humanity. The belief in Karma<sup>1</sup> and the endless revolution of the wheel

of causal retribution found in Buddhist teachings had a natural appeal during the years of disunity in China. Also, C.K. Yang has pointed out that "in a polytheistic culture, people were ever receptive to claims of the efficacy of new gods, particularly in times of widespread insecurity and mass anxiety, such as the decline of Hân and the period of disunion, when the ancient gods seemed to have lost their magical powers."

(Yang 1961:118).

The most influential and important school of Buddhist teachings is the Pure Land School. "It was developed and made popular by Hui Yuan (A.D. 335-416). Hui Yuan was a Taoist from Shansi who introduced many Taoist ideas and terms into this school." (Topley:1956:82). In Malaysia today, the Pure Land Sect (Qingdǔzōng) is the most common sect found.

The major doctrine of the Pure Land is that of salvation through faith in Amitabha, and the concept of Western or Happy Chi Lo paradise. The ultimate aim of Buddhist, through the endless cycle of reincarnation is to reborned into the Chi Lo paradise.

Through out the history of Chinese Religion, the process of borrowing and lending between the three "religions" is a very common practice. The three religions are complementary to each other, each one making up for the lack in the other. As such, the average Chinese has long been and still is an animist, a Buddhist, a Confucianist and a Taoist with no sense of incongruity or inconsistency. This aspect of the Chinese Religion is mirrored in the typed of temples that are found. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the influence of the three religions is clearly

shown in the difficulty in classifying temples into Buddhist or Taoist ones.

## 2.2 CHINESE COSMOLOGY

The concept of Yin-yang and the 5 elements has a prominent place in the Chinese Religion, especially in Taoism.

The theology of Yin-yang (negative and positive) and the 5 elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth) became important by the 3rd and 2nd Centuries B.C. as a means of deciphering the intentions of Heaven and Heaven's predetermined course. This theology provided a mystical explanation for the relationship between the heavenly forces and the affairs of the State and the individual.

Yang, the sun or light is the exact opposite of Yin, the moon or darkness. This dualistic idea of Yin and Yang permeated every aspect of nature. Heaven, light, warmth, masculinity, paternity, strength, productivity, life are all Yang. The earth, darkness, cold, femininity, maternity, weakness, death are all Yin.

The principal of Yin-yang is also carried into the unseen realm. Yin is attributed to the evil spirits (gǔi),<sup>2</sup> whereas Yang is attributed to good spirits (Shén)<sup>3</sup>.

So far, I have tried to describe briefly the basic ideas/concepts of each "religion" that has influenced the development of the Chinese

Religion as a whole. The basis of the Chinese Religion was already developed by the end of the Han dynasty. Although there are slight modifications in the Chinese Religion, its basic idea/concept of practices and ritual has remained unchanged.

### 2.3 THE CULT OF DEITIFIED MEN

Deitification of man is very common and very much an integral part of the Chinese Religion. The syncretic nature of the Chinese Religion not only does not hinder but encourages this process which has contributed greatly to the vast pantheon of Chinese deities. Furthermore, the belief in the souls of the dead, as portrayed in ancestor worship, is vastly acceptable. As such, the souls of mortal men are elevated to the ranks of 'shén'. They are worshipped because they are the symbolic personification of values and virtues greatly admired by man.

#### BĀOGŌNG

The deity Baogong whose real name is Pao Cheng (99-1062) lived during the era of the Song dynasty. In his life time, he was an official noted for his courage, his upright and indomitable character and to borrow a Chinese expression, his "iron-faced disinterestedness" (Li:1983:111). As an astute and courageous judge, defending always the interest of the innocent inspite of the pressure of neopotism, he earned the admiration and support of the people. He is worshipped by the people because he symbolises the truth, justice and also the good against evil.

According to my informant in the Leng Toh Temple, this deity is

very rarely worshipped in the house because only those who are free from corruption and untruthfulness can worship 'him'. Till this day, he is still popularly referred to by the reverent title of Bāogōng (Lord Bao) (Li:1983:112).

### GUĀN DÌ

The name of this deity is Guān Yū, a historical warrior during the 3rd Century is best known to the Western observers as the god of war.

"After his death, he was ennobled as Faithful and Loyal Duke in AD 1120. Eight years later, he was made Magnificent Prince and during the Yuan dynasty in Emperor Wen's reign, the title Warrior Prince was added. In 1454, Emperor Shen T'sung of the Ming dynasty conferred on him the title 'Ti' after which he was known as Kuan Ti, the Faithful and Loyal Great Supporter of Heaven and Protector of the Kingdom" (Werner: 1922:71).

### TIÀNNÒU

Tiànhòu was posthumously deified by the people because sailors struggling in storm and other dangers on high seas frequently claimed to have seen the apparition of her image, which led the ship to safety.

The Chinese encyclopaedia, T'zu Yuan Cheng Hsu Pien Ho Ting Pen (p.337) gives an account of her origin. According to this source, the Queen of Heaven was born the 6th daughter of a Hokkien sailor named



Lin Yuan in the Sòng dynasty (A.D. 960-1278). One day, she had a dream in which she saw her father's junk sinking during a storm. She changed into a water spirit and went to his rescue. She died at the early age of 20, but her spirit had been seen again and again by sailors. During the reign of Emperor Yung Lo of the Ming dynasty (A.D. 1403-1426) she was deified as Tien Fei (lady-in-waiting in Heaven) and soon after that a temple was built in her honour. (c/f Evelyn Lip 1981:27)

The process of deification still continues in this century in Malaysia. The Dàbógōng, Big Paternal Great-Uncle, one of the popular deities of the Malaya or Singapore born Chinese, is an example of this. According to Victor Purcell, Dàbógōng "seems to be the personification of the pioneer spirit generally and not the deification of any special person." These early pioneers lived a life of extreme hardship during their early days in Malaya. However, their presence in this Land made immigration less of a hardship for later immigrants. Therefore the spirits of these early pioneers were honoured in memory by those who came after them.

Dàbógōng is vaguely associated by many Chinese with Tǔdìgōng (earth god). This deity has infact been taken back to China by returning immigrants and this explains their existence in the Southern provinces of China exmple Fukien. [According to these homeland Teochews, "In earlier times, it was considered a great fortune by any family when its first immigrants to the Nanyang survived. Such men were affectionately called Kai Shan Ta Pai or pioneers. The title Kung was later added to show them respect .....shrines were built in their (the immigrant's) homes (in

Malaya) for the fact that they survived earlier vicissitudes, gave them in the eyes of other immigrants, possession of unusual powers and they were subsequently revered as saints." ] (Topley 1955:87)

#### 2.4 SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF TEMPLES

An important point which I would like to make here is that the functions of a temple is greatly connected to the main god of the temple itself. Different deities are attributed with different "powers" and symbolism. In conjunction with this, the functions that they play differ from one deity to another although there are many instances of overlap of functions.

In his book, Religion in Chinese Society, Professor Yang has tabulated the functions of the temples according to the nature of the main gods in each example. Briefly, he has categorized the functions of the temples into six categories.

Functions		Deities
I. Integration and well being of Social Organisation.	A. Kinship Group 1. Marriage 2. Fertility 3. Kinship Values B. Local Community Protection	Guānyīn

Functions		Deities
I.	<p>C. The State</p> <p>1. Figures symbolizing civics and political virtues</p> <p>a. Civic and political</p> <p>(i) Historical personalities</p> <p>(ii) Legendary figures</p> <p>b. Military personalities</p> <p>2. Deities of Justice</p> <p>3. Patrons of the scholar-official class and the literary tradition</p>	<p>Bāogōng</p> <p>Guān Dī</p> <p>Bāogōng</p> <p>Wei to (Buddhist god of Law)</p> <p>Confucious</p>
II. General moral order	<p>A. Heavenly deities</p> <p>B. Underworld authorities</p>	<p>Jade Emperor</p> <p>Tǔdìgōng (Local god of earth, a tutelary god)</p>

Functions		Deities
III. Economic functions	A. Agricultural deities B. Patrons of Crafts and Trades C. Commerce and general economic prosperity	Tiānhòu (goddess of sailing) Ts'ai-shen (god of wealth)
IV. Health		Yo-shih (Buddhist deity of healing)
V. General public and personal welfare	A. Pantheons B. Devil dispeller C. Blessing deities D. Temples with unspecific gods	Guānyīn
VI. Monasteries and Nunneries	A. Buddhist B. Taoist	Sakyamuni Buddha

Source: C.K. Yang: Religion In Chinese Society, (1961:8-10)

This table is by no means an absolute classification of the function of temples and deities. However, it can provide a general idea

as to the functions of temples in a Chinese community.

Here I would like to bring in a few examples of the functions of deities which also determines the function of the temple. The first temple is the deity Guān Yǔ. He is mainly worshipped by merchants and businessmen because he is also considered as the god of wealth and of fidelity in business contracts. In Hong Kong this deity is prayed to by the police because 'he' symbolises loyalty, bravery and righteousness. "For many social organizations, such as fraternities and secret societies, he was the overseer of fraternal ties and a blessing spirit for their cause of mutual interest and justice." (Yang: 1961:159)

Tiānhòu, the goddess who is considered to be the patron of crafts and trades, falls into the category of economic function. She is viewed as the goddess of sailing and is greatly revered by sailors and fishermen.

In the category of health, there is one temple in Petaling Jaya, the Huánglǎo Xiānshī, which specialises in "curing" people. Yo-shih, which is the Buddhist deity of healing is also found in a number of temples, although not as the main deity of the temple. The people also pray to other gods to heal sickness because all deities are potential healers, since they are endowed with supernatural powers.

However, it should be noted that a temple basically serves the fundamental function as a place of worship. This is shown from an extract of Lip's book, Chinese Temples and Deities (1981), which says that "Chinese Temples are religious buildings primarily for devotees or

Chinese religionists to communicate with the gods or shen ..... [and] devotees may visit as many temples as they please. They believe that different gods have different degrees of power and different kinds of blessing. In order to get a multitude of blessings, it is necessary to pray to many gods and visit as many temples as possible during the year". (Lip:1981:48)

Although a person can worship at home just as well as in a temple, it is felt that by worshipping in a temple, a person can pray to a whole range of deities and thus obtain blessings from all of them. Furthermore, it is not possible to "house" all the deities in a home. At the most, a Chinese home has an average of 5 statues of deities on the altar. As such, in public worship a person can pray to a whole range of deities that is not made available to him in domestic worship.

