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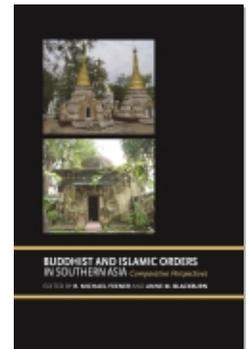
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WHOSE ORDERS?

Chinese Popular God Temple Networks and the Rise of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist Monasteries in Southeast Asia

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Anthony Reid has traced the religious revolutions of Southeast Asia during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, as Theravāda Buddhist monastic orders and ritual traditions spread across mainland Southeast Asia and Islam competed with Christianity in the insular regions.¹ He has also noted the expanding role of Chinese merchants as middlemen in the British and Dutch colonies of Malaya and Indonesia. However, he makes little mention of the role of Chinese temples or of the spread of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism to Southeast Asia—although French travelers had already reported the presence of Chinese Buddhist monks in the Qingyunting (Pavilion of the Blue Clouds) in Malacca in 1698.²

The lack of a Chinese cultural context elsewhere in Southeast Asia would make the spread of Chinese Mahāyāna challenging and complex. Although the evidence on the spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism to Southeast Asia is sparse for the early modern era, we can trace the rise of full-fledged Mahāyāna monasteries and religious orders in the late nineteenth century. Reid briefly discusses the spread of Confucian culture and Chinese Mahāyāna within Vietnam, where a shared Chinese language and cultural context facilitated the spread of Buddhist orders.³ At that time Chinese religious networks also expanded in the region through connections with traditions of Daoist ritual masters. Evidence for this includes a wooden “earth contract” from 1898 that was discovered during renovations to the Po Chiak Keng Tan Si Chong Su in Singapore. This ritual artifact demonstrates that Daoist ritual specialists conducted rites to exorcise the space of the temple and consecrate the new gods upon their installation and animation in diaspora Chinese contexts of the region.⁴

When scholars of religion speak of the spread of religious orders in Southeast Asia, however, they usually refer to the expansion of Theravāda

Buddhist monastic lineages, Islamic prophetic lineages (often related to Sufi teachers), or later lineages of Christian missionaries associated with Catholic monastic communities. What is strangely overlooked in these accounts is the long historical development of a vast network of Chinese temples in Southeast Asia dedicated to the gods of the regional pantheons of the different emigrant communities.

This chapter explores the expansion of a Chinese temple network that began in Fujian in the sixteenth century, spread across Southeast Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and accelerated its spread in the nineteenth century with the arrival of immigrants from multiple dialect regions. For centuries, Chinese temples and their native-place business offices provided the main institutional framework for the elaboration of trust networks holding long-distance trade together across the “Minnan coastal trading system.”⁵ These temples held rituals before the gods in which the two sides of a trading contract would swear to maintain their trust. Such rites (and institutions) were especially important because these were “merchants without empires,”⁶ who were operating outside the legal protection of the Chinese state in treacherous environments. The temple business offices lent out funds and supervised credit pools watched over by the gods, which were designed to cover the costs of key life-cycle rituals for the members of the pool. Funds could be withdrawn for weddings, “cappings” (of young men come of age), or funerals and then returned with interest for the next person who needed them. The temple officers registered the marriages and deaths in their dialect communities, fulfilling ritual as well as bureaucratic roles. These temples were staffed by *miaozhu* (temple invokers), who were responsible for tending the incense and oil lamps, and assisting worshipers in making prayers and offerings. They were directed by temple management committees made up of Chinese leaders who held high positions in local society as wealthy merchants and traders. Because ritual roles were “differentially distributed” across Chinese society, these temple managers along with leaders of guilds, opera troupe directors, carpenters, and heads of households were all able to perform specific ritual roles.⁷ Thus, larger rituals in temples could be conducted by the temple leadership, with one or more being selected annually to fill the ritual role of keeper of the incense burner, while other leaders in the community were assigned ritual roles as “leading families.” Members of the temple committee could also serve as temporary masters of ritual ceremony (*lisheng*) during rites held in temples and ancestral halls.

These temples were transnational religious institutions linked by the division of incense marking generations of affiliations (see below). They were characterized by possession rituals that authorized expansion of the networks in new directions. Thus, although not defined by specific institutionalized lineages descending from a particular teacher or monastic adept, Chinese temples can be seen as transregional institutionally based religious orders in a broadly comparative sense. They are also transpersonal in the sense that different individuals

rotated in and out of ritual roles and that spirit mediums were possessed by “outside” supernatural forces. The Chinese temples of Southeast Asia also invited in or temporarily housed representatives of more formal religious orders (defined by participation in specific lineages of monastics or masters) such as itinerant Buddhist monks and Daoist ritual specialists. Such itinerants performed rites of consecration of temples, animation of god statues, feasts for the gods or the ancestors, or funerals for individual members of the dialect communities. They also sometimes took care of the temple or the burial grounds of a particular dialect group. As will be seen below in the case of the Shuanglinsi (Double Grove Monastery) in Singapore, such itinerant monks were in some cases taking part in extended pilgrimages to Buddhist centers in Sri Lanka. These pilgrimages were an extension of the common process of *yunyou* (moving like a cloud), in which monks traveled from one monastery to another within China in search of an inspiring master and possibly a better position within a monastic organization. As for Daoist ritual specialists, many who are currently active in Southeast Asia are the descendants of men who emigrated for a wide range of reasons and who often worked in additional trades, only occasionally serving as Daoist ritual masters.

The Chinese temples of Southeast Asia are dedicated to a mixture of regional deities, mostly of Daoist derivation, as well as Buddhist gods such as Guanyin.⁸ The diverse regional Daoist ritual traditions of Fujian coevolved along with the many regional pantheons of the dialect groups who founded these temples. Each dialect region along the coast of China (or inland in the case of Hakka regions) had its own topolect, distinctive temple architecture, regional pantheon, regional ritual traditions, food, clothing, and regional local customs. Each regional Daoist ritual tradition formed its own distinct lineage of groups of masters (and is thus referred to as a “formal religious order” above), although these were primarily transmitted through initiation rituals along paternal lines or between masters and disciples.

The Tianshifu (Celestial Master Headquarters) at Longhushan (Dragon Tiger Mountain) in northern Jiangxi was, at various times, a center for the coordination of regional Daoist ritual traditions and for the conferral of additional ordinations to the regional ritual specialists. However, integration across the wide range of distinct regional ritual traditions was minimal. For the most part, these localized Daoist orders were based in the homes of the Daoist masters and usually not in temples.⁹ The regionally based Daoist ritual specialists did, however, contribute to the process of transforming many local god cults into regional, national, or transnational cult networks by writing up the invocations, legends, and miracles of the gods and then composing scriptures and liturgies for some of them, thus inscribing them within a shared “universal” Daoist liturgical framework. For centuries, starting with the large-scale migration of Han Chinese into Southeast China in the Tang, Five Dynasties, and Song eras, leaders of the local communal temples in different parts of Southeast China

hired Daoist ritual masters to perform communal offerings (*jiao*) dedicated to the local gods on their feast days. Local communal temples were important centers of village life, forming the core of local self-governance of territorial communities.¹⁰

By the seventeenth century at the latest, branch temples from founding temples of the main gods of Fujian had spread to many parts of Southeast Asia. It is likely, however, that there were smaller shrines and temples in Chinese communities in Southeast Asia much earlier. Admiral Zheng He (1371–1433), for example, found over three thousand Chinese living in Palembang (Sumatra) in the early fifteenth century.¹¹ Most branch temples were established by means of a ritual of “division of incense” from the founding temple, and some have divided incense with newer third- or fourth-generation temples elsewhere in Southeast Asia, generating a network of affiliation, or a lineage. Often, small statues of the gods of the founding temples were carried overseas by emigrants (*fenling*, or division of the god’s spiritual power). Some branch temples maintained strong ties with their founding temples in Southeast China.

Spirit mediums, a regular feature of the Southeast Chinese religious world, could become possessed by the gods of the regional pantheons back in China. These gods might insist (through the spirit medium) that their devotees build a temple to the deity in a new land in Southeast Asia. Spirit mediums flourished in these temples, perhaps because the Southeast Asian contexts lacked key features of the southern Chinese ritual sphere that restricted the space available to spirit mediums there, such as tightly interlocking strata of Confucian literati, localized lineages, strong traditions of Daoist ritual masters or Buddhist monasteries, and a hierarchy of local temples intersecting with the state cult at City God temples.

