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EXPLORING MINORITY COMMUNITIES: A STUDY OF CHINESE AND SIAMESE TEMPLES IN PASIR MAS, KELANTAN

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Abstract: This study explores Taoist and Buddhist temples in Pasir Mas, Kelantan, focusing on how minority communities practice their faith and preserve cultural identities within a Muslim-majority society. It examines their harmonious coexistence with the Malay Muslim majority while maintaining religious traditions. The research investigates the history and development of these temples and their role in social, educational, and cultural life. Understanding these religious practices fosters tolerance and reduces prejudice in a multicultural society. A qualitative approach is adopted, incorporating fieldwork, interviews with twenty religious leaders, local authorities, and community members, alongside secondary sources. Findings reveal that the Chinese and Siamese communities enjoy religious freedom and contribute to mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. The study concludes that shared universal values between Islam, Taoism, and Buddhism, along with a

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supportive constitutional framework, play a critical role in fostering regional interreligious harmony. These insights offer valuable implications for promoting interfaith understanding and social cohesion in multicultural societies.

Keywords: Buddhism, Taoism, Theravada Buddhism, Pasir Mas, Mahayana Buddhism.

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Introduction

Religious diversity is a defining feature of Malaysia's socio-cultural landscape, with various ethnic and religious communities coexisting within a complex historical and political framework. Among these communities, the Chinese and Siamese populations in Kelantan have maintained their religious and cultural identities through the establishment of temples that serve as both places of worship and community centres. In Pasir Mas, Chinese and Siamese temples play a crucial role in preserving religious traditions, facilitating cultural practices, and fostering social cohesion among devotees. However, scholarly attention to these temples remains limited, particularly concerning their historical development, religious significance, and contemporary challenges. Kelantan, a northeastern state in Peninsular Malaysia, is widely recognized for its strong Islamic identity. However, the state is also home to a significant non-Muslim population, including Chinese and Siamese Buddhist communities.¹ The historical presence of these communities is linked to long-

¹ Rabihah Mohd Ghazali, *Buddhisme di Malaysia: Kajian Kes ke atas Masyarakat Buddha di Jajahan Tumpat, Kelantan*, (UKM: Unpublished Master Thesis, 2003).

standing transnational Buddhist networks, particularly with Thailand. Previous studies indicate that Theravada Buddhism in Kelantan has adapted to the local socio-religious context while maintaining its traditional practices.² Despite the extensive body of research on Islam in Kelantan, studies on Buddhist religious practices remain relatively scarce.

Several studies focus on Buddhism in Kelantan. Aweng Eh Rak³ explains in his work the subject related to Kelantan Siamese food, heritage, and culture. Nur Azuki Yusuff⁴ explores in her research the Siamese community in Kelantan throughout its historical development, sociocultural, and linguistic aspects. In their writings, Mohamed Yusoff Ismail⁵ and Rogayah Ester Mohamad,⁶ emphasize one aspect of Buddhism. The first author provides two studies: one about the social organization of Buddhist temples in Kelantan and the other about Theravada practices and religious life in Kelantan. Meanwhile, the second author focuses on the teachings and Buddhism in the Siamese community in Kelantan. Moreover, the writings of Norazlinda Zakaria⁷, Rabihah Mohd Ghazali⁸, and Abd Rahman Sulaiman⁹ focus on one district in Kelantan. Norazlinda discusses the influence of Buddhist belief on the community in Semerak, Pasir Puteh, Kelantan. Meanwhile, Rabihah and Abd Rahman focus on the Buddhist community in Tumpat, Kelantan. These studies fail to describe the whole subject of the Chinese and Siamese communities. Interestingly, studies by Zuriati binti Mohd Rashid¹⁰ and Muhammad Gaddafi Ibrahim¹¹ cover the Buddhist community in Pasir Mas. Zuriati explains the cross-religious and social interaction among Muslims and Buddhists in Kampung Tendong, Pasir Mas. Muhammad Gaddafi describes the practices and activities of the Buddhist community in Pasir Mas, Kelantan. Only the last study may be useful for complementing this study.

Hanapi Dollah¹² discusses in his book how the Chinese community in Kampung Mata Ayer, Pulau Chondong, Kelantan has assimilated Malay culture into its own. While

² Hanapi Dollah, *Assimilasi Budaya: Kajian Kes Komuniti Cina di Kelantan*, (Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1986).

³ Aweng Eh Rak, *Kelantan Siamese Food, Heritage & Culture*, (Kota Bharu: UMK Press, 2019).

⁴ Nur Azuki Yusuff, *Masyarakat Siam Kelantan; Sejarah, Sosiobudaya & Bahasa*, (Kota Bharu: UMK Press, 2017).