Professor Yang, in his study of the functional role of temples and shrines in China wrote that "the religious influence in Chinese life may also be seen in the wide range of functions served by the temples. In a monotheistic religion, people pray to one god for all their spiritual needs but in the Chinese polytheistic tradition, people pray to different gods for different purposes". (Yang:1961:7) This accounts for the various types of temples and shrines found through out Malaysia.

Temples too serve the function of providing services to the general public. The services of spirit-mediums which can be obtained from spirit medium temples, from nuns and monks especially in chanting prayers and to ask for protection from the gods. In some temples too,

a room is also provided for those who wish to place their ancestral tablets. A more detailed explanation of these services will be provided in the following chapters of this study.

University of Malaya

Chapter Notes:

1. Karma - the feeling of resignation to the overwhelming power of fate.
  
2. gǔi - are usually malevolent spirits that have a propensity to molest human beings. The powers of the gǔi are spontaneously generated and not normally under human control. As such they can invade human beings without warning.
  
3. shén - are usually good by nature and are willing to help human beings. The powers of the shén are latent but can be activated by those who wish to modify the effects of their fates or to counteract ghost-powers.





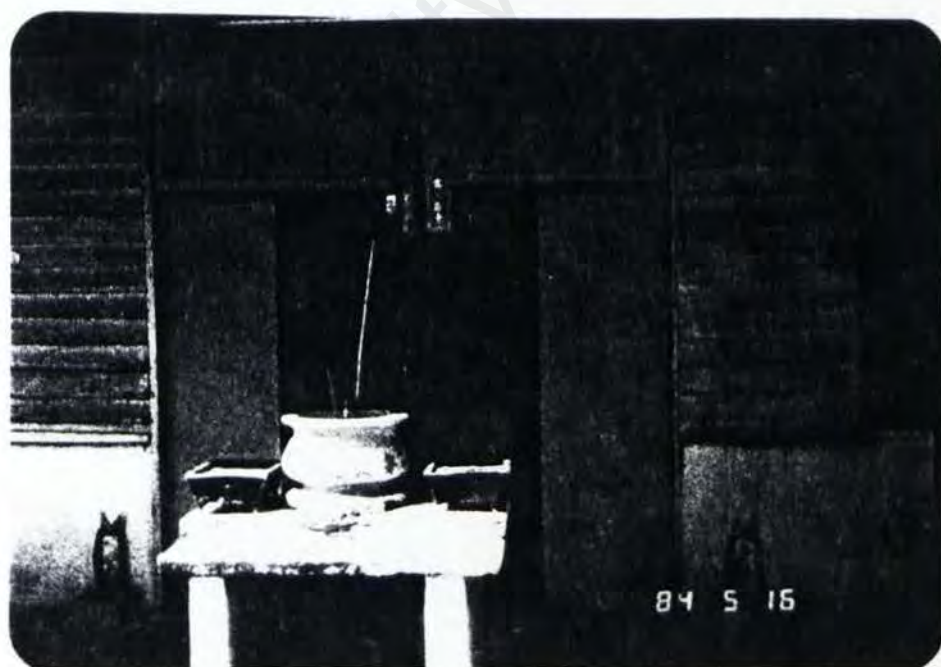
HONGSHENGGONG TEMPLE



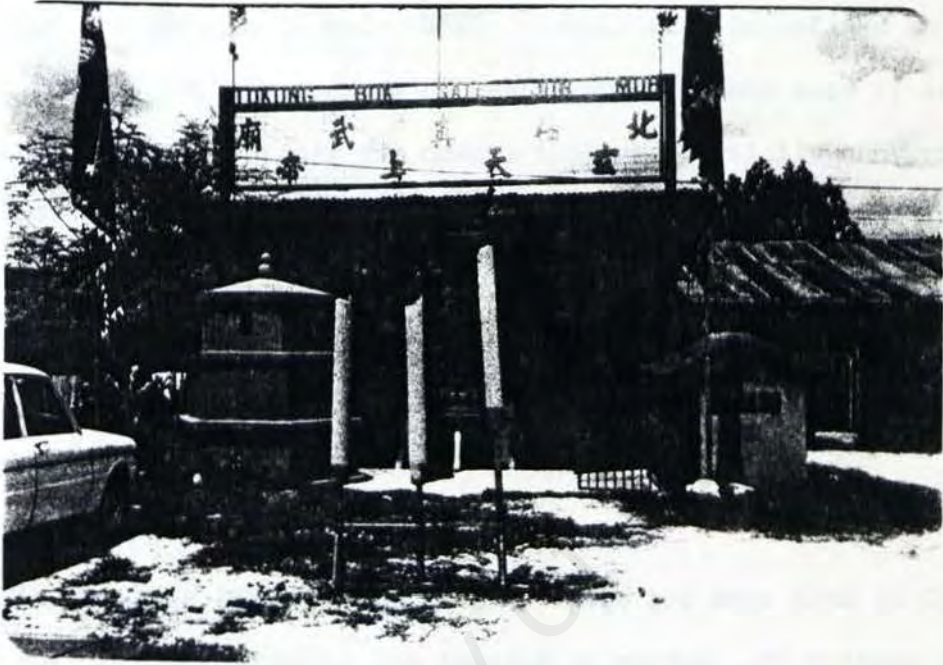
ZHUXIAOLINYUAN TEMPLE



POH LUM NUNNERY



QITIANDASHENG TEMPLE



TOKONG BUK GATE JUN MOH TEMPLE

### CHAPTER THREE

#### 3. A SURVEY OF CHINESE TEMPLES AND SHRINES IN PETALING JAYA

For the purpose of this thesis, temple will be defined as a building that is used for the purpose of public worship, and also it is much bigger than shrine. Shrines are houses that are partially converted into public places of worship. It is also relatively smaller than a temple.

Chinese temples, shrines and other places of public worship can be found through out Malaysia, especially in areas where the Chinese community is numerically dominant.

In Petaling Jaya Old Town alone, there are more than 20 Chinese temples and shrines. Some of the temples or shrines are nothing more than wooden shacks. However, some are huge buildings. An example of this is the Poh Lum Nunnery which has an area of 6 shop lots.

In newer residential areas such as Sungai Way-Subang, SEA Park and Section 17, the number of temples and shrines found did not correspond to the number of Chinese people living there. The majority of these shrines and temples are residential houses that are being used as public places of worship.

##### 3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TEMPLES

The majority of temples and shrines found in Section One - Eight in Petaling Jaya were built when this part of town first started. Among

these are the Wǔléi Xiānshī, Hóngshènggōng, Qīngliántáng and Huat Wang Teng (H) Temple.

However, the other temples were shifted from Kuala Lumpur and Old Klang Road to Petaling Jaya when this town started. For example the Huánglǎo Xiānshī temple had been in 6th Mile Old Klang Road for 14 years before it was shifted to Petaling Jaya in 1977. The Leng Toh Temple which started off as a shrine in Jalan Selangor and later shifted to Kampong Sentosa, 6th Mile Old Klang Road, was shifted to its present location in 1974.

Some of the Buddhist temples like Poh Lum Nunnery and Xiūchénglín were originally located in Peel Road, Kuala Lumpur. The founder of both temples were from China. In Xiūchénglín, it was started by a nun Sek Chi Kin (釋慈堅) who is at present 83 years old.

The Méifēnglín temple which was built 27 years ago in 1957 is actually the branch of the Guānyīngé temple in Ipoh Road. According to my informant, the Guānyīngé is still in existence and it provides free medical treatment for those in need of it.

Among the Taoist temples, which provide the services of spirit-mediumship, a few of them originated because of supernatural "intervention". According to my informant in the Leng Toh Temple, there was some squabble among its committee members and when in 1974, one of the committee members had a dream in which the deity Bāogōng directed him to shift the temple, he and a few others started their own temple in Section One.

The Wūléi Xiānshī shrine was started by a Mr. Ng, together with 3 - 4 other persons. According to Mr. Ng, he suffered a heart attack at the age of 27. He prayed to the deity Wūléi Xiānshī or Wènshén (問神). He was asked to take the 'fu' prescribed by the deity through a medium. When he was cured, he was asked to become a medium but he did not take it up because he felt he was too young. Futhermore he had to take care of his family. However, he agreed to become a medium when he reached 50 years in age because by then he would have less responsibilities towards his family and more time to himself.

Although he did not become a medium then, he set up a shrine in a friend's house. The altar is located on the right-hand section of the living room.

At present, Mr. Ng is 55 years old and he has been a medium for the past 2 years. There are 2 mediums operating in this shrine. Mr. Ng operates at night because he works in the morning. He is a businessman. The medium operating in the morning is about 39-40 years old and has been a medium for the past 5-6 years.

In the case of the Zhānggōng Shèngjūn temple, Mr. Lee Peng Hong (李炳鐘), the temple keeper who is also the spirit medium, set up the temple after he became a medium. According to Mrs. Lee, her husband is a very pious person and he prays frequently in the temple next door. At one of the sessions, the deity Fatt Chi Kung (法子公) alternately known as Zhānggōng Shèngjūn possessed Mr. Lee. He went into a trance and could not speak. Those people in the temple who could understand what

was happening to him gave him a piece of paper on which he wrote out a 'fu'. The 'fu' was then burned and mixed with water for Mr. Lee to drink. After that he regained consciousness. When I asked him about it, Mr. Lee said he was not aware of what was happening to him and only knew when the others told him about it.

Mr. Lee said that at the beginning i.e. the first few times he entered into a trance, he felt tired because he shook and sweated a lot and also he vomited the first two times. Later he took vegetarian meals for 49 days and now he does not vomit when he goes in a trance.

Mr Lee worked for the Leng Toh Temple on a voluntary basis but later left and became a part-time medium for the Tokong Buk Gate Jun Moh Temple for about a year or more. After that, with the encouragement and financial assistance of devotees, he started off his own shrine. The shrine was "officially opened" on the 23rd of the 7th month in 1981, according to the lunar calendar.

According to the female medium in the Huánglǎo Xiānshī temple, she had her calling to become a medium at the age of 16 years old but she ignored it until the birth of her youngest daughter. Her daughter has physical defects and is stunted in growth. When her daughter was younger, she had to be hospitalised for a long time. Being poor, she had to work extra hard to make ends meet and to pay for the hospital bills. It was during this time that turned to religion and heeded her calling to become a medium. She has been a medium for 28 years.

