



ONE HUNDRED YEARS'  
HISTORY OF THE  
CHINESE  
IN SINGAPORE

THE ANNOTATED EDITION

SONG ONG SIANG



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Mr & Mrs Song Ong Siang

# ONE HUNDRED YEARS' HISTORY OF THE CHINESE IN SINGAPORE

BEING A CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF THE CONTRIBUTION BY THE CHINESE COMMUNITY TO THE DEVELOPMENT, PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY OF SINGAPORE; OF EVENTS AND INCIDENTS CONCERNING THE WHOLE OR SECTIONS OF THAT COMMUNITY; AND OF THE LIVES, PURSUITS AND PUBLIC SERVICE OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS THEREOF FROM THE FOUNDATION OF SINGAPORE ON 6TH FEBRUARY 1819 TO ITS CENTENARY ON 6TH FEBRUARY 1919

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ON BEHALF OF THE  
SINGAPORE HERITAGE SOCIETY



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TO  
THE MEMORY OF MY LATE FATHER  
WHOSE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND EXAMPLE  
HAVE BEEN A CONSTANT  
INSPIRATION TO ME  
AND TO

MY DEAR WIFE  
WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT AND HELP IN  
MANY WAYS SUSTAINED ME THROUGH  
THREE YEARS OF INCESSANT TOIL  
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

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## ANNOTATOR'S PREFACE

Song Ong Siang's *One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore* began as a single chapter intended for inclusion in the two-volume work *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, edited by Walter Makepeace, Gilbert E Brooke and Roland St John Braddell. Makepeace had initially approached Dr Lim Boon Keng to complete this task but Lim was unable to complete it, given his multifarious civic and professional obligations. Instead, Lim recommended his old friend, Song Ong Siang to complete what he had started. In Song's own words, he quickly 'realised at once the futility of attempting to write a historical review or a general survey of the subject which would be of any real value to readers' and proceeded to 'compile a chronological history of the Chinese in Singapore covering the one hundred years' period, on the lines of the late Mr Buckley's *Anecdotal History of Singapore*'.

Song's choice of Buckley's stupendous compendium as a model determined the shape of his own work. Buckley's work had been 'in great part a revision with many additions of a series of articles which appeared under the same title in the weekly *Singapore Free Press*, newspaper' between 1884 and 1887. Buckley had 'the columns of the history cut out of the newspaper, sewn into a book, and interleaved' before sending it off to WH Read, who sent it to James Guthrie. Both the latter gentlemen added their comments and later, other residents provided more information to Buckley for his use in the compilation. Over the course of some twenty years, Buckley's *Anecdotal History* took shape. It is, as Buckley himself noted, 'made up largely of scraps'. The same could be said of Song's volume. He made copious and liberal use of newspapers and even called himself a 'Compiler' rather than an author.

*One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore* was first published in 1923 by John Murray of London and then reprinted twice; first by the University of Malay Press in 1967 and then by the Oxford University Press in Singapore in 1984. It has thus been out of print for

more than 30 years, but its popularity remains undiminished. This is evinced by the astronomical sums for which the first edition of this work sells for on auction sites like eBay and antiquarian booksellers listed on abebooks.com. The copyright itself expired and went into public domain on 29 September 2011, exactly 70 years after Song Ong Siang's death and digitised versions of the first edition are easily available for downloading in PDF format.

So why undertake to reissue this work, and in an annotated edition at that? Simple. Despite its limited and elitist outlook on the Straits Chinese community, the work remains extremely popular and is one of the best sources of information of the key personalities who were active in Singapore between 1819 and 1919 and a little beyond. Many researchers use this book as one of their prime sources of research to the extent that some have come to regard it as a primary source. Song Ong Siang never intended it to be used this way; he only wanted to provide a chronological account of the Chinese in the first hundred years of British-rule in Singapore. Given its importance, primacy, and the fact that so many readers rely heavily on the accuracy of its account, it was decided that a serious attempt be made to verify and corroborate, insofar as it is possible, Song's account of the history. No attempt has been made to refocus the work or its objects in any way. Song's text is left intact, but annotated footnotes are added throughout to substantiate, and in a few instances, challenge the account offered by the author.

The practice of annotating a primary text by adding explanatory notes or comments to it, usually in the margins, is a long-standing one, quite possibly dating back to the 5th or 6th century BCE. The purpose of annotating a text is to illuminate it and add value to the text. At the same time, errors or contradictions may also be highlighted through annotation. In the case of major literary works or religious texts – like the works of Shakespeare, or the Bible – annotations provide guidance to the literary or religious references and devices adopted by the authors. Our object in annotating Song Ong Siang's work is no different. By revisiting Song's text, we hope to trace, where humanly possible,

the primary sources for his account and to reference them for the reader. This exercise also allows us to verify the facts presented, especially dates and other details, and to note discrepancies where they appear. Errors, where they appear are contradicted in the footnotes, while the original text remains unblemished.

This is a mammoth task requiring, in addition to three editors, a dedicated team of researchers. Before research commences, the editors created a master list of names of each chapter to be researched. The lists are then compared and duplicates eliminated. Researchers are then assigned specific personalities to research. Priority is given to the newspaper archives since we know that Song relied very heavily on newspapers for his information. After the researchers combed through the newspapers, their next port of call would be the various secondary sources in English and Chinese in the libraries. These would include published monographs, collections of essays and theses and dissertations.

Finally, a general search on the internet – especially on genealogy and history websites – was conducted. Naturally, highest priority was given to the newspaper archives and secondary sources and in terms of annotation, these sources are cited in preference to others, such as internet websites and ephemera. However, we do discern between secondary sources as well, with academic works from reputable authors carrying the greatest weight. Citation of websites are generally avoided and only cited where the editors have determined the information contained therein is credible and can be found nowhere else. In addition, all attempts are made to list websites with stable URLs but this was not always possible. As such, the dates of accession to the web page is given as bona fides evidence of the site having been consulted.

Every effort has been made to track the Chinese names (rendered in simplified Chinese characters) of the personalities listed in each chapter. These have been compiled in a separate table at the start of the book to facilitate easy reference. This is to avoid the repetition of Chinese character names in the text as the same personalities tend to be mentioned several times. Chinese names in footnotes are embed-

ded therein. The editors and researchers have focused on the personalities – just as Song had done – but dates and accounts of key events are also verified and referenced. To maintain the integrity of the original text, only house-style changes have been made. At the same time, the original page numbers are retained and embedded within the text in square brackets.

It is our hope that our efforts in annotating this important work has enhanced its value as a research tool and reference work for future generations of researchers and readers.

Kevin YL Tan

*Singapore*

1<sup>st</sup> November 2016

## NOTE TO READERS

### ANNOTATIONS

The two key objects of this annotation are to offer readers and researchers:

- a. Additional biographical information on the individuals described and discussed in Song's work.
- b. Accurate references to the source material used by Song in his compilation of the work.

It is not our purpose to embark on a biographical study of every individual listed. That would create a work many times more voluminous than Song's original. In some instances, where the personalities are described in great depth by Song, for example his good friend, Dr Lim Boon Keng, annotations are kept to a minimum with reference only to later secondary sources that provide more information or better analysis. Interested readers may pursue these references on their own and it is not the object of the editors to summarise all the arguments made in the secondary literature either.

Wherever possible, primary sources are consulted and referenced. In the many cases where primary sources do not exist in the public domain, secondary sources are consulted and every effort has been made to corroborate the information provided.

### CHINESE NAMES

In Song's original version, all names were only rendered in dialect and spelt out in English. No Chinese characters were used. This has long been a problem for researchers as it was very difficult to determine if Chinese sources referring to a particular individual was in fact a reference to one of the named individuals in Song's book.

We have prepared a table of Chinese names which can be found in the opening pages of this volume to help readers in identifying the various personalities listed in this volume. We opted to make a listing



in tabulated form rather than to intersperse the Chinese names of individuals throughout the text wherever their names appear. This will make the text less distracting and hopefully, much easier to read as well.

All efforts have been made to locate the Chinese character names of the individuals. These are rendered in simplified Chinese script. In quite a number of instances, an individual may be listed as having several alternative Chinese script renditions of their names. This is because they have been referred to in different permutations in different publications. Naturally, attempts have been made to verify many of these names against those found in the most authoritative sources – family genealogies, epigraphic material on tombstones, temples etc – but oftentimes, such sources simply do not exist. So, rather than arbitrarily choosing one of two or more alternatives, all alternatives are listed.

## FOOTNOTES

Annotation of the text has been done by use of extensive footnotes. This enables the reader to easily cross-refer material in the text and match up the facts and events with those revealed in the annotation.

Song Ong Siang's original footnotes have been retained but are rendered in square brackets, and signified as being from the original, e.g.:

3. [Song: British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca (1839)].

All other footnotes have been inserted by the annotators.

## QUOTATIONS

Compared to the original version of Song's work, there appears to be a sudden 'increase' in the number of quotations in this version. This is because Song tended to take entire chunks of material from newspapers and books and weave these words into his own text. All he did to

separate the quoted segments from the text was to make extensive use of double quote marks to indicate these 'merged passages'. For example, this segment from Chapter 11 was originally laid out as:

'This future occasion was furnished by the Harbour Improvement scheme. The Chinese view was based on the Colony's experience in the construction of the Singapore and Kranji Railway, through the Crown Agents, which had cost two million dollars against an estimate of half a million dollars.

'The Harbour scheme is put down at fifty million dollars. Increase this by 300 per cent, or even 200 per cent, and the Colony will have to find two hundred or one hundred and fifty millions of dollars. These alarming figures justify the agitation that the time has come when Crown Agents may - nay, must - be dispensed with.'

We have opted to separate these extensive quotations from the main text and indent them in smaller typeface so that readers are better able to identify them as direct quotations. Thus, the same segment is now laid out in the following fashion without the quote marks:

This future occasion was furnished by the Harbour Improvement scheme. The Chinese view was based on the Colony's experience in the construction of the Singapore and Kranji Railway, through the Crown Agents, which had cost two million dollars against an estimate of half a million dollars.

The Harbour scheme is put down at fifty million dollars. Increase this by 300 per cent, or even 200 per cent, and the Colony will have to find two hundred or one hundred and fifty millions of dollars. These alarming figures justify the agitation that the time has come when Crown Agents may-nay, must-be dispensed with.

## PAGINATION

Given the extent of the annotation, it would have been impossible to retain the original layout and pagination of Song's book. Furthermore, the original had been typeset rather 'generously' and thus occupies a

lot more pages than it might otherwise have. This edition has been completely re-laid out. Nonetheless, the pagination of Song's original version have been 'retained' with in-text references in square brackets and in bold typeface, e.g.:

When he was scarcely twenty-five years of age, he was established in Kling Street and afterwards in **[20]** Circular Road, Singapore, as a commission agent supplying the junks trading between this port and Rhio, Sumatra and the ports of the Malay Peninsula, with all ...

## CITATION STYLE

For this volume, we have adopted a system of citation based on a form adopted from the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of OSCOLA (Oxford University Standard for the Citation of Legal Authorities) developed by Oxford University. While this system of citation was developed for legal scholars, we have found its structure to be the most logical and usable among all styles considered. Moreover, it has the advantage of accommodating proper legal citations, which Song refers to from time to time. Citations to books are self-explanatory and authors' names are reproduced as printed. In the case of journal citations, the form adopted is as follows:

Author, 'Title of Article', (Year) Volume number (Issue number), *Name of Journal in full and in italics*, and page range, with precise page quote.

For example:

Robert Harold Compton et al, 'An Investigation into the Seedling Structure in the Leguminosae' (1913) 41 *Journal of the Linnean Society, Botany* 1-122, at 12-15.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I conceived this project in 2011 but it was not till 2013 that I managed to persuade the National Library Board to take this project under its wings and to provide funding for its execution. For this, I am eternally grateful to Elaine Ng, Chief Executive of the National Library Board (NLB) and her team at NLB, including Tay Ai Cheng, Wai Yin Pryke, Wong Siok Muoi, Francis Dorai, and Sharon Koh. I am also most grateful to the many unnamed fact-checkers at the NLB which saved us from the most egregious errors. Research for this project was undertaken by a team of researchers under the charge of Tan Teng Teng of Art Logica who was unstinting in her efforts to get down to the nth detail. My co-editors, G Uma Devi and Kua Bak Lim helped lighten my load considerably. The project benefited greatly from Bak Lim's encyclopedic command of Chinese materials and sources. Tan Kok Eng, with whom I have shared many publishing journeys was the steadfast eagle-eye and checked through the typography and proofs to make this as clean a copy as humanly possible. Thanks also to Clarissa Cavalheiro for allowing us to use her photograph of the beautiful cyan and pink tiles for our cover. Last but not least, thanks to Chua Ai Lin, President of the Singapore Heritage Society and her Executive Committee for keeping steadfast faith in us and for supporting this project wholeheartedly.

KEVIN YL TAN

## FOREWORD

WHEN it was decided that a local history of Singapore should be compiled as one mark that the Colony founded by Raffles had reached its hundredth year, the compilers were faced with considerable difficulties, owing to the lack of written records. The published books were few and the newspapers indeterminate on facts, though not lacking in comment on local affairs. Moreover the average period of a generation – and few families ran to two or three generations – was short. The compilers of *One Hundred Years of Singapore* had intended to include two or three chapters on the history of the Chinese of Singapore, those interesting settlers contemporary with the British, who had brought with them their own characteristics and culture, their own literature and tradition to which they steadfastly adhered, while readily absorbing the spirit of Western law and Western commerce which were the foundations of the future prosperity and greatness of the place. It was soon evident that the task of chronicling the hundred years of the Chinese in Singapore could only be adequately undertaken by a member of that race, and that it would be a task of great magnitude. The Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng was approached; he found the work more than he could undertake with his manifold political, commercial and social activities, but he suggested Mr Song Ong Siang, not less a busy professional man, for the work. Mr Song Ong Siang has brought to it great industry, scholarly ability and a record in the life of his family in the Straits – five generations.

Records of the history of the Chinese in Singapore are even more scanty than those of the Europeans, and only personal inquiry and patient investigation could have succeeded in discovering so much of the old Chinese families here. The Straits-born Chinese have always been noted for the strength of their family ties and their love for the country they have adopted. Numerically they are more than the British, and their influence on the Colony has always been great. The book which the author has produced is a fine testimony to their virtues, and

serves to remind future generations of how the sons of an Old Empire can adapt themselves to the conditions of a new one, retaining their centuries-old characteristics, yet receptive of new ideas (often those of their own sages, clothed in Occidental dress) and capable of utilising their abilities in the formation of a unit of a New Empire – the British.

Walter Makepeace  
*Singapore*  
16<sup>th</sup> March 1923

## COMPILER'S NOTE

WHEN the General Editors of *One Hundred Years of Singapore* (since published in two volumes) assigned to me the task of contributing thereto a chapter on the Chinese in Singapore, I had no idea of the magnitude of the work which I was undertaking. During the hundred years that closed on the 6th February 1919, the Chinese had played a very great and important part in the agricultural, industrial, commercial, economic, educational, religious, social and political life of the Settlement, but, apart from information furnished by the newspapers as to the activities, doings, events and incidents of or concerning the Chinese community as a whole or the individual members thereof, there were few records, in any form, available for reference. I realised at once the futility of attempting to write a historical review or a general survey of the subject which would be of any real value to the readers - especially to the present and future generations of Chinese, whether resident in this Colony or elsewhere - at all events, I felt it would be like trying to make bricks without straw.

After careful study of the matter, I decided to compile a chronological history of the Chinese in Singapore covering the one hundred years' period, on the lines of the late Mr Buckley's *Anecdotal History of Singapore*. The work that is now offered to the public, in fulfilment of the promise made by the General Editors, traces the lives, doings, pursuits and fortunes of the Chinese community, or of sections or of individual members of that community, from year to year, from the foundation of Singapore on 6th February 1819 by that great Empire builder, Sir Stamford Raffles, to the celebrations on its Centenary on 6th February 1919.

The work has been a stupendous undertaking, which, owing to the fact that it could only be done outside of office hours, has taken a very much longer time to complete than would have been necessary had my whole time been devoted to its compilation. The task has been rendered more difficult through the unwillingness or inability of a

certain number of people to furnish me with information relating to their ancestors or immediate forbears who had contributed towards the development, progress and prosperity of Singapore during the period chronicled.

My thanks are tendered heartily to those who have helped by contributing sketches or by completing, correcting and amending sketches submitted to them, and to members of the Straits Chinese Reading Club - in particular to Messrs Lim Seng Kiang, Tay Ah Bee, Cheang Peng Moh, Tan Kim Moh and Lee Peng Yam for devoting their Saturday afternoons, for many months, at Raffles Library, poring over back numbers of the *Straits Times* and *Singapore Free Press* in quest of materials for the History. My acknowledgments are due to Dr Lim Boon Keng, who kindly placed at my disposal some papers and articles he had drafted and photographs he had collected for a proposed work on the Chinese in Singapore which he had to abandon. Special reference must here be made to the valuable assistance rendered by my old friend, Mr CM Phillips, late Principal of Raffles Institution, who has spent a great deal of time in his quiet retreat in England in revising the MSS of the History, in preparing a comprehensive Index, and in reading and correcting the proofs for the press. My thanks are also due to Mr W Makepeace, Revs JAB Cook and W Murray and Sir John Anderson (of Messrs Guthrie & Co, Ltd, London) for sketches supplied or revised and for the loan of illustration blocks, and to Messrs Kiong Chin Eng and Tan Boon Chin for special work in collecting information for my use. I am also indebted to the Managers of the *Straits Times* and *Singapore Free Press* and to the successive librarians of Raffles Library for the loan of back volumes of both these newspapers, which has been of incalculable value to me and my staff of voluntary workers in collating the materials for this History.

As this compilation had to end abruptly with the completion of the hundredth year of this Settlement, no mention is made, in the sketches of Chinese residents who are still living, of their activities for the public weal since the 6th February 1919, although here and there,



in the case of those who died shortly after that date, it will be found that their biographical notes have been rounded off.

From the nature of the work, it was unavoidable that events and incidents occurring periodically should be scattered throughout the pages of the History. I do not claim originality. I have tried to be just a faithful recorder. Nevertheless, I hope that the book will be found to be a useful and handy work of reference on Chinese matters generally as they affected Singapore, as well as serve as archives in which the lives and public services of prominent members of the Chinese community, so far as they have been procurable, are preserved for their posterity as well as future generations of Chinese in Singapore to 'read, mark, learn and inwardly digest' and thereby to get encouragement, incentive and stimulus to serve the Colony with equal public spirit, zeal and disinterestedness in their day and generation.

SONG ONG SIANG

LONDON

20th December 1922

## TABLE OF CHINESE NAMES

Ang Chat Wat	洪捷发
Ang Choon Seng	洪俊成
Ang Hock Siew	洪福寿
Ang Kim Cheak	洪锦綽 / 洪锦雀
Ang Kim Tee	洪锦池
Cham Chan Seng	詹振成
Chan Koo Chan	曾举荐
Chan Moh Lim	曾茂林
Chan Moh Seng	曾茂盛
Chee Kim Guan	徐钦元/徐钦源
Chee Teang Why	徐长怀
Cheang Sam Teo	章三潮
Cheong Ann Jan	钟安然
Cheong Choon Beng	钟存命
Cheong Choon Kim	钟存锦/钟春锦
Cheong Swee Kiat	钟瑞吉
Cheong Swee Whatt	钟瑞发/钟水发
Chia Ann Siang	谢安祥 / 谢朝祯
Chia Poh Eng	谢宝荣
Choa Chong Long	蔡沧浪/蔡苍浪/蔡沧郎
Choa Ho Lam	曾茂林

Choa Lum	蔡南 / 蔡鹏南
Chua Moh Choon	蔡茂春
E Chip Hock	余集福
Foo Teng Quee	符愈贵 / 符廷贵
Gan Eng Seng	颜永成 / 颜锡昆
Heng Bun Soon	王万顺
Ho Chong Lay	何宗礼
Ho Yang Peng	何衍炳
How Guim Foo	侯允富
Khoo Kok Wah	邱国瓦
Khoo Pek Lock	邱百禄
Khoo Phee Soon	邱丕顺
Khoo Cheng Teow	邱正潮
Khoo Cheng Tiong	邱正忠 / 邱笃信
Khoo Seok Wan @ Khoo Teck Him	邱菽园 @ 邱德馨
Khoo Syn Thuak	邱新坛
Khoo Teck Him @ Khoo Seok Wan	邱德馨 @ 邱菽园
Khoo Teck Siong	邱得松 / 邱德松),
Kiong Chin Eng	龚振荣 / 裘振英
Kiong Kong Tuan	龚光传
Kiong Seok Wee	龚菽惠 / 龚淑惠
Kuek Swee Cheng	郭瑞清
Lee Boon Lim	李文林

Lee Cheng Gum	李清岩
Lee Cheng Tee	李清池
Lee Cheng Yan	李清渊
Lee Choon Guan	李浚源
Lee Eng Guan	李荣源/李荣元
Lee Keng Hee	李庆禧
Lee Kim Lin	李金麟 / 李锦麟
Lee Pang Chuan	李邦泉
Lee Pang Seng	李邦声
Lee Pang Soo	李邦赐
Lee Pek Hock	李百福/李白福
Lee Pek Hoon	李碧云/李白云
Lee Pek Swee	李百水
Lee Phan Hok	李攀福
Lee Poh Neo	李宝娘
Lee Seo Neo	李淑娘
Lim Boon Keng	林文庆
Lim Ho Puah	林和坂
Lim Keng Liak	林庆烈
Lim Kong Wan	林光瑗
Lim Nee Soon	林义顺/林峇顺
Lim Peng Nguan	林炳源
Lim Peng Siang	林秉祥

