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In China, as in India, ritual roles are distributed across the entire social field, rather than being confined to a religious field that is competed over in a quest for the monopolization of its powers (Bourdieu, 1987, 1991; Goossaert, Palmer, 2011; Dean, 2016). This essay explores the ritual roles of a leader of the Chinese diaspora in Singapore in the second half of the 19th century, drawing on stone inscriptions he wrote in several temples he built or restored, and his burial record, composed by the Chinese Consul General to Singapore, Huang Zunxian (1848-1905). These sources reveal how intricately entangled were the secular, commercial, political and religious realms at the end of the golden age of the Chinese temple network in Southeast Asia.[1]

Opium for the Gods

Visitors to the many temples in Singapore today are often surprised to find the mouths and tongues of the underworld deities smeared with opium. Indeed, spirit mediums of the Underworld gods in many parts of Malaysia still regularly smoke opium laced cigarettes while in trance (Graham, 2020: 156). It was the mixture of tobacco with opium that would be one of the main vectors in the spread of opium smoking across the Chinese communities of Southeast Asia and on to China (Dikötter *et al.,* 2004). This is rather similar to adding sugar to bitter substances such as coffee or tea in Britain in the 18th century (Mintz, 1985). These mixes of narcotics and stimulants produced caloric energy for work or provided relief from exhaustion amongst contracted laborers, and in some cases enabled them to use part of their salaries to buy their way into a consumer class that in time would become a (self-medicating) middle class.

1. Readers may wish to consult the historical maps layers in the Singapore Historical GIS (shgis.nus.edu.sg). For more information on the SHGIS, see Yan Yingwei *et al.*, 2020: 1-23.

The study of the role of the Chinese dialect associations in Singapore history (especially Hokkien and Teochew dialect groups) has examined the links between founding pioneers in the early 19th century and the construction of various temples around Singapore for distinct dialect migrant groups (Yen, 1986; Freedman, 1960-1961; Mak, 1995). But the link between the pioneers and their temples and the largest item on the colonial budget, namely opium, is strangely overlooked in this literature. The opium farm provided close to half and sometimes as much as 70% of colonial Singapore's annual income. Carl Trocki (1990) has documented in detail the role of the Chinese opium farmers in the distribution of opium within an evolving global market. But he does not explore the links between the opium farmer leadership (*towkay*) and the temples they sponsored, restored, managed and directed. While he points to growing class tensions between originally egalitarian *kongsi* (collective corporation) laborers and increasingly powerful Chinese middlemen merchants, he does not explore the respective role of both groups in the Chinese ritual system, which may have served as a means to contain or repurpose some of the emerging class contradictions.

Even more importantly, the temples were often the base of operations of the *huiguan* (business offices) as well as the secret societies (*hongmen*). The latter were employed by the Chinese business and temple leaders to provide protection for their opium and alcohol farms, to prevent smuggling, and to handle the flow of new laborers pouring into Singapore who would provide the local market demand for the opium. These enforcers were known as *chintings*. As Trocki (1987) pointed out, the literature on the secret societies from the beginning drew connections back to their mythologies and their rebellious illegal activities in China (anti-Manchu), rather than closely examining their transforming roles within Singapore society. Thus William Pickering (1878-1879) repeats the mythological accounts of the origins of the Triads, even while claiming that they have degenerated overseas into criminal activity without an ideological goal. But once we place the activities of these associations back into the context of their roles as the security forces and violent enforcement arm of the temple/business leaders, we can better follow the process of the colonial dismemberment of the original, organic unity of functions (combining business, worship, trust building, organization of labor and enforcement of economic monopolies) found in the early Chinese temples of Singapore (Dean, 2018).

Overview of Role of Opium in Singapore in the 19th century

British traders who set up shop in Singapore in the early days imagined that they would earn immense wealth by controlling the trade in opium from India to China. Things did not work out as they imagined. The opium trade was too enormous for them to handle. Direct trade with China soon bypassed Singapore for the newly established free port of Hong Kong. That trade mostly was in the hands of Armenian, Jewish and Parsee traders (according to William Gulland, cited in Trocki, 1987). But there was a growing local demand for

opium within Singapore itself as pepper and gambier plantations expanded across the dense jungle covering the island. Similar plantations had already spread across Riau beyond the strait of Malacca, and Johor, north of Singapore. Chinese laborers earned enough cash (between 3.5 and 6 dollars a month) to pay for opium (on average half their salaries each month, Yen, 1986). An estimated 2/3 of the Chinese population smoked opium. The opium enabled them to keep going in tough working conditions, while still saving a little money to send back home to their villages in Southeast China. Catering to this market required vast purchasing power to win the auction on the supply from British India (the opium farm monopoly), a very large infrastructure to prepare the opium for consumption and local sales, an armed enforcement group to guard against smuggling of private outlaw opium, and a complex distribution network to sell the opium (and its dregs at a lower cost).

Within a few years of the founding of Singapore, Chinese merchants had cornered the opium farm monopoly. While the first years of the opium farm are difficult to reconstruct, the overall power struggle within the Chinese community in Singapore is easier to determine. A group of Hokkien Paranakan Straits born merchants arrived shortly after Sir Stanford Raffles set up the free port of Singapore in 1819, and established themselves at the head of the regional and transnational shipping business. Figures like See Hoo Kee 薛佛記 (1793-1843) and Tan Tock Seng 陳篤生 (1798-1850) were the largest contributors to the Heng Shan Ting 恒山亭 (Eternal Mountain Pavilion and Hokkien cemetery) and to the Thian Hock Keng 天福宫 (Temple of Heavenly Good Fortune). The latter temple was located on the beach facing the sea and the harbor for the boats bearing the trade to and from Singapore. The Hokkien Huay Kuan 福建會館 was located in the back building of the temple.

Another faction was connected to the Teochew dialect group. Seah Eu Chin 佘有进 (1805-83) was a major Teochew pepper and gambier plantation owner. He raised from the age of 9 his future brother in law Tan Sen Poh (b. 1828 - d. Dec. 19, 1879), the son of Tan Ah Hun, the "rich Captain China of Perak" (Song, 1967: 21). Seah and Tan were based in the Wak Hai Cheng Beo 粵海清廟 (Guangdong Temple of the Calm Seas), where from 1848 onwards they operated the Ngee An Kongsi 義安公司 in the back building of that temple.

