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(IJHAM)**www.ijham.com**THE ARTS AND HISTORICAL REMAINS IN THE CAVE
TEMPLES IN IPOH, MALAYSIA**Tan Ai Boay^{1*}¹ Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman

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This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the arts and historical remains in the cave temples of Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia. Ipoh is well known for its numerous limestone cave temples. Based on the fieldwork survey from 2016 to 2020, Ipoh has 50 cave temples. Before the survey, the number of cave temples in Ipoh was unknown. These cave temples can be divided into three types based on their physical appearances. The paper discusses the arts and historical remains kept in selected cave temples that were established before World War II. The arts discussed in this paper can be divided into visual and literary arts, such as mural, drawing, statue and poetry. The majority of the historical remains taken are archival and epigraphical materials. The epigraphical materials are carved in bronze bells, wooden tablets, brass censers, stone inscriptions, and other materials. This paper aims to highlight the diversity of the arts and historical remains in Nusantara.

Keywords:

Arts, Historical Remains, Cave Temple, Ipoh

Introduction

Ipoh, the capital of Perak, is also known as the city of hills because it is surrounded by hills, especially limestone hills. In pre-history, aboriginal people lived in these limestone caves. After the mid-19th century, these caves were occupied by the migration community, mainly the Chinese. A large number of Chinese migrated to Kinta Valley in search of mining opportunities. By the late 19th century, the Chinese had established themselves as the most dominant community in Kinta. Similar to the Chinese in other parts of Malaya, the Chinese in Kinta brought their beliefs with them and then built temples in their new lands. Unlike their

counterparts elsewhere, the Chinese in Ipoh were able to build a temple within the limestone cave.

How many cave temples are there in Ipoh? The investigation was initiated by Dato Dr Mah Han Soon, the former chairman of the Perak Non-Islamic Affairs Department. The research team¹ worked hard to discover these temples, which could be hidden in a remote area surrounded by dozens of ferocious dogs. The research team attempts to unravel the arts and historical mysteries of these temples not only by searching the materials *in situ*, including dark and dusty storerooms but also by accessing old photos and archival materials in Malaysia's National Archives.

The output of the research project is a book – *Trials of The Nanyang Chinese: History and Legends of the Cave Temples in Ipoh of Malaysia* (Tan & Toh, 2017). The book only listed the names of 49 cave temples that were discovered. Only seven temples kept the evidence that was established before World War II were detailed in the book. Years later, new historical materials were discovered. In early 2020, we visited an abandoned Chinese cave temple, under the guidance of Chaw Yeh Saw, an archaeologist department postgraduate student at University Science Malaysia.

The paper has two aims: first, it records the cave temples discovered in Ipoh from 2016 to 2020; second, it explores the arts and primary historical evidence, mainly drawing, mural, statue, poem and epigraphical materials in these cave temples. The research also attempts to answer the question: what is the inheritance and localisation of these arts which originated from China but have been localised in Malaysia?

Literature Review

From the perspective of Chinese epigraphical research, this should be deemed as relevant, as should the study of Wolfgang Franke and Chen Tieh Fan, with their three-volume book – *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Malaysia*. (Wolfgang & Chen 1982, 1985 and 1987). In 1969, Professor Jao Tsung-I (饒宗頤) was the first college scholar to attempt a comprehensive listing of all Chinese inscriptions in Singapore and West Malaysia with his publication “A Chronology Survey on Chinese Inscription in Singapore and Malaysia” (〈星馬華文碑刻繫年〉) (Wolfgang and Chen 1982: 4). Takeo Hibino(日比野丈夫), Chen Ching Ho (陳荊和), Tan Yoke Seong(陳育嵩), Chen Tieh Fan (陳鐵凡) and Chan Cheung (陳璋) contributed to the collection of Chinese epigraphic materials in Singapore and West Malaya, before Wolfgang Franke and Chen Tieh Fan. In the 21st century, epigraphic materials from both temples (Lew Boon Hooi & Chong Kok Ming 2016; Tan 2019) and cemeteries (Wong Wun Bin 2013; Foo Yew Chew 2016; Danny Wong Tze Ken 2016; Tan Ai Boay 2017,) captured the concern from college-trained scholars.

