‘They Will not Suffer a Church More Beautiful Than Their Own’:

The Chinese as Patrons of Ecclesiastical Architecture in Early Twentieth-Century Singapore

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Abstract. This paper traces the Chinese patronage of church architecture in early twentieth-century Singapore through a discussion of three churches built or renovated during this period. In the early twentieth century, Singapore’s Chinese community became significant patrons of ecclesiastical architecture. As Chinese congregations grew, so too did their spatial needs. Donations from this mercantile community ensured that their churches were lavish monuments, tangible symbols of piety, wealth, and patronage. These churches are also monuments to an Asian diaspora negotiating their Western faith, and expressing their religious affiliations through architecture. The influence of French missionaries is discernible in Singapore’s Catholic churches, where Chinese patronage is read through donor panels on stained glass windows and other architectural benefactions. By contrast, some Protestant churches demonstrated a willingness to incorporate Chinese architectural elements, as in the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church. Singapore’s Chinese Christians thus practiced architectural patronage in various ways: by funding the construction of new churches, by bankrolling the renovation and expansion of old ones, and by constructing new monuments which blended Western architecture with Chinese architectural traditions. The churches built by and for Singapore’s Chinese Christians were thus syncretic monuments to this multifaceted community’s faith and identity.

Keywords: Singapore · Ecclesiastical architecture · Chinese diaspora · Nanyang chinese · Missionary architecture · Architectural patronage

1 Introduction and Historical Background

This paper will trace patterns of Chinese patronage of ecclesiastical architecture in early twentieth-century Singapore by examining the construction and renovation of three churches between 1908 and 1925. The period was one of significant growth in Singapore’s Christian population. Christianity—and Christian missionaries—arrived in

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Singapore with the establishment of a British outpost on the island in 1819. The Church of England arrived with members of the East India Company.[1] Missionaries from other denominations followed shortly after. In 1821, Bishop Esprit-Marie-Joseph Florens, Vicar Apostolic of Siam, contacted the Société des Missions-Étrangères—or Foreign Missions Society (henceforth MEP)—in Paris to raise the idea of expanding the Catholic mission from Siam to Singapore.[2]

By the mid-nineteenth century, Singapore's landscape—both physical and spiritual—bore clear traces of the various Christian denominations which had established themselves on the island. This sectarian variety was evidenced by the competing spires of the numerous churches constructed on the northern bank of the Singapore River: the Armenian Church; the Anglican Cathedral, St Andrew's; the French Catholic Cathedral of the Good Shepherd; and the Portuguese Mission's church, St Joseph's.[3] This theological landscape was given further variety in the 1880s with the arrival of Reverend James Mills Thoburn, who established the Methodist mission in Singapore.[4] By the turn of the twentieth century, Singapore had a small but lively Christian community who subscribed to a variety of denominations.

This Christian population included a number of Chinese converts, who would become increasingly significant to Christian missionaries over the course of the twentieth century. As noted by Scott,[5] Christian missionaries valued Singapore for its strategic position as much as its population of potential converts: the island was viewed as a potential base from which to launch further missionary work in China. But these missionaries were also cognizant of the potential to convert Singapore's multicultural community to Christianity. Both Catholic and Methodist missionaries viewed Singapore's Chinese community as central to their evangelical mission on the island. American Methodist missionaries, for example, were quick to see the potential of Singapore's Anglophone Chinese as potential new Christians.[6] This was crucial since the conflation of Malay ethnic identity with Islam, particularly on the part of colonial authorities, stymied attempts at converting a large portion of Malaya's population to Christianity.[7]

While some did attempt to proselytise to the Malay community, they found limited success. Singapore's large ethnic Chinese community thus became a demographically critical focus for Christian evangelism. As a result of this, language education and philanthropy became central to the policy of Methodist missionaries and clergy in Singapore.[8] Dr. Benjamin Franklin West, who arrived in Singapore in 1888, opened a dispensary in Telok Ayer and began ministering to local residents with the aid of two Chinese catechists.[9] This would eventually pave the way for a significant Methodist presence in

[1] Singh and Tay (2009).
[2] Wijeyasingha (2006).
[3] Pieris (2009).
[4] Lau (2008).
[5] Scott (2016).
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.; also cf. Lau (2008).
[9] Lau (2008).

