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THE ADVENTURES OF THE FIVE SAGES IN SAN JOSE

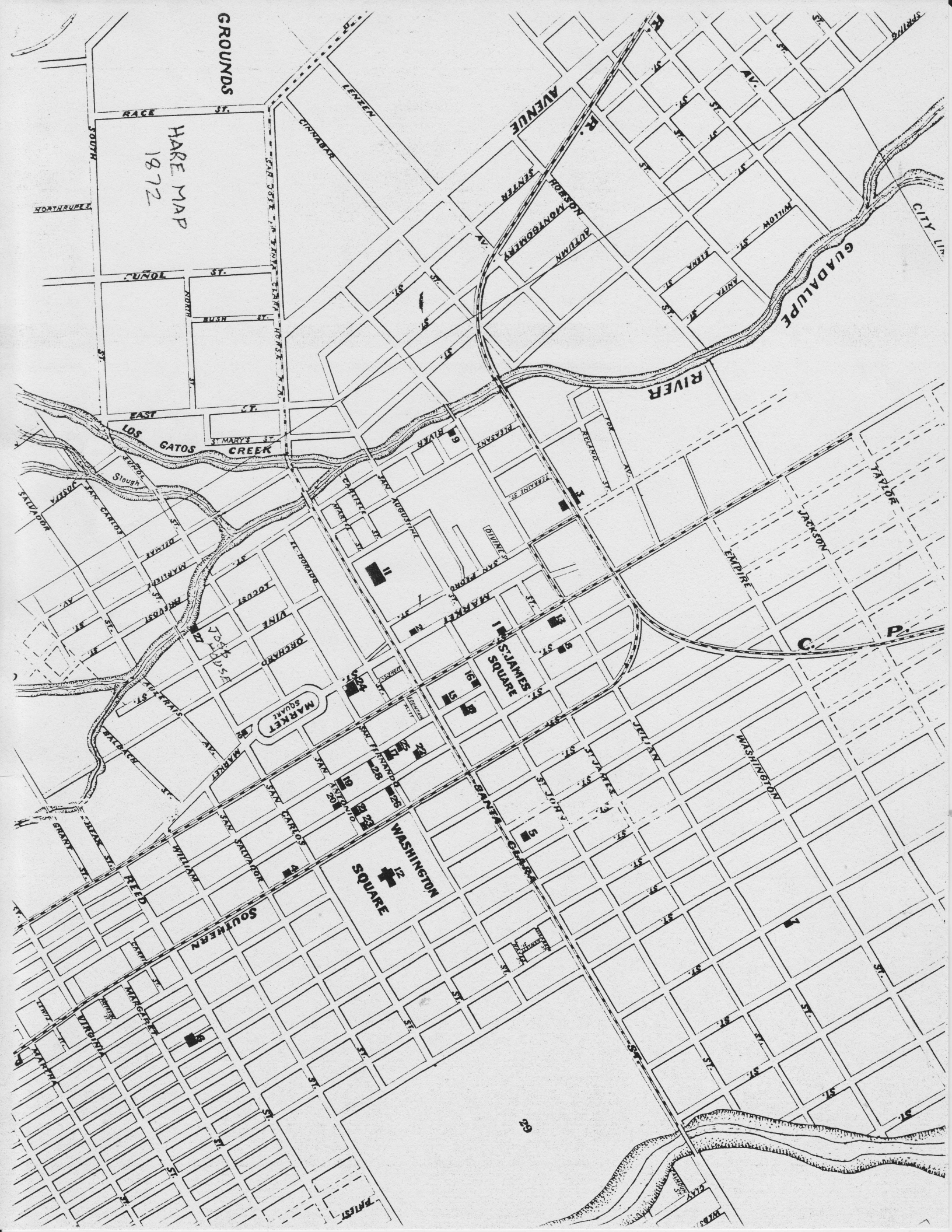
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APRIL 26, 1991

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

Introduction	1
The Five Sages	2
The Five Sages Survive a Fire	7
The Five Sages Find a New Home	9
The Tyrany of Democracy	10
The Five Sages and the Social Life of the Chinese	12
A Historical Summary	21
The Five Sages and the City Fathers	22
Some Legal Questions	25
A Council United	27
The Buddhas Visit a Mother in Taiwan	29
The City Fathers Triumph over the Five Sages	30
Bibliography	35
Other Sources	36

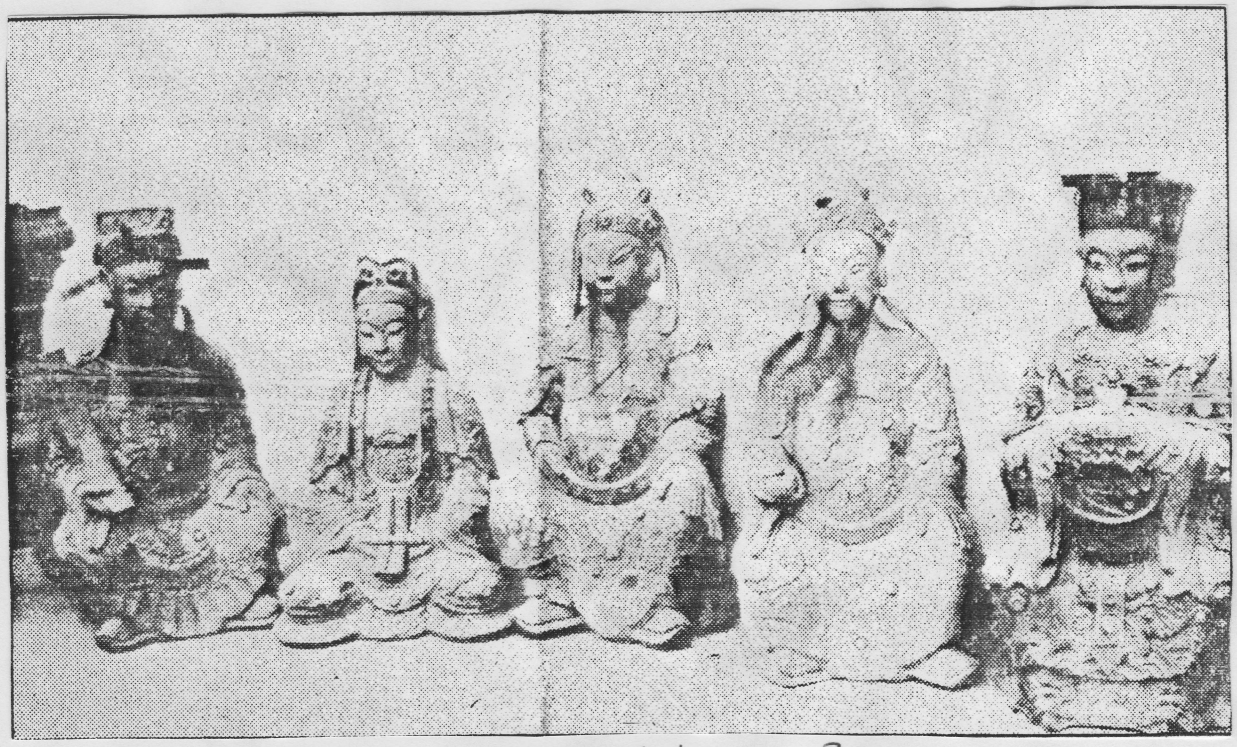

HARE MAP
1872
GROUNDS
RACE ST.
SOUTH
NORTHRUP ST.
CINNABAR
LENZEN
AVENUE
R.
SEVENTEEN
HOBSON
MONTGOMERY
AUTUMN
AV.
ST.
SPRING
CITY LIM
GUADALUPE
RIVER
WILLOW ST.
TIMA ST.
ANITA ST.
CUÑOL ST.
NORTH
BUSH ST.
HOUSE
EAST
LOS GATOS CREEK
ST. MARY'S ST.
RIVER
PLEASANT
FOX
RELAND AV.
TERRAINE ST.
JAN AUGUSTINE
MARTI ST.
DIVINE ST.
SAN PEDRO
MARKET ST.
EL DORADO
JOSEFA
SALVADOR
SAN CARLOS
BUTLER
MARIETTA
MARIPOSA
TOCOST
VINE
ORCHARD
JACKSON
EMPIRE
TAYLOR
C.
P.
ST. JAMES SQUARE
MARKET SQUARE
AUSTRIA
LOUDAN PLACE
SAN FERNANDO
SAN ANTONIO
SANTA CLARA
JULIAN
ST. JOHN
WASHINGTON
WILLIAM
REED
SOUTHERN
GRANT
ALMA
CARRIE
MARGARET
VIRGINIA
LEWIS
PARK
PLUM
PACIFIC
CLAY
WILLOW
29

INTRODUCTION

The Five Immortals of China, like any other representation of the divine, bring out the best and the worst impulses of the human heart. Sacred history, in this sense, includes not only miracle and myth, but any human response to the material apparatus of religion. Razing a temple to the ground, places the destroyer in relation to the divine. The destroyer of the house of God could be a complete atheist. For him, the image of God can be a mere block of wood. Nevertheless, the destruction of the temple remains a historical fact and an episode in the sacred chronicle. The adventures, then, of the Five Immortals in San Jose bear all the marks of a historical romance. For here is a tale of the struggles between gods and men.

