

IX ‘Buddhism’ in Singapore*

VIVIENNE WEE

INTRODUCTION

BUDDHISM is generally considered to be one of the major religions, if not *the* major religion of multiracial Singapore. But on closer examination, one discovers that the word ‘Buddhism’ is actually used as a religious label¹ by a variety of people in Singapore whose religious practices and beliefs do not necessarily correspond to those prescribed by the Buddhist scriptures. For this reason, the word ‘Buddhism’ appears in quotation marks in this paper whenever it refers to the Singaporean variety.

About 50 per cent of Singapore’s population declare themselves to be ‘Buddhists’.² But despite their usage of a single religious label, the ‘Buddhists’ of Singapore do not in fact share a unitary religion. As we shall see, ‘Buddhism’ in Singapore shows such a range of beliefs, practices and institutions that it can be structured analytically into distinct and separate religious systems. Some of these systems are in belief and practice so distant from Buddhism proper that any discussion of them seems to be out of place in a paper on Buddhism. These seemingly non-Buddhistic systems must also be considered here because in Singapore the practitioners of such religious systems declare themselves to be ‘Buddhists’ and their religion to be ‘Buddhism’. Consequently parts of this essay are only nominally about Buddhism.

In order to gauge which of the many ‘Buddhist’ systems in Singapore are the more properly Buddhist, it is useful to consider to what extent each system is related to the Buddhist canon, as this reflects upon the nature of that particular ‘Buddhist’ system itself. The following diagram shows the links between the different ‘Buddhist’ systems in Singapore and the Buddhist canon.

*The analysis presented in this chapter must be regarded as tentative, since the field research on which it is based is still continuing. I would like to thank Geoffrey Benjamin, Hans-Dieter Evers and Ku Cheng Mei for their many critical comments; they are, however, not responsible for any faults that remain. The fieldwork was financed in part by the WHO Ethnographic Survey of Singapore. Chinese words are romanized according to the system currently employed in China.

FIGURE 1

<i>Extant school of Buddhist teaching</i>	<i>Corresponding 'Buddhist' system in Singapore</i>
Theravada or Hinayana ³	Sinhalese, Thai, Vietnamese, ⁴ etc.
Mahayana	Chinese
Tantrayana	—
—	Chinese syncretic religions with Buddhist elements

'Buddhist' systems in Singapore thus fall into two general categories:

1. Those which refer directly to specific Buddhist canonical traditions, in this case Theravada and Mahayana.
2. Those which have no direct Buddhist canonical reference.

I shall deal separately with these two categories in the body of this essay.

Since Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism must be considered to be more legitimately Buddhist than the Chinese syncretic religions, all further references to the Theravada and Mahayana forms in this paper will not be enclosed in quotation marks. The word 'Buddhism' in quotation marks will accordingly be used (1) to refer to the so-called 'Buddhist' systems which are not directly derived from the Buddhist scriptures and (2) to refer to the totality of 'Buddhist' systems in Singapore, including within this totality the more properly canonical Theravada and Mahayana.

It is also useful to consider the relationship between each 'Buddhist' system and the ethnic or social group(s) with which it is associated. The two ethnic communities in Singapore associated as such with any 'Buddhist' system are the Sinhalese and the Chinese. The Sinhalese form of Buddhism is associated with the Sinhalese community and some of the Chinese; and among the latter it is particularly associated with the Babas⁵ and the English-educated. The other 'Buddhist' systems are associated only with the Chinese. There is no Thai or Vietnamese community of any significance in Singapore, so that, even though Thai and Vietnamese Buddhist temples are manned by Thai and Vietnamese monks respectively, these forms of Buddhism cater to a Chinese laity, to the same extent as do Chinese Buddhism and the Chinese syncretic religions. Thus 'Buddhism' in all its variety is a religious phenomenon primarily associated with the Chinese.

This means that most, if not all, of the 'Buddhist' systems as practised in Singapore must be considered in the larger context of Chinese religious behaviour.⁶ In fact, for a significant number of Singaporean 'Buddhists', the word 'Buddhism' refers simply to Chinese Religion. The nature of

Chinese Religion will be discussed below. For the moment, we shall just note that Chinese Religion is a religion in the sense of being 'a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic' (Geertz, 1966: 4).

Even though for many Singaporean 'Buddhists' the term 'Buddhism' means Chinese Religion, 'Buddhism' as a religious phenomenon cannot be reduced merely to Chinese Religion.⁷ Singapore 'Buddhism' can only be understood in a dialectical framework: it is on the one hand 'Buddhism' as Canonical Buddhism and on the other hand 'Buddhism' as Chinese Religion. Figure 1 has already shown the various forms in which Canonical Buddhism is represented in Singapore.

In contrast, 'Buddhism' *qua* Chinese Religion includes (1) the Chinese syncretic religions with Buddhist elements, and (2) the representative forms of Canonical Buddhism (Thai, Chinese, etc.), which must from this perspective be considered as part of Chinese Religion. A possible exception, however, is Sinhalese Buddhism, which is set somewhat apart from the other 'Buddhist' systems because it has a reformist nature, and because it serves the Sinhalese community, thereby bringing about something of an ethnic divide. The greatest structural distance, therefore, is between Sinhalese Buddhism and the Chinese syncretic religions: the former falls almost wholly within the realm of Canonical Buddhism, and the latter almost wholly within the realm of Chinese Religion.⁸ The other 'Buddhist' systems fall somewhere between these two poles, partaking of both Canonical Buddhism and Chinese Religion.

Language is another variable to be considered, particularly with regard to the relationship between each type of 'Buddhism' and the language or languages used in communication between its religious specialists and the laity. English is used in both the Theravada and Mahayana forms of Singaporean 'Buddhism', but not in the Chinese syncretic religions. Hokkien⁹ is used in the Thai, Vietnamese, and Chinese forms of Buddhism and in the Chinese syncretic religions, but not in Sinhalese Buddhism. There is thus a dual pattern with two *linguae francae*: English and Hokkien.¹⁰ Again, there is no overlap between Sinhalese Buddhism and the Chinese syncretic religions. Besides English and Hokkien, the following languages are also used: in Sinhalese Buddhism, Sinhalese and Malay; in Thai Buddhism, Teochew, some Thai and some Malay; in Chinese Buddhism, Mandarin and the other Chinese languages; in the Chinese syncretic religions, Chinese languages such as Cantonese and Henghua.¹¹

It should be noted that no two 'Buddhist' systems share the same combination of languages. This may be taken as an indication that each of the 'Buddhist' systems in Singapore is adapted to its own particular sociocultural niche. This further implies that if 'Buddhism'

were to exist in Singapore as a reality, and not just as a loosely used label, then there must be bridging institutions to close the gaps between the various 'Buddhist' systems. Later I shall discuss the question whether there is some unity underlying the diversity of 'Buddhist' systems.

CANONICAL BUDDHISM IN SINGAPORE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, THEOLOGY, INSTITUTIONS, PERSONNEL

Historical background

Canonical Buddhism did not come to Singapore as a world religion finding converts among animistic people. A significant number of the early migrants were already 'Buddhist' in one sense or another when they arrived in Singapore. There was thus a ready-made laity for the Canonical Buddhist systems that were later to become institutionalized.

Of these, Chinese Buddhism may be considered to have the longest history, for it was brought in as part of Chinese traditional beliefs. One of the oldest Chinese Buddhist temples¹² in Singapore dates from 1840. But there are some who would disagree with giving Chinese Buddhism such an early date of institutionalization, one reason being that many, if not all, of the old Chinese Buddhist temples were originally built not as Buddhist temples but as Chinese temples of one sort or another, and were later converted into more properly Buddhist temples. According to this view, Chinese Buddhism (as distinct from Chinese traditional beliefs) did not arrive until the 1900s, or to be even more specific, until the 1920s with the arrival of certain Chinese monks.¹³ In any case, even if Chinese Buddhism as such was not institutionalized until a relatively late date, syncretized Buddhist elements were certainly present much earlier in many of the other Chinese religions.

The other canonical systems arrived in Singapore more recently. The first Sinhalese Buddhist temple was established about forty-five years ago, and the first Thai Buddhist temple in the 1920s. Sinhalese Buddhism was brought in not only by Sinhalese migrants but also by Sinhalese soldiers then serving in the British Army, who were stationed in Singapore. The introduction of Thai Buddhism may perhaps be explained in part by the geographical proximity of Kelantan and Thailand to Singapore, and in part by the missionary tradition of Thai Buddhism.

Theology

The canonical systems are, to quite a large extent, reflections of Buddhist philosophy. The contents of the Buddhist canon cannot be discussed here in any great depth. Suffice it to say that the canon certainly does not contain a homogeneous, contradiction-free body of doctrines. In fact, it would be more accurate to talk of 'Buddhist

canons' in the plural, but for convenience I shall treat the Buddhist scriptures as if they all belonged to a unified collection, that is 'a canon': what I discuss here is not the inner contradictions of Buddhist philosophy but 'Buddhism' as it is practised in Singapore.

However, I shall discuss briefly the similarities and differences between Mahayana and Theravada as systems of Buddhist theology so as to throw some light on them as systems of *practice* in Singapore. The school of Mahayana Buddhism discussed here is the Pure Land School, which is the closest to Mahayana practice in Singapore. Among the tenets shared by Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism are:

1. Life is basically sorrowful; deliverance from sorrow is possible only through the extinction of all desire, which is the foundation of life.
2. Deeds performed in this life result in the birth of another being—a god, a human being, a demon, or an animal, depending on the kind of deeds. This is known as 'rebirth'.
3. The perceived world is non-essential, and the empirical person is no more than a complex of soulless factors, which are known as the 'Five Groups of Grasping'.
4. Truth is imparted to unenlightened beings by buddhas, who are variously considered as 'human teachers, supermen or transcendent beings' (Schumann, 1973: 94).

But there are also substantial theological differences between Theravada and Mahayana; I note here only those that are more relevant to this discussion.