These two factions would compete over and eventually unite to control the opium farm in Singapore from 1847-1880. An initial partnership was established from 1847-1860 between the Hokkien representative, Cheang San Teo 章三潮, from Changtai district, Zhangzhou, Fujian 福建長泰縣 and Lau Joon Tek, a Teochow leader[2]. In 1860, Lau passed away, and the Teochew

2. His counterpart from the Hokkien side of the coalition was Cheang Teo Sam, the father of Cheang Hong Lim. Cheang was from Changtai county in Zhangzhou Prefecture of Fujian province. There is nowadays no trace of the Zhang lineage in his home village, which is now a single surname village (Dai). Local people said the other lineages had all changed their surname to Dai in order to continue living in the village. Whatever the reasons, Cheang San Teo left home and ended up as the head of the Hokkien opium and spirit farm in Singapore (Lin, 1986).

faction backed Heng Bun Soon to take over the Johor and Singapore opium farm, leaving Hokkien representative Cheang San Teo with a much reduced hold over only the Singapore and Johor spirit (i.e., alcohol) farms. Cheang fought back by smuggling opium and processing it into *chandu* for smoking and distribution in Johor, perhaps in association with Wee Bock Seng. The Teochew faction managed however over the next few years to take complete control over the Johor opium spirit farm, in partnership with the Teochew aide to the Sultan of Johor, Tan Hiok Nee 陳旭年 (1827-1902), also known as the Chinese Major of Johor.

Later Tan Sen Poh forced Cheang to retreat to Singapore, where he was reduced to running only the spirit farm, which he passed on to his son Cheang Hong Lim (fig. 1) in 1865. In 1868, Hong Lim's younger brother Cheang Hong Guan attempted to outflank the Teochew alliance by buying the Malacca opium and spirit farms, and using these assets to augment his ownership of the Singapore spirit farm. This effort failed, and he was driven into bankruptcy. He sued his elder brother Hong Lim, claiming the latter had forged their father's will, but the case was thrown out by the British colonial court after a few days of testimony. He was never able to repair the family quarrel, and this brother was not buried in the Cheang family graveyard on Alexandra Road.


CHEANG HONG LIM.

Figure 1. Cheang Hong Lim from Song Ong Siang, *One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore*, London, John Murray, 1923, p. 234.

Background on the Role of Secret Societies

Many of the leaders of the dialect groups in Singapore were members or leaders of the secret societies. Trocki (1993: 250) speculates that the very first Teochew partner Lau, the partner of Cheang San Teo, was a leader of the Ghee Hin secret society. Zhao Wenbin 趙文炳 was a Ghee Hin member and a council member of the Cantonese Ningyang Huiguan 寧陽會館. Deng Xujin 鄧旭進 was both a Ghee Hin member and the Director of the Fuk Tak Chi on Telok Ayer Street, which linked Cantonese and Hakka migrant groups.

Conflicts in the early years of Singapore between the Teochew and the Hokkien communities was constant, and almost structural, pitting the Hokkien merchant network with its port cities against the gambier and pepper plantations carved out of the jungles of Singapore, Johor and the Riau islands. The cultural gulf between the "downtown" and the "outskirts" of Singapore would last for 150 years. The Teochews controlled the godowns along the Singapore river, where they unloaded ships owned by the Hokkien merchants and transferred on board their local produce of gambier for sale to China and pepper for Europe or elsewhere in Southeast Asia. These tensions probably underlay the conflicts between their respective "secret societies," which first came to a head in the 1846 Chinese Funeral Riot when a Ghee Hin funeral procession got into a fight with a rival Guan Tek 關帝 (Guandi) secret society. This event revealed early signs of tension between the competing groups of secret societies backed by different dialect groups.

The literature on secret societies in Singapore, Malaya and Southeast Asia is voluminous (Pickering, 1878-79; Comber, 1959; Blythe, 1969; Cheng, 1972; Mak, 1981, 1995). In 1825 Superintendent Caunter of the Fort Cornwallis Police Force noted the founding dates of three societies in Penang, namely the Ghee Hin 義興, founded in 1801, Ho Seng 和勝, founded in 1810, and the Hai San 海三[山] founded in 1823. The Ghee Hin (also spelled Ngee Hin) is known to have been active in Singapore by 1824 from an account of an initiation ceremony provided by Munshi Abdullah in his *Hikayat Adbullah*. George Bonham, Assistant British Resident in Singapore in 1830, estimated membership in the Ghee Hin at around two to three thousand. By 1860, according to C. P. Plunket, these numbers had risen to over 25,000 (Lim, 1999). In 1869, on the verge of the criminalization of the secret societies, a total of 68,000 men were registered, out of an estimated local Chinese population of under 80,000.

In the 1840s, the Ghee Hin were predominantly Teochew. Another primarily Teochew secret society was organized around a surname association: the Se Tan 姓陳 association, or Chen surname group. This latter group were the primary enforcers for Tan Seng Boh's operations, and thus for the Cheang Hong Lim and the Great Syndicate as a whole. Rival groups soon formed amongst the Hokkien, organized around god cults including the Guan Tek society and the Zushigong 祖師公 Society (named after Qingshui zushi 清水祖師, the Patriarch of the Clear Stream, a Buddhist monk turned regional god in Anxi 安溪, Fujian).

The 1851 Anti-Catholic Riot (led it seems by Teochew groups outside the control of the mainstream leaders) featured ferocious attacks on recent Catholic converts working in the gambier plantations by the Ghee Hin (Ngee Heng) society. By that time 8,000 mostly Teochew agricultural laborers working on the Singapore gambier plantations in isolated pockets spread across the island. The 1854 Hokkien-Teochew Riot, in which several hundred people were killed, and over a hundred buildings in Singapore were burned down, was due to the collapse of gambier prices and the return of Xiaodaohui (Small Knives) rebels from Xiamen and Shanghai (this is the first mention in the sources of the Hokkien Ghee Hock 義福 society). In 1870 the so-called Verandah Riots broke out, with posted threats on the lives of leading figures like Tan Seng Poh and Whampoa (Cantonese community leader), as well as Cheang Hong Lim. This indicates, in Trocki's view, a rapidly widening gap between the increasingly disenfranchised laborers and the towkay, who were now firmed established within the colonial social system. Cheang was also apparently singled out for an attack in one document from this period (Trocki, 1987).

Riots in Penang in 1867 over the performance of operas had led British authorities there to pass a Peace Preservation Act which gave them the right to banish undesirable individuals. In 1869 they passed the Dangerous Societies Suppression Ordinance which called for the registration of all "secret societies," but this was laxly enforced. The situation was somewhat different in Singapore, where William Pickering had been appointed head of the Chinese Protectorate. At first Pickering tried to work with the secret societies to achieve stability and order in Singapore, but he grew increasingly frustrated by the difficulties of this task. Ultimately, he was the victim of an assassination attempt in 1887 by a Cantonese triad member, and only barely escaped with his life. In 1890 Governor Clementi Smith passed the Societies Ordinance Act, declaring the sworn brotherhoods completely illegal, and criminalizing these groups. In 1891 new prisons were built in Singapore to incarcerate hundreds of newly defined criminal elements. This shattered the unity of the functions of the Chinese temples, which for over 60 years had combined business operations in the *huiguan* offices at the back of the temple, with ritual activities and services for fellow dialect members, along with secret society memberships to enforce the opium and spirit monopoly rights purchased by the temple directors.