Telok Ayer, the heart of Singapore's Chinatown, and would eventually develop into the Telok Ayer Chinese Church in 1891.[10]

Catholic missionaries were not blind to the strategic importance of Singapore's Chinese community as a source of converts either. The circular letter of the MEP, with its annual account of the Society's missionary work around the world, provides significant insight into how Catholic missionaries viewed and strategised their work across Asia. The account of their endeavors published in June 1900 is explicit about the significance of Singapore's Chinese community to the Catholic mission there:

> *Chinese Christianity in Singapore continues to grow in numbers and influence under the leadership of Monsieurs Vignol and Gazeau; it has doubled in ten years and attained the figure of 2,000 faithful. When the Sacred Heart has its [new] church, already planned two years ago, the movement can only increase; we hope it will be* [completed] *soon. The Chinese element is the future of the Mission: the figure of 113 adult baptisms, achieved this year, demonstrates that this population—so seemingly busy and indifferent—is not deaf to the voice of the missionary.*[11]

Chinese Christians were thus significant to the evangelical strategies of both Catholic and Methodist churches in early twentieth-century Singapore. This makes the buildings constructed by and for these congregations worth studying, in order to better understand how the spatial and religious needs of this community were met, and how this Christian community expressed its faith through architecture.

1.1 Methodology

Three churches—two Catholic and one Methodist—will be the focus of this paper: the Catholic Church of Saints Peter and Paul on Queen Street, the Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart on Tank Road, and the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church. These churches will be used as case studies into the different forms of architectural patronage Singapore's Chinese community engaged in through the first three decades of the twentieth century.

These churches are significant for their differences as well as their similarities: Saints Peter and Paul is a mid-nineteenth-century gothic revival building which was expanded in 1910 with the construction of a new porch, funded by donations from the Chinese community; the baroque Church of the Sacred Heart, which was completed in 1910, was built to accommodate the growing Chinese Catholic population—and in particular Cantonese-speaking members of the Catholic congregation; finally, the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church, which was completed in 1925, is a building which blends a Romanesque revival body with a Chinese-style roof.

This paper will draw on four main sources of information: missionary records lodged in the archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, building plans from the National Archives of Singapore, historic newspapers digitised by the National Library Board of

[10] Ibid.

[11] Société des Missions-Étrangères (1900).

Singapore, and material evidence from the buildings themselves. There are, of course, limits to the information which can be gleaned from these sources. In the absence of written records which give personal insight into the design choices of Singapore's Chinese Christian community, much can only be left to speculation. Despite these limitations, the stylistic analysis of the buildings can allow us to make inferences about the different patterns of architectural patronage among Chinese Christians in early twentieth-century Singapore. A comprehensive survey of early twentieth-century churches is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is hoped that this research will pave the way for future work in the area.

2 The Church of Saints Peter and Paul, Queen Street

The Catholic Church of Saints Peter and Paul on Queen Street is one of the oldest Catholic churches in Singapore. The gothic revival building, reminiscent of provincial French churches, was established in the 1860s, at a time when there were already some five-hundred Chinese Catholics in Singapore.[12] The church initially housed both Chinese- and Tamil-speaking worshippers, though the latter would eventually be afforded their own church, Our Lady of Lourdes.[13]

The generosity of Chinese parishioners was well-attested to by the early twentieth century, with benefactions towards the enrichment of parish buildings being a notable part of religious culture among Singapore's Chinese Christians. The Church of Saints Peter and Paul had already been expanded and enriched as a result of Chinese architectural patronage in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which helped fund the extension of the transept, the construction of lavish marble altars, and the installation of stained glass windows.[14] The donation of stained glass windows from European glass studios was a popular form of architectural patronage among Catholics in early twentieth-century Singapore.[15] In 1913, the Abbé B. Nain—brother of Father Charles Benedict Nain, who designed St Joseph's Institution and the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus' Chapel—published his impressions of the Church of Saints Peter and Paul:

> *My first visit was to the Chinese church of Saints Peter and Paul. It is magnificent, and rivals the beautiful churches of France. The Chinese are exceedingly rich, at least those who are involved in commerce. They will not suffer a church more beautiful than their own. The altars are made of the most beautiful marble from the Pyrenees, and the windows come from the atelier Martin in Angers. It is a superb gothic monument. During my stay in the city, a sumptuous portico, donated by a Chinese man from the parish, added to its original beauty.*[16]

The plans for the portico mentioned by Abbé Nain, as well as further ornamentation of the façade of the church, were lodged with the municipal authorities in 1910 by the

[12] Wijeyasingha (2006).
[13] Ibid.
[14] Tan (2004).
[15] Yeo (2017).
[16] Nain (1913).

firm of P. Bernatz (Fig. 1).[17] The plans also bear the signature of the parish priest, Émile-Joseph Mariette. This could suggest that Father Mariette might have had some input in the design of the extension. This would certainly not be without precedent in the context of Singapore's Catholic institutions in the early twentieth century; priests had been involved in the design of other Catholic buildings in Singapore, including St Joseph's Institution and the Chapel of the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus—both of which were designed by Father Charles-Benedict Nain, with plans signed by him lodged in the National Archives of Singapore.[18] Father Mariette's signature may, however, simply indicate the approval of the client.

Regardless of whether the parish priest was involved in the design of this extension, the portico is decidedly French in its stylistic sources. With its three gothic arches capped by pointed triangular tympana, the porch echoes—however faintly—the north portico of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Chartres, a major French monument.

The portico was funded in large part through a donation from Joseph Chan Teck Hee.[19] Hailing from China, Chan was a particularly noteworthy Catholic philanthropist whose charity work extended from Singapore to Siam. Along with his associate Low Kiok Chiang, another *émigré* from China with business links to Siam, Chan helped fund numerous Catholic institutions in Southeast Asia.[20] In addition to helping fund the expansion and embellishment of the church itself, Chan Teck Hee had also purchased land adjacent to the church in 1897 and paid for the construction of eleven houses, which were used to accommodate 'catechists, widows, and the aged'.[21]

As a result of Chinese architectural patronage, by 1910, the Church of Saints Peter and Paul was—in the words of Abbé Nain—able to 'rival the beautiful churches of France'. What is notable about the architectural patronage here is its transnational character: much of the expansion of the Church of Saints Peter and Paul was funded by Chinese merchants who had migrated to Southeast Asia from China, and who were involved in transnational business empires which spanned from Singapore to Siam. While the Chinese were the principal benefactors of the church, they left little evidence of their architectural heritage, however. The Church of Saints Peter and Paul is, ultimately, French in style and even in materiality, with its French-made stained glass windows, altars hewn from French marble, and church bells cast in France. It is possible that the French parish priest had a hand in the design of the portico, though this is currently impossible to confirm. It is thus through financial patronage that the Chinese Catholics of the parish of Saints Peter and Paul expressed their faith.

3 The Church of the Sacred Heart, Tank Road

The Church of the Sacred Heart on Tank Road was built to house the growing Chinese Catholic congregation in downtown Singapore, which had quickly outgrown the old

[17] Bernatz (1910).

[18] Nain, "Proposed New Front Elevation for St Joseph's Institution, Singapore".

[19] "Death of Mr J. Chan Teck Hee." *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 10 September 1930, p. 167.

[20] Ibid.; "Death of Mr Low Kiok Chiang." *The Straits Times*, 22 March 1911, p. 9.

[21] Ibid.