Lim Seng Chai	林生财
Lim Soon Tee	林顺池
Lim Soon Yang	林顺阳
Lim Tek Wee	林德为
Lim Tek Siong	林德祥
Loke Yew	陆佑
Low Chee Neo	刘志娘
Na Tien Piet	蓝天笔/那天笔
Ngai Lau Shia	魏刘谢
Ong Boon Tat	王文达
Ong Kim Wee	王锦威
Ong Sam Leong	王三龙
Oon Toh	允道
Phan Fung Lean	冯芳莲
Seah Cheo Seah	佘石城
Seah Eng Kiat	佘应吉 / 佘应杰
Seah Eng Kun	佘应恭 / 佘应瑾 / 佘应琨
Seah Eu Chin	佘有进
Seah Liang Seah	佘连城
Seah Pek Seah	佘柏城
Seah Song Seah	佘松城
See Boon Tiong	薛文仲 or 薛文忠
See Eng Wat	薛荣樾

See Ewe Boon	薛有文
See Ewe Lay	薛有礼
See Moh Guan	薛茂元/薛茂源
See Tiang Lim	薛长林
See Teong Wah	薛中华
Seet Kee Ann	薛祈安
Sim Ah Khay	沈阿溪
So Guan Chuan	苏源泉
Song Eng Chong	宋英泉 / 宋荣宗 / 宋英宗
Song Hoot Kiam	宋佛俭/宋佛谦/宋佛剑
Song Ong Joo	宋旺武
Tan Ah Hun	陈阿汉 or 陈亚汉
Tan Beng Gum	陈明岩
Tan Beng Swee	陈明水/陈宪章
Tan Beng Teck	陈明德
Tan Boo Liat	陈武烈
Tan Boon Chin	陈文进
Tan Chay Yan	陈齐贤
Tan Che Sang	陈叔送
Tan Cheng Gay Neo	陈青霓娘
Tan Cheow Pin	陈昭彬
Tan Geok Hup	陈玉合
Tan Gin Hock	陈仁福

Tan Hong Khuay	陈宏魁
Tan Hoon Soon	陈云顺
Tan Jiak Kim	陈若锦
Tan Jiak Ngoh	陈若愚/陈传贤
Tan Joo Tiam	陈裕添/陈敬堂
Tan Keng Swee	陈贵水/ 陳季隨
Tan Keng Wah	陈贵华/ 陳季騮
Tan Kim Ching	陳金鐘
Tan Kim Tian	陈金殿
Tan Koh Teow	陈国朝
Tan Kong Wee	陈光为
Tan Kwee Liang	陈贵良/ 陳季良
Tan No Keah	陈路加
Tan See Boo	陈诗武
Tan Seng Poh	陈成宝
Tan Soon Lim	陈顺麟
Tan Soon Toh	陈纯道
Tan Swan Neo	陈宣娘
Tan Tek Soon / Tan Teck Soon	陈德顺
Tan Tock Seng	陈笃生/陈卓生
Tay Geok Teat	郑玉颀 (哲)
Tay Ho Swee	戴河水
Tchan Faat	曾发

Tchan Yow Chuen	曾耀全
Teo Bah Tan	张峇党/张峇丹/张华丹
Teo Eng Hock	张永福
Teo Kit	张乞
Teo Lee	张理/张礼
Toh Nya Chik	杜惹吉/ 杜惹舌
Tschu, John; The Reverend John Tschu	褚约翰
Wan Eng Kiat	云英杰
Wee Ah Heng	黄阿兴
Wee Ah Hood	黄阿佛 /黄亚佛
Wee Bin	黄敏
Wee Bock Seng	黄木生
Wee Boon Teck	黄文德
Wee Chong San	黄崇山
Wee Hean Boon	黄献文
Wee Kim Yam	黄金炎
Wee Leong Hin	黄隆兴
Wee Siang Tat	黄尚达
Wee Swee Lum	黄瑞南
Wee Theam Tew	阮添筹/黄天宙
Yap E Gin	叶怡仁
Yeo Choon Neo	杨春娘



Yeo Hong Tye	杨丰泰/杨逢泰
Yeo Hoot Hin	杨佛兴/杨佛印
Yeo Hoot King	杨佛敬/杨佛经
Yeo Hoot Seng	杨佛生/杨佛成
Yeo Kim Swee	杨金水
Yeo Koon Ho	杨坤和
Yeo Poon Seng	杨本盛



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

THE task of preparing an account of the Chinese in Singapore for the hundred years from the 6th day of February 1819, mainly from a historical and chronological point of view, has been a difficult and laborious one in consequence of the paucity of data, records and references bearing on the Chinese inhabitants of this island, especially during the early decades.

To think of the Chinese in Singapore, we must let our minds go back far beyond the founding of this Settlement by Sir Stamford Raffles. Long before the advent of Europeans into the Malayan regions, the Chinese had migrated westwards and southwards from their homes in search of knowledge and in quest of the exotic products of the tropics. 'That an early intercourse existed between China and the islands of the Asiatic Archipelago', says Crawfurd,<sup>1</sup>

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1 The first edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* carries the following article on Crawfurd by Robert Kennaway Douglas:

**Crawfurd**, John (1783-1868), orientalist, was born on 13 Aug 1783, in the island of Islay, where his father had settled as a medical practitioner. He received his early education in the village school of Bowmore, and in 1799, at the age of sixteen, he entered on a course of medical studies at Edinburgh. Here he remained until 1803, when he received a medical appointment in India, and served for five years with the army in the North-west Provinces. At the end of that time he was, most fortunately in the interests of science, transferred to Penang, where he acquired so extensive a knowledge of the language and the people that Lord Minto was glad to avail himself of his services when, in 1811, he undertook the expedition which ended in the conquest of Java. During the occupation of Java, i.e. from 1811 to 1817, Crawfurd filled some of the principal civil and political posts on the island; and it was only on the restoration of the territory to the Dutch that he resigned office and returned to England. In the interval thus afforded him from his official duties he wrote a 'History of the Indian Archipelago', a work of sterling value and great interest, in 3 volumes, 1820. Having completed this work he returned to India, only,

... is certain, but there is, at the same time, no ground for ascribing a very remote antiquity to it. In the ancient language, literature and monuments of Java, the only country of the Archipelago boasting of an ancient civilisation, there is certainly no allusion whatever to China or the Chinese. There is, however, other evidence which attests an intercourse of many centuries. Ancient Chinese coins have been discovered in various parts of the Archipelago: and as these, with the exception of those of Java, are known to have been [2] the only coined money of the Archipelago before the arrival of

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however, to leave it again immediately for the courts of Siam and Cochin China, to which he was accredited as envoy by the Marquis of Hastings. This delicate mission he carried through with complete success, and on the retirement of Sir Stamford Raffles from the government of Singapore in 1823, he was appointed to administer that settlement. In this post he remained for three years, at the end of which time he was transferred as commissioner to Pegu, whence, on the conclusion of peace with Burma, he was despatched by Lord Amherst on a mission to the court of Ava. To say that any envoy could be completely successful in his dealings with so weak and treacherous a monarch as King Hpagyidoda would be to assert an impossibility; but it is certain that Crawfurd, by his exercise of diplomatic skill, accomplished all that was possible under the conditions. In the course of the following year Crawfurd finally returned to England, and devoted the remainder of his long life to the promotion of studies connected with Indo-China. With characteristic energy he brought out an account of his embassy to the courts of Siam and Cochin-China in 1828, and in the following year a 'Journal' of his embassy to the court of Ava, which reached a second edition in 1830 (2 vols). Among his other principal works were *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language*, in 2 vols (1852), and *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands and Adjacent Countries* (1856); in addition to which he published many valuable papers on ethnological or kindred subjects in various journals. Endowed by nature with a steadfast and affectionate disposition, Crawfurd was surrounded by many friends, who found in him a staunch ally or a courteous though uncompromising opponent in all matters, whether private or public, in which he was in harmony or in disagreement with them. For many years Crawfurd was a constant attendant at the meetings of the Geographical and Ethnological Societies, discussing authoritatively all matters connected with Indo-China. He unsuccessfully contested, as an advanced radical, Glasgow in 1832, Paisley in 1834, Stirling in 1835, and Preston in 1837. Crawfurd died at South Kensington on 11 May 1868, aged 85.

See Leslie Stephen (ed), *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol 13 (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1888) at 60–61.

Europeans, they are sufficient to prove the existence of the intercourse. Thus, several coins were dug up in 1827 from the ruins of the ancient Malay settlement of Singapore, said to have been founded in 1160 and destroyed by the Javanese in 1252. These coins have been deposited in the Museum of the Royal Asiatic Society and bear the names of Emperors whose deaths correspond with the years of our time, 967, 1067 and 1085.<sup>2</sup>

It is, however, on record that in AD 414 Fa Hsien,<sup>3</sup> the celebrated Buddhist pilgrim, returned to China via Ceylon, the Straits of Malacca and Java. From about this time onwards, the Chinese continued to visit the Malayan regions in increasing numbers. They were highly respected by the natives and succeeded in inducing the rulers of these regions to send tributes to the Emperors of China. The annals of the Middle Kingdom are full of records of missions from the princes of these little-known States.

In 1408 and in 1412 a tour of the Chinese settlements in Malaya was conducted by the illustrious eunuch and statesman of the Chinese Court, popularly known to every Chinese throughout Malaya as Sam-po-kung.<sup>4</sup> Tradition says that he remained in Malacca for some time, learning Malay and per-

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2 [Song: Crawford's *Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Archipelago* (1856), p. 94]. John Crawford, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands & Adjacent Countries* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1856), 'China', at 94.

3 Faxian (法显) (337–c422 CE) was a Buddhist monk who travelled from China to India on foot, visiting many sacred Buddhist sites along the way. He recorded his journeys in his *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*. See *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-Hien of his Travels in India and Ceylon (AD 399-414) in Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline*, translated and annotated by James Legge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886).

4 Sam Po Kong (三宝公) is the nickname for the famous Ming admiral Zhenghe (郑和) or Cheng Ho (1371–1433), who commanded seven massive expeditions involving numerous treasure ships (宝船) to Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and East Africa between 1405 and 1433. A well in the grounds of the San Bao Temple – supposedly dug by Zhenghe and his men – at the foot of Bukit Cina is the well referred to in this passage. See Edward L Dreyer, *Zheng*

forming miracles, to the astonishment of the natives, whose ruler agreed to send tribute to the Dragon Throne. There are now in Malacca, quite close to the town – the old well, alleged to have been used by him, and the little memorial temple with appropriate inscriptions cut on stone, telling of his sojourn in Malacca. Sam-po-kung is evidently a name to conjure with among the illiterate classes. The miracles which he performed to save his countrymen from the perils of their travels in unknown lands are among the marvels of romance, illustrating in a striking way one of the factors in the genesis of a myth. ... [3]

The Chinese in Malaya did not at first attempt to form permanent colonies, but always at the end of each trip returned home in their junks when the monsoon changed. In course of time these itinerant traders found it convenient to marry the women of the country in which they had established business houses. The native wives were useful as housekeepers and saleswomen, keeping the shops going while their husbands returned to China for further shipments of goods. While the boys born of Malayan mothers in those far-off days were repatriated for education in China, the girls were left behind, but were never allowed to marry the natives of the country. Thus, in the course of a few generations, the new-comers from China found a growing population of native-born Chinese females in all the flourishing trading centres which the energy and the enterprise of the early pioneers had called into existence.

By the time of the Dutch inroads into the Malayan regions the Chinese had firmly established themselves in Java, in Bali, in the Moluccas, in Acheen and in the Malay Peninsula. Trengganu, for instance, has had for a considerable period an indigenous Chinese population interbreeding among the local Chinese and the new immigrants from China. In Rhio and Penang, the same process of marrying Malay wives to found families had produced the same results. The children

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*He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433* (London: Pearson, 2006).

spoke a new patois of Chinese in each locality, with a liberal admixture of Malay words peculiar to each Malayan region.

In Malacca, however, where the Chinese had formed a continuous colony for about six centuries, the womenfolk had entirely dropped the use of Chinese, while the Malacca-born Chinese males only acquired the Hokien dialect colloquially for the purposes of trade, though the sons of the rich were always duly provided with a Chinese teacher to teach them the hieroglyphic writings of their fathers, and the sacred writings of their sages. The growth of the local population of native-born Chinese continued to increase steadily through the Portuguese and Dutch occupations. Up till the early part of the nineteenth century, the local Chinese families used to take considerable interest in the arrival of the junks from China, for these not only brought new [4] goods, but welcome batches of eligible sons-in-law for the daughters who could not marry the natives of the country. While the boys were fewer in number than the girls, they could, when grown up, and often did, take Malay girls to be their wives, and the Chinese girls had either to marry the Chinese of mixed parentage or the immigrants from China. In this way the Chinese families steadily increased in number and became a permanent population of the peninsula, since, in the vast majority of cases, the connection with China was sooner or later severed. For all practical purposes these locally-born Chinese became the natives of the Malayan States, having lost touch with China in every respect, except that they continued to uphold Chinese customs, and to practise, in variously modified forms, the social and religious practices of their forefathers.

This was the condition of the permanent Chinese population when the British appeared on the scene. In reality, a new race had been created by the fusion of Chinese and Malay blood. While the Chinese traditions and conventions have been more or less scrupulously observed, and there has been visible, to the inexperienced, little outward change, there have existed in reality fundamental differences that

have increased in the course of years. Though these Chinese peranakans (or local-born men), as the Malays call them, are to all intents and purposes Chinese, from a superficial acquaintance with them and their mode of life, they have developed such distinct social qualities and have shown so many characteristic ethnic and anthropological aspects that they constitute a class by themselves. Since the British occupation, through the influence of English education, the line of cleavage has become more evident. The forces that are at work shaping the destiny of this important branch of the Sino-Malayan race continue to operate throughout the length and breadth of the Malayan region. The characteristics of this people – whether in Netherlands India or in British Malaya – are identical, showing that the fundamental qualities of the parental races have been preserved; but, owing to the great difference between the British and the Dutch systems of government and education, [5] the social, political and educational conditions of the British and Dutch Chinese peranakans exhibit remarkable qualitative variations, to the advantage of the Chinese born and bred under the aegis of the British flag.<sup>5</sup>

With this necessary historical introduction, we will now proceed with the subject of this work.

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5 [Song: Dr Lim Boon Keng in *Present-Day Impressions of the Far East*, pp. 876-7]. See, Lim Boon Keng, 'The Chinese in Malaya' in W Feldwick (ed), *Present-Day Impressions of the Far East and Prominent and Progressive Chinese at Home and Abroad: The History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources of China, Hong Kong, Indo-China, Malaya, and Netherlands, India* (London: The Globe Encyclopedia Company, 1917) 875-882, at 876-877.



## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRST DECADE (1819-29)

WHEN the British flag was hoisted on the plain (somewhere in the vicinity of the Esplanade) in Singapore, the population of the island, according to Captain Newbold,<sup>1</sup> amounted to about 150 fishermen and pirates living in a few miserable huts: about thirty of these were Chinese, the remainder Malays. The Malays were most probably the Orang Laut (the descendants of the aborigines of Johore before the Malays crossed from Sumatra) who had accompanied the Dato Temenggong Sree Maharajah,<sup>2</sup> Ruler of Singapore, from Johore in 1811. Dr R Little<sup>3</sup> conjectured that when the island was made an English

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- 1 [Song: *British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (1839)]. See TJ Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (London: John Murray, 1839), vol 1, at 279. Thomas John Newbold (1807-1850) joined the British East India Company in 1828 as ensign in the 23<sup>rd</sup> regiment of the Madras Light Brigade and rose to the rank of Captain in 1842. He spent three years in the Straits of Malacca where he interacted regularly with the native chiefs of the Malay Peninsula. He accumulated materials for several papers which he published in the Asiatic societies of Madras and Bengal and which he subsequently compiled and used in the writing of his two-volume *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca*. See William Albert Samuel Hewins, 'Newbold, Thomas John' in Sidney Lee (ed), *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol 40 (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1894) at 314-315.
  - 2 The Temenggong Sree Maharajah was an official of the former Johor royal court with sovereignty over Singapore and a number of northern islands in the northern part of the Riau Archipelago. Loosely speaking, he was a kind of minister in charge of justice, defence, police and markets. See Carl Trocki, *Prince of Pirates: The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore 1784-1885*, 2 ed (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007) at 21 & 24. At this time, the Temenggong was Abdul Rahman who was in office from 1806 till his death in 1825. Abdul Rahman had moved to Singapore island from either Riau or Bulang (Pulau Bulan near Batam) in 1818.
  - 3 [Song: *Medical Topography of Singapore*, vol iii, *Logan's Journal* (1848)]. See Robert Little, 'An Essay on Coral Reefs as the Cause of Blakan Mati Fever and of

settlement it contained about 200 to 300 Malays. He was silent as to whether there were any Chinese settlers on the island at the time. Had there been any, it seems curious that neither Raffles nor Abdullah Munshi<sup>4</sup> should have made mention of the fact. We know, however, that Major Farquhar,<sup>5</sup> who was appointed the First Resident by Sir

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the Fevers in Various Parts of the East, Part I: On the Medical Topography of Singapore, Particularly on its Marshes and Malaria' (1848) 3(8) *Journal of the Indian Archipelago & Eastern Asia* 449, at 472.

- 4 Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir (1797–1854), better known as Munshi Abdullah was a literary pioneer of Arab-Indian descent. Born in Malacca, he was the fifth and sole surviving child of Sheikh Abdul Kadir. Abdullah was proficient in English, Arabic, Tamil, Hindi and Malay and was an acclaimed translator and teacher. Indeed, it was his many students who called him *munshi* or *munsyi*, meaning 'teacher'. His many writings made him famous and won him the epithet, 'Father of Modern Malay Literature'. In 1810, when Raffles arrived in Malacca, he hired Abdullah as an interpreter and in the course of his travels with Raffles, became a keen observer and recorder of everyday life and events. His book, the *Hikayat Abdullah* (1843) is an autobiographical account of his life and observations. See generally, AH Hill, *The Hikayat Abdullah* (1955) 29(3) *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Song used the 1874 translation by John Turnbull Thomson – JT Thomson, *Hakayit Abdulla: Translations from the Hakayit Abdulla (bin Abdulkadar), Munshi*, with comments (London: HS King, 1874).
- 5 Major William Farquhar (1774–1839) was the first Resident and Commandant of Singapore. A career soldier with the British East India Company, Farquhar first came to the Straits when he was Chief Engineer in an expeditionary force that captured Malacca from the Dutch in 1795. From 1803 to 1818 he was Resident of Malacca, and from 1813 to 1818, also concurrently its Commandant. Farquhar was on the verge of returning to Britain when he was summoned to join Raffles in his expedition to find a new trading post 'in the Eastward' and was with Raffles when the expedition landed in Singapore in January 1819. Raffles appointed Farquhar the first Resident and Commandant of Singapore in 1819. However, the two men were to have many fundamental differences over the next few years and in 1823, Raffles relieved Farquhar of his appointment. Farquhar returned to Scotland and later complained about his treatment but to no avail. He was promoted to the rank of Colonel in 1829 and Major-General in 1837. See John Bastin, 'Farquhar, William (1774–1839)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) at <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/67783>> (accessed 9 July 2014).

Stamford Raffles, sent the news of the settlement to Malacca by a sampan, and asked the Malays to come to Singapore, urging them to bring fowls, ducks, fruits and provisions of all kinds for which they would obtain a ready sale. Letters to the same effect were also sent by some of the Malays who had accompanied Major Farquhar in the expedition to Singapore.

Abdullah tells us that the news that there was pro-[7]fitable business to be done in Singapore spread like wildfire among the inhabitants of Malacca; and in spite of the severe measures taken by the Dutch authorities there to prevent any person sailing for Singapore, and also in spite of the petty pirates who would take fowls and even fishing boats from the anchorage at Malacca and who lay in wait in the Straits of Cucob for their victims, 'hundreds found their way to Singapore, fleeing from the punishments in Malacca and the want of employment, combined with the oppression of the Hollanders: some laboured at wood-cutting, others at house-building, others shopped, each to their business'.<sup>6</sup>

It seems pretty certain that a number of Chinese were among the new arrivals from Malacca, for the *Hikayat Abdullah* records that when early in June 1819 Sir Stamford Raffles had, after consultation with Mr Farquhar, decided to break up the hill 'at the end of Singapore point' and fill up the swamp on the south bank of the river (Boat Quay and up to the Police Court), two or three hundred coolies, Chinese, Malays and Klings, were employed at the rate of one rupee a day each man, some digging and carrying the earth, others breaking the rocks which were very plentiful and large in the hill – each one to his special work 'as if a battle were raging'.<sup>7</sup>

On the 11th June 1819 Raffles wrote to the Duchess of Somerset:

My new colony thrives most rapidly. We have not been established four months, and it has received an accession of

6 JT Thomson, *Hakayit Abdulla: Translations from the Hakayit Abdulla (bin Abdulkadar)*, *Munshi*, with comments (London: HS King, 1874), at 118.

7 *Ibid*, at 122.

population exceeding 5,000 – principally Chinese, and their number is daily increasing.<sup>8</sup>

On the 25th June, shortly before his departure, Raffles gave minute written instructions to Major Farquhar of his duties as Resident. With regard to Police and Administration of Justice he directed that 'the Chinese, Bugguese and other foreign settlers are to be placed under the immediate superintendence of chiefs of their own tribes to be appointed by you, and [8] these chiefs will be responsible to you for the police within their respective jurisdictions.'<sup>9</sup>

The Resident was also instructed to construct without delay a bridge across the river so as to connect the cantonments with the intended Chinese and Malay towns on the opposite side of the river. On the following day an Arrangement was made and signed between Raffles and the Sultan and Temenggong providing for the Government of Singapore, by the 2nd Article of which it was directed that

... all the Chinese should move over to the other side of the river, forming a kampong from the site of the large bridge down the river towards the mouth: and all Malays, people belonging to the Temenggong and others, should also remove to the other side of the river, forming their kampong from the site of the large bridge up the river towards the source.<sup>10</sup>

The large bridge referred to in the above Arrangement stood, it is conjectured, on the site where Elgin Bridge is now, and the Chinese

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8 Raffles to Duchess of Somerset, 11 Jun 1819. See Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* (London: John Murray, 1830) at 383.