The first site used to house the Five Sages is recorded on an old 1872 map of San Jose. The temple or joss house was located at Locust Street and San Carlos (Hare, 1872). No trace of the temple exists today, except for some venerable shade trees growing along the Guadalupe River. Situated by the Performing Arts Center, the dark sheltering grove is an oasis of tranquility in a sea of noise.

Sometime between 1872 and May 4, 1887, the Five Immortals made the ocean voyage from China to California. We know the Five Sages were in San Jose, during this period, because they were the only items saved from the Chinatown fire of 1887. The Immortals, themselves, are five finely carved wooden figures measuring a little more than two feet.



T'SAI SHEN YEH KWAN YU ? T'IEN HOU

KWAN YIN

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS, MARCH 11, 1987

THE FIVE SAGES

Three of the Five Sages have been identified: they are Kwan Yin, T'ien Hou, and Kuan Yu. The other two sages are harder to identify. One Immortal has been subject to a variety of interpretations. He has been said to be Bok Kai, Bock Sek How Kong, Liu Pei, and Chang Fei. The other Immortal remains unknown to this day. (Nunes, 1991)

Of the Five Immortals, Kwan Yin has the most convoluted background. Simply put, Kwan Yin is a manifestation of the male Bodhisattva named Avalokitesvara. Obviously, this statement requires clarification.

For some Buddhists, Adi-Buddha is the Self-Existent, when nothing else was. Adi-Buddha is infinite, omniscient, and the originator of all things. Five Dhyani-Buddhas evolved from Adi-Buddha. Each Dhyani-Buddha received existence, wisdom and the power of meditation from Adi-Buddha. The exertion of the Adi-Buddha with the Dhyani-Buddhas produced five celestial Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattvas direct the affairs of the world. However, the Adi-Buddha system was used by very few Chinese (Getty, 1988, pp 2-3, 44-45).

Instead, a Chinese Buddhist might begin with a mortal Bodhisattva or Manushi-Buddha. A Manushi-Buddha appears on earth in a series of incarnations. The historical Buddha known as Gautama Buddha or Sakya-muni, after 550 incarnations, was born in the Tushita heaven and descended to earth. While dwelling in the Tushita heaven, Sakya-muni met the celestial Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. During his earthly

ministry, Guatama spoke about Avalokitesvara. Once, when man eating demons disquised as beautiful women tempted Guatama, Avalokitesvara appeared as a horse and carried Guatama away. Guatama also spoke about Avalokitesvara's descent into hell to convert the wicked.

Avalokitesvara was generated from the Dhyani-Buddha Amitabha. At some time, in some heaven, Amitabha was in deep meditation and caused a ray of white light to issue from his right eye. Thus, Avalokitesvara came into existence. Avalokitesvara exists eternally in heaven and delegates his functions to earthly manisfestations. He is continually reincarnated in human male form except when he was manifested as the miraculous horse Balaha and the female diety Kwan Yin. Thus, Kwan Yin is one of the many incarnations of Avalokitesvara (Getty, 1988, pp 57-59).

We owe the legend of Kwan Yin to a seventh century (A.D.) monk called Tao-hsuan. Tao-hsuan was one of the most learned and respected monks of his day. In his old age, he went insane. He believed he was always surrounded by gods who spoke to him. Tao-hsuan wrote the revelations down with a trembling hand. The revelations were compiled and published by a disciple. Among the revelations was the legend of Kwan Yin (Maspero, 1981, pp 166-171). Oddly enough, one meaning of Kwan Yin's name is "universally manifested voices" (Getty, 1988, pp 78). The reader should keep this image in mind; we will return to it later in the essay.

In any case, the legend of Kwan Yin tells the adventures of Miao-shan, the third daughter of a king living in 2587 B.C. The king arranged a marriage for Miao-shan. However, Miao-shan

refused to marry; she wanted to live a life of meditation and seclusion. She suffered several trials and tortures at the hands of her father. Miao-shan survived them all. Finally, one of the local gods, disguised in the form of a tiger, rescued her and carried her to safety.

Miao-shan visited Yama in Hell and freed the damned souls. Upon her return from the underworld, Buddha gave Miao-shan a peach from the garden of heaven, which would give her immortality. After removing to an island, Miao-shan meditated and performed acts of merit; she then reached the rank of Buddha. As a Buddha, she refused to enter Amitabha's paradise as long as any human being was excluded.

Tien Hou, one of the other Five Sages, was a girl born on the island of Mei-chou, living sometime between 800 A.D. to 1000 A.D. She was devoted to Kwan-Yin and refused to marry. Her four brothers were ocean traders. One evening, she slipped into a cataleptic fit. It took a long time to revive her. After regaining consciousness, she said that she was summoned back too soon. Later, three of her brothers returned from a voyage. They told of a storm that almost destroyed their ships. At the critical moment, a girl appeared and guided the ships to safety. Only one of the brothers perished in the tempest. Soon afterwards, the girl died.

Sometime during the Twelfth Century, the villagers of Mei-chou saw a supernatural glimmer over the beach at night. Then, the villagers all had the same dream about a young girl who said, "I am the goddess of Mei-chou, I must be lodged here!" Thus, a

temple was buildt on the seashore.

In 1278, the Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan awarded the title of Tien-Hou, or Empress of Heaven, to the cult centered at Mei-chou (Maspero, 1981, pp 145-147).

The third immortal, Kwan Yu, has a very inspirational history. We can learn much from his example. Once upon a time, the parents of Kuan Yu locked him in his room as a punishment. He broke out of the room and wandered around the city at night. He happened to hear a woman and an old man weeping. Kwan Yu learned that the woman, the daughter of the old man, was engaged to be married. However, an uncle of a local magistrate wanted to take the daughter for a second wife. Kwan Yu, angered at the injustice, took his sword and killed both the uncle and the magistrate. Thus, Kwan Yu was forced to flee (Werner, 1961, pp 227-229).

Later, during his travels, Kwan Yu would swear the famous peach garden oath with Liu-Pei and Chang-Fei. These three men swore a blood oath to treat each other as uterine brothers and help each other when faced with dangers. Kwan Yu was faithful to his oath even unto death. After many valient deeds, Kwan Yu was captured by his enemies and decapitated.

What I find inspirational about Kwan Yu is his bellicosity tempered with justice. Both Buddhism and Taoism stress the unity and oneness of life. Thus, a Buddhist scripture says,

"One in All

All in One

If only this is realized,

No more worry about your not being perfect."

(Conze, 1987, pp 175)