Cheang Hong Lim's Parallel Lives

Cheang Hong Lim had begun to take over the family business around the age of 20, in the early 1860s. His father had provided him with funds for a villa overlooking the sea along Pasar Panjang Road in 1863. He inscribed a stele in a temple next to his villa, entitled 重修北西板讓福德廟碑記 *Stele record of the restoration of the Pasir Panjang Temple of Fortune and Virtue, 1892* (for the full translation, see Dean and Hue, 2017, 721-725).

> In the 11th lunar month of 1863, I purchased this piece of land and built a house at the peak of the mountain, which I called the Garden South of the Park. Now this site was next to a cliff set with a boulder which had produced brilliant, miraculous deeds, and which had attracted much worship (lit. incense). I inquired about it and learned that this was what the local people of Pasir Panjang had for several decades (worshipped) as the local God of the Earth. Repeatedly, it had shown miraculous powers, and there was no confusion that it could not penetrate. The local people thereupon asked me to build a temple wherein it could be worshipped. Truly, only bright virtue is most illustrious, and what it seeks to model it reveals within itself. How could I dare not show my respect and request the god's blessings? Thereupon the site was prepared. The temple was three lengths long, and the construction was simple and plain.

In 1863, Cheang was 22 years old. This is probably the earliest text we have from his hand. He recognized the supernatural powers of a boulder worshipped by local people and built a temple to house the god. It would seem that this divine boulder (which can still be found receiving incense and offerings at the Wutaishan Temple on West Coast Road)[3] provided Cheang with unusual good fortune, for he was able a few years later in 1870 to somehow out-manoeuvre Tan Seng Boh by linking up with Tan Hiok Nee in Johor and establish control over the Singapore, Johor and the Malacca opium and spirit farms, leaving Tan Seng Boh with control of only the Riau opium and spirit farms. This was rather similar to what Tan Seng Boh had done to Cheang's own father a decade earlier. Finally, in the end of 1870, Cheang Hong Lim, Tan Seng Poh, and Tan Hiok Nee agreed to unite their forces into what one local British merchant (William Gulland) coined the "Great Syndicate," which lasted for a decade until 1880.

Cheang Hong Lim worked hard to establish his social standing within Singapore during the years of the Great Syndicate. Already, in 1869 and 1870, he had donated land to the Hakka and Guangdong Fuk Tak Chi Temple on Telok Ayer Street, so that they could build a better seawall and erect a stage for opera performances. He became renowned as public benefactor (Dean, Hue, 2017: 69). Because of his contributions to Singapore society, the British colonial government in 1873 gave him the title of Justice of the Peace (see also *Straits Times, Weekly Issue*, 6 July 1887). On 13 May 1876, he donated the Hong Lim Cup to the Balestier Road Racecourse (*Straits Times* 13 May, 1976). That same year (1876) at the height of his powers, Cheang donated $3000 towards a public park in front of the Singapore Police Station, which is called to this day (Cheang) Hong Lim Park. He donated another $3000 to

3. The Pasir Panjang Temple of Fortune and Virtue was located at the 7 mile mark on Pasir Panjang Road, and was dedicated to a stone called "Stone Great Uncle" by local fishermen – this was in fact a huge boulder weighing some 4 tons. The boulder appeared to have a face with eyes, a nose, and a mouth with teeth. Currently, the big boulder has been placed within the Wutaishan Fogongsi on West Coast Road. Local worshippers claim that the boulder continues to grow and expand a small amount each year, and that this is unique to this stone Great Uncle.

the Botanical Gardens, and to the Penang Free School (*STOJ,* 16 Nov. 1876: 13). He became active throughout this period in real estate, housing and construction, building a large number of new homes and shophouses along Chin Swee Road and Havelock Road. He became one of the largest landowners in Singapore. He was famous for his generosity and his philanthropy, usually agreeing to donate $3000 to any worthy cause. He is said to have lent out over $100,000 without seeking repayment (Song, 1967). The English newspapers reported on his charitable gifts to St. Joseph's – for an orphanage and later for a nunnery (*STOJ,* 19 Dec. 1878: 5). Another contributions spared a mosque from demolition (*Straits Times,* 27 July 1878). Huang Zunxian 黄遵憲 (1848-1905), the Chinese Consul to Singapore, mentions other contributions to the Portuguese school in Malacca and another orphanage in Penang, to local schools for poor Chinese children in Singapore, and multiple contributions for disaster relief in China, Vietnam, India and Egypt. Cheang founded the Jen Chean school (in his son's name) for poor students, where pupils were taught basic reading and accounting skills (Dean, Hue, 2017: ch. 41, 945-951).

Cheang was considered one of the social leaders of Singapore, and was invited to a luncheon in honour of the Maharaj of Johor at the home of his Teochew partner in the Great Syndicate, Tan Sen Poh, in November 1876 (*Straits Times,* 18 Nov. 1876: 5). This was a gathering of all the leaders of the syndicate, and they were toasted by the Governor. As the *Straits Times* put it: "The pop of champagne corks, which has always a wonderful effect on the spirits of a festive party, was soon followed by the flow of festive conversation… Europeans, Malays, and Chinese had probably never been brought before in such close contact." There is little doubt that Cheang Hong Lim had become a leading figure on the Singapore social scene. Several similar news reports recounted other soirées at his mansion.