9 Raffles to Farquhar, 25 June 1819, in 'Notices of Singapore' (1853) 7 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, at 333.

10 Article 2, Arrangements Made for the Government of Singapore, June 1819. See Roland St John Braddell, *The Law of the Straits Settlements: A Commentary*, Reprint with introduction by MB Hooker (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1982) at 148–149.

kampong evidently became the present Boat Quay, as it occupies the position pointed out.

There does not appear to have been any record of the Chinese or other 'chiefs' of the various native kampongs who were directed to be appointed by the above Arrangement to receive complaints and to deal with grievances of those under their respective jurisdictions, and who were themselves to attend every Monday morning at the *Rumah Bichara*.<sup>11</sup>

Although the Supreme Government of India, in the very early days of the Settlement, failed to realise the vision of its founder that Singapore would one day become the emporium and pride of the East, and in a letter dated 11th January 1820 to the Resident gave him to understand that Singapore was to be considered as a military post rather than as a fixed settlement, we are told that the year 1820 found people of all nations coming here: Chinese, Arabs and a few Europeans. Chinese traders who had before 1819 resorted to such places as Manila and Brunei found it safer and more [9] profitable after that date to visit Singapore in their junks and in time to settle down here. Chinese people in both these places had been ill-treated. Capt Campbell of *HMS Dauntless* reporting the massacre in Manila on 3rd December 1820 stated that the natives, incited to rise under the belief that an epidemic that was then raging was owing to foreigners poisoning the wells and tanks, slaughtered all the English, French, Dutch and Americans whom they could find, including eighty Chinese. In the case of Brunei, the *Singapore Chronicle*<sup>12</sup> recorded that towards the end of the

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11 'Council Chamber or Court House' – see Sir Frank A Swettenham, *Vocabulary of the English and Malay Languages with notes*, vol 2 (Shanghai, Hongkong, Singapore & Yokohama: Kelly & Walsh, 1910) at 120.

12 The *Singapore Chronicle* was Singapore's first newspaper. It commenced publication on 1 January 1824 as the *Singapore Chronicle and Commercial Register*, and was originally owned and edited by Francis James Bernard, son-in-law of Major William Farquhar. Bernard only edited a few issues of the *Chronicle* before handing the editorship to Resident John Crawford, who edited it till 1826 when it was taken over by James Loch. The paper, which functioned as a semi-official gazette shut down in 1837. See CA Gibson-Hill, 'The Singapore

eighteenth century its foreign trade fell almost entirely away, because the government of the country had become tyrannical, rapacious and piratical, and Chinese vessels did not venture to approach the coast. With the cessation of Chinese trade, the Chinese population rapidly declined, and the pepper gardens in which many of them had been employed were neglected.

In the space of a little more than a year from the foundation of the Settlement, Sir Stamford Raffles writing to friends in England said that 'this port, from being an insignificant fishing village, is now surrounded by an extensive town, and the population does not fall short of ten or twelve thousand souls, principally Chinese'.<sup>13</sup>

We shall see later that those figures were an overestimate, but there is no doubt that the port was increasing in popularity in so phenomenal a manner as to make some people lose their heads when attempting to prophesy its future prospects. Thus Col Farquhar in a private letter dated 31st March 1820 to Raffles expressed himself:

Nothing can possibly exceed the rising trade and general prosperity of this infant colony, indeed to look at our harbour just now, where upwards of twenty junks, three of which are from China, and two from Cochin China, the rest from Siam, and other vessels are at anchor, besides ships, brigs, etc, a person would naturally exclaim, 'Surely this cannot be an establishment of only twenty months' standing.' One [10] of the principal Chinese merchants here told me, in the course of conversation, that he would be very glad to give \$500,000 for the revenue of Singapore five years hence. ... The swampy ground on the opposite side of the river is now

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Chronicle (1823-37)' (1953) 26(1) *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 175.

13 The words in quote are inexact. The original reads: 'From an insignificant fishing village, the port is now surrounded by an extensive town, and the population does not fall short of ten or twelve thousand souls, principally Chinese.' See Raffles to Duke of Somerset, 20 Aug 1820, in Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* (London: John Murray, 1830) at 465-466.

almost covered with Chinese houses, and the Bugis village is become an extensive town.<sup>14</sup>

With Chinese forming such a large element of the inhabitants, a great many of whom were addicted to the opium and gambling habits, the idea occurred to the Resident to follow the lead given by Penang and Malacca and establish opium, spirit and gambling farms, thereby obtaining revenue for police purposes. In spite of a strong protest from Raffles, then at Bencoolen, the farms were sold, realising monthly \$395 for four opium shops, \$100 for arrack shops and \$95 for gaming tables. A little later, the gaming tables were placed under the special control of the 'Captain China' and a tax levied on them. The proceeds of the gaming tax were applied to keeping the streets clean. The farm revenues were kept as a separate fund and applied to local purposes until May 1826 when they were ordered to be paid into the Treasury.

The arrival of the first junk from Amoy in February 1821 was the occasion for a dispute between the merchants and the Resident. It would seem that the Sultan had been in the habit of receiving presents from the masters of vessels calling at the port, and when the *tai-kong* of this particular junk, having obtained timely information of the new order of things, would not pay his respects to the Sultan or tender the customary gifts, he was put in the stocks by the Sultan's followers: and the merchants, jealous of the reputation of the Settlement as a free port, remonstrated. The Resident thought it was an improper, premature and unnecessary interference on the part of the merchants, and wrote to that effect to Sir Stamford Raffles. This gave much offence to the merchants.

At this time the provisions made by the authorities for the policing of the town were wholly inadequate to [11] the needs of the place. In September 1821 at the request of the Resident certain European merchants met for the purpose of carrying into effect the resolutions passed at a meeting of the merchants held six months previously that

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14 Farquhar to Raffles, 31 Mar 1820, in Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* (London: John Murray, 1830) at 444.

funds should be raised by means of voluntary subscriptions for increasing the strength of the police establishment and that a committee of three Europeans and three native merchants should be formed to take into consideration all points connected with the Police. The meeting decided to request the Resident to suggest to the inhabitants of Kampong Glam and China Town the propriety of subscribing to the proposed fund for extending the police system to these kampongs. The response was apparently not hearty, for the mercantile subscription, which was called the 'Night Watch Fund', amounted in the average to \$54 a month – sufficient, however, to increase the police establishment by one native sergeant and nine native constables. The Chinese held aloof, but we find that shortly afterwards, as robberies became more frequent in their kampongs, they realised the propriety of subscribing to the Night Watch Fund.

Towards the end of the year 1822, Sir Stamford Raffles was back again in Singapore, busily engaged among other things in remodeling and laying out his new city. He issued a proclamation on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 1822 appointing a committee of three European gentlemen and a representative from each of the principal classes of Arabs, Malays, Bugis, Javanese and Chinese for appropriating and marking out the quarters or departments of the several classes of the native population.

In Raffles's written Instructions given on 4th November 1822 to Capt Davis (President) and Messrs Bonham and AL Johnston (Members) on the above subject, the Chinese inhabitants were roughly divided into three classes :

- (a) The lower classes, earning their livelihood by handicrafts and personal labour, who were then in [12] occupation of a considerable portion of the sea and river face, and in this class were included the Chinese artificers who had settled on the beach near Telok Ayer and Kampong Glam and who were to be removed from thence without delay.



- (b) A higher and more respectable class engaged in mercantile speculation, and
- (c) The cultivators who were to be excluded from the proposed town limits.

The following instructions were given to the Committee for the Chinese kampong:

From the number of Chinese already settled, and the peculiar attractions of the place for that industrious race, it may be presumed that they will always form the largest portion of the community. The whole therefore of that part of the town to the south-west of the Singapore river (except where marked out for the use of European and other merchants) is intended to be appropriated for their accommodation. ...

In establishing the Chinese kampong on a proper footing, it will be necessary to advert to the provincial and other distinctions among this peculiar people. It is well known that the people of one province are more quarrelsome than another, and that continued disputes and disturbances take place between people of different provinces. It will also be necessary to distinguish between the fixed residents and itinerants. ... Of the latter, those from Amoy claim particular attention, and it may perhaps deserve consideration whether on account of their importance it may not be advisable to allot a separate division for their accommodation, even to the westward of the cantonments beyond the European town and the Sultan. The object of the Government being to afford the utmost accommodation to every description of traders, but more particularly to the respectable classes ... you are not to lose sight of the advantage which may arise from deviating from the rule (i.e. of concentrating the different classes of the population in their separate quarters) in special cases where the commercial interests of the Settlement are concerned. Few places offer greater natural facilities [13] for commerce than Singapore and it is only desired that the

advantage of these facilities be afforded to all who are competent to avail themselves of them in the proportion of their relative importance and claims to consideration.

It being intended to place the Chinese population in a great measure under the immediate control of their own chiefs, you will fix up such central and commanding sites for the residence of these authorities and appropriate to them such larger extent of ground, as may tend to render them efficient instruments of police, and at the same time raise them in the consideration of the lower classes. ... The concentration of the different descriptions of artificers, such as blacksmiths, carpenters, etc, in particular quarters should also be attended to.<sup>15</sup>

Raffles also gave instructions for the removal of the fish market to Telok Ayer, and directed the Committee to consider whether, in the interests of general convenience and cleanliness, it might not be advantageous to concentrate the fish, pork, poultry and vegetable markets in the vicinity of each other. It would appear that Col Farquhar fixed on a site for the market more suitable than that first proposed by the Committee, and Tan Che Sang (better known as Inchek Sang or Chek Sang),<sup>16</sup> the principal Chinese merchant in the place at that time, agreed to build it at his own expense, if he was allowed to hold it free

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15 Raffles to Captain CE Davis, George Bonham & Alexander L Johnston, 4 Nov 1822 in 'Notices of Singapore' (1854) 8 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, 101, at 106-107.

16 According to historian Hsu Yun Tsiao (许云樵) (1905-1981), Tan Che Sang's real name was simply Tan Sang (陈送) and that the 'Che' was added on as a Hokkien form of address for younger uncle: *Chek* or 叔 (Shu). See 许云樵《马来亚丛谈》(Singapore: Youth Book Company, 1961) at 27-28. See also 颜清煌《从历史角度看海外华人社会变革》(Singapore: Youth Book Company, 2007) at 55. There are several variations to the spelling of his name: Tan Che Sang, Tan Chi Sang, Tan Cheh Sang, Tan Chisang, and Tan Chee Sang.

of tax for a certain number of years. Whether his offer was accepted or not, the records do not say.

Tan Che Sang<sup>17</sup> is the first Chinese name mentioned in Mr Buckley's *Anecdotal History of Singapore*. He was born at Canton,<sup>18</sup> circa 1763, and at the age of 15 had left his native city for Rhio, thence he went to Penang where he remained for ten years, then to Malacca where he was for some years, and finally he settled down in Singapore. He was a wealthy man, and as there were no banks in those days he kept his money in iron boxes and slept among them.<sup>19</sup> He was said to be a great miser, [14] but addicted to gambling. He knew his weakness and tried to conquer the vicious habit in a dramatic fashion by cutting off the first joint of one of his little fingers with an oath not to play any more when, on one occasion, he had lost a considerable sum of money at the gaming table; but the remedy proved ineffectual, for he fell a victim to the habit again.<sup>20</sup> He died here on 2nd April 1836 at

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17 Some accounts have Tan's Chinese name as 陈志生 but this is highly improbable, given that his real name was Tan Sang 陈送. See Hsu, *ibid*.

18 This is almost certainly erroneous. According to historian Hsu Yun Tsiao, Tan was born in Fujian province and not in Canton or Quanzhou. See Hsu, *ibid*.

19 One account states: 'The room in which he died was literally surrounded with coffers of silver and most valuable goods, and a tiger's skin in the centre of it upon which he slept.' See 'Funeral of a Chinese Miser' *Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser* 14 Jul 1836, at 1.

20 This account of Tan Che Sang is almost certainly drawn from a contemporary account by George Windsor Earl, *The Eastern Seas or Voyages and Adventures of the Indian Archipelago in 1832-33-34* (London: Wm H Allen & Co, 1837) at 364-365, which reads:

The emigrants from China are chiefly mechanics, agriculturists, and labourers, but many are also engaged in commerce. The most wealthy of the latter is Che Sang, a miserly old man, who appears to great disadvantage when compared with the liberal and well-informed Chong Long. His sole aim has been the acquirement of riches, and he is supposed to possess immense wealth. His cash is deposited in a number of iron chests, among which he always sleeps. It is said that a considerable portion of this treasure has been acquired by gambling, to which he is much addicted. On one occasion fortune deserted him, and he lost a considerable sum, which so terribly disconcerted the old man, that he took a most solemn oath never to touch dice again, and, to

the age of 73 and was buried on the 13th: the funeral, attended by ten to fifteen thousand (?)<sup>21</sup> persons, proceeded through the commercial part of the town on the way to the Hokien burial ground.<sup>22</sup> It is said that Che Sang used to boast that he wielded so much influence over the Chinese section<sup>23</sup> that any day he said the word he could empty the place of all the Europeans, but he never tried.<sup>24</sup>

He left a will in the Chinese language in which he directed that a block of land comprising 51,558 square feet with frontages on High Street and North Boat Quay (being Lease No. 298)<sup>25</sup> 'should be kept

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punish himself for his indiscretion, and as a momento of his oath, he cut off the first joint of one of his little fingers. The ruling passion, however, proved too strong and he soon embarked in gambling as deeply as ever.

- 21 Estimates of the numbers of people at his funeral varies between 5,000 and 13,000. See 'Funeral of a Chinese Miser' *Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser* 14 Jul 1836, at 1.
- 22 This burial ground was what came to be known as Tiong Lama near Sepoy Lines. The Heng Shan Ting Temple was originally the 'joss house' of this cemetery which had been founded by See Hoot Kee (or Si Hoo Keh), the wealthiest Hokkien in Singapore.
- 23 Tan was certainly an important and influential leader of the Hokkien community. Indeed, he was considered to be only second to See Hoot Kee (or Si Hoo Keh) in terms of wealth and influence. See 陈荆和《新加坡华文碑铭集录》(Hongkong: Chinese University of Hongkong, 1970) at 7-8. It was also reported that Tan was asked to settle a dispute involving three Chinese men who struck down a poor woman and he had permission of the government to sentence them to receive a dozen lashes each, inflicted on them publicly with a rattan. See Yen Ching-Hwang, 'Class Structure and Social Mobility in the Chinese Community in Singapore and Malaya 1800-1911' (1987) 21(3) *Modern Asian Studies* 417, at 436.
- 24 Tan was reputedly involved with the Hokkien triads. See 陈荆和《新加坡华文碑铭集录》(Hongkong: Chinese University of Hongkong, 1970) at 7-8.
- 25 Tan bought a warehouse at Hill Street from the Resident, William Farquhar. Farquhar, who lived at the junction of Hill Street and St Andrew's Road, had built this warehouse across from his own home. Later in 1822-23, as a result of Raffles' resettlement plan, Tan moved his warehouse to Commercial Square (now Raffles Place) but kept this Hill Street site till his death. His title, Lease No 298 was issued on 11 June 1827. See Leong Foke Meng, 'Singapore: The Real Estates Of William Farquhar (1774-1839), John Crawford (1783-1868), And

for the joint concern and reserved for ever as an ancestral heritage and should not be turned into money for apportionment nor sold nor alienated'; but in 1880 in an action instituted by Wee Swee Lum, executor of Tan Swan Neo deceased, a daughter of the said Tan Che Sang, against Lee Boon Neo and others, the Court held that on the true construction of the will, the direction reserving the aforesaid property for ever was void as creating a perpetuity, and that the said Tan Che Sang died intestate in respect of such property and ordered a sale thereof in thirty lots.

In Raffles's Instructions a moderate compensation was directed to be paid to such Chinese settlers as were required to remove their dwellings, and it may safely be presumed that the market gardeners and the other cultivators of the soil who had to be excluded from the proposed new town limits were treated with the same consideration. During the four years from the founding of the Settlement, a certain number of the Chinese immigrants had given their attention to agriculture and prospered as planters of vegetables, nutmegs, spices, gambier and pepper. It is worthy of note that in a despatch dated the 13th February 1819 reporting to the Supreme Government the occupation of the island, Raffles was already able to write: 'The industrious Chinese are already established in the interior and may soon be expected to supply vegetables etc. equal to the demand.' From the same despatch we learn that a number of Chinese were then already engaged in building boats and vessels, some were engaged in smelting the ore brought from the tin mines in the neighbouring islands, and others were employed as cultivators and artificers.

On the 4th February 1823 Raffles, who had already written to Calcutta for the removal from office of Lieut-Col Farquhar on the

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Their Families' (2004) 77(1) *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 23-42, at 28. Lee Kip Lin has, however, suggested that Tan bought his Hill Street house from DS Napier instead of Farquhar but he offers no reference for this assertion. See Lee Kip Lin, *The Singapore House 1819-1942* (Singapore: Times Editions & Preservation of Monuments Board, 1988) at 77.

ground that, under his weak and inconsistent rule, favouritism and irregularities were daily arising, directed his Secretary to write to the Resident on the subject of cracker-firing as a nuisance:

I have the directions of the Lieutenant-Governor to request you will take immediate measures for preventing the Chinese from continuing the practice of letting off fireworks at the Kramat you have allowed to be erected on the Government Hill.

The Lieutenant-Governor regrets exceedingly that any such establishment should have been permitted by you, on a spot so close to the site which has been set apart for the residence of the chief authority, and he trusts you will see the propriety of causing the discontinuance of the nuisance.

The Lieutenant-Governor desires me to state that he was disturbed during the whole of last night by the nuisance complained of. I am at the same time directed to request you will cause the removal of the Chinese movable temple and lights from the great tree near the lines and which is included within the space proposed to be reserved for the Church.<sup>26</sup>

Another sore point with Raffles in the administration of Farquhar was the deliberate manner in which by [16] establishing a gambling farm he had frustrated the policy declared by Raffles in 1819 that the vice of gaming was strictly prohibited. In May 1823 Raffles asked the opinion of the magistrates as to the desirability of gambling licences, and they unanimously represented the great and growing evils arising from the vice. Despite the opposition of the Resident, Raffles issued his Regulation IV of 1823<sup>27</sup> prohibiting gaming houses and cockpits and

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26 LN Hull (Acting Secretary) to Lieutenant-Colonel Farquhar, Resident, 4 Feb 1823, in 'Notices of Singapore' (1853) 7 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 325, at 336.

27 See 'A Regulation prohibiting Gaming Houses and Cock-pits and for Suppressing the Vice of Gaming at Singapore' in 'Notices of Singapore' (1854) 8 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 329–330.

providing for punishments extracted from the Penal Code of China concerning gambling:

Whoever games for money or goods shall receive 80 blows with a cudgel on the breech, and all money or property staked shall be forfeited to Government. He who opens the gambling house, although he does not gamble, shall suffer the same punishment and the gaming house shall be confiscated. ...

Whoever gambles, whether soldiers or people, shall wear the broad heavy wooden collar one month. ...

In some cases the parties are to be transported.<sup>28</sup>

The Chinese gamblers and gambling farmers were of course displeased, but were soon consoled, for they discovered that Mr John Crawford, who had arrived on the 9th June as successor to Farquhar, was a Resident after their own heart. We find Mr Crawford writing on the 15th July to the Secretary to the Government at Bengal complaining of the severity of the punishment against gambling, and he continued:

A sentence of this nature was on the point of being carried into effect by the eleemosynary magistrates of Singapore when I found myself compelled to come forward to stay the proceedings and finally to annul them.<sup>29</sup>

Notwithstanding the unanimous protest of the nonofficial section of the magisterial bench, whose opinion and advice had been sought by the Resident, on the 23rd August notice of conditions of sale of ten licensed gaming houses and of one cockpit in the Bugis kampong was issued: and on the 18th September the Resident [17] addressed a further letter to the Supreme Government in which he said that 'the principal natives and Chinese made repeated applications for the suspension of the Regulation, stating a fact, the accuracy of which could not be questioned, that many of the lower classes had quitted the Settlement

28 Ibid, at 330.

29 Crawford to George Swinton, 1 Jul 1823, *ibid*, at 332.

on account of being deprived of a customary amusement'.

But Raffles utterly repudiated the policy that it was necessary or expedient to relax the rules of government and morality in order to induce the immigration of Chinese and other traders. He had established 'freedom of person as the right of the soil, and freedom of trade as the right of the port', and with all the earnestness of his strenuous nature he pleaded with the Governor-General in Council not to sacrifice principle for expediency in the matter of the gambling farm at Singapore. 'It is alleged', he writes, 'in support of the gaming farm, that by placing it under regulation, the quantity of vice is diminished, but independently of the want of authority of any human government to countenance evil for the sake of good, I cannot admit that the effects of any regulation whatever, established on such a principle, are to be put in competition with the solid advantages which must accrue from the administration of a Government acting on strict moral principles, discountenancing vice and exercising its best efforts to suppress it'.

Legalised gambling went on during the whole term of office of Mr Crawford (1823-6), and the revenue from that Farm which was \$15,076 in 1823 was double that amount in 1826, being \$30,390. There were, however, still residents who did not look at the subject merely from the point of view of revenue, and in 1827 the Grand Jury made a presentment against the Gaming Farm as an immoral nuisance and were met by this remark: 'I did not think there were thirteen such idiots in this Island.' Ten years later, the first Recorder, Sir John T Claridge,<sup>30</sup> between whom and the Governor, Mr Fullerton,<sup>31</sup> there

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30 Sir John Thomas Claridge was the first Recorder of the Court of Judicature of Penang, Malacca and Singapore. This was the first court with jurisdiction over all three territories of the Straits Settlements. He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford where he graduated with a BN in 1813, and was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple in 1818. Claridge, who served from 1826 to 1829, was a controversial figure and was subsequently recalled on grounds of insubordination. See Robert P Dod (ed), *The Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage of Great Britain and Ireland for 1856* (London: Whittaker & Co, 1856) at 169.