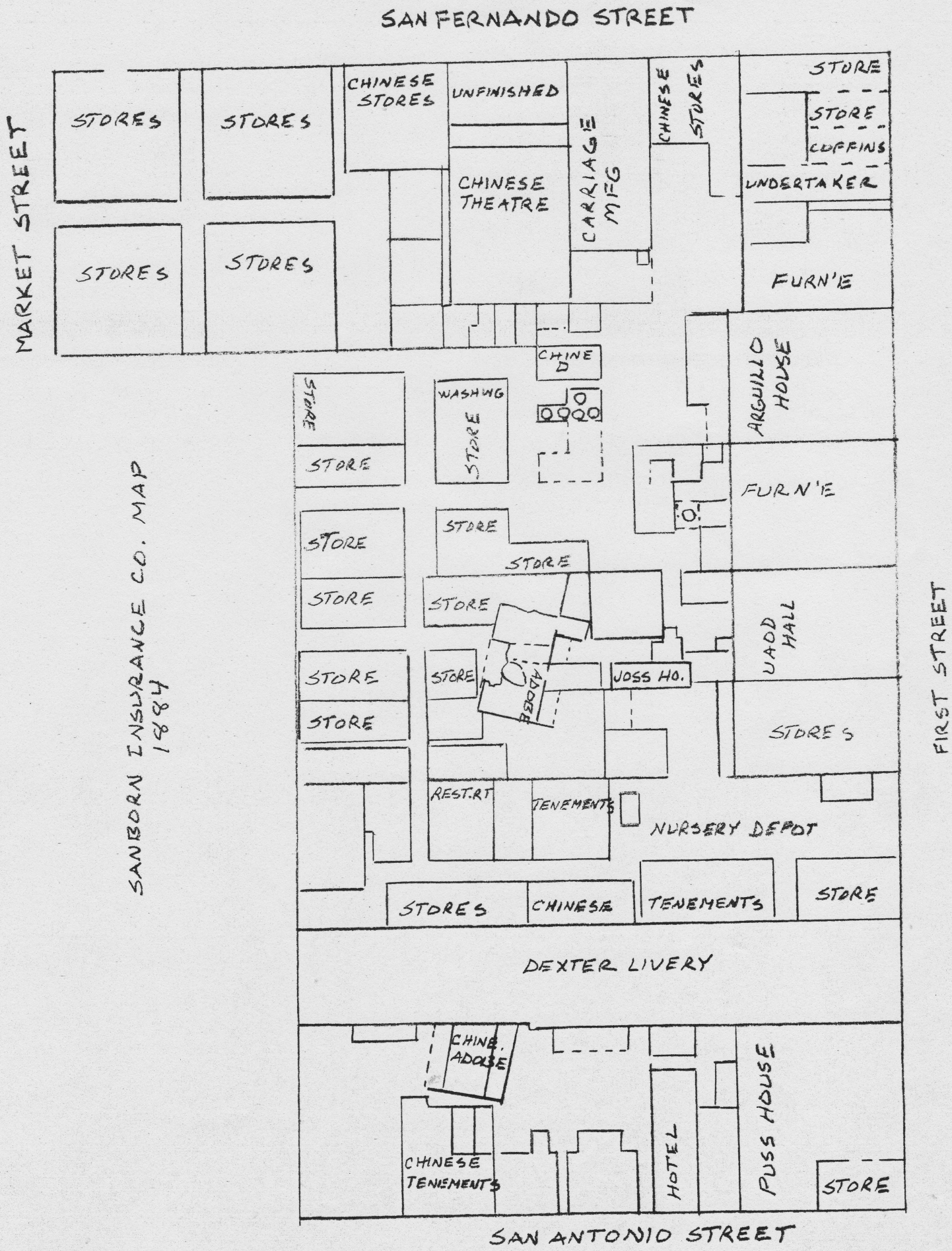
Laotse, the Taoist sage writes,

"The Sage dwells in the world peacefully, harmoniously.
The people of the world are brought into a community of heart.
And the sage regards them all as his own children."

(Yutang, 1976, pp 231)

This ideal unity of mankind is of course violated every day. The rich crush the poor. The strong trample the weak. The extaordinary thing about Kwan Yu is that he makes war to potect the unity of life. The strong threaten to destroy the weak? Kwan Yu comess along and overthrows the strong, reestablishing equity or the right of each to enjoy unity with the oneness of life. Kwan Yu is the scourge and justice of God, because of his compassion for the weak--a compassion that leads Kwan Yu to take up arms to defend the suffering and the oppressed.

As for the remaining two Immortals, one sage remains unidentified, the other sage is said to be Bok Kai, Bock Sek How Kong, or Ts'ai Shen Yeh. Bok Kai is God of the North; he lived before the world came into existence and he is the director of the world's destiny (Wells, 1962, pp 98). As for Bock Sek How Kong, he has been mentioned as a possible identity for a sage, but I have yet to find any information on him (Nunes, 1991). A more promising identification for the sage was offered by a practicing Buddhist (Tse, 1991). One sage is probably the God of Wealth, Ts'ai Shen Yeh. Ts'ai Shen Yeh is thought to be the spirit of Pi Kan, a wise man who was related to a tyrant of the Shang Dynasty. Pi Kan reproved the tyrant for being a wicked


SAN FERNANDO STREET
MARKET STREET
FIRST STREET
SAN ANTONIO STREET
SANBORN INSURANCE CO. MAP
1884
STORES
STORES
STORES
STORES
CHINESE STORES
UNFINISHED
CHINESE THEATRE
CARRIAGE MFG
CHINESE STORES
STORE
STORE
COFFINS
UNDERTAKER
FURN'E
CHINE
ARGUILLO HOUSE
STORE
STORE
WASHWG
STORE
FURN'E
STORE
STORE
STORE
STORE
STORE
STORE
ADOBE
JOSS HO.
UADD HALL
STORE
STORE
STORES
REST.RT
TENEMENTS
NURSERY DEPOT
STORES
CHINESE
TENEMENTS
STORE
DEXTER LIVERY
CHINE. ADOBE
CHINESE TENEMENTS
HOTEL
PUSS HOUSE
STORE

ruler. The tyrant had Pi Kan's heart cut open. (Williams, 1941, pp 212)

THE FIVE SAGES SURVIVE A FIRE

Sometime before 1887, the Five Sages were housed in a temple of the San Jose Chinatown located at Market Street and San Antonio Street. At this time, the Chinese settlement was thirty five years old. The first Chinese had arrived in San Jose in 1852, the operator of a wash house (San Jose Public Library). In 1860, there were 22 Chinese in Santa Clara County. By 1870, 1,525 Chinese lived in the county (Chan, 1986, pp 48-49).

An 1884, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows a Chinatown containing a Chinese Theatre, tenements, a wash house, a restaurant and a joss house or temple. It was an adventure just going to the temple. The only way to get to the temple was for the worshiper to walk down an alley that passed through an old adobe building. The adobe was probably one of the structures left from the first Spanish settlement. Thus, the Chinese who went to the temple also took a journey through history. Visits to the temple must have been truly awe inspiring.

However, the peculiarities of Chinatown's organization and geography met with slight approval from the bureaucrats and politicians of San Jose.

"Chief of Police Brown, County Health Officer Holman, Street Commissioner Purcell, City Engineer Peiper, Fire Chief Brady and Mayor Breyfogle fought determinedly to close Chinatown, but in vain." (San Jose Public Library, p 119)

A journalist writing on the day after the fire of May 1887 wrote,

"A short time ago, it will be remembered, the City Attorney, acting under instructions of the Mayor and Comman Council began suit to have Chinatown declared a public nuisance." (Daily Mercury, May 5, 1887).

Despite their displeasure regarding Chinatown, the city fathers had a change of heart, when Chinatown went up in flames on May 4, 1887. Judge Belden, Mayor Breyfogle, Councilmen Hale and Prindle, and Chief-of-Police Brown were on hand to fight the fire.

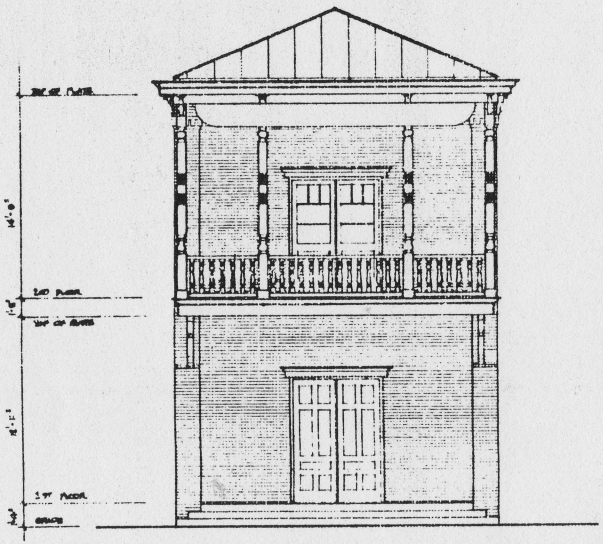
Today, the general consensus is that the fire was deliberately set, but of mysterious origin. The mysterious circumstances include the following:

1. The mayor and city council started proceedings to declare Chinatown a public nuisance.
2. Bystanders said the fire broke out simultaneously in three places. (Mercury, May 5, 1887)
3. The 10,000 gallon water tank used to fight fires in Chinatown was empty on the day of the fire. (Mercury, Feb. 29, 1991)
4. The director of the Chinese firefighters, W.T. Wheeler was absent in San Francisco during the fire.
5. Only Chinatown burned down. Buildings adjoining Chinatown suffered only slight damage. For instance, the Bolanger Brothers stable suffered damage not exceeding $150. (Mercury, May 5, 1887)

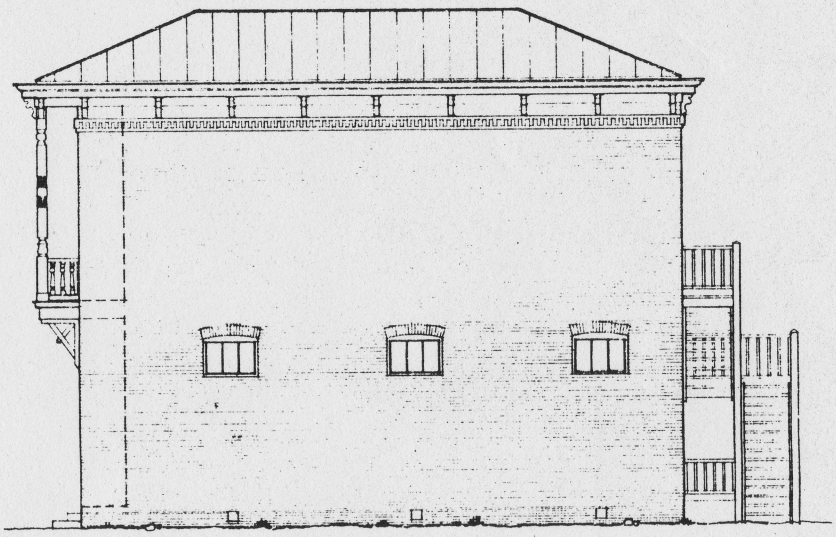
Mysterious incidents after the fact make up two counts.