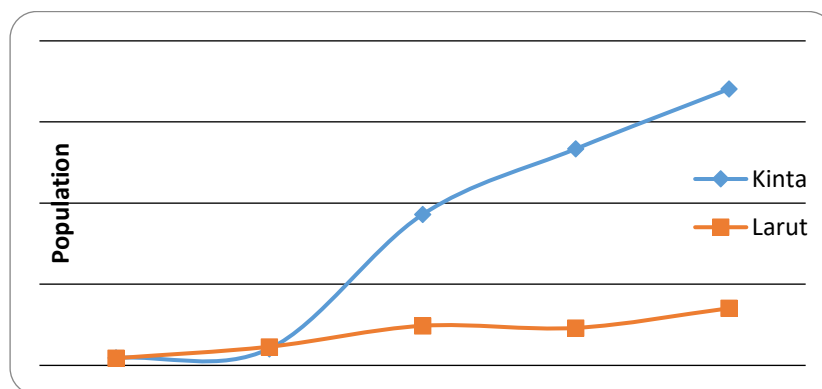
While Wolfgang and Chien's collection extended throughout Malaysia, their search for artefacts in the state of Perak was very limited. Many epigraphic materials in Perak had escaped their attentions, and of those that were discovered as the result of their exhaustive list of every artefact discovered, analytical studies remained unfinished. For instance, the book only collected three-temple epigraphical materials in the Kinta district. At least 22 temples in Kinta that housed hundred-year-old epigraphical materials were not recorded in the book. This left

opportunities for a myriad of research to be undertaken and to move forward from where they left off.

Since then, only two un-unpublished conference papers have discussed the arts in these cave temples. Toh Teong Chuan's paper – "A Taoist priest awakening poem in Nam Thean Tong, Ipoh". (Toh Teong Chuan 2017). The paper has used the unveil mural poem. The poem mural was discovered halfway up a hill in the dark and humid shrine hall. The mural's colours have faded, and the writing has become illegible. Toh Teong Chuan's paper analyses the 39 awakening poems. Ling Liong Ngo contributed another paper on the study of poem descriptions of Perak Tong, a famous Buddhist cave temple. She presented a conference paper titled "The Study of a classical poetry in Cave Temple in Malaysia - The discussion of Perak Tong Eight Views Poetry Anthology" (Ling Liong Ngo 2017). The poems are the focus of the two papers. Even though, the paper mainly reviews the findings of Toh Teong Chuan's paper because the poems take the form of calligraphy arts written on the temple walls.

The Survey Of The Cave Temples In Ipoh

The State of Perak became the first Malay State to be intervened by the British in 1874. The state is divided into eight districts: Larut and Matang, Kinta, Kuala Kangsar, Lower Perak, Krian, Batang Padang, Selama and Upper Perak. The development of the tin industry in Perak had resulted in an influx of Chinese migrants. Malaya became the largest tin exporting country in the 1880s and Perak contributed half of the exports. As such, in 1889, the Chinese became Perak's largest population with 85% of them residing in the Kinta and Larut districts (*Perak Government Gazette* 1889, p. 220). As shown in Graph 1, the Chinese population in Kinta has grown rapidly since then.



Graph 1: Chinese Population In Kinta And Larut (1879, 1889, 1901, 1911 and 1931)

Source: (Perak Government 1889, p. 220; Hare 1902, p. 32; Pountney 1911, p. 94; Vlieland 1932, pp. 122-123.)

Kinta's growing Chinese population has resulted in the establishment of Chinese temples. The earliest evidence of these temples was discovered during these rapid growth periods, including the cave temple.

In the paper, the “Cave Temple” was divided into four categories based on their physical appearances:

- A. Cave temple: The entire or part of the temple is located within the cave.
- B. Temple in the cave’s vicinity: The temple is located within the cave’s surrounding areas.
- C. Abandoned cave temple: The temple has been abandoned and no devotees have visited it.

Type A: Cave Temple

The entire or a part of these cave temples located continue to serve as places of religious worship. The research uncovered 39 Cave temples (Table 1) in Ipoh. Among these cave temples, Kwong Fook Ngam(廣福岩), the Buddhist temple may be the oldest, followed by Nam Tou Ngam (南道岩), the Taoism temple. Seven cave temples contain historical evidence that they were built up before World War II. Kwong Fook Ngam (廣福岩), Sam Poh Tong (三寶洞) and Perak Tong(霹靂洞) are Buddhist temples, whereas Nam Tou Ngam(南道岩), Nam Thean Tong(南天洞) and Loong Thow Ngam (龍頭岩) belonged to Taoism. The Tung Wah Tong (東華洞) which was initiated by Leong Sin Nam (梁燦南, 1880—1940), the famous Chinese leader was difficult to categorise to any single religion.