Of the many elements of the various regional ritual spheres of Southeast China that could be found in the Chinese temples of Southeast Asia, including temple managers acting in a ritual capacity, hired temple invokers, spirit mediums attached to a temple, itinerant Buddhist monks, and Daoist ritual specialists, only the latter two could be considered to be members of formal religious orders, and those of the regional Daoist ritual masters were often particularistic and fragmented. Nevertheless, careful procedures for the rotation and selection of temple management committees and annual keepers of the incense burners as well as the continuous production of spirit mediums ensured continuity of ritual practices within temple communities over hundreds of years. Even when formal religious orders were not present, we can identify what I refer to as “networked orders,” shaped through the transpersonal transmission of ritualized roles within nodes of translocal networks rather than by individuals taking up vocations within a dedicated lineage in a stably institutionalized context.¹² This chapter presents a history of the rise and intensifying presence of formal religious orders in the Chinese religious context of Southeast Asia, a process linked

to changes in temple environments, social functions of temple spaces, and the forms of social authority linked to Chinese temples. These changes occurred over several centuries. This chapter will trace particular strands of developments in the area that later became the British Straits Settlements.

I examine Chinese temple networks from a historical perspective, tracing the growth of the network of Hokkien (Fujian Minnan-speaking immigrants) temples from the seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries, followed by the rise of Teochew, Hakka, Cantonese, Hainan, and other regionally based and dialect-specific temple networks in the nineteenth century. Powerful emigrant communities from these different regions of Southeast China controlled the branch temples as well as the *huiguan* (native-place associations or business offices) housed within the temples. These temples/*huiguan* provided rooms for visiting Chinese business travelers from their regions of origin, loaned money to those linked to their associations, and managed graveyards for those unable to return to their points of origin.

The temples/*huiguan* were also at the center of intense and sometimes violent conflict between dialect groups (and among their business leaders) over control of the opium, alcohol, and prostitution farms (cartels, or monopoly rights) auctioned off by the colonial administration, which provided over half of the annual income of the Straits Settlement colonies.¹³ The cartel business leaders were often the leaders of the temples/*huiguan*. They needed to have a strong enforcement apparatus to handle conflicts; administer monopoly control over the distribution of opium, alcohol, and prostitutes; and control the coolie trade within the mines and plantations across Southeast Asia. Many of the latter were owned and managed by the same Chinese leaders who served as managers of temples/*huiguan* within their dialect communities (which had specific residential zones, commercial territories, and economic niches). The sworn brotherhoods responsible for the enforcement of the cartels were often linked to the temples. These groups would later be stigmatized (and eventually criminalized) by the colonial authorities as Triads or secret societies.¹⁴

In the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a fundamental transformation in the structure and relative autonomy of temples/*huiguan* as Western colonial authorities made a deliberate attempt to separate these temples from their enforcement arms (secret societies/Triads). This was a long process, which took place in different colonial settings across Southeast Asia over the second half of the nineteenth century. Bureaucratic solutions and evolving imperial knowledge/power formations developed across the reach of the British Empire in Asia, through the itineraries of various colonial bureaucrats, officials, and governors, who experimented with different but converging policies over time across the empire to deal with the problem of the Chinese communities (that is to say, the temples/*huiguan*) and their secret societies. In different port cities at different times for different reasons, after gradually criminalizing

the enforcement arm of the Chinese temples/*huiguan*, the colonial powers proceeded to regulate the finances and eventually the administrative structures and operations of the temple organizations—and this tended to continue into the postcolonial period. Leaders of the Chinese community realized that the ground rules had shifted and opted to focus more of their energies on emerging Chinese chambers of commerce. In some cases, they chose to cede control over some temples to more formal religious orders and to sponsor the establishment of local Buddhist monasteries. It is in this context that, at the end of the nineteenth century, we find evidence for the establishment of the first mainstream Buddhist monastery in Malaya, the Jilesi (Monastery of Extreme Joy) in Penang in 1905, followed by the founding of the Shuanglinsi (Double Grove Monastery) in Singapore in 1909.¹⁵

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OVERSEAS CHINESE TEMPLE NETWORK

In order to get a sense of longer-term Buddhist connections between Southeast Asia and China, one can turn to earlier travel accounts of monks, historical records, and stone inscriptions. Tansen Sen has discussed the flow of monks back and forth from India to China from the Han to the Tang/Song period.¹⁶ Claudine Salmon has discussed religious exchanges between the Buddhist kingdom of Srivijaya (based in contemporary Palembang and Jambi in Sumatra) and Song China. The next period of intense contact between Chinese Buddhists and Southeast Asia began at the end of the Ming era and continued through the beginning of the Qing. During the Qing Manchu takeover of China, the entire coast of Southeast and South China endured a coastal evacuation policy, which lasted for up to twenty years (1660–1680) in some regions. Tens of thousands of villages were abandoned and destroyed along with many thousands of temples dedicated to popular gods and Buddhist monasteries. These measures were intended to eliminate any sources of support for the armies and navies of the Ming resistance, including those of Zheng Chenggong (1624–1662) and his son Zheng Jing (1642–1681) on Jinmen and later on Taiwan, and those of the Ming armies in the southwest. These policies drove many coastal residents to emigrate to Southeast Asia.

In the 1990s, Zheng Zhenman and I gathered inscriptions in temples and monasteries in the Quanzhou and Zhangzhou regions of Fujian.¹⁷ We located an inscription dated 1697 at the Dragon Pool Buddhist monastery in Haicang, which revealed that this monastery had sent out Buddhist monks to Southeast Asia to raise funds for the reconstruction of the temple immediately after the Qing coastal evacuations. Leaders of the Chinese community in Batavia responded to their call and donated substantial sums toward the reconstruction of the temple. The Baosheng Dadi (Great Emperor Who Protects Life, a deified doctor from the Song named Wu Tao [979–1036]) temple nearby in Qingjiao,

Haicang, which dates back to the Song dynasty, also preserves a stele from the Kangxi period (also dated 1697) titled *Baguo yuanzhu beiji* (Stele record of the patrons from Batavia), describing how many of the same Chinese leaders in Batavia recorded on the Dragon Pool Monastery inscriptions agreed to donate two years of the income of their branch temple (presumably dedicated to Baosheng Dadi) to help pay for repairs to the temple.¹⁸ Many other temples along the coast aimed to do the same.¹⁹

The Qingyunting (Pavilion of the Blue Clouds) in Malacca was one of the most important Chinese temples in Southeast Asia. This temple (not a monastery) was founded around 1673 by Ming loyalists including Zeng Qilu (1643–1718) and Lin Weijing (1614–1688).²⁰ Currently, the temple is dedicated to both Tian Hou (the Empress of Heaven, also known as Mazu, Goddess of the Sea) and Guanyin (the Mahāyāna Buddhist Bodhisattva of Mercy). The temple played a key role as the political command center for the Chinese community, with the pavilion director usually also serving as the Kapitan of the Chinese (appointed by the Dutch and later the English to administer the Chinese community). The temple also played a key role as a business center and social club for wealthy merchants who made up the temple management committee. They lent temple funds to smaller merchants and entrepreneurial immigrants, and maintained control over credit-pooling associations (for life-cycle ritual needs) housed inside the temple.

Reading through the epigraphy of this temple, we find early inscriptions praising the founders of the temple, Ming loyalist refugees from the Manchu takeover of China.²¹ Some of the leaders inscribed steles at the Baoshanting (Precious Mountain Pavilion), a temple built at the foot of Sanbaoshan, the main Chinese cemetery in Malacca, which was sponsored and managed by the Qingyunting. Later inscriptions at the Qingyunting celebrate the success of the local merchant class. Other inscriptions continue to highlight the role of the leading Chinese merchant families of the region, with some early founders visited in dreams in order to display their virtuous natures.