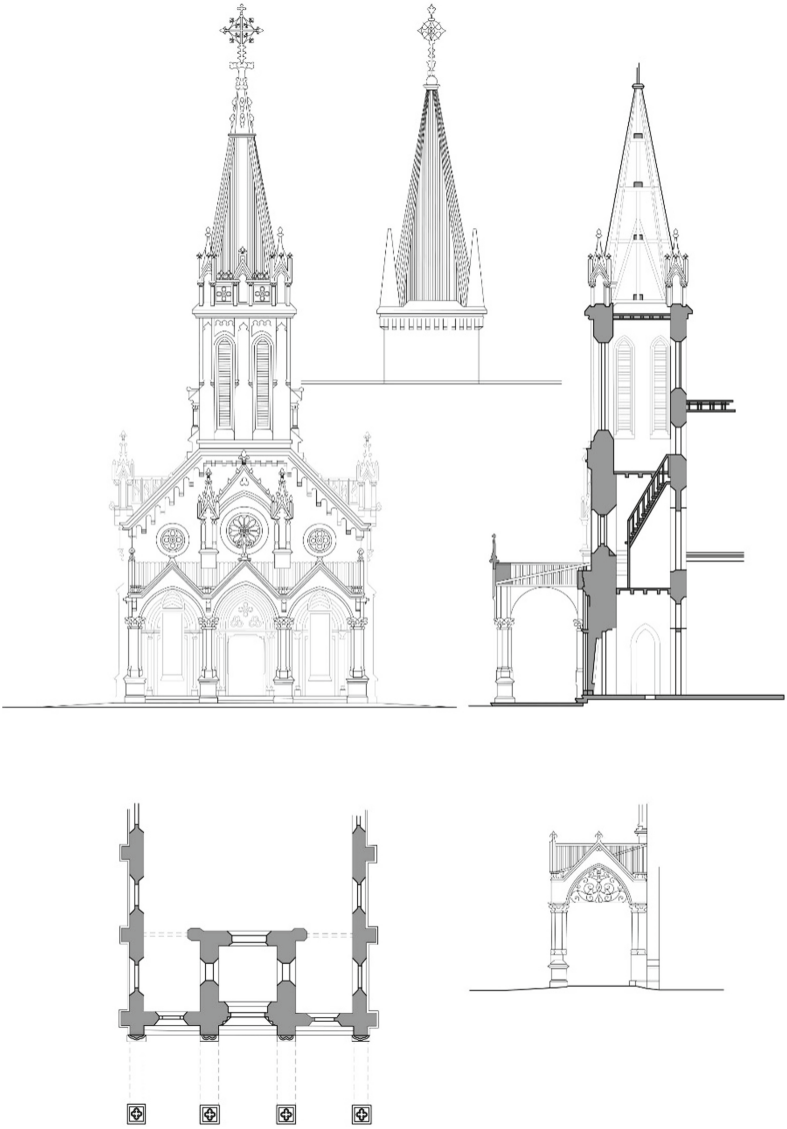

Fig. 1. Plans for the portico added to the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Queen Street in 1910, designed by P. Bernatz. Redrawn by Chen Jingwen.

Church of Saints Peter and Paul on Queen Street. Plans for the new church had already been made in the late 1890s,[22] but the building would not be completed until 1910. This grand, domed building was designed by Tomlinson and Lermit (Fig. 2).[23] The Church of the Sacred Heart soon came to serve the Cantonese and Hakka Catholic

[22] Société des Missions-Étrangères (1900).
[23] Tomlinson and Lermit (1908).

parishioners, while the Hokkien and Teochew congregation remained at the Church of Saints Peter and Paul.[24] Cheong Quee Theam, Low Kiok Chiang, Chan Teck Hee—who had previously funded the renovation of the Church of Saints Peter and Paul—were the church's principal benefactors, with Chan also 'acquiring property in the neighbourhood for the church'.[25] Again, it was wealthy Chinese businessmen involved in regional trade who were the Catholic Church's most substantial architectural benefactors.