⁵ Mohamed Yusoff Ismail, *Buddhism and Ethnicity: Social Organization of a Buddhist Temple in Kelantan*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993) and *Buddhism in a Muslim State: Theravada Practices and Religious Life in Kelantan*, (e-BANGI: Jurnal Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan, 2006, 1 (1). pp. 1-12.

⁶ Rogayah Ester Mohamad, *Ajaran dan Kepercayaan Agama Buddha: Satu Kajian Khusus Terhadap Masyarakat Siam di Kelantan*, (Petaling Jaya: University of Malaya 1999).

⁷ Norazlinda Zakaria, *Pengaruh Agama Buddha ke Atas Masyarakat Islam di Semerak, Kelantan*, (Petaling Jaya: University of Malaya 2006).

⁸ Rabihah Mohd Ghazali, *Buddhisme di Malaysia: Kajian Kes ke atas Masyarakat Buddha....*

⁹ Abd. Rahman Sulaiman, *Masyarakat Thai di Kampung Kok Seraya*, (Petaling Jaya: University of Malaya 1969).

¹⁰ Zuriati Mohd Rashid, *Cross Religious Study among Muslims and Buddhists in Kampung Tendong, Pasir Mas, Kelantan*, (IIUM: Unpublished MA Thesis, 2008).

¹¹ Mohd Gaddafi Ibrahim, *Amalan dan Kegiatan Masyarakat Buddha: Kajian Kes di Jajahan Pasir Mas, Kelantan*, (UKM: Unpublished Master Thesis, 2005).

¹² Hanapi Dollah, *Assimilasi Budaya: Kajian Kes Komuniti Cina di Kelantan*.

Teo Kok Seong¹³ explains in his book the historical background of the Chinese community in Kelantan and its pattern of communication, which is like that of most Malays by using Kelantanese dialect. Additionally, Tan Chee Beng¹⁴ provides in his book an informative description and analysis of the historical, economic, political, and socio-cultural development of the Chinese in Malaysia. These studies provide useful information about the Chinese way of life, especially in Kelantan.

Furthermore, the writing of Tan Chee Beng,¹⁵ it is very important because it provides a comprehensive analysis of Chinese folk religion in Malaysia, focusing on its adaptation, institutional structures, and social functions. This study is based on extensive ethnographic research and examines the intersection of religious practices, identity politics, and social organization within the Malaysian Chinese community. Even though it does not examine both communities, the Chinese and Siamese yet its emphasis on the ethno-religious study is the best example of this type of research. Chinese and Siamese temples serve as key religious and cultural institutions within their respective communities. Chinese temples in Malaysia often integrate Mahayana Buddhism,¹⁶ Taoist, and Confucian elements, while Siamese temples primarily follow the Theravada Buddhist tradition¹⁷. There remains a lack of research focusing specifically on the temples in Pasir Mas, Kelantan. These factors highlight the need for further study on how temples in Pasir Mas are adapting to contemporary socio-religious challenges.

It is remarked that the existing literature provides important insights into the religious and socio-political aspects of Chinese and Siamese temples in Malaysia. However, there is a significant gap in research focusing on the temples in Pasir Mas, particularly regarding their historical evolution, contemporary challenges, and role within the community. This study aims to address this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the significance of these temples in sustaining religious identity, preserving cultural heritage, and maintaining social cohesion within a predominantly Malay-Muslim society.

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the experiences and perspectives of the Buddhist community in Pasir Mas, Kelantan. The chosen methodology

¹³ Teo Kok Seong, *The Peranakan Chinese of Kelantan: A Study of the Cultural, Language and Communication of an Assimilated Group in Malaysia*, (London: ASEAN Academic Press, 2003).

¹⁴ Lee, Kam Hing, & Tan, Chee-Beng, *The Chinese in Malaysia*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁵ Tan, Chee Beng, *Chinese Religion in Malaysia: Temples and Communities*. In *Asian Anthropology*, 10(1), 55-68. (Oxford: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁶ Nur Suriya binti Mohd Nor, *An Understanding of Beliefs and Practices of Mahayana Buddhism: A Case Study of a Contemporary Chinese Mahayana Buddhist Community in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor*, (IIUM: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2015).

¹⁷ Aweng Eh Rak, *Kelantan Siamese Food, Heritage & Culture*.

ensures a comprehensive understanding of religious and cultural practices within a Muslim-majority society. A qualitative approach is used to examine complex social and cultural phenomena, providing rich, detailed data on human behaviour and perceptions. This study follows a phenomenological approach, which focuses on understanding lived experiences from the perspective of those involved¹⁸. Data collection involves in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Interviews are conducted with 20 key informants, including Taoist and Buddhist leaders, temple committee members, devotees, and community leaders. Observations at temples document rituals, ceremonies, and daily activities. Additionally, temple records, publications, and media reports supplement the findings. The researchers utilized a thematic analysis approach to conduct data analysis. First, the researchers reviewed the transcripts to gain a deeper understanding of the data¹⁹. The researchers then developed key themes based on patterns emerging from the data. This method facilitated a thorough analysis and interpretation of the dataset, leading to comprehensive and meaningful insights.