31 Robert Fullerton (1773-1831) was Governor of Penang from 1824 to 1826 and first Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1826 to 1829. See Walter Make-



had been a most violent quarrel, [18] made a declaration from the Bench that the Gambling Farm was illegal, and the Government reluctantly suspended the gaming-farm system. A few months after the recall of Sir John Claridge, Mr Fullerton brushed aside his decision and affirmed the legality of this method of raising the revenue. But his success was short-lived, for towards the end of the same year the Court of Directors finally abolished the Farm.

Two attempts were made later to reintroduce the Gaming Farm, the first being made by Mr Bonham,<sup>32</sup> the Resident Councillor, in 1834, and the second by the press in 1836, but both failed.

It is interesting to observe that Abdullah, writing his *Hikayat* in 1840, gave a paragraph to this subject wherein he defended Raffles's strong measures against gambling.

These measures were humane, tending to save people from destruction; for gambling is destructive of man, as it encourages cheating and evil propensities. Further, gambling is the father of wickedness and has three children: the eldest being *Inchek Bohong* (Falsehood), the second *Inchek Churi* (Thief) and the youngest *Inchek Pembunoh* (Murderer).<sup>33</sup>

The question of a gambling farm continued for many years thereafter to be hotly and bitterly discussed, particularly in 1860 when from June to September it was thrashed out at great length in the *Free Press*, and doubtless this led to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for the

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peace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St. John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 82–83.

32 Sir Samuel George Bonham (1803–1863) was Resident Councillor of Singapore from 1833 to 1836 and he succeeded Kenneth Murchison as Governor of the Straits Settlements (1836–1843) before being appointed Governor of Hong Kong in 1848. He retired in 1854. He was the son of Captain George Bonham who worked for the British East India Company. Bonham Street in Singapore is named after him. See Justin Corfield, *Historical Dictionary of Singapore* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2011) at 40.

33 JT Thomson, *Hakayit Abdulla: Translations from the Hakayit Abdulla (bin Abdulkadar), Munshi*, with comments (London: HS King, 1874) at 171.

Colonies, making inquiry about the propriety of licensing gambling houses. An opinion favourable to a farm was given by several of the old Straits merchants in London, but the matter did not proceed further. Legislation against gaming houses had been made four years previously in certain sections of the Police Act of 1856, but the inaction of the police during the fortnight after the Chinese New Year in 1862 when gambling went on unchecked was so noticeable that on 12th June a public meeting, called by the Sheriff, at the written request of thirty-three of the principal European residents, was held in the Town Hall [19] to consider what steps should be taken to deal with the gambling evil. At this meeting, which was largely attended, various views were expressed, and a Chinese gentleman suggested that licensing should be tried for a limited time, but nothing further seems to have been done. Next came Ordinance XIII of 1870, followed by amending Ordinances in 1876 and 1879, and finally the Common Gaming Houses Ordinance (V of 1888) was enacted.

As a rule, the Chinese have fully recognised the evils of the gambling habit, and before leaving the subject it deserves to be recorded that in the Federated Malay States the gambling farms, which for so many years had yielded a large revenue, have been abolished at the express request of the Chinese themselves, the change having come with the foundation of the Chinese Republic.<sup>34</sup>

In 1823 Seah Eu Chin came to Singapore from Swatow. He was born in 1805 and lived in the village of Guek-po in the interior of Swatow within the sub-prefecture of Theng-hai. His father, Seah Keng Liat (余庆烈), held the position of secretary to the yamen of the P'o Leng subprefecture, and this would probably explain his intimate knowledge of the Chinese written language. Being of an enterprising nature, he worked his way to Singapore as a clerk on board a Chinese junk, and on arrival, on the recommendation of the owners of the junk, he became attached as clerk to several trading vessels. During five years

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34 Preamble to Common Gaming Houses Ordinance Number V.



Seah Eu Chin

of a roving sea life, he was engaged in bartering with the natives, and thereby acquired a wide knowledge of the mental habits of the Malays as well as of their requirements. The various junks whereon he was employed visited from time to time practically all the coasts of the Straits of Malacca, the islands of the Rhio Archipelago and the east coast of the Malay Peninsula as far north as Singgora.

When he was scarcely twenty-five years of age, he was established in Kling Street and afterwards in [20] Circular Road, Singapore, as a commission agent supplying the junks trading between this port and Rhio, Sumatra and the ports of the Malay Peninsula, with all their wants and receiving from them all the produce they had collected for sale on commission. His business was successful, and he invested his profits in landed property. He was, it is said, the first to start gambier and pepper planting on a large scale in this island,<sup>35</sup> and in 1835 acquired for this purpose a large tract of land extending countrywards for eight to ten miles from the upper end of River Valley Road among more or less what is now Irwell Bank Road to Bukit Timah and Thomson Roads. We are told that he tried planting tea, nutmegs and other tropical produce, but not succeeding as he had expected, he gave them up and tried gambier. At that time the price of gambier was 75 cents, and pepper \$1.50 a picul. He was seriously intending to discontinue these plantations, but Mr Church persuaded him to persevere and he made a large fortune thereby. Besides being a planter, he was also a general trader in cotton goods and in tea, and had extensive dealings with European firms and was well known among them and highly respected. In 1840 he became a member of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce (composed of the principal European and native mer-

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35 See GM Reith, *Handbook of Singapore*, 1 ed (Singapore: The Singapore & Straits Printing Office, 1892) at 6-7, which reads: 'The next year (1823) was important in many respects. A Chinaman, Seah Eu Chin, is said to have started gambier and pepper planting on the island, an industry which had much to do with the early prosperity of the Settlement.'

chants). In 1847 and 1848 he wrote, for *Logan's Journal*,<sup>36</sup> articles in the Chinese language upon the 'Remittances made by the Chinese to their Parents',<sup>37</sup> and the 'Numbers, tribes and avocations of the Chinese in Singapore',<sup>38</sup> which were translated and published in Volumes 1 and 2 of that Journal.

In 1850 he headed the deputation of the Chinese which waited upon the Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, on his visit to Singapore, and Governor Butterworth<sup>39</sup> wrote to him expressing his grateful acknowledgments for the assistance he had given in welcoming his Lordship. From 1851 onwards he was frequently summoned to act as a grand juror. He was a straight- [21] forward man, and rendered many valuable services to the Government, especially during the great Hokien and Teochew riot in 1854. He was quite fearless during those trou-

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36 *Logan's Journal* is the popular name for the *Journal of Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* that was founded and edited by the noted lawyer and publisher, James Richardson Logan (1819–1869). The journal was first published in 1847 and folded in 1862. Through the journal, Logan single-handedly shaped public opinion on matters relating to the Straits Settlements. Logan was based in Penang and was also noted for publishing much important official and academic material concerning the Straits. He died on 20 October 1869 of malaria and is buried in Penang. The people of Penang erected a monument – the Logan Memorial – in the grounds of Penang's old courthouse in his memory. With the massive renovation to the court complex, the memorial was moved to its current location in Light Street.

37 This should read: 'Annual Remittances by Chinese Immigrants in Singapore to Their Families in China' (1843) 2 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 283–290.

38 See 'General Sketch of the Numbers, Tribes and Avocations of the Chinese in Singapore' (1847) 1 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 35–37.

39 Colonel William James Butterworth (1801–1856) was Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1843 to 1855, the longest-serving Governor of the Straits. He was the son of Captain William Butterworth of the Royal Navy, who died during the Battle of Trafalgar. He joined the army in Madras where he rose through the ranks to become Lieutenant-Colonel in the 38<sup>th</sup> Madras Regiment. An aloof and pompous figure, he was known as the 'Great Butterpot'. See Justin Corfield, *Historical Dictionary of Singapore* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2011) at 46–47.

blous times and used to go with the Sepoys who escorted the conveyance of food to his plantations.

It was not at all remarkable that Government readily granted him in 1853 a certificate of naturalisation under Indian Act XXX of 1852. Mr Church, writing to him on 29th December 1853, referred to his grant as follows:

The Governor desires me to add that he cannot permit the certificate to leave this office without assuring you of the satisfaction it has afforded him to enrol the name of so talented and so highly respectable a Chinese resident of Singapore amongst the naturalised British subjects in the Straits of Malacca.

Later, during the time of Sir R McCausland (Recorder 1856-66), it was not unusual for the Court to advise Chinese suitors to refer their cases to Seah Eu Chin. When Col. Ord became the first Governor of the Straits Settlements under Crown rule, Seah Eu Chin was made a JP, one of the first Chinese who received this distinction from the Government.

In 1837 he married the eldest daughter of Tan Ah Hun,<sup>40</sup> the rich Captain China of Perak, whose son, Tan Seng Poh, was for many years one of the opium and spirit farmers in Singapore. His wife died a few months after her marriage, from the effects of smallpox, and about a year later he married his deceased wife's younger sister, by whom he had four sons and three daughters. The eldest son – the late Mr Seah Cheo Seah,<sup>41</sup> JP, a gentleman well known for his kindness of heart and

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40 Also sometimes spelt 'Tan Ah Hung'. Tan's date of birth and death are unknown. He was appointed first Captain China of Perak in the 1830s. See Wong Choon San, *The Gallery of Chinese Kapitans* (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1963) at 68.

41 His name has variously been spelt Seah Cheoh Seah, Seah Chak Seah, Seah Cho Sia and Seah Cho Seah. Seah was born in 1846 and died on 25 November 1885 aged just 39. With his father, he ran the Alexandra gunpowder magazine at Tanah Merah Kechil as its general manager from 31 July 1869 (see *The Straits Calendar & Directory for the Year 1870*, at 416-417). He also represented the

liberality – died in 1885, leaving Seah Eng Kiat<sup>42</sup> and Seah Eng Kun<sup>43</sup> among his sons.<sup>44</sup> The second son, Mr Seah Liang Seah, will be referred to later. Of the other two sons, Mr Seah Song Seah, at one time a

Chinese community to receive Prince Albert Victor of Wales and Prince George (later King George) in 1882 during their visit to Singapore. Seah Cheo Seah built a large mansion along North Boat Quay for his father in 1872 – one of the four big *chu* 厝 of the Teochews. See Chapter 10 of this volume.

- 42 Also spelt Seah Eng Keat. Both variants of his Chinese name have been used. He was born in 1867 and died in 1955 at his home at 205 Joo Chiat Place (*Singapore Free Press*, 16 Jul 1955, at 20). At the time of his death, Seah Peng Hong was listed as his surviving son; his daughter, Seah Neo Chee (Mrs Ng Siew Gim) had predeceased him on 11 Apr 1928. Seah's first wife died in January 1914 (*Straits Times*, 8 Jan 1914, at 8), and in 1915, he married Yap Nyat Jin, widow of the late Lim Kup Cheong. Yap was the daughter of Yap Kwan Seng, Captain China of Kuala Lumpur (*Straits Times*, 11 Jan 1915, at 6). Eng Keat and his brother Eng Kun were fond of horse racing and owned several horses. The two brothers also sold in 1913, a 999-year lease on a huge triangular plot of land at the junction of Battery Road and Bonham Street ('A Big Land Deal' *Straits Times*, 11 Jul 1913, at 9).
- 43 Various spelt Seah Eng Koon, Siah Eng Kuh and Seah Eng Keong. He was born in 1873 in Singapore and was educated at the Anglo-Chinese School and Raffles Institution. In 1901, he took control of his father's pineapple canning business, Chop Chin Giap which produced Tiger Brand and Combat Brand canned pineapples which were popular in Europe and in Asia. The business ceased operations just before World War I when the prices of pineapples plummeted. In 1909, Eng Kun's manager, WAB Goodall discovered a hot spring at the 13<sup>th</sup> milestone, Thomson Road. He sent samples of the water to London for testing and it was found to be of excellent quality. Seah then established the Singapore Natural Mineral Springs Company, bottled the water and sold it under the brand of Zombun. This company was later taken over by Fraser & Neave Limited in 1921. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 105.
- 44 Seah Cheo Seah's wife, Lim Quee Poh bore him Eng Kiat and Eng Kun. He had two other sons by his concubine Lim Kah Lye: Eng Yeak (应玉) and Eng Lok (应禄). In 1895, the four sons embroiled in a court case against their uncle Liang Seah over whether the illegitimate sons were entitled to their share of inheritance from Seah Eu Chin's \$1.35 million estate. See 'Seah Liang Seah v Seah Eng Kiat, Seah Eng Kun and Seah Eng Yeak and Seah Eng Lok (respectively infants)', *Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser* 25 Sep 1895 at 3. The Supreme Court held that they were entitled.



Seah Pek Seah



partner in the Opium and Spirit Farm, died a few years ago in China,<sup>45</sup> and Mr Seah Pek Seah,<sup>46</sup> JP, is a partner of Chin Huat Hin Oil Trading Co.<sup>47</sup> He was the [22] first Hon Treasurer of the Straits Chinese British Association, and held the office for four years.

Seah Eu Chin<sup>48</sup> retired from active business in 1864 when he was sixty years of age, and spent the remaining years of his life in the cultivation of Chinese literature, of which he was by no means a poor scholar. In September 1875 he was appointed trustee of the Teochew Chinese burial ground in Orchard Road, comprising 72 acres,<sup>49</sup> where the average number of burials was about forty-five a month. He died on 23rd September 1883 at the age of 78,<sup>50</sup> and his widow died in 1905.

Early in January 1824 the Resident, Mr Crawford, asked permission to forward a gold cup, with a letter dated 23rd December 1823,

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- 45 Seah Song Seah died sometime in the 1910s in China. See 柯木林, 新华历史人物列传(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 105–106.
- 46 Sometimes also spelt 'Seah Pek Seah'. The fourth son of Seah Eu Chin, his birth date is unknown. In 1899, together with Lim Boon Keng and Song Ong Siang, Seah was elected to the first committee of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School. In April 1936, he was adjudged a bankrupt and was thus stripped of his Justice of the Peace office. See *Straits Times*, 18 Apr 1936, at 10.
- 47 Chin Huat Hin Oil Trading Co was a partnership between Seah Peck Seah, Tan Swi Khi, Lim Kim Seng and Seah Whah Ngee. It was dissolved on 25 Jan 1914. See *Straits Times* 13 Jul 1914, at 6.
- 48 Eu Chin Street is named after him. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 118–119.
- 49 This burial ground was exhumed in 1951 for the construction of five blocks of five-storeyed flats which was known as Ngee Ann Building. It is now the site of Ngee Ann City.
- 50 Seah Eu Chin was buried on Grave Hill, adjacent to Bukit Brown Cemetery. For many years, his tomb was lost after it was covered by undergrowth. In November 2012, brothers Charles and Raymond Goh – who have spent many years hunting down and documenting tombstones – rediscovered Seah's grave (see Rachel Boon, 'Teochew Pioneer's Grave Found in Toa Payoh' *Straits Times* 28 Nov 2012).

presented to Col Farquhar, the late Resident, by the Chinese inhabitants of Singapore. Abdullah's description of the Colonel was 'a man of good parts, slow at fault finding, treating rich and poor alike, and very patient in listening to the complaints of any person who went to him, so that all returned rejoicing'. Farquhar had tried to look at Asiatic problems through Asiatic spectacles and failed as administrator of the high-principled policy laid down for him by Raffles. His popularity among the natives was shown on his departure from Singapore, when they accompanied him to his ship in the harbour in numerous boats decorated with flags and accompanied with music.

In January 1824 the first census of the population was taken. Out of a total of 10,683 inhabitants, the Chinese numbered 3,317 or less than one-third. There were 74 Europeans, 16 Armenians, 15 Arabs and 4,580 Malays (the largest section of the community). Although Sir Stamford had written in 1820 that out of a population of between ten and twelve thousand, the principal element was Chinese, this did not prove to be correct, from a numerical point of view, until many, many years afterwards. It is interesting to observe the steady increase of the Chinese community from the censuses of the next twelve years: [23]

	1824	1830	1834	1836
Chinese (Males)	?	6,021	9,944	12,870
Chinese (Females)	?	534	823	879
Total	3,317	6,555	10,767	13,749
Total Population	10,683	10,034	26,329	29,984

The *Singapore Free Press*, dealing with the census for 1835-6, supplies the following details:

In the town the total number of inhabitants was 16,148, of whom 12,748 were males and 3,400 females. The Chinese figures were 8,233. The town limits were the Rochore River as the eastern boundary, Mr Ryan's hill (now known as Bukit Pasoh) as the western boundary and from the sea in-

wards to a line drawn parallel to Mount Sophia.<sup>51</sup> The country was subdivided into two districts, Singapore Town and Kampong Glam, with respective populations of 4,184 (Chinese 2,338 including 41 females) and 9,652 (Chinese 3,178 including 72 females). Newbold<sup>52</sup> remarks that 'the Chinese females here mentioned are not of course natives of China, but all of a creole or mixed race and mostly from the neighbouring island of Bintang.'<sup>53</sup>

A census taken in 1849 showed that out of a total population of 59,043 the Chinese numbered 24,790 or just under 42 per cent. It was only when Singapore had been forty years under the British flag that the Chinese community formed more than one-half of the whole population. The following comparative table should prove interesting:

	1860	1881	1891	1901	1911
Chinese	50,043	86,766	121,908	164,041	219,577
Total Population	80,792	130,208	184,544	228,555	303,321
Percentage of Population	62	62	66	72	72

[24] Of the 219,577 Chinese in this Settlement in 1911 (when the last census was taken) the Census report gives the following details:—

#### SINGAPORE MUNICIPALITY (CHINESE)

	—	Male	Female
China born	155,132	123,043	31,189
Straits born	38,884	17,985	20,899
Total	194,016	141,928	52,088

51 T] Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (London: John Murray, 1839), vol 1, at 286.

52 [Song: *British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (1839)]. See *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.*, at 287.

	COUNTRY (CHINESE)		
	—	Male	Female
China born	20,883	17,336	3,547
Straits born	4,678	2,384	2,294
Total	25,561	19,720	5,841

Abdullah has given an account of the flight of twenty-seven female slaves from the Sultan's harem, and their appearance at the police office to lay their complaints. They were young and pretty, but had all been cruelly treated. 'One opened the clothes on her back to show the marks of the rattan cane, others had marks of having been hung up, others of burnings with pitch, others complained of being punished by fasting and nakedness.'<sup>54</sup> Mr Crawford allowed them to go where they liked: 'so some went with the policemen, some to the Klings, others to the Chinese, and a few of them to the houses of the Europeans, just wherever they could get food and clothing'.<sup>55</sup>

Mr Crawford wrote on the 10th January 1824 to the Supreme Government on this and other subjects, and remarked that whilst among the followers of the Sultan and Temenggong the proportion of women to men was two to one, among the free settlers this proportion was even more than inversed, and in the case of the [25] Chinese the disproportion was so great that there were at least eight men to every woman. Looking, however, at the census tables given above, the proportion of Chinese males to Chinese females at that time must have been at least twelve to one. Even at the present day, judging from the 1911 census, there are, among the immigrant Chinese population, something like four men to every woman, although among the Straits-born Chinese to every 100 males there are 113 females.

Towards the close of the year 1824 for the first time some riots occurred among the Chinese, in which several persons were killed and wounded. There is no reason to believe that these riots had any

54 JT Thomson, *Hakayit Abdulla: Translations from the Hakayit Abdulla (bin Abdulkadar), Munshi*, with comments (London: HS King, 1874), at 206.

55 Ibid.

connection with the operations of secret societies, since such societies did not come before public notice until six years later. It is quite conceivable that among the very earliest immigrants into Singapore there were some members of the Triad Society (or 'Thian-ti-hui') as political refugees, and, according to Mr JD Vaughan,<sup>56</sup> 'it is said that some Europeans, on the first settlement of Singapore, who lived far away from the town beyond the protection of the police, joined the society for protection.'<sup>57</sup> It was, however, after the lapse of more than twenty years from this date that the next Chinese riot broke out, and so we pass on.

On the 20th April 1826, out of fifty-one leases – the earliest of the existing titles to landed property in Singapore issued in exchange for location tickets to those residents who had cleared and built on lands comprised on such tickets – twenty-two were registered in favour of Chinese. Tan Che Sang secured five and Si Hoo Keh<sup>58</sup> four titles to

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56 [Song: *Manners and Customs of the Chinese*]. See, JD Vaughan, *The Manners and Customs of the Chinese of the Straits Settlements* (Singapore: Mission Press, 1879). Jonas Daniel Vaughan (1825–1891) was a sailor, public official and lawyer. Between 1851 and 1867, he served as Superintendent of Police in Penang, Master Attendant in Singapore, Police Magistrate and Assistant Resident Councillor and was elected to the Municipal Council. He was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple in 1869 and in addition to operating an active practice, found time to guest edit the *Straits Times* and the *Singapore Free Press*, whilst contributing numerous historical articles to their pages. He was also artistically and musically gifted. In October 1891, while on the way home from Perak, Vaughan was lost at sea and was presumed to have fallen overboard. See Duncan Sutherland, 'Jonas Daniel Vaughan' *Singapore Infopedia*, < [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_1826\\_2011-08-11.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1826_2011-08-11.html) > (accessed 1 Jul 2014).

57 JD Vaughan, *The Manners and Customs of the Chinese of the Straits Settlements* (Singapore: Mission Press, 1879) at 92.

58 Alternatively spelt See Hood Kee, See Hoot Kee, Seet Hoot Kee, and Si Hoot Kee, he was born on 28 Oct 1793 in Malacca and died on 26 Sep 1847 in Malacca. He was the eldest son of See Tiong Ham (1751–1804). In 1793, he married Tan Choon Neo and among his sons were Eng Watt, Eng Moh, Moh Guan, Koon Guan, and Tek Guan. See Hood Keh arrived in Singapore in 1826 and quickly became an important leader of the Hokkien *bang*. He contributed significantly to the building and running of the Heng Shan Ting Temple and also the Thian Hock Keng Temple in Telok Ayer Street. In 1843, at the age of 46, he returned to

land in Commercial Square and Malacca and Telok Ayer Streets, while Choa Chong Long, and Kiong Kong Tuan got a title each to land in Commercial Square and Yeo Kim Swi a title to land in Malacca Street. Two months later ten more leases [26] were issued to Chinese for lands in Boat Quay and Circular Road. In 1827 not less than 199 leases were given to Chinese inhabitants comprising lands situate at Market Street, Philip Street, Telok Ayer Street, Church Street, China Street, Pekin Street, Kling Street, Circular Road, Amoy Street, Cross Street, High Street, Japan Street and South Bridge Road. In the following year eighty-four leases went to more Chinese residents who had built houses in Beach Road, North Bridge Road, Chinchew Street, Nankin Street, China Street, Hokien Street and Macao Street. Most of the lessees' names are unfamiliar or untraceable, but besides the names of Choa Chong Long, Tan Che Sang and Kiong Kong Tuan, who were already registered landowners, there began to appear the names of men like Tan Tock Seng, Yeo Hood Ing (or Hooding), Yeo Ching Hai and Tan Oo Long, who became prominent citizens in the later history of Singapore.