The Golden Age of the Chinese Temple Network

Cheang Hong Lim was one of the leaders of the last flowering of the traditional Chinese temple system in Singapore. The decade from 1870-1879 was the decade of what can be described as the symbolic unification of the Chinese temple system, just as it saw the unification of the competing factions within the Great Opium Syndicate (made up of Cheang Hong Lim, Tan Seng Poh and Tan Hiok Nee, the Teochew representative of the Sultan of Johor). The Great Syndicate linked the Singapore, Johor, Melaka, and Riau Islands opium and alcohol farms. This was the heyday of the opium kings of Singapore. This period, and Cheang's superior management skills, are portrayed in the funerary account written by Huang Zunxian, Chinese delegate to Singapore (Dean, Hue, 2017: ch. 41). Huang makes an interesting analogy, pointing out that in China great merchants were encouraged to purchase Salt Monopolies, and that the Opium and Spirit Farms were examples of the same economic principles. Huang noted that Cheang was especially effective because of his personal touch and his soft-spoken managerial style:

> It was the general rule for the British government that with regards to the sales of opium or alcohol, any private dealings were strictly forbidden. Instead they asked for vast sums as bids for official monopoly control from the powerful households, in the manner of the Chinese salt monopolies. Those who had control of these monopolies one after another set up networks of spies, and they set out a dense net to catch anyone engaged in (private sales) and seized their money. This way a net was spread to catch any profits from those in the city, while as for any other merchant sojourners traveling through who might be carrying a few leftover illicit goods, they would be captured and punished. When these incidents grew serious they could lead to lifelong enmity. In order to damage the other party, they would invent accusations so as to bring harm to their enemy. If the case was light, people would only receive a fine. But if it was serious, they would be investigated and imprisoned. Prisoners filled the jails. (However, when) Master Cheang took charge (of the monopolies) for over 15 years, he employed a broad minded technique in his management. He allowed for the sale of anti-addiction medication. If there were people who were not private dealers but had nonetheless hidden a bit of opium (for their own use) they would not be found guilty. As for those private sellers seeking a profit, he personally went to their homes and told them, "Your activities have all been revealed. I hope that you will hand over all the drugs you are concealing, and then I will not blame you." Thus every one of them felt ashamed, and private dealing ceased. Thereupon their profits exceeded those of others, and thus his fame grew daily. People felt great obedience towards him, and the state entrusted him with many tasks. Master Cheang was fastidious in his loyal pursuit of his duties for his superiors (Dean, Hue, 2017: ch. 41)

Despite or perhaps because of the stability and the success of the Great Syndicate, which kept the price down, in 1880 Gov. Weld decided to sell the opium farm at a much higher price (almost double) to traders from Penang, in order to break the dependency of the colony on the local Singaporean Chinese leadership. Carl Trocki (1987, 1990) has described in great detail the collapse of the Great Syndicate, due to Gov. Weld's decision to sell the farm to an outside financial consortium based on Penang tin mining profits. Cheang Hong Lim first attempted to negotiate with and join this outside cartel, but when that proved impossible, he next tried to extend his opium empire to Hong Kong, working with a group of Hokkien merchants and opium dealers in Vietnam to bid for the Hong Kong opium farm. These efforts led to little profit, and in the end he retreated from the Hong Kong market.

The next step was to try to smuggle in opium to the Singapore market, and thus to undermine the colonial government decision to sell the opium farm to the Penang businessmen. Large reserves of opium stored in the Riau Islands and in Johor were cooked, processed and smuggled into Singapore, with the product blatantly advertised. As Trocki (1987) has described, based on contemporary police reports and open debates in the legislature, Tam Kim Ching, the son of Tan Tock Seng, at this point turned the tables on Cheang Hong Lim by providing state's evidence against Cheang and his smuggling

operation. Many of Cheang's and Tan Seng Boh's *chinting* enforcers, who were mostly members of the Se Tan 姓陳 (Chen surname) secret society, were arrested, and several were exiled.

In 1881, even as he was struggling with the consequences of the loss of the Great Syndicate opium farm, Cheang rebuilt the Kim Lam Temple (said to be a center for Hokkien secret society members)[4]. The following year, in 1882, Cheang Hong Lim built the Hong Lim Market around Havelock Road and Kim Seng Road, and built more houses along River Road (Lin, 1986).

In 1883, Cheang Hong Lim and others were accused of conspiracy against the farms (smuggling) and forced to apologize in the newspapers – a contemporary police report went so far as to recommend that Cheang be stripped of his title of Justice of the Peace (*Colonial Office (Malaya) Records 273/119b, Police Report*). It is not clear whether this recommendation was acted upon, for a few months later in 1883 Cheang's lawyers sued the local newspaper editors who had leaked the story to the public (*Straits Time Weekly Issue* 12 March 1883: 11, commenting on rumors found in the *Straits Intelligence*).

Meanwhile, Cheang was keeping very busy. In 1884 he worked as a secret agent for Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823-1901), the Viceroy of Zhili and Beiyang Trade Minister, reporting on the French warships that sailed into Singapore harbor en route for their devastating engagement with the Chinese Navy at Mawei near Fuzhou (for a full account see Dean, Hue, 2017: ch. 41). Cheang also threw himself into public service and redoubled his construction work. In 1886, the Singapore Fire Department was short of equipment, and he donated funds to establish the Wan Seng Fire Brigade, which was very active in responding to disasters and to fires, and providing relief to the community.

In 1887 he rebuilt his father's temple, the True Lord of Pure Origin Temple 清元真帝廟 as well as the Temple of the Jade Emperor 玉皇殿. With regards the first temple, he stated:

> **清元真帝廟碑記 Stele record of the Temple of the Perfected Lord of Pure Origin, 1887**
>
> The acts of guarding the age and protecting the people by the Perfected Lord of Pure Origin are renowned and his spiritual powers are great. There is no one in all directions who does not worship him. Only we lacked a temple so the god's spirit did not have an appropriate place [to be worshipped]. In Singapore, between Upper Fujian Street and Nathan Street a temple was built to worship him. Although at that the time we lived close to the residences of various southern barbarians, yet all thought on the god and worshipped him. Now searching back to the origins of the temple, it originally belonged to and was purchased by the Metropolitan Candidate of the Commandery, honored with the title of 2nd rank, Master Cheang

4. The Golden Orchid (Sworn Brotherhood) Temple was built in Tanjong Pagar near Narcis Street by Yongchun migrants from the Quanzhou region in 1830. The temple was dedicated to Qingshui zushi (The Patriarch of the Clear Stream) whose founding temple is in Penglai township in Anxi county near Yongchun. This temple was a center for a sworn brotherhood and secret society of the Fujian coalition. In 1988, the temple was moved to its current location on Kim Tian Road. The new temple was built by the Hokkien Huay Guan.

> Sam Teo [Zhang Sanchao] […] Those who came to offer fragrant sacrifices and incense, used pure offerings [four words unclear]. The virtue of the god provided them with protection which was wonderful. Peoples' possessions increased and they were all in good health. The god's powerful spirit presided over his office and guarded the land. The years were bountiful and the people lived long, [three words unclear] so that they would forever be imbued by the special blessings of the god. Erected with respect by Zhang Fanglin[5].