This research work presents the main discussions and interpretations of the findings, structured into two sections. The first section delves into the specific findings, the Taoist and Buddhist temples in Pasir Mas, Kelantan, and their historical development. The second section explores the religious activities conducted by Taoist and Buddhist temples, focusing on their practices of prayer, meditation, fasting, vegetarianism, and festival celebrations.

Taoist and Buddhist temples in Pasir Mas, Kelantan

Based on the fieldwork conducted, the researchers found that in Pasir Mas, there are **four Taoist temples, one religious association** that is currently constructing a temple, **one Samnaksong, three Theravada Buddhist Wats, and one Mahayana Buddhist temple**. In total, there are **ten temples**, including the one under construction. The table below describes all those temples:

Belief	Temple	Built	Location
Taoism	Tir Kun	1.5.1994	Kampung Kubang Keli
	Tin Hu Keng	mid-20th century	Jalan Tokong, Pasir Mas
	Thein Boo Kong	30. 7. 1999	Kampung Tendong
	Tiu Kong Seng Kun	2002	Kampung Kelar

¹⁸ Nachmias, C. F. and David Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

	Persatuan Penganut Tao Jee Ong Kg KaSAR	2019	Kampung Kasar
Theravada Buddhism	Samnaksong Sukvikcha Vanaram	1950 ++	Kampung Lemal
	Wat Chinpradhittaram	1930 ++	Kampung Tendong
	Wat Uttamaram	1804	Kampung Teresek, Repek
	Wat Khosakaram	1920 ++	Kampung Lubuk Batil
Mahayana Buddhism	Kuan Yin	1996	Jalan Lemal

Table 1: Details Info. of Temples in Pasir Mas.

1. Tir Kun Temple

Tir Kun Temple is one of the important places of worship for the Chinese community in Pasir Mas. Built on May 1, 1994, this temple serves as a centre for religious and social activities for the local community. The name “Tir Kun” was given in honour of the guardian deity worshiped in this temple, also known as Kuan Kong or Hiap Tian Tai Tir. This deity plays a role as the protector of peace and well-being in the community. The main belief practiced in Tir Kun is Taoism. The construction of the temple was initiated following community discussions in the 1960s at an existing burial ground. After planning led by Mr. Owi Ten Kin, and with the support of the community, construction began using wood and bricks donated by residents. The temple was completed and inaugurated on April 5, 1995, by Khai Kong Tiam Gan. The architecture of Tir Kun reflects traditional Chinese styles with dragon carvings and unique religious symbols. Its location in Kampung Kubang Keli, 17040 Pasir Mas, Kelantan, makes it easily accessible to nearby residents. The well-maintained surroundings demonstrate the community’s dedication to preserving this place of worship. The main visitors of Tir Kun consist of residents around Kampung Kubang Keli. According to Mr. Owi Ten Tian, the temple caretaker, visitors usually come on the 1st and 15th of the Chinese calendar to pray. During major celebrations such as the Chinese New Year and the Lantern Festival, many visitors come to witness cultural performances, including dragon dances and lantern competitions. The presence of local Malays as observers highlights the good relations between ethnic groups.

2. Tin Hu Keng Temple

Tin Hu Keng Temple is one of the oldest temples in Pasir Mas, Kelantan. It was built in the mid-20th century by the Hokkien Chinese community who settled in the area. The name “Tin

Hu Keng” refers to Goddess Mazu, known as the protector of sailors and travelers. This goddess plays a crucial role in the lives of her devotees, who often depend on the river for transportation and livelihood. According to an interview with the secretary of the Temple, the construction of Tin Hu Keng began as a collective effort by the local community who wanted a dedicated place for prayer and safety rituals. The temple is strategically located near the river at Jalan Tokong, 17030 Pasir Mas, Kelantan, making it easily accessible to both locals and visitors from outside the area. The main belief practiced in Tin Hu Keng is Taoism, with influences from Confucianism and Buddhism. The temple is dedicated to Goddess Mazu, who is regarded as the guardian of fishermen and seafarers. The primary visitors to Tin Hu Keng include the local Chinese community in Pasir Mas, comprising both the elderly and younger generations. Additionally, the temple frequently welcomes visitors from outside the region who are interested in understanding its religious traditions and unique architectural features. On significant occasions such as Chinese New Year and the birthday of Goddess Mazu, the number of visitors increases significantly. The presence of local Malays observing these celebrations also highlights the harmonious interethnic relations in the area.