In 1827 Mr Prince,<sup>59</sup> the Resident Councillor, sent round a circular to the natives pointing out the advantages of education, and calling upon them to co-operate in opening schools. Whether at this time or before it the Chinese residents had established any educational institutions or sent their children to Malacca or Penang for their education, we are unable to say: but two years later the Rev GH Thomsen, a German missionary, reported that there was a Cantonese school at Kam-

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retire in Malacca and became the leader of the Cheng Hoon Teng Temple there. His duties at Thian Hock Keng were taken over by Tan Tock Seng. (See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 213). See's sister, Keng Neo married Tan Beng Swee, son of well-known tycoon, Tan Kim Seng. In 1827, See was recorded as having seven land grants in his name, making him the biggest land owner in Singapore at the time. (See 陈荆和《新加坡华文碑铭集录》(Hongkong: Chinese University of Hongkong, 1970) at 7-8).

59 John Prince (c1772-1848) was Resident Councillor of Singapore from 15 Aug 1826 to 18 Nov 1827. He was the first person to scale Singapore's highest hill, Bukit Timah Hill, in June 1827.

pong Glam of twelve boys, and another at Pekin Street of eight boys, while there was a Hokien school at Pekin Street of twenty-two boys.

In the same year the attention of Government was drawn to the great increase of Chinese vagrants in the town, which state of affairs was remedied by their being given an allowance of rice for one year and being sent into the interior to clear jungle.

In June 1828 the first Criminal Sessions were held in Singapore by Mr Fullerton, the Governor of Penang, Malacca and Singapore (incorporated in 1826 as one Settlement), and Mr Murchison,<sup>60</sup> the Resident Coun-[27]cillor of Singapore Station. There were twenty-seven indictments presented to the Grand Jury, of which six were found for murder. Two of the prisoners charged with this capital offence were convicted – one Kling and one Chinese – and they were hanged on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1828.

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60 Kenneth Murchison (1794–1854) was the third Governor of the Straits Settlements, from 1833 to 1836. Prior to that, he was Resident Councillor at Penang, and then at Singapore. On the day Murchison was appointed Governor, he left for a holiday in South Africa and over the next three years, spent much of his time away from the Straits. It was Samuel Bonham – his eventual successor – who handled most of the administration of the Straits Settlements. See Justin Corfield, *Historical Dictionary of Singapore*, New ed (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) at 180.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SECOND DECADE (1829-39)

EARLY in February 1830 there was a serious outbreak of fire in Chinatown. It began in a blacksmith's shop in Circular Road, burned down Philip Street and one side of Market Street and nearly got to Commercial Square. Abdullah's account of the great fire in his *Hikayat* evidently referred to this event, and not, as his translator Mr Thomson<sup>1</sup> suggests, to the fire in 1847 at Kampong Glam. To quote from his graphic description:

After I had heard of the death of Mr Collie<sup>2</sup> [which took place in 1828] I was living in a house in the merchants' quarter, very ill with fever, and impatiently waiting to return to my college work in Malacca, when, about 7.30 pm on the 13th of the 1st Chinese moon, as the children were busily engaged in playing with *kuda api* (candle-lit paper horses), and half of the Chinese were amusing themselves, and half making great noises with their musical in-

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1 John Turnbull Thomson (1821–1884) was a surveyor and artist born in Glorum, Northumberland. He first came to the Straits in 1838 as a young man of 17 and worked as a surveyor in Penang. In 1841, he became Government Surveyor for the Straits Settlements. For the next 12 years, Thomson surveyed the island and made long-term plans for the development of Singapore Town. He was responsible for many important public buildings, including the Dalhousie Memorial, the Ellenborough Buildings and Horsburgh Lighthouse. Thomson had an artistic hand, and his many articles, paintings and sketches of colonial Singapore provide an excellent glimpse into the life of early settlers in Singapore. Proficient in Malay, he completed the first English translation of large segments of Munshi Abdullah's *Hikayat Abdullah*. Thomson moved to New Zealand and became its first Surveyor-General in 1876. He retired in 1879 and died in 1884 at his home in Invercargill. See Justin Corfield, *Historical Dictionary of Singapore* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2011), at 272.

2 The Reverend David Collie of the London Missionary Society. Collie was based in Malacca from about 1822. He spoke and read Chinese fluently and translated *The Four Books*, a classical Chinese text, which he printed in Malacca in 1828. He died on 27 Feb 1828 on a ship off the coast of Singapore. See *The Missionary Register for 1828* (London: LB Seeley & Sons, 1829), at 528.



struments – I heard the cry of ‘Fire! Fire!’ ‘The fire spread rapidly in the direction of the house wherein he was lying down, and so startled him that, forgetting all his personal belongings and the \$400 he had in his box, he rushed out of the house with just the clothes he had on.’ I saw many coveted goods and merchandise in the middle of the streets which people had thrown out like rubbish. Chests of opium were scattered about all down the streets, while spirits were flowing like a stream to the sea.<sup>3</sup>

There were no fire engines, of course, and the only water supply was by buckets carried by the convicts [29]. The fire raged for three successive nights and days. Abdullah composed a poem of this fire which ‘I named *Singapura Terbakar*, and is well known to all Singaporeans and Malakites.’

In the year 1831 thirty-six Chinese merchants and traders formed themselves into a Family Benefit Society under the name of *Keng Tek Whay* (庆德楼). The Society still exists and owns eight valuable shophouses in the Town of Singapore. No new members have ever been admitted, and all the present members are representatives of the original members, some of whom are referred to in these records, viz: See Boon Tiong,<sup>4</sup> Ang Choon Seng,<sup>5</sup>

3 JT Thomson, *Translations from the Hakayit Abdulla (bin Abdulkadar), Munshi, with comments* (London: HS King, 1874), at 230.

4 See Boon Tiong (1807-1888), also referred to as ‘Seet Boon Tiong’, ‘Ban Tiong’ or ‘Boon Tiong’ in records, was an influential Chinese merchant who facilitated trade missions between the British and Pahang and Kelantan. He was said to be a close friend of pioneer merchant Alexander Laurie Johnston, after whom Johnston Pier was named. A Malacca-born Baba, See arrived in Singapore in 1825 as one of the early Chinese settlers and set up a trading business. He retired to Malacca in 1848 and became a Justice of the Peace in 1860. Boon Tiong Street is named after him. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd’s Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 717.

5 Also known as Ung Choon Seng or Ung Choon Sing. Born in Malacca, Ang Choon Seng (1805-1852) was a commissioning agent, merchant, and philanthropist. Along with several Chinese leaders, he wrote in 1850 to William John Butterworth, Governor of the Straits Settlements, to request a more lenient approach towards weddings, funerals, prayers, festive celebrations and other

Chee Teang Why,<sup>6</sup> Chee Kim Guan<sup>7</sup> and So Guan Chuan.<sup>8</sup> The last two named 'brethren' are presumably the two Chinese gentlemen who were elected to sit on the first Committee of the Chamber of Commerce in 1837.

Buckley in his *Anecdotal History*<sup>9</sup> speaks of Singapore as being in a lawless state in 1831. Several murders were reported in one week, while

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Chinese customs. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 145.

- 6 Also known as Chee Teangwy, Chee Tiong Why and Chee Teang Wye. Along with Ang Choon Seng (see above), Chee Teang Why was one of several Chinese merchants who petitioned Governor Butterworth for more sympathetic treatment of the Chinese. He owned and operated Teang-why & Co (active 1840-1858) in Market Street, and contributed generously to various causes including the Chinese Free School. He died in 1861. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 162.
- 7 Another Malacca-born merchant, Chee Kim Guan was a founding member of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce. His son, Chee Yam Chuan, was elected Head of the Malacca Hokkien community. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 163.
- 8 Born in 1808, So Guan Chuan became one of the wealthiest Straits Chinese in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He contributed generously to the building funds of the Thian Hock Keng Temple in Telok Ayer Street and became its General Manager in the 1840s. Guan Chuan Street in Tiong Bahru is named after him. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 53.
- 9 See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819-1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902). Charles Burton Buckley (1844-1912) was born on 30 January 1844, the second son of Reverend John Wall Buckley, Vicar of Paddington, London. One of his younger brothers, Henry Burton Buckley (1845-1935) became Lord Justice of Appeal in England. Charles Buckley was educated at Winchester College, but did not attend university on account of his poor health. His neighbour, William Henry Read (then head of AL Johnston & Company in Singapore) suggested that he go to Singapore to recuperate and offered him a job. Buckley arrived in Singapore in 1864, aged 20. While working with AL Johnston & Co, he read law privately and in 1875, left AL Johnston & Co and worked briefly as assistant to Attorney-General Thomas Braddell. In 1877, he became partner at the firm of Rodyk & Davidson, retiring in 1904. In 1884, Buckley acquired and revived the defunct *Singapore Free Press*, turning it into a daily and expanding its history column. Buckley was active in numerous committees and causes and was the first person to import and drive a car in

no proper measures were available to trace the criminals or to secure life and property in the outlying parts of the town. Very little was known of the island beyond the hills behind the town, and convict labour was being then employed in road-making from Kampong Glam across the Kallang and Gaylang bridges. While a gang of Chinese convicts was at work on a road on the outskirts of the town, a number of Chinese ran out of the jungle and rescued ten of these convicts by carrying them off and knocking off their irons. The whole police force, eighteen strong, was mustered and recovered five of the convicts. It was said at the time that there was a secret society exceeding 1,000 men established in the jungle and that they had actually an armed fort there. This seems to have been the first mention of secret societies in Singapore.

On the 8th of June 1831 a dinner was given to all the influential residents by Choa Chong Long to celebrate his forty-fourth birthday. He was born circa 1788 in [30] Malacca, as his father was the Captain China there when the settlement was under Dutch rule. In the judgment of Maxwell CJ<sup>10</sup>, in the reported case of *Choa Choon Neo*<sup>11</sup> v *Spottiswoode*,<sup>12</sup> the deceased was described as a person 'born and domiciled in Singapore but of Chinese descent'. This description is ev-

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Singapore. He is most well-known for his book, *Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*. See 'The Late Mr Charles Burton Buckley' *Singapore Free Press*, 24 May 1912, at 7.

- 10 Sir Peter Benson Maxwell served as Chief Justice of the Straits Settlements from 1867 to 1871, and Recorder of Singapore from 1866 to 1871. Born in 1817, Maxwell was of Irish descent. He was called to the bar in 1841 and authored *The Interpretation of Statutes*. See Lim Kheng Eng, *Sir Peter Benson Maxwell: His Malayan Career (1856-1871)*, Department of History Academic Exercise (Singapore: University of Malaya, 1959).
- 11 Choa Choon Neo was a descendant of Choa Chong Long. In 1869, she successfully contested her ancestor's will reserving properties in Malacca and Singapore in perpetuity for 'Sin Chew' rites (for descendants to worship Choa and his wives) in favour of partible inheritance. She died in 1875. On her legal case, see *Choa Choon Neoh v Spottiswoode* [1869] 1 *Kyshe* 216.
- 12 [1869] 1 *Kyshe* 216.

idently an error. He lived in Commercial Square, and sometimes gave entertainments in European style to the British merchants and was a very intelligent and wealthy man. After the dinner above referred to, a number of toasts were drunk, including the health of Mr Ibbetson<sup>13</sup>, the Resident, and the memory of Sir Stamford Raffles, and Chong Long proposed the health of the Duke of Wellington. Wealthy and influential though he was (for at one time the natives called one of the hills near Tanjong Pagar, now demolished, Bukit Chong Long), he was apparently a man that you could not impose upon or take liberties with. To this day, the following pantun is still remembered:

Tinggi tinggi rumah Chek Chong Long  
 Di-bawahnya buat kedai kain:  
 A lang-nya bisa ular tedong  
 Bulih-kah tangkap buat main?<sup>14</sup>

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13 Robert Ibbetson served as Resident and then, from 1832 to 1834, Governor of the Straits Settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore. He arrived in Penang in September 1805 as one of the first batch of Covenanted Civil Servants and was placed in the Secretary's Office under Stamford Raffles, then the Under Secretary. In 1808, Ibbetson was sent to Rangoon to learn the Burmese language and 'to qualify himself for superintending the purchase of teak for shipbuilding, then proposed to be carried on in Penang'. This did not come to pass and Ibbetson returned to Penang the following year and joined the office of the Civil and Military Paymaster. In 1820, when the Court of Directors of the East India Company gave special permission to civil servants to cultivate spices, Ibbetson took advantage of the opportunity. In 1824, he became Secretary to the Government and two years later, became a member of the Council. When the Straits Settlements Presidency was 'downgraded' to a Residency in 1829, Ibbetson was appointed Resident of all three Settlements. In 1832, when the capital of the Straits Settlements moved from Penang to Singapore, Ibbetson became its Governor but had no real power. See 'Mr Robert Ibbetson' *Straits Times*, 26 Sep 1874, at 1.

14 As translated by G Uma Devi, this reads:

Rather tall is the house of Chek Chong Long  
 Underneath it is a shop that sells cloth  
 Alas a poisonous snake lives nearby  
 Can we catch and play with it?

He went to China in 1838, and was murdered in a house in Macao by some burglars in the middle of December. He appointed Mr William Spottiswoode<sup>15</sup> executor of his will, which contained a devise for ever of certain properties for 'sinchew' purposes, and this was probably the first Chinese will which the Courts here had to construe on that point, when it was held that such a devise was void as being in perpetuity, and not a charity.

Mr GW Earl<sup>16</sup> has this paragraph on the Malacca-born Chinese of whom Chong Long was a fine example:

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15 Very little is known of William Charles Spottiswoode save that he was one of the partners of the trading firm Spottiswoode Connolly, which had been founded in 1824 by John Connolly and Charles Spottiswoode. In 1849, the name of the firm was changed to William Spottiswoode Co. William Spottiswoode left the firm at the end of 1856. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819–1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902), at 233.

16 [Song: *Eastern Seas* (1837)]. George Windsor Earl, *The Eastern Seas or Voyages and Adventures of the Indian Archipelago in 1832–33–34* (London: Wm H Allen & Co, 1837), at 363. George Windsor Earl (1813–1865) was an English lawyer, explorer and colonial civil servant. British scholar Russell Jones writes of Earl:

George Windsor Earl was one of the many versatile amateur scholar-adventurers who found their way to the east in the nineteenth century. To Australians he is known as a 'pioneer of northern Australia'. We know from one of his books that by August 1882 he had spent several months in Fremantle, Western Australia, and since he had by then been out of England for three years he may have reached Australia by 1829. ...

He had other interests. In fact his peregrinations tended to conform to a triangular pattern stretching between London, Australia, and South-East Asia. His first recorded contact with the Indonesian area was during the period 1832–34 when, sailing northwards from Australia, he visited Java, Singapore, Sumatra, Thailand, Borneo, and other places. The book in which he described these travels, *The Eastern Seas*, is the one by which he liked to be remembered. The rest of Earl's life is reasonably well documented and can be summarised without difficulty. When he arrived in Singapore once more, in 1848, he was accompanied by his wife, acquired in London, and their baby daughter, acquired in Sydney. With family responsibilities, he settled down to less adventurous jobs. In September 1849, as we saw earlier, he settled in Singapore as a partner in the law practice of JR Logan, an occupation he was following in the crucial year 1850.

In 1852 Earl left Singapore to perform once more his triangular peregrination: in 1854 to Australia, in 1856 back to Singapore to resume his prac-

The Malacca-born Chinese hold more direct intercourse with the European merchants than the others. Many of these are born of Malay mothers, but, as they [31] always adopt the manners and mode of dress of their fathers, they are scarcely to be distinguished from the actual natives of China, and although they are probably less active and energetic than the latter, they are more enlightened and make better merchants. Many of this class who have been educated at the Malacca College speak English tolerably well, and from their constant communication with Europeans they have acquired in some measure their general habits and mode of transacting business, which renders them more agreeable to the latter than those who have not enjoyed similar advantages. They are all employed in commerce, many as independent merchants, and some are engaged as cashiers and under-clerks in European go-downs. They are always remarkably clean and well dressed, and few are obliged to resort to manual labour.<sup>17</sup>

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tice of the law. In June 1857 he entered the Public Service in Singapore, a profession which occupied the remaining eight years of his life. At first he was a magistrate and Assistant Resident Councillor in Singapore; in February 1859 he transferred to Penang, another of the Straits Settlements. Penang was less salubrious than Singapore and Earl 'whose constitution had been undermined by recurrent bouts of malaria for the past twenty years' suffered from ill health during his service there. Penang includes the strip on the opposite mainland called Province Wellesley and it was while serving there on 29 August 1863 that Earl had an attack of 'sunstroke', leading to paralysis of one side of his body. He was able to carry on in his office, but by the end of the year his condition had deteriorated to a point where he had to be given medical leave for twelve months. As a result he spent most of 1864 on sick leave in Australia.

By January 1865 he had recovered and was able to resume duty in Penang. In June 1865 he applied for transfer from the island to Province Wellesley. There again he fell ill and again had to be given twelve months' sick leave, this time in Europe. On 7 August he embarked with his wife in the *Shantung*, but two days out from Penang he died. His remains were brought back to Penang for burial.

See Russell Jones, 'George Windsor Earl and "Indonesia"' (1994) 22(64) *Indonesia Circle* 279-290, at 281-282.

17 George Windsor Earl, *The Eastern Seas or Voyages and Adventures of the Indian Archipelago in 1832-33-34* (London: Wm H Allen & Co, 1837), at 363.

A serious blot upon the Government up to this time, and for many years after, was the piracy in the waters of the Archipelago. The usual prey of the pirates was the native junks which traded between China and the Straits ports. Criticism in the press and representations by the local merchants only resulted in spasmodic efforts on the part of the Government, which did not stamp out the evil, but only scotched it from time to time. So intolerable had the situation become that in June 1832 the Chinese merchants in Singapore, with the sanction of the Government, equipped at their own expense four large trading boats, each manned by thirty Chinese, well armed and carrying several guns, to go out and attack the pirates who were lurking outside the harbour. This little fleet went out and soon fell in with two pirate prahus, one large and one small, and sank one but the other escaped. One or two Chinese were killed. The Chinese merchants had agreed to pay \$200 for every pirate boat attacked, and also \$200 to the relatives of any man who was killed in the expedition. The Government having been shamed, apparently, by the action of the Chinese, two boats were built at Malacca for protective purposes. These were armed with 24-pounder guns, and manned by Malays [32] who were trustworthy characters. It was, however, a totally inadequate provision for dealing with the widespread piracy then existing. Petitions to the King and to the Governor-General of India for more effective measures to check this evil received at last a favourable response, and in March 1836 HM *Sloop Wolf* arrived in the harbour and commenced a vigorous crusade against the pirates. As a mark of 'their grateful sense of his unwearyed and successful exertions', the European and Chinese merchants presented to Captain Stanley,<sup>18</sup> the commander of the *Wolf*, a sword

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18 Edward Stanley (1798-1878) entered the Royal Navy in 1812. While serving on HMS *Gloucester* in 1826, he was the officer in command responsible for suppressing a fire in Cronstadt and saved the Russian fleet from destruction. For his work against piracy in the region, which included attacking a large group of 18 prahus with 700 people on board in March 1835, he received thanks from the Governor General of India in Council, the Naval Commander-in-Chief Sir Bladen Capel, the Governor of Prince of Wales' Islands and Singapore, the

of honour, and a dinner was given to him and his officers on the 14th June 1837, at which complimentary speeches were made.<sup>19</sup>

Mr Buckley says that in 1832 there were some six or seven hundred Chinese Christians (Roman Catholics) and the small chapel built in 1823 or 1824 on the site of the present St Joseph's Boys' School had become too cramped. But Mr Earl writes:

Of the 300 native Christians mentioned in the census (of 1833) 'at least nine-tenths are Roman Catholics, who are either descendants of the Portuguese or converts to the French missionaries'.

With the arrival of the Rev Etienna Albrand<sup>20</sup> in 1833 the work of the Mission among the Chinese received an impetus and met with much success. In the course of a few months, with the assistance of the funds subscribed by the inhabitants, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, and with the gratuitous labour of his Chinese converts, he completed his new chapel. About six years later, in June 1839, the Rev John Tschu, a Chinese Catholic priest, was sent from Siam to be head of the mission in Singapore. John Tschu was born in the province of Canton of a respectable family, his father being a literate mandarin. He had been sent, when young, by a French missionary to the college in Penang, and after doing mission work there, he was transferred to Siam, where his work flourished. He laboured for nine years in Singapore, during which time he built up a large congregation and [33]

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Penang Chamber of Commerce, the Madras Chamber of Commerce as well as the Singapore Chamber of Commerce. See Richard Gott, *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (London, Verso, 2011) at 287–288.

19 See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819–1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 280.

20 Song appears to misspell Albrand's first name. Etienne-Raymond Albrand (1805–1853) came from Gap, in Dauphine, France. He preached to people on the streets and instructed potential converts in his house, sometimes rewarding new students with tea and tobacco. By September 1833, he had 100 Chinese converts. He also learnt Teochew, aiding in his conversion of 30 Chinese in the Riau Islands. He died a Bishop, after having worked 21 years first in Singapore and then in Thailand. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819–1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902), at 121–122.



died on the 13th July 1848. His early death was much felt by the Roman Catholic community.<sup>21</sup> He was buried in the church at the altar of St Joseph, where a granite stone was placed over his tomb. When the new church was built the coffin was opened and the bones were placed in the St Joseph chapel in the new church, and a marble slab with an inscription was put on the side wall.