1. In contrast to Theravada, the Mahayana has the concept of an Eternal Absolute which is manifest under a great variety of names. Sakyamuni Gautama Buddha is considered in the Mahayana as one of these manifestations. 'In the Hinayana he is regarded as a natural man and teacher, at the most a superman' (Schumann, 1973: 92).
2. The Mahayanins also believe it is possible to be delivered from suffering through outside assistance or 'other-power' (Schumann, 1973: 92). The Theravadins, however, believe that liberation is possible only through one's own efforts.
3. The immediate goal of Theravada Buddhism is to reach personal extinction, *nibbāna*. In Mahayana Buddhism, however, there is the intermediate goal of Bodhisattvahood, in which an enlightened being postpones his own *nibbāna* in order to lead all sentient beings to liberation. In Mahayana Buddhism one's own *nibbāna* is of secondary importance.

Given the theological similarities and differences of Theravada and Mahayana, it is easier to understand the paradoxical situation whereby Theravadins and Mahayanins both claim each other as fellow Buddhists and yet see each other as rivals.

The theological differences between Theravada and Mahayana are reflected in a number of ways in Canonical Buddhism as it is practised in Singapore.

1. The difference between Theravada and Mahayana temples in Singapore is strikingly clear. The Theravada temples usually contain only one important object of worship (or 'respect' as many Theravadins would prefer to say), namely, the image of Sakyamuni Gautama Buddha. The bodhi tree is also an object of significance in Theravada temple grounds. In contrast, the Mahayana temples contain a multitude of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, which are the myriad manifestations of the Eternal Absolute; Sakyamuni Gautama Buddha is just one of these manifestations. In fact, in some Mahayana temples, the images of Amitabha Buddha (Mandarin: Āmítuófó 阿彌陀佛) and the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (known in Chinese Buddhism as *Guānyīn* 觀音) are more important than the image of Sakyamuni Gautama.

2. In the theology of Mahayana Buddhism, the belief in the possibility of deliverance through 'other-power' is closely linked to the idea of the compassionate Bodhisattvas. Since there are Bodhisattvas who want 'to lead *all* beings to liberation' (Schumann, 1973: 92), it follows that there are unenlightened beings who could and would be led by them.

Of the many Mahayana Bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara (or *Guānyīn*) is by far the most popular in Singapore. There are many who appeal to her in her various manifestations for help on the arduous road to liberation. Mahayana monks and laity alike talk unashamedly of praying to *Guānyīn* for protection against evil, for help in keeping one's heart pure and free of desires, for guidance in meditation, etc. But I know of no Theravadin in Singapore who would pray to *Guānyīn* for help of this kind; and if any Theravadin should pray to *Guānyīn* in this manner, he would almost certainly feel uneasy about it, as such an act would be inconsistent with Theravada theology. Most of the Theravada monks, in fact, reject out of hand the Mahayana idea of the Bodhisattva.

3. The Theravada Buddhists in Singapore often say that Mahayana Buddhism is a distortion of the teachings of Sakyamuni Gautama Buddha. The Mahayana Buddhists, on the other hand, say that the Theravada Buddhists are selfish for they care only about their personal *nibbāna*. Some of my Mahayanin informants even go so far as to say that the word 'Hinayana' (meaning 'Small Vehicle') is an indication of the pettiness of the Hinayanins' religious goal. ('Mahayana' means 'Great Vehicle'.¹⁴⁾ The Mahayana idea of Bodhisattvahood could be taken as an illustration of the disagreement between the Theravada and the Mahayana. For the Theravadins, the Mahayana Bodhisattvahood is a notion foreign to the teachings of Sakyamuni Gautama Buddha. For the Mahayanins, the Bodhisattva is the highest symbol of compassion (or 'loving-kindness' as some Mahayanins would prefer to put it), an emotion of great significance in Mahayana Buddhism.

Institutions

Though theological differences are important, they are not fully

reflected in the institutions and practice of Buddhism as found today in Singapore. A national style always intervenes, and all Buddhist institutions in Singapore follow a pattern based upon the nationality of the founding monk. It is possible to distinguish the following national styles: Sinhalese, Thai, Vietnamese, Burmese, and Chinese, the first four being Theravada and the last Mahayana. Hence Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism do not exist in Singapore in a pure and unadulterated form, but only as they have been interpreted by the different national traditions which are made available by the monks and nuns of different nationalities resident in Singapore.

Despite the importance of the religious specialists, there is no self-perpetuating Sangha¹⁵ in Singapore, and ordination services are very rarely held. This applies to all the forms of Canonical Buddhism. Thus, a fair number of Buddhist religious specialists are foreigners, and almost all those who have Singapore citizenship have been ordained abroad.

There is, however, a so-called 'Singapore Buddhist Sangha Organisation' which includes both Mahayana and Theravada religious specialists. But membership is a matter of choice, and not all Buddhist religious specialists in Singapore are members. The function of the organisation is not to ordain newly recruited monks or nuns, but to maintain communication and coordinate activities between the religious specialists of different nationalities and different canonical traditions. The Sangha Organisation does not constitute a central authority, for individual temples have almost full autonomy in their organization and activities.

The temple seems to be the most important organizational unit of Canonical Buddhism in Singapore. The Mahayana temples far outnumber the Theravada ones. The exact number of Mahayana temples is not known, but it is in the region of a few hundred. This information is difficult to ascertain not only because of the sheer number of Mahayana temples but also because of their vague character. The difficulty may be phrased thus: it is relatively easy to recognize a Theravada temple by its inscriptions and its architectural and iconographical features; it is also relatively easy to tell the difference between a Theravada and Mahayana temple by the same criteria; it is difficult, however, to differentiate consistently between a proper Mahayana temple and a temple belonging to the other Chinese religions.

The main difference between Theravada and Mahayana temples in Singapore is that, whereas the Theravada temples have non-Chinese origins, the Mahayana temples are of Chinese origin. There are thus two broad categories of temples in Singapore: (1) non-Chinese, that is, all Theravada temples; and (2) Chinese, including Mahayana and other Chinese temples, 'Buddhist' or otherwise.

Frequently, the name of a temple enables one to identify the category to which it belongs. The names of the Theravada temples when written

in Latin script are recognizably of Sanskrit or Pali origin; for example there are names such as 'Mangala Vihara', 'The Anandametyaram Temple', 'Sattha Puchaniyaram Buddhist Temple', and so on. However, the transcribed names of the Chinese temples are derived from an obviously Chinese form; examples are 'Beeh Low See Temple' 'Chee Toh Aun', 'Fuk Tak T'ong', and so on.

To make the matter even more confusing, some of the Theravada temples have adopted Chinese names, in the fashion of the Chinese temples. For example, the Chinese name of the Mangala Vihara, one of the two Sinhalese temples in Singapore, is *Zhōfú Sì* 祝福寺, a name not significantly different from that of any Chinese temple. Hence the names of the temples as written in Chinese script are no guide to the category to which they belong.

The architectural features of a temple may also be used to decide whether it is Chinese or non-Chinese. Almost all the Chinese temples show at least one or two features distinctive of Chinese architecture such as a tiled roof turned up at the corners, round supporting pillars and an orientation towards the centre in the layout of the temple. The Theravada temples, on the other hand, are clearly based on Thai or Sinhalese architecture, as the case may be. Another feature worth noting is that the icons on display in Chinese temples are almost always more numerous and more varied than the icons in the Theravada temples.

I have so far focused on the differences between Theravada temple and Chinese temples. It is, however, much more difficult to distinguish a Mahayana temple from a temple belonging to some other Chinese religion; the Chinese syncretic religions have borrowed considerably from Mahayana Buddhism, and Mahayana Buddhism in China has in turn become very much Sinicized. Also, as I mentioned earlier, many of the present-day Mahayana temples were originally built as temples of other Chinese religions and were only later converted into Mahayana temples.

My criterion for the recognition of a Mahayana temple is the actual or potential presence there of a Mahayana monk or nun. This is not an arbitrary decision, as there are some Chinese temples a monk or nun would not even enter, much less reside in. (These include all the spirit-medium temples, since spirit-mediumship is ideologically incompatible with Buddhist principles.)

To illustrate the difficulties of identifying Mahayana temples, I shall describe some of my fieldwork encounters. In a number of cases temple attendants of the same temple have given different answers when asked whether or not their temple was Buddhist. In one case, a temple attendant stated that her particular temple was not a Buddhist one because there were no resident monks. When I went on to ask her what were the main images in the temple, she told me 'Sakyamuni Buddha and the Bodhisattva *Guānyīn*', without feeling that there was any contradiction.

in her statements.

Chinese temples in Singapore may thus be placed on the following continuum:

Unambiguously Mahayana temples (that is, those with resident monk or nun)	Temples that are ambiguous in character	Unambiguously non-Mahayana temples (that is, spirit-medium temples)
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Though it may be possible to give a formal definition of a temple applicable to Theravada countries, it does not seem to be so for Singapore. For example, according to one opinion, a Theravada temple must have a *sima* area that has been consecrated by the Sangha.¹⁶ But in Singapore, even those Theravada religious buildings without *sima* areas are called 'temples'. Of the Theravada temples in Singapore the most numerous and the most varied are the Thai temples, which range from big temples such as the Anandametyaram Temple¹⁷ to temples little more than renovated huts, such as the Wat Uttamayamuni.¹⁸ There are also Thai temples which have developed systems of 'head' and 'branch' temples. One example is the Wat Palelai, which has opened a new and bigger temple, while retaining its old 'head temple'. One Thai temple, the Sakyamuni Gaya Temple, is better known as a tourist sightseeing spot than as a place of worship; there are no monks residing there and the only rituals are those performed by the occasional Buddhist tourist.¹⁹

There are two Sinhalese temples in Singapore: the Sri Lanka Ramaya, which attends primarily to the needs of Sinhalese Buddhists in Singapore, and the Mangala Vihara, which attends primarily to the needs of a Baba and English-educated Chinese community. Thus the Sinhalese temples have rather well-defined congregations.²⁰ In contrast, the Thai temples' congregations are not so well defined; but chanting and dharma classes, youth circles and other kinds of association are also organized.