3. Thien Boo Kong Temple

Thien Boo Kong Temple is in Kampung Tendong, 17030 Pasir Mas, Kelantan, and serves as an important religious centre for the local Chinese community. The name “Thien Boo Kong” means “Temple of the Guardian Goddess,” referring to **Goddess Ma Chor**, who is revered as a protector of fishermen and maritime communities. This temple represents a unique fusion of Taoist and Buddhist beliefs practiced by the Chinese village community in Kelantan. The construction of Thien Boo Kong began on July 30, 1999, corresponding to the 6th day of the 18th lunar month in the Chinese calendar. The idea for its construction was initiated by **Mr. Teng Guan Chai**, who was inspired by his mother’s devotion. With strong support from the local community and collected donations, the land for the temple was donated by the late **Coi Mek Wal**. The temple’s structure was designed with traditional Chinese architectural elements rich in spiritual symbolism. Thien Boo Kong serves as a centre for **Taoist-Buddhist** worship, a unique blend found among the Chinese village communities in Kelantan. The temple primarily honours **Goddess Ma Chor**, who is respected as a symbol of wisdom and protection. In Taoist-Buddhist beliefs, guardian deities are considered intermediaries to the greater divine. Visitors to Thien Boo Kong include various groups, such as **Taoist-Buddhist devotees**, who come to perform prayers and rituals, the **residents**, who participate in temple events, **out-of-town visitors**, including those with family ties to the village and **freethinkers**, who attend

social gatherings and interact with the local Chinese community. During major festivals, the number of visitors significantly increases, showcasing the temple's role as a cultural hub. Thien Boo Kong is more than just a religious site; it symbolizes the integration of culture and faith. Its unique combination of Taoism and Buddhism, traditional architecture, and community involvement make it a landmark of great importance in Kampung Tendong. Through religious and social activities, Thien Boo Kong continues to play a vital role in strengthening communal ties and preserving traditions for future generations.

4. Tiu Kong Seng Kun Temple

Tiu Kong Seng Kun Temple is located at Lot 431, Jalan Kampung Kelar Dalam, Kampung Pengkalan Rambutan, Pasir Mas, Kelantan. This temple was founded by the **Yeuk Shang Thang Cultural Association**, which operated for two decades without official registration before being formally registered in 2022. Before the temple was built in 2002, the association's religious and cultural activities were held alternately at devotees' homes through a lottery system. The temple was completed in 2003 on a **1-acre waqf land** donated by **Mr. Wee Tiat See**, husband of **Mrs. Chan Siew Nia**. The structure consists of an open hall and a dedicated space for the main deities. This site has become an important religious and cultural centre for the Taoist community in the area. Tiu Kong Seng Kun Temple follows the teachings of **Taoism**, which is more cultural than religious in nature. Its followers practice various rituals to honour the deities. The three main deities worshiped here are: **Hei Kong (Hei Seng)** – The Black Deity, known as a ghost catcher and healer of black magic. According to legend, he fought a venomous snake, and his body turned black due to the poison. **Siam Kong (Siam Seng)** – The Green Deity, an expert in herbal medicine and knowledge. And **Hong Kong (Hong Seng)** – The Red Deity, a medical specialist often consulted for healing various ailments. Visitors to the temple mainly consist of residents of **Kampung Kelar** and its surroundings. During major celebrations, such as the **Tiu Kong Seng Kun deity's birthday**, devotees from other temples in Kelantan also visit. The connection between this temple and other Taoist temples reflects strong camaraderie within the community. Beyond being a place of worship, this temple also functions as a **community hub, welfare centre, and symbol of unity**. The temple's contributions, such as assisting flood victims regardless of ethnicity, demonstrate the noble values it upholds. Additionally, daily activities such as **dragon dance training** attract youth participation, making the temple a meeting place between the older and younger generations. It stands as a testament to **interethnic harmony** in Kelantan, reflecting Malaysia's rich cultural and religious diversity.

5. Tao Jee Ong Association, Kampung Kasar

The **Tao Jee Ong Association** in Kampung Kasar is an active religious organization within the Chinese community of Pasir Mas, Kelantan. Although they are still in the process of constructing an official temple building, their religious and cultural activities have continued without interruption. Their unique tradition involves holding celebrations and rituals from house to house before having a permanent place of worship. The association has a long history, passed down from generation to generation, making it a symbol of unity and identity for the local community. The process of constructing the association's building began with the purchase of **1.6 acres of land** for **RM100,000**, funded by donations from devotees and the local community. The temple is envisioned to serve as a centre for various religious, cultural, and social activities for the Chinese community in Kampung Kasar. For the past two years, the association has already celebrated **Jee Ong deity's birthday** at the construction site, attracting enthusiastic participation from the community. The association follows **Taoism**, which emphasizes harmony between humans, nature, and the spiritual world. The main deity honoured is **Jee Ong Ya**, a mythical figure regarded as the guardian and protector of the community. The uniqueness of the Tao Jee Ong Association lies in its **deeply rooted traditions and strong community involvement**. Although it does not yet have a formal temple, its cultural significance remains intact, preserving the Taoist heritage within the Chinese community of Pasir Mas.

