

Jailangkung: Indonesian Spirit-Basket Divination

Margaret Chan

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Abstract and Keywords

Chinese spirit-basket divination, which dates to the fifth century, would have been lost to the world had it not been reincarnated as Indonesian jailangkung. The term is the homophonic rendition of the Chinese cai lan gong [菜篮公, vegetable basket deity] and unambiguously links the Indonesian practice with the Chinese. Contemporary Chinese divination methods have replaced the clumsy basket planchette with the handier triforked branch or a pen held in the medium's hand, but a spirit basket still features in jailangkung and remains the key element in involutions of the prototype. For example, Nini Thowong's spirit-possessed doll originated as an effigy built over a basket armature. Jailangkung and its iterations are performed as sacred rituals or games of amusement all over the archipelago to an extent that jailangkung has been absorbed into Indonesian magic folklore. Jailangkung starred in the country's most successful horror movie. This investigation discusses the domestication of an alien tradition as social-political engineering.

Keywords: Indonesia, jailangkung, hantu, mysticism, séance, spirit basket, archaeology, distribution of games

Introduction

I was astonished by my first encounter with a *jailangkung* (also *jelangkung*, spirit basket).¹ This was at a temple in Jam Thang [盐汀] village on the outskirts of Singkawang, West Kalimantan, where I was watching a spirit medium dance with a fan on the evening of February 9, 2008. The languid performance lulled me, so I was unprepared when two men suddenly barged past me in a flurry of activity. They appeared to be wrestling with a “wild beast” that they were hanging onto with sashes. The “beast” pulled the men up and down the temple hall and into the crowd so that spectators had to scramble to get out of the way. After the séance, the “beast” lay lifeless on the main altar table. It was a rattan basket dressed in a little red and yellow Ming-style soldier's tunic (Figure 1).

My childhood in Singapore of the 1950s was a social milieu of temple ceremonies for my Hokkien father's family practiced Chinese popular religion, which is why I chose to research Chinese spirit possession. I also investigate Indonesian spiritualism for at home I was immersed in the Sino-Malay cultural world of my Peranakan² mother. This included the everyday belief in *djinns* and *hantus*.³ Notwithstanding my familiarity with temple rit-

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uals and Malay magic, a spirit-possessed basket, endearingly dressed in a little shirt, was a discovery. I pressed my informants for answers, only to be met with nonchalance. Apparently, *jailangkung* is commonplace in Indonesia.



Figure 1 The beast of Singkawang, a *jailangkung* basket wearing a shirt.

Photograph: Ronni Pinsler.

This information made me even more determined to learn about spirit-basket possession, and my research included fieldtrips to Java and West Kalimantan from 2008 to 2010. I learned that the *jailangkung* originated in fifth-century Chinese spirit-basket divination. The method had traveled throughout the Chinese diaspora but disappeared by the 1950s. Spirit-basket divination thrives only in Indonesia, and *jailangkung* is living testimony of cultural connections between China and Southeast Asia. This essay focusses on *jailangkung* in Java and West Kalimantan. I discovered Nini Thowong, a *jailangkung* involution,⁴ and from Indonesian scholarship I learned about *lukah gilo* (mad fish-trap) in Sumatra⁵ and Riau.⁶ The *lukah* is a rattan fish-trap that can be as tall as a man. When spirit possessed, the basket has the strength to drag teams of men about an arena.⁷

Games as Anthropological Evidence

Jailangkung can be described as a game inasmuch as there is an objective and rules of play. In 1880, Edward Tylor made a “special argument” for games as anthropological evidence. Tylor proposed that if geographically separate communities have similar games that are “peculiar or complex enough to bar the supposition of their having sprung up independently,” then this would be proof of cultural connections between the groups.

Despite the cogency of the argument and the eminence of the proposer in the field of cultural anthropology, the study of the international distribution of games never quite took off as research method.⁸ Perhaps the fact of cultural diffusion needs no explication, or the origins of traditional games can never be proven, but Tylor’s theory combined with an archaeology of the everyday enables a critical examination of how host societies cope with alien traditions through time. This study shows how *jailangkung* naturally assimilated into

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Indonesian animism to foster involution, but how a newer import, Middle-Eastern Islamic ideas, have necessitated new coping strategies.

The Chinese origin of *jailangkung* is published by the name, which is a homophonic rendition of the Chinese *cai lan gong* [菜篮公, vegetable basket deity]. The Indonesian practice rehearses spirit-basket rituals of the Chinese Goddess of the Latrine and the Seven Star Sisters.⁹ The basket is anthropomorphized by the shirt draped upon it. According to Chinese folklore, an image made in human likeness, such as a temple idol or a scarecrow, provides a doorway for spirits to enter the mortal world.¹⁰ The basket as human effigy distinguishes *jailangkung* from Western cossinomancy, where a sieve is balanced on shears, and from African divinations, where tokens are shaken out a basket.¹¹

The everyday may seem banal, but Overholtzer and Robin propose that an archaeology into the materiality of the everyday offers insight into changing politics, commerce, and cosmology in a community over time.¹² A similar argument informs the Museum of London investigation into the ubiquitous willow-pattern ceramics of Victorian England. The discovery of pottery shards in archaeological digs all over London enabled a conclusion on the aspirations of the poor to the material culture of the rich.¹³

The Materiality and Rules of Play of *Jailangkung*

A typical *jailangkung* uses a household basket, about 30 centimeters wide and as tall, draped over with a shirt (Figure 2). The assemblage may feature head and arms, and decorations such as flags, but these embellishments are optional. The garment is *de rigueur*. When spirit possessed, the basket self-automates to write using a pen protruding from the reeds. One or two bunches of keys may be hung upon the cross-sticks.

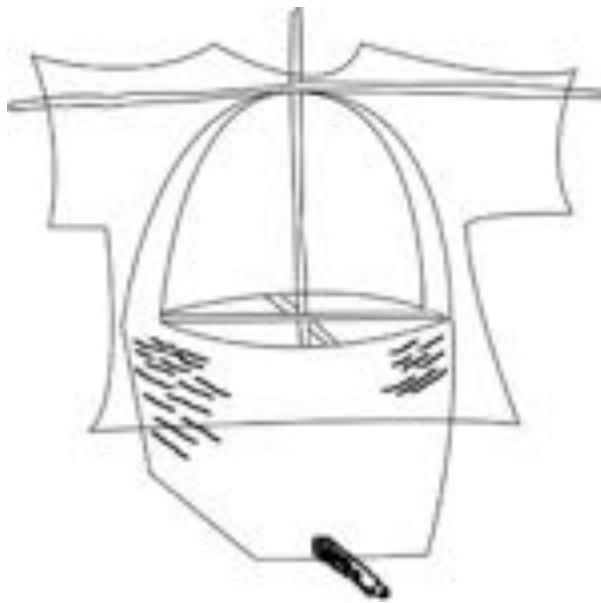


Figure 2 The general structure of a typical jailangkung.