This inscription provides the standard classical justifications for a cult to a divine or a historic figure who, after his death, has done good deeds, aided the people and saved the empire. Such figures deserve a cult, and a temple. In this case, the temple was built by Cheang's father, and the god was a very local deity found only in the Changtai region (Dean, Zheng, 2020). Once the temple was built in Singapore, amongst the southern barbarians, Cheang reports that it attracted the worship of local people of different ethnicities. Such phenomena were quite common in multi-cultural Southeast Asia, where Chinese and Indians often worshipped in each others' temples. Cheang concludes with an account of the repairs to the temple, and the continued blessings provided by the god (increased goods and good health).

Even more significant in symbolic terms was his decision to build a temple to the highest god in the Chinese popular pantheon, the Jade Emperor:

> 玉皇殿碑記 **Stele record of the Temple of the Jade Emperor, 1887**
>
> I have often chanted texts such as the *Book of Songs of King Wen* [of Zhou] where it states: "With entire intelligence he served the God Di" and also "the God Di is with you" [citing the same poem from the *Book of Songs, Daya Wenwang Daming Shisanjing* 1:507, J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4: 435, modified]. In these texts, there seems to be the words "Di" [supreme god] but not yet the full meaning of the term "huang" [august]. And when we read the text of the *Taijia hao* in the *Book of Documents* [*Shang Shu Taijia, zhong, Shisanjing zhushu* 1:164] which states "Great Heaven has graciously favored [me]" [J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol 3: 206], or again "Great Heaven no longer extended its protection to him" [quoting *Shangshu Xianyou yi de. Shisanjing zhushu* 1:165, J. Legge, p. 214], there seems to be a sense of the word "August" without any sense of the meaning of the word "Di" [supreme God/ruler]. Now if we say the word "Di" [supreme God] we first unify it with the idea of [august], and if we state the word "august", we make it solemn by [adding] the word "Di" [supreme ruler]. As for the *Book of Songs*, the *Daya* [*Greater Elegentia*] *Huangyi* poem reads "Great is the God Di" [*Shisanjing zhushu* 1:519, J. Legge, vol. 1: 448, modified]. Thus the titles "Tianhuang" [Heavenly August] and "Tiandi" [Heavenly Di ruler] have no way to be augmented. When we look at the ancients, they kowtowed before the vault of heaven and prayed to the invisible vastness. They merely observed and examined the imageless, and never carried out prayers directed

5. The Temple of the Perfected Lord of Pure Origin, originally located on Fujian Road, was torn down in the 1970s. It had three stelae – now stored in the Singapore History Museum (Dean, Hue, 2017).

to something with physical shape. Coming down to later ages, the manufacture of "vessels of earthenware and of gourds" [citing the *Liji Jiao Te sheng, xia, Shisanjing zhushu* 2:1452-1453, J. Legge. *Book of Rites*, vol. 2: 428] increased daily. In places where the "Kings wandered and indulged themselves" [citing the *Book of Poetry, Shijing. Daya Shengmin, Ban, Shihsanjing zhushu*, 1:550, J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, 1: 503], various kinds of portents and symbols appeared. These not only provided something to worship within their hearts, but they also were an object for their gaze. These were not simply invented symbols but were also manifestations of reverence. Now when it came to the auspicious founding of this glorious dynasty, the ritual system became resplendent, and [the court] recorded [these rituals]. From the court on down to the village lanes, everyone took part in fragrant sacrifices and prayers directed on high in thanks to the High Luminous [gods]. How magnificent this was! Truly these rites were most elaborate. However, the sacrifices to the high god Di and those to the Six Honored Ones were carried out within the Middle Kingdom, but when we examine temple sacrifices overseas, there were no such places [of worship]. Now as for Singapore, this was a place located in the Southern Lands, where the smoke of household fires was dense, and where more than several tens of thousands of people had come by sailing across the seas. Boats and junks gathered like clouds, crowded together like a gathering of ants. People gradually began to reverence the ritual observances, and to move towards carrying out these rites in the proper fashion in a dedicated temple. In no time, beautiful temples gilded with gold and richly painted had already rushed in to dazzle all with their loveliness. Throughout Chinese civilization this is the most splendid island of all. Temples arose all around and they achieved fame. In the Han dynasty, [the god Guan Gong] was acclaimed as an Emperor. At that time he was [given the title of Emperor,] Aid to the Heavens. The goddess [Tian Hou's] virtue is equaled by her motherly comportment, so she was enfeoffed as "Heavenly", and also she was said to accompany the Emperor [as Empress of Heaven]. Now, as for the unification of the Supreme Ultimate and the Non-Ultimate, and the work of endowing the beginning of things and endowing [all beings] with life [quoting from the *Book of Changes, Qian and Kun hexagrams, Shisanjing zhushu, Zhouyi*, 1:14&18] – and as for the founding of the Prior [Virtual] Heaven and the Latter [Actualized] Heaven, and the carrying out of this task of completing the transformations [of the Dao] – distantly, unreachable, towering on high, [this is all the doing of] the most reverent deity, the Great August Jade Emperor. But this was [still merely] a matter of honoring his name and not worshipping him with rites. Thus I thought of creating a temple and so divined a site in the middle of Outram Road, with its back to the mountains and the Singapore river [lit. bay] encircling it in front. Deep springs and high peaks send off verdant colors – this is an excellent site. Moreover, it was only a few kilometers away from the Temple to the Perfected Lord of Pure Origin which I had built earlier. Both the temple built later, and the earlier one were radiant, and both had exceptional form. Thereupon were gathered materials and workmen and I saw [the work] through to completion. Truly this was what is called "will not Heaven renew its favorable appointment, and give you blessing?" [citing the *Shangshu Yiji, Shisanjing zhushu*, 1:14; J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 3: 79]. The god "only helps the virtuous" [quoting the *Shangshu,*

Cai Zhong zhiming, Shisanjing zhushu, 1:227, J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 3: 490]. If we are to gaze upon great solemn temples then we must provide ever more sincere and careful prayers to the gods. [Formerly] on another occasion, men from the town asked me why there was not a graceful and solemn temple in which to offer fragrant sacrifice and rely upon the Way of the Gods, thereby promoting civilizing transformations. [Only] in that way would one be able to observe the bright spirit's illuminating power. Those without sincerity cannot cause the gods to descend [to the temple]. The wide fame and power of the gods is responsive and has a mutual interaction. So I have composed a hymn about the gods, "[We] ascend to the Hall of Light [Mingtang] [it is] fully emergent and flourishing" [quoting Yang Xiong, *Taixuanjing, Jiao hexagram*, nº 16, tr. M. Nylan, *The Elemental Changes* (Albany, SUNY Press, 1994, p. 89, modified)]. "Thus increasing our bright happiness" [citing the *Book of Songs, Xiaoya, Datian, Shisanjing zhusu*, 1:477, J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4: 382], our possessions will be abundant and the people will have good health."