1. "There was a rush to make sure the city reclaimed its Plaza

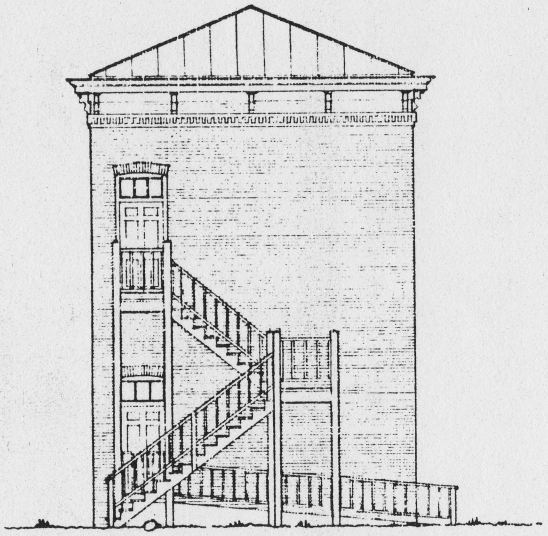
SAN JOSE HISTORICAL MUSEUM 1989 NG SHING GUNG TEMPLE



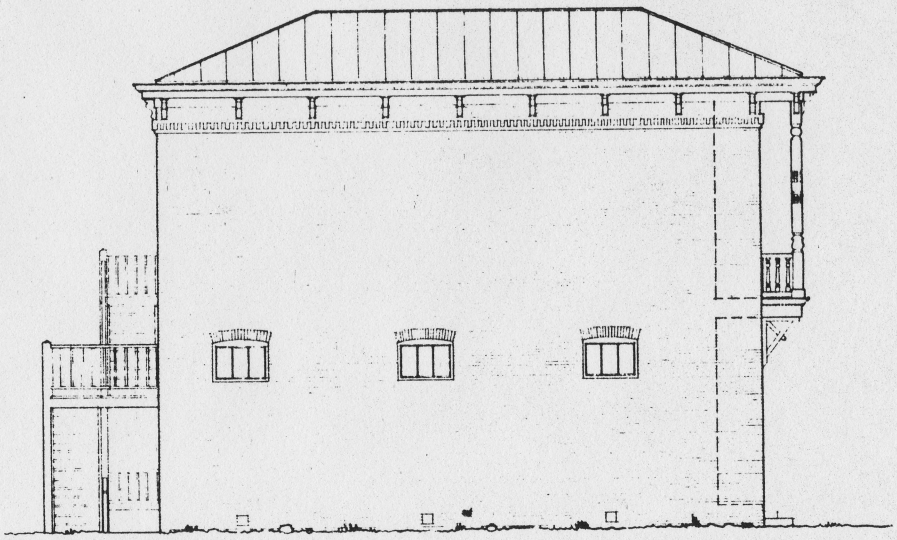
FRONT



SIDE



REAR



SIDE

EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS 1/4" = 1'-0"

and to prevent the re-occupation of Chinatown." (San Jose Public Library, p 119)

2. An armory was, shortly afterwards, buildt next to where the fire started in the Ah Toy alley. A Freudian would ascribe this coincidence in urban planning to a repressive mechanism working in the collective subconscious. The armory would defend the city from the memory of any dark deeds committed in the Ah Toy alley.

As was said before, the Five Sages were among the few things saved from the fire. The San Jose Daily Mercury of May 5, 1887 reads as follows:

"The appearance on the street of a Chinaman haveing in charge a joss, nearly as large as himself, was the cause of considerable shouting, but although he was beset on all sides, he managed to take his idol to a place of safety."

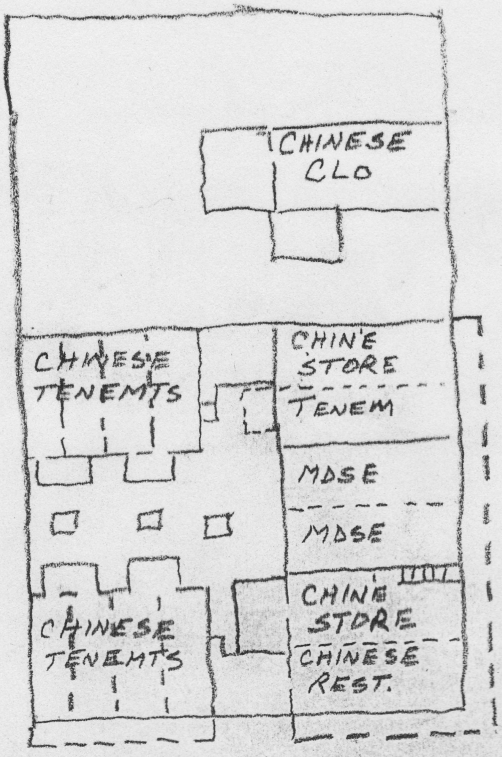
Many years later, an original resident of the Heinlenville Chinatown corroborated the story that the Five Sages escaped the fire. (Mercury, May 23, 1949)

THE FIVE SAGES FIND A NEW HOME

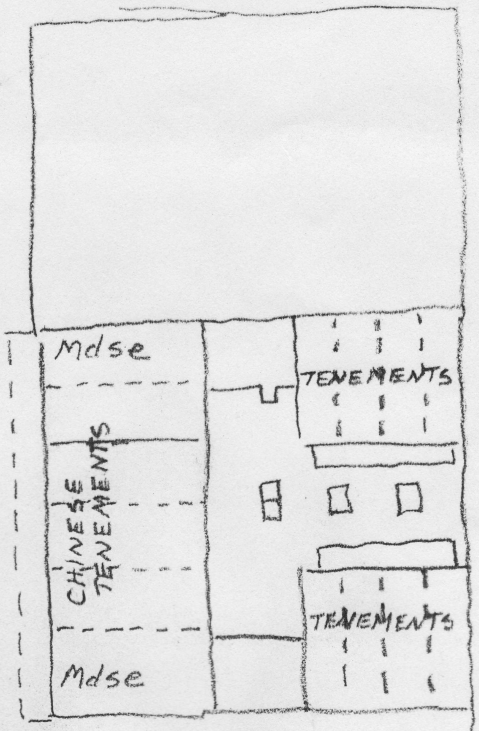
In the following year after the 1887 fire, a new temple was buildt to house the Five Sages. The temple was buildt from bricks manufactured at the Peterson brick works in San Jose. The costs incurred in erecting the temple were met by a public subscription. The total cost for building the temple was not more than $2,000. The Chinese called their place of worship the Ng Shin Gung Temple. It was located at Clay and Sixth Street in

NEW CHINA TOWN

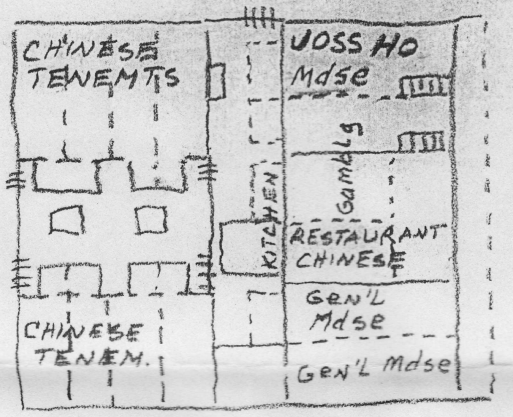
SANBORN INSURANCE CO. MAP
1890



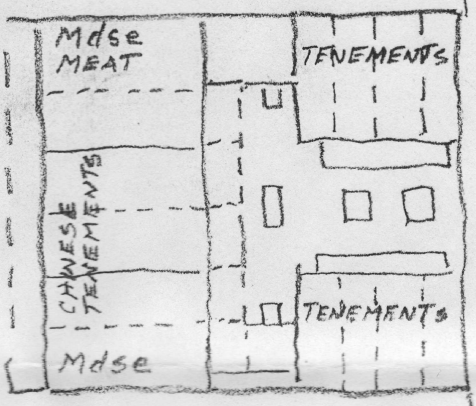
DUPONT



ARTESIAN WELL

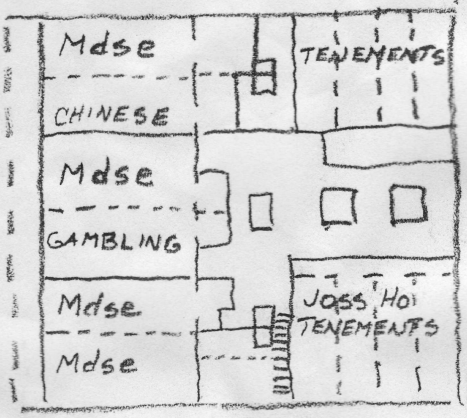


KEARNEY





CLAY



NEW CHINA TOWN

CHINESE TENEM.
KITCHEN
RESTAURANT CHINESE
Gen'L Mdse
Gen'L Mdse
CHINESE TENEMENTS
Mdse
TENEMENTS

KEARNEY

CHINE Lodgs
CHINE D
BARBER
BARBER
Gen'L M'dse
Gambl'g
CHIN'E DWG
Gambl'g
STORE, Gambl'g
Gen'l M'dse
CHINESE TENEMENTS
Mdse
TENEMENTS
CHINESE
Mdse
GAMBLING
Mdse
Mdse
JOSS HO TENEMENTS

CLAY

CHINESE TENEMENTS
MEAT
Gen'L Mdse
W. HO
ROASTING KETTLE
CHINESE WASH HO

SIXTH

CLEVELAND

D
JOSS HO
JOSS HO
CHINESE TENEMENTS
SIXTH

JACKSON

SEVENTH

the Heinlenville Chinatown.