Drawing by Jonathan Chan.

The Rules of Play for *Jailangkung*

Two players grasp the *jailangkung* in their hands, or they hold the basket between them using sashes. One man is the medium, who channels the spirit through his right hand into the basket. The second man merely supports the *jailangkung*.¹⁴ A mantra invites a spirit to possess the basket, and the ritual aspect of the performance is emphasized with offerings of incense, candles, fruit, and sweets. The mantras informants shared with me were formulaic instructions for the spirit to possess the basket but to leave when so ordered. From a Bangka Belitung (islands south of Sumatra) website I found a mantra particularly rich in cultural information. The spirit, named “Pig Dung Aunty,” directly links this *jailangkung* with the Chinese Goddess of the Latrine (see earlier references):¹⁵

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Thai lam sin. Thai lam fa,	Big basket spirit. Big flower basket,
Pat nyet sip ng. Chiang nyi ha loi ` kau jit ja.	On this eighth moon night, come down to play.
Oi loi tu loi. Ng ho jit sin. Khi ngoi ngoi.	If you wish to come, then come, but do not just stand stock still.
Oi hi tu hi. Ng ho jit sin. Ta liong thi.	If you wish to leave, leave but do not rebel.
Cuk jap co son. Pun nyi cho. Ten sim tham khiau. Pun nyi ko.	Bamboo reeds make you a boat. Light the lanterns; make a bridge to cross.
Thai pa so si. Oi nyi nak. Se pa so si. Oi nyi jung.	Here's a large key to hold. And a small key to use.
Kim ci hiong cuk. Chiang nyi loi. Kim ci hiong cuk chiang nyi con. ¹⁶	Gold spirit paper, incense, and can- dles invite you to come. Gold spirit pa- per, incense, and candles invite you to leave.

Jailangkung in the Indonesian Quotidian

The term *jailangkung* has entered Indonesian vocabulary.¹⁷ Every Indonesian informant, and I do mean every person, I spoke to about *jailangkung* knew the game. Ardian Canggihanto, my Indonesian guide in Singkawang in 2008 and in Jogjakarta in 2009, told me he had once communicated with Bruce Lee, the late martial movie star by spirit basket.¹⁸ Hedy (not her real name), who had taken me to see children play *jailangkung* in Singkawang on July 3, 2009, shared how as a schoolgirl in Semarang she had witnessed a séance. The possessing spirit was the soul of a convict who had died in the local prison. The spirit basket had asked Hedy to draw closer to be admired. Frightened, she ran away. I continue Hedy's story later. Over January 30 and 31, 2017, I polled twelve members of SMUKI (Singapore Management University Komunitas Indonesia), a student Indonesian cultural club. Everyone knew of *jailangkung*; six had witnessed séances; one had played *jailangkung*.

However, the imprimatur of *jailangkung* as a part of everyday Indonesian culture is the acceptance of *jailangkung* as local *hantu*, alongside *kuntilanak* (a vampire who is the soul of pregnant woman), and *pocong* (a wandering ghost dressed in burial shroud).¹⁹ Social

media reports tell of hauntings and mass hysteria among schoolgirls on account of possession by *jailangkung*,²⁰ and *jailangkung* stars in popular horror movies.”²¹

***Jailangkung* in Text**

Contradicting, or so it would seem, the place of *jailangkung* in the Indonesian everyday is the paucity of research on the subject. There is local scholarship on Nini Thowong and the mad fish-trap of Sumatra, but not on *jailangkung*.

Jailangkung was mentioned in recollections by Indonesian writer Hersri Setiawan of life in Salemba prison, Jakarta, where he was imprisoned in 1969 under the New Order. Hersri recounted how inmates killed time by playing *jailangkung*.²² He connected *jailangkung* with Javanese Nini Thowong, “[b]ut for some reason, when this game re-appeared like a plague in urban areas at the beginning of the 1950s, it was more Chinese than Javanese in form.” Hersri reasoned that while only female spirits possessed Nini Thowong, *jailangkung* summoned male and female spirits. The *jailangkung* was the more powerful, wrote Hersri without irony, just as prison life had the tradition “of the dominant position of the Chinese male, or that of the ruler and ruled.”²³

I will return to the discussion of the dearth of scholarship on *jailangkung* at the conclusion of this paper.

***Jailangkung* in the Profane World of Amusement Games**

Raden Sudibyo lives in a storehouse in the Pracimosono area of Jogjakarta palace. The locals told me he used to play *jailangkung* just about every night in the palace in the 1970s. Sudibyo confirmed the reports and told me that the Jogjakartan ghoulish Sumilah was the spirit that regularly possessed his *jailangkung*. Sumilah often obliged with lucky lottery numbers.

Sudibyo explained that he had become bored with *jailangkung*, but he was eager to play spirit basket for me. I had to bring a man to support the basket because women may not hold a *jailangkung*. Cangianto, who had communicated with Bruce Lee through *jailangkung*, was happy to oblige. On the evening of June 29, 2009, we gathered at the palace storehouse. Sudibyo produced a household basket and put over it one of his shirts turned inside out. He explained that the cloth in contact with the basket must not have been touched by the human body. Sudibyo set out a glass of water, a glass of tea, small cakes, and cut pieces of newspaper. The latter substituted for Chinese spirit money that Sudibyo said he had no time to buy. I worried out loud that the spirit would not accept this offering, but Sudibyo was confident that the spirits would make do. He tied a key with string to the basket to make a channel for the *jailangkung* to imbibe the essence of the offerings, and last, he lit an incense stick and inserted it into the basket.

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Sudibyo and Cangianto took up the basket. A few minutes later, the basket moved to make little scrawls on a book held up to its pen. Nothing further happened. During the muezzin call to evening prayers, Sudibyo insisted that the session had to be paused. Then the men again picked up the basket, but it stubbornly would not write anymore. We gave up eventually. Sudibyo seemed much deflated that he had failed before an important interviewer. Explaining the lethargy of our *jailangkung*, Sudibyo said that the spirit was the soul of an ancient batik painter. Apparently, the scrawls were old Jawi writing. Cangianto and I took Sudibyo's word for this.

Playful Youths and *Jailangkung*

On the evening of July 3, 2009, I watched the guileless play of Singkawang youths. I discuss Singkawang as a research site in the following section but here recall the fun I shared with twelve boys, perhaps aged between nine to fifteen years old. They formed a gang that gathered most evenings to play *jailangkung* in a vacant lot off Harmonis street. That night, the boys had two baskets that they took turns holding with sashes. Every time, even when the players switched, the *jailangkungs* would bob so fast as to make the sound of fluttering birdwing. At one point the boys tied a *jailangkung* to a lamppost so that only one handler held the basket. Still the *jailangkung* bobbed so fast as to become a blur.