No.	Temple		Main Deity
	Chinese	Registered name in Malay or English	
1	巴占法天宮仙洞	Tokong Wuat Tian Keong	Fa Zhu Gong(法主公)
2	巴占大眾花園山邊觀音 信徒會	Persatuan Penganut Agama Tao Guan Yin Tokong Cina	Guan Yin
3	白雲寺	-	Shakyamuni Buddha
4	般若岩	-	Shakyamuni Buddha
5	慈雲山	-	Guan Yin
6	大乘岩佛寺	Tokong Da Seng Ngan	Shakyamuni Buddha
7	打扞創意古藏傳禪修中 心 (前南龍古廟)	Thrangu Dharma Retreat Centre	Maitreya Bodhisattva

No.	Temple		Main Deity
	Chinese	Registered name in Malay or English	
8	德隆祈达维峇沙那暹庙	Wat Thumcitta Vipassana Temple	Shakyamuni Buddha
9	敦珠新岩藏佛教中心	Dudjom New Treasure Buddhist Society	Padmasambhava
10	东华洞	Tung Wah Tong	The Jade Emperor
11	法喜寺	Dhamma Piti Meditation Monastery	Shakyamuni Buddha
12	福昌宫	-	The Supreme Elderly Lord(太上老君)
13	福佈洞	Wat PhupaRattanawararam/ FookPu Tong/ Cave of Happiness	Shakyamuni Buddha
14	观音洞	Kwan Yin Cave Temple	Shakyamuni Buddha
15	观音坛八仙洞	Goddess of Mercy and Eight Immortals Cave	Guan Yin
16	观音紫明庵	Kuan Yin Chee MengAam	Guan Yin
17	光炽岩	Persatuan Penganut Dharma Kong Chee Nguam	Shakyamuni Buddha
18	广福岩	Kwong Fook Ngam / Kwong Fuk Ngam	Shakyamuni Buddha
19	极乐洞	Kek Look Tong	Hua-Yen Trinity
20	乐苑寺	Pertubuhan Meditasi Sukhavana/Sukhavana Meditation Monastery	Shakyamuni Buddha

No.	Temple		Main Deity
	Chinese	Registered name in Malay or English	
21	莲花宫	-	Zhang Tian Shi(张天师)
22	灵山妙圆禅寺	Pertubuhan Pertapaan Penganut Agama Buddha Meow Yuen	Shakyamuni Buddha
23	灵仙岩	Ling Sen Tong	Guan Yin
24	龙头岩	Loong Thow Ngam / Lung Thau Ngam	Guan Di
25	妙缘禅林	-	Shakyamuni Buddha
26	明心殿	Persatuan Penganut Ming Xin Dian Tebing Tinggi	Supreme of Bao Zheng(包拯大人)
27	南道岩	Nam Tou Ngam	The Supreme Elderly Lord
28	南天洞	Nam Thean Tong	The Supreme Elderly Lord
29	霹雳洞	Perak Tong	Shakyamuni Buddha
30	三宝洞	Sam Poh Tong	Shakyamuni Buddha
31	三教院观音庙	-	Guan Yin
32	森山佛脚庙	Wat Putabatwanapup	Shakyamuni Buddha
33	四面佛洞	Persatuan Penganut Erawan Shrine	Erawan
34	送子观世音	Pertubuhan Penganut Dewi Song Zi Guan Shi Yin	Nan Hai Guan Yin
35	无极岩	Persatuan Penganut Moo KekNgam Ipoh	Guan Yin
36	修持金刚精舍	Persatuan Penganut Dewa Jingang Jing She	Padmasambhava

No.	Temple		Main Deity
	Chinese	Registered name in Malay or English	
37	云仙洞德教会紫霄阁	Persatuan Memperbaiki Akhlak Hoon Sean Tong, Che Seow Kor	Li Bai (李太白师尊)
38	真佛宗怡保雷藏寺	-	Do Not know
39	紫竹六佛祖坛	Chee Chak Loke Fuat Chow	Guan Yin

Table 1: Cave Temples in Ipoh

Types B: Temple In The Cave's Vicinity

This type of temple is located within the cave, nearby areas, or within 100 metres of the cave. Believers continue to visit these temples for religious purposes. Some of these temples appear to be built into the cave, but they are not. There are 10 temples attributed to this type (Table 2).