From the 1890 Sanborn Map, we have a good idea what the Heinlenville Chinatown looked like. The Heinlenville Chinatown was bounded by Jackson, Taylor, Fifth, and Sixth Streets. Judging from the number of tenements alone, most of the Chinese workers were employed outside of Chinatown. Sucheng Chan's ground breaking study of Chinese agriculture in California confirms this view. In 1900, 43% of the Chinese population were engaged in agricultural enterprises (Chan, 1986, pp 48-49).

Among other things, we also notice the map shows four shrines or joss houses. While researching this essay, I was solemnly assured, by people who should have known better, that religion was not that important to the Chinese. The number of shrines located in Heinlenville tend to contradict such solemn assurances. Further, the contention that joss houses enumerated on maps might instead be tong or clan houses is tenuous at best. Tong houses and family association headquarters usually contain shrines that easily pass for a temple. To this day, many Chinese temples or shines are located in the tong and family association headquarters in the San Francisco Chinatown.

Another fact that should be noted was that the Heinlenville Chinatown was surrounded by a fence. Further, the fence gate was locked at night to keep the Chinese within the Heinlenville compound. (Yu, 1989, p 5)

THE TYRANY OF DEMOCRACY

In order to understand the drastic measures inflicted on Chinese communities by local governments, we must turn to

California's Constitution. The Constitution delegated peculiar powers to local governments. In 1880, a constitutional convention drafted and a popular vote adopted the notorious Article 19. Article 19, section 4, reads in part:

"The Legislature shall delegate all necessary power to the incorporated cities and towns of this State for the removal of Chinese without the limits of such cities and towns, or for their location within prescribed portions of those limits..." (Jordan, 1912 pp 149-150)

In short, the state gave local governments the power to coerce a minority. Also, this piece of legislation was not repealed until November 4, 1952. Article 19 raises some interesting questions for the political scientist. Unfortunately, we can only raise the questions, their investigation must wait for another time.

One thing is clear, Article 19 calls into question the legitimacy of democratic legislation. If duly elected representatives draw up and popular vote ratifies tyranous and oppressive legislation, are the citizens obligated to obey such legislation? Further, what is the higher moral standard that allows men of good will to judge and damn coercive democratic legislation? Finally, what can stop a democracy from bringing forth monstrous legislation? For we are already confronted with an instance of tyranous legislation springing from the bosom of democracy.

THE FIVE SAGES AND THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE CHINESE

A discussion of religion must be corrolated with the social life of believers. Material practice verifies the significance of religion within the life of a community. Thanks to the pioneer work of Suchen Chang, we have an accurate profile of the Chinese community in Santa Clara County at the turn of the century. The ocupational distribution of the Chinese in Sonoma, Napa, Marin, Contra Costa, Alameda, Santa Clara, and San Mateo Counties from 1870-1900 is given as follows:

	1870		1880		1900	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculturalists	417	8.2	286	2.5	302	5.5
Agric. Laborers	934	18.4	1975	17.5	1135	20.8
Fishermen	135	2.7	670	5.9	158	2.9
Miners	16	.3	78	.7	109	2.0
Professionals	81	1.6	188	1.7	38	0.7
Merchants	84	1.6	306	2.7	268	4.9
Clerks	0	0	7	.1	8	0.1
Owners of Vices	1	0	12	.1	1	0
Laundrymen	471	9.3	1036	9.1	821	15.1
Factory Owners	2	0	4	0	1	0
Factory Workers	150	3.0	140	1.2	372	6.8
Cooks	415	8.2	958	8.5	815	14.9
Servants	305	6.0	1104	9.7	263	4.8
Prostitutes	15	.3	27	.2	38	0.7
Others	57	1.1	87	.8	57	1.0
Nonag. workers	1645	32.4	4147	36.6	754	13.8
No Occupation	264	5.2	285	2.5	314	5.8
Total	5083	100	11326	100	5454	100

(Chan, 1986, pp 63, 69, 76)

Obviously, one problem with the data is that it is an aggregation of seven counties. Nevertheless, the data is representative enough to allow for a few inferences, since there are utilitarian aspects in the worship of Chinese Gods. All occupations had their own patron deities. Likewise, members of

various occupations would tend to maintain the cult of their patron deities. Moreover, the existential predicament of the Chinese provided a number of motives for honoring the sages.

For instance, all the Chinese came to the United States by ocean vessels. Before, during, and after a voyage, Chinese immigrants would petition, honor, and thank Tien Hou, the Goddess of sailors and ocean travel.

Women would worship Kwan Yin as the giver of children. It should be remembered the San Jose Chinatown at Market and San Antonio was not a bachelor community, but included women and children. This is really not surprising, since during the periods of the most rigorous exclusion laws, Chinese merchants were always allowed to bring their wives and children with them to America (Nee, 1974, p 25). In any case, laundry women, cooks, servants, factory workers, clerks, and any other working and nonworking women would honor Kwan Yin, the goddess who was merciful to the suffering. Kwan Yin was also the patron of prostitutes (Maspero, 1981, p 149).

Among other personas, Kwan Yu evolved into a god of wealth (Dore, 1918, vol 6, p 85). Moreover, one of the Five Sages has been tentatively identified as Ts'ai Shen Yeh, the God of Wealth. Certainly, everyone seeks wealth, so everyone would honor the God of Wealth. Merchants, factory owners, professionals, and agriculturalists would be a fanatical core of worshipers, due to their frantic vocation as entrepreneurs. Thus, in 1900 alone, upwards of 11% of the Chinese population in Santa Clara County were engaged in economic activities that harmonized with cultic worship. We leave the calculation of other cult populations to

the ingenious and erudite reader.

The Tongs also provide a significant link joining the Chinese workers with the cult of Kwan Yu. Let us remmber a Tong could be anything from mutual benefit society providing burials to a militant secret society. Most if not all of the Chinese is San Jose wre from Kwangtung province in China. During the Taiping Rebellion, the Triad Society led a series of rebellions known as the Red Turbin Uprisings (Nee, 1974, p 67). Thanks to Connie Yong Yu's memoir on her father's life in San Jose's Chinese community, we have a documented link between the Taiping Rebellion and the residents of San Jose's Chinatown. Ms Yu writes as follows:

"My father told the Young family saga throughout our childhood. He told us how Soong Qwong, his father begged to come to Gum Shan when he was a mere boy. Soong Quong had been influenced by his uncle, who hated Manchu rule and went to America after participating in the Taiping Rebellion."

Certainly, this is not hard and fast connection. Yet, something of the Triad or the Taipings might well have been in the air of San Jose's Chinatown. The Tongs, like the Triad and the Taipings, were created to fight injustice and state oppression. The Tongs only became criminal enterprises when they were taken over by the merchants. (Nee, 1974, pp 67-69)

It would have been nice to draw a parallel between the saga of the most original of Christian Churches, the Taipings, and the bitter bondage of the Chinese in California. Both groups went on an exodus to escape Pharaoh and the fleshpots of Egypt; the

Taipings left the Manchus to seek the kingdom of God, the Chinese in California had to flee persecution across the state. Instead, we will look for parallels closer to home.

A Mercury article describes the violence in the Heinlenville Chinatown as follows:

"Wong Mew used to be known in Heinlenville because a part of his nose was shot away. He and four friends were making merry in their quarters on night when a huge drunken Chinese, dressed only in trousers and bearing a loaded revolver, kicked at the door for admission. They declined to open the door, so the armed one fired four shots through the panels. One of them hit Wong Mew in the nose penetrating to his ear.

The giant with the gun fled to the Woolen Mills Chinatown. When he was later apprehended through the efforts of Wong Mew's tong brothers, the giant was disclosed as the cook at the Seven Mile house on the Almaden road." (San Jose Public Library, p 122)

Certainly, a cook is as capable of playing the hero as anyone else. However, the precedent for a transformation from laborer to hero was long established in Chinese literature and religion. One of Kwan Yu's sworn brothers, Chang-Fei, was a butcher who went on to be a hero, as recorded in The Romance of the Three Kingdoms. Further, the oath, sworn to by Kwan Yu, Liu Pei, and Chang Fei in the peach orchard, was similar to the blood oaths of secret societies.

When the three men made the oath to treat each other as brothers born from the same mother, a black bullock and an white horse were immolated. Incense was burnt in the presence of

heaven and earth, who were to avenge the oath if it was broken. A fraternal banquet sealed the pact. This same kind of ritual used by the brothers in the Oath of the Peach Orchard was used by the Triad Society, the White Lotus Society, and the Boxers. Members took an oath, which was confirmed by shedding blood. Also, threre was a promise not to divulge a secret. (Dore, 1919, vol 5, pp 497-499)

From what we know of the tongs, candidates for membership swore a blood oath or made an oath before a war God like Kwan Yu (Dillon, 1962, p 123). Thus, the mutual aid and violence of the tongs owed something to a religious ethic. The tong members were reliving the lives of warrior heroes. Perhaps, criminal motives explain some of the activity of the tongs. However, I feel martial religious sentiment was the predominate motive within the tongs until they were corrupted by merchants.