To my knowledge, there is only one Vietnamese Theravada temple, the Sattha Puchaniyaram Buddhist temple. The resident monk is a Chinese from Vietnam, and the ethnic factor may have aided in the establishment of this temple. There is also one Burmese temple, which was founded by a Burmese folk-healer who has since died, leaving first his wife and now his son as successors. It is possible that Burmese Buddhism proper could yet be instituted, since there is already some kind of Burmese 'Buddhist' establishment maintained, apparently, with the approval of the Burmese government.

With the exception of the Sakyamuni Gaya Temple and the Burmese temple, there is at least one resident monk or nun in all the Theravada and Mahayana temples of Singapore. The resident monk or nun of a particular temple is not subordinate to anyone and is free to run the temple as he or she wishes. In the case of the Thai temples, there is a district head monk for Malaysia and Singapore who resides in Penang.

It is among his functions to grant permission for ordinations to be held. However, he has little control over the day-to-day running of the Thai temples in Singapore.

Despite the autonomy of individual temples, there are linkages between them. The Mahayana Buddhist temples are linked to one another via their association with a loose network of semi-secular Mahayana Buddhist organizations which overlap in membership and function. Such organizations generally include as members both the religious specialists and the laity. Examples are the Buddhist Union, the Chinese Buddhist Association, and the Singapore Buddhist Federation. Besides these, there are also Buddhist free clinics, homes for the aged, vegetarian restaurants, Buddhist schools, Buddhist bookstores, and so on.

The Theravada temples are also linked to one another; but unlike the Mahayana temples, they are linked through their monks rather than through their laity. Specifically Theravada religious occasions such as the Kathina festival are factors in promoting such interlinkage. There is also interaction between Theravada and Mahayana religious specialists during such occasions as Vesak Day, which are shared by both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists in Singapore. On the whole, the Theravada temples are more autonomous than the Mahayana ones. To a large extent, Theravada temples are built around the charisma of individual monks, and Theravada congregations are the followers of specific religious leaders.

At present in Singapore, there is, for example, a Theravada monk who is not attached to any particular temple but who has a lay following of considerable size. This Sinhalese monk has organized a number of Buddhist 'youth circles' and it is quite possible that a number of Theravada temples in Singapore had their beginnings in the routinization of similar situations.

Personnel

The foregoing section has shown something of the importance of the religious specialist, first as a mediator linking Singapore's Canonical Buddhist systems to the Buddhist canon, and second as an institutional pillar of Canonical Buddhism.

There are, however, differences between the role of the Mahayana religious specialist and that of his Theravada counterpart. The Mahayana religious specialist does not have to do much preaching. The reason for this is that Mahayana Buddhism has long been integrated into the general religious fabric of China, so that a significant portion of Mahayana Buddhist theology has become part of Chinese cosmology: it is therefore readily available to any practitioner of any Chinese religion, even a non-Buddhistic one such as Taoism or Confucianism. Furthermore, the Mahayana religious specialist's function in such ritual activities as Chinese funeral rites can easily be fulfilled by other religious specialists such as Taoist and Confucianist priests. This is because Chinese

Mahayana Buddhism is very much Sinicized: essentially Chinese practices such as ancestor worship have become part of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, and the Mahayana monk besides being a Buddhist religious specialist is also a Chinese ritualist. This is not to say that all Chinese Mahayana monks are Chinese ritualists. There are a few Mahayana monks who perceive clearly the ambiguity of their position and, choosing to be Buddhist rather than Chinese, firmly refuse to perform any ritual that might be construed as non-Buddhistic.

The Mahayana religious specialist plays an important part in keeping Mahayana Buddhism as a religion distinct from other Chinese religions, especially from those with many syncretized Buddhist elements. Whereas the Theravada monk has a more aggressive role to play, the Mahayana religious specialist is more defensive. Without the presence of Mahayana monks and nuns, it is unlikely that Mahayana Buddhism would continue to exist as a distinct religious system in Singapore.

According to the criterion I have proposed for the identification of a Mahayana temple, there are at least as many Mahayana religious specialists as there are Mahayana temples, that is, a few hundred.²¹ The exact number is again not known. Most of the monks are in their fifties and sixties. There are few Singaporean male recruits to the Sangha and, unless there is an influx of monks from Taiwan, Hong Kong or Malaysia, the number of Mahayana monks in Singapore is likely to decrease in the coming years. However there are relatively more Singaporean female recruits to the Sangha. What social factors are at work is not known yet, but one possible factor to consider is 'patrilineal ideology', 'still a potent cultural force among Singapore Chinese', which circumscribes sons' behaviour more than that of daughters (Hassan and Benjamin, 1973: 737 and in this volume, pp.214-15).

Monks and nuns are of two kinds: those who perform rituals and those who do social work or meditate. The division of the two functions is clearly perceived by the monks and nuns themselves. Quite often those who do social work or meditate make disparaging remarks either about 'ice-cream selling monks' (bell ringing being a prominent feature of Chinese Buddhist ritual) or about 'the uselessness of ritual as a way to enlightenment'. On the other hand, ritualistic religious specialists themselves feel shy about discussing Buddhist theology; they quite often say that they are 'ignorant' and 'know only how to chant'.

Most of the Mahayana religious specialists in Singapore are from China, and are part of the migrant population that came to the South Seas (Mandarin: *Nányáng* 南洋) either because of the Sino-Japanese War or because of the Communist takeover in 1949. Before Singapore became independent in 1965, there was much to-and-fro movement of monks and nuns between Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia, especially Penang and Malacca. So before 1965 Singapore was part of a larger Mahayana Buddhist region which included both Sabah, Sarawak and

Peninsular Malaysia. It was only after Independence that the problem of recruitment to the Mahayana Order in Singapore became more urgent. Singaporeans who become Mahayana monks or nuns are usually ordained in Peninsular Malaysia (usually Penang, sometimes Malacca), Hong Kong and Taiwan (usually Taipei). Mahayana religious specialists from abroad (for example, from Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia) visit Singapore frequently. These visiting monks and nuns are housed in both Theravada and Mahayana temples.

In addition to the monks and nuns, there is a problematic group of self-cultivators who might also fulfil the role of Mahayana religious specialists. These people observe rules of celibacy and vegetarianism, and are generally known as 'vegetarians'. Since most of the 'vegetarians' in Singapore are female, the term most commonly used to refer to them is 'vegetarian-aunt' (Mandarin: *zhāigū* 嫩姑). The male self-cultivators are referred to as *lāoshī* 老師. It has been pointed out by some of my monk informants that the 'vegetarians' are equivalent to the canonically institutionalized roles of *upāsaka* (Pali: 'male lay devotee') and *upāsika* (Pali: 'female lay devotee'). The proper Chinese versions of these two terms are respectively, *yōupōsāi* 優婆塞 and *yōupōyī* 優婆夷 but I have never heard these words used in Singapore to refer to the 'vegetarians'.

The 'vegetarians' often live in the same temples as the monks and nuns. It is difficult to classify them either as Buddhist religious specialists or as lay Buddhists. The monks and nuns generally regard these 'vegetarians' as pious lay Buddhists, but the lay Buddhists regard them as religious specialists somewhat lower in ritual status than the monks and nuns. There is also a difference between a person who observes a vegetarian diet at home and a 'vegetarian' residing in a temple; the term *zhāigū* is applied only to the latter. Most of the 'vegetarians' have a master-disciple relationship with a specific monk with whom they have taken the Three Refuges and the Five Vows.²² This behaviour corresponds to that of the Mahayana *upāsaka* and *upāsika*.

Another category of Mahayana Buddhists are the lay devotees who are referred to as *jūshī* 居士, a term meaning 'a person who practises Buddhism while residing at home'. This term is applied broadly, and may include even 'those who are merely scholars and friends of Buddhism' (Welch, 1967: p. 358). In the words of a monk informant, 'a *jūshī* is someone who has an interest in Buddhist theology, who has taken the Three Refuges with a monk, and who is observing the Five Vows'. So from a Buddhist point of view, there is little or no difference between a 'vegetarian' and a *jūshī*. But from the viewpoint of the Singaporean Chinese laity, there are important differences. The *jūshī* does not commit himself to observe the rules of celibacy and vegetarianism; whether or not he observes them privately is beside the point. Nor does the *jūshī* reside in a temple. It is perhaps for these reasons that I have never yet heard of a *jūshī* being considered as a religious specialist even if he is acknowledged as someone well-versed in Buddhist theology.

The *jūshi* are often people who are involved in the lay associations of Mahayana temples, associations such as chanting classes, welfare associations, or lay committees helping in temple administration.

Just as there are fewer Theravada temples than Mahayana temples, so there are relatively few Theravada religious specialists. As I have already mentioned, the role of these few Theravada religious specialists is in some ways more crucial than the role of their Mahayana counterparts, especially as the charisma of the individual Theravada monk is important in the development of Theravada Buddhism in Singapore. Almost every Theravada temple in Singapore has been built as the result of donations by rich individuals to a single monk, usually a charismatic figure. The Sri Lanka Ramaya is one exception: it was founded by Sinhalese for themselves. At present there are four or five Sinhalese monks, about ten Thai monks, and at least one Vietnamese Theravada monk resident in Singapore. In addition, a number of visiting monks stay briefly in various temples, either Theravada or Mahayana. A resident monk is one who is attached to a particular temple and who (since he is usually a foreigner) is given some kind of work permit for a period of, say, one year. The visiting monks are usually given tourist visas. At least one of the Theravada monks has obtained Singaporean citizenship by dint of a long period of residence, but hardly any Singaporeans become Theravada monks. I know of one Singaporean who became a Theravada monk but later switched his allegiance to the Mahayana Order. I also know of a Singaporean woman who became a Theravada nun, and to my knowledge, she is the only Theravada nun in Singapore. The few Singaporeans who have become Theravada religious specialists were ordained in Thailand. I do not know of any Theravada ordination service that has been held in Singapore, despite the availability of at least five monks and of a *sima* area, which are generally regarded as prerequisites for an ordination.