From an early period, the Qingyunting temple hired Buddhist monks to conduct ritual services. One of the first accounts of the Pavilion of the Blue Clouds was provided in 1698 by the French voyager François Froger.²² He describes visiting the temple and observing men in robes chanting over tables covered with offerings. Although he could not understand a word they said, he was certain that they were religious specialists (presumably Buddhist monks). He knew it was a temple because of the three icons on the altar. He also made a sketch of the temple, revealing that at that time it had only a single room, with statues of (Buddhist) deities on the altar at the back of the hall. The Qingyunting leaders also sponsored Buddhist rites at the nearby cemetery hill. The following inscription at the Precious Mountain Pavilion at the foot of the Hokkien cemetery hill was written by Cai Shizhang, who served as pavilion director of the Qingyunting, in 1801:

The Precious Mountain Pavilion is a place where the secluded deceased are offered sacrifices with respect. . . . It is decided that of the entire year's rent from the property, 25 *wen* should be given to the monk[s] of this pavilion as "incense salary," 20 *wen* should be given to the master of the incense burner of that year so that he can separately set up offerings before the [main] spirit tablet[s] on days on which families make sacrifices. The remainder left over should be held on to and saved for use on future repairs.²³

This passage reveals that, in the early period, the Buddhist monks connected to the Baoshanting Precious Mountain Pavilion were on a small salary from the Qingyunting. Similar indications can be found in inscriptions at several temples and cemetery shrines in Singapore.²⁴

By the late eighteenth century, a shift occurs in the inscriptional record of the Qingyunting. We find a broader merchant class represented in steles and wooden plaques dedicated to Mazu or to Guanyin. In the nineteenth century, the temple was expanded, and new halls were added dedicated to the worship of the unrequited dead, with inscriptions outlining the development of a Pudu (Hungry Ghosts Universal Deliverance) Association. Here we see a shift from serving the top leadership or the merchant elite to a concern for the local Chinese community as a whole and their many deceased ancestors. This shift also implies the need for a broader range of ritual observances on the part of resident Buddhist monks.

THE MAIN EARLY TEMPLES OF THE SINGAPORE DIALECT COMMUNITIES

The earliest Hokkien temples and cemetery shrines in Singapore were built by leaders of the Qingyunting in Malacca, including Director of the Pavilion Si Hoo Keh (Xue Foji, 1793–1874), who helped sponsor the construction of the Tianfugong on Telok Ayer Street in Singapore in 1840. Si had first served as director of the Hokkien cemetery in Singapore, the Hengshanting (Pavilion of the Everlasting Mountain), founded in 1828. His sons succeeded him in this role, even after he returned to Malacca to take up the post of pavilion director once again. Several other Malacca *peranakan* (Southeast Asian-born Chinese) businessmen from Malacca banded together to build the Chongde (Worshipping Virtue) pagoda next door to the Tianfugong, and their descendants still worship their forefathers there on a triannual basis.

The formation of the old town of Singapore, at the mouth of the Singapore River, saw the rise of distinct dialect territories in which people from the same region in South or Southeast China gathered and built their temples, native-place and clan associations, as well as their shops that monopolized different

trades and commercial activities. The boundaries of these dialect neighborhoods were preserved from the founding of Singapore in 1819 until the beginning of the urban development of Singapore island in the mid-1950s. Currently, only traces of these communities can be seen in the few temples left behind. The dialect communities have now been dispersed across the entire island into the HDB (Housing and Development Board) blocks built by the government in the satellite towns around Singapore island.

Each dialect group contains many subsections, based on combined principles of a common place of origin and dialect (as these can differ considerably by region within the broader dialect area). Often, within the same dialect and territorial subgroup, there are also divisions based on common surname, class, education, and gender. Thus, for example, the immigrants to Singapore from Jinmen divided into two groups, with the merchant leaders worshiping Chen Yuan (fl. 804), a Tang dynasty military founder of Chinese communities on the islands, and the lower-class dock workers who lived in coolie houses worshiping Liu Wangye (sometimes called a “plaque demon”), who is said to have been an officer under Chen Yuan in the Tang.

Stone inscriptions from the Heng San Ting (Eternal Mountain Pavilion) (built in 1828, burned down in 1997) and the Kim Lam (Golden Lotus) temple in Singapore provide some insight into the status of the monks attached to the major temples of the Chinese merchant communities in the period preceding the rise of organized monastic Buddhism and the later spread of Reform Buddhism.²⁵ In the *Five Regulations Agreed Upon though Discussion at the Eternal Mountain Pavilion*, dated 1836, we find the following:

Third regulation: As for the splendid Mid-Autumn Festival, the funds raised by the Master of the Incense Burners and the Heads of the Families for ritual sacrifices and offerings can all be kept as blessed objects in the homes of the Master of the Incense Burner. When he wishes to invite all the Heads of the Families to partake in the blessed offerings, of whatever funds were raised, if there is any remainder, it should be given to the monks to cover the expenses of tobacco, old leaf [betel nut], and tea, and to cover the costs of his annual ritual expenses and of any occasional costs for the entertainment of visitors. Whomever takes turns and posts a proclamation for the two ceremonies of Qingming, and the monks should take care of and attend to. . . . If there are those who do not follow this regulation, they will receive ritual punishment or be sent away. Everyone must obey the public agreement, there being no exceptions for individual feelings.

This passage clearly indicates that the monks are receiving leftover funds from ritual offerings and that they are expected to be continuously on call and ready to provide ritual services to whomever asks to perform rites at the pavilion.

Fourth 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 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.

From the point of view of the temple leadership, the morals of the itinerant monks were suspicious. They were apparently thought likely to be involved in opium and gambling.

Fifth regulation: As for the funds for incense [operational expenses] of the Mt. Heng Pavilion, each first and fifteenth day of the lunar month, the Buddhist monks should go down into Singapore to gather contributions. As for the Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, or other foreign sailing boats or double decked boats that have safely reached Singapore each year, it is publicly agreed that each Chinese boat that belongs to someone from Quanzhou or Zhangzhou [prefectures] will make a contribution of four Spanish [(Lu)song, Manila Spanish] silver dollars. The sojourners on board these boats can make any [additional] contribution their hearts desire. As for Thai, Vietnamese, or other foreign sailing boats or double decked boats, and every other kind of boat, regardless of the size of the boat, so long as the boat belongs to a person from Quanzhou or Zhangzhou, it has been publicly decided that each boat will contribute two Spanish silver dollars. Should it happen that, during the annual contribution, a Singaporean boat has a captain [or owner] who refuses to obey, then if the captain or anyone else registered to his crew should happen to pass away, by public decision they will not be allowed to be buried in this cemetery. The Buddhist monks of this Pavilion should refuse them. If anyone from Quanzhou or Zhangzhou prefecture passes away and wishes to be buried in this cemetery, he or she must obtain a permit from the Master of the Incense of that year, which must be handed over to the monks of the Pavilion as evidence. Anyone who has not received a permit as proof should be refused by the monks.

As can be seen from the inscription above, the Buddhist monks working at the Chinese cemetery shrines were a floating population very much at the service

of the temple leadership in contrast with later scenarios in which temples developed around monastics stably resident in a monastery linked to the Buddhist temple.

Another inscription from the Golden Orchid Temple sets out regulations concerning itinerant Buddhist monks and Daoist ritual masters and shows that the day-to-day activities of the temples were carried out by ritual specialists (temple keepers, or invocators, who would assist worshipers with their prayers and offerings, and tend to the incense and oil lamps in the temple). Monks and Daoist masters were not lodged permanently in these temples. The *Regulations of the Golden Orchid Temple*, dating to 1891, reveals that the itinerant Buddhist monks and Daoist ritual masters were under suspicion from the leadership for their tendency to make money on the side with gambling tables and the sale of opium. They were called on to provide ritual services at the temples on a regular basis and at the cemeteries during Qingming (sweeping of the graves) and Zhongyuan Pudu (universal deliverance of the hungry ghosts in the Middle Prime [lunar 7/15]), but they were expected to subsist on the leftovers from the sacrificial offerings. Other inscriptions from this period describe the (quite low) wages provided to monks, many of whom seem to have been largely peripatetic.