How else can we explain the Chinese War in Weaverville? Seven hundred Chinese, armed with traditional weapons, fight a pitched battle in 1854. A California valley, surrounded by snow clad mountains, was the scene of a battle taken from the pages of the The Romance of the Three Kingdoms. Here was the portrayal of an ancient Chinese epic in a foreign land. Instinctively, the Chinese cast their lives in the form of a epic myth. (Lee, 1965, p 108)

A whole host of social practices reinforced religion in the life of the Chinese in San Jose. For instance, the Chinese pantheon is made up of gods, anscestors, and ghosts. All Chinese merchants who had wives and children would have ancestral tablets

set up on a household altar. Incense would be burnt and ceremonial offerings of food would be made to the ancestors (Williams, 1976, p 16). Likewise, the family, district, and subdistrict associations would have shrines honoring the Gods and the Immortals. Thus, Chinese bachelors also had continual access to religious ritual, since bachelors were housed in associations. Further, every Chinese business had a small altar with Gods.

Various community festivals celebrated in the Chines community would keep religious feeling alive. Connie Young Yu writes as follows:

"San Jose's Chilnatown was more traditional than San Francisco's. While other towns had stopped maintaining many of the old customs and the celebration of certain festivals, San Jose's Chinese residents continued with da jiu--a five-day celebration with a parade of huge eight-foot "guards." It was a feast day of the five deities, and huge pots of the vegitarian dish jai were blessed by priests and distributed to the community." (Yu, 1989, p 6-7)

Funerals were another expression of ancestor worship and religion. Clyde Arbuckle witnessed Chinese funeral processions that began at the Chinatown on Taylor Street and went all the way to the Chinese cemetary near Oak Hill Cemetary. All along the way from Chinatown to Oak Hill, a member of the procession threw out paper money called Hell Notes to buy the goodwill of the ghosts. (Arbuckle, 1991)

The Chinese Cemetary near Oak Hill was a cooperative venture of several local Chinese associations. On May 12, 1900 a memorandum of agreement was drawn up between the Oak Hill Improvement

Company and several Chinese parties. The Chinese signers to the agreement are listed as follows: President of the Ning Yung Association, Sam Yup Association, Kwong Chow Association, Yoeng Wo, Hop Wo, Shu Hing, Yen Hoi, and Yan Wo. The Chinese agreed to pay $1,250 dollars for a burial plat for graves. The plat would have a kiln to cremate burial remains. One stipulation was that sometime after burial, the graves would be disinterred, the remains incinerated, and the ashes sent to China. (Arbuckle, 1991)

From what I can determine, the Chinese funerals in California were much like traditional funerals in China. A recent study on the Riverside Chinatown carries a 1889 newspaper account of a Chinese Funeral. A meal of roast pork, lamb, cakes, oranges, fruits, and nuts were laid out on a table by the corpse. The corpse was in a plain wood coffin, with coins placed on the ears and mouth of the body.

Mourners would offer libations by pouring wine on to the ground, while offering prayers to the departed.

A procession left the house of deceased. The order of procession was as follows: a musical band, pall bearers carrying a Chinese banner, relatives and friends carrying banners and lanterns, the hearse, a crowd of mourners on foot, and a crowd of spectators coming last. A mourner sitting by the driver of the horse drawn hearse would out Hell Notes as the procession moved to the cemetary.

The mourners were provided with a generous supply of food and drink by the grave site.

More prayers were spoken by priests and the coffin was lowered into the grave. Old clothing and personal articles of the dead, along with the funeral banners were burned near the grave. The mourners continued to feast into the night. (Great Basin Foundation, 1987, vol 1, pp 275-278)

There are definite similarities in ancestor worship, funeral ritual, and temple ritual. Wine would be poured from pitcher to glasses on the altar of the Gods, on the ancestral altar, and near a grave. Likewise, roast chicken and bowls of rice are set before the Gods and the ancestral tablets to be later eaten by the worshiper. Food is placed on graves to feed the spirit of the dead. Burning incense to Gods, ancestors, and near graves is another ritual duty.

Chinese of all occupations periodically visit a temple to consult the oracles. Two crescent shaped blocks of wood are thrown to give a yes or no answer to a question. The believer could then obtain a more detailed answer by using a vase full of bamboo rods. While concentrating in the mind about a question concerning the future, the believer shakes the vase, until one rod stands out above the others. From the character on the bamboo rod, a corresponding scroll is selected from the book of oracles.

I had occasion to consult the oracle before Kwan Yin's altar at the Po Wah Zi Buddhist Temple of San Jose. Having just read C.G. Jung's Foreword to Wilhelm's translation of The I Ching, I asked Kwan Yin how she and the other sages felt about being in the clutches of City Government of San Jose. While shaking the vase, a rod emerged. A bystander indicated the scroll I should draw.

With my wife in tow, I asked a Buddhist nun to explain the oracle's answer. My wife and the nun tried to find out what question I had asked, since in order to interpret the scroll the interpreter needs to know the question. When I explained my question, they both laughed and thought I was crazy. When consulting the oracle you must inquire about your own future.

Nevertheless, I nagged my wife to translate the scroll. Her translation is given below:

"#56. Ancient History--Lusan Rebels.

Water runs thru small stones on a river. The sage is busy during clear wind and bright moon days. Somebody asks what direction we should go. Just go ahead and take the good small flowers of the forest.

This poem represents a boat on a small river. Every problem will get the sage's help.

Answer. Plan things with reason. Use will and heart. Be conservative and wait for the chance. Things will go lucky.

There is safety at home and luck being alone. Hunting, trading, and marriage are good. If you are pregnant, it will be a boy. There is a visitor on the farm and good luck with silk worms. Things are bad with the farm animals of another house. The person who was asked will be here. There is good luck in law suits." (Translation by Lily Wang Abinante, 1991)

Up to now, I can only make sense of one line. Going into the forest to pick flowers means to practice meditation. The one other idea that comes out of this scroll is that the purpose of the Sages is constant as water passing over small stones.

Besides being used for worship the Ng Shing Gung Temple was the center of the Chinese community. Ms Yu writes:

"The focal point of social activity, the Ng Shing Gung Temple was more than a place of worship. It was a town hall, a Chinese school, and a shelter." (Yu, 1989, p7)

In short, religion permeated the life of the community in San Jose. There are other connections linking social life and religion within the Chinese community. We know San Jose Chinese went to the San Francisco Chinese theatre on weekends, where scenes from Kwan Yu's life were sure to be part of a theatre's repitoire. Another interesting aspect of Kwan Yu's cult was his patronage of mediums and spiritualists. However, I have yet to run across the records of Chinese spiritualist groups. The social aspects of Chinese religion would fill many books. Chinese religion was simply a fact of life.

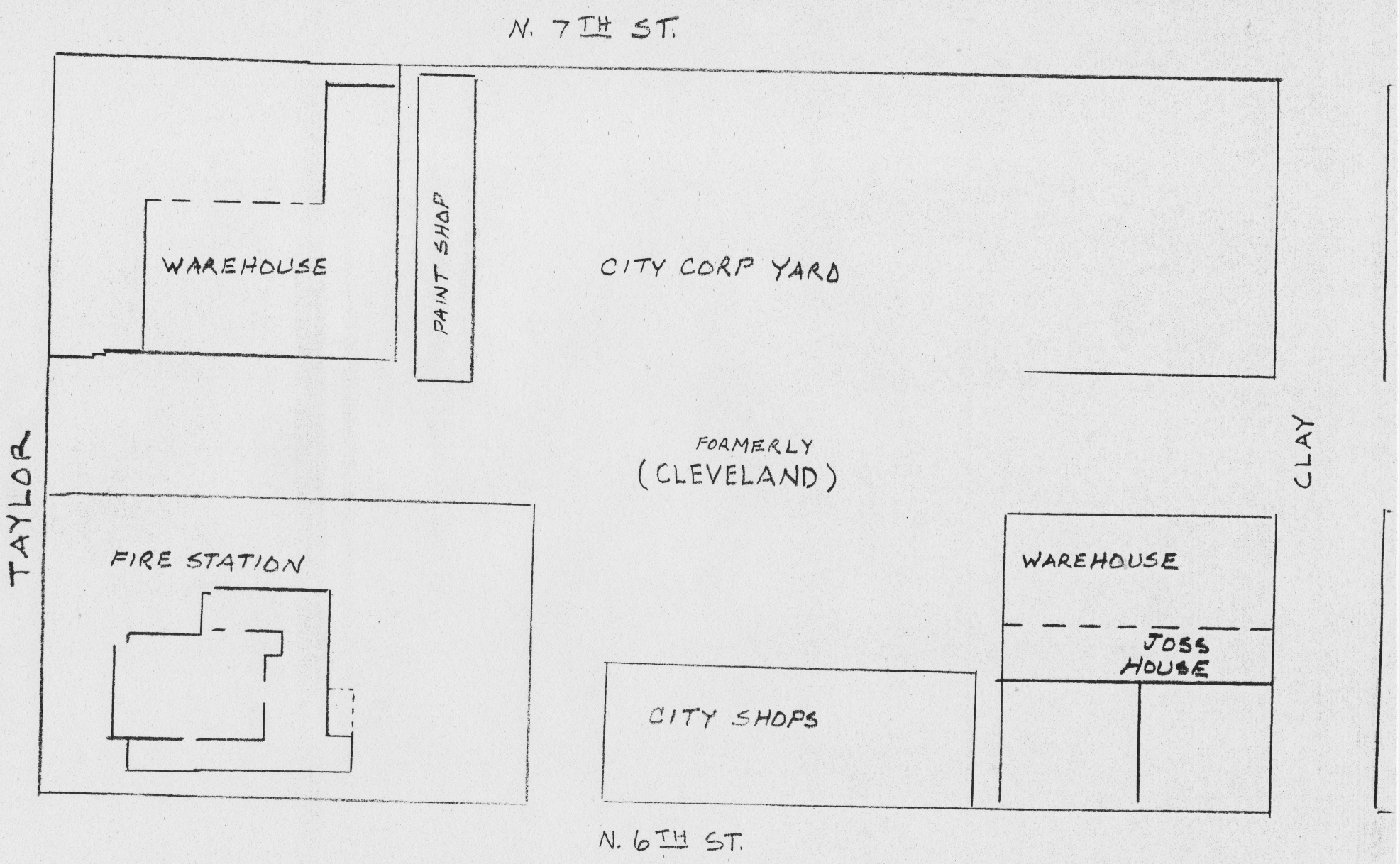
A HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The history of the San Jose Chinatown is best summarized by the Chinese population figures in San Jose and Santa Clara County. The population counts are taken from the Federal Census; they are listed as follows,