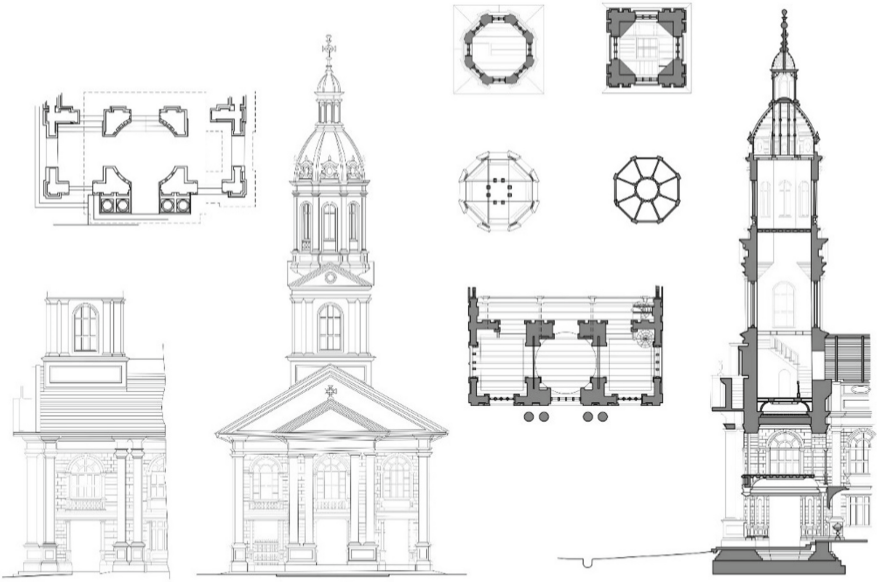

Fig. 2. Amended plans for the Church of the Sacred Heart on Tank Road designed by Tomlinson and Lermit 1908. Redrawn by Chen Jingwen.

In his account of his travels through Singapore, the Abbé B. Nain, described the Church of the Sacred Heart:

> *The Church of Saints Peter and Paul became insufficient, and its enclosure was unable to contain the faithful—who grow more numerous day by day—and a new church by the name of Sacred Heart was built a few years ago (…) Decorated with very sober and beautiful ornamentation, the Church of the Sacred Heart cuts a fine figure with its immaculate whiteness and its graceful openwork windows (…) As at Saints Peter and Paul, the Catholics give generously to their church, and do not shrink from any sacrifice if it is necessary for its embellishment.*[26]

Once again, while the Church of the Sacred Heart was intended to house a Chinese congregation, there is little in the building stylistically to indicate the ethnic origins

[24] "Church of Sacred Heart." *Malaya Tribune*, 5 October 1935, p. 12.
[25] Ibid.; Wijeyasingha (2006).
[26] Nain (1913).

Fig. 3. Photograph of the 'Trinity Church, Paris, France', Detroit Publishing Co., circa 1890–1900. Library of Congress, Call No. LOT 13418, no. 286, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001698535/

of its parishioners. Indeed, the building draws freely from French references, such as the Église de la Sainte-Trinité in Paris (see Fig. 3). In the early twentieth century, it seems that Chinese patronage of Catholic institutions was limited to the financing of construction projects, rather than any discernible stylistic input. Chinese names appear on the donor panels of the stained glass windows at both Saints Peter and Paul and the Church of the Sacred Heart, and the marble memorial plaque to Father Vincent Gazeau in the Church of the Sacred Heart is written in both Latin and Chinese, but there is little architecturally to distinguish either building as 'Chinese' parishes.

Yet the philanthropy of wealthy Chinese Catholics was not without its cultural impact. Donors such as Low Kiok Chiang and Chan Teck Hee helped create Catholic monuments not only in Singapore, but across the region; it was reportedly 'principally due to the efforts' of Low Kiok Chiang that the Church of the Holy Rosary in Bangkok was built.[27] The Church thus benefited from both the finances and diasporic links to which these wealthy businessmen had access.