No.	Temples		Main Deity
	Chinese	Malay / English	
1	布塔尼密坛暹庙	Wat Puthanimittam	Shakyamuni Buddha
2	打扪八仙坛	-	The Eight Immortals
3	拉蒙耶旺萨伟伽耶塔	Reamonnya Wongsa Wijaya Pagoda	Shakyamuni Buddha
4	灵霄殿	Ling Xiao Dian	The Eight Immortals
5	蒙坤三宝庙	-	Shakyamuni Buddha
6	弥陀道场	Pertubuhan Penganut Buddha Pureland Amitabha	Amitabha
7	盘古庙	Persatuan Penganut Agama Tao Poon Koo Khoong	Pangu (盘古)
8	太上老君庙	Persatuan Penganut Dewa Tai Shang Lao Jun Ipoh, Perak	The Supreme Elderly Lord
9	心意佛院	Persatuan Enlightened Heart Buddhist / Enlightened Heart Tibetan Buddhist Temple	Shakyamuni Buddha
10	玉仙宫	-	Shakyamuni Buddha

Table 2: Temple In The Cave's Vicinity

By compiling Table 1 and Table 2, one can find that 40% of these cave temples enshrine Shakyamuni Buddha at the main shrine hall, followed by Guan Yin (觀音) (16%). Chinese traditional religions, which include Buddhism, Taoism and folk religion, are very complex. Usually, the temple's main hall, which houses Shakyamuni Buddha and Amitabha, should be classified as Buddhism. Shakyamuni Buddha is the founder of the Buddhist religion. Amitābha, known as "The Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life", is the principal buddha in Pure Land Buddhism in the Mahayana Buddhism. Taoism considers *Laozi* (老子) to be the religion's founder. In other words, the deification process transformed *Laozi* into The Supreme Elderly Lord. Hence, the temple that houses The Supreme Elderly Lord in the main shrine hall is usually classified as a Taoist temple.

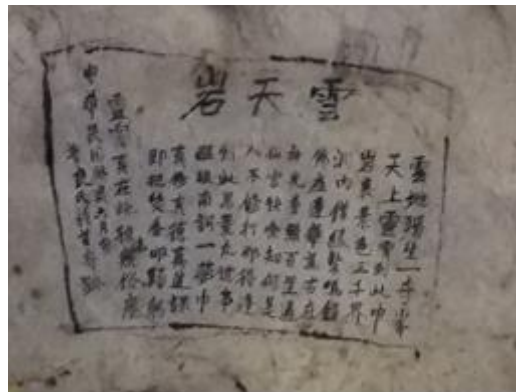
The "Chinese Traditional Religion" is a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism and folk religion. According to the census in Malaya during the colonial period, the British official mentioned that it was difficult to classify the Chinese religion. The category of Chinese religion can be changed, such as "Confucian", "Other", and "Chinese Traditional Religion" (Tan Ai Boay, 2015). The cave temples may reflect Chinese traditional religious practises, such as worshipping Buddha, Bodhisatva, deities and ancestors. Even though the "purification religion movement", especially Buddhism, began after independence, the majority of Chinese practising "Chinese traditional religion" until today. Hence, the research does not intend to classify the religious attribution to every temple mentioned above. It may be complex, and the temple's "self-identity" is changeable. For instance, the Tung Wah Tong, which was established in 1926, enshrines the Jade Emperor as its main deity. In 1980, Tung Wah Tong was officially registered as "Pusat Meditasi Buddhist Tung Wah" (Tung Wah Buddhist Meditation Centre). Nowadays, the temple committee considers Tung Wah Tong to be a Taoist temple and has joined the Taoist Association Malaysia.

The above-mentioned temple is still visited by tourists and devotees. The cave temple of type C is another story.

Type C: Abandoned Cave Temple

The temple was abandoned and only a few explorers and archaeologists had visited it. There is only one abandoned cave temple that was discovered.