In 1845 the Chinese congregation raised the sum of \$700 for the erection of a house in the school compound where religious instruction might be given to the Chinese. In the following year a plank and attap chapel was built at Bukit Timah for the Chinese congregation there, chiefly engaged in planting, and the Rev A Manduit<sup>22</sup> went to live permanently among his flock until his death in 1858. In the 'sixties Pedro Tan No Keah was an influential man among the Roman Catholic Chinese, and we find him subscribing liberally toward the cost of erecting the Chinese Church of St Peter and St Paul in Queen Street, completed in 1871. The Chinese Roman Catholic community in town having outgrown the accommodation in the aforesaid church, the Cantonese congregation has since 1910 worshipped in the Church of the Sacred Heart, situated in Tank Road.

One of the earliest 'sons of the soil' was Teo Lee, who was born in Singapore about 1833. His father came from China in a junk shortly after the foundation of the Settlement, and was for many years a gambier and pepper planter somewhere in the vicinity of Bukit Tunggal. Teo Lee started life as a cloth pedlar. Later, he opened a shop in Beach Road under the chop Tiang Bee, dealing in mercer and piece goods and as general commission agent, and gradually built up an extensive trading connection with Trengganu, Kelantan, Bali and

21 See *Singapore Free Press*, 27 Jul 1848, at 3.

22 Anatole Manduit (1817-1858) came from Coutances in Normandy, France. He studied Chinese and could converse with and hear the confessions of Chinese Christians. He actively sought funds for his church and the school until his death at age 41 on 1 Apr 1858 and was buried in the grounds of St Joseph's Church in Bukit Timah. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819-1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902), at 251.



Teo Lee



Mrs Teo Lee

Ampenan. Like many of the early settlers, Teo Lee invested his savings in landed property, and at the time of his death he was a considerable landowner. He was a great friend of the late Sultan Abubakar of [34] Johore. His two sons, Messrs Teo Eng Hock<sup>23</sup> and Teo Bah Tan,<sup>24</sup> are well-known merchants and rubber planters and dealers in Singapore. His widow, Tan Poh Neo, who is now eighty-one years of age, is the granddaughter of Tan Hong Khuay, who was mayor of Muntok. The eldest daughter of Mr Teo Lee was married to Lim Peng Nguan,<sup>25</sup> and became the mother of Mr Lim Nee Soon,<sup>26</sup> who will be referred to in a later part of this history.

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- 23 Teo Eng Hock (1871–1958) was a Straits-born Teochew. He invested in rubber plantations in his early years and, along with Tan Kah Kee, monopolised the 20<sup>th</sup> century rubber shoes manufacturing trade in Singapore. He took part in the Singapore Revolutionary Movement and later followed Sun Yat Sen. He was a founder of the Tung Meng Hui (Chinese Revolutionary League) Branch in Singapore in 1906 and of the Kuomintang Branch in Singapore in 1912. He founded Nanyang Girls' School in 1917. He returned to China in 1932 and became Mayor of Swatow. During World War II, he supported Wang Jinwei's pro-Japanese regime and was later classified as a war traitor and detained by the Kuomintang government. He retired and passed away in Hong Kong. His daughter, Teo Soon Kim, was Singapore's first female lawyer; Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean is her grand-nephew. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 109.
- 24 Along with his brother Teo Eng Hock, Teo Bah Tan is a prominent supporter of Singapore's Tung Meng Hui. He is the great-grandfather of current Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 109.
- 25 Lim Peng Nguan (d 1887) came to Singapore in the 1860s. He was a merchant and ran a sundries shop in Beach Road. He was also one of the earliest gambier and pepper planters in Singapore. Peng Nguan Street in Tiong Bahru is named after him. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 132.
- 26 Lim Nee Soon (1879–1936) studied at St Joseph's Institution and Anglo Chinese School. He lost his parents at an early age and was cared for by his maternal grandfather Teo Lee. He reclaimed over 20,000 acres of waste land for rubber and pineapple planting, and by 1910, became known as both 'Rubber King' and 'Pineapple King'. He founded Chinese High School with Tan Kah Kee in 1919. He was also a founding member of the Tung Meng Hui in Singapore and helped Sun Yat Sen acquire support and money for the revolution. He passed

Mr Earl, writing of the Chinese in Singapore during the three years 1832 to 1834, mentioned that –

The ground at the back of the town is laid out in gardens by the Chinese, who grow large quantities of fruit and vegetables for the supply of the inhabitants, while on the bank of the creek are many plantations of pepper and gambier, also cultivated by the Chinese.<sup>27</sup>

There are several sago factories on the banks of the Singapore River, a little beyond the town, owned and conducted by Chinese, in which the pith of the sago-palm imported from the neighbouring islands in Malay prahus underwent numberless washings on large wooden troughs and other processes until it became the pearl sago of commerce.

The interior of the island is almost unknown to Europeans, but there is a small independent Chinese settlement a few miles distant from the town, which is said to be very populous, and as considerable quantities of produce are brought thence to the town for sale, their plantations must be extensive. No European has yet visited them.<sup>28</sup>

The system of land tenure at that time gave no encouragement to the planter, while the inefficiency of the police, coupled with the frequent reports of the killing by tigers of Chinese planters and coolies in the newly opened plantations, kept back not a few enterprising people from agricultural pursuits.

A certain number of bad characters had already found their way to this Settlement, and these, with their ranks augmented by agricultural labourers who had been [35] in receipt of low and unremunerative wages, made their appearance as organised bands of robbers. Fortunately they were 'such arrant cowards that they retreated on the

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away in Shanghai and is buried in Nanking near the Sun Yat Sen mausoleum. The Yishun area is named after him. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 118 & 119.

27 George Windsor Earl, *The Eastern Seas, or Voyages and Adventures in the Indian Archipelago in 1832–33–34* (London: Wm H Allen & Co, 1837) at 352.

28 *Ibid.*, at 353.

slightest opposition,' and were armed with no weapons more formidable than spears.

Mr Earl, writing of agriculture in Singapore at this time, pronounced it to be 'of minor importance, when compared with commerce, for it has been by means of the latter alone that Singapore has attained its present state of prosperity'. But, two years later (in 1836), gambier and pepper plantations began to be of greater commercial importance, the yearly production of the former being about 22,000 piculs and of the latter about 10,000. On a plantation producing from 100 to 110 piculs, the average size of the gardens, six coolies were employed at wages from \$4 to \$4.50. The price of gambier was then about \$3 a picul.

In *Logan's Journal*,<sup>29</sup> we read that the cultivation of gambier by the Chinese had increased rapidly since 1830, but in 1840 it was already retrograding, as the older plantations had all become exhausted. Nothing daunted, the Chinese began to open up gardens on the adjoining coast of Johore, and by 1845 there must have been at least a hundred plantations on the mainland.

The *Free Press* of March 1839 speaks of the cultivation of gambier and pepper by the Chinese settled in the interior as the only cultivation on the Island which had yet assumed any degree of commercial importance:

It is well known to our local readers that the cultivation of pepper and gambier is always carried on in conjunction, the support which they mutually afford each other being, it seems, indispensable to the existence of either of these plantations, commonly termed 'bangsals'. There are now altogether about 350 in the Island, which we may divide into plantations of the first, second and third class.

A bangsal of the first class produces about 210 piculs of gambier annually and employs from ten to eleven [36] men, including the proprietor. To supply firewood for the boiling-house, it is neces-

29 [Song: Vol iv, p 30]. See JT Thomson, 'General Report on the Residency of Singapore, Drawn Up Principally with a View of Illustrating Its Agricultural Statistics' (1850) 4 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 27, at 30.

sary to have a tract of jungle in the immediate vicinity, and it is a serious objection to any locality for gambier-growing if it has not, at the commencement, an available extent of jungle for fuel equal to the area occupied by the plant and which it is computed will supply firewood for a term of twenty-five years. The annual produce of pepper on a bangsal of this description is about 125 to 150 piculs.

Bangsals of the second class average about 150 piculs of gambier annually and about 80 piculs of pepper, employing eight or nine men; while those of the third class, about 100 to 120 piculs of gambier annually, and about 50 piculs of pepper, there being seldom more than seven men to the latter.

The aggregate produce of the whole of the 350 bangsals in gambier and pepper is stated at fully 48,000 piculs annually of the former, and 15,000 piculs a year for the latter.

Nearly all these plantations were commenced by individuals without capital of their own, who began on small advances from the Chinese shopkeepers in town, on the security of a mortgage of their ground; and out of every three of them it is probable that two are subject to encumbrances of this description, the advances sometimes running on at a very high rate of interest, and often made in clothes and provisions at higher than market rates. The consequence is that frequently plantations are changing hands, the original settlers often absconding, leaving considerable debts behind them. Notwithstanding all this, however, the Chinese in town who support the planters, and the better class of planters themselves, affirm that a plantation is almost sure to clear off the original advances and finally yield a fair profit, if the planter is steady and industrious and abstains from gambling and opium smoking. ...

Many of the old gambier plantations, and there are some, it seems, eighteen years old in the Island, have considerably diminished in value of late years, as well from the soil being partly exhausted as from the want of firewood, all the jungle in the neighbourhood having [37] been cleared away, and requiring the settlers to proceed to a considerable distance to bring it. This is the great drawback, and in consequence of it alone several bangsals

have been given up altogether, and the ground abandoned to that inveterate enemy of all cultivation, the lalang grass.<sup>30</sup>

Major Low<sup>31</sup>, concerned about the agricultural future of the Island, in his Journal kept during 1840 and 1841 made the following observations:

The Chinese have been the chief cultivators of gambier and pepper, but then they have no attachment to the soil. Their sole object is to scourge the land for a given time, and when worn out to leave it a desert. It seems clear that, if no general cultivation of a more permanent nature than pepper and gambier can be advantageously established, the forest must ultimately reassume its dominion. The only remaining chance, therefore, would seem to be the planting of coconut, areca, and other indigenous fruit trees and incorporating them gradually with sugar cane and trees yielding an exportable produce.<sup>32</sup>

Across the Johore Straits, where there was a vast expanse of unopened territory, the Temenggong<sup>33</sup> was only too glad to welcome these Chinese agriculturalists who had been obliged to abandon their exhausted plantations in Singapore, and to encourage the more enterprising and

30 See *Singapore Free Press*, 28 Mar 1839, at 3. The quote Song extracted is edited and inaccurate, with several missing paragraphs and sentences.

31 Major, later Lieutenant-Colonel James Low of the Madras Army was for many years employed in the Straits Settlements civil service as Magistrate and Chief of Police in Penang up to 1850. He was known as a writer of agriculture, geology and the history of the Straits and the Malay Peninsula. See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert E Brooke & Roland St J Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 81; and also CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819–1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902), at 366–367.

32 It is unclear as to the precise provenance of Low's journal but it is reproduced *in extenso* in CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819–1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902), at 355–366. The above passage is found at 362.

33 In traditional Malay states, the Temenggong was an official responsible for maintaining law and order and commanding the police and army. This important non-hereditary position emerged during the development of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Malaccan state. See 'Temenggong' in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, available at <<http://global.britannica.com/topic/temenggong>> (accessed 20 Jul 2015).

adventurous among them by appointing them 'kang-chus' or concessionaires exercising jurisdiction and enjoying rights and privileges over certain rivers. In the course of opening up the plantations, there was great loss of life from wild animals, bad water supply and sickness. The planters did not sever their connection with Singapore altogether, for a number of Chinese merchants, especially Teochews, in this town, acted as financiers, making advances on the understanding that they were to have the monopoly of all produce from the plantations of their debtors.

In 1867 the Gambier and Pepper Society (or 'Kongkek') was established in Singapore for the mutual [38] protection and benefit of the financiers and planters and of the trade between Johore and this Island. The plantations in Rhio produced red gambier, which was an adulterated product, while Johore manufactured black gambier, which fetched better prices in the market. In the 'Eighties the 'Kong-kek' Cup was regularly presented by the Gambier and Pepper Society, and the 'Kang-chu' Cup by the Kang-chus of Johore for the Spring and Autumn Race-meetings.

The cultivation of pepper was found to be unprofitable while coolie labour became more expensive, and after 1905, when the railway was opened, coolie labour became more difficult to retain, as the railway afforded the coolies better chances for absconding.

The Society is now in a moribund condition, but during a period extending over forty years when the gambier and pepper trade between Johore and Singapore was considerable, the Society discharged a useful duty in arbitrating between the financiers and the planters. One of its honoured Presidents was Mr Tan Joo Tiam, who came from China about fifty years ago and established himself in business as a gambier merchant under the chop 'Hua Heng'<sup>34</sup> in Teochew Street and as a cloth merchant under the chop 'Kia Heng' in Upper Circular Road.

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34 Also spelt 'Wah Heng'. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908) at 705.



For many years he figured as one of the leading gambier and pepper planters in Johore, and he has had the honour of being decorated by the Sultan of Johore.<sup>35</sup> He is an influential member of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and acted as President during the absence from the Colony of Mr Tan Jiak Ngoh,<sup>36</sup> the substantive holder of the office.

A few Chinese landowners had tried nutmeg planting. The nutmeg had been introduced into Singapore in 1819 when 125 seedlings and 1,000 seeds were planted on Fort Canning and continued for more than thirty years with much success at the beginning, but 'the circumstance that operated against the extension of its cultivation was the scarcity of manure.' The trees took a long time before yielding any returns, and such [39] plantations as belonged to Chinese were generally so neglected that they were seldom brought up to the producing point.

Coffee planting was also tried, and Captain Newbold<sup>37</sup>, writing in 1839, says that the Chinese were so confident of success in coffee that they were everywhere extending their plantations, and there were at

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35 Ibid.

36 Tan Jiak Ngoh (1866-1939) was a Teochew merchant whose ancestors hailed from Guangdong, China. He was summoned to Singapore to take over his father's successful business and also set up his own clothing shop in Circular Road and a remittance business. He donated generously to various causes, such as the Prince of Wales' Fund, and returned to China in 1932 where he later died. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 84.

37 Thomas John Newbold (1807-1850) was born on 8 Feb 1807 and joined the 23<sup>rd</sup> regiment Madras light infantry of the East India Company in 1828. He spoke both Hindi and Persian and in 1832 was posted to Malacca. In the three years that he was in the Straits of Malacca, he 'had constant intercourse with the native chiefs on the Malayan peninsula' and 'accumulated materials for several papers contributed to the journals of the Asiatic societies of Bengal and Madras'. These papers formed the basis of his book, *A Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca, viz. Penang, Malacca and Singapore; With a History of the Malay States on the Peninsula of Malacca*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1839). Newbold was promoted to the rank of lieutenant in 1834 and captain in 1842. He died at Mahabuleswar, in the Indian state of Maharashtra, on 29 May 1850. See William Albert Samuel Hewins, 'Newbold, Thomas John' in Sidney Lee (ed), *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900*, vol 40 (New York: Macmillan & Co, 1894) at 314-315.

that time several with 2,000 to 3,000 young plants coming up. In the 'Forties Mr Kiong Kong Tuan planted out about 50 acres of coffee near Jurong, but the plantation died out and his enterprise ended in complete failure. In Dr Little's paper on 'The Habitual Use of Opium'<sup>38</sup> Mr Kong Tuan is mentioned as the holder of the farm when the retail price of opium was very high and smuggling was so great that he was a loser by the speculation, but the next farmer made a handsome monthly profit because the price of opium had meanwhile been lowered.

Mr Kiong Kong Tuan came from Penang, where he had carried on business as a merchant and established himself in Singapore. He married a daughter of the well-known Choa Chong Long, by whom he had an only son, Kiong Seok Wee, and several daughters, one of whom became the wife of Wee Bin of the steamship firm of 'Wee Bin & Co'. Mr Kong Tuan also figured as the Spirit Farmer for some years. He had a spirit factory at Pearl's Hill, and the site is still known among the Chinese as Chiu-long-san (the spirit factory hill). He died at the age of 64 years on 16th January 1854. Mr Kong Tuan was the grantee of that large tract of land comprising twenty acres which has now become a thickly populated Straits Chinese residential quarter with Chin Swee Road as the main artery, and Cornwall Street and Seok Wee Road as side streets. His son, Kiong Seok Wee, did not fancy spirit farming. He went into business with his brother-in-law, Wee Bin,<sup>39</sup> but the partnership was short-lived. In 1865 along with Wee Leong Hin, the firm of Leong Hin, Seok Wee & Co, chop Aik Ho, ship-handlers, was established at Boat [40] Quay and another under the chop Joo

38 [Song: Logan's *Journal*, vol ii (1848)]. See R Little, 'On the Habitual Use of Opium in Singapore' (1848) 2 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago & Eastern Asia* 1.

39 Wee Bin (1823-1868) was a Fujian-born shipping tycoon. He owned a fleet of more than 20 ships that plied trade routes to China and around the Malay and Indonesian archipelagos. A philanthropist as well, he contributed generous amounts to the building of the Chinese Free School, and the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States Government Medical School. (Most information is from Internet e.g. Factiva but – See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 181.)

Chin & Co. as General Merchants. 'Aik Ho' was accidentally burnt down, and as it was not covered by insurance, Mr Seok Wee sustained a severe loss which was augmented by the failure of Joo Chin & Co. He was at that time one of the proprietors of the *Singapore Daily Free Press* and *Mercantile Advertiser*. In 1869 the affairs of Mr Seok Wee and his partner were administered by the Court of Insolvent Debtors. He died in 1888 at the age of 49 years, leaving six sons and two daughters, the elder of whom became a daughter-in-law of Mr Tan Kim Ching.<sup>40</sup> The youngest son of Mr Seok Wee is Kiong Chin Eng, chief clerk and cashier at the General Hospital, a man of liberal education and a first-class player both in tennis and chess.

The *Free Press* of February 1837 contains the following complaint about cracker-firing at Chinese New Year:

It has been brought to our notice that the firing of noisy crackers by the Chinese, with or without the permission of the police, in the streets during this season of their New Year's festivals, occasions so much alarm to the owners of carriages that they are compelled to forgo their use, unless they prefer to risk their necks. The burning of large heaps of gilded joss-paper in the middle of the street may be a harmless amusement and not dangerous to pedestrians, but firing crackers is a more serious matter, and may very easily lead to damage to limb, if not to loss of life, especially as the little urchins . . . think it a very fine piece of fun to plant one right in the track of your passing or advancing vehicle. This ought not to be permitted, or if it does seem meet to show respect for the 'customs

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40 Malacca-born Tan Kim Ching (1829-1892) was Tan Tock Seng's eldest son, and a prominent businessman and philanthropist. He founded one of the earliest Chinese multinational rice-trading companies, becoming the 'Rice King of Singapore' in the 1870s. He served as the Hokkien Huay Kuan's president for over 30 years from 1860. He was also one of the founders of Anglo Chinese School. He held various important appointments, including that of Consul-General and Special Commissioner for Japan, Siam and Russia in the Straits, and was the first Asian to be elected member of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Tan Kim Cheng Road in Bukit Timah is named after him. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 82.

of the natives' they should be restricted at least to particular hours and places.<sup>41</sup>

On the 20th February 1837, following upon a meeting held twelve days earlier of all the merchants, agents and others interested in the trade of Singapore, a Chamber of Commerce was established, composed of [41] the principal European and native merchants, and the first Committee elected consisted of eleven persons; including two Chinese, Chee Kim Guan<sup>42</sup> and So Guan Chuan,<sup>43</sup> and Syed Abubakar. Newbold has this remark on the subject: 'The liberality of sentiment displayed by the British merchants in opening the doors of the Chamber to the natives, and in enrolling them on the first committee is proof of a good and honourable feeling which will no doubt be reciprocated and tend to the best results.'<sup>44</sup> Just five months later two Chinese members of the Chamber were expelled from it for having sold to a Jew four cases of opium, after putting in spurious contents of an inferior quality and weight.

Buckley says that up to this time no Chinese woman had ever come to Singapore from China, and the newspapers said that, in fact, only two genuine Chinese women were, or at any time had been, in the place, and they were two small-footed ladies who had been, some years before, exhibited in England:

The commercial activity of the Chinese is seen to the greatest advantage during the annual visit of the junks from China. These remain in the harbour from December until June, and throughout the whole period boats filled with Chinese are continually passing and repassing among the shipping, giving to the roads the appearance of a floating fair.

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41 See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819–1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 313.

42 See note on Chee Kim Guan at n 7 above.

43 See note on So Guan Chuan at n 8 above.

44 TJ Newbold, *A Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca, viz. Penang, Malacca and Singapore; With a History of the Malay States on the Peninsula of Malacca*, Vol 1 (London: John Murray, 1839) at 394.

The first junk, which arrives generally a little before Christmas, is most anxiously looked for, and when its approach is notified by the crew of a Malay sampan which has been on the look-out to the eastward, the greatest bustle pervades the Chinese community. ... Many hasten off to the vessel to learn the news from China. ... The first boat reaches the junk when she is still several miles distant, and as she nears the town she gains an accession of bulk at every fathom, until at last the unwieldy mass slowly trails into the roads, surrounded by a dense mass of boats, having the appearance of a locust which has inadvertently crossed an ants' nest, and is dragging after it countless myriads of the enraged inhabitants, attached to its [42] legs and feelers. As the decks of the junk are always crowded with emigrants, the greater proportion of the visitors are obliged to remain in the boats, and these endeavour to gain as much information as they can by shouting out questions to the people on board.