4 The Chinese Methodist Church, Telok Ayer Street

The Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church is quite different from the two Catholic churches discussed above. The Telok Ayer neighbourhood had been a focal point of Singapore's Chinese Methodist community since the 1890s, when Dr. Benjamin Franklin West began his proselytising mission.[28] As this Chinese Methodist community grew, so too did the spatial needs of the congregation. By the 1920s, it was evident the congregation had outgrown its 'Old Tin Church'.[29] Plans for a new building were lodged in 1923,[30] and the foundations were laid in January 1924.[31] The building was completed the following year.[32] The new building was immediately hailed in the press as 'unique of its kind in Singapore':

> *Mr Denis Santry, of Messrs Swan and Maclaren, has co-operated with the Mission in producing a building which is distinctively Chinese in appearance, its most characteristic feature being a quaint gabled tower surmounting the roof, and finishing off the design of the frontage very effectively.*[33]

The Methodist Church's desire to have a 'distinctively Chinese' looking building for its Chinese congregation distinguishes it from the Catholic parishes of Singapore, whose buildings were firmly rooted in European historicism. Indeed, the building was overtly Orientalizing in its design. In a rendering produced by Swan and Maclaren and

[27] "Death of Low Kiok Chiang." *The Straits Times*, 22 March 1911, p. 9.
[28] Lau (2008).
[29] "Teluk Ayer New Church." *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 16 January 1924, p. 8.
[30] Swan and Maclaren (1923a, b).
[31] "Teluk Ayer New Church." *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 16 January 1924, p. 8.
[32] "A Chinese Church." *The Straits Times*, 9 April 1925, p. 9.
[33] Ibid.

reproduced in the *Malayan Saturday Post*, the building is shown as the backdrop to a bustling scene, with figures carrying baskets on their shoulders and wearing pointed hats—an image reminiscent of eighteenth-century European *chinoiseries* (see Fig. 4).[34] The church was thus self-consciously intended to be read as a 'Chinese' building, even if this 'Chinese' character was filtered through the imagination of a Western architect.

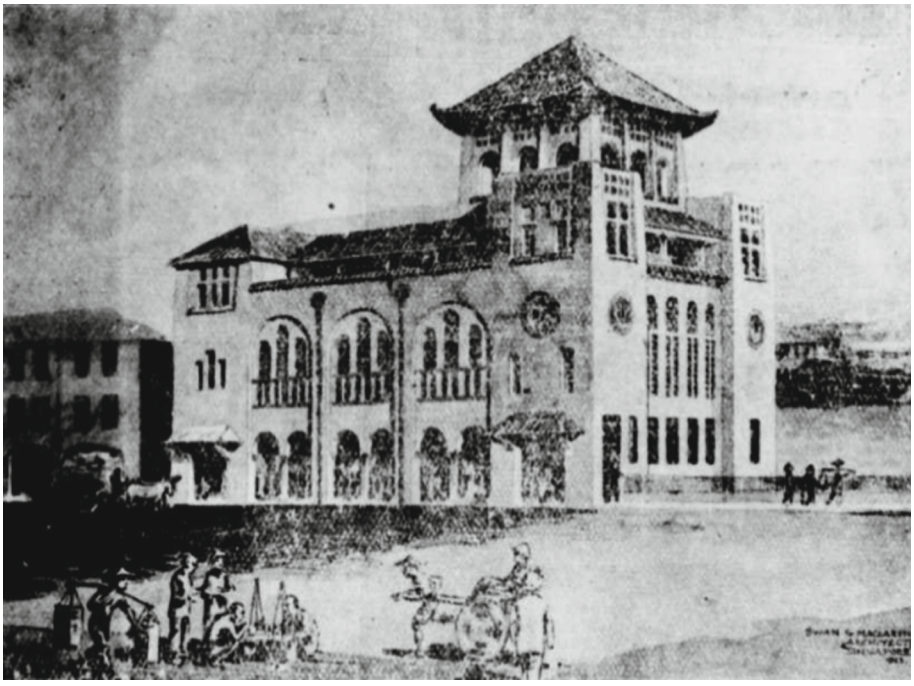

Fig. 4. Swan and Maclaren's rendering of the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church and Recreation Centre, published in *The Malayan Saturday Post*, 2 February 1924.