The abandoned temple is located at Kampung Kapayang with a broken stair and arched door. The graffiti Chinese calligraphy arts on the stone demonstrate that it was named *Yun Tian Yan* (雲天岩) (Picture 1), or *Yuan Tian Xian Dong* (雲天仙洞).



Picture 1: The Name Of The Temple -- Yun Tian Yan (雲天岩)

When the Society Enactment was implemented at Perak in 1895, the temple was registered as “Wan Sin Tung”(雲仙洞) by Kung Sin Tak (Federated Malay State Government Gazette 1895). The earliest graffiti *in situ* dates from 1904: “This place is towering mountains and precipitous ridges, flourish jungle and prune bamboo.” This sentence was quoted from “Preface to the Collection of Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion” (Lanting Xu, 蘭亭集序), written by Wang Xizhi (王羲之 303—361), a famous Chinese calligrapher.

The cave had been inhabited by *Orang Asli* (aboriginal people) during the pre-history period. They left a prehistory mural behind. The temple was occupied by the Chinese at the end of the 19th. According to the mottled poem on the stone, the temple enshrined Buddha and resided by monks in the 1920s.

The period and the reason for the temple’s abandonment are still unknown.

The Visual And Literature Arts In These Cave Temples

Arts is an application and expression of human creative skill and imagination. Usually, arts are divided into visual arts, literary arts and performing arts. The arts found in these cave temples are drawing and painting, sculpture or statue and poem. These visual and literary arts are mainly found in Nam Thean Tong, a Taoist cave temple.

Painting

Painting is the first type of visual arts performance in the temple. The paintings found in Nam Thean Tung can be classified into two types:

The Pictures Of The Deities

There are 329 deities names recognised in the Nam Thean Tong.¹ The majority of the deities’ names were written on a wood tablet, but some were drawn on wooden materials.

¹ This part mainly refers to Liow Min Wei (2017).



Picture 2: Goddess Picture In Nam Thean Tong

Picture 2 is one of the deity paintings that were discovered in Nam Thean Tong. The picture depicts 17 goddesses with their names or titles. Even though this is a Taoist cave temple, the deity seen in this picture is “*Mu Lian* (目連)” (Maudgalyāyana or Mahāmaudgalyāyana). Maudgalyāyana and Śāriputra are considered as Buddha's two foremost male disciples. Maudgalyāyana is well known for his filial piety, which he demonstrated by visiting the hell and transferring his merits to his mother. One of the fundamental principles of the Chinese Hungry Ghost Festival is to dedicate the merits to ancestors during the festival. A famous Buddha male disciple is depicted as a goddess in the old Taoist temple. Another goddess in this painting comprises protection embryo goddess, land-lord goddess. This goddess in this picture may be associated with motherhood and protection.

Nam Thean Tong has six frames of deities' pictures, with gods and goddess occupying half of each. The three goddess pictures contain 35 deities, but some of their titles or names are unknown. The three gods' picture should be the “Ten Temples Yama” (十殿閻羅).² Yama is the death deity in Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. The Chinese society has absorbed the concept and “sinicized” Yama. According to Chinese legends and beliefs, the ten Yama played various roles and punished the deceased based on their various types of karmas.

Who is the artist? Did the artist draw the figures in the Cave temple, or was it brought from China? I believe the artist is a Taoist priest in the cave temple. He not only drew the deities but also painted the mural and wrote the poem. His identity will be discussed in the following paragraph.

² Two of the deity names cannot be recognised.

The Mural

Mural research is one of the most difficult aspects of the study of this cave temple. Every painting demonstrates “The seven-character quatrain” poem. There might be 14 story paints on the wooden material. Unfortunately, the colour of the painting and writing has faded. One of the stories that can be recognised is the fiction of Fan Lihua (樊梨花) and her husband Xue Dingshan (薛丁山) (Picture 3)



Picture 3: The Mural In Nam Thean Tong

The fiction and Fan Lihua and Xue Dingshan occurred during the early years of Dynasty Tang. Fan Lihua, a female general from Western Liang, falls in love with Xue Dingshan, a general of Dynasty Tang. Fan Lihua, a heroine with superpowers, caught Xue Dingshan three times before releasing him. Finally, they fell in love with each other and married.

