

# Research into *dang-ki* belief in Taiwan and Southeast Asia

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## Background and objectives of my research

My research concerns "*Dang-ki* belief in Taiwan and Southeast Asia". Surveys concerning Han spirit-mediums and temples such those conducted by Alan Elliot and Leon Comber in Singapore in the 1950's shed light upon elements of Chinese folk religions which at the time were difficult to investigate (especially those of Hokkien peoples). Alan Elliott defines "*dang-ki*" as " a spiritual being of vast and undefined powers possesses the body of a human medium and enables him to inflict injury upon himself without feeling pain, and to speak with divine wisdom, giving advice to worshippers and curing their illnesses " [Elliott 1955:15]. I wish to further investigate the Hokkien folk religions of Taiwan through participation in séances conducted by *dang-ki*, and by examining the ways in which ancestors, gods, and ghosts are worshipped in daily life and during rituals. Then, further to that, I wish to know more of the idiosyncrasies of the ways of thinking of the people of Chinese descent who live throughout Southeast Asia, and to examine whether or not the characteristics of that established region can have a reverse influence on people of Chinese descent.

After the last field school I went to Singapore and, although I spent less than a week there, in the time permitted I visited as many temples as I could. There are various kinds of temples in Singapore, and there are even shrines of the kind in which *dang-ki* are active beside the HDB and in the sections of the residential quarters. Also, people of Chinese descent can even be seen praying assiduously in the Buddhist or Taoist way in Hindu temples.



The Monkey God Temple in Singapore



Jade Emperor in Hong San Si Temple



Siang Cho Keong Temple in Singapore

## Bibliography

Elliott, A.J.A. 1955. *Chinese Spirit-Medium Cults in Singapore*. The Athlone Press.

Comber, L. 1958. *Chinese Temples in Singapore*. Eastern Universities Press.