Her son has been a medium for 7 years, since he was 25 years old. According to him, before he became a medium, he was an atheist. In 1977, he had a very serious accident. After that, he lived in a state of semi-consciousness for 3 months. He felt that he only survived with "god's" intervention and so he is devoting his time to being a medium and serving his 'sifu' or master which is Huánglǎo Xiānshī.

### 3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF TEMPLES

On the whole, the temples and shrines in Petaling Jaya can be classified into Buddhist or Taoist or a mixture of both in which case deities of Buddhist origin, e.g. the Sakyamuni Buddha is housed in a Taoist temple/shrine. In most cases, temples that are classified as a 'mixture of both' is found.

In Chapter 2, we have seen that the religion of the Chinese people is polytheistic and deities, regardless of their origin were prayed to as long as they were perceived of as being able to help solve the people's problems. As a result, Chinese Religion became what it is today, a mixture of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism and the Chinese folk beliefs. This aspect of the Chinese Religion is mirrored in the temples/shrines erected to house the numerous deities. As such it is very difficult, if not impossible to find a temple/shrine that is dedicated solely to Buddhist or Taoist deities.



3.2.1 BUDDHIST TEMPLES

Out of the 18 temples/shrines surveyed, 4 can be said to be Buddhist Temples. They are:

- (i) Poh Lum Nunnery  
1, Jalan Lembah (off Jalan Gasing), Petaling Jaya.
- (ii) Huat Wan Teng  
26, Road 2, Petaling Jaya.
- (iii) Qingliantang  
2, Road 2, Petaling Jaya
- (iv) Xiuchenglin  
4, Section 1/5, Petaling Jaya.

In each of the temples, the principal deity is the Sakyamuni Buddha. In all the 4 temples, the statue of the Sakyamuni Buddha, which is carved from marble and encased in glass cases, is placed in the centre on the altar, and surrounded by other Buddhist deities.

Among the popular Buddhist deities that could be found were:

- (a) Goddess of Mercy ( 观音 )
- (b) Amitabah Buddha ( 阿彌陀佛 )
- (c) Wěituó Púsà ( 韋陀菩薩 )
- (d) Dìcángwáng ( 地藏王 )

All these Buddhist temples are run by nuns except for the Huat Wan Teng which is run by a zhāigū<sup>1</sup>. The nuns were either educated locally or had furthered their education in Fo Kuan Shan in Taiwan. For e.g. the Reverend Yi Hsiu (釋依修) in Qīngliántáng went to Taiwan in 1968 to study Dharma Buddhism and she only came back to Malaysia in 1980. Also, the nun in Xiūchénglín temple was away in Taiwan when I visited the temple.

Generally, the day to day running of the temples does not differ greatly from each other. The day is started off with morning prayers. Although the time differs from temple to temple, the usual time for morning prayers is between 4.30 - 5.00 a.m. because the neighbours will be disturbed if it is conducted too early. The duration of the morning prayers is 2 hours. Evening prayers starts at around 4.30 p.m. and ends at 6.30 p.m. According to Hsing, "the morning and evening devotions are the most important ..... not only use these time for worship of the images in their temples but also use incantations and hymns to quiet their minds at the beginning and end of the day." (Hsing 1979:115-116). Also, these prayers are for those who have contributed towards the temple in terms of money, oil for lighting lamps, joss-sticks, food-stuffs and so on.

The hours between morning and evening prayers are spent taking care of the temples, cleaning and sweeping the temple and self-prayers. Also, since they have to get up very early in the mornings, they usually rest in the afternoons.

An interesting feature that is common among the Buddhist temples surveyed is the presence of young girls between the ages of 2-10 in these temples. These young girls were "adopted" by the temples. At present there are 3 of them in the Poh Lum Nunnery, 2 in Xiūchénglín and 2 in Huat Wan Teng. However, in Huat Wan Teng, one of the girls is 19 years old. Generally, they are from families that have too many children and are too poor to take care of them or are children born out of wedlock. The temples will finance their education. After they have reached adulthood, they have the choice of setting up their own families or joining the nunnery.

### 3.2.2. TAOIST TEMPLES

Taoist temples/shrines are erected to dedicate to a certain deity. Therefore in each of the temples/shrines surveyed, there is a principal deity. For e.g. the Leng Toh Temple in Section One was built to honour the deity Bāogōng. As such, the statue of this deity occupies a central position in the temple. There are of course other deities in the temple but they occupy a less prominent position. This feature is applicable to all the other temples surveyed. In all the temples, there is at least one principal deity and many minor deities.

In conjunction with this, important dates, such as birthday of the principal deities are celebrated on a grander scale than the birthdays of other deities. This year (1984), the celebrations of the birthday of the deity Bāogōng which fell on the 4th day of the 4th month according to the lunar calendar, lasted for 6 days. Through out the duration of the celebration, opera performances were held. According to my informant,

professional actors and actresses were hired especially for the festive celebration. On the 6th day of the celebration, a great feast was held in a restaurant.

The same procedure was observed in the Huánglǎo Xiānshī temple. According to the temple keeper, the celebration of the birthday of the principal deity, Huánglǎo Xiānshī which fell on the 6th day of the 6th month (lunar calendar) also lasted for 6 days. Through out the celebration, documentaries and educational programmes were screened in place of opera shows.

During the festivals of "lesser" deities, celebrations were kept to a minimum and they normally last for a day.

A common feature of the Taoist temples is the presence of spirit mediums. Out of the 10 Taoist temples I visited, spirit mediums were present in 8 of them. In one of them, i.e. the Huánglǎo Xiānshī temple, there were 2 mediums, a mother and son team.

Spirit mediums do not have to take a vow of celibacy. From my survey, I found out that all the spirit mediums of the temple were married with families.

Normally, these spirit mediums double as temple keepers or as owners of the temple. The owner of the Zhānggōng Shēngjūn Temple in Section One started off as spirit medium but when he had enough money, mainly from contributions, he built and serve in his own temple. The

spirit mediums in the Tokong Buk Gate Jun Moh Temple and the Leng Toh Temple are also temple keepers because they live in the temple itself. Furthermore, these 2 temples are run by committee members and these mediums were employed by them to serve in their temple.

The Hóngshènggōng Temple in Section 4 is slightly different from the other Taoist temples. It was started by a Shanghai doctor by the name of Chan Yit Fei.

The outstanding features that sets it apart from all other Taoist temples/shrines I visited is that this temple is also an old folks' home for females. When Dr. Chan was killed by soldiers during the war, his wife left the running of the temple to the inmates. According to my informant, Madam Yuen Foong, she hardly visits the temple.

At present, there are around 9-10 old women staying in the Temple. Most of them are not married and so do not have families to take care of them. However, there are also a few who have families of their own but have chosen to stay in the temples. From my informant, I gathered that they have to pay to stay in. The rates she had to pay was \$300 (for life) but she is not sure if the rates have gone up. The amount paid is only for lodging and they have to pay for their own meals individually.

Madam Yuen also mentioned that there are a few who stay in the Temple in spite of being unable to pay for their lodging but they have to pay for the meals.

Another feature which distinguishes it from other Taoist temples is that it does not have a medium. In spite of the fact that there are no spirit mediums to act as intermediaries between the deity and the devotees, they are those who come to the deity to be cured of their illnesses. Since there are no mediums in the temple to prescribe 'fu', the devotees will take a small packet of tea leaves (wrapped in red paper) from the altar. They have to mix the tea leaves with water and drink it.

The only other Taoist Temple that I have come across which does not have a medium is the Yoke Wong Temple in Section One. The present temple keeper is a zhāigū and her 'master' is from Taiwan. According to my informants, the zhāigū travels a lot and is seldom in the temple. As with the Hóngshènggōng Temple, there are also 6 old women staying in this temple. More detailed information could not be obtained because my interviewees were very uncooperative.

An interesting feature of the Taoist temples surveyed is that all the names of the temples were derived from the names of the principal deities in the temple. An example of this is the Qítīandàshēng Temple, the Wǔléi Xiānshī Temple, the Hóngshènggōng Temple and the Tiānhòu temple.

### 3.2.3 THE GODDESS OF MERCY TEMPLES

The temples devoted to the Goddess of Mercy are basically Buddhist temples. However, the main deity is not the Sakyamuni Buddha but the Bodhisatva Avalokitesvara.

Out of the 18 temples surveyed, four were such temples. They are

- (a) Zhùxiǎolínyuán
- (b) Méifēnglín
- (c) Ānqìngtáng
- (d) Shèngdétáng

Out of these 4 temples, only the Zhùxiǎolínyuán and the Méifēnglín are run by nuns and monks respectively. The Méifēnglín temple is the only one that I came across that has a monk. When I saw him, he was not wearing a Buddhist robe but was wearing T-shirt and pants. Furthermore, his head is not cleanly shaven but looked more like crew cut. However, from the photographs of him, he wore a Buddhist robe. There is also a zhāigū staying in the temple.

In the Zhùxiǎolínyuán, there are 2 nuns there, an older one, age 70 and a younger one, 25 years old. Before becoming a nun at the age of 60, the older nun was majiě.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the Méifēnglín Temple, this temple does not celebrate Wesak Day but only festivals of the Goddess of Mercy. However, the 2 temples are members of the Buddhist Association of Malaysia.

The other 2 temples are run by zhāigū. From my informant, I gathered that the Ānqìngtáng was started by a few majiě, whereas the Shèngdétáng was started by a zhāigū. There are a few old women staying in the Temple and this temple seems to serve the secondary role of an old folks home.

The Ānqìntáng and the Shèngdétáng are similar to the Zhāi táng, the vegetarian hall or houses. According to Topley, "A Vegetarian house, although closely resembling a nunnery in appearance can really be considered as a home for women run on religious lines." (1955:54). In this 2 temples, the zhāigū are all unmarried women who in their life time will not get married and devote their lives to the Goddess of Mercy.

In the Shèngdétáng, there are a number of children who are 'adopted' children of the temple keeper. In this respect, the Goddess of Mercy temple is similar to the Buddhist temples.