This was not the only scenario for monks' involvement with temples in nineteenth-century Singapore, as some temples contained monastic residents and granted monks more status. Some temples in Fujian dedicated to local gods maintained historical connections with Buddhist orders. This was also the case for the Hong San See (Fengshansi, lit., Phoenix Mountain Monastery), which was dedicated to Guangze Zunwang, the Reverent King of Broad Compassion (Guo Mingliang, 899–922). The mother temple of this god, one of the greatest of the Fujian local god cults, is located in Shishan township in upper Nanan County.²⁶ For centuries, the cult center has been maintained by Buddhist monks, although the god is best known for his highly Confucian filial piety, manifested in his visits to his parents' tombs (to apologize for becoming a Daoist immortal before they had died). The historical links with Buddhism at this temple center ensured that Buddhist monks were invited to its branch Fengshansi temple in Singapore (built in 1836), housed at the temple, and put in charge of the upkeep of the temple of the god's cult after it was moved to Mohammed Sultan Street. This progression can be seen from the epigraphy in the temple. The names of other Buddhist monks are also inscribed on steles revealing their roles in the running of the Linshanting Beijigong (Temple of the Northern Polestar of Unicorn Mountain Pavilion, built before 1866), another temple in charge of yet another Hokkien cemetery in Singapore. The Tianfugong, the main temple of the Hokkien community on Telok Ayer Street, also housed Buddhist monks at various times (such as Master Hong Choon, who resided there for several years in the 1930s). Nonetheless, it is important to note that even in these instances characterized by resident monks being offered greater status, these were all

temporary institutional arrangements rather than permanent multigenerational monasteries. They thus left little scope for the training of future generations of monks.

JILESI IN PENANG AND THE TRANSFORMATION FROM SALARIED EMPLOYEES TO BUDDHIST ENTREPRENEURS

A major turning point in the rise of Chinese Mahāyāna monastic orders in Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century was the founding of the renowned Jilesi (Monastery of Extreme Joy) in Penang in 1898. The monastery was founded by the monk Miaolian (1824–1907), who had been sent in 1888 to Penang by the Gushan Yongquansi outside Fuzhou to raise money to repair his home temple. Miaolian set in motion a major transformation of local roles for Buddhist monks in the region. Miaolian worked with the local Penang Chinese temple leadership to develop a new system of financing for temples, with novel roles for the monks within the temple. The system changed the position of a Chinese Buddhist monk in Southeast Asia from a salaried itinerant to participant in a contract system wherein monks would handle all the finances of the temple, with any additional profits in temple income beyond the initial annual rental fee becoming their own.²⁷ Miaolian used these additional profits to begin the process of constructing a Mahāyāna monastery in Penang.

Before Miaolian's arrival, one finds scattered earlier records of Buddhist monks working in Penang on inscriptions within the Guangfu (Guangdong and Fujian) Temple, which had been founded in 1800. The 1824 *Chongjian Guangfu gong beiji* (Stele record of the reconstruction of the Guangfu Temple) states, "After we rebuilt the inner courtyard and buildings, and set up the images of the saints therein, then to the side we built quarters for monks to live in and made them complete."²⁸ However, within three decades a new monastic lineage began to take shape in Penang. The 1923 *Gazetteer of the Penang Crane Mountain Jile Monastery*, written by (Wei) Baozi, states,

Formerly, in the *dinghai* year of the Qing [1888], Chan Master Miaolian came once more to Penang. The elite [merchants] Qiu Tiande, Hu Taixing, Lin Huacan, Tiao Xingyang, and so forth, invited him to become the abbot of the Guangfu Temple and charged him over 2,000 in gold for the annual rental [of the temple]. The name of this practice is called *baojuma* [contracting for annual temple income]. From this time on, the monks of the Gushan Monastery [near Fuzhou] became the leaders of the Guangfu Temple.

Although Miaolian left the Guangfu Temple within three years, he arranged for a series of his disciples to come from his Fuzhou home monastery, Gushan Yongquansi, to succeed him as abbots for over twenty-five years. Miaolian then began the process of establishing the Jilesi in a quiet spot outside of the crowded

city center with support from local Chinese business leaders and eventually from the dowager empress of China.

Financial matters within the Guangfu Temple led to a government audit.²⁹ The entrance on the scene of a group of monks held together by strict master-disciple relations, having a specific code of conduct (internal regulations), and with an institutional base in an ancient, established Chan monastery back in Fujian (the Yongquansi is a renowned thousand-year-old Buddhist monastery outside Fuzhou City founded in 908) introduced a different set of relations between abbots and monks, on one hand, and between the monks and temple sponsors and everyday worshipers, on the other hand. Moreover, it reshaped relations between the temples (or monasteries) and the colonial authorities. These new monastic arrangements with the first establishment of a formal Buddhist order in Penang thus altered the religious ecology of the region.

An inscription written by Miaolian for the Jilesi dated 1907 outlines twenty-one detailed regulations for the conduct of the monks in the monastery.³⁰ He includes detailed rules on lines of authority (the abbot in the founding monastery in Fujian held decision-making power and exclusive rights to ordination of new monks), accounting procedures, and issuing of wages, and limitations on the hosting of “floating cloud” itinerant monks, who were restricted to a maximum stay of only one week. There were also warnings about not falling under the sway of local patrons and preserving Buddhist control over the monastery.

The Jilesi attracted considerable support and local funding from several of the wealthiest Hakka businessmen in Penang and across Southeast Asia. Five of them served as successive managing directors. These were (1) Zhang Bishi (cognomon Zhenxun, 1840–1916), a Hakka entrepreneur from Dapu, appointed Chinese consul in Penang and later consul general in Singapore; (2) Zhang Yunan (cognomon Rongxuan, fl. 1891–1912), from Meixian, who owned rubber plantations, was appointed Kapitan of Deli in Sumatra by the Dutch, and was named Chinese consul to Penang by the Qing imperial court; (3) Xie Rongguang (1846–1916) from Meixian, Kapitan under the Dutch and a consul in Penang, who served for over a decade as managing director of the temple; (4) Zheng Siwen, a mining magnate from Zengcheng County in Guangdong, who was made a Kapitan in Perak; and (5) Dai Chunru (d. 1919) from Dapu, another extremely wealthy managing director, renowned for his philanthropy, who established hospitals and schools, and contributed greatly to the monastery. Some of these patrons were major investors in the coastal railroad to Shantou in China. Other prominent patrons who merited special biographical notices in the *Gazetteer* include Zhang Hongnan (d. 1921), brother of Zhang Yunan, who also made his fortune in rubber plantations and was appointed major in Deli by the Dutch colonial government (he was a close friend of Buddhist monk Benzong). Finally, Madame Lin, née Chen Xinan, made generous donations to the monastery, which were recorded in multilingual inscriptions.

An inscription dated 1906 reveals the vast transnational network of sponsors supporting this temple, who altogether contributed the sum of 210,030 yuan to the monastery. Sponsors include the businessmen listed above as well as individuals and native-place associations from all over Malaya, Singapore, and Indonesia, as well as patrons in Fujian and Jiangxi in China.³¹ In response to this outpouring of support, a final unique set of plaques and inscriptions, including one by the dowager empress Cixi, details the transmission of a complete set of the Buddhist Canon (*Tripitaka*) from the Imperial Household via the (Folusi) Buddhist Registry Office to the Jilesi Monastery in Penang in 1904. This was the first *Tripitaka* to be sent to Malaysia, and the inscriptions (including one that was the inscribed record of a telegram from Beijing) make clear that these scriptures were intended for a foreign Southeast Asian audience.³²

THE LIANSHAN SHUANGLINSI AND THE RISE OF BUDDHIST MONASTICISM IN SINGAPORE

The story of the founding of the first mainstream Buddhist monastery in Singapore revolves around a family of roaming Buddhist monks and nuns. However, in this case, they were Chinese Buddhist pilgrims who had traveled for several years in Sri Lanka and who were persuaded to stay in Singapore, where they stopped on their return trip to China. Low Kim Pong (Liu Jinbang, 1837–1909) donated land and set out to build a monastery (and a nunnery) for them. The mother of the founding monk wrote the following personal account of the tribulations of her family. Unfortunately, the original stele has been lost, but the text was preserved:

I am from Huian county in Quanzhou prefecture [in Fujian, China]. My lay name is Xiao. My entire family united together and sought after the delights of Buddhism. As a result, my two sons became enlightened and floated through life as though it was a dream. They urged us to search out the truths of Buddhism, so in the *renchen* year [1892] I followed along with the entire family of men and women, twelve in all. We sailed by boat to Colombo and spent six years in the mountains in Sri Lanka. When it reached the *wuxu* [1898] year, in the spring we came down from the mountains and traveled all over the Buddhist kingdom. Later, we traveled to Penang and passed by Singapore, planning to return to our home country. We were greeted by the Patron Low, who graciously offered to donate this mountain [property to serve as a monastery]. Therefore, my eldest son, Xian Hui, built the Double Grove Chan Monastery here. He also planned to build a Zhulin [Pearl Gem] Nunnery behind the main hall of the monastery to provide a place for myself, my eldest daughter, Chan Hui, who was also nun, and my niece, Yueguang, who is also nun, so that all three of us could stay together. Unexpectedly, my son Xian Hui suddenly cast away his

body of illusory transformations in the summer of the *xinqiu* year [1901] and entered into the realm of Nirvana. But at this time the construction was not complete, and life seemed to float like a dream: isn't that just the way things are! But since we, mother and son, had already been here for several years, I had a great desire to see the great work completed. Then above we could repay the Buddha's mercy. But now that things have come to this, what am I to say? Now my [second] son, Xing Hui, has already returned to the True, and it is no longer convenient for us three women to remain here. Therefore, I intend to give instructions that my second son Xing Hui's disciple, Great Master Mingguang, should manage what still needs to be done. Only by working hard will he be able to carry on the aspirations of his predecessors. [That he will] not let down the ancestral ways is what I earnest hope for. Now we will take the next boat back to our country, and I cannot help but feel emotional. So I have specially composed these few words and engraved them on fine stone, so that those of you who come passing by will know the origins [of this monastery] and also know that the Pearl Gem Nunnery is the Dharma hall, and the Dharma hall is the nunnery. On an auspicious day in the autumn of Guangxu *renyin* [1902], erected by Nun Cimiao.³³

This touching and very personal inscription reveals that the founding monks of Lianshan Shuanglinsi (Lotus Mountain Double Grove Monastery) were itinerant monastics returning to China from a pilgrimage to Sri Lanka when they encountered the lay Buddhist patron Low Kim Pong. The decision to construct a full-fledged Buddhist monastery in Singapore at this point reflects a desire on the part of leading members of the lay Buddhist Singapore elite to localize Chan Buddhist orders from their founding monasteries in Fujian to Southeast Asia. Other mobile Buddhist monks also took advantage of changing circumstances, including changes in colonial policies toward religious institutions and the Chinese temple network, to set up smaller-scale temples in Singapore.³⁴

THE COLONIAL REGULATION OF RELIGION

Looking back over developments within the Chinese religious sphere in Malaya and Singapore in the nineteenth century, one can see that colonial regulation of Chinese religion from the mid-1850s led to a gradual dismantling of central elements of the Chinese temple system, which combined communal leadership and enforcement in the form of secret societies. These colonial policies resulted in the creation of a new, autonomous category of "religion," as well as the separation among Chinese between a privatized sphere of religion and a public life based ultimately in chambers of commerce. Related colonial policies included the gradual elimination of Chinese cemeteries, the removal of hawkers from

the five-foot ways, and other efforts to improve hygiene and regulate colonial space.³⁵ These transformations were facilitated by the rise of English-educated Chinese in mission schools, British universities, and government service. The rise of Chinese modern nation-state nationalism during the Republican period intensified the rejection of the earlier Chinese temple system among educated elite Chinese leaders.³⁶

It is useful to analyze the impact of colonial conceptions and regulations of religion on the subsequent transformation of the Chinese dialect community temples. These policies were worked out across the British colonies, from colonial statements in India on religious tolerance, to bans in Madras on Thaipusam processions, to clashes in Penang, Hong Kong, and Singapore with secret societies. The colonial knowledge machine was creating and imposing categories as fast as it was absorbing and attempting to assess and categorize perceived new threats (such as the potential for the Kongsì in Borneo to become independent). The following regulations and policy changes enacted across the Straits Settlements had a major impact on Chinese temple networks in Malaya and Singapore as well as in Hong Kong:

- 1856: Penang riot over an opera stage
- 1867: Penang riot featuring feuding “secret societies”
- 1867: Peace Preservation Act: giving British authorities the right to banish undesirable individuals
- 1869: Dangerous Societies Suppression Ordinance: calling for the registration of all “secret societies” but only laxly enforced
- 1877: William Pickering appointed to the Chinese Protectorate in Singapore: working closely with the so-called secret societies, he argued for coordination with the colonial authorities
- 1887: Assassination attempt on Pickering
- 1890: Societies Ordinance Act: declaring sworn brotherhoods completely illegal and criminalizing such groups
- 1891: New prisons built in Singapore
- 1899: Chinese Advisory Board established: encouraging greater cooperation with the colonial authorities
- 1905: Mohammedan and Hindu Endowment Board established to coordinate these religious institutions with colonial authorities
- 1906: Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce established

With the prohibition of secret societies in 1890 (which took place later in Singapore than in Penang and Hong Kong), the enforcement arm of the temple

and clan association business leadership was criminalized. At the same time, British authorities were intruding more and more into the financial side of temple administration. An example of this was noted earlier, in relation to the Guangfu Temple in Penang. An audit in 1890 led to the enforced reorganization of the temple's administrative structure and financial accounting procedures. This audit likely shaped the decision of temple leaders to transfer control over temple finances to the Buddhist monk Miaolian and his Chinese monastic order.

LAST STAND OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY CHINESE TEMPLE SYSTEM

Cheang Hong Lim (Zhang Fanglin, 1842–1892) was one of the preeminent leaders of the Singaporean Chinese community at the end of the nineteenth century. His engagement with the Chinese temple system represents a last effort to hold together the pieces of this rapidly changing system. Cheang was a major partner in the Great Opium Syndicate of 1890s Singapore, a position he inherited from his father, Cheang Sam Teo.³⁷ The vast fortune accumulated by controlling opium sales enabled Cheang to invest in property, diversifying his holdings. Over time, he built or restored six Chinese temples. Cheang first restored the temple established by his father dedicated to an obscure local god from his home region in Fujian called Qingzhen Yuanjun (Primordial Lord of Pure Perfection). He also built a temple at his seaside villa to house a boulder worshiped as an Earth God by local people. Later he restored the Golden Orchid Temple, which was a center of the secret societies of the Hokkien faction. In this context, he attempted to establish rules for this temple to enable its self-regulation, trying to keep a step ahead of colonial regulations forbidding secret societies. He also built a temple to the Jade Emperor, which attempted to transcend dialect boundaries and create the basis for new forms of Chinese leadership and alliances within Singapore. Bound closely to the Qing court and involved in disaster relief programs in Asia and beyond, Cheang received titles and honors from the Chinese imperial court as well as recognition and honors from the colonial authorities and other Asian governments. Most important here is Cheang's role as leader of the Chinese community in Singapore. According to his epitaph, he was regarded as the “chief libationer”—the head ritual specialist—of the entire Chinese community of Singapore. Cheang's activities as a patron of many Chinese temples and societies operated according to the earlier logic of Chinese temple administration marked by nonmonastic control and tight interconnections between ritual and commercial activities. At his death, Cheang was recognized in these terms by many associates and clients, yet this occurred as the Chinese temple system was undergoing massive transformations that eventually led to privileged Buddhist monastic leadership rather than that of nonmonastic entrepreneurs.

THE RISE OF MODERN(IST) TEMPLE LEADERS AND REFORMIST BUDDHIST MONKS

Despite the efforts of figures like Cheang Hong Lim, leadership based in the temples and associations would soon give way to modern forms of nationalism and capitalist networks. More and more, the Chinese leadership in Singapore was drawn into the process of building a Chinese modern nation-state. These leaders turned their energies away from the Chinese temple network that Cheang had worked so hard to preserve. Instead, they were content to allow Buddhist monks to run increasing numbers of monasteries.