Great Qing Empire, 2nd rank official, with a promotion of three ranks
Great British Empire, Leader [of the Hokkien], specially appointed Kapitan,
Guangzu 13 (1887)

How is one to interpret such texts, full of Confucian rhetoric and classical allusions? It is most unlikely that they were composed by Cheang himself. More likely he hired a scholar from China to compose the texts. But he must have approved the final version, and had some part in formulating the ideas within them. The first part of the Jade Emperor inscription spends time explaining why the term August Emperor (God), or Jade Emperor, are not found in the early classics. Indeed, the Jade Emperor as he is envisioned today, at the center of a pantheon of local and regional and national deities, did not take iconographic form until the Song dynasty. The text of the inscription goes on to comment on the abstract forms of worship of early sages, and the later evolution of god statues and other objects of worship to provide a material focus for worship. Thereupon the entire system of rites of the state cult was elaborated, from the court down to the villages. Cheang's text next comments on the rise of many beautiful temples in Singapore, which is said to have a set of temples that rivals in beauty those of China itself. In these temples, one finds worshipped deities such as Guandi and Tian Hou (Empress of Heaven, Mazu), but the cult of an even higher order cosmic deity such as the Jade Emperor is nowhere to be found. Cheang then explains that he has decided to build a temple to the Jade Emperor to assist in *jiaohua* 教化 (transforming/civilizing through education), the great Confucian vision of transforming the world through ritual means. Cheang emphasizes how crucial sincerity is to the correct performance of the rites.

The building of the Jade Emperor Temple in 1887 was a form of symbolic overcoming, or a hierarchical encompassment of the plethora of regional (dialect based) deities that had proliferated within Singapore, without any symbolic center for the proper performance of the classical ritual order. This kind of temple was open to all Chinese regardless of their dialect group or

profession (most trades had their own gods and temples). By composing this text, Cheang was making a claim to a role as a key ritual leader of the Hokkien and indeed the entire Chinese community of Singapore.

In 1887 the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria was a cause for celebration across the British Empire. Singapore was no exception. Cheang Hong Lim was one of a group of wealthy Chinese who commissioned a statue of the Queen by the sculptor Edward Geflowski and attended the unveiling ceremony dressed in their Mandarin robes of (purchased) office. The other Chinese business elite members present included Tan Kim Ching, Lee Cheng Yan, Tan Jiak Chin, and Hoo Ah Yip Whampoa (son of Whampoa) (see accounts in 27 Feb 1886, Lebao; 26 Feb. 1886, *Straits Times*; Song, 1967: 249-250, including a photo of the unveiling of the statue at Government House). This image tells one a great deal about the rather schizophrenic nature of social capital in Singapore at the end of the 19th century. Chinese merchants simultaneously lived in two cultural universes of hierarchy, symbolism and cultural authority. If you add in the world of opium dens and secret societies, it is fair to say they lived in multiple universes.

In that same year, 1889, Cheang donated a set of Maxim machine guns to the Singapore Volunteer Army (Song, 1967: 195, 327-328), to further underline his loyalty to the colonial powers. Possibly in response, in 1891 the colonial government made him a Councilor and Advisor to the Committee for the Improvement of Morals.

Two years later, in 1891, Cheang Hong Lim set up three identical inscribed steles, one each in the Temple of the True Lord of the Pure Origin (his father's temple), another in the Golden Orchid Temple (a center of the Hokkien secret societies), and a third in the Jade Emperor Temple (fig. 2) which he had built on Havelock Road. What is most noteworthy about these identical inscriptions is their emphasis on maintaining the laws of the Colonial order (the King's Law), and the prohibitions on the consumption of opium within the temples:

> 金蘭廟規 **Regulations of the Golden Orchid Temple, 1891**
>
> 3) The Ritual Specialists are not allowed in the slightest way to infringe the laws of the King [of England], for fear of breaking the prohibitions.
>
> 4) In the quiet rooms of the temple, it is not permitted for the Ritual Specialist or anyone else to gamble or gather to drink, or to set out opium smoking paraphernalia. Nor may they invite in friends or bring in criminal elements, all of which would overstep the laws.
>
> 5) Any travelers who are friends of the Ritual Specialist, or any wandering Buddhist monks or Daoist masters, who desire to take up residence within the rooms of the temple, must have an official note of permission from [Cheang's] company headquarters before they will be allowed to stay, and no one may arrogate the authority to bypass this regulation (Dean, Hue, 2017).[6]

6. Similar regulations prohibiting Buddhist monks or other temple keepers using or selling opium in the Chinese temples can also be found in the *1836 Five Regulations agreed upon*

Figure 2. The Jade Emperor Temple, Havelock Road, Singapore, author's photo.

Perhaps as Cheang Hong Lim was struggling to restore his social position, he feared the damage that illicit consumption of opium in one of his temples might do to his reputation. Or he may have worried that the colonial government would begin to take over the running of local Chinese temples in Singapore, as they had threatened to do in 1888 in Penang to the most important Chinese temple, the Guangfumiao, before agreeing to "rent" the temple to the Buddhist monk Miao Lian instead (Dean, 2018). Recall that the assassination attempt on William Pickering in 1887 in Singapore led by 1890 to the passage of the Societies Ordinance Act, declaring sworn brotherhoods completely illegal and criminalizing all such groups. Thus Cheang's effort to shore up law and order in these temples can be seen as a response to rapidly changing colonial policies towards Chinese temples, which called for more transparency in auditing funds, and which criminalized the secret societies, thereby dismantling the original unity of functions (ritual, social, economic, political, juridical, and disciplinary) of the Chinese temples of Singapore.

through discussion at the Mt. Heng Pavillion: "4th regulation: On the festivals of Qingming, the seventh month Pudu, and the Mid-Autumn Festival, it is decided that extraneous idle people will not be allowed to set up gambling tables inside and outside of the Pavilion, as this would bring disruption to the order of the (Pavilion). If there are any who disobey, we will invite the Police (named in three languages, English – "Baolisi" = police, in Hokkien – "Big Dog" – and in Malay "majiao") to come and take them away to be punished by the Chief of Police. We also will not allow any Buddhist monk within the Pavilion to sell opium or to set up an opium den within or nearby the Pavilion. If there be anyone who disobeys and does not respect (this regulation), and who is then discovered by the people, then this monk will be expelled, and the opium den will be dismantled. There will be no mercy" (Dean, Hue, 2017). The ubiquity of these prohibitions indicates that itinerant Buddhist monks, Taoist ritual masters, and temple keepers (ritual invokers and perhaps spirit mediums) were quite likely to break such rules and consume opium when they could. Such behavior may have also contributed to stricter colonial policies on Chinese temples.