### 3.3 TEMPLE ORGANIZATION

The Chinese temples and shrines in Malaysia may be privately owned or they may be connected with a clan or guild, or other clubs and associations. In this study, the organization and running of a temple can be divided into 3 categories namely those that are

- (a) privately owned
- (b) part of a larger network of temples
- (c) run by committee members.

From my survey of the Chinese temples and shrines carried out in Petaling Jaya, the majority of these temples and shrines (i.e. 13 out of 18) are privately owned; 2 out of 18 are run by committee members while the other 3 temples, though privately owned, are members of the Buddhist Association of Malaysia.



Out of these 3 Buddhist temples, one (the Poh Lum Nunnery) is connected to the Buddhist Association in Penang. This is because its chief monk, i.e. Master Chok Mor, is based in Penang. As far as I know, Master Chok Mor is also the Chief Monk of another Buddhist temple near Slim River, Perak. It is also known as Poh Lum. However, a report on these connections are outside the scope of this study.

In the 1st Category, the running of a temple, inclusive of its finances, temple activities and festivals depend solely on the individual temple keeper. In the case of individual ownership, a temple does not necessarily have any connection with another temple which has the same name. For e.g. the Zhānggōng Shēngjūn temple in Petaling Jaya is not part of nor is it connected to the Zhānggōng Shēngjūn temple in Kuala Lumpur. However, both the temples does celebrate the birthday of the deity on the same day i.e. on the 23rd of the 7th month according to the lunar calendar. The only difference is in the scale of celebration.

The Poh Lum Nunnery and the Méifēnglín temple falls into the category of temples that are part of a larger network of temples. I have already mentioned that the Poh Lum temple in Petaling Jaya together with the Poh Lum temple in Slim River, Perak is head by the same Chief Monk. As such, the two temples are run by nuns and monks appointed by him. In the Poh Lum temple in Slim River, it is run by a monk and a nun whereas the Poh Lum in Petaling Jaya is run by 5 nuns. Although these 2 temples are, to a certain extend, connected, the day-to-day running of the temple is very much an individual affair.

According to my informant, the Méifēnglín Temple is a branch of the Guānyīngé temple that is located in Jalan Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur. However, my informant did not elaborate as to the kind of connection that exist between the 2 temples.

In the last category, a process of election is carried out to elect the committee members. The deities of the temple elects these committee members. The usual procedure for such an election is to read out in front of the altar the names of local personages who are willing to stand for election. After each name, the divining blocks are thrown and the person whose name receives the greatest number of affirmative answers becomes the next president or 'lu chu' (stove master). The 'lu chu' and his committee will run the temple for a year after which the process is repeated. According to Elliot, "the most important obligation on the stove master is that he should be prepared to make good any deficit that may occur during his year of office on account of failure to attract sufficient subscriptions from the inhabitants of the neighbourhood." (Elliot:1955:41).

The 2 temples which fall into this category is the Leng Toh temple and the Tokong Buk Gate Jun Moh. In the second temple, the post of the committee members include the Chairman, Vice Chairman, two Secretaries, 2 Assistant Secretaries, a Treasurer, an Assistant Treasurer and a Book Keeper. In the Leng Toh temple, the committee member consist of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and a Public Relations Officer. These are the people who are responsible for the running of the temple such as its finance, and how to promote the temple to gather in more

devotees.

According to my informant in the Tokong Buk Gate Jun Moh temple, the deity 'chooses' (through the use of divining blocks) an ad hoc committee to take care of the celebration of festivals and rituals in the temple.

#### 3.4 TEMPLE FINANCE

The support and patronage of the people are very important for a temple to continue functioning. As such, its 'survival' depends on its ability to attract devotees and patronage. An example of the importance of the devotee's support is the Qítiāndāshèng Temple. The temple is more of a wooden shack. From the main road, which runs parallel to the temple, it looks very unimpressive and "run-down". The interior of the temple, like the exterior has a very neglected atmosphere.

According to the temple keeper herself, the upkeep of the temple is barely met. The number of devotees who visit the temple is minimal because the temple is not actively run such as having grand celebrations or festivals to attract devotees. Less devotees would mean less money for the temple because it receives its major source of income from contributions from the people.

In all the temples surveyed, inclusive of Buddhist temples, "oil and incense money"<sup>3</sup> is among the major source of income that they receive.

In the Poh Lum Nunnery and Xiūchénglín temple, members of the public pay a certain amount of money for blessings and prayers. In this particular temple members of the public have to pay \$13 per year for prayers and blessings for individuals and \$26 per year for family blessings and prayers. The fees can be paid monthly or yearly and they are given a card to show that they have paid. The names of these members are then written on a white plastic block, rectangular in shape. All these rectangular blocks are hung on the walls of a wooden shelf which is encased in glass. In front of the shelf is a table where an oil lamp, which burns continuously, and a brass container for joss-sticks is placed. The number of people who subscribe to this is quite numerous and as such the amount collected can be quite considerable.

The sale of joss-sticks, candles, incense paper and various paraphanelia connected with the process of 'pai shen' is also a source of income for the temples. It is a common occurrence that people buy the above said items from the temples itself when they go there to pray.

In a few Taoist temples surveyed, for example the Hóngshènggōng, Tokong Buk Gate Jun Moh and Zhānggōng Shèngjūn temple, joss-sticks known as tǎxiāng (土塔香) were also sold. Tǎxiāng, unlike the other joss-sticks which are vetical, are made into coils which are quite big, about 10 inches in radius. They are hung from the ceiling and lighted. The cost of each coil of joss-sticks varies from temple to temple but basically it is about \$3.50 - \$4.00 each. In most cases, they are only lighted during the 1st and 15th day of the lunar month. Pictures of this type of joss-stick can be seen from the photographs of the Hóngshènggōng and

Tokong Buk Gate Jun Moh Temple.

In the Xiūchénglín temple, paper charms known as "money for rebirth", wǎngshēngqián<sup>4</sup> are also sold. These paper charms are yellow in colour printed with red characters. Holes are made onto these paper charms using joss-stick. During this process, the person concerned will have to chant prayers or incantations. Holes will be made at the centre of each 'coin', on the 3 fingernails of Buddha's hand and on the centre figure at the top of the paper charm. Each sheet will then be folded across into half and the 2 ends folded in with the picture of Buddha's hand facing the front.

According to the respondent in the Xiūchénglín temple, there are devotees who buy these paper charms and bring them to the temple for the above said process. Devotees can also purchase ready "processed" paper charms from the temple. However, I am not sure as to the amount charged by the temple keeper.

Huge sum of money can be collected through the celebration of the birthdays of deities. A good example of this is the Leng Toh Temple in which more than \$40,000 was collected during the festive celebration of the birthday of its principal deity Bāogōng, during a span of 6 days. The actual amount collected is not known but this amount of \$40,000 was contributed by this temple for the building of a Chinese National Type School in Kuala Lumpur (Yoke Kuan Primary School).

During festive celebrations, the amount of devotees who visit the

temple is far greater than ordinary days. By contributing "oil and incense money" and purchasing ritual paraphanelia from the temple, the income of the temple will also increase. In the Leng Toh Temple, chinese opera shows were put up. With such activities going on in a temple, it is bound to attract people, even those who are not 'regulars' of the temple.

The birthday of the deity Zhānggōng Shēngjūn was celebrated in a very grand scale by the Zhānggōng Shēngjūn temple in Kuala Lumpur. Although Kuala Lumpur is outside of the area of my study, I made a few observations that can be incorporated into this paper.

In this temple, the auctioning of items were carried out as part of the celebration. Items such as tins of oil, bags of rice, flowers and so on which were contributed by devotees were auctioned off. A tin of oil was auctioned off for \$90 while a bag of rice for \$105. Statues of deities were also auctioned off and these items fetched very high prices. All the money collected goes to the temple.

Wǎngshēngqián (往生錢)

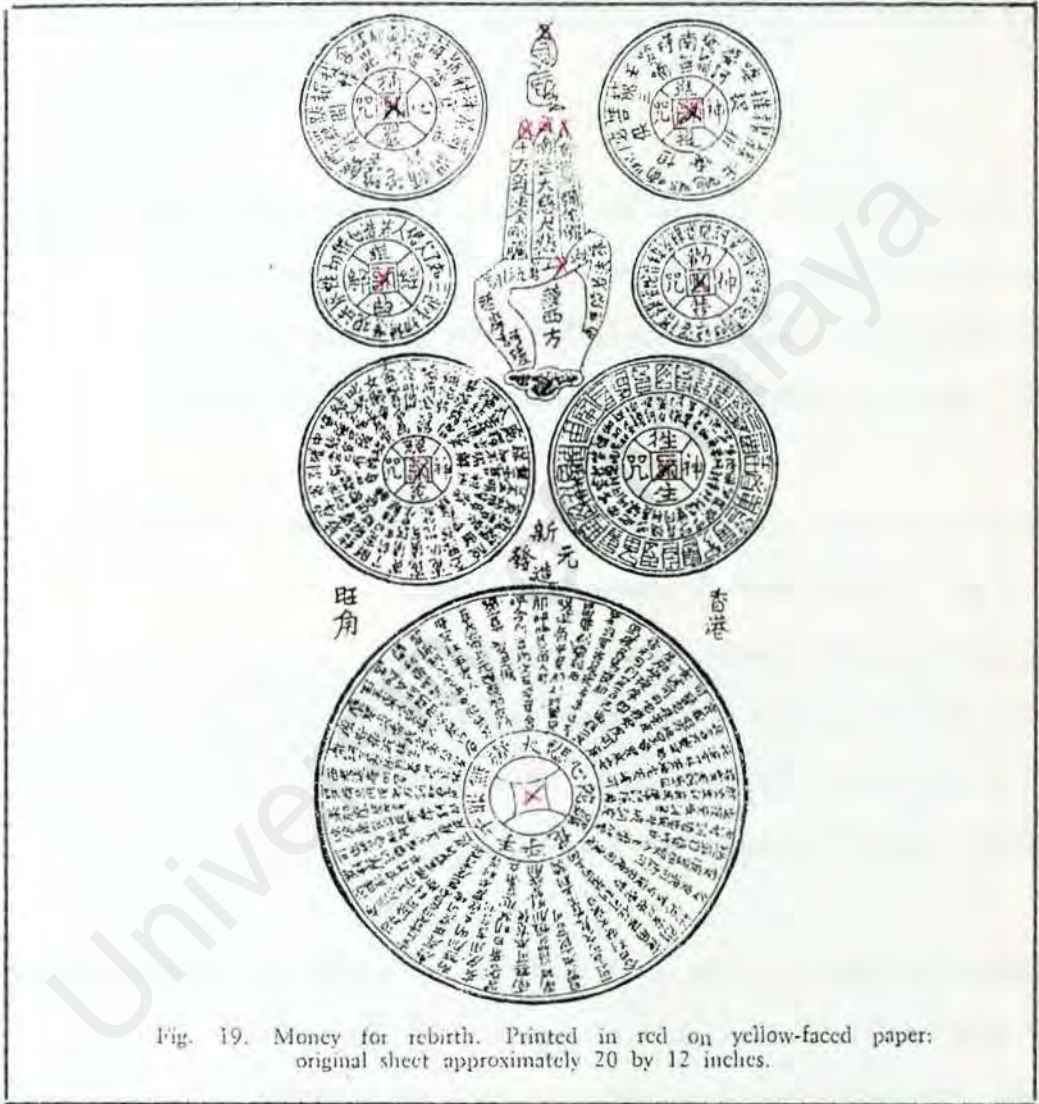


Fig. 19. Money for rebirth. Printed in red on yellow-faced paper: original sheet approximately 20 by 12 inches.