While the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church may have been intended to be read as an explicitly 'Chinese' building, the design solution reached by the building's architect was in fact grounded in a particularly American form of missionary architecture. The use of Chinese roofs on modern reinforced concrete structures had been pioneered by architects designing buildings for missionary-run universities in China (Fig. 5).[35] A notable example of this was the work of the American architect Henry K. Murphy, who pioneered the use of traditional Chinese-style roofs on otherwise modern steel and concrete buildings, particularly in his designs for missionary universities in China.[36] Anglican Churches in Singapore would adopt a similar hybrid architectural style—with

[34] "The New Chinese Church." *The Malayan Saturday Post*, 2 February 1924, p. 24.
[35] Yeo and Yu (2009).
[36] Zhu (2009), Cody (2001).

Chinese roofs adorning Western buildings—in the 1940s, as seen in the Holy Trinity Church and the Church of the True Light.[37]

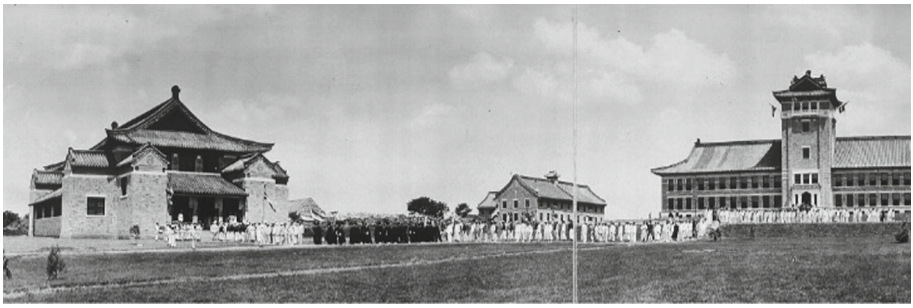

Fig. 5. Photograph of the syncretic campus buildings at the University of Nanking, which drew on both Chinese and Western architecture. Brownie Photo Co., 'University of Nanking', 1920. Library of Congress, LOC Call/Control No. 2007663089, https://lccn.loc.gov/2007663089

The Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church thus signalled layers of cultural affiliation through its hybrid architecture: it was both a Chinese building and an American one, whose design was informed by the Methodist experience in China as much as it was a response to the cultural traditions of Telok Ayer's Chinese community. This sort of architectural hybridity would not appear in Singapore Catholic churches until the second half of the twentieth century, after the Second Vatican Council relaxed the strict rules governing liturgical space. St Joseph's Church in Bukit Timah is an example of this post-war attempt at architectural hybridity in Singapore's Catholic churches, and its design solution—incorporating a Chinese roof above a modern structure—is remarkably similar to that of the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church decades earlier.[38]

The Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church was designed to serve both as a place of worship, and as a recreational centre for the local Chinese community.[39] This separation of functions was made explicit in the building's plan, with the downstairs hall used for recreation, while the upstairs space was reserved for religious functions.[40] Indeed, in press coverage relating to the construction of the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church, the building was repeatedly described as a 'recreation building' which was 'being built for the benefit of the Chinese community'.[41] The upper storey also provided apartments for two pastors and their families.[42]

Donations from the local Chinese community were crucial to the construction of the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church. The building's Straits $75,000 construction cost was substantially offset through local donations:

[37] Yeo and Yu (2009).
[38] Liew (2016).
[39] Swan and Maclaren (1923a, b).
[40] Ibid.
[41] "Methodist Mission Recreation Building." *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 19 November 1924, p. 328; "Methodist Mission." *The Straits Times*, 14 November 1924, p. 10.
[42] "The New Chinese Church." *The Malayan Saturday Post*, 2 February 1924, p. 24.