Other junks soon arrive, and although these do not excite quite so much interest as the first, the same scene is enacted over each. For a day or two after their arrival, there is little business transacted, as the crews are all engaged in building roofs over the vessels to shelter the wares which are to be exposed for sale on the decks. When these arrangements are completed, the fair commences, and the junks are surrounded from morning till night by the boats of the Chinese traders from the shore.<sup>45</sup>

Mr Earl's description of the landing of the emigrants from the junks in those days is equally applicable to our own time, with the necessary modifications:

They usually came ashore in large cargo boats, each carrying from fifty to sixty persons, scarcely any space being left for the rowers. As the boat approached the landing place, which was always on these occasions crowded with Chinese, the emigrants would cast anxious glances among them, and a ray of delight would occasionally brighten the countenance of one of the 'high aspirants' on recognising the face

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45 George Windsor Earl, *The Eastern Seas or Voyages and Adventures of the Indian Archipelago in 1832-33-34* (London: Wm H Allen & Co, 1837), at 365-367.

of a relative or friend, on whose favourable report he had probably decided on leaving the country.<sup>46</sup>

Abdullah, in his *Kesah Pelayaran*, has given us a very full and interesting account of a mission undertaken by him and one Grandpre (an Englishman) to Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan, being in charge of letters from Mr Bonham<sup>47</sup> to the Rajah Bendahara<sup>48</sup>, the Rajah Temenggong and the Yang di-pertuan at Kelantan. The arrangements were made by two Chinese merchants, Poh Eng<sup>49</sup> and Ban Tiong<sup>50</sup> by name, who had despatched money and merchandise to Kelantan in their boats, which could not return owing to the disturbed state [43] of the country. On the 27th March 1838 the expedition left in Mr Scott's ketch *Maggie Lauder* along with Mr Boustead's<sup>51</sup> *Waterwitch*. Abdullah

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46 Ibid, at 367–368.

47 Sir Samuel George Bonham (1803–1863) was born in Feversham, Kent, the son of Captain George Bonham. He served as Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1837 until 1847, becoming Governor of Hong Kong in 1848 until his retirement in England in 1854. See Robert P Dod, *The Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage of Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Whitaker & Co, 1860), at 124–125; & GB Endacott, *A Biographical Sketch-book of Early Hong Kong* (Hong Kong University Press, 1962) 30–35.

48 This administrative position within classical Malay kingdoms, comparable to a vizier, existed until the intervention of European powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sultans appointed the bendahara to his hereditary position; both shared the same lineage. See RO Windstedt, 'Bendaharas and Temenggungs' (1932) 10(1) *Journal of Malayan Branch of Royal Asiatic Society* 55–66.

49 Chia Poh Eng (birth and death unknown) was a Hokkien Baba trader from Malacca and one of 36 merchants who co-founded a Family Benefit Society under the name Keng Tek Whay. His son was Chia Ann Siang. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 195.

50 See note on See Boon Tiong at n 4 above.

51 Edward Boustead was an Englishman who arrived in Singapore in 1828 en-route to China. He saw the business opportunities offered by the vibrant trade settlement and founded Boustead and Company. The company initially traded spices, coconut, tea, tin, tobacco and silk. Today, it is a holding company with interests ranging from information and data systems to marketing services, and the second oldest company of European origin in Singapore. Boustead retired to England in 1850. See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert E Brooke & Roland St J Brad-

says that he asked for \$100 as his fee, which on the arbitration of a Chinese merchant Kim Swee was fixed at \$80. The mission having been successfully accomplished, after exciting experiences both on land and sea, Abdullah reported at the shop of Baba Ban Tiong, and was greeted with the remark:

You have arrived safely, it is well: but you will be paid nothing as your fee. Tomorrow we will meet at Baba Kim Swee's shop to discuss the matter.

The *Kesah* goes on to say that both Grandpre and Abdullah went to Ban Tiong for payment, and not getting satisfaction they threatened legal proceedings. Grandpre's agreed fee of \$120 was paid, and he was asked not to tell Abdullah that he had been paid in full. Poh Eng offered Abdullah \$40 in settlement, and later \$60 – which Abdullah says he refused to accept and laid his complaint before a magistrate, whereupon the full fee of \$80 was paid to him.

It has been found impossible to get any information concerning some of the Chinese merchants whose names appear in these pages. Baba Kim Swee mentioned in the *Kesah* was probably the Chinese merchant Yeo Kim Swee (杨金水)<sup>52</sup> who did a large business in Boat Quay between Market Street and Bonham Street, and who, according

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dell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore Vol 2* (London: John Murray, 1921), at 189-191 & Melanie Chew, *Boustead 1828* (Singapore: Boustead & Co, 2008) at 6-10.

52 Yeo Kim Swee was originally from Penang and came to Singapore in 1829. See 柯木林 《新华历史人物列传》 (Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 55-56.

to Mr James Guthrie,<sup>53</sup> had employed Seah Eu Chin<sup>54</sup> in his early days here as book-keeper. In 1831 or thereabouts Kim Swee bought half of the land belonging to Morgan & Co's estate, extending from the corner of High Street near the Court House to the bridge on the riverside. He erected houses on this land which afterwards was acquired by Seah Eu Chin.

During this decade several retail druggists' shops, e.g. Kye Guan, Seng Tek Kee, Tong Sian and Hok Ann Tong, were already doing a good business. The last named was started by Lee Eng Guan, a physician who had come from China and in time got to be well known. In those days the fee paid to a Chinese doctor [44] was only ten cents. Lee Eng Guan married a niece of Tan Che Sang,<sup>55</sup> and their only son

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53 James Guthrie (1813–1900) arrived in Singapore in January 1837, and became a partner in his uncle, Alexander Guthrie's company – Guthrie & Company – in 1837. By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the company was a successful merchant house trading British goods for produce from the Straits. James Guthrie headed its Singapore office from 1847. Guthrie Lane is named after him. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819–1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 65–66; and Norman Edwards & Peter Keys, *Singapore: A Guide to Buildings, Streets and Places* (Singapore: Times Book International, 1988), at 447.

54 Seah Eu Chin (also spelt 'Siah U Chin') was a Teochew who came to Singapore in 1823 from Swatow. Heir to Yeo Kim Swee, he took over Yeo's lands and assets. He married the daughter of Tan Ah Hun, the Teochew Capitan China of Perak, and retired in 1864, after which his brother-in-law Tan Seng Poh took over the family's business. Seah's sons took over from Tan after his death in 1879, and the family continued to dominate the pepper and gambier business and opium farming. The Seah family also exercised a controlling influence over a large section of the Teochew community. In the 1850s, Seah emerged as a leader of the Teochew community and was regarded by the British as one of the 'headmen' responsible for the conduct of the community. He is the father of Seah Liang Seah, Seah Peck Seah and Seah Chiu Seah who were leading lights in Straits Chinese society in the 1880s and 1890s. See Carl A Trocki, *Singapore: Wealth, Power and the Culture of Control* (London: Routledge, 2006) at 43.

55 Tan Che Sang (1763–1835) was one of the earliest merchants from Malacca to come to Singapore when it was first set up as a settlement. On the accuracy of his name, see Chapter 2 n 16. Born in Quanzhou, he left China at 15 to seek his fortune. After stints in Riau, Penang and Malacca, he settled in Singapore in 1819 until his death. Reported to be the richest tycoon of his time, he was said to also be a gambling addict and a miser, apparently hoarding his wealth



Lee Boon Lim, born in Singapore in 1842, became engaged in export and import business with Shanghai, but died at the age of 31 before he had managed to establish the business on a sound footing, leaving a son Lee Phan Hok aged 11. After being educated at Raffles Institution, where Mr RW Hullett<sup>56</sup> had already taken up the appointment of Principal, Mr Lee Phan Hok was employed in the firm of Chip Hock & Co, Provision and Wine Merchants in Raffles Square. This firm was begun by E Chip Hock in partnership with Tan Beng Teck,<sup>57</sup> a Straits-born Chinese, who, after some years' residence in Japan, had returned to Singapore with a large consignment of lacquer and brass ware and porcelain, and the earlier firm of Beng Teck, Chip Hock & Co was one of the first shops to deal in Japanese ware. Chip Hock & Co, however, had to be wound up, and Mr Lee Phan Hok joined the Police Office as clerk and interpreter in 1881, retiring in 1897. He started a spirit shop

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in iron boxes and sleeping among them. See George Windsor Earl in Chapter 2, n 20. See also, CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819–1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 216; & CM Turnbull, *A History of Singapore: 1819-1988* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989) at 13-14 and 25-26.

56 Richmond William Hullett (1843-1914) was originally from Derbyshire. Educated at Cambridge, where he earned a first-class honours degree, he left for Singapore in 1871 where he was appointed Principal of Raffles Institution until his retirement in 1906. He then became an Inspector of schools in the Straits Settlements and Director of Public Instruction in Singapore. Hullett was also a passionate botanist and discovered the *Bauhunia hulletti*, an orchid-like plant, on Mount Ophir, Malaysia. A variant of the *Bauhunia*, appears on the Hong Kong national flag, coins and coat of arms. See *A Cambridge Alumni Database* (University of Cambridge); and Robert Harold Compton et al, 'An Investigation into the Seedling Structure in the Leguminosae' (1913) 41 *Journal of the Linnean Society, Botany* 1–122, at 12–15.

57 Tan Beng Teck (birth and death unknown) hailed from Penang. He was said to have a fine command of both the Chinese and Malay languages and translated at least four Chinese novels which were published in 1889 in Singapore. He was also among the first persons in the Straits Settlements to translate Chinese works into colloquial Malay. See Claudine Salmon (ed), *Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia (17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries)* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013) at 280.

in the following year and still owns it. He has acted and continues to act as agent to collect house rents in Singapore for Malacca landlords, like the late Mr Tan Chay Yan<sup>58</sup> and Mr Seet Kee Ann.<sup>59</sup> He has travelled extensively in Japan, China and India, is a man of liberal views and is always ready to help in works of charity. He was one of the early adherents of the Singapore reformed party which discarded the queue in 1898. The cause of female education finds in him a keen and consistent supporter.

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58 A grandson of Tan Tock Seng, Tan Chay Yan (1870-1916) inherited a vast fortune along with his brothers. He was the first practical rubber planter in Malaya and played an important role in setting up Tan Kah Kee in the rubber business, selling him 180,000 rubber seeds at a bargain. He owned significant tracts of land in Singapore and visited it to encourage friends to take up rubber planting. Tan also played an active part in the public life of Malacca for several years, being appointed a Justice of the Peace when he was just 24 years old and serving as Municipal Commissioner. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 75-76 and also See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 842.

59 Seet Kee Ann (1863-1924) was a Malaccan merchant and landed proprietor. He planted tapioca, gambier and pepper and in 1897 became partner and manager of opium and spirit revenue farms in Malacca. A prominent community leader, he was President of the Hokkien Huay Kuan and a member of the Malacca Chinese Chamber of Commerce. He was also appointed Municipal Commissioner in 1895 and a Justice of the Peace in 1901. Jalan Kee Ann in Malacca is named after him. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 160.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE THIRD DECADE (1839-49)

IN his Diary for July 1839 Sir James Brooke<sup>1</sup> (afterwards Rajah of Sarawak) gives his impressions of the Chinese in Singapore:

Emigrants from the Celestial Empire greatly exceed the natives of all other countries put together, and form the chief mass of labourers and shopkeepers. I know not whether most to admire the Chinese for their many virtues or to despise them for their glaring defects and vices. Their industry exceeds that of any other people on the face of the earth, they are laborious, patient and cheerful; but on the other hand they are corrupt, supple and exacting, yielding to their superiors and tyrannical to those who fall into their power. The most interesting class of Chinese are the squatters in the jungle around the high hill of Bukit Timah. Their habitations may be distinguished like clear specks amidst the woods, and from each a wreath of smoke arises, the inmates being constantly engaged in the boiling of gambier. We may estimate at nearly 2,000 these people who, straying from the fold of civilisation, become wild and lawless on its very confines.

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1 Popularly known as the first White Rajah of Sarawak, James Brooke (1803-1868) was a true colonialist. Born and raised in India, he was more at home in the Far East than he ever was in England. Attempts to educate him in England were unsuccessful and after a brief stint there, during which he ran away from school, he returned to India to join the British East India Company. He arrived in Kuching in 1838 during the Iban and Bidayuh revolt against the Sultan. Brooke helped to quell the rebellion and the Sultan gratefully bestowed upon him the position of Rajah of Sarawak. Brooke then set about quashing the piracy that plagued the region. Though hugely successful, he had to face a formal inquisition on charges that he used excessive force against the natives. The charges were dismissed and he continued to rule Sarawak until his death, with several of his descendants succeeding him as Rajah. See Bob Recce, *The White Rajahs of Sarawak: A Borneo Dynasty* (Singapore: Archipelago Press, 2004).

The nature of the country renders control difficult, if not impossible, so that they may be said to live beyond the reach of all law, and frequently resort to acts of violence and robbery. They are, however, habitually prudent and frugal, and if permitted would in the day of their prosperity lay by a sufficiency to meet any reverse of fortune, and so might gradually emerge from the jungle and commence labour in the town, but this [46] desirable object is defeated by their own countrymen, who, making advances of money on their arrival and monopolising the supplying of their common wants at an enormous profit, load them with an irredeemable debt and render them a nuisance instead of a benefit to the colony.<sup>2</sup>

In 1840 two Chinese firms, Chong-san Seng-chai & Co and Kim Seng & Co, both having offices at Boat Quay, figured as members of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce. Other Chinese firms already established at this date were Hooding & Co, Teang-why & Co, Tan Tock Seng<sup>3</sup> and Whampoa.

Tan Kim Seng, the founder of the well-known firm of Kim Seng & Co, was born in 1805 in Malacca, which was also the birthplace of his father. Coming to Singapore, he embarked in business as a trader and by his perseverance, intelligence and integrity he rose steadily in the world and left a large fortune to his descendants. He was made a JP in 1850 on the death of Tan Tock Seng, and was highly respected by the

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2 See Sir James Brooke, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes, Down to the Occupation of Labuan: From the Journals of James Brooke* (London: John Murray, 1848) at 9–10.

3 Tan Tock Seng (1798-1850) was one of Singapore's earliest pioneers and success stories. Born in Malacca to humble Hokkien-Peranakan parentage, he moved to Singapore in 1819 to sell fruit, vegetables and poultry on Boat Quay. His business did well and he went on to acquire land, property and plantations. He is best remembered for his contribution to the hospital that bears his name. Tan Tock Seng Hospital served the poor Chinese community, with Tan often personally paying the expenses of patients there. His wife and later one of his sons continued to support the hospital after his death. See, Kamala Devi Dhoraingham & Dhoraingham S Samuel, *Tan Tock Seng: Pioneer – His Life, Times, Contributions & Legacy* (Kota Kinabalu: Natural History Publications (Borneo), 2003).



Tan Kim Seng

whole community, and his advice on Chinese questions was frequently sought by the Government. He was a public benefactor on a large scale, and numerous are the gifts which bear his name and serve to keep his memory green. He constructed the Kim Seng Bridge over the river close to the Stadt House in Malacca; he built and endowed the Chinese Free School known as 'Chui Eng Si E' in Amoy Street, Singapore, and dedicated to the public the thoroughfare known as Kim Seng Road, leading from River Valley Road to Havelock Road. He was the President of the principal Chinese Temple in Malacca and leader of the Chinese community in Singapore and Malacca. A warm supporter of Tan Tock Seng Hospital, he used to send annually at Chinese New Year a ration of pork and a few cents for each of the inmates. In 1850 he was a member of the committee appointed to arrange for sending exhibits to the Great Exhibition of 1851 at the Crystal Palace, London.

Upon the completion of Kim Seng & Co's new godowns [47] in Battery Road (for many years occupied by Stiven & Co and recently sold), Mr Kim Seng entertained the European community and his native friends to a ball and supper. The offices which occupy the upper floor of the godowns were the scene of the entertainment, the front room overlooking the river being fitted up as a dancing saloon. At the supper Mr Kim Seng's health was proposed by Mr Thomas Church<sup>4</sup> in appropriate terms and drunk with the greatest enthusiasm by his guests. For the comfort of his native friends, some of the side rooms were laid out with tables of refreshments suited to their various tastes.

This Ball, which took place on February 21, 1852, furnished materials for an amusing contribution to *Household Words* of June 19, 1852:

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4 Thomas Church (1798-1860) served throughout the Straits Settlements' administrations. He was Deputy Resident Councillor in Penang in the early 1830s, becoming full Resident Councillor in 1834, and in the 1840s became Assistant Resident Councillor in Malacca. He then moved to Singapore in 1842 as Resident Councillor, a post he held for almost 20 years. He was known as a conscientious public servant who genuinely cared for the welfare and advancement of the people. See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 86.



Chinese Free School (Ghi-ok) in Amoy Street

Kim Sing, a merchant well known as an Antonio on the Rialto of Singapore, conceived a few weeks ago the intrepid design of giving the first Chinese Ball ever beheld in this part of the world. Having recently erected a spacious godown or suite of chambers and warehouses, he resolved to convert one of these into a magnificent banquet hall and dancing room. ...

Numerous invitations were issued to gentlemen and ladies of all tribes, who were requested to be present in their respective costumes on the appointed evening at the godown of Kim Sing. ...

I had of course about me (as everybody else had) the usual prejudice of my own race, and, therefore, on being presented to the master of the house, with his pig-tail, sharp features and Mongolian eyes, it was with much difficulty that I kept my mirth under polite restraint. ... The ball room was not smaller than the body of a good-sized English church, with a row of pillars on each side, under the galleries, behind which the spectators thronged. ... The cluster of faces peering out from under the pillars was now and then lighted up with laughter as strangely-united couples whirled past. ... A young lady from Calcutta, dressed after the most elaborate fashion of the city of palaces, got fearfully entangled in a Schottische with a Chinese [48] mandarin, whose large, jet-black tail descended considerably below his waist. As he hopped and frisked, the tail flew about in the most dangerous manner. No doubt could be entertained, however, that the gentleman had been taking lessons for a fortnight or three weeks, because he really went through the business of the dance very respectably. At length, as ill luck would have it, one of his red slippers came off. A burst of laughter, which it was impossible to restrain, shook the fat sides of the host at this disaster, while the unhappy How Guim Foo quitted his partner and rushed, with his long tail like a comet, to regain his shoe – for to be shoeless is to be disgraced in Celestial eyes.

At another time, and in another part of the room, the tails of two of the Chinese, as they passed one another, back to back, hooked together, perhaps by the strings which tied them. While the gentlemen butted forward with their heads, after the manner of rams, to dissolve their involuntary partnership, the chosen partners ran into each other's arms and whirled on in the waltz without them.



Becoming by degrees a little tired, I slipped behind the pillars for rest. Here I observed neat little tables in front of luxurious sofas, on which several Celestials reclined at their full length, smoking opium. They appeared to be in a delicious state of dreaminess, imagining themselves, perhaps, in the vicinity of the Lake of Lilies, with orange and tea trees blossoming around them. Near these were two or three Hindoos smoking the hookah; in the neighbourhood a solitary Turk who bore in his countenance an expression of infinite disdain for the infidels of all colours whom he saw around him.... To describe fitly the supper which followed, I ought to have studied for three years under some Parisian gastronome. It was a chaos of dainties, each more tempting than the other. All the fruits of the Indian Archipelago, of India, China and the West – some in their natural state, others exquisitely preserved – were piled around us. There were bird's-nest soups, puppy ragouts, pillaus of kangaroos' tails, fish of all kinds, and pastry in profusion. And then for the wines – all the wines that France, Germany and Hungary [49] could produce sparkled on the board, and the most anxious care was taken that everyone should be supplied with what he most desired. While we were regaling ourselves, delicious strains of music, issuing from I know not where, stole into the apartment. This I thought much better than a noisy band, destroying or bewildering one's appetite, from a gallery immediately overhead. ...<sup>5</sup>

On the 18th November 1857 Mr Kim Seng offered the Government a sum of \$13,000, a princely sum in those days, for the purpose of bringing a better supply of water into the town. He stipulated that the whole of that sum should be devoted to the purpose specified and that the works, when completed, should be taken charge of by the Government or the Municipality, and always maintained in an efficient state.

'His offer is hereby accepted', wrote Mr Blundell<sup>6</sup>, the Governor in January 1859, 'with warm acknowledgments, and the assurance

5 James Augustus St John, 'A Chinaman's Ball' (1852) 5 *Household Word* 331.

6 Edmund Augustus Blundell was born in England in 1804. His career in South-east Asia began in Burma, where he was Commissioner of Tenasserim from 1833 to 1843. He then became Resident Councillor of Malacca and later Pen-

that the conditions imposed by him shall be strictly carried out'. The sanction of the Governor-General in Council to the work being undertaken having been obtained, plans and estimates were prepared, but matters dawdled on, and the first water-works were not finished till 1877 and opened in 1878. In 1882 the Municipality erected the large fountain close to Johnston's Pier with the inscription: *This Fountain is erected by the Municipal Commissioners in Commemoration of Mr Tan Kim Seng's Donation Towards the Cost of the Singapore Water-works* – a matter of fourteen years after the death of the donor, for Mr Tan Kim Seng had died on the 14th March 1864 at Malacca at the age of 59 years.

Mr Tan Kim Seng maintained his popularity with the European community until the end of his life. One of the recorded events of the year 1861 was a Ball given during the race week in May, in the Masonic Lodge on the Esplanade, by Mr Kim Seng to all the [50] Europeans. It must have been of him that Mr Cameron<sup>7</sup> has this note in his book:<sup>8</sup>

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ang, before assuming the position of Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1855 to 1859. He married an English lady, but it is believed his heart remained in Burma, where he had 11 children with a long-standing mistress. He died in England in 1868. See Justin Corfield, *Historical Dictionary of Singapore* (Lanham, Toronto & Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, 2011) at 39; see also, Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 87.

7 One of the earlier editors of *The Straits Times*, John Cameron (1835-1881) lived in Singapore for about 30 years, during which he was a prominent and popular resident. He moved to Singapore in 1861, and with some friends, bought over *The Straits Times*. He became editor, growing interested in Malayan history and society. Soon he began writing his own book, *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India*, which was published in 1865. Active in Singapore society, he was proprietor of trading firm John Cameron & Co, sat on a committee to establish the Raffles Library and Museum (precursor of the National Museum), was Honorary Secretary of the Singapore Sporting Club and otherwise aided in the expansion and development of the Straits Settlements. See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St. John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vols 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 92-94.