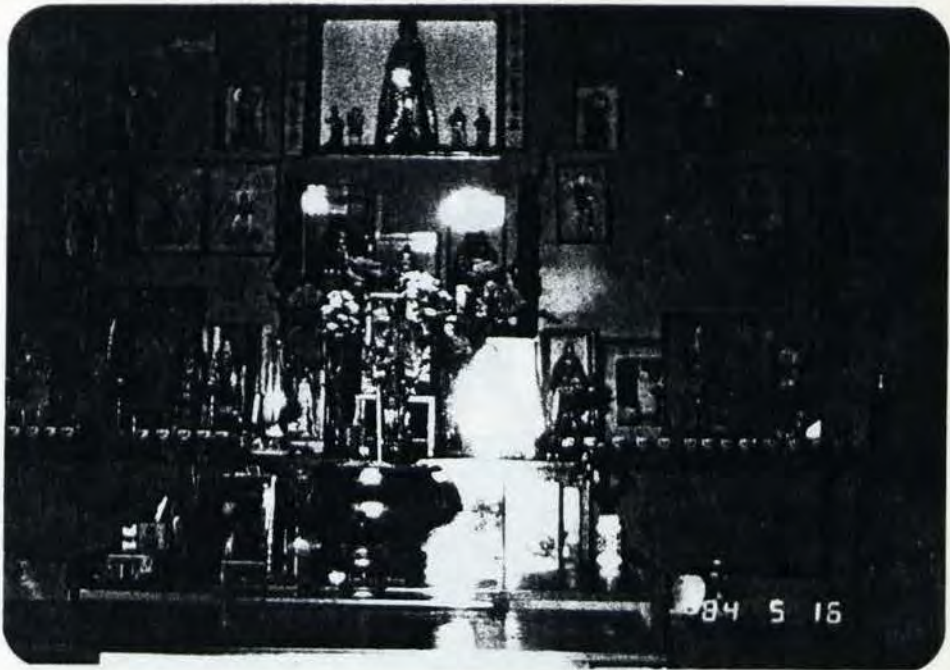
Source: Topley, Marjorie "Singapore Chinese, Paper Charms and Prayer Sheets". in Journal Malayan Branch Roayal Asiatic Society, Vol. 26, Pt. 1; Pg 79.

The crosses in red on the above diagram indicates the holes that are made using joss-stick.

Chapter Notes:

1. zhāigū - is a vegetarian nun. Unlike a nun, she does not have to shave her head bald. Furthermore, she is not expected to live as strictly or as ascetic as a nun but she has to lead celibate life.
2. mājiě - are women who take vows of celibacy. There is a little anointing ceremony called "saw-hee" in which a women has her hair combed. The traditional symbol of the true majie is her pigtail, a sign of virginity. (Sit Yin Fong, 1983).
3. "Oil and incense money" - is the euphemous term for donations to a temple by members of the public. On receiving a sum of money from a worshipper, the priest will put a little oil in the lamp which hangs in front of the altar of the shen being worshipped. (Topley 1955:99)
4. Wǎngshēngqián - the money for rebirth from the clutches of ghostly debtors. This charm is made up of 'coins' with Buddhist Sutras inscribed on them in Sanskrit words translated phonetically into Chinese Characters. In the centre at the top is Buddha's hand, which leads souls into the Western Paradise. These sheets are bought in great quantities for funerals, at Ching Ming and during the 7th month - the month devoted to the worship of Hungry Ghost. (Topley).





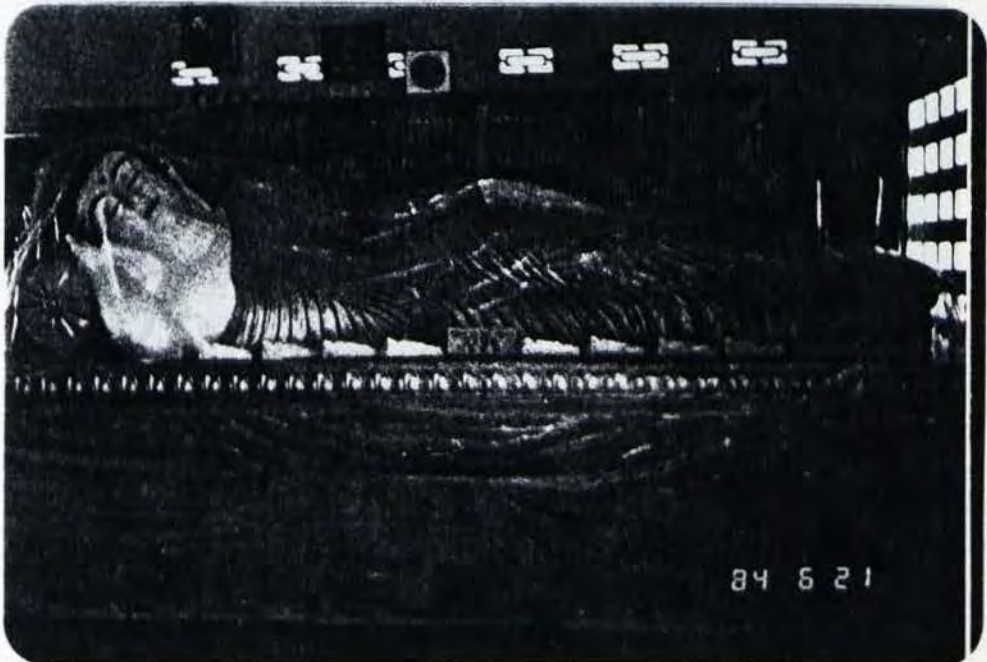
THE ARRAY OF DEITIES FOUND IN THE QITIANDASHENG TEMPLE



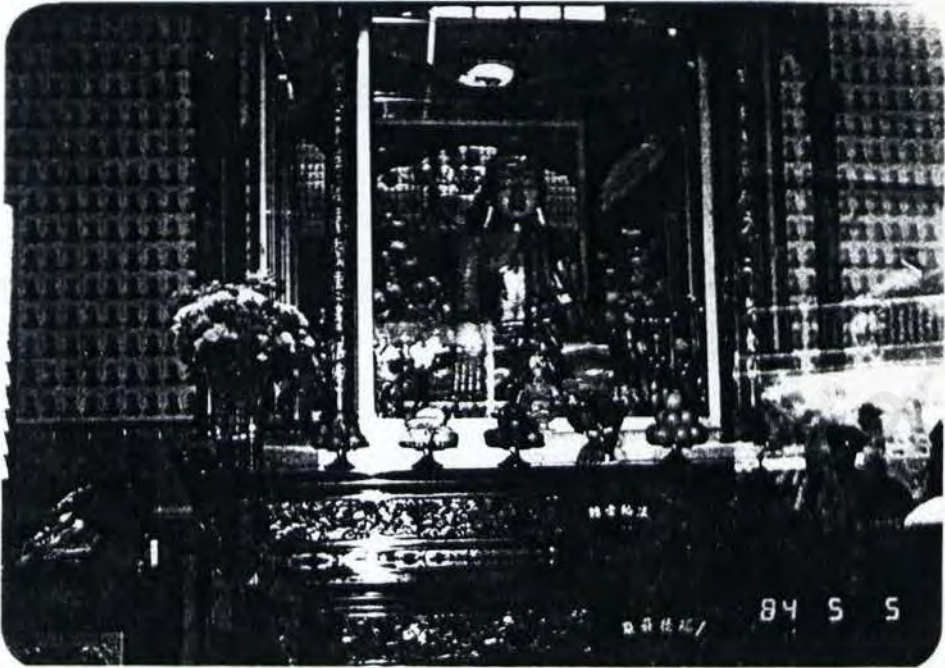
ALTAR OF THE WULEIXIANSHI TEMPLE



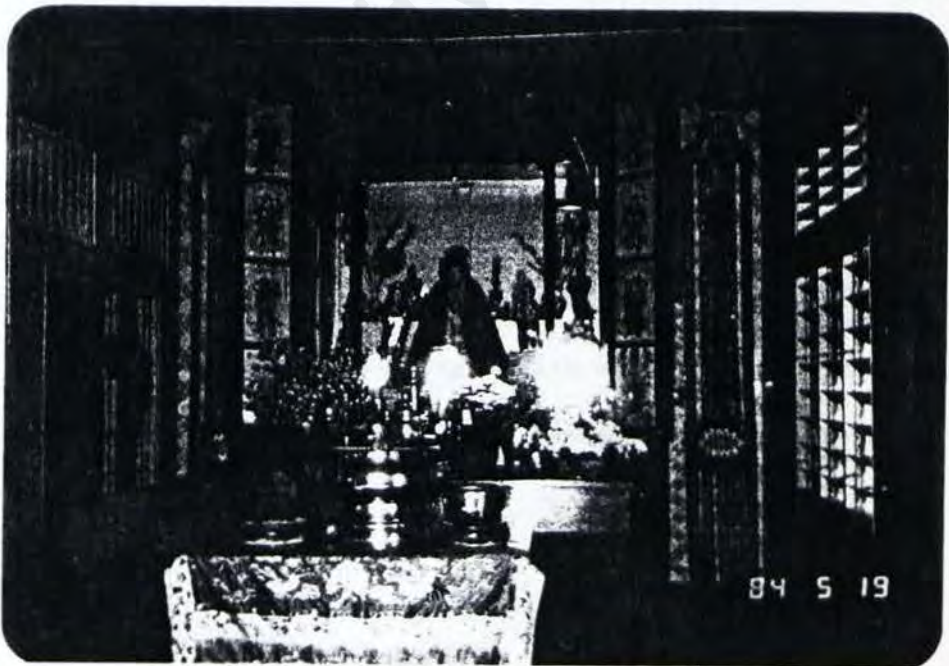
ALTAR OF THE HUAT WAN TENG TEMPLE



STATUE OF THE RECLINING BUDDHA IN THE QINGLIANTANG TEMPLE



SAKYAMUNI BUDDHA IN THE POH LUM NUNNERY



GODDESS OF MERCY IN THE MEIFENGLÍN TEMPLE

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. SOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHINESE RELIGION IN PETALING JAYA

The celebration of festivals, temple activities and services that are provided for the public are among the few social aspects of Chinese Religion.