Ritual Libationer and Headman of the Hokkien Community

In 1892 the British colonial government officially honored Cheang Hong Lim with an appointment as the Headman of the Hokkien Community. He was also appointed as the *jijiu* 祭酒 or the Ritual Libationer of the Hokkien community. This is the same term the Chinese Consul Huang Zunxian states was used by the Hokkien (Minnan) community for Cheang Hong Lim.[7] The Chinese press on 4 October 1892 reported that the appointment was treated with great ceremony, and that several plaques and sets of couplets were presented to Cheang by the community leaders and by the representative of the Qing court, the Chinese Consul Huang Zunxian.[8] The community gathered in the Thian Hock Keng Temple in formal dress and proceeded to carry the plaques and couplets in a procession to Cheang's office, the Yuansheng Gongsi 苑生公司. All along the street banners and flags were arrayed. After repeated efforts to politely decline these gifts and tokens of esteem, Cheang accepted them, and insisted that everyone join him for a banquet, at which there were performances of Chinese opera. This was said to be one of the greatest events of the entire epoch (*Lebao*, 4 November 1892: 2).[9]

With his social status now fully reaffirmed, Cheang had time to relax. His thoughts turned once again to this villa overlooking the sea at Pasir Panjang, and to the small temple he had built there 30 years earlier to honor a supernatural boulder. He restored the Great Uncle Temple (dedicated to the tutelary god of the earth) and wrote the following:

> 重修北西板福德廟碑記 **Stele record of the restoration of the Pasir Panjang Temple of Fortune and Virtue, 1892 (selection)**
>
> In 1891 I restored and repaired the temple, making it completely new. The temple overlooks the great sea, and the sound of waves and the shadows of sails all pass across its eaves and doorway. The god's spiritual powers are resplendent, and those who depend on the god happily attain their desires. From this point on may the god forever display and manifest his glory. Then all who display their sincerity can

7. The term Ritual Libationer was also used for the great Salt Commissioner merchant monopolists of the Jiangnan region in the Ming (personal communication, Prof. Wang Hung-t'ai, Academia Sinica).

8. Huang Zunxian concluded his obituary tomb inscriptions (*muzhiming*) for Cheang (for a full translation see Dean, Hue, 2017) with the following remark: "If (China) could find more people like Master Zhang, we would be like a millipede that will be strong enough to overawe all its neighbors!" (quoting the saying that a millipede is like the combination of the strength of many people).

9. This appointment nevertheless unleashed some controversy in the local press. Some commentators accused Cheang Hong Lim of being too "timid and effeminate" and "consequently not capable of holding the appointment with satisfaction" (*Daily Advertiser* of 24 Oct 1982). One senses here lingering hatred between the followers of Tan Kin Seng (representing perhaps the declining fortunes of the descendants of the Malacca Peranakan Chinese) and the followers of Cheang Hong Lim. Nonetheless, Cheang's character and qualifications for this ritual role were upheld in the English press (see the discussion in the *Daily Advertise*r on 23 Dec 1892, p. 3).

> depend upon the oversight and protection of the god. Thereupon I have engraved these few words to enable those who come after me and read this stele to know the trajectory of this temple. On an auspicious day in the 5th lunar month of 1892, written by [Zhang Fanglin], promoted to First Ranked official, with permission to wear a patterned feather [in his hat], Salt Distribution Commissioner, official member, stationed in Singapore, on behalf of the North Sea [Shandong Naval Command] in charge of all locations in the South Sea (Shandong to Zhejiang) for the Eastern [China] Relief Effort, Zhang Guiyuan [Zhang Fanglin].

In late 1892, Cheang Hong Lim held a huge party at his "downtown" mansion on Morrison Hill for over 200 guests, with music performed by the boys in the St. Joseph's orphanage, which he had helped sponsor (*Straits Times*, 23 Dec. 1892). It must have almost seemed to him that he had put back together all the elements of his reputation and was once more poised for success in the business (read opium) world, as well as in the symbolic ritual order of his Chinese community. He must have imagined that if only he could put together a large enough coalition, he could corner the entire Asian opium market...

However, the realities of the international capitalist order were shifting under his feet. First the French in Indochina (1881-83) then the Dutch in the East Indies (late 1890s), and finally the British colonial government in Singapore (1909) all took direct control over the opium trade, from production to the sale of opium. Perhaps the gods withheld their support as well. In late 1892, Cheang Hong Lim came down with rheumatic fever and passed away in his Singapore residence at the age of 52. He was buried with the title of the 1st ranked official of the Qing Dynasty, with the right to wear a feather in his cap – a title he had purchased.[10]

Conclusion

The decision of the Governor Weld to sell the opium monopoly to the Penang tin merchants reflected the rise of new forms of global finance capital in the 1890s, based on Malayan tin mining and new flows of capital. In fact, the entire international financial system was undergoing major transformations during this period, leading to the eventual takeover of the opium farm by the British Government. This was a result on the one hand of increasing demands for bureaucratic and financial efficiency. On the other hand, the costs of managing and maintaining the opium farm had grown beyond the capacity

10. Through his inscriptions, one can follow the rise in Cheang's (purchased) ranks from his 1881 2nd rank, first tier title of Grand Master for Thorough Services, Grand Master Exemplar, granted three generations of official status (for his parents and children), to his 1887 title of 2nd rank official, with a promotion of three tiers (within the 2nd rank), to his title in 1892 of First Ranked official, with permission to wear a patterned feather (in his hat), Salt Distribution Commissioner, official member, stationed in Singapore, on behalf of the North Sea (Shandong Naval Command) in charge of all locations in the South Sea (Shandong to Zhejiang) for the Eastern (China) Relief Effort.

of a local coalition of leading businessmen to control. Now even vaster sums were needed to try to ride the opium tiger (Trocki, 1990; Derks, 2012).

How are we to interpret the temple building and public philanthropy of Cheang Hong Lim? Were the temples an ideological cover? If not, how should we understand their levels and their roles? Was Cheang Hong Lim a representative of the last flowering of the Chinese temple system in Singapore? The next generation of Singapore Chinese elites would turn their attention to nationalist causes, modern social reform movements, and the formation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Yen, 1986). The network of Chinese temples would enter into a new phase, no longer at the center of socio-economic or local political life. And yet the temples have survived, and continue to flourish in contemporary Singapore, over 800 of them (not counting several hundred more *shentan* spirit medium altars in private apartments) (Yan *et al*., 2020). We need to develop alternative understandings of the evolution of the Chinese temple network in the early 20th century. Another level of Chinese leadership arose within Singaporean society to carry on the repair, restoration and expansion of the Chinese temple network.