6. Samnaksong Sukvikcha Vanaram

Samnaksong Sukvikcha Vanaram is one of the main places of worship for **Theravada Buddhism** followers in Pasir Mas. It is believed to have been established around the **1950s**, when the local community built a small resting hut for Buddhist monks who came to perform religious ceremonies. Located in **Kampung Lemal, 17000 Pasir Mas, Kelantan**, this temple has become a spiritual centre for the local Buddhist community. In **2017**, construction of a new building began in phases, funded by community donations. The **2,500-square-foot** structure symbolizes unity and the strong cooperation among Buddhists in the area. Samnaksong Sukvikcha Vanaram follows **Theravada Buddhism**, with the **Tripitaka** as its primary scripture. Visitors to Samnaksong include residents from **Kampung Lemal, Pasir Mas, and neighbouring areas like Kelar**. Besides Theravada Buddhists, **Taoist followers** also frequent the site due to cultural and religious connections. On special occasions, such as major Buddhist festivals, the number of visitors can exceed **50 people**, particularly if the event falls on a public holiday. In conclusion, Samnaksong Sukvikcha Vanaram is more than

just a place of worship—it is a **symbol of unity and harmony** among the various religious communities in Pasir Mas. By preserving its traditions, the temple plays a vital role in ensuring the continuity of Buddhist culture and teachings for future generations.

7. Wat Chinpradittharam

Wat Chinpradittharam is in **Kampung Tendong, Pasir Mas, Kelantan**. This temple was built by the **Chinese community** in a predominantly Hokkien-Siamese village. The name “**Wat Chinpradittharam**” originates from the Thai language, where “Chin” refers to the Chinese people, “Praditthan” means build, and “Aram” means temple. The establishment of Wat Chinpradittharam dates to the **1930s** as a small temple near the **Kelantan River**. The first abbot, **Phra Atthikan Kaew (Phor Than Kaew)**, played a crucial role in developing the local Buddhist community. Later, **Phor Than Dam**, a monk from **Phatthalung, Thailand**, took over. In **1951**, **Phra Khru Visuthi Saschamettee (Phor Than Long)** was appointed as the temple abbot, leading the temple for **26 years** until 1977. The temple continued to grow physically, with significant contributions from local leaders. In **2013**, the **main entrance gate** was constructed by **Mr. Teng Guan Chai**, while a second gate was added in **2014** under the efforts of **Mr. Teng Siew Ann**, along with the village youth and residents. The architecture of these gates blends **Chinese and Siamese influences**, symbolizing the harmonious coexistence of both cultures. The gate inauguration was officiated on **August 21, 2015**, by **Dato’ Haji Anuar Tan Abdullah** and **Consul General Jackrid Kanjanasoon**. The temple attracts visitors from **Kampung Tendong, Kampung Kasar, and nearby areas in Kelantan**. Guests include **Buddhist devotees, Dhamma students, and the public** who visit to offer donations or participate in religious ceremonies. During major Buddhist celebrations like **Kathina and Vesak Day**, the temple welcomes visitors from outside Kelantan, providing a spiritual and educational experience. Wat Chinpradittharam is unique due to its **blend of Chinese and Siamese culture**, reflected in its architecture and religious practices. The temple serves not only as a place of worship but also as a centre for **education, social unity, and community welfare**.

8. Wat Uttamaram

Wat Uttamaram, located in **Kampung Teresek, Repek, Pasir Mas, Kelantan**, is one of the most prominent religious and cultural centres in the area. Established in **1804** by **Phor Than Khron (Tok Raja)**, the temple has played a vital role as a spiritual hub for the **Siamese Buddhist community**. Covering **14 acres**, the temple has undergone multiple phases of

development, including the construction of an **Ubosot** (ordination hall) and other structures that showcase traditional **Siamese architecture**. Currently, Wat Uttamaram is led by **Phra Khru Udomdhammapatiban**, who continues the spiritual legacy of Tok Raja. He oversees religious, educational, and cultural activities, ensuring that the values and teachings of **Theravada Buddhism** are upheld. The temple follows the **Theravada Buddhist tradition**, emphasizing meditation, moral discipline, and wisdom. Though **Buddhism does not involve deity worship**, symbols and Buddha statues serve as focal points for devotion and meditation. The temple aims to guide individuals toward **Nirvana** through virtuous living, meditation, and the pursuit of wisdom. The uniqueness of Wat Uttamaram lies in its **traditional architecture, historical significance, and the presence of the Tok Raja Museum**, which preserves artifacts and teachings from its founder. Beyond being a place of worship, **Wat Uttamaram serves as an educational and cultural centre**, reinforcing Buddhist values and fostering interfaith harmony. Its **longstanding legacy** ensures that the temple remains a treasured part of Kelantan's diverse religious and cultural landscape.