#### 4.1 FESTIVALS

An important aspect of the Chinese Religion, be it Confucianism, Taoism or Buddhism, is the celebration of festivals. Among the Taoist temples, festivals are usually celebrated on the birthday of the principal deity of the temple or on the day that 'he' was deified. Wesak Day and the 3 festivals of the Goddess of Mercy are among the various festivals carried out annually in Buddhist Temples.

The elaborateness of the celebration depends on the popularity of the temple itself. For example, the Poh Lum Nunnery is always crowded whereas the Huat Wan Teng temple has relatively very much less devotees during the celebration of Wesak Day. With more devotees, more contributions will come in and therefore a more elaborate celebration can be held.

##### 4.1.1 WESAK DAY

Wesak Day, which is the celebration of the birthday of the Sakyamuni Buddha falls on the 8th day of the 4th month according to the Lunar Calendar. In Malaysia the 15th of May is the date fixed for the

celebration of Wesak Day.

Among the rituals for celebrating Wesak Day, one of them is to place a small image of the Sakyamuni Buddha into a trough, which has fragrant water and blooms of flower in it. A devotee kneels in front of this trough which is placed on a table with the back of the Statue facing the alter. He then takes ladle-full of water from the trough and pours it onto the Statue. However, the water must not be poured onto the head of the Statue but on the shoulders. For those who wish it, they can take some of the water home and pour it in their baths.

According to the Fo Chiao Chao Mu K'o Sung (Buddhist Liturgy and Ritual for morning and evening Studies), the image of Buddha is bathed because it is said that when Sakyamuni was born there were 9 dragons with fragrant water pouring from their mouths and washing him. But it seems that the water has other meanings as well. It was said that in ancient time in India during inauguration to the throne, the people poured water from the seas and all the rivers in the ruler's territory on his head for celebration. (Hsing, 1979:102)

This ritual of bathing the Buddha was observed through out the 4 Buddhist temples surveyed. Also, according to the temple keepers, this ritual is an annual affair. In the Qīngliántáng temple, I noticed that a devotee, before kneeling down to bath the Buddha, puts an "ang pow" into a container near the trough.

In the Poh Lum nunnery, devotees gathered and chanted prayers, led

by nuns, which began at about 8 o'clock in the morning. At around 11 to 12 o'clock noon, the prayer session ended and the devotees were served vegetarian meal. A similar procedure was also observed in the Qīngliántáng and Xiūchénglián temple.

In the Poh Lum nunnery, many devotees brought pigeons to the temple to be freed.

#### 4.1.2 FESTIVAL OF THE GODDESS OF MERCY <sup>1</sup>

The goddess of mercy is among the most revered deity in the Chinese Pantheon of Gods and spirits. As such, its festivals are celebrated by many.

These are 3 festivals of the Goddess of Mercy that is on the 19th day of the 2nd month which is said to be her birthday, the 19th day of the 6th month, the day on which her attainment to Bodhisattvahood is celebrated and the 19th day of the 9th month, the day on which she died.

On these festive days, vegetarian meal is served in the Méifēnglín and Ānqìngtáng temple. According to the temple keepers, the devotees come and place joss-stick in front of the image of the deity. Unlike the celebration of the birthday of the Sakyamuni Buddha, there are no prayer sessions.

#### 4.1.3 SPIRIT MEDIUM TEMPLES

In spirit medium temples which celebrate the birthdays of their deities on a grand scale, spirit mediums usually go into a trance. I have observed such a celebration that was held in the Zhānggōng Shèngjūn temple in Kuala Lumpur. The occasion was to celebrate the deity's birthday which falls on the 23rd of the 7th month.

In this case, 6 mediums went into a trance. Before getting into a trance, the only piece of clothing that these mediums wore were their pants. After a deity has possessed one of them, he will be dressed up by his assistant, who clothe the medium according to the deity that possessed him. For e.g. if the deity Na Cha<sup>2</sup> has possessed a medium, then the assistant will dress the medium up in a "stomacher", tie his hair on top of his head and put a ring round his neck. He is also given a "demon whip"<sup>3</sup> which he uses to lash on the floor several times.

After that, with skewers that are 8-6 feet long, a skilled member will pierce the cheeks of the mediums. Some of the mediums were pierced on only one side of the cheek, while the principal medium, had both his cheeks pierced through with the skewer. A thinner and more flexible skewer was pierced through the skin on the throat of the principal medium. In all the cases, except for the thinner and more flexible skewer, fruits such as oranges or apples were pierced onto the ends of the skewers to balance the weight.

These mediums, together with the statues of the deities

which were tied to a "Dragon Throne"<sup>4</sup> and carried by members of the temple, started out on a procession. Members of the public and the devotees were also involved in the procession. Many of them carried banners and huge flags. The procession started from the temple in Jalan Tung Shin, passing through Jalan Alor and Jalan Bukit Bintang and then back to the temple.

At the end of the procession, the skewers were taken out and the wounds were just pasted with a piece of paper that has been soaked in water. The wound is very slight and the amount of blood drawn is very little too. According to my informant, the wounds heal very fast and there will not be any scars on the cheeks.

Apart from this event, many devotees brought food, roasted pig, joss-sticks and the various ritual paraphanelia to pray in the temple. Many of them also took the opportunity to consult the mediums, and to ask the advice of the deity through the means of divining blocks and bamboo spills. In the evening, a sumptuous meal was given to the devotees.

In less elaborate celebrations, the duration of the celebration is only for one day. Devotees will also bring the various ritual paraphanelia to pray in the temple but they usually leave straight after worshipping the deity. There will also be very much less people who visit the temple compared with a more elaborate celebration.



#### 4.2 TEMPLE SERVICES

From my survey, I found out that the Qīngliántáng conduct classes on Buddhist studies every Sunday from 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon. The Reverend Yi Hsiu conducts lessons on reading the prayer books and chanting prayers. Apart from this, the Reverend Yi Hsiu also give talks on Buddhism in the Tuanku Abdul Rahman College every Saturday.

The Poh Lum nunnery provides the facilities for those who wish to enter nunhood. According to the nun I interviewed, there are three requirements that have to be fulfilled before a person can become a nun of the temple:

- (i) The most important thing is that the person intending to be a nun must be recommended by those who frequent the temple or are known to the nuns.
- (ii) Must be a female. Those who are above 40 years of age will not be accepted.
- (iii) The background of the person must be known.

If all these 3 requirements are satisfied, then the person will be allowed to stay in the temple for a certain period of time that is between 1½ to 3 years. During this time, she must follow the life style practiced by the nuns. She must get up at 5.30 a.m. every morning for prayers and follow the day to day routine of the nuns there. Also, she

must lead a humble and celibate life and must not indulge in any form of hedonism.

If after the time period is up and she still wishes to become a nun, then a ceremony will take place to finalise/formalise her entry into nunhood.

In the Qīngliántáng and Poh Lum Nunnery, ceremonies are held for those who wish to be "baptized" or guīyī. Guīyī, the entry into the Buddhist faith is conducted by the head of the temple. In the case of the Poh Lum Nunnery, Master Chok Mor will be the one conducting the service. In this temple too, mass guīyī is carried out a few times a year.

Through out the process of guīyī, the would be Buddhist must kneel in front of the image of Buddha, holding a joss-stick while the nuns chant and say prayers. Somewhere between the prayers, the monk/nun conducting the service will say that so and so wishes to be a Buddhist and to follow the doctrines of Buddha. According to Topley, "[guīyī is] taking a teacher or master and pledging allegiance to the Buddha, the Buddhist Law and the priesthood. After this ceremony, they are given a new Buddhist name by their master which indicates their new membership of the Buddhist family". (Topley 1955:71)

In the Poh Lum nunnery, there is a room specially used for placing ancestral tablets. This room is at the back portion of the temple. A picture of Buddha is placed at the centre of a wall. In front of the

picture of Buddha, on a wooden shelf, is an "ever-burning" lamp, a container for placing joss-sticks and vases for flowers.

The ancestral tablets consist of white rectangular blocks made of plastic which were hung in rows on the wall and all of them were encased behind a glass shelf. On its surface at the top were pasted photographs of the deceased, with their names carved directly beneath the photographs. Normally the tablets of a couple were placed next to each other.

There were also some tablets which were covered with red pieces of paper. These actually belong to persons who had "reserved" a place for themselves when they die. Their names were written on these red pieces of paper. Once they die, the red paper will be peeled off and their names will be carved and photographs placed on the white blocks.

The cost of each "place" is about \$500 for worship in perpetuity. However, this price is not fixed and in later years, perhaps it will increase.

Friends and families of the deceased can come to the temple any-time to place joss-stick and pray to the deceased.

In the Huat Wan Teng temple, ancestral tablets are placed on the left side of the hall. These tablets are made of wood. Unlike the ancestral tablets found in the Poh Lum Nunnery, the tablets here have stands and so are not hung up. Instead they are arranged in rows in a descending manner. Normally the deceased did not have children or

relatives and as such their tablets are placed in this temple.

No certain amount of money is required for those who wish to place these ancestral tablets in the temple. For those who are able to afford it, they can pay more. Some of these tablets are even placed there free of charge.