When the boys asked the *jailangkungs* to reveal their identities, the baskets wrote answers into exercise books. One *jailangkung* pressed so hard it broke the pen in its reeds. One spirit announced itself as Suster Ngesot, a vampire of popular movie fame.²⁴ The other announced itself as *polong*, an evil sprite sent by black magicians to do harm. The boys laughed to learn they were communicating with *hantus*. During their play, a tiger spirit apparently possessed one boy for he crept about us on all fours roaring loudly. This must have been a common occurrence for the boys continued with their play unperturbed.

Hedy, who had taken me to meet the boys, said her brother had become possessed while playing with *jailangkung* and is now prone to fits. Several Singkawang spirit mediums I interviewed said they had first become spirit possessed during *jailangkung* sessions. It appears that playing *jailangkung* is a common prelude to bodily possession by a spirit.²⁵

Jailangkung in Singkawang

My main research site for *jailangkung* is Singkawang, the second largest town (after Pontianak) in the province of West Kalimantan. Singkawang is populated by a Chinese majority who are descendants of eighteenth-century Hakka goldminers.²⁶ Singkawang stages an annual Cap Goh Meh [十五暝, fifteenth of the first moon] parade featuring some five hundred spirit mediums borne down the main streets on palanquins set with knives and nails.²⁷ *Jailangkungs* dance wildly among them.²⁸ Chet Ket Khiong (蔡国强), the head of Majelis Tao (MTI), an association claiming to represent all spirit mediums and

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jailangkung groups in Singkawang, told me that there are some seven hundred spirit mediums and seventeen *jailangkung* groups on his register.²⁹

In 2008 and 2009, I interviewed leaders of Singkawang's religious community: Bong Wui Khong [皇威康], head of the TriDharma [Daoism-Confucianism-Buddhism] Association, and Zheng Zhen Fu [郑振福], head of the Majelis Konghucu Indonesia (Makin Confucian Association of Indonesia) group. I interviewed the oldest spirit medium in the town, ninety-year-old Cung Nyiong Hin (钟杨兴), who became a spirit medium at the age of eighteen. Three of the many spirit mediums I interviewed were in their eighties. All recalled seeing children play *jailangkung* from as far back as they could remember and concurred that spirit-basket divination only entered temple practice around the late 1960s to 1970s.³⁰ All of them named the earliest *jailangkungs* known to them as Nyian Sai and Khim Sin.³¹ Both *jailangkungs* are no longer in use. I saw a faded photograph of Khim Sin, but I found the original Nyian Sai basket in an abandoned temple on Pulau Belitung road.

I interviewed Lai Fo Bao [赖佛保], who had supported Nyian Sai *jailangkung* from 1981 to 1994.³² He said that the basket was first possessed in 1965. Its medium, Zhu Miao Jin [朱妙金], built the temple in 1974. After Zhu died in 1999, the spirit of the basket refused to perform with any other medium.

Chin Miao Fuk [陈妙福], head of the Singkawang Cap Go Meh parade committee in 2008 and 2009, had supported the Khim Sin *jailangkung* from 1971 to 1980.³³ Fung Ji (no Chinese characters) was the medium. According to Chin, Fung had amused himself playing *jailangkung* from the early 1960s. One day in 1968, the possessing spirit announced that it was a saint. Evil spirits do possess *jailangkung* in the profane world, but only saints perform in temple divinations.³⁴ Fung consulted Fan Ren Shou [范仁寿], then the "pope" of spirit mediums. Fan gave Fung a talisman, and with this in his pocket, Fung summoned the spirit to the *jailangkung*. The spirit took possession of the basket in the presence of Fan's talisman, testifying irrefutably to its saintliness.

Chin recalled how in 1975 a spirit medium, proclaiming himself a god incarnate, said that a ghost possessed Khim Sin. The spirit medium attacked Khim Sin with a machete, but the spirit basket knocked the upstart to the ground.

The Earth Gods of Singkawang

In Singkawang, the spirit mediums and *jailangkungs* I met were possessed by Malay, Dayak, and Chinese tutelary deities (*datoks*), the cultivated souls of ancient Singkawang ascetics.³⁵ All the Chinese *jailangkungs* "told" me they were souls of immigrants who had come to Indonesia before the Dutch. I witnessed many *jailangkung* séances, but space constraints allow me to describe only one performance at some length.

The *jailangkung* of Malay Datok Pak Gani is the oldest ongoing practice in Singkawang. Pak Gani's original medium/channeler, Lie Teck Poh [李德保] was in his sixties when I met him on July 4, 2009. Old Lie had suffered a stroke that left him with a helpless left arm

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and incoherent speech. His son, Lie Jiu Chuan [李求权], a drink and cake vendor, has taken his place. A relative, Lie Chun Hooi [李春辉], who had supported the *jailangkung* for Old Lie, continues this duty for Young Lie.

Datok Pak Gani séances take place in a small wood-and-brick temple in Kampong Natuna. There is a portrait of the saint in an outdoor shrine in front of the temple. The separate accommodation is because Pak Gani is a Muslim spirit, whereas the temple is Daoist. His picture shows Pak Gani as a distinguished old man dressed in white, wearing the skull cap of a returnee from the pilgrimage to Mecca (Figure 3).



Figure 3 Portrait of Datok Pak Gani.

Photograph: Margaret Chan

The original Pak Gani basket is about thirty years old and still in use. Made of thin cane, the basket measured about 35 centimeters wide at the base. Draped over the basket is a stained white, one-shouldered shirt with Arabic-style calligraphy written on it. An assistant lit altar candles and burned aromatic resins. He added broken pieces of joss sticks to the censer so that smoke billowed out in suffocating clouds, bringing tears to the eyes of the eight people crowded around the spirit basket.

The two younger Lies took up the *jailangkung* by means of sashes tied to the basket base (Figure 4). In less than a minute, the basket began to nod, although the handlers held steady. The Pak Gani spirit basket wrote agitatedly into a student's exercise book using the ballpoint pen pushed into the basket reeds. Pak Gani was displeased with the red candles on the altar. These were for Chinese gods, whereas he, being Muslim, demanded white candles. The session had to wait for the assistant to go on bicycle to buy suitable candles. When all was in order, Pak Gani patiently took questions, writing replies in Bahasa Indonesia in a legible hand. When I asked Pak Gani to demonstrate Arabic calligraphy, the spirit basket obliged (Figure 5). I asked the Datok where he was in relation to the basket. Pak Gani replied that he was standing in front of the basket and moving the

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jailangkung with his hands. The spirit basket swayed and bobbed gently in a manner seemingly appropriate for a wise old man.



Figure 4 Datok Pak Gani *jailangkung* answered questions by writing into a book. The medium, Li Qiu Quan, is hidden in the picture.