Although the lay personnel of Theravada temples are often the followers of individual charismatic monks there is no category in Theravada Buddhism corresponding to the Mahayana 'vegetarian'. Theravada laity are quite ready to refer to themselves as *upāsaka* and *upāsika*, but since there is no formalized master-disciple relationship in Theravada Buddhism as there is in Mahayana Buddhism, the terms do not imply formalized roles. I have mentioned chanting classes, dhamma classes and youth circles in the context of Thai temples. In fact, almost all Theravada temples have lay associations of this sort. For example, in the Mangala Vihara there are Sunday School classes, dhamma classes, communal vegetarian lunches, and even sports and games, all of which are activities serving to knit the laity into a clearly defined congregation.

I shall not discuss the reformist nature of Sinhalese Buddhism in Singapore here. Suffice it to say that Sinhalese Buddhism in Singapore,

is more closely related to the 'modern' type of Sinhalese Buddhism practised in a more urban setting than to the 'traditional' type practised in the villages of Sri Lanka.²³ In both of the Singaporean Sinhalese temples, the laity sing Buddhist hymns (which are modelled on Christian hymns), take examinations sponsored and organized by the Young Men's Buddhist Association in Sri Lanka (an association modelled on the Young Men's Christian Association), and observe *poya* days (full moon, half moon, or no moon) which are the Buddhist parallel of the Christian Sabbath. All these reflect the reformist nature of Sinhalese Buddhism in Singapore. The Sinhalese monks of both temples also take a relatively active role in preaching Buddhist theology to their respective congregations. This last aspect is also true of the Sinhalese monk who has organized several 'youth circles'.

In contrast, the Thai monks do not take such an active role in preaching the dhamma. This could be because of the language barrier: the laity speak hardly any Thai and the monks usually speak only imperfect Hokkien, Teochew or English. It is difficult for the Thai monks to conduct dhamma classes, and when these are held English-speaking monks or theologically knowledgeable lay persons are invited to teach the dhamma on behalf of the Thai monks. Nevertheless, the Thai monks are also charismatic leaders; but their charisma possibly has a different basis from that of the Sinhalese monks. Considering the reputation that the Thai monks have in Singapore as practitioners of black magic, their charisma could possibly have a mystical rather than an ideological basis.

We now come to another kind of laity who frequent both Theravada and Mahayana temples. These are the non-differentiating 'Buddhists', that is, those who make use of Canonical Buddhist institutions for non-Buddhist purposes. There were many such 'Buddhists' in traditional China: for example, 'the peasant woman who offers incense to Kuan-yin in hopes of bearing a son... [and] the Confucian official who has a Buddhist service performed for his parents' (Welch, 1967: 358). In Singapore, anyone can enter any Buddhist temple, Theravada or Mahayana, and pray to Sakyamuni Gautama Buddha, or, in the Mahayana case, to any of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for anything he desires; no monk or nun would stop him. Hence the Mahayana and Theravada temples are open to varying individual interpretation and usage. But different temples set different limits to such individualism. For example, the chief monk of the Sinhalese Sri Lanka Ramaya cannot prevent people from praying at the bodhi tree for good luck, but he would certainly not allow them to bring images of gods to the temples to be worshipped. But at the Mahayana Phor Kark See (Mandarin: *Pújué Si* 普覺寺), the laity bring in pictures and images of gods, including some which have no Buddhist background, such as *Dàbogōng* 大伯公. One way of rationalization often employed by monks and nuns to explain such practices is to say that they are tolerating 'local custom'

and 'the ignorance of the laity'. But something that is definitely not tolerated in a Canonical Buddhist temple is spirit-mediumship.²⁴

It is the non-differentiating 'Buddhists' who perceive as Chinese Religion any form of Canonical Buddhism that they come into contact with, whether Mahayana or Theravada. I must digress here to justify my earlier claim that Sinhalese Buddhism and Chinese Religion are the two extremes of the 'Buddhist' continuum in Singapore, despite what I have just said. The lay people who go to the Sri Lanka Ramaya to pray for good luck at the bodhi tree, a practice which is not canonically Buddhist, are usually not Theravada Buddhists but Hindu Tamils. They are not practitioners of Chinese Religion, even though Hinduism and Chinese Religion have much in common. The practitioners of Chinese Religion recognize the similarities between Hinduism (which they refer to as the 'Indian Religion'; Mandarin: *Yìndì Jiào* 印度教) and Chinese Religion (which they refer to as 'Buddhism'). But they perceive these two religions as separate because their respective practitioners are ethnically distinct. For practitioners of Chinese Religion, Sinhalese Buddhism poses something of a problem. In the context of 'multi-racial' or ethnically segmented Singapore,²⁵ the Sinhalese belong to the category 'Indian' and hence Sinhalese Buddhism must be 'Indian Religion'; some of my informants do, in fact, so refer to it. Yet it is clear that Sinhalese Buddhism is not Hinduism. Perhaps this perceived ambiguity of Sinhalese Buddhism is one factor inhibiting its inclusion within Chinese Religion.

The non-differentiating 'Buddhists' provide a bridge between Canonical Buddhism and Chinese Religion. However, there are practitioners of the Chinese syncretic religions who recognize a clear distinction between Buddhism and non-Buddhism; these readily declare themselves to be not Buddhists but Shenists, practitioners of *Sānyí Jiào* 三一教, and of other such religions. Nevertheless, the non-differentiating 'Buddhists' (that is, those who do not differentiate between Canonical Buddhism and Chinese Religion) are in the majority.

The practitioners of Canonical Buddhism and of Chinese Religion may be placed on the following continuum:

Unambiguous Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists, who are aware of Buddhist theology	Non-differentiating 'Buddhists', who make free use of both Canonical Buddhism and Chinese syncretic religions	Unambiguous practitioners of Chinese syncretic religions
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CHINESE SYNCRETIC RELIGIONS WITH BUDDHIST ELEMENTS

The Chinese syncretic religions practised in Singapore are often referred to as 'Buddhism'. While some practitioners do recognize a

distinction between Canonical Buddhism and the Chinese syncretic religions, for a significant proportion if not the majority of 'Buddhists' in Singapore, 'Buddhism' is all-inclusive, embracing both Canonical Buddhism and the Chinese syncretic religions, and extending sometimes even to Hinduism. By including Chinese syncretic religions in the discussion of 'Buddhism' in Singapore, I do not mean to imply that these syncretic religions are Buddhist. Indeed, as I have already shown, these syncretic religions make no direct reference to the Buddhist canon. Strictly speaking, therefore, they are not Buddhist, and must be understood primarily on their own terms. They are 'Buddhist' only because they are so labelled by many practitioners; but since this labelling is itself a socio-cultural fact, it does have some effect upon Canonical Buddhism, among other things. Hence even Canonical Buddhism in Singapore cannot be understood without taking into consideration these so-called 'Buddhist' religions.

All the Chinese syncretic religions in Singapore known to me originated in China. It is difficult to gain definite information regarding these religions because of a general lack of information and because of the secrecy that they often quite consciously maintain.

The Chinese syncretic religions in Singapore are of two types: those that have no canonical tradition whatsoever, and those that have developed canonical traditions of their own. The first type includes only one generalized religion, which may be referred to as 'Shenism' after Elliot (1955). Some of my informants refer to it as *Shén Jiào* 神教 (literally: the doctrine of the gods). The second type of Chinese syncretic religions includes *Sānyī Jiào* 三一教 ('Three-in-one Doctrine'), *Xiāntiān Dàdào* 先天大道 ('Great Way of Former Heaven'), *Zhēnkōng Jiào* 僞空教 ('Doctrine of the True Void'), *Huáng Lǎoxiānshī Jiào* 黃老仙師教 ('Doctrine of Old Fairy-teacher Huáng').²⁶ and possibly *Báilián Jiào* 白蓮教 ('Doctrine of the White Lotus').²⁷ There may be others not yet known to me.

In this discussion the first type will be referred to as 'Shenism', and the second type as 'sectarianism' or 'the sectarian religions', for reasons to be discussed later.

Shenism or Shén Jiào 神教

Of the Chinese syncretic religions, the one most frequently encountered is Shenism. In fact one may even say that the majority of Singaporeans who call themselves 'Buddhists' are in fact Shenists. This means that of all the forms of 'Buddhism' in Singapore, Shenism is the most prevalent.

To understand Shenism one must first understand Chinese Religion, by which I mean not an institutionalized religion but rather a specific range of religious needs, a cosmology, and a certain pattern of religious behaviour. To be precise, what I refer to is a certain kind of religious orientation which is quite deeply embedded in Chinese culture. Chinese

Religion in this sense may be thought of as an empty bowl, which can variously be filled with the contents of institutionalized religions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, the Chinese syncretic religions, or even Christianity and Hinduism. The contents of these institutionalized religions are re-interpreted and used in a way peculiar to the symbolic system of Chinese Religion.

It is often thought that Chinese Religion and Shenism are one and the same thing. But this is inaccurate, because it does not explain the relationship between Chinese Religion and the other institutionalized religions, a relationship which certainly does exist. For example, Buddhist monks and Shenist spirit-mediums have almost nothing to do with one another; yet a lay person may utilize both of these religious specialists at different times for different purposes which, however, fit into the general scheme that I refer to here as 'Chinese Religion'. To be more specific, one consults a Shenist spirit-medium about matters of luck, but one would never call in a spirit-medium to officiate at funeral rites. For the latter function only Buddhist monks or Taoist and Confucianist priests are qualified. Similarly, one might set up ancestral tablets in a Mahayana temple, but not in a Shenist spirit-medium temple. It can be maintained that the concept of luck and the perception of death are thus not separate, but linked together as part of the larger cosmology that is Chinese Religion.

Chinese Religion is more than any one institutionalized religion. The variety of institutionalized religions it makes use of can in part be explained by the division of labour involved in fulfilling the range of religious needs. In this respect, Shenism is significant because, to a large extent, it has developed in response to religious needs left unfulfilled by the other institutionalized religions: that is to say, Shenism fills in the gaps.