In the Qīngliántáng, the ancestral tablets are shaped like those found in Huat Wan Teng. They are also placed on the left side of the temple and arranged in a similar position. However, the temple keeper, Reverend Yi Hsiu is new to the temple and as such she does not know whence they are placed there. She is also not sure if the previous temple keeper collected any money from the deceased's family but she herself does not collect any payment now.

The purpose of providing such a service to the public is to ensure that the souls of the deceased, who are without children and relatives, are attended to. With the ancestral tablet in the temple, joss-sticks will be placed there every day and night and especially on all soul's day.

In the Taoist temples that I had carried out my survey, most of them provide the services of spirit mediums. Mediums are paid "consultation fees" by the clients who consult them. These consultation fees are usually about \$2.00 or more, depending on the individual client and the money is put inside a red packet or "ang pow".

If the prediction or medication prescribed by a particular deity

through a medium is correct or works, then the client or patient will bring gift or contributions as a gesture of thanks to the deity. These gifts and contributions include tins of oil and money.

In the Huánglǎo Xiānshī and Leng Toh temple, grateful clients give Huángcái to the temples. These are pieces of red material embroidered with chinese characters and pictures. They are hung from the ceiling in these temples. They bear testimony to the ability and credibility of the deities in curing people of their illness or in helping them solve their problems.

#### 4.3 TEMPLE ACTIVITIES/PRACTICES

In this section, I would like to bring in an important aspect that is found in temple activity i.e. divination.

Divination is the act or practice of trying to foretell future events and the unknown. "The nature of divination requires the use of occult means and almost every conceivable instrument or phenomenon is utilised as an indicator. Divination therefore involves either the manipulation of techniques or the interpretation of natural phenomena (Choong Ket Che, 1983:49)

The Chinese's belief in predestination plays a major role in contributing towards the existence and continuence of divination till this day. Human lives are believed to be predestined by the gods. The fate of a person, known as ming (  $\frac{\text{命}}{\text{定}}$  ) is preordained and cannot be

changed whereas a person's luck, known as yun 運 is not fixed and can be manipulated to one's favour through the aid of the spirits. To know the secret of this pre-ordained course, the aid of the spirit is resorted to. Hence, divination is an occult practices which endeavours to discover the unknown future through the intervention of spirits. (Choong Ket Che, 1983:49)

There are different methods of engaging "spiritual assistance" to find out one's ming-yun 命運. To divine without professional aid is to consult the Almanac or t'ung-she 通書 and Manuals of Fortune-Telling. However, this method only cater for the literate and the older generation.

Divination, apart from its use to forecast a person's life, is also used as a means of obtaining help and advice from the deities. This type of divination involves the spirit mediums that serve as mediators between the gods and the layman. Through these mediums, the gods help to solve and provide advice to problems. It is this aspect of divination that will be dealt with in this study.

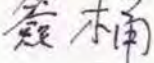
Divination as a means communicating with the inhabitants of the spiritual domain existed in ancient China during the Shang dynasty. Oracle bones were widely used in communicating with the supernatural beings. Questions were written on the bones which is then heated and allowed to cool. Cracks that appear on the bones were then interpreted by diviners.

In contemporary times, the idea of seeking answers and advice from the deities still exist. As Elliot puts it, "perhaps it is in the field of occultism that the methods of traditional Chinese Religion remains strongest" (Elliot:1951). However, the methods and materials used to procure such answers and advices have changed.

In place of oracle bones, divining blocks known as the 'pei' are used. "These blocks consist of 2 blocks of wood or bamboo roughly kidney shaped and meant to represent the Yin and Yang symbols of positive and negative; good and bad". (Topley 1955:99)

No religious specialist are needed to perform the throwing of the blocks. Usually it is the devotee, who is asking the question, that throws the 'pei'. A usual procedure is for the devotee to place joss-sticks in the altars of all the deities found in the temple. Then he kneels in front of the main altar (usually in front of the principal deity), holding up the 'pei' with both the flat sides on top of each other. He then asks the question and upon completion, lets the 'pei' fall down. The position of each block is then interpreted. If both the blocks fall on either the flat or rounded side, a negative answer is indicated. However, if one falls on the rounded side and the other on the flat side, then the answer is positive.

Another method of divination is the use of cylindrical boxes of wooden or bamboo spalls. This method is called *qiújiān*. As with the use of the divining blocks, a devotee intending to *qiújiān* must first place joss-sticks on the altar. He then kneels in front of the altar,

holding the cylindrical box  tilted forwards slightly in front of him. He will then say his name, address, profession and after that ask a question. After that, he will proceed to shake the cylindrical box until one of the spills fall to the ground. Only one spill should fall and if there are more, the process must be restarted.

The divining blocks can be used together with the divining sticks. Once the devotee has obtained a divining stick, he can proceed to throw the divining blocks to confirm if he has obtained the correct divining stick.

Each of the bamboo spill is numbered and it corresponds to a slip of paper (jiān) which is usually hanged on the wall of the temple. On this slip of paper is written several poetic sentences (usually four), with the characters 上上 ; 上 ; 中 ; 下 ; 下下 written at the sides. 上 'shang' means up or good; 中 means middle and 下 'Hsia' means down. A jiān with the character 上 written on it means a good chim and the one with 上上 means 'double' good. However, one must interpret the sentences written on the jiān as well. The jiān forecasts a person's life for that year.

The content of the fu or the slip of paper which is obtained through the process of 'qiújiān' differs from temple to temple. This means that if a person visits 2 different temples and obtain the same number e.g. 5, it is most probable that the contents of the jiān, will differ from each other. This is because Chinese temples develop individually and as such uniformity cannot be obtained. Futhermore,



the number of divining sticks found in each divining box differs from temple to temple too.

The fee for this form of divination is very small. The devotee have to pay for the slips of paper which is about 20¢ or so.

In the Poh Lum Nunnery, divining blocks and divining sticks were also found. This is a clear indication of the influence of Taoism on Buddhism.

Spirit mediumship, another form of divination, is a popular practice as evidenced from the temples that I surveyed. Mediumship is the temporary possession by a shen of a man or woman. People so possessed are called tang ki (H) or tung san (C). Through these mediums, a person can communicate with the deity. Unlike the other 2 methods of divination whereby a person can only obtain positive or negative and vague answers to their questions, spirit mediums provide the opportunity for the person to "converse" with the deity.

According to the medium in Leng Toh Temple, he must place 3 joss-sticks in front of the deity Sam Tai Chi (H) or Na Cha before he begins the procedure of getting into a trance. After that, he sits on a chair placed in front of the deity and begins to repeat incantations. After sometime (unspecific duration), he will begin to shake which indicates the presence of the deity in him. After a while, from a signal given by his assistants, a devotee will start to put forward questions to the deity.

When a spirit medium goes into a trance, the principal deities are not the only ones that possess them. The other 'lesser' deities that are prayed to in the temple may/also enter the medium. As long as the medium calls out to the deity that wished to be summoned, then the deity will enter the medium. This means that the people have a choice of which deities they want to communicate to. Different deities are supposed to 'specialize' in different fields although basically seen as benevolent spirits. An example of this is the deity Wǔléixiānshī. He is seen primarily as a deity that cure illness.

Patients or clients are seated in front of the medium and proceeds to describe his problems or symptoms of his illness. In the case of those who seek a deity out to cure their illness, medication in the form of fu is provided/prescribed.

Fu 符 is a piece of paper (usually yellow in colour) on which is written Chinese characters whether intelligible or otherwise. Most of the designs on the fu is composed of scrawls and whirls which are meaningless to the uninitiated.

The fu that is used as medicine is about 1½" to 2" wide and between 6" to 8" long, made from 100% bamboo fibres which is very absorbent. The ink that is used to write is a vermilion substance used widely in chinese medicine or chinese ink mixed with water in a bowl.

For this purpose, paper of finer texture is used to ensure digestibility. The fu may be reduced to pellets and swallowed or they

may be burnt and their ash added to water or tea and the resultant mixture drunk.

In the case of babies who cry more often than others, they are usually brought by their parents to seek out a medium. In such cases they are also given fu. However because the immunity system of the babies is relatively weak, the fu is not consumed. It is either rolled up and put inside a metal container that is cylindrical in shape and worn with a chain. Also, it can be folded into a triangular shape and wrapped with red cloth and worn with a red-string. These fu is used to ward off malevolent spirits that disturb the babies.

The only temple that I came across which does not prescribe fu to its patients is the Huánglǎo Xiānshī Temple. In this temple there are many jars of chinese herbs and medicine that are given to the patients who seek the deity's help. According to the medium, he has no training in medical profession at all. As such, whatever medication that he prescribes for his patients are actually directed by his 'master' Huánglǎo Xiānshī. The medium also mentioned that he only sleeps in the day because he spends his time meditating at night so as to receive inspiration or guidance from his master. From this, he receives instructions on how to prescribe medication for different types of illness.

Apart from being consulted to cure illness many people consult the mediums to ask for 4 digit numbers from the deities. This issue of cái ( 財 ) or wealth is very common among the clients. Even those who, after consulting about their illness will ask for the 4 digits as well.

During one of my visits to the Tokong Buk Gate Jun Moh Temple in Section One, the medium was preparing to go into a trance because there were some clients there who wanted to ask for the 4 digit number. My visit was on a Friday night and these people must have gone there so that they can bet their numbers on Saturday and Sunday. Unfortunately, the medium refused to go in a trance because of my presence and so I have no way of knowing how accurate the deity is.

The Monkey God, also known as Qítīāndàshèng is a deity that is very accurate in giving 4 digits. According to Madam Lee Swee Ngor, the temple keeper of the Qítīāndàshèng temple in Section One, many people have benefited financially from the deity's accuracy. Even her husband, (who was a medium), was 'helped' by the deity when he wanted to get money to build another temple. That's why the temple was such a busy place, frequented by many people during Madam Lee's husband's lifetime. Since his demise, the temple has lost its clients to other temples.

For those who always seem to be plagued by bad luck or whose business ventures are not going too smoothly, the deities are sought in the hope of solving their problems. A person's luck, unlike his fate, is variable. When a person's luck happens to be low, he is vulnerable to attacks from malevolent ghosts. Also, if a person incurs the wrath of a god, he may be punished as well. As such, by seeking out the medium, a person hopes to find out what he has done wrong and the ways to remedy his wrongs.