9. Wat Khosakaram

Wat Khosakaram, located in **Kampung Lubuk Batil, Pasir Mas, Kelantan**, is one of the oldest temples in the area, with a history spanning over a century. Although the exact date of its establishment remains undocumented, it is believed to have been built by **Siamese settlers** who migrated to the region more than 100 years ago. The temple's original structure was made of **wood** and has undergone multiple renovations. In **1976**, a new **bot (ordination hall)** was constructed, marking a significant transformation in the temple's architecture and function. Covering approximately **3 to 4 acres**, the temple complex includes several key facilities, such as: **Bot (Ordination Hall)** – The main hall for religious ceremonies, **Kutik (Monastic Quarters)** – Residences for monks, **Dhamma School Hall** – A space for Buddhist teachings and Thai language classes, **Kitchen Hall** – Used for food preparation during religious events, and **Funeral Hall** – A dedicated area for funeral rites. Wat Khosakaram adheres to **Theravada Buddhism**, the oldest school of Buddhism, emphasizing the original teachings of **Gautama Buddha** as recorded in the **Tripitaka**. Monks and devotees follow strict moral and ethical guidelines, including **Pancasila (Five Precepts)** – Basic moral principles observed by lay Buddhists, **Atthasila (Eight Precepts)** – A higher level of ethical commitment, and **Dasa Sila (Ten Precepts)** – Observed by novice monks. Wat Khosakaram attracts visitors from both the local **Siamese and Chinese Buddhist communities**. Devotees frequently gather for **Wan Phra (Buddhist Holy Days)** to engage

in prayers, meditation, and merit-making activities. The temple also serves as a **centre for Buddhist education**, offering **Thai language classes and Dhamma teachings** for children and youth. A unique tradition at Wat Khosakaram involves **community participation in temple construction**, where villagers bring **river sand** to contribute to the temple's development. This practice highlights the **strong communal spirit** and collective dedication of the local Buddhist community.

10. Kuan Yin Temple

Kuan Yin Temple, located on **Jalan Lemal, Pasir Mas, Kelantan**, is a spiritual centre founded by the **Quek Eiong Lip family (Pak Chu Lip)** in **1995**. The temple was established to accommodate the growing needs of the local community, especially those seeking **spiritual healing and guidance**. Before its construction, a **Kuan Yin statue** was housed in **Pak Chu Lip's residence**, where people gathered to pray and seek blessings. As the number of visitors increased, his family decided to build a **proper temple**, officially inaugurated between **1996 and 1997**. Situated on a **6-acre family-owned estate**, the temple complex includes a **garden, residential areas, and agricultural land**. The temple follows the **Mahayana Buddhist tradition**, which emphasizes **Bodhisattva teachings**, with **Kuan Yin (Goddess of Mercy)** as the central deity. Kuan Yin is revered for her **compassion and commitment to alleviating suffering**, guiding devotees toward **enlightenment while remaining in the world**. Although primarily a **Mahayana Buddhist temple**, Kuan Yin Temple also incorporates **Taoist elements**, focusing on moral and ethical teachings. Key scriptures studied include **Tripitaka** and **Praritawa**, guiding followers in their spiritual development. Devotees are encouraged to follow ethical principles such as: **Pancasila (Five Precepts)** – Fundamental moral conduct, **Atthasila (Eight Precepts)** – Observed by lay practitioners on religious days, and **Dasa Sila (Ten Precepts)** – Followed by novice monks and devout practitioners. Kuan Yin Temple attracts visitors from **diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds**, including **Chinese, Siamese, Malays, and Indians**. Many come seeking **spiritual healing, personal guidance, or to participate in prayer rituals**. The temple is also visited by people from **Penang, Singapore, and other Malaysian states**. The temple's uniqueness lies in its **fusion of Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism**, allowing it to serve both as a **place of worship and a spiritual healing centre**. Despite operating as a **non-registered, volunteer-run organization**, it remains a **stronghold of faith and community service**. During times of crisis, such as major floods, the temple has provided

humanitarian aid, assisting victims regardless of race or religion. This compassionate outreach reflects the **core Buddhist values of selflessness and universal love**.