Tan Kah Kee (Chen Jiageng, 1874–1961), leader of the Hokkien Huay Guan (native-place association) and founder of the Ee Ho Hean Club, was dedicated to supporting the revolutionary cause in China. He is an example of the new kind of leader who helped to develop newly emerging organizational forms. He raised large sums to support China in the first half of the twentieth century, founding modern educational centers such as Jimei College and Xiamen University. Other Singaporean Chinese leaders of the first half of the twentieth century, such as Lim Boon Keng (1869–1957), were closer to colonial rule, through English schooling in the missionary schools, scholarships to study in England, and government employment and honors. Later in his life, Lim turned to a reformed Confucianism as an alternative to Christianity as well as to Chinese popular religion. Negative attitudes toward Chinese popular religious practices—involving the temple network discussed at length above—can be seen in his editorials published in the leading Singaporean Chinese newspapers at the turn of the century.³⁸

Such attacks led Singaporean Chinese Buddhist leaders to participate in reform movements designed to rationalize Buddhism and make it more compatible with the modern nation-state and its secular modernization projects (including its new definition of religion).³⁹ Taixu (1890–1947) and other Buddhist reform leaders came to Singapore in the Republican period to attempt to counter Japanese propaganda on the unity of the Asian races, the rise of the Pan-Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, and the role of (Japanese state-linked) Buddhism within this vision.⁴⁰ These Chinese Reform Buddhism leaders also had a major impact on local Buddhist organizations within Singapore. They worked with Buddhist monks trained in China (primarily in the Fujian Chan Buddhist monasteries of Quanzhou, Xiamen, and Zhangzhou) to turn the major Buddhist centers in Singapore into centers of modern Reform Buddhism.⁴¹ Reform Buddhism's emphasis on spirituality over ritual and on the cultivation of the self paralleled the emphasis of the Protestant missionaries, who established several mission schools in this period still considered top elite schools in Singapore. One can see these developments as instances of a "conversion to modernity."⁴²

However, the rise of Reform Buddhism was not the only development in Buddhist circles in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Several other more traditional

Buddhist monastic networks had begun to extend into Southeast Asia in the Republican era and up to the early 1950s. One such network linked a series of temples across Southeast Asia to the Guanghuasi (Monastery of Broad Transformations, founded in 558 CE) in Putian. As soon as it was possible to return to China in the early 1980s, monks from this network (including those from the Singapore Guanghuasi) returned with suitcases full of cash to rebuild the Guanghuasi, which had been turned into a plastics factory and where several monks had committed suicide after refusing to eat meat and return to a secular life at the height of the Cultural Revolution.⁴³ Yet another such mainstream or unreformed Buddhist monastic network extends from the Guishansi (Turtle Mountain Monastery) in Huating, Putian, to the Qingyunting in Malacca, and from there to Muar, Penang, Singapore, Jakarta, and elsewhere. This network was able to mobilize related networks of Putian immigrants (spirit mediums, native-place associations, Mazu temples of fishermen/smugglers) to rebuild the founding temple and to use remaining funds to rebuild the home village in Huating of the Buddhist abbot Zhen Jing and to build an even larger temple across the street from the Qingyunting in Malacca.⁴⁴

In the last Singapore census, conducted in 2010, over one million Singaporeans identified themselves as Buddhists.⁴⁵ Given the growing predominance of “socially engaged” or “human realm” Buddhist transnational organizations, such as the Ciji (Merciful Salvation) Foundation, Fagushan (Dharma Drum Mountain), and Foguangshan (Buddha’s Light Mountain International Association) based in Taiwan, the history of twentieth-century Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism is being rewritten as the inevitable triumph of Reform Buddhism.⁴⁶ This narrative leaves out many alternative lineages and developments in the region. Multiple networks link Buddhist monasteries and Chinese temples to their founding sacred sites in South and Southeast China. They provided another key vector for the spread of variant forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism into Southeast Asia within networks of sectarian lay-Buddhist movements.⁴⁷ Several of these networks maintain important but little studied traditions of Buddhist practice. For instance, lay-Buddhist groups in Southeast Asia such as the Xiantian Dao (Way of Prior Heaven) studied by Marjorie Topley set up *zhaijiao* (vegetarian retreat) centers for women. There are currently some thirty temples in Singapore linked to the Xiantian Dao, now under the leadership of the Kwan Im Thong on Waterloo Road.⁴⁸ These “vegetarian associations” were places of refuge for many Cantonese female laborers, spinsters, and orphans who moved to or were born in Singapore in the second half of the nineteenth century. This organization is now one of the wealthiest charities in Singapore.

Another important but more fragmentary network is made up of small nunneries spread across Southeast Asia, which often take in abandoned girls and perform a range of traditional Buddhist practices (reciting scriptures and making offerings to the spirit tablets of the deceased—often a female sponsor of the nunnery). This kind of quasi-private nunnery is also widespread in

Southeast China. A third lay-Buddhist Mahāyāna network is the Chaozhou Shantang (Halls of Merit) dedicated to the worship of the Song Buddhist monk Song Dafeng (1039?–1127?). This network of halls is of interest because most of the ritual activity is performed by the members themselves, without the intercession of Buddhist monks. The members of the temple don special robes and engage in group recitation. Many halls have set up *gongdetang* (halls of merit to worship ancestral tablets) as these tablets are being concentrated in such spaces. Halls of merit have evolved into charities that support medical clinics and other contemporary social needs. They constitute a tight, transnational business network.⁴⁹ These groups and others like them far outnumber the established Buddhist monastic orders or the new Reform Buddhist organizations, and they deserve further study. In such groups, we find that the relationship between Buddhist religious orders and their lay followers is blurred, inviting comparison to Chinese temple networks before their restructuring in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries under British colonial rule.

This chapter has examined transformations in the nature of the Chinese temple network of Southeast Asia from its early founding in the sixteenth century to its expansion in the seventeenth century after the Qing conquest of China and the consolidation of its central role in Chinese overseas life and transnational trust and trade networks in the eighteenth century. The nineteenth century witnessed exponential growth of the network with the sudden influx of laborers and the concomitant proliferation of temples and associations for dialect groups. For several centuries, Chinese temples and native-place business offices provided the main institutional framework for the elaboration of trust networks that facilitated long-distance trade across the Minnan coastal trading system. I have argued that such Chinese temples in Southeast Asia can be considered informal, transpersonal, translocal, networked religious orders, owing to their ties to founding temples in distinct regions of Southeast China and their provision of ritual frameworks for Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. I have also shown how they incorporated within their ritual frameworks representatives of more formal religious orders, such as itinerant Buddhists or Daoist ritual masters, for specialized ritual purposes. Finally, I have traced the rise of independent Chinese Mahāyāna Chan Buddhist monasteries in the Straits Settlements during the late nineteenth century that were linked to ancient founding monasteries in China by formal Buddhist orders of the time. This innovative moment in the Chinese religious life of the Straits Settlements was dependent on changes in colonial policy toward religion and, thus, on the effects that various projects of secularization had on Chinese societies in Southeast Asia.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, colonial authorities began to regulate and redefine Chinese religious institutions by criminalizing their violent enforcement arms and by forcing greater transparency, or at least accountability, in their management and fiscal accounting. These pressures along with

the rise of modern nation-state nationalism and the spread of mixed forms of capitalism in the early twentieth century led many Chinese community leaders to channel their energies more into the emerging Chinese chambers of commerce than into existing temple networks.

We have seen how one Chinese leader in mid-nineteenth-century Singapore, Cheang Hong Lim, struggled to hold together the Chinese temple network framework, while many forces were working to undermine its central role in Chinese life. His life marked the end of an era. By the end of the nineteenth century, mobile Chinese Buddhist monks, moving through Southeast Asia on pilgrimage or in search of support for their home monasteries, took advantage of the opening created by the withdrawal of the Chinese leadership and the redefinition of the Chinese temples by the colonial authorities. Working with local business leaders but offering a complete system of temple management, they raised support for the construction of imposing monasteries. The turn of the twentieth century saw the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the rise of Chinese nationalism in Southeast Asia at precisely the moment that Chinese Mahāyāna monasteries were first established in Penang and Singapore.

These Buddhist monastic networks themselves became a site of contestation lasting into the middle of the twentieth century, as institutional debates led by Reform Buddhists like Taixu in China (in response to the widespread assault on popular religion) led to changes in the operations of Buddhist monasteries in Singapore and Malaya as well. As we have seen, the rise of formal monastic orders in Singapore and Malaya/Malaysia during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries did not lead to a homogenization of Buddhist practice in the region. Many alternative forms of Buddhism, some syncretic and redemptive, others more traditional, continued to develop in Southeast Asia during the twentieth century. The larger Chinese temple network has persisted across time despite substantial changes in leadership and financing that occurred during the period considered here.