As an institutionalized religion, Shenism does not possess a canonical tradition, unless the Taoist- and Buddhist-derived chants that Shenism is said to possess can be considered as a canon of sorts. But whatever the case may be, there is a definite Shenist theology. The most fundamental tenet is the belief in fate, that is, the belief that a person's life in this world is predetermined. How this is so is not much a matter of concern: predetermination is taken for granted. The primary concern is to make the best use of one's predetermined quota of good luck and to minimize the effects of the similarly predetermined quota of ill-luck. The most effective way of doing this is to appeal to the *shén* 神, a process known as *wèn shén* 開神 or *qiú shén* 求神 (literally 'asking or begging the gods'). The *shén* (or 'gods') dwell in

... an extremely influential spiritual world... that is apart from the human world but in close relation to it. These inhabitants of the world of the spirits are strongly anthropomorphic and their modes of behaviour are firmly patterned on human activities. At a commonplace level of knowledge, many of them are envisaged in the guise of ancient emperors, nobles and heroes, as depicted

in better known legends and on the stage (Elliot, 1964: 27).

Powerful as a *shén* may be, his powers are limited to adding a bit more to one's store of luck and slightly reducing one's ill-luck. In the words of an informant, 'if your time is right, the *shén* can help you to win the lottery; but if your luck is low, what the *shén* can do is to protect you from meeting with a *gui* 鬼 (a term variously translated as 'demon, disembodied spirit, spirit of the dead, ghost, goblin, devil').²⁸

In Shenist theology the *shén* are basically compassionate beings, and if a *shén* is moved to help a human being he can manifest himself in three ways: by possessing a medium, by appearing in a dream, or by answering questions through the divining blocks (*mùbēi* 木杯). These three ways of manifestation are not ritually structured to the same degree. Manifestation in a dream is entirely up to the *shén* himself; the human being has no conscious say in the matter. Putting a question to the *shén* and getting an answer through the divining blocks is a more conscious act: one can choose to ask a certain question and receive a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Manifestation through medium-possession enables a *shén* to give more elaborate answers and advice to those who seek help; the *shén* can even write out charm papers to ward off evil. Of the three methods, spirit-mediumship is the most institutionalized form of Shenist ritual activity, since the other two methods need neither temples nor religious specialists.

Theoretically, any *shén* can possess a medium, but some are more willing than others. In traditional China, only the minor and insignificant *shén* would condescend to manifest themselves in medium-possession. In Singapore, however, some of the mightier figures in the Chinese pantheon apparently possess mediums too (Elliot, 1964: 73-4). One explanation possibly lies in the changed hierarchy of the pantheon: many of the minor and insignificant *shén* of traditional China, such as village gods and lineage *shén* have been sloughed off.

Nevertheless, the highest *shén* in the Singaporean Shenist pantheon are considered too dignified to possess mediums. The Jade Emperor or *Yùhuángshàngdì* 玉皇上帝 (who is also known as *Tiāngōng* 天公, Lord of Heaven) and Sakyamuni Buddha, known as *Rúlái fó* 如來佛 are almost never associated with spirit-mediumship. The four most popular possessing *shén* are *Dàshèngyé* 大聖爺, the Great Saint or Monkey God; *Sāntāizi* 三太子, The Third Prince; *Guānyīn Púsa* 觀音菩薩 the Bodhisattva *Guānyīn*, also known as The Goddess of Mercy; and *Guāndīgōng* 關帝公, The God of War. There are many other possessing *shén* which are not so well known.

Shenism is a cultic religion, as each Shenist temple is dedicated to one *shén* even though other *shén* are worshipped there too. The Shenists on their part also tend to worship one or two *shén* rather more than they worship others. (There are, of course, less important *shén* who do not have their own temples.) From the Shenist perspective Sakyamuni Buddha is just another *shén*: the Theravada and Mahayana temples

re his temples, and the Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists are his group of devotees. A similar interpretation is applied to Catholicism, with Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary considered as *shén*. Hinduism is similarly treated.²⁹ It is clear that a religion such as Shenism is loosely bounded. It extends ever outwards to include more and more deities within its sphere. Shenist extensionism, however, stops at Islam and Protestantism. One very strong reason for this is that both of these religions do not have images in their places of worship. The idea of a disembodied god is foreign to Shenism.

From the idea that a *shén* is an embodied being usually represented by an image, it is a short step to the practice of spirit-mediumship, whereby a *shén* enters the body of a human medium. Spirit-mediumship can thus be taken as an identifying characteristic of Shenism as an institutionalized religion. It is impossible to identify all the Shenist temples in Singapore, since Shenists have the habit of taking over the deities of other religions by treating them as *shén*. I have already mentioned the group of non-differentiating 'Buddhists' who frequent the Theravada and Mahayana temples; most of these are really Shenists who interpret and treat the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in a Shenist manner. Such Shenists, if asked, would include the Theravada and Mahayana temples as Shenist temples, except that they would probably use the word 'Buddhist' instead, which only serves to make the matter more confusing. Their conception of 'Buddhism' is, however, not referable to Canonical Buddhism but to what I have called 'Shenism' in this essay.

Even though Shenists use Theravada and Mahayana temples for their own purposes, these temples were never intended to be Shenist institutions, and hence cannot be so considered. My criterion for the recognition of a true Shenist temple is the actual or potential presence of a Shenist spirit-medium. Since no Theravada or Mahayana temple will brook spirit-mediumship within its grounds, Shenists find it necessary to build temples expressly for the purpose of spirit-mediumship. However, there are temples which have neither monks nor nuns, spirit-mediums nor other kinds of religious specialists: such temples may be classified as Shenist, if only because they could in the future come to be used for spirit-mediumship—assuming that Buddhist clergy have not taken office there first. In the absence of either spirit-mediums or Buddhist clergy, these temples are treated more as Shenist than as Buddhist temples: they are visited by Shenists, but hardly ever by theologically conscious Buddhists.

There are a few hundred spirit-medium temples, but it is impossible to give an exact figure. Many are simply private residential houses converted into 'temples'. Quite often when the spirit-medium of a certain temple dies it is either converted again into a private residence or left vacant until it is pulled down or made use of by another spirit-medium.

The spirit-medium is the ostensible Shenist religious specialist, but

unlike the Buddhist monk or nun, he or she is rarely, if ever, a full-time religious practitioner. It must be realized that Shenists do not consult the spirit-medium as such, but the *shén* who enters his body. The spirit-medium is not an intermediary between the *shén* and the Shenist but just someone whose body is made use of by the *shén*. In Shenist belief, a spirit-medium is generally someone who has been fated to die young but to whom a *shén* has given the choice of either dying young as fated or living longer through the *shén*'s grace but serving as his medium in return. A person fated to die young does not have so much soul as a person fated to have a long life. Even though the *shén* may have promised a medium-to-be a longer life than fated, there is still the question of soul-deficiency—that is, the life of the human body cannot be lengthened without a corresponding increase in the amount of soul possessed by the person. This is where spirit-mediumship fits into the picture. When a *shén* enters the body of a medium he displaces the soul of the medium and suspends it in some kind of vacuum. Hence when a spirit-medium is in trance his body and soul are separate from one another and he is in a death-like state. It is through such temporary death-like states that the life of the body can be prolonged without necessitating a corresponding increase in the amount of soul possessed by the medium, since soul can neither be increased nor decreased once it has been apportioned.

The spirit-medium is not really a Shenist religious specialist. It is not even he but his body that is the passive vessel filled by the *shén*. Other than this the spirit-medium has no more of an active role than any other ordinary Shenist, and he usually has some full-time secular job such as driving a taxi or working as a clerk. This, perhaps, is one important reason why most séances take place in the evenings and on weekends. The medium usually does not live at the temple, but if he does, it usually means that he is a temple attendant as well as a medium. Properly speaking, the spirit-medium is considered to be such only when he is in trance, and since he obviously cannot be in trance all the time it follows that he cannot be a full-time spirit-medium. Hence there is hardly any relationship in Shenism that corresponds to the relationship in the other religions between the religious specialist and the laity. In Shenism the important relationship is between the *shén* and the Shenist.

The different Shenist cults are each centred around a particular *shén*. The cult of *Dàshèngyé*, for example, is dispersed all over Singapore in temples dedicated to this particular *shén*. Temples which share the same patron *shén* do not necessarily have anything to do with one another. There is thus no higher organizing body to co-ordinate the activities of the different segments of any one cult.

The Shenist temples function even more autonomously than the more properly Buddhist ones. A large part of Shenist religious activities is, in fact, carried out in the home. The Shenist spirit-medium temples

are rather deserted places for much of the time, and people usually visit them only when there is a séance.

The sectarian religions

Chinese syncretic religions with their own canonical traditions are often referred to as ‘sectarianism’.³⁰ They are sectarian in two senses.

1. Traditionally in China, the major religions have been recognized, though not necessarily accepted, to be Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Any other Chinese religion was perceived as being derived from these three religions, and was thus regarded as a religious sect rather than as a religion in its own right.

2. The syncretic religions are themselves sectarian in nature: they are usually split up into numerous competitive sects, with no central organizing body.

To a very large extent, the sectarian religions that exist in Singapore are the remnants of sectarianism in China. Hence to understand them it is necessary to know something of their historical background. The growth of the sectarian religions is historically related to religious persecution in China. Confucian doctrine was the state religion and was considered to be the only true doctrine; anything different was heretical. The anti-heresy laws are aimed at both Buddhist and Taoist institutions and at other kinds of religious societies and sects, more so the latter.

Sectarianism arose ‘as a religious challenge to the existing order’ (Ng, 1973: 9). Many of the sectarian religions, for example *Xiāntiān Dàdào* and *Sānyī Jiāo*, have a predominantly Buddhist orientation. This is significant because Buddhism is a religion of salvation which is concerned not with this world but with liberation from suffering and from rebirth (that is, *nibbāna*). In contrast, Confucianism is concerned with ‘an ethical code for man and society’, and is inadequate and evasive regarding matters of after-life. ‘Thus, when the Chinese State put all sorts of obstacles in the way of “salvation-seekers” by barring them from monasteries and nunneries, a new alternative method of attaining salvation had to be discovered’ (Ng, 1973: 10).