Chinese Population

Census Year	San Jose	Santa Clara
1890		2723
1900		1738
1910	356	1064
1920	341	839
1930	273	761
1940	176	555
1950	192	685
1960	1366	2394
1970	1094	7817
1980	10222	22891

SANBORN INSURANCE CO. MAP 1915-1945



(U.S. Population Census, 1890-1980)

The census figures from 1890 to 1930 are probably inaccurate, but at least representative. Some idea of community cohesiveness can be inferred from the number of Chinese living in San Jose as a percentage of the Chinese population in Santa Clara County. For instance, from 1920 to 1950 the percentage of Chinese living in San Jose declined from 41% to 28%.

Further, the decline of the San Jose Chinatown is evidenced by the encroachment of the city fire department, city shops, and the city corporation yard on the boundaries of Chinatown, as shown by the 1915 Sanborn map. This Sanborn map was updated to at least 1945.

It was during the period of decline from 1920 to 1950, when the Chinese community was at its weakest, that the Ng Shing Gung Temple and the Five Sages begin to be the subject of a dispute between the Chinese and the city government.

THE FIVE SAGES AND THE CITY FATHERS

John Heinlen, the owner of the Taylor Street Chinatown, died in 1906. The Heinlen estate was taken over by the Pacific National Bank of San Francisco. The Pacific National Bank relied on the Vosburg company to liquidate the estate (San Jose Public Library, p 120). The Chinese of the Heinlenville Chinatown were to continually allege that John Heinlen deeded the property to the Chinese community. No record of the deed has yet been found.

The Ng Shing Gung Temple was acquired by the City of San Jose for not more then $750 on December 1, 1941. The sum of $750 was

the amount of back taxes owed to the state. The state property tax, in California, is collected by the county. Thus, the County of Santa Clara sold the temple to San Jose for back taxes. (Mercury, Dec 4, 1941)

All in all, the City made out like a thief. In 1919, the temple furnishings alone were valued at $2,500 by a prospective buyer and collector (Mercury, Dec 1, 1941). To give the reader an idea of the appreciation in value on the religious furniture, another similar collection of Chinese temple artifacts were up for sale in Chico California less than twenty years ago. A Hollywood props company offered three million dollars for the collection (Poitras, 1991).

As a short term investment, the City of San Jose acquired a property valued at $2,750 for a price of $750. For, on December 2, 1941 the Farmers Box Company offered to buy the temple from the city for $2,750 (Mercury, Dec 2, 1941).

While city hall was pursuing real estate speculations, one member of Chinatown, Charlie Moy waged a one man campaign to save the temple from the clutches of city government. This was no mean feat, since Article 19 of the California Constitution was still in effect. Moy sought out friends and officials, attempting to mobilize the Chinese community. Suddenly, Moy was spirited away by Federal agents, who arrested Moy for possession of an opium pipe and opium pills.

The debate over the disposition of the temple then spread to the wider community. On December 8, 1941 the city council received a letter from the Kalon Club. The club asked that the temple..."be preserved as a place of worship for our old Chinese

residents." (San Jose City Council Minute Record)

On December 15, 1941 the city received correspondence from another community group. The city minutes read as follows:

"The California Pioneers of Santa Clara County read and filed a request with the San Jose City Council that the building on the lot at the South East corner of 6th and Taylor...."be not sold" but that it be preserved as a landmark by the City of San Jose." (Council Minutes)

Indeed, the city council was divided on the issue of the temple. Councilman Randuzzo pointed out that the property may belong to the city, but the Chinese had title to the temple as a place of worship. Further, as to the Gods and relics of the temple, Randuzzo stated that...."the city has no right to claim these objects, they belong to the Chinese community." He went on to say that the rights of the Chinese community were vested in five directors or trustees elected by the Chinese many years ago. (Mercury, Dec 4 and 7, 1941)

Others on the city council resorted to more sophistic arguments. The city sophists said the furnishings were attached to the temple and the temple belonged to the city, so that the furnishings belonged to the city (Mercury, Dec 4, 1941). The ownership of the temple Gods and relics remains a viable legal question to this day. The legal issue lies hidden within the events surrounding the claims of ownership levied on the Five Sages.

SOME LEGAL QUESTIONS

We must now make a brief excursion into the law. Let us first consider the issue of real estate ownership. A transfer of ownership of the temple from Heinlen to the Chinese would have to be in writing as stipulated in the Statute of Frauds (California Civil Code, sec 1622). However, the Chinese were certainly in possession of the temple, so that a purchaser of the property would be denied any claim to be a bona fide purchaser, should he purchase the property from someone else other than the possessors. (Calif. Dept. Real Estate, p 88). Further, the party to first record is not protected by the recording laws in such a situation. Thus, the city was not dealing with some elusive private party in the guise of the Hienlen estate. The city was supposed to deal with the Chinese, who were the possessors of the temple.

When the county decided to collect back taxes on the temple, the county acquired an interest in the property, in the form or a tax lien. The county was generally within its rights to sell off privately owned real estate to collect back taxes.

However, the city and county were dealing with a Chinese religious corporation. Religious corporations are exempt from property taxes in California. In order to claim an exemption from paying property tax, the temple had to register with the state. At the time when the county claimed the back taxes, the temple did not have an affidavit on file with the state. The county tax collectors decided to zealously enforce the letter of the law. They might just as well respected the freedom of

worship and allowed the Chinese to file for the exemption. Obviously, bureaucrats were made of sterner stuff and felt no qualms about using law to engage in some sharp practice.

Later, the claim would be made that Heinlen paid the taxes on the temple. Therefore, the temple had to pay taxes. If this was so, Heinlen was paying a tax that did not need to be paid, since an exemption could have been obtained.

When the city purchased the temple from the county, a bad title became worse. To my mind, the city never had legal title.

Let us leave the bellicose bureaucrats banging at the door, threatening to foreclose on the temple, and pursue the city's claim to own the temple Gods and relics. No matter how strong the city's claim to own the temple property and building might be, the city had no claim on the religious furniture of the temple.

Early on in the controversy surrounding the temple, some on the city council said the furniture inside the temple belonged to the city because the furnishings were fixtures. In general, a fixture must be attached to the land or building and be essential for the use of the land or building. The most important legal test for defining a fixture is the intent of the person incorporating the personal property into the land. (Calif. Dept. Real Estate, p 69).

All the temple furnishings, except for the Five Sages, were shipped from Canton in 1888, after the temple was buildt. What can be carried into a temple, could be carried out. The altars, banners, vases, wood screens, and images of the Sages were not attached to the building; further, these objects were not

essential to the use of the building: we use a building essentially for shelter, not religion.

A fine distinction might be made regarding the finely carved wood arch within the temple. When it arrived from Canton, a plaster moulding had to be fabricated to hold the wood arch to the building (Nunes, 1991). However, even the wood arch was made in such a way that it could be shipped, put up, and taken down. Thus, the religious furniture and articles were chattels or personal property belonging to an organized Chinese community. Chattels cannot be subject to a foreclosure of real estate.