In recent decades, many temple communities in Southeast Asia have returned to China, helping to rebuild their founding temples. Hundreds of thousands of temples, monasteries, and ancestral halls have been rebuilt over the past three decades. A great deal of ritual knowledge had been preserved in the Chinese temples of Southeast Asia over the course of the Cultural Revolution, when many ritual traditions, temples, and religious practices were banned in China, in some areas for over two decades if not longer. Thus, the Southeast Asian Chinese temples (along with Taiwanese temples) played a crucial role in reviving, reinventing, and in some cases transforming ritual traditions in Southeast China, including rebuilding temple structures and ancestral halls, a cultural historical phenomenon largely overlooked. In this process, we can trace the role of a complex, historically evolved, transnational network of branch temples, native-place associations, ancestral halls, common surname associations, and Buddhist monasteries and lay movements scattered across Southeast

Asia. As these temple networks evolve and generate new possibilities, they will continue to draw in and circulate more flows of people, ritual knowledge, and capital, and develop new potentials for the expression of new identities and new aspirations within simultaneously transnational and localized circuits.

NOTES

1. For more on the spread of Theravāda Buddhism, see Stanley Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Richard Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988); Donald Swearer, *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011); Anne M. Blackburn, *Locations of Buddhism: Colonialism and Modernity in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

2. Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450–1680*, vol. 2: *Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

3. For further discussion of seventeenth-century Chinese Mahāyāna Chan missionary activity linking South China to Vietnam, see Claudine Salmon, “Réfugiés Ming dans les Mers du sud vus à travers diverses inscriptions (ca. 1650–ca. 1730),” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 90–91 (2003): 177–227; Charles Wheeler, “Missionary Buddhism in a Post-Ancient World: Monks, Merchants, and Colonial Expansion in Seventeenth Century Cochinchina (Vietnam),” in *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian Ocean Realm, c. 1400–1800*, edited by Kenneth Hall (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2008), pp. 205–230; Charles Wheeler, “Buddhism in the Re-ordering of an Early Modern World: Chinese Missions to Cochinchina in the Seventeenth Century,” *Journal of Global History* 3 (2007): 303–324; Charles Wheeler, “Re-thinking the Sea in Vietnamese History: Littoral Society in the Integration of Thuan-Quang, Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37.1 (2006): 123–153; Charles Wheeler, “A Maritime Logic to Vietnamese History? Hoi An’s Trading World, c. 1550–1830,” in *Seascapes, Littoral Cultures and Trans-Oceanic Exchanges*, conference proceedings (Washington, DC: Library of Congress—The History Cooperative, 2003); Thich Thien-An, *Buddhism and Zen in Vietnam in Relation to the Development of Buddhism in Asia* (Rutland, VT: Charles Tuttle, 1975).

4. See Kenneth Dean and Hue Guan Thye, *Chinese Epigraphy in Singapore: 1819–1911* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016).

5. The concept of “trust networks” is drawn from the works of Charles Tilly, e.g., *Trust and Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See also Kenneth Dean, “Ritual Revolutions,” *Encounters: An International Journal for the Study of Culture and Society* 4 (2011): 17–42.

6. Wang Gungwu, “Merchants without Empires: The Hokkien Sojourning Communities,” in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World*, edited by James Tracy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 400–422.

7. “Before the nineteenth century . . . religious knowledge and authority were differentially distributed, not only among several institutions and categories of clerics, but also among the laypersons who controlled most temples, forming highly complex social fields that did not include an autonomous space designated as ‘religion.’” Vincent Goossaert and

David Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 10.

8. Chinese popular religion (or local communal religion) blends Confucian morality with the worship of multiple deities, many with a Daoist derivation. Buddhist deities, especially Guanyin and the Goddess of Mercy, were often worshiped within these temples as well. For an account of the social organization and roles of the Three Teachings (Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism) within Chinese popular religion, see Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*, pp. 22–23.

9. The home altars of the Zhengyi (Orthodox Unity) order of Daoist ritual masters contrast with the monastic orders of the Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) tradition. The latter tradition did not move to Southeast Asia until recent decades. Qing dynasty standard Chinese literary sources do not show a clear understanding of the technical terms relating to specific Daoist or Buddhist orders. See Vincent Goossaert, *The Taoists of Peking, 1800–1949: A Social History of Urban Clerics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007). These issues were of importance only within Daoist and Buddhist circles, however.

10. Kenneth Dean, *Taoist Rituals and Popular Cults of Southeast China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

11. Wang, *Merchants without Empires*.

12. This raises the important question of the position of the Chinese lineage within Southeast Asian Chinese society. Given the presence of dialect communities from many different regions of the southern and southeastern coast of China, there is no single common regional culture to provide integrated cultural unity in Singapore or elsewhere in the Straits Settlements. Whereas in the regional cultures of Fujian or Guangdong, powerful localized lineages linked up with prominent Daoist ritual masters and Buddhist monks to constrain new local forms of religious authority (such as locally based spirit mediums), this is not the case in Singapore and much of Southeast Asia, where spirit mediums have much more room to maneuver. In the classic model of the Chinese family lineage, in theory, the most important ritual role is assigned to the eldest son of the first line of descent (*zhangzi*). Such a role is a ritual function passed down within a lineage hierarchy. However, in practice, such rules of ritual priority were often bent or ignored, especially in Southeast Asia, where lineage forms were much more flexible than in South China. See P. Steven Sangren, “Traditional Chinese Corporations: Beyond Kinship,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 43.3 (1984): 391–415. Some immigrant lineages mutated into temple communities, and others developed networks by combining into common surname groups and inventing a common ancestor. Rukang Tien, *The Chinese of Sarawak: A Study of Social Structure* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 1953).

13. Carl Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800–1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

14. The key Western sources on secret societies and Triads have been republished in a five-volume set. See Kingsley Bolton and Christopher Hutton, eds., *Triad Societies: Western Accounts of the History, Sociology and Linguistics of Chinese Secret Societies*, 5 vols. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). For evolving academic views on the role of the secret societies, see Ching-hwang Yen, *A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya, 1800–1911* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986); David Ownby and Mary Somer Heidhues, eds., “Secret Societies” *Reconsidered: Perspectives on the Social History of Modern South China and Southeast Asia* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993); David Ownby, *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in Early and Ming-Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996);

Jean DeBernardi, *Rites of Belonging: Memory, Modernity and Identity in a Malaysian Chinese Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). These groups practice elaborate initiations with complex ritual symbolism. While ter Haar demonstrates the continuities between the Triad “demonological” ritual paradigms and broader Chinese religious cosmology, Ownby places “brotherhoods” into the broader context of Chinese social institutions as self-help organizations for marginalized groups of young men. Barend ter Haar, *Ritual and Mythology of the Chinese Triads: Creating an Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

15. For compilations of Chinese epigraphic materials, see Ts’ung-i Jao, “Chronological Study of Some Chinese Tablet Inscriptions in Malaysia and Singapore” (in Chinese), *Shumu jikan* 5.12 (1970): 3–33; Chingho Chen and Tan Yoek Seong, *Xinjiapo huawen beiming jilu* (A collection of the Chinese inscriptions in Singapore) (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1970); Wolfgang Franke and Ch’en Tieh-fan, eds., *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Malaysia*, 3 vols. (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaysia Press, 1980–1985); Wolfgang Franke, with the collaboration of Claudine Salmon and Anthony Siu and with the assistance of Hu Juyun and Teo Lee Kheng, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, 3 vols. (Singapore: Nanyang xuehui, 1988–1997); Wolfgang Franke, ed., *Taiguo Huawen mingke huibian* (Chinese epigraphic materials in Thailand) (Taipei: Xinwen fengchu bangongsi, Minguo 87 [1998]); Kenneth Dean and Zheng Zhenman, *Ritual Alliances*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2010); Kenneth Dean and Zheng Zhenman, *Epigraphical Materials on the History of Religion in Fujian: The Quanzhou Region*, 3 vols. (Fuzhou: Fujian Peoples Publishing House, 2003); Kenneth Dean and Zheng Zhenman, *Epigraphical Materials on the History of Religion in Fujian*, vol. 1: *The Xinghua Region* (Fuzhou: Fujian Peoples Publishing House, 1995); Dean and Hue, *Chinese Epigraphy in Singapore*. For records of eminent Buddhist monks, see *Nanyou yunshui qing: Fojiao dage hongfa Xingma jishi 1888–2005* (Record of Chinese Buddhist missionaries to the South [lit., Feelings provoked by clouds and water in the southern journey]: Record of the great deeds of virtue in the spreading of the Dharma to Malaysia and Singapore, 1888–2005) (Penang: Poh Oo Toong Temple, 2010). These and other sources make it possible to trace some of the lines of development of a complex network of heterogeneous Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions, including the rise of twentieth-century Reform Buddhism. The 1923 *Gazetteer of the Penang Crane Mountain Jile Monastery* (10 *juan*), compiled by (Wei) Bao Ci, is one of the most complete early sources available for the establishment of the first Mahāyāna Buddhist monastery in Malaya. Chen Zhakang and Monk Baoci, *Gazetteer of the Penang Crane Mountain Jile Monastery* (Jiangsu: Guangling guji keyinshe, [1923] 1996); see also Baoci, *Heshan Jilesi zhi* (Gazetteer of the Crane Mountain Monastery of Extreme Joy) (Penang: Jilesi, 1923).

16. Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600–1400* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2003); Tansen Sen, “The Intricacies of Premodern Asian Connections,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 69.4 (2010): 991–999.

17. These are recorded in Dean and Zheng, *Epigraphical Materials*.

18. Claudine Salmon, “Cultural Links between Insulindian Chinese and Fujian as Reflected in Two Late 17th-Century Epigraphs,” *Archipel* 73 (2007): 167–194.

19. Salmon, “Réfugiés Ming.”

20. *Ibid.*

21. Franke and Ch’en, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials*.

22. François Froger, “Relation du premier voyage des Français à la Chine en 1698–1700,” manuscript preserved at the Bibliothèque d’Ajuda in Lisbon, with fifteen maps and plans, including one of the layout of the Qingyunting temple. See Salmon, “Réfugiés Ming.”

23. Franke and Ch'en, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials*, vol. 1., p. 241.

24. More recently, in the mid-twentieth century, a group of Buddhist monks from the Guishansi (Turtle Mountain Monastery) in Huating near Putian, Fujian, established themselves within the Qingyunting. Disciples of the first monks from the Guishansi went on to establish branch temples in Muar, a port town some 100 kilometers to the south. In the 1990s, third-generation monks from this lineage gathered resources from across a wide range of Putian (Henghua) immigrant networks to rebuild the Guishansi in Putian. Additional funds were used to build the Xianglinsi Monastery of the Fragrant Grove across the street from the Qingyunting, and additional leftover funds were used to rebuild the entire home village (Yuantou cun) of the monk in charge of this project, Master Zhenjing. See Dean and Zheng, *Ritual Alliances*.

25. The texts blocks quoted below have been published in Dean and Hue, *Chinese Epigraphy*, chaps. 3–4.

26. Kenneth Dean, *Lord of the Three in One: The Spread of a Cult in Southeast Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), chap. 4.

27. Wang Tanfa, "Huanchu 'Xiangzi' du zhongsheng: cong wenwu beiming tantuo 18, 19 shiji Malu jia haixia sanchi de Hua seng hudong" (Exchanging "incense salary" for saving souls: A discussion of the activities of Chinese monks in the three Straits Settlements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from stone inscriptions) (online publication, 2004), <http://www.xiao-en.org/cultural/magazine.asp?cat=34&loc=zh&id=662> (accessed January 21, 2013).

28. Franke and Chen, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials*, p. 532. J. D. Vaughan visited this temple in 1851 and commented that the monks there were mostly from Fujian, as were those he had seen in Singapore. Their funding mostly consisted of donations, but they could make a dollar by taking part in a funeral. They also received a dollar from every theater company that performed before the temple. Moreover, Vaughan was not impressed by the level of literacy or doctrinal knowledge of the Buddhist monks he encountered. See J. D. Vaughan, *The Manners and Customs of the Chinese of the Straits Settlements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). This is the same temple that sent out the Chan master Kun Shan to Malacca some sixty years earlier, and it later sent Master Fachuan to Singapore, where he played an important role in the founding of the Guangmingshan Monastery. Penang is also the site of the tomb of a monk from Fujian dated to the seventh lunar month of 1854: "Chan Master of Xibin, Sramana Shun Ji of Kaiyuan(si)" (Jao, "Chronological Study").

29. *Penang Gazette Strait Chronicle*, February 2, 1888.

30. Franke and Ch'en, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials*, pp. 662–664.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 652–658.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 652–658. Miaolian is a controversial figure in the historiography of modern Buddhism. For a detailed account of the transmission of yet another set of the Buddhist *Tripitaka* by Master Xuyun from 1907 to 1910, starting from Beijing, then to Xiamen, and then by boat to Thailand, Penang, and Rangoon, and finally by land across Burma to a monastery on Jizu Mountain in Yunnan, see Xuyun, *Empty Cloud: The Autobiography of the Chinese Zen Master Xu Yun*, translated by Charles Luk, revised and edited by Richard Hunn (Shaftesbury: Element Books, 1988), pp. 94–119. Master Xuyun had been ordained by Master Miaolian, and he brought Miaolian's relics back with him to the Jilesi on this trip. For Miaolian's fundraising efforts in Taiwan, see Hsuan-Li Wang, "Gushan: The Formation of a Chan Lineage during the Seventeenth Century and Its Spread to Taiwan" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2014).

33. Kenneth Dean and Hue Guan Thye, *Chinese Epigraphy of Singapore: 1819–1911*, 2 vols. (Singapore: National University Press, 2017), p. 1127.

34. For an account of the regulation of Hindu and Islamic religious institutions under British colonial administrations, see Vineeta Sinha, *Religion State Encounters in Hindu Domains: From the Straits Settlements to Singapore* (Dordrecht and New York: Springer, 2011). On the establishment of Theravāda religious institutions in Singapore, see Anne M. Blackburn, “Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore: New Ritual Spaces and Specialists, 1895–1935,” ARI Working Papers Series 184 (National University of Singapore, 2012).

35. Brenda S. A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations in the Urban Built Environment* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012 [1996]).

36. For an insightful and in-depth analysis of the transformations of the Chinese temple and ritual system in Penang under the impact of forces of modernity, nationalism, and the hardening of ethnic boundaries, see DeBernardi, *Rites of Belonging*.

37. This section is based on Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, 116; Chen Zhakang and Monk Baoqi, *Gazetteer of the Penang Crane Mountain Jile Monastery*.

38. On the changing discursive field in China and sinophone regions in the later nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, characterized by attacks on clericism, superstition, popular religion, and finally Buddhism, as well Daoism’s role in supposedly preventing the modernization of China, see Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*.

39. Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*, pp. 201–209.

40. On Taixu, see Don A. Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu’s Reforms* (Honolulu: Hawai’i University Press, 2001). On the period more broadly, see Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Holmes Welch, *Buddhism in China: 1900–1969* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

41. Khun Eng Kuah-Pierce, *Rebuilding the Ancestral Village: Singaporeans in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011 [1993]).

42. See the discussion of this concept in Peter van der Veer, *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

43. Dean and Zheng, *Ritual Alliances*.

44. Dean, “Ritual Revolutions,” p. 15.

45. Kenneth Dean, “Parallel Universe: The Chinese Temples of Singapore,” in *Handbook of Asian Cities and Religion*, edited by Peter van der Veer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), pp. 257–289.

46. For a more critical perspective, see Julia C. Huang, *Charisma and Compassion: Cheng Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

47. Another recent movement that has spread across Southeast Asia from its base in Taiwan is the Yiguandao. Francis Lim has examined the range of Yiguandao activities in Singapore. See Francis Lim, “‘We Are Not a Religion’: Secularization and the Religious Territory of the Yiguan Dao (Unity Way) in Singapore,” in *Proselytizing and the Limits of Religious Pluralism in Asia*, edited by Julian Finucane and Michael Feener (Singapore: Springer, 2014).

48. See Marjorie Topley, *Cantonese Society in Hong Kong and Singapore: Gender, Religion, Medicine, and Money*, edited by Jean DeBernardi (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011).

49. Lee Chee Hiang, “Charity, Ritual and Business Networks of the Teochew Charity Halls in Singapore,” *Asian Culture* 33 (2009): 37–55; Tan Chee Beng, “*Shantang*: Charitable Temples in China, Singapore and Malaysia,” *Asian Ethnology* 71.1 (2012): 75–107.