The sectarian religions adapted themselves to religious persecution in the following ways:

1. The religious specialists usually had neither clerical dress nor shaven heads. They often could marry and have families. This secular character provided a kind of disguise.

2. The egalitarian nature of sectarian organization better ensured the survival of the religion as a whole, as some of the sects would probably be able to survive the disappearance of others. In the face of persecution, there was thus no centre for the authorities to aim at.

3. Admission of members was very strict, often with tests of merit as the basis of selection. ‘The danger of being exposed to... the state authorities... by admitting unworthy people must have made this

selective process an important necessity' (Ng, 1973: 12).

4. The sectarian religions also camouflaged themselves by variously claiming to be 'Buddhism', 'Taoism' or 'Confucianism'.

It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to trace the history of the sectarian religions that existed in China. It is not even clear how many there were and how many there are now.

Sometimes several names describe one and the same widely ramifying society. Some sects have disappeared in face of state persecution and proscription by edict only to re-appear later under another name. Others continued underground.... The history of many such sects is probably lost forever. Such histories were often kept only in manuscript form and they had frequently to be destroyed when raids were expected.... Chinese secret sects range from the mainly political to those that are mainly religious; in between are those politico-religious sects that seem to adapt themselves to changing conditions, being at one time more political in interest and at others more religious according to the demand of the people they attract. The often militant messianic beliefs of many of the sects lend themselves very easily to more immediate, political interpretations by the ambitious and frustrated intellectual or minor civil or military official who so often is associated with sectarianism (Topley, 1956: 88).

The theologies of the sectarian religions are syncretistic: they are usually combinations of Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian elements. For example, the religious goals of *Xiāntiān Dàdào* and *Sānyī Jiào* are:

1. To lead a virtuous life according to Confucian morals.
2. To practise meditation according to Taoist principles for the purpose of health and longevity.
3. To attain Buddhahood or *nibbāna*, an idea borrowed from Buddhism but which is, as we shall see, radically different from the Buddhist conceptualization.

Most of Singapore's 'Buddhists' are not even aware of the existence of religions such as *Xiāntiān Dàdào* and *Sānyī Jiào*, even though they may frequent the temples of these religions. Consequently, the sectarian religions seem to be losing their distinctiveness and identity. Even the initiated seem not to be keen on learning the religious texts. Given these trends, it is not improbable that the institutions of the sectarian religions will become absorbed into either Mahayana Buddhism or Shenism, or that they may lose their religious character altogether. As a general rule, it is safe to say that if a sectarian temple allows spirit-mediumship to be practised within its premises it is likely to become Shenist rather than Mahayana Buddhist.

The founder of *Sānyī Jiào* was a native of the prefecture of *Xīnghuá* 興華 (which no longer exists as such) in central Fukien province. And to this day, *Sānyī Jiào* is a religion predominantly associated with people from the former prefecture of *Xīnghuá*. At present, there are some five or six *Sānyī Jiào* temples in Singapore: the trend towards Shenism is already very marked in at least one of them.

The *Xiāntiān Dàdào* has sixty-odd vegetarian houses, a number of

which are also very popular as Shenist places of worship. There are ten or so *Zhēnkōng Jiào* temples, some of which are well known as centres for curing opium addicts, this being one of the specialities of the religion. But since there are nowadays relatively few opium addicts, one might expect the popularity of *Zhēnkōng Jiào* to have declined correspondingly. There is at least one *Huāng Lǎoxiānshí Jiào* temple in Singapore; the one that I have visited is perhaps better known as a school for Chinese fighting techniques than as a place of worship. The temple attendants also name this religion *Rú Jiào* 魯教, 'Religion of the *Rú* School', i.e. Confucianism, but there are no images of Confucius nor are there any Confucianist priests present in the temple. It has been suggested to me by other sources that this is really a *Bāilián Jiào* 白蓮教 temple, but I have not yet been able to confirm this.

Of the sectarian religions in Singapore, *Xiāntiān Dàdào* is the most likely to be absorbed into Mahayana Buddhism. *Xiāntiān Dàdào* is often identified even by Mahayana monks as a branch of Mahayana Buddhism. Practitioners of *Xiāntiān Dàdào* and Mahayana Buddhists 'often sit together on boards of so-called Buddhist associations' and co-operate in social welfare projects (Topley, 1961: 310). Also *Xiāntiān Dàdào*, unlike the other sectarian religions, has residential vegetarian-halls. Since in the context of Mahayana Buddhism the vegetarians are considered by the laity to be religious specialists somewhat lower in ritual status than the monks and nuns, the vegetarians of *Xiāntiān Dàdào* could yet come to be treated as minor Mahayana religious specialists. This is a distinct possibility, especially since secrecy is consciously maintained in *Xiāntiān Dàdào* and its practitioners are most reluctant to admit to the uninitiated that their religion is anything but 'Buddhism'.³¹

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The discussion has thus far demonstrated the considerable variety of the religious systems hidden under the loose label of 'Buddhism'. As we have seen, this label refers both to Canonical Buddhism proper and to the Chinese syncretic religions. The question that has to be asked at this point is whether there is any unity whatsoever in the diversity of 'Buddhist' systems in Singapore. From the Buddhist point of view, one can discern certain unifying threads running through the varied fabric of 'Buddhism' in Singapore. Of these, there are a few that seem to be of greater significance.

First, there is the figure of Sakyamuni Gautama Buddha who is present in almost all the systems that call themselves 'Buddhist'. In Theravada Buddhism he is the most important object of 'respect'; there is none other who stands on a par with him. In Mahayana Buddhism he is also an important figure, but not the sole object of worship. In

Shenism he is a *shēn*, usually ranked by informants as second highest in the pantheon after the Jade Emperor. In some of the sectarian religions Sakyamuni Buddha is also an important figure.

Another Buddhist theme which runs through all the 'Buddhist' systems is the concept of rebirth (Pali: *samsāra*) and predestination (Pali: *kamma*). The theory is as follows. All human beings pass through a multitude of existences. Death leads but to another life, but there are several levels of existence. For example, one may be reborn as a god, as a human being, as an animal, or even as a demon. But even gods and demons have to be reborn after their periods of existence are over. What then determines one's next existence? This is where *kamma* fits in. 'Favourable rebirth is caused by good deeds... unfavourable rebirth by bad deeds. Deed divides beings into lower and higher ones' (Schumann, 1973: 51-2). One's present existence is thus the result of an old deed.

Given these premisses, the difference between Canonical Buddhism and the other so-called 'Buddhist' systems in Singapore is as follows. In Canonical Buddhist theology life is basically sorrowful. 'One life is suffering enough; how much more the multitude of existences' (Schumann 1973: 50). Therefore the primary religious goal is liberation from the chain of rebirths, which is possible only through extinction (*nibbāna*). Extinction does not mean the extinction of mere body, for one's deeds live on after one's physical death and cause the birth of another body. *Nibbāna* refers to the extinction of *kamma*, which leads in turn to the extinction of all future rebirths.

In contrast to this doctrine of extinction which arises out of the evaluation of all life as sorrowful, Shenism and the sectarian religions are not concerned with preventing future rebirths, as they do not hold such a pessimistic outlook on life. Some of the sectarian religions do, however, employ the term '*nibbāna*', but not to refer to liberation from the cycle of rebirth. '*Nibbāna*' is often characterized instead as an eternal state of happiness, peace and freedom in an eternal paradise, which is quite at odds with Canonical Buddhism. Even more discordant with Canonical Buddhism is the sectarian belief that good deeds (that is, good *kamma*) lead to '*nibbāna*'. But, whereas the sectarian religions are concerned to some extent about one's rebirth, Shenism, despite its acceptance of the dual concept of rebirth and predestination, is more concerned about how to make the best of this life in terms of the here-and-now. Thus, even though the concept of rebirth and predestination is shared by all the 'Buddhist' systems in Singapore, it fits differently into the various hierarchies of religious values.

Related to this idea of rebirth and predestination is a belief in several levels of existence which also forms part of all the 'Buddhist' systems in Singapore. 'Buddhist cosmography lists five, sometimes six, realms into which a person can be reborn: the sphere of the gods, the world of man, the sphere of spirits (*peta*), that of animals, and hell. Some

texts also speak of a realm of demons (*asura*)' (Schumann, 1973: 51). In Canonical Buddhism, all beings in all realms of existence are subject to death and rebirth, and hence subject to the sorrow that is life. *Nibbāna* is still the ultimate religious goal of all beings, including gods and demons, but these latter must first be reborn in human form so as to follow the Eightfold Path. Canonical Buddhism does not deny either the power of the gods or the evil energy of the demons and spirits, but it declares such power and energy to be limited in scope, as nothing can change the impersonal laws of *samsāra*. Hence it is useless for human beings to appeal to the gods or to propitiate the spirits, as such acts are irrelevant to the achievement of *nibbāna*.

The sectarian religions tend to merge godhood with Buddhahood, and at this point we can interpret the sectarian concept of '*nibbāna*' as the attainment of godhood, or in this case, synonymously, 'Buddhahood'. In other words, the sectarian religions do not advocate doing away with all the realms of existence; instead, they advocate entering the sphere of gods, which can be achieved by self-cultivation.³²

It is in Shenism that the gods and demons wield their greatest influence on the lives of men. As Shenism is little concerned with rebirth and the escape from rebirth, great significance is attached to the relationship between the world of the gods and the world of man, and to the relationship between the world of man and the world of the spirits (i.e. demons and devils). While the gods are compassionate beings and can help human beings, the spirits are malicious and can do harm. Shenists thus direct their ritual activities both towards appealing to the gods and towards propitiating the spirits. The belief in several levels of existence thus assumes different meanings and different degrees of importance in the various 'Buddhist' systems.

Even though Canonical Buddhism conceptualizes life as basically sorrowful it is not an altogether pessimistic religion, as it also provides a means of achieving *nibbāna*. This is the Eightfold Path, which consists of the following virtues.