Photograph: Margaret Chan

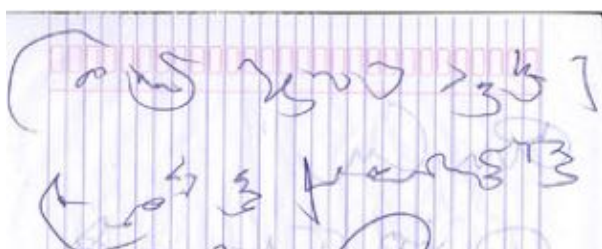


Figure 5 "Arabic script" written by Pak Gani through his *jailangkung*.

Photograph: Margaret Chan

Through the spirit basket, Pak Gani told me that he was Javanese, originally from Gunong Kawi Raya in Surabaya (Figure 6). He had come to West Kalimantan in the 1800s and retired as an ascetic to Serasan Island. Pak Gani achieved sainthood in death because of his prayers and meditation. He used the *jailangkung* in order to prescribe medicines to people in need. Pak Gani wrote that he first possessed the *jailangkung* in 1980 in Jakarta, where Old Lie, the original medium/channeler, was working as a spirit medium. One day, a friend of Old Lie needed medicine so Old Lie made a *jailangkung* and invited a spirit that knew medicine to possess the basket and write a prescription.



Figure 6 Pak Gani describes himself as “Orang Jawa,” a Javanese.

Photograph: Margaret Chan

Datok Pak Gani interrupted the spirit-writing session three times to smoke cigarettes. The *jailangkung* moved automatically to a candle flame to light sticks inserted into the basket weave. Surprisingly, the cigarettes burned to stubs, although no one drew on them. Pak Gani also drank coffee by dipping the pen into a cup. After a drink, the basket would write, staining the pages with coffee. Toward the close of the session, the *jailangkung* asked to write talismans. The *jailangkung* wrote Arabic-type script on two strips of white paper, each about two centimeters wide and six centimeters long. Pak Gani instructed that the talismans be burned and the ashes mixed with water, which Old Lie had to drink while facing north during the *magrib* (sunset prayers) hour. Apparently, Younger Li has been too busy recently to invite Datok Pak Gani to possess the *jailangkung*. Pak Gani wrote that he did not want to miss a chance to prescribe medicines for his old friend. Around 11 a.m., three hours after the start of the session, it was time for Pak Gani to take his leave. Datok Pak Gani tossed two *sheng bei* [圣杯] divining blocks placed on the spirit basket. After three throws, the answer was “yes” when the basket abruptly became still.³⁶

I met two Dayak *jailangkungs* on July 2, 2009, at a shrine on Ali Anyang road. Both spirit baskets were dressed in white shirts trimmed with black. They identified themselves as Iban spirits who had come from nearby Kabung Island. One was a vegetarian that drew sustenance by pressing its pen into white flowers set before it. The other was a fierce spirit that chain-smoked throughout the séance. The medium/channeler, Bhong Ci Thung [汪志星], told me that every Cap Goh Meh he chopped off the head of a rooster so that this *jailangkung* could peck into the bloody neck with its pen.

The most successful *jailangkung* practice in Singkawang was that of a temple on Kalimantan road. On July 1, 2009, I went to the temple and communicated with two *jailangkungs*. Both spirit baskets emphasized that they were possessed by higher Daoist deities, not mere local earth gods. The higher standing of the two gods is reflected in their ascetic

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vegetarian diet, and this is why they chose to communicate through spirit baskets and not the bodies of spirit mediums, for the latter were likely to be meat eaters.

The *jailangkungs* wrote handsome Chinese characters neatly set out in rows. Each spirit had a distinctive hand. The *jailangkungs* moved in stately manner, bowing often and writing steadily. No one dared to ask for lucky numbers. The *jailangkungs* became impatient when I asked them to relate their life histories; they said their purpose was to give spiritual advice and not interviews. Someone asked the *jailangkung* possessed by Zhi Gao Da Wang [志高大王, The High Achieving Emperor] if one in the crowd of onlookers could hold it. In reply, the spirit basket scanned the faces of those around the table, turning to me. The person who supported the basket yielded his place to me. I gingerly held onto a handle on the base of the basket when the *jailangkung* began again to write and it moved easily. I was not able to tell whether the basket moved on its own accord, or whether it was the hand of sixty-one-year-old medium/channeler, Ma Guo Hui [马国讳], that wrote.

***Jailangkung* Involution**

I have argued that Nini Thowong is an involution of Chinese spirit-basket divination that has now become entirely Indonesian.³⁷ Geertz discussed involution as the tendency to embellish cultural items. Over time the ornamentation can be so elaborate it appears to be a new artifact, but the original idea remains intact.³⁸ The evolution of the anthropomorphic basket into a doll is instinctive, and I illustrate this process with pictorial evidence. At Guang Hui Gong [廣惠宮, Shrine of Boundless Benevolence], Kebumen, the *jailangkung* of Bei Gu Xing Jun [北姑星君, Lady Northern Star Deity], has a doll's head, but underneath the sumptuous red gown I found a basket armature (Figure 7).

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Figure 7 Bei Gu Jailangkung at Kebumen; a basket armature is under the gown.

Photograph: Margaret Chan

At Boen San Tong [汶山堂, Wen Mountain Shrine], Cirebon, the *jailangkung*, also of Bei Gu, had fully evolved into a sculpted wooden image sans basket body (Figure 8). The temple people told me that this made a handier *jailangkung*.



Figure 8 Bei Gu Jailangkung at Cirebon; there is not a basket. Pak Lioe, in white, is the medium.

Photograph: Margaret Chan

Somewhere between the two developments lies the *jailangkungs* of Kwan Seng Boen [关圣闻, The Famed Sage Guan] temple in Semarang. Sugiharto Mulyo is the medium/channeler and owner of Kwan Seng Boen. He conducts divination using two *jailangkungs*. One belongs to Mazu-Guanyin,³⁹ and the other is for Guangong, God of War. Mulyo said that his

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grandfather had set up the original shrine in 1970. The old man also used two *jailangkungs*. Sugiharto's father inherited the spirit baskets and the temple in 1986. In 1996, a fire at the temple destroyed both original *jailangkungs*. Similar-looking substitutes were made. Sugiharto inherited the temple practice in 1999, including the replacement *jailangkungs*, beautiful paper-mâché sculptures built over basket armatures (Figure 9).



Figure 9 The Mazu-Guanyin Jailangkung of Kwan Seng Beon. Note the pencil under the hand.

Photograph: Margaret Chan

Sugiharto believes his grandfather was Hokkien, but he considers himself an indigene and he speaks no Chinese. He said he was Muslim but saw no conflict between his personal faith and his Tridharma temple practice. Sugiharto is proud of his work and wanted to be identified by his name in my research. Having witnessed religious intolerance first-hand in Indonesia, I worried about the ethics of identifying Sugiharto as Muslim, so I pointedly asked him again if I should give my readers this information. He said “yes.” Back in Singapore I telephoned him to once again check his decision to be named. He said “yes” once more, but sounded irritated on the line, as if I doubted his words. His daughter is Muslim, he pointed out, and he planned on her taking over his temple practice.