> *…$10,000 gold was subscribed from the United States, $10,000 Straits from the Methodist Publishing House at Singapore, and local contributions reduced the balance yet to be obtained to about $12,000.*[43]

A particularly substantial donation was received from Mr Ng Hong Guan, who donated $10,000 towards the construction of the building.[44] Other major contributors to the building, Major Oei Tiong Ham—a Chinese businessman from the Dutch East Indies who was known as the 'Sugar King of Java'—and Chia Eng Say, a tin and rubber magnate who made his fortune in Penang, both contributed $1,000 towards the building.[45] The wealthy businessman and philanthropist Eu Tong Sen also contributed $500 to the building.[46] As the *Malayan Saturday Post* noted in February 1924, the 'Chinese of Singapore are well known for their generous gifts and as it is their own institution they are enthusiastic to see it through'.[47] Examining the list of donors published in the newspapers, benefactions appear to have come from members of various dialect groups—some of whom were probably not Christian themselves.[48] This suggests that the Chinese community saw the social benefits of the building beyond its religious function. The Methodist Mission was thus successful in promoting the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church not solely as a religious building, but as a much-needed social and recreational centre for Telok Ayer's Chinese community. The building in some ways took on the role traditionally associated with Chinese *kongsi* and *huiguan*¸ or clan associations, in Singapore. Perhaps this role as a community space is why the Methodists were so successful in raising funds from the Chinese community for the construction of the building, attracting donations from across dialect groups.

5 Conclusion

Singapore's Chinese Christians were not a homogeneous community in the early twentieth century. They included both new migrants and locally-born Chinese, spoke a variety of Chinese dialects as well as English, and subscribed to a number of different Christian denominations. This variety was reflected in the religious monuments constructed by and for this community. The growth in the number of Chinese Catholics led to the expansion of existing churches as well as the construction of new churches. Congregations, often split for practical reasons according to dialect groups, were competitive in their architectural patronage, with parishes taking great pride in the architectural beauty of their churches. Their churches were thus tangible symbols of piety, generosity, and mercantile wealth.

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43 "A Chinese Church." *The Straits Times*, 9 April 1925, p. 9.

44 "$10,000 for Telok Ayer Church." *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 15 February 1921, p. 7.

45 "Methodist Mission Recreation Building." *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 19 November 1924, p. 328.

46 "Methodist Mission." *The Straits Times*, 14 November 1924, p. 10.

47 "The New Chinese Church." *The Malayan Saturday Post*, 2 February 1924, p. 24.

48 "Methodist Mission." *The Straits Times*, 14 November 1924, p. 10.

While there is considerable material evidence of Chinese patronage of these churches—through donor panels and indeed in the very existence of the buildings themselves—there is often little in these buildings to stylistically suggest that these were specifically Chinese churches. The buildings do not draw on Chinese architectural traditions. Instead, the Chinese Catholic churches of the early twentieth century reflect the French origins of the mission in Singapore, with buildings that clearly draw on French architectural precedents. The Catholic Church in Singapore had a tradition of priest-architects such as Father Charles-Benedict Nain who were actively involved in the design of Catholic institutional buildings, and this influenced the style adopted in Singapore's early Catholic churches. The lack of Chinese influences could also, perhaps, be read as reflecting the idea of the Catholic Church's universality; it appears that Catholic missionaries did not feel the need to adapt their churches to the architectural traditions of their ethnically diverse congregations.

Yet the philanthropy of Chinese Catholics was also significant in that it was diasporic and transnational—wealthy architectural patrons such as Low Kiok Chiang and Chan Teck Hee were responsible for the creation and adornment of Catholic monuments across regional borders, in both Singapore and Siam. While there is little stylistic evidence of Chinese architecture in these buildings, they are monuments to the mercantile wealth of the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia. By contrast, the Methodists active in Singapore in the early twentieth century seemed to be willing to make concessions to Chinese tradition in their architecture. This could be understood as a reflection of the relative liturgical freedom enjoyed by the Methodist Church compared to the early twentieth-century Catholic Church. The overtly 'Chinese' appearance of the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church was also the product of the Methodist mission's experience in China. American missionaries in China had, by the 1920s, a tradition of building syncretic buildings which blended modern construction technologies with traditional Chinese ornamental features. The Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church was one such syncretic, hybrid building, drawing on both the American Romanesque revival style as well as a free interpretation of a traditional Chinese roof.

Singapore's early twentieth-century Chinese churches thus provide a snapshot of a diverse faith community at a particular moment in time, paying testimony to the wealth and piety of this population.

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