A COUNCIL UNITED

Our story left off with the city council divided over what to do about the temple. President Harry Young, Fred Doerr, DeWitt Rucker, and Seth Corbett wanted to deed the temple to the Chinese for one dollar. Councilman Bradley said the city could not give property away or sell it for less than a reasonable value. Councilman Randazzo pointed out that the city could not give the temple away because the temple did not belong to the city. (Mercury, Dec 7, 1941).

By December 9, 1941, the council voted to give the Chinese 60 days to incorporate an organization that could accept ownership of the temple (Mercury, Dec 9, 1941). However, the Chinese already had an organization in the form of elected representatives. Why was not the city dealing with the Chinese organization that already existed?

A few years later, a Chinese group did file articles of incorporation in Sacramento on January 21, 1944. The name of the

incorporated group was the Temple of the Five Gods. The articles of incorporation included the following:

"The purpose of the corporation will be to maintain a temple or church for religious worship for Chinese people of San Jose and vicinity according to the rites of the Buddhist and Confucian faiths."

The articles also stated the church had existed as an unincorporated association for 54 years. (Mercury, Jan 21, 1944)

On October 18, 1944 the City Manager John Lynch proposed the city lease the temple to the Chinese. The city would preserve and control a historical landmark. The Chinese were to pay rent to the city and keep the temple in repair. Should the Chinese fail to make repairs, then the city would pay for the repairs. The city would also strengthen its claim of ownership by investing in the maintenance of the temple. Indeed, a short time later, Lynch was clamoring for the temple to be repaired at city expense. For in December of 1944, the city paid $288 to make some minor repairs to the temple. (Mercury, Oct 18 and Dec 6, 1944)

THE BUDDHAS VISIT A MOTHER IN TAIWAN

While events were being played out in San Jose, a woman in Taiwan, who was to later live in San Jose, was visited by Kwan Yin. Kim Cheng Wang was born February 10, 1903. She married and raised a family of ten children. Sometime in 1944, her eldest son Thomas Wang came down with a mouth infection. Kim was frantic to treat her son's infection, but the family was poor.

Deeply troubled with the many problems facing her family, Kim went to a temple to pray. Kim prayed to the image of Kwan Yin as she had done so many times before. While she was praying, she saw a white light flash through the temple. Suddenly she received an inspiration on how to cure her son. Using only a bowl of water and branch to scatter the water, she sprinkled her sons face with water. Within days, her son was healed.

Kim began to go into trances at night. The Buddhas would come into Kim and greet each other. The Buddhas would then talk to each other through Kim. Once again the Buddhas were speaking with many voices. During one trance, Kim walked around the room as if she were stepping over obstacles laying on the floor. This puzzled Kim's daughter Juno, who was a witness to her mother's trances. Within days, the village suffered a major flood. Many animal and human bodies lay about the village after the waters receded.

Kim used her charism for the good of others. She gave good advice; she worked many healings; and, she could predict the future. During World War II, Taiwan was governed by Japan. Japan of course had invaded China. The Japanese conscripted most of the young men of Taiwan to fight in the Japanese army. Except for the aborigines, the people of Taiwan were Chinese. At the end of the war, one Taiwanese family despaired of ever seeing their son again; he had been impressed into the Japanese army and had not returned home. Kim accurately predicted the date of the missing man's arrival, despite the scepticism of the man's family.

Due to Kim's spiritual gifts, the family began to prosper. Kim

made the family fortune. Even though she could neither read nor write, Kim developed her own written accounts, in a personal language, to keep track of the ever growing financial transactions. Kim would always say she owed her spiritual gifts and her material wealth to her devotion to Kwan Yin, the Mother of all mercies. (Juno Wang, 1989)

THE CITY FATHERS TRIUMPH OVER THE FIVE SAGES

On May 6, 1941 a memorial was written by the Chinese of San Jose and sent to the city council. The petition read as follows:

"To the Honorable City Council of the City of San Jose."

"Your petitioner, Ng Sing Gong, a religious corporation, represents that it is an incorporated church *** conducting religious exercises according to the Buddhist Confucius faith in a building commonly known as the Joss House on N. Sixth St. in San Jose; that its members have been informed that the city has turned this property over to the Historic Landmarks Commission: *** that, as a church, the property has been exempt from taxation and should not have been turned over to the city or the State for failure to pay taxes.

It is respectfully represented that under the policy of the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California granting freedom of religion to all churches and all persons, that the act of the City government *** is arbirary and contrary to all principles of American gvovernment.

Wherefore, Petitioner prays that the City of San Jose turn said church back to this corporation." (Mercury, May 6, 1946)

The petition was referred to the city attorney by the city council on May 7, 1946.

The matter lay dormant for two years, when on June 26, 1948 Councilman Moore proposed that the Temple be returned to the representatives elected by the Chinese population. The Chinese were to pay a lease of a dollar a year and pay for any repairs on the temple. At the same meeting, City Building Inspector Robert Lotz stated the temple needed to be repaired at considerable expense or needed to be torn down. (Mercury, June 26, 1948)

The council voted to refer the temple problem to City Manager Campbell, City Attorny Cassin, the Historical Landmarks Commission, and the Committee on Lands, Parks, and Public Structures. (San Jose City Council Minutes, June 28, 1948)

What was certainly to be a milestone in jurisprudence, the City Attorny Robert Cassin ruled that the legal title to the temple rested with the city becacause an individual was paying taxes on the temple, up until the taxes fell delinquent (Mercury, June 29, 1948). It looks like the city attorney was untroubled about a conflict of interest, even though the city attorney ruled in favor of the city, without benefit of court proceedings. Once the city claimed ownership, the city could have its way with the temple and the temple furnishings.

On June 22, 1948 the Public Works Department put a lock on the doors and boarded up the windows of the temple. A few weeks later, on August 31, 1948, Councilman Bradley proposed a resolution that the temple be razed and the contents of the temple be turned over to the Historical Landmarks Committee. (San Jose City Council Minutes)

Early in September of 1948, the Hip Sing Tong could raise only $900 to defray the costs for repairs on the temple amounting to $5,600. The Hip Sing Tong had just moved into a new $30,000 building at 637 N. 6th Street in San Jose. (Mercury, Sept. 3 and 10, 1948)

In February of 1949, the American Institute of Architects brought a plan before the city council, which called for demolishing and rebuiding the temple. City Manager Campbell said he favored the AIA plan, along with the stipulation that money from the Hip Sing Tong, city money, and state funds be pooled to finance the new temple. (Mercury, Feb 21, 1949)

The Chinese campaign to raise money to rebuild the temple reached a total of $2,000. The proposed cost of erecting a new temple was set at $6,700. (Mercury, March 14, 1949)

However, the city manager and the city council got cold feet. City Manager Campbell ordered the temple destroyed; and, the city council backed out of any fianancial commitment to rebuild the temple (Mercury, March 15, 1949).

In May, the City Engineer Harold Flannery assigned city workers to demolish the building. (Mercury, May 4, 1949)

While the city legions were poised to march on the temple, events in the wider world may have been at work. First, the City Manager O. W. Campbell was about to present the largest budget in city history, with expeditures reaching three millon dollars. Second, during May of 1949, the Red Chinese Army was driving toward Shanghai. Third, this was also the time of the "red trials," when anyone with any sympathy toward Marxism was

subject to a public inquistion. The Mercury at this time is full of accounts of communist sympathizers exposed and condemned before the public eye. (Mecury, July 2, 1949)

On May 24, 1949 the city workers marched on the Temple of Five Sages and razed the temple to the ground. The Five Sages and the valuable temple furniture was carried off by the victorious city minions (Mercury, May 24, 1949).

The next day, the Mercury contained a story on the fall of Shanghai to the Red Chinese Army.

The Five Sages and the temple relics were carted off and stored under the bleachers of the Spartan Stadium. Still lanquishing in their Babylonian Captivity, the Five Sages were moved to the San Jose Historical Museum warehouse at Kelly Park in 1966. (Mercury, Feb 7, 1979)

In August of 1971, Mrs Kim Cheng Wang moved from Taiwan to San Jose. In San Jose, she was still consulted by Chinese who needed healings or who wanted to know the future. Kim Cheng Wang passed away in San Jose on February 13, 1983.

Sometime between 1974 and 1987, two of the Sages vanished. One of the missing Sages happens to be the statue of Kwan Yin. (Nunes, 1991)

Chinese religion and the cult of Kwan Yin remain vital and living faiths to this day. The Po Wah Zi Temple in San Jose practices Chan Buddhism and has a chapel devoted to Kwan Yin.

The Five Sages, minus two, will go on display in Kelly Park sometime in September of 1991.

"Peerless indeed was our lord Kuan, of the latter days,

Head and shoulders stood he out among the best;
Godlide and terrible in war, elegant and refined in peace,
Resplendent as the noonday sun in the heavens,
Haloed as are the noblest of those early days,
He stands, the brightest model for all ages,
And not only for the strenuous days he lived in." (Kuan-Chung, 1969, vol 2, p 178)

"Just so, O Kasyapa, the Buddha also
Arises in this world just like a rain-cloud.
And when he has arisen, then the World's Saviour speaks,
And shows the true course to all living beings."
(Conze, 1990, p 139)

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