The Kwan Seng Boen *jailangkung* divination has been successful enough for Sugiharto to build a good-sized temple of zinc, wood, and concrete. The attractive façade, painted fire-engine red, made the temple stand out from among the wooden huts clustered around it in Gendong Utara village. A wonderland of altars lay within. There were large altars with large tables as well as small worship nooks all over the place. Gaudy paintings on the

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walls presented a bewildering spectrum of pre-Islamic Javanese deities and Chinese gods, including a giant portrait of the Chinese God of War.

Sugiharto estimates that 80 percent of his clientele are Chinese; the rest are indigenes. There is a weekly schedule of divinatory times, but people also come for private one-on-one consultations. For questions concerning illnesses, marriage, and love, Mazu-Guanyin would be consulted. Guangong is appealed to for inquiries regarding business and work.

When I asked for a spirit-writing consultation, Guangong obliged, but I first had to kneel and pray with joss sticks at several altars, in front of the temple, and even at the head of the path leading to the temple. After the elaborate preparation, the divination itself was anticlimactic (see Figure 10).



Figure 10 Sugiharto writes using his right hand to hold and channel the Guangong Jailangkung.

Photograph: Margaret Chan

Sugiharto sat at a table before a pad of recycled paper printed on one side. In his right hand, Sugiharto held the Guangong effigy by its base. The basket swung back and forth, writing out answers in blue pencil. There was no way I could tell whether the basket moved automatically or if Sugiharto wrote. Guangong's replies looked like the scrawls of a one-year-old, so I had to depend entirely on Sugiharto for interpretations. He said that he channeled the deities and could hear their voices:

“Was my present job good for me?”

“Yes. Focus on what you have to do and do not fritter energy pursuing other initiatives.”

Every question triggered vigorous writing. Later when I asked Sugiharto whether evil spirits could possess the *jailangkungs*, he seemed genuinely baffled. He had never thought of such a possibility.

***Jailangkung* as Anthropological Evidence of the Spread of Culture**

Research into the world distribution of Chinese spirit-basket divination reveals a trail that has run cold. Divination using the *ngoc co* [beaked basket] was central to Vietnamese Cao Dai spiritism, but the practice is proscribed under communism.⁴⁰ Spirit-basket divination must have been popular in Malaysia to be featured in a fictional story about a Hakka woman living near Kuala Lumpur in the 1940s,⁴¹ but Jean DeBernardi, who researched spirit mediumship in Penang in the 1970s, wrote that she had heard of sieve and spirit-basket divination but never observed a *séance*.⁴² Malaysian independent researcher Lee Eng Kew [李永球] told me that he witnessed the game only once. As a child, he watched his mother and another woman hold a basket that moved on its own to rap upon a stool.⁴³ The situation repeats itself in Singapore. There is an account of a 1949s *Datok Bakol* [Deity of the Basket] practice in a popular magazine.⁴⁴ Elliot, who researched spirit mediumship in Singapore in the 1950s, described basket rapping as a moribund practice of illiterate folk.⁴⁵ A 1975–1976 research project on a Singapore Peranakan temple revealed a large basket dressed in a cloak on an altar table. The male medium who had channeled the *Datuk Bakol* had passed away before the time of the research.⁴⁶

Apparently, in Chinese divination, the clumsy spirit basket has been replaced by the handier *fuji* triforked branch, or a pen held in the hand of a medium.⁴⁷ Even in China it appears that spirit-basket divination is a dying tradition. Lin writes of spirit-basket practices at seventeen sites in China, but he provides no data or ethnography to support this proposition.⁴⁸ Robert Weller, who researches Chinese popular religion in Taiwan, said he had never seen spirit-basket divination.⁴⁹ The only contemporary report on spirit-basket divination outside Indonesia comes from Hong Kong.⁵⁰

This evidence proposes *jailangkung* as a cultural treasure largely lost to the world. Archaeology of the Indonesian everyday reveals that the survival of spirit-basket divination owes to its having melded into Malay magic. However, ancient beliefs of magic are now under threat.

Nineteenth-century reports of Nini Thowong and *lukah gilo* comprise sightings of well-developed indigenized practices, provide proof that the *jailangkung* prototype must have come to the Malayo-Indonesian region earlier, allowing for involution over time.⁵¹ The contemporary “thick” descriptions of *jailangkung* in this essay show that the practice is very much alive in the Indonesian everyday. However, *jailangkung* and other folk beliefs are increasingly being rationalized by notions of modernism and religious fundamentalism. The attitude is reflected in local scholarship that present Nini Thowong and *lukah gilo* as pre-Islamic practices now belonging to the secular world of tourism and village sports.⁵² The academic silence on *jailangkung* transforms the Chinese tradition into an Other that can be ignored. This *modus operandi*—ignoring that which may not be countenanced—was how newly independent Indonesia repudiated indigenous animism for modernist monotheism.

Jailangkung: Indonesian Spirit-Basket Divination

Only six institutionalized religions are constitutionally recognized: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Denied is the real belief in magic embedded in the indigenous psyche and manifested in the Malayo-Indonesian everyday as “culture-bound” behavior such as *latah* (a startle reaction) and *amok* (an unexplained rampage), concepts that have entered Western psychiatric vocabulary.⁵³

The rich variety of indigenous faiths has been bundled into one category: *Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa* [Beliefs in the Almighty God, *Kepercayaan* for short],⁵⁴ a misnomer since animist pantheons include good and bad spirits. *Kepercayaan* believers had until recently been forced to leave blank the space for religion on their national identity card (KTP).⁵⁵ Only on November 7, 2017, did the Constitutional Court rule that “*Kepercayaan*” may be recorded as a religion in the KTP.

The Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), the nation’s highest Muslim authority, has challenged this ruling on the basis that beliefs do not constitute religion.⁵⁶ Whereas members of a *Kejawen* [Javanese indigenous faith] group I worked with from May to December 2010 in Cilacap proudly declared their faith as preceding any imported religion,⁵⁷ Anton Tabah Digdoyo, a member of the Law Commission of MUI, spoke of the constitutional recognition of *Kepercayaan* as a return to the Stone Age in an era of science.⁵⁸

This archaeology into the materiality of spirit-basket divination in the Indonesian everyday reveals how Western concepts, including nationalism and education, have been adopted, but the colonial dismissal of the native as primitive is challenged by a penchant for scientism that would dismiss indigenous animism as naive. An increasing influential theocracy of Middle-Eastern ideation is bent on imposing an austere school of Islam. The new sanitization of indigenous traditions can only result in an impoverishment of the cultural world because spirit-basket divination, which dates to the southern Chinese Liu-Song [刘宋; 420–479 CE] dynasty, would have been lost to the world had not *jailangkung* found a home in Indonesian folklore.