Religious Activities in Taoist and Buddhist Temples

This section examines the religious activities run by Taoist and Buddhist temples, focusing on how they pray, meditate, fast, practice vegetarianism, and celebrate festivals. Below are the details of the activities:

Practice	Taoism	Theravada Buddhism	Mahayana Buddhism
Daily prayer Morning & evening	✓	✓	✓
Weekly prayer	-	Wan Phra	-
Monthly prayer	1st & 15th day of the lunar calendar	-	1st & 15th day of the lunar calendar
Wen Tian Ceremony (candlelight procession)	-	✓	-
Meditation sessions	-	✓	✓
Fasting	-	✓	✓
Vegetarianism	✓	-	-
Major festival prayers	Deity birthday celebrations	1. Wesak 2. Kathina 3. Magha Puja 4. Asadha Buddha 5. Songkran 6. Loy Krathong 7. Cheng Beng	1. Kuan Yin's Birth 2. Kuan Yin's Hermitage 3. Kuan Yin's Nirvana

Table 2: Religious activities in Taoist and Buddhist Temples.

1. Taoism

Taoist followers perform prayers daily. The guardian of the temples opens the temples in the morning and evening to allow devotees to carry out their prayers. Grand prayers are held during the celebration of Taoist deities' birthdays, where devotees begin their prayers at midnight. Prayer items such as incense, candles, and prayer paper are used in every ritual.

Devotees believe that these prayers bring blessings, safety, and protection from misfortune. Although Taoist temples do not have monks, devotees often use the temple space for individual prayers. Meditation activities are usually not conducted in Taoist places of worship, as Taoism does not adhere to meditation practices. However, followers of Taoism who also practice Confucianism and Buddhism may engage in meditation in the morning and evening, or whenever they feel necessary, to achieve spiritual tranquillity. Vegetarianism is practiced voluntarily by devotees, especially on the 1st and 15th of each lunar month. On these days, they avoid consuming meat as a sign of respect for the deities. This practice also aims to cleanse the soul and enhance self-discipline. Before major celebrations, devotees are encouraged to adopt a vegetarian diet as an act of self-purification, preparing themselves spiritually for religious events. During Taoist deities' birthdays, vegetarian food is provided for all visitors. This food is considered a symbol of simplicity and sacrifice, reinforcing moral values among devotees. There are several major celebrations observed in Taoist temples:

1. ***Tai Pi Kong***: The Tai Pi Kong ceremony is usually held on the eve of the birthday of the Goddess Ma Chor. The ritual involves offerings of sweets, fruits, and tea to the deity as a sign of respect. Devotees kneel and bow nine times as a gesture of devotion and highest reverence for the deity. At the same time, devotees make personal vows, seeking blessings and protection for the coming year.

2. ***Taoist Deities' Birthdays***: Celebrations depend on the temple's guardian deity. The event begins with a midnight prayer ceremony, followed by prayers throughout the day. The burning of gold paper is conducted in the evening as a sign of respect to the deity. The large turnout of devotees from surrounding areas transforms the event into a community celebration. The celebration usually lasts for three consecutive days, featuring various ceremonies such as Kwei Yuan, Sampan Chun, Hohaiti, and Siu Peng, along with other festive activities.

3. ***Lantern Festival (15th day of the 8th month in the Chinese calendar)***: The celebration starts with a mooncake prayer in the morning. In the evening, a lantern competition is organized, with the most beautiful lantern being selected as the winner. The night is filled with festivities, attracting many visitors, including Malays who join in the celebration.

4. ***Mooncake Festival (15th day of the 8th month in the Chinese calendar)***: This festival involves a mooncake prayer ceremony as a tribute to the Moon Goddess. A lantern competition is held at night, showcasing various creative designs that attract many visitors, including those from outside the area. The glowing lanterns hanging around the temple

create a lively atmosphere, drawing the attention of many attendees. All those festivals are celebrated happily by all Taoists in Pasir Mas, Kelantan. In short, Taoist temples serve not only as a religious centre but also as a symbol of the strength and resilience of the Chinese community. By preserving traditions and fostering communal ties, the temples play a vital role in uniting society and maintaining cultural heritage.