The mural depicts the superpowers of the god or goddess. However, the mural is hard to understand without the poem description. The Taoist priest in the cave intended to pass on his artistic abilities and religious perception to the next generation.

The Statue

The old, mystery Nam Thean Tong has a lot of deity statues. The colour and model of the statue revealed that different period artefacts are kept in this cave temple. The antique artefacts should be the Hakka style deity statue (Picture 4). This style of sculpture is unusual in Malaysia. The deity held the seal that carved the title or name.



Picture 4: The Hakka Style Deities Statues

Usually, the title or name of the deities is engraved in the seal. Even the character of the seal can be read, and who is the deity may be an unsolved problem. For example, the seal read “*Lao Zu Dao Jun* (老祖道君) (Picture 5). Is *Lao Zu Dao Jun* another title for Laozi or Supreme Elderly Lord (*Tai Shang Lao Jun*, 太上老君) one of the Three Pure Ones, the highest divinities of Taoism? Usually, the Supreme Elderly Lord holds horsetail whisk, or tablet or “Moon” or “Sun”. The stature of Picture 5 holds the sword. This may also be the *Hongjun Laozu* (鴻鈞老祖). However, on the upper level of the hall, there is another hall named “*Hongjun Hall*” (鴻鈞殿) (picture 6). I have never seen two identical halls designed to enshrine one deity in a temple.



Picture 5: The Deity Holds A Seal Of “*Lao Zu Dao Jun*”

According to the style of the *Hongjun* Statue in *Hongjun Hall*, this is a comparatively new statute. The original statute of *Hongjun* may have disappeared or been displaced. The research speculates that the stature in Picture 5 was originally put in the *Hongjun Hall*. The reason for the misplacement might have occurred during the renovation following the establishment of the committee in the 1970s.

Under the dark staircase toward the mountain, the research team found a bizarre statue (Picture 6). The stature has five heads. The head resembles that of a human, with eyebrows, eyes and nose, but the human mouth is replaced by a beak. What exactly is the deity?



Picture 6: A Bizarre Deity Statute In Nam Thean Tong

The Hokkien dialect folk adage said: “The brother pig’s nose, the Mr Thunder’s beak (豬哥鼻，雷公喙)”. The unusual stature should be the Thunder gods. Its identification is not only based on its beak but also on the instrument grasped on its right hand. The instrument is similar to a thunder hammer. Therefore, it can be concluded that the odd statue is the Thunder God. Since then, this type of stature has only been found in Nam Theam Tong.

Awaking Poem

The awakening poems in Nam Thean Tong were written by a Taoist priest, Gong Shan De (龔善德, 1870--?). The awakening poem consists of 39 poems, written under the mural. The first poem, which was written in 1905 demonstrated the origin of the poem series:

*Last mid-night, I woke up startled and awoke this was only a dream.
After awaking, I felt that being enlightened.
Hence I wrote the Taoist sentiment on the wall
To savage of devout men and women.*

The poem is mainly describing the process and pursuing of Taoism self-cultivation. He mentioned the charm of fame and fortune, the greedy nature of human beings, and the impermanent world. The poem advised people to seek their inner consciousness and to follow the path of Tao. Although Gong Shan De was a Taoist priest, his awakening poem had used

many Buddhist terms and concepts. For instance, the term *sarira*, bodhi, four forms of life and six realms of existence. He also stated, “Took the refugee to Buddha is not the conflicting (with Taoism)”.

The poem series reveals the hybridisation of Taoism and Buddhist during that period. Regrettably, about 10% of the character went unrecognised. Nonetheless, these poem series are among the precious Chinese literature arts. Compared with Buddhist intelligentsia monks who wrote a lot of awakening poems, the awakening poem left by a Taoist priest is very rare. This series of awaking poems, written over a century ago, is valuable for further research.

Cave Temples’ Historical Materials Before World War II

Historical evidence is essential for the construction of history. The study of cave temples in Perak relies on two types of primary sources. First, British official records – Perak Government Gazette (1895—1906) and second, the epigraphical materials.

Official Records

Table 3 shows the cave temples that were registered after the Societies Act 1895. From the compiles of the Perak Government Gazette from 1895 to 1909, there are eight Chinese Cave temples. Kwong Seng Ngam and Fuk Shan Ngam disappeared already. Nam Lung Ku Miu is set to disappear. Today, the site of Nam Lung Ku Miu has become Thragu Dhamma Retreat Centre. Kwong Seng Ngam left the cave and relocated to New Village.