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Notes:

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⁽²⁾ For a discussion on Peranakans in Singapore, see Mark Ravinder Frost, "Transcultural Diaspora: The Straits Chinese in Singapore, 1819–1918," *Asia Research Institute, Working Paper Series* 10 (August 2003).

⁽³⁾ *Hantus* are evil spirits. *Djinns* are benign but can be mischievous. Cheryl L. Nicholas, "I Don't Believe in Hantu (Ghosts), But They Do Exist: Malay Syncretic Talk-in-Interaction," *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* 10, no. 1 (2009): 46–54, discusses the acceptance, even among the educated, of a spirit cosmos in the Malay everyday.

⁽⁴⁾ A doll built upon a basket armature; Margaret Chan, "The Sinophone Roots of Javanese Nini Towong," *Asian Ethnology* 76 (2017): 95–115.

⁽⁵⁾ Desfiarni, *Tari Lukah Gilo Sebagai Rekaman Budaya Minangkabau pra Islam: Dari Magis Ke Pertunjukan Sekuler* [The Dance of the Mad Fish-Trap as Cultural Tradition of pre-Islamic Minangkabau] (Jogjakarta: Kalika, 2004); Hidayat N. Rahmat, "Kesenian Lukah Gilo di Masyarakat IX Koto Sungai Lasi" [The Art of the Mad Fish-Trap of the Community of IX Koto Sungai Lasi], unpublished diploma thesis, Universitas Andalas, Padang, Sumatra (2016).

⁽⁶⁾ Rosta Minawati Desmiati and Suherni, "Fenomena Pertunjukan Lukah Gilo pada Masyarakat Sabak Auh, Siak" [The Phenomenon of the Mad Fish-Trap in the Community of Sabak Auh, Siak], *Bercadik* 2, no. 1 (2014): 173–182.

⁽⁷⁾ Febriyanti, "Keranjang Gila Dusun Empeh" [The Mad Basket of Empeh Village], *Tempo*, Intermezzo section (January 25, 2009): 60, describes *jailangkung* by another name.

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⁽⁸⁾ I know only one study of the distribution of a game (in this case *mankala*, the game where players take turns to distribute stones into an array of holes) as trace of cultural connections: W. M. J. van Binsbergen, "Rethinking Africa's Contribution to Global Cultural History: Lessons from a Comparative Historical Analysis of Mankala Board-Games and Geomantic Divination," *Talanta* 28/29 (1996–1997): 219–251. There is the *International Journal for the Study of Board Games*, a somewhat obscure online journal, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120327131107/http://www.boardgamestudies.info:80/studies/> accessed on April 6, 2018. Elliott Morton Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Study of Games* (New York: Columbia University, 1971) on *Internet Archive* https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.112077/2015.112077.The-Study-Of-Games_djvu.txt, accessed on April 6, 2018, is an anthropological study of play.

⁽⁹⁾ Wei-pang Chao, "The Origin and Growth of the Fu Chi," *Folklore Studies* 1 (1942): 9–27; Wei-pang Chao, "Games at the Mid-Autumn Festival in Kuangtung," *Folklore Studies* 3, no. 1 (1944): 1–16; Jan Jakob Maria de Groot, *The Religious System of China: Its Ancient Forms, Evolution, History and Present Aspect, Manners, Customs and Social Institutions Connected Therewith, VI, Book II*. (Leiden: Brill, 1910), pp. 1324–330; Qin Ying, "The Purple Lady and Blessings of Fertility," paper presented at the American Association for Chinese Studies (AACS) 52nd Conference on October 16, 2010, Wake Forest University, North Carolina. Chinese sources include Xiaoshu Zhang [张晓舒], "Ying Zigu Yi Su Qi Yuan Xin Lun" [迎紫姑习俗起源新论, A New Study into the Origin of the Custom of Welcoming Zigu], *Zhong Nan Min Zu Xue Yuan Xue Bao, Ren Wen Du Hui Ke Xue Ban* [中南民族学院学报, 人文社会科学版], *Journal of South Central University for Nationalities, Humanities and Social Sciences* 21, no. 4 (July 2001): 78–81; Bingan Wu [乌丙安] (ed.), "Zigu" [紫姑], *Zhong Guo Min Jian Shen Pu* [中国民间神谱 *Chinese Folk Theogony*] (Shenyang [沈阳]: Liaoning Ren Min Chu Ban She [辽宁人民出版社, Liaoning People's Publishing Agency], 2007: 120–121; and Ji-fu Lin [林继富], "Zigu Xin Yang Liu Bian Yan Jiu" ["紫姑信仰流变研究," "On Changes in Zigu Belief"], *Changjiang Da Xue Xue Bao, She Hui Ke Xue Ban* [长江大学学报, 社会科学版, *Journal of Yangtze University, Social Sciences*] 31, no. 1 (February 2008): 5–11.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Margaret Chan, "Bodies for the Gods: Image Worship in Chinese Popular Religion." In Julius Bautista (ed.), *The Spirit of Things: Materiality and Religious Diversity in Southeast Asia*, 197–215. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2012.

⁽¹¹⁾ See, for example, Geoffrey Arnott, "Coscinomancy in Theocritus and Kazantzakis," *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series 31, no. 1 (1978): 27–32.

⁽¹²⁾ Lisa Overholtzer and Cynthia Robin, "The Materiality of Everyday Life: An Introduction," *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 26, no. 1 (2015): 1–9.

⁽¹³⁾ Alastair Owens, Nigel Jeffries, Rupert Featherby, and Karen Wehner, "From the Unusual to the Banal: The Archaeology of Everyday Life in Victorian London," *Museum of London Archaeology, Research Matters* 4 (May 2010).

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(¹⁴) In all the *jailangkung* performances I witnessed, the players were men.

(¹⁵) *BangkaBelitung123*, “Ritual Jailangkung Tionghoa Bangka Belitung—Cu Si Pak” [*Jailangkung* Ritual of the Chinese Community of Bangka Belitung—Pig Dung Aunty], <http://babel123.com/ritual-jailangkung-tionghoa-bangka-belitung-cu-si-pak-me.html>, accessed on June 8, 2017. Mary F. Somers Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper: Chinese Settlement on an Indonesian Island* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992), reports on the Chinese community on the islands.

(¹⁶) Hakka informants from Singkawang say the transliteration resembles their vernacular.

(¹⁷) See, for example, John M. Echols and Hassan Shadily, in John U. Wolff and James T. Collins (eds.), *An Indonesian-English Dictionary*. Third Edition, rev. (1961, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 231; Alan M. Stevens and A. Ed. Schmidgall-Tellings, *A Comprehensive Indonesian-English Dictionary* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), p. 405; Sutanto Atmosumarto, *A Learner's Comprehensive Dictionary of Indonesia* (Harrow, UK: Atma Stanton, 2004), p. 197.