1. Right View: the knowledge of the Buddhist Four Truths and the recognition that all is suffering.
2. Right Resolve: resolve to renunciation, benevolence and resolve not to harm living things.
3. Right Speech: 'speech that does not consist of lies, gossip, abuse and idle talk'.
4. Right Conduct: desisting from killing, stealing, and debauchery.
5. Right Livelihood: 'the pursuit of a harmless bread winning which does not cause suffering to others'.
6. Right Effort: 'the endeavour to ward off unwholesome mental phenomena and to produce wholesome ones'.
7. Right Awareness: 'mindfulness of the body, sensations, mind and mental objects'.
8. Right Meditation: the way to Insight (Schumann, 1973: 68-75).

Something of the Eightfold Path has diffused into both Shenism and the sectarian religions. It is a fundamental belief of the sectarian religions that godhood or 'Buddhahood' can only be attained by observing certain rules of self-discipline. The practice of 'self-cultivation' (Mandarin: *xiūxìng* 修行, 'the cultivation of morality') entails meditation, celibacy, and keeping to a vegetarian diet. These practices, especially the practice of meditation, may partly derive from Taoism too, but for the moment, we are concerned only with certain Buddhist elements that appear in all the Singaporean 'Buddhist' systems and we therefore shall consider *xiūxìng* only in the light of its Buddhist derivation.

Xiūxìng is not unknown in Shenism, but since the religious goal of Shenism is neither the liberation from rebirth nor the attainment of godhood, it is not necessary for Shenists to cultivate their morality in a rigorous manner. If a spirit-medium so chooses, he may observe the rules of vegetarian dieting and sexual abstinence for a limited number of days, especially before he participates in an important festival. Also, on the first and fifteenth day of every lunar month, many Shenists keep to a vegetarian diet (Mandarin: *chīsù* 吃素 or *chīzhāi* 吃齋). Individual Shenists may also observe a vegetarian diet on certain days which hold special significance for them. Thus in Shenism, almost all that remains of the Eightfold Path is vegetarianism, which is practised as a means of attaining 'a pure state of mind' (Mandarin: *qīngxīn* 清心). This 'pure state of mind' has nothing to do with *nibbāna* in either the Canonical Buddhist or the sectarian senses of the word: *qīngxīn* has to do with living a peaceful life in the here-and-now.

The foregoing section has illustrated some of the Buddhistic motifs that underlie the variety of 'Buddhist' systems in Singapore. Scholars of Buddhist philosophy may not approve my eclectic treatment of these Buddhistic motifs, so let me make it clear that I have discussed Buddhist philosophy only to the extent that it has some relevance to so-called 'Buddhists' in Singapore. The majority of Singapore's 'Buddhists' are ignorant of much of the Buddhist philosophy; in fact, many 'Buddhists' do not even know of the existence of Mahayana and Theravada as systems of Buddhists theology, even though they do know that there is a difference between Chinese monks and Thai monks.

Despite transformations in meaning and differing degrees of importance, the underlying Buddhist themes that I have just discussed do give unity to the diverse 'Buddhist' systems of Singapore. And it now becomes clear that there are, indeed, good reasons for the common Singaporean usage of the term 'Buddhist' to label an apparently heterogeneous assemblage of religious systems.

¹ The label 'Buddhist' as an ethnographic fact will be discussed in a separate work.

² This figure is derived from the following sources: Hassan, 1969/70: 47-52; Chen, 1973: 49. In Hassan's study, about 45 per cent of the marrying couples described themselves as 'Buddhist'; in Chen's sample, 54 per cent of the respondents described themselves as 'Buddhists'.

³ Of the several Hinayana schools, Theravada Buddhism is the only surviving one. Hence for practical reasons, 'Theravada' and 'Hinayana' may be treated as coterminous.

⁴ Although the majority of Vietnamese Buddhists are Mahayanins, there exists a small group of Theravada Buddhists consisting of 'perhaps fifty monks with discipline and learning processes not too well organized yet. Its adherents, while few in number, are found in a half-dozen or more provinces as well as in Saigon and Da Nang'. (*Vietnam Magazine*, Vol. IV, No. 11, 1971: 10).

⁵ The Baba Chinese are Chinese whose ancestors have lived for three generations or more in the former Straits Settlements of Singapore, Penang and Malacca.

⁶ I am not implying that people of Chinese ethnicity are necessarily practitioners of Chinese Religion. But statistically speaking, one might expect most practitioners of Chinese Religion to be Chinese.

⁷ Chinese Religion cannot in turn be reduced to 'Buddhism' as it includes avowedly non-Buddhistic systems such as Taoism and Confucianism.

⁸ Note that the dialectic we are concerned with is that between the opposed categories of Canonical Buddhism and Chinese Religion. By saying that Sinhalese Buddhism is almost wholly in the realm of Canonical Buddhism, I do not mean that it is canonical *per se*. If the category Canonical Buddhism were to be set up against some category other than Chinese Religion, Sinhalese Buddhism might well turn out not to be very canonical after all.

⁹ That is, Amoyese or *Xiāmén huà 厦門話*.

¹⁰ See Kuo's essay in this volume.

¹¹ Henghua is *Xīnghuá huà 廈華話*, one of the Min languages spoken in Fukien province.

¹² The Thian Hok Keng 天福宮 (Mandarin: *Tiānfù Gōng*) in Telok Ayer Street.

¹³ See for example Topley, 1961: 292 and the *Nanyang Buddhist* 1973: March, June, August issues.

¹⁴ Because of the ambiguous meaning of the word 'Hinayana', I prefer to use the word 'Theravada' when referring to this particular school of Buddhist teaching.

¹⁵ The Sangha is the Buddhist monastic order.

¹⁶ H.-D. Evers: personal communication.

¹⁷ It has been suggested by one source that this temple is partly sponsored by the Thai government. This has not yet been verified.

¹⁸ The addresses of temples are given in Appendix I.

¹⁹ According to some of my informants, the resident monk of this temple left the Sangha and came to an agreement with the Singapore Government whereby the temple was officially converted into a tourist sight-seeing spot, and the disrobed monk appointed its caretaker. I cannot yet confirm this story, but I do know that this temple has a very low reputation among Buddhist religious specialists in Singapore and is not even regarded as a proper temple by some of them.

²⁰ My study of these two Sinhalese temples will shortly appear as a *Working Paper*, Department of Sociology, University of Singapore.

²¹ The Mahayana religious specialists of Singapore will be discussed in greater detail in a forthcoming paper.

²² Taking the Three Refuges means taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. The Five Vows are promises 'not to kill, steal, lie, drink alcoholic beverages or commit any immoral sexual act'. (Welch, 1967: 358). In Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, the master-disciple relationship is a formal one: on entering it, one is involved in the network of religious kinship and becomes a member of the religious 'lineage', receiving a new name from one's master. See Welch, 1967 for details.

²³ The concept of 'modern' 'traditional' is derived from Gombrich, 1971: 40-56.

- ²⁴ The theological contradictions between Canonical Buddhism and spirit-mediumship are too involved to discuss here; I shall deal with them in a later study.
- ²⁵ See Benjamin's essay in this volume.
- ²⁶ I suspect that this is not the real name of this religion, but I cannot yet offer substantial evidence to prove this.
- ²⁷ The words *dào* 道 (way) and *jiao* 教 (doctrine) are terms meaning religion (Yang, 1961:2).
- ²⁸ Regarding the co-existence of a belief in fate and a belief in supernatural justice, see Fortes, 1959.
- ²⁹ Low, 1973; Wong, 1974; Chew, 1975.
- ³⁰ De Groot and others such as Topley and Ng use this term.
- ³¹ The data presented in this section come from my own fieldwork and from the studies of Topley, Franke, Ng and Hsü listed below in the Bibliography.
- ³² This interpretation is derived in part from Topley.

APPENDIX I

NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF TEMPLES

1. MAHAYANA INSTITUTIONS

(i) Some Mahayana temples

Avatamsa Lodge
171, Telok Kurau Road
Singapore. 15

華嚴精舍
(Huāyán Jīngshè)

Beeh Low See Temple
71-B, Jalan Jurong Kechil
Singapore 21

毘盧寺
(Pílú Sì)

Chee Toh Aun
283, 7½ milestone, Changi Road
Singapore 14

自度庵
(Zìdù Ān)

Leong San Temple
371, Race Course Road
Singapore 8

龍山寺
(Lóngshān Sì)

Phor Kark See
11, Bright Hill Drive
Singapore 20

光明山普覺寺
(Guāngmíngshān Pǔjuē Sì)

Poh Toh Si Temple
7, Yan Kit Road
Singapore 2

普陀寺
(Pǔtuō Sì)

Siong Lim Temple
35, Kim Keat Road
Singapore 12

雙林寺
(Shuānglín Sì)

Thian Hock Keng
158, Telok Ayer Street
Singapore 1

天福宮
(Tiānfǔ Gōng)

(ii) *Some Mahayana organizations*
Singapore Buddhist Federation
739, Mountbatten Road
Singapore 15

新加坡佛教總會
(Xīnjiābō Fójiào Zhōnghuì)

The Buddhist Union main shrine
28, Jalan Senyum
Singapore 14

新加坡佛教會
(Xīnjiābō Fójiāohuì)

The Chinese Buddhist Association
21, Kreta Ayer Road
Singapore 2

中華佛教會
(Zhōnghuā Fójiāohuì)

The Singapore Buddhist Lodge
19, Kim Yam Road
Singapore 9

佛教居士林
(Fójiào Jūshílin)

The Singapore Buddhist Sangha Organization
(same address as Phor Kark See)

新加坡佛教僧伽聯合會
(Xīnjiābō Fójiāo Sēngqīé Liánhéhuì)

(iii) *Other Mahayana establishments*
Fut Sai Kai Vegetarian Restaurant
147 & 153, Kitchener Road
Singapore 8

佛世界素菜館
(Fóshìjìè Sòuchāiguān)

Maha Bodhi School
50, Lorong 34, Geylang
Singapore 14

菩提學校
(Pútí Xuēxiào)

Mee Toh School
375, Race Course Road
Singapore 8

彌陀學校
(Mítuó Xuēxiào)

Nanyang Buddhist Culture Service
298, South Bridge Road
Singapore 1

南洋佛學書局
(Nányáng Fóxué Shōujú)