The practice of divination is a very common activity in a temple,

especially when there is a medium in the temple.



University of Malaya

FU (符)



Fig. 15  
 Above, Fig. 15, a block-made Fu: printed in black on orange-faced paper, original size approximately 5 by 1½ inches. On the right, Fig. 14, a hand-written Fu: written in black ink on white tissue paper, original size approximately 8 by 3½ inches.

Fig. 14



Source: Topley, Marjorie "Singapore Chinese, Paper Charms and Paryer Sheets" in Journal Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society, Vol 26, Pt.1, Pg 79.

Chapter Notes:

1. Goddess of Mercy - is know by the chinese as Kuan Yin. Kuan Yin, meaning "to see and to hear all" is claimed by some authorities to be none other than Alvalokitesvara, Lord of Love and Compassion, a male Bodhisattva from India.
2. Na Cha - or the 3rd Prince is supposed to be a child deity.
3. Demon whip - a horse hair or rope whip with a wooden handle. Sometimes, this wooden handle is carved in the shape of a dragon.
4. "Dragon Throne" - A red painted wooden chair, resembling a throne. (Comber: 1958:10).

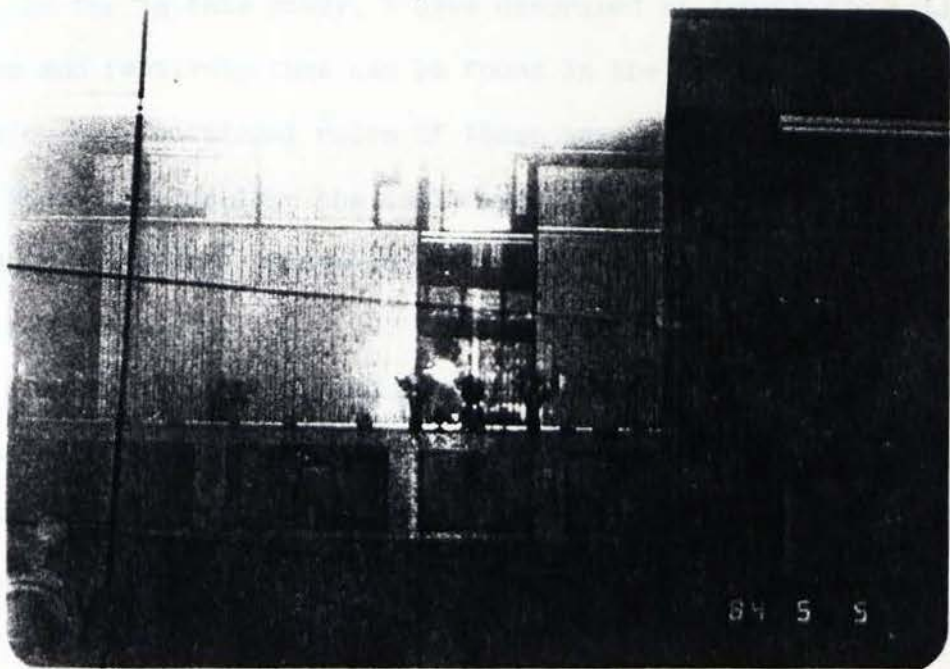


THE PROCESS OF BATHING THE BUDDHA



A MEDIUM ATTENDING TO HIS CLIENTS





THE ANCESTRAL HALL IN THE POH LUM NUNNERY

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSION

So far in this study, I have described at length the activities, services and festivals that can be found in the various temples, touching briefly on the functional roles of these temples. In this final chapter I will attempt to analyse the data reported in the previous chapters and also on the continued existence of these temples.

A very outstanding and prominent feature that can be observed here is that the vast majority of Chinese do not follow either of the great traditions with any regard for its purity. Even the most devout Buddhist will at least have a Kitchen God, an Earth God or an altar for the God of Heaven in his house. As we all know, these gods are very much of the Taoist origin.

From an analysis of the functions of the temples, one notices the close relationship between the daily life of an individual and religion. It has already been mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis that the Chinese Religion is part and parcel of the Chinese people's way of life. As such, the temple as an organised structure, renders services pertaining to religious matters to the general public. In a way, it helps to systematise (albeit loosely) the practice of ritual and ceremonies among the Chinese.

There are many activities which the Chinese would not consider without first consulting the almanac (for those who are literate) or a

temple keeper. In the temples, people can ask for guidance from the deities through divination. This divination can be in the form of using divination blocks and cylindrical boxes of wooden or bamboo spalls, or consulting spirit mediums.

This is one aspect of the role of the temple. However, it is a clear indication that it has a very functional role to play in the daily lives of the Chinese. In matters pertaining to finding an auspicious day for shifting, getting married, having a celebration and so on, the majority of the public refer to the temple keepers or nuns and monks. They (the religious specialists) have an important role of providing such information to the general public. For those who know how to make use of the almanac, they do not need to refer to the "religious specialist". However, the number of those who can is relatively small.

The popularity of a temple depends very much on the efficiency of the gods in dealing with personal problems, in healing illness and in the reputation of the owners or committee members. The ability of these owners and committee members to attract more devotees to the temple will mean increase income to finance the temple. A good example of this is the Qítíāndashèng Temple which lost its devotees when the medium passed away. The temple now is left with only a trickle of devotees and according to the temple keeper, she is finding it very difficult to "keep it going". Patronage and support of the people is very important for a temple to survive.

The worship of deities in temples either in crisis or at festivals

during normal times bring together the Chinese community and serve "to heighten the community consciousness of the local population."

(Yang 1961:12). As such a temple in a community is a centre point which serves as spiritual nuclei for integration and to bring together the people in times of crisis and festivals.

During the festive celebrations, there are many volunteers from the local community or members of the temple who help out with the cooking, washing and preparations that are needed for the festival. In the Poh Lum Nunnery, quite a large number of volunteers are needed during festive celebrations because the number of people who visit the Temple is very great.

Another example of community consciousness that can be generated through festive celebration of deities is found in the Leng Toh Temple. From my study of this temple, I found out that the local community donated \$40,000 for the cause of building a Chinese National Type School.

In this instance too, another function of temples is shown i.e. it plays the role of providing welfare to the community. The temple, through its committee and members rallied for contribution and support from the people for the cause of building the school. They initiated the move to help the school. From here it can be seen that it plays a very important role of helping the community.

From my analysis of the temples, I have gathered that although festivals that are held in temples are primarily to celebrate the

birthday of the various deities, it cannot be denied that they can also be seen as a publicity drive to attract the attention of the public. In the process, they will be able to get more people to visit the temple. This point is also indicated by Topley when she said that, "a good festival gives a temple popularity and the goodwill gained thereby may help to increase its number of regular patrons in the year to come." (Topley: 1955:104).

Another feature which is rather prominent in my study of temples is the popularity of the practice of spirit mediumship. Elliot has put forward a hypothesis explaining why the practice of spirit mediumship is so popular among immigrants to the south seas. According to him, factors such as urbanisation and commercialism in the larger cities overseas "..... have reduced the significance of some of the more religious institutions that were found in the homeland." Also, their sole purpose in coming to Nanyang was to gather as much wealth in as short a time as possible. As such divination was a means of manipulating one's luck to achieve success materially. A get together session with a medium to get "lucky" numbers to bet on is not unusual as can be seen from the Tokong Buk Gate Jun Moh.

As such, I would say that the average practitioner of Chinese Religion has become much less concerned with the spiritual gratification but are more interested in the abilities of the gods and deities to help him achieve success and prosperity in his lifetime. To quote Elliot, "inspite of the influence of Mahayana Buddhism, popular Chinese Religion remains strongly oriented towards success in human affairs and shows

little tendency to regard the world of man as an insignificant appendage to a spiritual world."

In spite of this, temples are still important centres of public worship and their construction and repair are an indication of the continued vitality of functional gods in the life of a community. From my study of Chinese Temples in Petaling Jaya, I came across many temples that had been renovated the past few years. The Xiūchénglín temple, which was only an attap and wood house has been transformed into a temple built from concrete and tiles. Another example of this is the Poh Lum Temple which was renovated and extended four years ago in 1980. At present the area of the temple covers 6 shop lots and the interior is fully tiled.

The expenses incurred in the renovation was paid by the general public i.e. collected through contribution. According to my informant, the Zhānggōng Shèngjūn Temple in Section One was started off with donations from the public. Apart from donating money, there were some who donated tables, chairs and the altar.

This serves to indicate the faith and belief of the people towards the deity of the temple. The general public must have felt the need for such a temple and that it fulfills certain functions in order to contribute towards its building funds.

In my opinion, temples may be considered as a place which help keep alive and perpetuate the Chinese Religion. I agree with Professor Yang when

he said that temples and shrines "are indications of the strong and pervasive influence of religion in Chinese Society." (Yang:1961:6). They are a symbolic representation of the Chinese Religion and in many areas, of the Chinese culture too.

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APPENDIX I (i)

Ānqìngtáng

安慶堂

Bāogōng

包公

Cái

財

Dàbógōng

大伯公

Dàojiā

道家

Dàojiào

道教

Dìcángwáng

地藏王

Fu

符

Guānyīn

觀音

Guānyīngé

觀音閣

Guān Dì

關帝

Guān Yǔ

關羽

guīyī

歸依

Hàn

漢

Hóngshènggōng

洪聖宮

Huánglǎo Xiānshī

黃老仙師

Huat Wan Teng

法源亭

Huángcái

黃財

Lǎozǐ

老子

Leng Toh

龍圖宮

Mājiě

媽祖

Méifēnglín

梅峰林

Poh Lum

寶林

Qín

秦

Qítiāndàshèng

天大聖

Qīngliántáng

清蓮堂

qiújiān

清求

籤

Shèngdétáng

盛德堂

Shèn

神

Sòng

宋

Tǎxiāng

塔香

Tǔdìgōng

土地公

Tiānhòu

天后

Tokong Buk Gate Jun Moh

北極真武

Wǎngshēngqián

往生錢

Wǔléixiānshī

五雷仙師

Wúwéi

無為

Wěituó Púsà

韋陀菩薩

Wènsheń

文神

Xiūchénglín

修成林

Zhōu

周

Zhāigū

齋姑

Zhāngōng Shèngjūn

張公聖君

Zhùxiǎolínjuán

築小林園