(¹⁸) Cangianto, a resident of Bogor, is named because he is regarded as an authority on Chinese ritual and values his social position. For the same reason, with the exception of “Hedy,” all other informants asked to be named.

(¹⁹) Endraswara Suwardi, *Dunia Hantu Orang Jawa: Alam Misteri, Magis, dan Fantasi Kejawaen* [The World of Ghouls: Mystery, Magic and Fantasy in the Javanese Tradition] (Jakarta: Narasi, 2004).

(²⁰) See, for example, Suparman Fana, “Gara-Gara Jelangkung, 25 Murid SD Kesurupan Masal” [Mass Trance Involving 25 Schoolchildren on Account of *Jelangkung* Haunting], *Berita Satu*, Thursday, September 4, 2014, <http://www.beritasatu.com/aktualitas/207486-garagara-jelangkung-25-murid-sd-kesurupan-masal.html>, accessed on March 19, 2018.

(²¹) The earliest *jailangkung* movie I know of is *Penghuni Bangunan Tua* [*Spirit of the Old Building*], with Lenny Marlina, Kiki Sharief, Aries Sharief, Pia Sharief, Fuad Rachman, Ardi Hs, and Mathias Agus. Directed by M. Sharieffudin A. (Medan: P.T. Surya Indonesia Medan, 1975). The post-New Order box office smash hit was *Jelangkung* [The Uninvited], with Winky Wiryawan, Melanie Aryanto, Rony Dozer, and Harry Panca. Directed by Rizal Mantovani and Poernomo (Indonesia: Rexinema, 2001). Later *jailangkung* movies include *Tusuk Jailangkung* [*Jailangkung Magic*] with Ian Bachtiar, Dinna Olivia, Samuel Rizal, Iqbal Rianza, and Thomas Y. Nawilis. Directed by Dimas Djayadiningrat (Indonesia: Rexinema, 2003); *Jailangkung Pembangkit Mayat* [*Jailangkung of the Risen Dead*], with Ary Sudarsono, Putri Rizky, Shinta Putri, Rimarsha, and Lulu Zakaria. Directed by Harry Dago (Indonesia: Multivision Plus, n.d.); *Ghost Jailangkung*, with Hessel Steven, Anneke Joey, Tyas Mirasik, and Ronal Gustaf. Directed by Rudi Witanto (Indonesia: MD Entertainment, 2007); *Jailangkung 3* with Mitha Griselda, Andrew R. Roxburgh, and M. Reza Pahlevi. Directed by Angga Dwimas Sasongko (Indonesia: Rexinema, 2007); *Tumbal*

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Jailangkung [Jailangkung Charm], with Soraya Larasati, Denny Weller, and Violenzia Jeanette. Directed by Nayato Fio Nuala (as Chiska Doppert) (Indonesia: Batavia Pictures, 2011); *Kalung Jailangkung [Necklace of Jailangkung]*, with Zaky Zimah, Soraya Larasati, Ghea D'Syawal, Rozi Mahali, Yessa Iona Gaffar, Raymon Knulih, and Munajat Raditya. Directed by Nayato Fio Nuala (as Koya Pagayo) (Indonesia: BIC Productions, 2011); *Jailangkung* with Amanda Rawles, Jefri Nichol, Hannah Al Rashid, and Gabriella Quinlyn. Directed by Jose Poernomo and Rizal Mantovani (Indonesia: Screenplay Films and Legacy Pictures, 2017).

(²²) Setiawan Hersri, "Art and Entertainment in the New Order's Jails," trans. and intro. Keith Foulcher, *Indonesia* 59 (April 1995): 1–20.

(²³) *Ibid.*, p. 9.

(²⁴) *Suster Ngesot [Sister Ngesot]*, with Nia Ramadhani, Mike Lewis, and Donita. Directed by Arie Azis (Indonesia: MD Pictures, 2007); *Suster N [Sister N]*, with Atiqah Hasiholan, Wulan Guritno, and Bob Seven. Directed by Viva Westi (Indonesia: Virgo Putra Film, 2007); *Kutukan Suster Ngesot [Curse of Sister Ngesot]*, with Rustam Anwar, Celine Evangelista, and Fanny Ghassani. Directed by David Poernomo (Indonesia: Imagine Pictures, 2009).

(²⁵) Accounts of spirit possession through *jailangkung* can be found in Robert L. Peterson, *The Demon Gods of Thorny River* (London: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, OMF Books, 1974), pp. 64–67, also Uray Ronald, "Dibalik Kesaktian-nya, Tatung juga Manusia" ["Behind the Magic, the Tatung Is Also Human"], *Pontianak Post, Potret Kehidupan [Life Portrait]* (February 23, 2008): 6. Also on the *Kanz Makhfiy* website, June 22, 2008. <http://kanzmakhfiy.blogspot.sg/2008/06/di-balik-kesaktian-nya-tatung-juga.html>, accessed on July 2, 2017.

(²⁶) Mary Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers, Farmers, and Traders in the "Chinese Districts" of West Kalimantan, Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2003); Bingling Yuan, *Chinese Democracies: A Study of the Kongsis of West Borneo (1776–1884)* (Leiden: Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies, CNWS, Universiteit Leiden, 2000). The latest population figure I have for Singkawang is 218,845 in 2011, Kementerian Dalam Negeri, Kabupaten Kota Singkawang [Ministry of Internal Affairs, Regency of Singkawang City], 2018, <http://www.kemendagri.go.id/pages/profil-daerah/kabupaten/id/61/name/kalimantan-barat/detail/6172/kota-singkawang>, accessed on March 18, 2018.

(²⁷) In 2008, the Chap Goh Meh parade I witnessed featured more than 400 spirit-mediums: Margaret Chan, "Chinese New Year in West Kalimantan: Ritual Theatre and Political Circus," *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* (CSDS), 3 (2009): 106–142. In 2017, 565 spirit mediums were featured in the parade; see Muhammad Irzal Adikurnia, "Wah, 565 Tatung Kebal Benda Tajam Meriahkan Cap Go Meh Singkawang" [Wow, 565 Spirit Mediums Braved Sharp Instruments to Celebrate Cap Goh Meh Singkawang], *Kompas.com*, February 11, 2017, <http://travel.kompas.com/read/2017/02/11/113450327/wah>.

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565.tatung.kebal.benda.tajam.meriahkan.cap.go.meh.singkawang, accessed on June 12, 2017.

(²⁸) There are two films of the Singkawang Chap Goh Meh parade: Lim Bui Sin, “Perayaan Cap Go Meh Di Klenteng Budi Darma Singkawang Kalimantan” [Cap Goh Meh Parade at the Budi Dharma Temple], February 10, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zp14nXtNdlo>; and “Ritual Jelangkung Cap Go Meh Di Kota Singkawang—Kalimantan Barat,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ADbt5B_WhA. Both films were published on February 12, 2017, and accessed on March 19, 2018.