Year	Cave Temple		Location	Note
	Registered Name	Chinese Name		
1895	Nam To Ngam	南道岩	Cave in Ipoh	
	Nam Lung Ku Miu	南龍古廟	In a Cave at Tanjong Rambutan	Now: Thragu Dhamma Retreat Centre
	Wan Sin Tung	雲仙洞	Kampong Kepayang, Sungei Raia	Abandoned
	Kwong Fuk Ngam	廣福岩	Do. Do	
	Fuk Shan Ngam	福山岩 (?) ⁱⁱ	Polai	Disappear
	Kwong Seng Ngam	廣聖岩	Do.	Move to New Village in Ipoh
1897	Nam To Yin	南道院		
1906	Lung Thau Ngam	龍頭岩		

Table 3: Registered Cave Temples in Ipoh (1895—1909) ⁱⁱⁱ

Similar to other societies in Malaya, some cave temples did not register to the government. The epigraphical materials have manifested their existence.

Epigraphical Materials

The definition of epigraphic material in this paper is “the script incised on stone, metal, tin, wooden or other solid materials.” There are different types of epigraphic materials in the cave temple, such as:

- A: Musical Instruments such as a bronze bell. The artefact is usually made in bronze.
- B: Religious Majestic symbols consist of the land and ceremonial boards, or better known as the board of *Zhishi* (執事牌)
- C: Stone or Wooden tablet, in rectangular or in pairs.
- D: Table, or gods’ table.

Temple	Type	Artefacts	Year	Content	Donated	Remark
Kwong Fook Ngam	A	Bronze Bell	1895		Rev. Wei Jia (微嘉)	
	C	Wooden Tablet	1907	Climb the cave to respect the appearance (登岩禮相)	Rev. Wei Jia	
	B	Board of <i>Zhishi</i>	1907	Solemn Silence(肅靜) To Duck (迴避) Kwong Fok Ngam (廣福岩) Guan Yin Buddha (觀音佛祖)	Fujian Tongan Zhou Shui Yun ()	Four wooden plaque
	B	The lance and ceremonial boards	1903		Fujian Tongan Zhou Shui Yun (周水蘊)	Four symbol items: axe, hammer, pen and dragon.
	C	Wooden tablet	1908	Record the history of the temple, which originated in 1890.		
Nam Tou Ngan	A	Bronze Bell	1893	Timely Wind and Rain (風調雨順)	Merchant of Paloh	
	C	Wooden tablet in pair	1895	Describe the beauty of the cave temple, Sakya deliver being.	Founder of the Taoist priest	
	C	Wooden tablet in pair	1895	Appreciate the secret of 500 words (<i>Daode Jing</i>)	Zhang Qi Li (張啓立) from	

					Guishan (歸善)	
	D	Worship Table	1901	The Supreme Elderly Lord and Buddha	Gu Wu Xin (辜務 心)	
	C	Wooden Tablet	1907	Nam Tou Ngam	Gu Wu Xin	
	C	Wooden Tablet	1909	Jade Teacher Temple (玉觀堂)	Dai Wei An (戴威 安)	
	D	Worship Table	1909			
Loong Thow Ngam	A	Bronze Bell	1911	Timely Rain and Wind		
	C	Wooden Tablet	1914		A group of devotees	
	C	Stone Tablet	1919	Record the history of the temple which began in 1895		
Nam Thean Tong	A	Bronze Bell	1899	Timely Rain and Wind	Chen Xi Sheng (陳 喜盛)	
Tung Wah Tong	A	Bronze Bell	1916	Timely Rain and Wind		
	C	Wooden Tablet	1936	The Heaven of Immortals (玄圃閭風)	Leong Sin Nam and others	
Sam Poh Tong	A	Bronze Bell	1931	The bell will enlighten the being.	The abbot Ming Miao (明 妙) and others.	
	C	Wooden Tablet	1936	Tushiha Heaven (兜率 宮)		
Kwong Seng Ngan	C	Wooden Tablet	1901	List of the temple rebuilt donors	Foo Choo Choon and others	
	A	Bronze Bell	1910	Kwong Seng Ngan of Pulai		Broken

Table 4: Epigraphic Materials of The Cave Temples Before World War Two

Table 4 shows the artefacts with epigraphic inscriptions discovered *in loci* at these cave temples. The bronze bell is the most common artefact in the temple. The musical instrument is usually played in religious ceremonies, such as morning and evening chanting in Buddhist temples,

which is coordinated with a drum. Kwong Fook Ngam is likely to be the oldest limestone cave temple in Ipoh.