2. Theravada Buddhism

Theravada Buddhist devotees perform prayers in the morning and evening, with special ceremonies on festival days. These rituals involve chanting by monks, lighting candles, and burning incense. Devotees believe that their prayers and offerings bring well-being and inner peace. Weekly group prayers are also conducted, especially on Wan Phra days. On festival days, mass prayers are held at the temple. Prayer activities include chanting in the Siamese and Pali languages and rituals honouring Buddhist teachings. These practices help devotees understand the meaning of prayers and the moral teachings conveyed by Buddha. The act of prayer is not meant to worship Buddha statues but to remember and honour Buddha's teachings and principles. Meditation plays a crucial role in Theravada Buddhism, especially during certain seasons when monks are required to reside at the temple. Meditation helps devotees achieve inner peace and spiritual focus. At night, monks recite prayers and chants, often joined by villagers voluntarily. Meditation is an essential element of Buddhist teachings and is consistently practiced in temples in Pasir Mas. The purpose of meditation is to purify the mind, enhance focus, and cultivate loving-kindness and positive thinking. It can be done at any time according to individual preference, whether in the morning after waking up or at night. Meditation is considered "food" for the mind, just as the body needs nourishment to stay healthy. Buddhist teachings emphasize that meditation is a way to cleanse the mind and improve one's karma, ultimately aiding in the attainment of enlightenment. Fasting is an essential discipline in Theravada Buddhism, particularly for monks and laypeople who observe the Eight Precepts (Atthasila). Monks are not allowed to eat after noon, in line with Buddha's teachings on controlling food cravings and focusing on spiritual practices. Lay devotees who observe the Eight Precepts are also encouraged to lead a simple life, including practicing partial fasting and vegetarianism as a form of self-purification. Theravada Buddhists celebrate several major festivals, including:

1. **Wesak Day:** Commemorating the birth, enlightenment, and passing of Buddha. The celebration includes a morning food offering and a candlelit procession (Wen Tian) at night.

2. ***Kathina Festival***: Celebrated for a month after the rainy season. It involves offerings of robes and food to monks. This “Robe Giving Ceremony” signifies the support of the lay community for Buddhist monks. The event includes communal activities, food preparation, and donations. Devotees from various states participate in this festival.

3. ***Magha Puja***: A day commemorating the spontaneous gathering of 2,500 monks without prior summons. The ritual includes prayers and a Wen Tian candlelit procession around the ordination hall.

4. ***Asadha Buddha***: Celebrating the perfection of Buddha’s teachings, with similar rituals to Magha Puja.

5. ***Songkran***: A water-pouring ceremony where Buddha statues and elders are bathed as a mark of respect and blessing.

6. ***Loy Krathong***: A ritual of releasing floating lanterns into the river, symbolizing the washing away of sins and honouring nature.

7. ***Cheng Beng***: A tomb-cleaning ceremony with prayers for ancestors’ spirits, observed in April.

3. Mahayana Buddhism

Prayers at this temple are conducted on the 2nd day of each month in the Chinese calendar. These prayers are performed with full concentration, seeking well-being, safety, and protection from Kuan Yin. Each ceremony involves chanting, incense burning, and food offerings to wandering spirits. These rituals reflect deep devotion to faith and moral values. Meditation is a fundamental practice in Mahayana Buddhism. In this temple, meditation is done individually with flexible durations, ranging from 5 minutes to over an hour, depending on personal capacity. Meditation helps devotees attain inner peace and spiritual enlightenment. Fasting is commonly practiced by devotees observing Atthasila, where they refrain from eating after 1 PM. They also adopt a simple lifestyle, avoiding entertainment, personal adornments, and luxurious sleeping arrangements, symbolizing their dedication to Buddhist teachings. This temple becomes a major focal point during three significant annual celebrations:

1. ***Kuan Yin’s Birthday*** (19th day of the 2nd month): The celebration begins on the previous night with prayer ceremonies and chanting. Vegetarian meals are provided throughout the day for visitors as a symbol of spiritual cleansing.

2. ***Day of Kuan Yin’s Hermitage*** (19th day of the 6th month): A similar ceremony is held to commemorate the event of Kuan Yin retreating into seclusion to help mankind. The

celebration starts with prayers the night before and continues with spiritual activities throughout the day.

3. **Day of Kuan Yin's Passing** (19th day of the 9th month): This solemn observance includes special prayers for the well-being of spirits and seeking protection from Kuan Yin. Additional rituals include incense burning and gold paper offerings as signs of respect and blessings.

Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the role of Chinese and Siamese temples in Pasir Mas, Kelantan, within the broader context of Malaysia's religious diversity. The research highlights how these temples serve as significant religious, cultural, and social institutions that sustain the identity of the Chinese and Siamese communities. Despite being a minority in a predominantly Malay-Muslim society, these communities have maintained their religious practices and traditions while contributing to interfaith harmony and social cohesion. The findings reveal that religious freedom is generally upheld, allowing Taoist and Buddhist communities to conduct rituals, festivals, and community activities. However, challenges such as modernization, generational shifts, and policy constraints remain significant concerns. The temples continue to play a crucial role in fostering cultural preservation, social unity, and interreligious dialogue, reflecting Malaysia's pluralistic heritage. By documenting these religious institutions' history, beliefs, and contemporary practices, this study contributes to the academic discourse on religious pluralism and minority religious communities in Malaysia. Future research could explore the evolving role of these temples in response to socio-political changes. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of religious tolerance and cultural preservation in maintaining Malaysia's multicultural harmony.

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