One place to look for new developments is the trans-regional spread of Southeast Asian Chinese cults, such as that of the Nine Emperor Gods. The Hougang Tou Mu Kung 后港斗母宫 (Hougang Temple of the Mother of the Great Dipper) was founded in 1902, when Mr Ong Choo Kee brought 'Joss Ash' from the Nine Emperor God temple in Penang to Singapore, building a shrine at the Hougang 4th milestone. In 1921, the temple was moved and rebuilt in its current location at the Hougang 5th milestone by pineapple businessman and construction magnate Ong Chwee Tow 王水斗 (d. 1924). Ong Chwee Tow also contributed to the renovations of the Soon Thian Kieng 順天宫 and the Goh Chor Tua Pek Kong 梧槽大伯公廟 (Rochor Road Great Uncle Temple), as well as the building of the Malay Kramat (Keramat) and the Tua Pek Kong Temple on Kusu Island 龜嶼島大伯公廟. He passed away in 1924 and was buried in Seh Ong 姓王 Cemetery (Bukit Brown Cemetery). The Hougang Tou Mu Kung is the first temple in Singapore to worship the Nine Emperor Gods, and was gazetted as a national monument in 2005. Leadership in the early 20th century passed to a different echelon in Singaporean Chinese society, more involved in regional networks or localizing religious developments, even as the top leadership became swept up into (inter)nationalist causes in the lead up to the 1911 Revolution.

A fundamental transformation in the 20th century was the rise of Chinese Christianity in Singapore. Currently Christians make up 19% of the Singaporean population, and worship in close to 600 churches with multiple denominations. Conversion to Christianity was seen as a conversion to modernity (Van der Veer, 1996), and many members of the Singaporean Chinese elite became converts in the first half of the century. In the post-war period, the power of this Christianized elite would be increased by policies designed to augment English language and suppress regional Chinese dialects, leading to an even greater separation from traditional Chinese temple circles.

In the post-war post-colonial period, the power of the Chinese temple network and the clan associations would be challenged once again by the powers of the newly independent Singapore state, which would set the legal framework for a highly controlled form of religious pluralism. Many temple properties were impounded for reasons of planned urban development, and temple communities were forced to move multiple times, each time usually only managing to secure a 30 year lease from the state. Enforced religious harmony was further enshrined in the *Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act* of 1990. The state reserves the right to determine the legitimacy of different religious movements, outlawing some groups while recognizing most religious organizations, and maintaining a grey zone by allowing others to register as charities rather than as religious groups. This highly pragmatic approach to regulating and preserving religious pluralism has generated certain contradictions. Like many post-colonial nation-states, Singapore has enshrined (a limited form of) multi-racialism within its regulatory framework. This has the effect of freezing ethnic communities and in some cases, linking these tightly to religious affiliations. These policies however confront a complex reality of constantly changing hybrid ritual forms that exceed ethnicity, culture and race. This actual diversity of day-to-day religious pluralism and hybridity is the legacy of the long history of globalization in Southeast Asia (Dean, 2011). The story of Cheang Hong Lim, and his effort to subsume multiple regional forms of local, popular, communal religion under the worship of the Jade Emperor represents an important phase in the integration of diversity within the Chinese religious community of Singapore. However, ultimately this effort was undermined by colonial policies of divide and rule, shifting capitalist orders, the spread of Christianity, and the rise of nationalism. Furthermore, centripetal tendencies within Chinese religion, such as the fractalizing proliferation of symbolic centers, as seen in the placement of small statues of Jade Emperors in most Chinese temples, undermined the claims to centrality of the Havelock Road Jade Emperor temple. Ultimately, Cheang's temple returned to being primarily a Hokkien temple, managed by the Hokkien Huay Kuan, while other Jade Emperor temples have arisen with their own claims on worshippers, sometimes expressed by spirit mediums possessed by this august deity (Dean, 2016). Despite high levels of state regulation, the religious landscape of Singapore remains remarkably de-centered, plural, and hybrid.

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Opium for the Gods. Cheang Hong Lim (1841-1893), Headman and Ritual Libationer of the Hokkien Community, Leader of the Singapore Great Opium Syndicate (1870-1882)

In China, as in India, ritual roles are distributed across the entire social field, rather than being confined to a religious field that is competed over in a quest for the monopolization of its powers. This essay explores the ritual roles of a leader of the Chinese diaspora in Singapore in the second half of the 19th century, drawing on stone inscriptions he wrote in several temples he built or restored, and his burial record, composed by the Chinese Consul General to Singapore, Huang Zunxian (1848-1905). These sources reveal how intricately entangled were the secular, commercial, political and religious realms at the end of the golden age of the Chinese temple network in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Singapore, opium, Chinese temples, Daoism, Hokkien.

Opium pour les dieux. Cheang Hong Lim (1841-1893), chef et libateur rituel de la communauté Hokkien, chef du Grand Syndicat de l'Opium de Singapour (1870-1882)

En Chine, comme en Inde, les rôles rituels sont répartis dans tout le champ social, plutôt que d'être confinés à un champ religieux où se joue la compétition pour la monopolisation des pouvoirs. Cet article explore les rôles rituels d'un chef de la diaspora chinoise à Singapour dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle, en s'appuyant sur les inscriptions qu'il a fait graver sur pierre dans les temples qu'il a construits ou restaurés et sur son registre funéraire, composé par le consul général chinois à Singapour, Huang Zunxian (1848-1905). Ces sources révèlent à quel point les sphères laïques, commerciaux, politiques et religieux étaient intimement lié à la fin de l'âge d'or du réseau des temples chinois en Asie du Sud-Est.

Mots-clés : Singapour, opium, temples chinois, taoïsme, Hokkien.

Opio para los dioses. Cheang Hong Lim (1841-1893), líder y maestro de libaciones rituales de la comunidad de Hokkien, líder del Gran Sindicato del Opio de Singapur (1870-1882)

En China, como en India, los roles rituales se distribuyen en todo el campo social, en vez de limitarse a un campo religioso donde se juega la competencia por la monopolización de poderes. Este artículo explora los roles rituales de un líder de la diáspora china en Singapur en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX*, basándose en las inscripciones que había tallado en la piedra de los templos que construyó o restauró y en su registro funerario, compuesto por el cónsul general chino en Singapur, Huang Zunxian (1848-1905). Estas fuentes revelan cómo los reinos íntimamente seculares, comerciales, políticos y religiosos estaban vinculados con el final de la Edad de Oro del sistema de templos chino en el sudeste asiático.*

Palabras clave: Singapur, opio, templos chinos, taoísmo, Hokkien.