Besides these epigraphic materials, these temples contain some paper materials. For instance, the *Dudie* (度牒), or the Degree of Taoism, dated 1922. The *Dudie* was kept in Loong Thow Ngam, the only local lineage of Malaysia's *Quanzhen* School. Perak Tong, a famous tourist resort in Ipoh did not preserve any historical relic before world war II. Nonetheless, the painting of Perak Tong by Zhong Bai Mu (鍾白木) in 1941 is considered as the earliest evidence that the temple was constructed before world war II.

Conclusion

This is empirical research to determine the number of cave temples in Ipoh. Today, 50 cave temples can be traced. The paper divided "cave temple" into three types: Cave temple (39); a temple in the cave's vicinity (10); an abandoned cave temple (1). Among these temples, 9 of them (Kwong Fook Ngam, Nam Tou Ngam, Loong Thow Ngam, Nam Thean Tong, Tung Wah Tong, Sam Poh Tong, Perak Tong, Kwong Seng Ngan and Wan Sin Tong) proved to be established before the World War II. The abundance of cave temples reveals Malaysia's religious freedom.

The visual and literary arts discussed in this paper are focused on the arts and historical remains kept at Nam Thean Tong, a Taoist Cave temple. The old temple records more than 300 deity names. In other words, most deities are worshipped in this temple in Malaysia. The temple is similar to the Chinese Taoism Arts Museum in Malaysia. The painting, which includes pictures of deities, and a mural depicting ancient Chinese legends, the Hakka style antique statute, and the awaking poem, was only captured in this temple. The arts continue to be discovered in Nam Thean Tong trend as an inheritance from China with no localised elements found.

Compared to Wolfgang Franke and Chen Tieh Fan's collection, epigraphic materials of more than seven folds were discovered in the temples in Kinta District. Wolfgang and Chen did not collect even one epigraphical material in these cave temples. The world has most likely forgotten about the historical relics that have been lying for hundreds of years. The research team even found a hundred-year-old historical relic in the dark and humid storeroom. The paper attempts to go a further step from the book *Trails of the Nanyang Chinese: History and Legends of the Cave Temple in Ipoh of Malaysia*, by not only summarising the work but also embedding the new findings until January 2020.

This is the research that is racing with time. These cave temples may have been well-known during British colonial periods. Today, the old photos can be found in Malaysia National Archives. The wonderful photo not only reveals the old features of these cave temples but also historical relics during that time. For instance, an old photo of Nam Tou Yan shows three wooden tablets, but they have disappeared now. The hot and humid weather damaged the historical relic. The Religious Majestic Symbols of Kwong Fook Ngam are in bad condition. Research work such as collecting epigraphic materials is valuable, not only for research purposes but also to raise awareness about the importance of these materials in our search of the past, which can bring explanation and understanding to the present.

The inheritance may be an imminent challenge for these cave temples, especially those established before World War II. During the years that these temples were discovered, the Buddhist temples were managed by the Buddhist monk, and the Taoism temples were controlled by a Taoist priest. Time flies and the religious teacher could not find their apprentice. Most cave temples that were established before World War II are no longer managed directly by religious authorities, except Sam Poh Tung and Lung Tou Ngam. Whatever researchers can do is record the contemporary findings, before they get destroyed or disappeared.

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ⁱ Tan Chaw Hui and Liow Min Wei, fresh graduate worked as the Research Assistance under the research project led by Dr. Tan Ai Boay, assisted by her colleague Toh Teong Chuan. The first batch of research assistance carried out the most challenge and tough research works. They drove along the limestone hill in Ipoh to find out the cave temples. Later, Ong Min Yu, Amy Ling Su Ping and Tang Man Hong joined the research team.

ⁱⁱ The government gazette did not record the Chinese name. The temple disappeared now. The Chinese name only based on the dialect pronunciation.

ⁱⁱⁱ Compiles from Federated Malay States Government Gazette 1895 to 1909.