(²⁹) Personal interview with Chet Ket Khiong in Singkawang conducted in Mandarin and Bahasa Indonesia on June 30, 2009.

(³⁰) This was when Chap Goh Meh parades began to be organized in Singkawang. See Chan, “Chinese New Year in West Kalimantan” (2009).

(³¹) None of my informants knew the Chinese characters for the two names. I guess “Khim Sin” means “Golden Body” (金身), the polite term for an image that is the repository of a spirit. “Nyian Sai” is possibly “Field Marshal” (元帅), pronounced “ngiàn-soi” in the Hakka.

(³²) Personal interview with Lai Fo Bao in Mandarin and Bahasa Indonesia, July 3, 2009, Singkawang.

(³³) Personal interview with Chin Miao Fuk in Bahasa Indonesia, July 6, 2009, Jakarta.

(³⁴) Chinese ancestor worship believes that the soul of the dead possesses images in order to enter the mortal world to do good. When offerings are made to the image, the soul gains spirit energy to become saints, then tutelary deities, and eventually buddhas; Chan, “Bodies for the Gods.”

(³⁵) Margaret Chan, “The Spirit-Mediums of Singkawang: Performing ‘Peoplehood’.” In *Chinese Indonesians Reassessed: History, Religion and Belonging*, edited by Sai Siew Min and Hoon Chang-Yau, 138–158 (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013).

(³⁶) Crescent-shaped blocks are tossed to obtain “yes-no” answers. The blocks feature one rounded and one flat side. If the blocks fall one rounded side up and the other the flat, the answer is “yes.”

(³⁷) Chan, “The Sinophone Roots of Javanese Nini Towong.”

(³⁸) Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1963), 81–82. Geertz employed the concept from Alexander Goldenweiser, “Loose Ends of a Theory on the Individual Pattern and Involution in Primitive Society.” In *Essays in Anthropology Presented to A. L. Kroeber*, edited by Robert Lowie, 99–104 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1936).

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(³⁹) A merging of the Daoist goddess of seafarers and Guan Yin, Buddhist goddess of mercy.

(⁴⁰) Jérémy Jammes, “Divination and Politics in Southern Vietnam: From the ‘Temple of the Three Doctrines’ (Tam Tông Miếu) to Caodaism.” Paper presented at “Modernities and Dynamics of Tradition in Vietnam: Anthropological Approaches” International Conference, Bình Châu Resort, Vietnam, December 2007.

(⁴¹) Tang Min [唐珉], “Xin” (信, “Letter”), in *Ma Hua Wen Xue Da Xi, Duan Pian Xiao Shuo* (马华文学大系, 短篇小说, Malaysian Chinese Literature Series, Short Stories Collection), edited by Chen Zheng Xin (陈政欣) and Yun Li Feng (云里风), vol. 2, 1981–1996, 403–414 (1991, Johor Bahru, Malaysia: Pelangi, 2001).

(⁴²) Jean DeBernardi, *The Way That Lives in the Heart: Chinese Popular Religion and Spirit Mediums in Penang, Malaysia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 94 and 198–199.

(⁴³) Lee’s research is in old graves of Taiping, Perak. I interviewed Lee in Singapore on May 3, 2009. At the time of the interview, Lee said his mother, Oon Ah Long (温植), was aged seventy-seven.

(⁴⁴) Tanah Kuning (Yellow Earth, a pen name), “Datok Bakol” [Basket Deity], *The Peranakan* 4 (October–December 2006): 5.

(⁴⁵) Alan J. A. Elliott, *Chinese Spirit-Medium Cults in Singapore* (1955; London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: The Athlone Press, 1990), pp. 145–146.

(⁴⁶) Cecilia Ng Siew Hua, “The Sam Poh Neo Neo Keramat: A Study of a Baba Chinese Temple,” *Contributions to Southeast Asian Ethnography* 2 (August 1983): 98–131.

(⁴⁷) David K. Jordan and Daniel L. Overmyer, *The Flying Phoenix: Aspects of Chinese Sectarianism in Taiwan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

(⁴⁸) Lin, “On Changes in Zigu Belief” (2008): 5–11, reports that spirit-basket worship can be found in Fujian, Anhui, Guangdong, Gansu, Guizhou, Guangxi, Henan, Heilongjiang, Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Liaoning, Sichuan, Shandong, and Zhejiang.

(⁴⁹) Personal interview with Robert P. Weller, professor and director of graduate studies, Boston University in Singapore on March 19, 2009.

(⁵⁰) There is an active spirit-basket practice in the Hong Kong Kam Lan Koon temple (金兰观, Jin Lan Guan, Sworn Brotherhood Daoist Temple) in the New Territories that dates its history to Chaozhou County, 1831, <http://www.kamlankoon.hk/>.

(⁵¹) Margaret Chan, “Sinophone Roots” (2017); Walter Skeat, *Malay Spiritualism, Folklore* 13, no. 2 (June 24, 1902): 134–165.

(⁵²) See Chan, “Sinophone Roots” and Desfiarni, *Tari Lukah Gilo*.

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(⁵³) Ronald C. Simons and Charles C Hughes (eds.), *The Culture-Bound Syndromes Folk Illnesses of Psychiatric and Anthropological Interest*, e-book (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Netherlands, 1985).

(⁵⁴) Candra Gautama and Robertus Rony Setiawan (eds.), *Ensiklopedi Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa* [Encyclopedia of Indonesian Indigenous Beliefs] (Jakarta: Indonesian Directorate General of Culture, Arts and Film, 2006).

(⁵⁵) In fact, the blank column under religion was a 2006 concession that had been hard fought for by *Kepercayaan* believers. See Margaret Chan, "The Worship of Semar, a Claim to 'Jus Primordialis,'" *Asian Culture* 38 (August 2014): 1–17.

(⁵⁶) Berita MUI [MUI News], *Solusi MUI Perihal Kolom Penghayat Kepercayaan* [MUI Solution for Kepercayaan Believers], December 8, 2017. <http://mui.or.id/id/berita/solusi-mui-perihal-kolom-penghayat-kepercayaan/>, accessed on March 26, 2018.

(⁵⁷) Chan, "The Worship of Semar."

(⁵⁸) Dimas, Ryandi. "Aliran Kerpercayaan Muncul di KTP, Mui: Negeri Ini Mundur ke Zaman Batu" [Kepercayaan to be Included in KTP, MUI: This Nation Returns to the Stone Age]. *Jawa Pos*. November 10, 2017. <https://www.jawapos.com/read/2017/11/10/167602/aliran-kepercayaan-muncul-di-ktp-musi-negeri-ini-mundur-ke-zaman-batu>, accessed on March 26, 2018.

Margaret Chan

School of Social Sciences, Singapore Management University