Singapore Buddhist Free Clinic
7, Yan Kit Road
Singapore 2

新加坡佛教施診所
(Xīnjiābō Fójiào Shǐzhēnsuō)

Singapore Buddhist Free Clinic
1st Branch
519, Block 77, Indus Road
Singapore 3

新加坡佛教施診所第一分所
(Xīnjiābō Fójiào Shǐzhēnsuō
Dìyīfēnsuō)

2. *THERAVADA TEMPLES*

i. Thai temples

The Anandametyaram Temple, also known as the Thai Buddhist Temple
50-B, Jalan Bukit Merah
Singapore 3

The Sakyamuni Gaya Temple, also known as the Temple of a Thousand Lights
 Race Course Road
 Singapore 8

Wat Palelai, also known as Palelai Buddhist Temple
 9, Jalan Nipah
 Singapore 16

Wat Uttramayamuni
 30-3, Choa Chu Kang Road
 Singapore 23

(ii) *Sinhalese temples*
 The Mangala Vihara
 38, Jalan Eunos
 Singapore 14

The Sri Lanka Ramaya
 St. Michael's Road
 Singapore 12

(iii) *Vietnamese temple*
 Saitha Puchaniyaram Buddhist Temple
 66, Holland Road
 Singapore 10

(iv) *Burmese temple*
 The Burmese Temple
 17, Kinta Road
 Singapore 8

3. SHENIST TEMPLES (from Comber 1958 and my own fieldwork)
 Clear Water Temple (dedicated to *Dàshèngyé* and *Sāntàizǐ*) 淸水宮
 Rangoon Road (Qīngshuǐ Gōng)
 Singapore 8

Fuk Tak Ch'i (dedicated to *Dàbógōng*) 福德祠
 Telok Ayer Street (Fùdé Cí)
 Singapore 1

Fuk Tak T'ong (dedicated to *Dàbógōng*) 福德堂
 Havelock Road (Fùdé Táng)
 Singapore 3

The Monkey God Temple (dedicated to *Dàshèngyé*)
 44, Eng Hoon Street
 Tiong Bahru
 Singapore 3

The Temple of Heavenly Virtue (dedicated to *Sāntàizǐ*) 天德宮
 Balestier Road (Tiāndé Gōng)
 Singapore 12

4. SECTARIAN TEMPLES

(i) *Sānyī Jiào* (modified from Franke, n.d.)

Ch'üng-san T'ang
347, Thomson Road
Singapore 11

瓊三堂

(Qiōngsān Tāng)

Hsing-sheng Kung
280A, 5th milestone, Changi Road
Singapore 14

興勝宮

(Xīngshèng Gōng)

T'ien-hsing Tz'u
Kampong Potong Pasir
Singapore 12

天性祠

(Tiānxìng Cí)

T'ien-hsing T'ang
18, Petain Road
Singapore 8

天書堂

(Tiānshū Tāng)

(ii) *Xiāntiān Dàdào* (from Topley, 1956)

Fei Hsia Tsing She
Jalan Ampas
Singapore 12

飛霞精舍

(Fēixiá Jīngshè)

Kuan Yin T'ang
Waterloo Street
Singapore 7

觀音堂

(Guānyīn Tāng)

Kuan Yin T'ang
Tembeling Road
Singapore 15

觀音堂

(Guānyīn Tāng)

Shan Te T'ang
Clemenceau Avenue
Singapore 9

善德堂

(Shàndé Tāng)

T'ao Yuan Fu Tang
Duxton Hill
Singapore 2

桃園佛堂

(Táoyuán Fótāng)

Tung Shan T'ang
Devonshire Road
Singapore 9

同善堂

(Tónghàn Tāng)

Tung Te Tang
Serangoon Road
Singapore

同德堂

(Tóngdé Tāng)

(iii) *Zhēnkōng Jiào* (from Hsü 1954 and from my own fieldwork)
Thian Ling Chong Toh Tong
472, Changi Road 5½ miles
Singapore 14

天靈通道堂

(Tiānlíng Zhōngdàotāng)

公立天南壇戒煙社
98, Tanjong Rhu Road
Singapore 15

(Gōnglì Tiānnán Tān

Jièyān Shè)

Leng Kong Toh Thong Temple 533, Yio Chu Kang 10 miles Singapore 28	靈光道堂 (Lingguāng Dàotáng)
Chin Hoe San Toh Tong 50, Jurong Road, Track 4, 9½ miles Singapore 21	真和山道堂 (Zhēnhéshān Dàotáng)
Chin Hoe Tuah 31-A, Tembeling Road Singapore 15	真和壇 (Zhēnhé Tán)
Thian Ling Toh Tong 827-D Upper Thomson Road 9 miles Singapore 26	天靈道堂 (Tiānlíng Dàotáng)
本元虛靈道堂 54, Hong Kah Lane Singapore 22	(Běnyuán Xūlíng Dàotáng)
顯揚壇 Cecil Street Singapore 1	(Xiānyáng Tán)
道南壇 Tras Street Singapore 2	(Dàonán Tán)
復本原 23, Carmichael Road Singapore 13	(Fùběnyuán)
顯傳道堂 790-D, Tampines Road Singapore 28	(Xiǎnchuán Dàotáng)
如真道堂 30, Peng Ann Road Singapore 14	(Rúzhēn Dàotáng)
如真道堂 245-A, Lorong 25, Geylang Singapore 14	(Rúzhēn Dàotáng)
(iv) Huāng Lǎoxiānshī Jiào Chee Chung Temple 364-D, Macpherson Road Singapore 13	慈忠廟 (Cízhōng Miào)

APPENDIX II

OBJECTS OF WORSHIP OR VENERATION
IN THE ‘BUDDHIST’ TEMPLES OF SINGAPORE

1. In *Theravada temples* the main object of veneration is the image (or images) of Sakyamuni Gautama Buddha; other objects, if present, may include the bodhi-tree and the Buddha-relics (symbolic remains of the Buddha's body). (In both of the Sinhalese temples in Singapore, Buddha-relics are kept and venerated.) There are also images of the Future Buddha Maitreya, the disciples of Sakyamuni, and the deva (gods); but these are seldom the objects of veneration. In at least two Thai temples in Singapore, Wat Uttamayamuni and the Anandametyaram Temple, there is also an image of the respective founder of the temple.
2. In *Mahayana temples* the two main Buddha images are Sakyamuni Gautama and the Buddha Amitabha (Mandarin: *Shíjiāmúní* 穢迦牟尼 and *Āmítuófó* 阿彌陀佛). The most frequently found Bodhisattva image is that of Avalokitesvara, the compassionate one, who is better known to the Chinese as *Guānyīn Púsa* 觀音菩薩. Among the other Bodhisattvas found, there are Ksitigarbha, the guardian over hell (Mandarin: *Dàyuàn Dìcāngwáng Púsa* 大願地藏王菩薩), and Mahasthamaprapta, the bestower of wisdom, who is often associated with Amitabha and Avalokitesvara (Mandarin: *Dàshízhí Púsa* 大勢至菩薩). Maitreya is also to be found in the Mahayana temples, where he is known as *Míluófó* 羅勒佛, or as *Xiāo Fó* 哭佛, The Laughing Buddha. Besides the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, there are images and pictures of gods such as Confucius, *Wéituó* 皇陀 (The Protector of Buddhist teaching and Buddhist temples), *Chénghuáng* 城隍 (The City God or The God of Ram-parts and Ditches), *Zhōushēng Niánghniang* 註生娘娘 (The Goddess of Child-birth), etc.
3. In *Shenist temples* the images of the *shén* are the objects of worship. Among these are the following: (a) Sakyamuni Buddha; (b) *Guānyīn*; (c) *Dàshèngyé*; (d) *Dàbógōng*; (e) *Guāndigōng*.
4. In *Sectarian temples* the following figures are among those associated with the various religions.
 - (i) *Sānyī Jiào*:
(a) Confucius; (b) Laotzu; (c) Sakyamuni Buddha; (d) *Lín Zhàoēn* 林兆恩, the founder of the religion who is also known as *Sānyī Jiàozhū* 三一教主 or as *Xià Wǔní* 夏午尼; (e) the associates of *Lin Zhàoēn* such as *Zhāng Sānfēng* 張三峯, *Zhuò Wāncùn* 卓晚春, *Lú Shiyuán* 盧士元, *Xiè Yuánhuī* 謝元暉, *Wáng Chéngguāng* 王成光, and *Chén Shàndé* 陳善德; (f) *Guānyīn*; (g) *Dàshèngyé*.
 - (ii) *Xiāntiān Dàdào*:
(a) *Jīn Mǔ* 金母 ‘Golden Mother’ who is also known as *Wújī Shèngmǔ* 無極聖母 ‘Infinitely Holy Mother’ and as *Yáo chí Shèngmǔ* 堯池聖母 ‘Holy Mother of the Yao Pool’; (b) *Guānyīn*; (c) *Míluófó*; (d) Confucius; (e) the Eighteen *Luóhàn* 遲漢 (Pali: *arakanī*) that is, ‘Buddhist saints’; (f) *Lú Dòngbìn* 盧洞賓, also known as *Lú Yén* 盧懇 (one of the eight Taoist

fairies); (g) *Dàmó Zhūshī* 大摩主師 (Bodhidharma, an Indian Buddhist monk of the 6th Century); (h) *Huátuó Xiānshī* 華陀仙師 (the patron saint of Chinese medicine).

(iii) *Zhēnkōng Jiào*:

The practitioners of this religion worship only their founder who is known as *Zhēnkōng Zhú* 真空主, and some of his disciples. The objects of veneration are a mirror and the written character *Kōng* 空 'Emptiness'.

(iv) *Huáng Lǎoxiānshī Jiào*:

(a) *Huáng Lǎoxiānshī* 黃老仙師, also known as *Huáng Qīgōng* 黃七公 (a famous magician who is considered the founder of this religion); (b) *Dàshèngyé*; (c) *Tàishànglāojūn* 太上老君 (a Taoist figure who is perhaps better known as Laotzu).