8 [Song: *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India* (1865)].

A Chinaman who had come to Singapore, a poor man about thirty years ago, died in March 1864, worth close upon two million dollars. He had grown up to be an extensive merchant, planter and tin miner, had adopted the settlement as his home and had left behind him many memorials of his public spirit and charity.<sup>9</sup>

In April 1840 was published the first account of a Chinese procession in the town, held in honour of a goddess or the statue of one which had been imported from China.

The procession extended nearly a third of a mile, to the usual accompaniment of gongs, and gaudy banners of every colour, form and dimension. ... The chief feature of the procession was the little girls from five to eight years of age, carried aloft in groups on gaily ornamented platforms, and dressed in every variety of Tartar and Chinese costumes. The little creatures were supported in their places by iron rods, which were concealed under their clothes, and their infant charms were shown off to the greatest advantage by the rich and peculiar dresses in which they were arrayed, every care being taken to shield them with umbrellas from the sun's rays. ... The divinity herself was conveyed in a very elegant canopy chair, or palanquin, of yellow silk and crape, and was surrounded by a bodyguard of Celestials, wearing tunics of the same colour. We have not been able to ascertain the various attributes of the goddess, but it seems she is highly venerated: and a very elegant temple, according to Chinese taste, has been built in the town for her reception. She is called by the Chinese Thien-siang-sing-bo (or Ma-cho-po), being the deity commonly termed the Mother of the Heavenly Sages. She is supposed to be the especial protectress of those who navigate the deep: at least, it is to her shrine as the [51] Goddess of the Sea that the Chinese sailors pay the most fervent adoration, there being an altar dedicated to her in every junk that goes to sea. The procession is regarded as a formal announcement to the Chinese of her advent in this Settlement, and the exhibition,

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9 John Cameron, *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1865), at 139, footnote.

with the feasting attendant thereon, is stated to cost more than \$6,000.<sup>10</sup>

This is evidently the Chinese temple described by Major Low in his *Journal* (1840-1) as a temple –

... lately erected, of elaborate workmanship and very curious in its way. The granite pillars and much of the stone ornamental work have been brought from China, and the latter is exceedingly grotesque. The interior and the cornices are adorned with elaborate carving in wood. Outside are painted tiles and edging of flowers, fruits, etc, formed out of variegated pottery which is broken to pieces and then cut with scissors.<sup>11</sup>

The firm of Whampoa & Co was already well known in 1840 as provisioner and shipchandler to HM Navy, in Telok Ayer Street. Whampoa senior came to Singapore in its earliest days and kept a shop to supply the shipping and town with beef, bread and vegetables, and the business prospered. After his death, his son Hoo Ah Kay Whampoa carried on and extended the business and became a prominent figure in the life of the Settlement for many years. Mr Gilbert Angus<sup>12</sup> and Mr Whampoa junior were at one time partners in business. The firm was enterprising and attempted to supply the requirements of the community in the matter of ice by establishing in 1854 an ice-house and

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10 CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 345–346.

11 We are unable to ascertain the source of this quote.

12 Born in the Shetland Islands, Scotland, Gilbert Angus (1815-1887) moved to Bencoolen, Java, with his parents before arriving in Singapore in the 1840s. Initially a bookkeeper with the firm Shaw, Whitehead & Co, he soon left to go into business with Whampoa. Both parties prospered, and Angus went on to own nutmeg plantations and numerous other pieces of land in Singapore, including the hills of Tanglin. He also acted as a Municipal Commissioner. He died in his home on Armenian Street on 24 Mar 1887, leaving a large family. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 658; and See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St. John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 368.

stocking it with ice from America, but as the consumption was only from 400 to 500 lb a day, and a sale of 1,000 lb was necessary to meet the cost and expenses, this branch of the firm's activities was discontinued. The firm's bakery was for many years the most extensive in the Colony. It was situated in Havelock Road in the buildings now occupied by the Bintang Oil Mills. [52] It may be of interest to many to know that the bakery is still working successfully and is now located in Club Street. Mr Tchan Chun Fook<sup>13</sup> was for some twenty-five years its genial manager.

Mr Hoo Ah Kay was born in Whampoa near Canton about 1816 and came to Singapore in 1830 to assist his father in business. His knowledge of English undoubtedly gave him a distinct advantage over other Chinese merchants and he rapidly acquired a position as one of the leading business men of the day. He was ready to take his share in every good work, and we find him as Hon Treasurer on the first Committee of Management of Tan Tock Seng Hospital in 1844. Buckley<sup>14</sup>

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13 Tchan Chun Fook was born in Penang, the son of Tchan Yow Chuen, the first Straits-born Chinese to explore the interior of the Malaya forests. He came to Singapore to live with his uncle, Whampoa Hoo Ah Kay at the age of 10 and studied at Raffles Institution. When Whampoa died, he and his cousin, Hoo Ah Yip, were appointed managers of Whampoa's business. He left the business after 40 years to start his own business. A charitable man, he was appointed to the Chinese Advisory Board in 1890. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908) at 636.

14 Best known as the publisher of the *Singapore Free Press* and author of *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*, Charles Burton Buckley (1844-1912) was a much-loved, high-profile resident of the settlement. He was born on 30 Jan 1844, the son of the Reverend John Wall Buckley. He was educated at Winchester College and came to Singapore on the recommendation of William Henry Read. He arrived in Singapore in 1864 and joined the firm of AL Johnston & Co where he remained for 11 years before reading law privately. He practised with Edward and William Nanson till 1904 when he retired from the firm of Rodyk and Davidson. In 1884, he acquired the dormant *Singapore Free Press*. This publication had ceased operations some years earlier, but under Buckley's hand it was resurrected. In a few years, it grew to become a daily newspaper with a popular history column, the contents of which contributed greatly to



'Whampoa' Hoo Ah Kay

mentions it as a curious fact that in 1855, at the request of the Ladies' Committee, Whampoa arranged to provision the Girls' School at an average charge of \$4 a month for each child.

The *Free Press* of 11th February 1847 contains the following account of a dinner to Mr Hoo Ah Kay:

It having been ascertained that Whampoa, the younger, whose name is known far and wide in these eastern parts and is familiar to not a few even in distant Europe, was about to leave this by the next steamer on a visit to his native country, a few of his friends, amongst the European mercantile community chiefly, resolved to show their respect and esteem for him by entertaining him at dinner. The dinner accordingly came off on Monday evening at the London Hotel, when about twenty sat down: CS Carnie<sup>15</sup>, Esq, in the chair, and WS Duncan<sup>16</sup>, Esq, croupier. The health of their guests having been given, Whampoa returned thanks in a most neat and feeling manner in English: and on the health of Tan Kim Seng, one of our most respected Chinese merchants who was also

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Buckley's seminal book, published in 1902. He retained ties with Johore, acting as advisor to the Sultan up till his death. See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St. John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 2* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 453-457; and Joshua Chia Yeong Jia, 'Charles Burton Buckley' at Singapore Infopedia; [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_1145\\_2006-08-29.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1145_2006-08-29.html) (accessed 30 Oct 2015).

- 15 The man after whom Cairnhill is named, Charles Carnie (1810-1873) was a successful merchant. He built the first residence in Cairnhill in 1840. The house sat on a sprawling 64-acre plantation, which in 1848 boasted 4,370 nutmeg trees. He also formed the firm Martin, Dyce & Co and traded in Manila and Batavia. An adventurous and plucky man, he had a penchant for hunting tigers. See Sharon Siddique, *Nutmeg and a Touch of Spice: The Story of Cairnhill Road* (Singapore: Sembawang Properties, 2000).
- 16 A Scottish merchant, Walter Scott Duncan (1803-1857) came to Singapore in 1823 and joined the firm Johnston & Co as a clerk. He stayed for just a year before leaving for Rhio, an Indonesian province, to tend to the firm's business there. He later returned to Singapore, setting up a ship chandler's business and buying a plantation in Siglap, next to that of Dr Robert Little's, near the seventh mile on Changi Road, which he called Mount Thule. There he lived till his death in 1857. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 155.

present, being drunk, Kim Seng replied in a clever and humorous speech in Malay which delighted all present.<sup>17</sup>

Hoo Ah Kay first had a plantation where the Tanglin Barracks are now, and long before Public Gardens were thought of he had bought a neglected garden 2½ miles [53] out of town on the Serangoon Road. There he built a bungalow, and the extensive grounds were at one time both an orange plantation, a fruit orchard and a Chinese garden laid out by horticulturists from Canton, and famous for its miniature rockeries, artificial ponds, aquariums and curious dwarf bamboos and plants trained and trimmed into resemblance of animals. There was displayed a wealth of horticultural products which were really admirable and unique. Plants from all available sources were collected and arranged with exquisite taste. Chrysanthemums, dahlias, lilies and a host of the choicest flowers of South China contributed a brilliancy and picturesqueness that added an indescribable elegance to the sombre foliage of the luxuriant tropical plants all around.

The well-planned paths were bordered with all varieties of brightly coloured flowering shrubs – the magnificent ixora, the numerous varieties of finely scented magnolia, the delicate blooms of many species of hibiscus and other plants too numerous to mention, contrasting with the beautiful flowers that emerged so gracefully from the ponds and streams. Water lilies of every colour decked the stagnant waters like stars shining forth in a dark night: while the white and pink blooms of the lotus surmounted in graceful elegance the majestic flowers of the *Victoria Regia* with their enormous circular leaves. There was also a choice selection of animals in the menagerie as well as a good collection of birds in the aviary.

For more than a quarter of a century Whampoa's Gardens, in Cantonese 'Nam-sang-Fa-un', were a place of resort for Chinese, young and old, at the Chinese New Year season, as popular as the Raffles Museum is to-day at that season. Great throngs of men, women and children flocked there throughout the day, enjoying the fresh air and

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17 *Singapore Free Press*, 11 Feb 1847, at 2.



the beautiful works of nature and art. Something like a country fair would spring up and the whole countryside presented a scene of picturesque animation, with the fine dresses of the grown-up people [54] and the lovely silks of the children. Hawkers with their stalls and booths, the merry-go-round, the joywheel and other little roadside shows, patronised by the holiday-makers, set up their little establishments in the vicinity. In such gatherings the democratic instincts of the Chinese would be seen, for all classes without distinction would mix freely and show mutual courtesy and respect: the children of the big *towkays* joining those of the *kranis* in all their plays and amusements.

It was quite a common thing for naval officers to spend a night at Whampoa's bungalow. Admiral Keppel<sup>18</sup> mentions him several times in his work.<sup>19</sup> Thus in 1848 he writes:

Our worthy old purser, Simmons, departed this life while staying at Whampoa's country house.

Whampoa was a fine specimen of his country, and had for many years been contractor for fresh beef and naval stores. His generosity and honesty had long made him a favourite.

He had a country house and of course a garden: also a circular pond in which was a magnificent lotus, the *Victoria Regia*, a present from the Regent of Siam, who sent it to him by WH Read. The huge lily grew splendidly and bore leaves over 11 feet in diameter.

When in bloom, Whampoa gave sumptuous entertainments to naval officers: although our host, he would not sit with us, but sat in a chair slightly withdrawn from the table.

At midnight, by the light of a full moon, we would visit this beautiful flower, which faced the moon and moved with it until

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18 Admiral Henry Keppel (1809-1904) never lived in Singapore but visited several times in the 1840s as Captain of HMS *Meander* on missions to counter piracy. By then he had already advanced significantly in the Royal Navy, having joined in 1822. From being captain, he continued to work his way steadily up the ranks, eventually becoming Admiral of the Fleet in 1877. He served in Africa, China and Crimea, and was made a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath in honour of his achievements. See Henry Keppel, *A Sailor's Life under Four Sovereigns*, 3 Vols (London: Macmillan & Co, 1889).

19 [Song: *A Sailor's Life Under Four Sovereigns*].

below the horizon. Amongst other pets he had an orang-utan who preferred a bottle of cognac to water.

Dear old Whampoa's eldest son was sent to England for education, and while there became a Presbyterian. When I was in Singapore years after, the young man returned, and had the assurance to reappear before his father, fresh and well, but minus a tail, and consequently was banished to Canton until it regrew and he consented to worship the gods of his fathers.<sup>20</sup> [55]

In his diary for 1857 Admiral Keppel had this entry:<sup>21</sup>

Oct 1 — Arrived in Singapore. Governor being absent at Penang put up at Whampoa's, and how comfortable the good fellow made me.

Oct 4 — Afternoon agreeably passed at Angus' small bungalow, where Whampoa, 'Thomas', Briggs and Harrison dined.

The large brick house in the old garden was built in later years, and the large dining-room at the back was completed just in time for Whampoa to give a big dinner to Admiral Keppel when he was here again in 1867 as Commander-in-Chief. After Whampoa's death, the property was sold to Mr Seah Liang Seah (佘连城), who named it *Bendemeer*, and since then it has ceased to be one of the few show places of Singapore.

Admiral Keppel made one more reference to Whampoa in his book, in which there is a good picture of the subject of our sketch. In 1869, when passing through Singapore, the Admiral was entertained to a big dinner at Government House. Whampoa was there. 'He gave me a pair of cassowaries to add to the museum on board *Rodney*, also some pigs to establish a breed at Bishopstoke.'

In recognition of his many services to the Government, he was appointed in 1869 a member of the Legislative Council, and a few years later an extraordinary member of the Executive Council – a po-

20 Sir Henry Keppel, *A Sailor's Life under Four Sovereigns*, Vol 2 (London: MacMillan & Co, 1899) at 80.

21 Ibid, Vol 3, at 14–15..

sition which had not previously, nor has since, been held by a Chinese. Mr Gulland<sup>22</sup> tells us that to prevent himself going to sleep during the prosaic deliberations of that august body, Whampoa used to keep on anointing his nostrils with Chinese peppermint. In 1876 he was made a CMG, and died on the 27th March 1880 at the age of 64 years. His remains were taken to China and he was buried on Danes Island, opposite Canton. An amusing incident is related by Mr Gulland thus:

One day a party of gentlemen were at Johore [56] spending the day with the late Sultan. About five o'clock His Highness and a number of his followers saw them to the landing stage, a wooden structure which gave way with the weight, and we all dropped about six feet into the water which fortunately was only up to about the waists of most of us. No one was hurt, but Whampoa had to be fished out, and once more on dry land the old gentleman took out of his pocket a cheap crystal-backed Waterbury watch. Through the glass you could see the watch was more than half full of salt water, which the old gentleman discharged through the tiny hole: after doing so he gave the watch a good shake which set it going again. Our fine expensive watches had all to go to the watchmaker's before they would move. Roughness has its advantages sometimes.

Whampoa held simultaneously the position of consul in Singapore for Russia, China and Japan. As consul for Russia, he possessed a consular uniform and sword, which he only wore once, because he looked so 'ugly' from his curious appearance in it, and was laughed at so much. Towards the latter part of his life, in company with some European

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22 A member of the Legislative Council, William Guiseppe Gulland (1842-1906) was well-known in society. He came to Singapore in the early 1860s, joining the firm of Paterson, Simon & Co. Starting as a clerk, he worked his way up and eventually became a partner of the firm. See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, Vol 1 (London: John Murray, 1921) at 152 & 585. Gulland was also passionate about Chinese porcelain; he amassed a large collection numbering hundred of pieces, which he bequeathed to the Victoria & Albert Museum. He even wrote a book on Chinese porcelain. See 'William Giuseppi Gulland' at <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/w/william-giuseppi-gulland/>> (accessed 20 Jul 2015).

merchants, he embarked in speculative business which got him into trouble, without his fault, but he weathered the storm, with his fortune, however, very much reduced. He was an upright, kind-hearted, modest and simple man, a friend to everyone in the place. Mr Buckley tells us that Whampoa could sing only one Chinese song (if he could be persuaded to sing), that it was very laughable, and that he was as much amused and laughed as heartily as anyone else. Of his three sons, the eldest, Hoo Ah Yip – educated in England as mentioned in Admiral Keppel's book – managed the firm of Whampoa & Co for a short time only when he died; his second son, Hoo Keng Choong, is also dead, and his youngest son, Mr Hoo Keng Tuck, who was for many years employed in the legal firm of Joaquim Brothers<sup>23</sup> (now Allen & Gledhill), is now in charge of the old firm of Whampoa & Co, [57] General Merchants and Importers of the highest class of Chinese curios and china wares. Of a retiring disposition, Mr Hoo Keng Tuck is one of the few well-educated Straits Chinese who realise that exertions on behalf of the public earn only the ill-will of some influential parties and the thanks of nobody. Like a philosopher, or rather the hermit crab, he lives in complete retirement, looking out occasionally from his coign of vantage upon his luckless compatriots who are struggling to make this world a better place to live in for themselves and their children, pretty much as a Martian might watch the social activities of the earth's inhabitants.

In 1842 and 1843 there occurred a long series of gang robberies by armed Chinese, owing to the inefficient state of the police department: and on the 10th February 1843, at a public meeting of the inhabitants, several resolutions were passed, the 7th and 8th being as follows:

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23 Joaquim Brothers was a thriving law firm. At the end of the 19th century, one of its partners Parsick Joaquim died, and with his demise the partnership was dissolved. One of its new lawyers, Roland Allen, took over to keep the firm going and was joined by John Joseph Gledhill, a former assistant at the firm. Together they revived the firm as Allen & Gledhill in 1902, which is now one of Singapore's leading law firms. See Julian Davison, *Allen & Gledhill Centenary* (Singapore: Allen & Gledhill, 2002).



Hoo Ah Yip



Hoo Keng Choong



Hoo Keng Tuck

That it is an understood fact that many of the Chinese shopkeepers and traders in the town, particularly the native-born subjects of China, pay regular sums to the Hueys or Brotherhoods (organised associations of Chinese often for unlawful purposes) as protection money for their own property, or as a contribution in the nature of blackmail, and that it rarely or never happens that the Chinese are themselves sufferers from the depredations complained of.

That it is highly expedient a law should be passed having for its object the suppression of these brotherhoods so far as the same may be effected or influenced by legal enactments, and in particular that it should be made penal for any person or persons to pay or receive any sum of money as protection money of the nature specified in the preceding resolution.

As usual, no immediate steps were taken, and the lawless bands continued to terrorise the people. In the course of one week, in March, four Klings were [58] murdered in a boat at Tanah Merah; the powder magazine of Tock Seng on Kallang River<sup>24</sup> was broken open by a large gang of Chinese robbers and large quantities of powder carried off; a quantity of coal stored at Tanjong Rhu was set on fire by an incendiary; while a gang of armed Chinese landed from a boat at New Harbour and attacked several houses, but were driven off by the Temenggong and his followers.

The Straits Chinese Church in Prinsep Street was built in 1843 by the Rev Benjamin Peach Keasberry, who came to Singapore in 1837 as a missionary of the American Board of Missions and joined the London Missionary Society, which had other representatives at that time there, and continued to work with that Society till 1847. Having learnt Malay from Abdullah Munshi<sup>25</sup>, Mr Keasberry started a small school

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24 According to Song, this gunpowder magazine was already in existence in 1864 and originally owned by Chan Koo Chan – who married Tan Tock Seng's sister – and was then known as Alexandra Magazine. It later moved to Tanah Merah Kechil. See Chapter 6 of this volume. On 31 July 1869, Tan Seng Poh and Lee Cheng Tee became owners of the magazine and gave a public luncheon at its grand opening in Tanah Merah. See Chapter 7 of this volume.

25 See Chapter 2, n 4.

at Rochore and carried on preaching in Malay in an attap building in North Bridge Road nearly opposite where the Chinese Gospel House is now. He would not give up his work in Singapore when in 1847 the London Missionary Society instructed all their men to proceed to China, and became a self-supporting missionary, occupying himself with his school, his preaching, and the printing establishment (now Fraser & Neave, Ltd) by which he maintained the school, until his death, which occurred suddenly while preaching in the 'Greja Keasberry' on 6th September 1875 at the age of 64.

The opening sermon in this church (then known as the Malay Chapel) was preached by the Rev Samuel Dyer<sup>26</sup> of Penang, and the service on the following Sunday was taken by the Rev Dr Legge<sup>27</sup>, both passing through on their way to China. For a number of years

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26 A British Protestant missionary, Samuel Dyer (1804–1843) had a fervent desire to spread the gospel which brought him to China, Penang, Malacca and Singapore. He came to the Straits in 1827, aged only 16. He and his wife, Maria Dyer, devoted their lives to working with Chinese communities, learning the language, translating the Bible into Chinese and even creating a steel type-face for printing in Chinese that worked better than traditional woodblocks. They arrived in Singapore in 1842. Here he conducted religious services and preached widely, while she opened a boarding school for Chinese girls in their own home, which later become St Margaret's Primary School. He stayed only a year before travelling to Hong Kong, where he took ill with a fever and died on 24 November 1843. See generally, Evan Davies, *Memoir of the Rev Samuel Dyer, Sixteen Years Missionary to the Chinese* (London: John Snow, 1846).

27 James Legge (1815-1897) was a sinologist and a Congregationalist. In 1839 he went to China as a missionary but broke journey at Malacca where he took charge of the Anglo-Chinese College there. Legge later moved with the College to Hong Kong, where he lived for the next 30 years. There he translated many important works and served as a pastor and newspaper editor. In 1867 he returned to Scotland and two years later embarked on a major trip to China. Returning to England in 1873, he moved to Oxford where he was made a Fellow of Corpus Christi College and became the university's first professor of Chinese. See Helen Edith Legge, *James Legge, Missionary and Scholar* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1905).

the girls of Miss Cooke's<sup>28</sup> Chinese Girls' School regularly worshipped in this chapel. In 1885, after the congregation of Straits Chinese Christians had been for ten years under the ministrations of the Rev William Young, who had to leave for England owing to failing health, the Rev JAB Cook<sup>29</sup> of the English Presbyterian Chinese Mission took over the care of the congregation. [59]

For close on forty years Straits Chinese gentlemen have been associated with the missionaries as voluntary preachers in this church. In addition, most valuable service has been rendered to the missionaries by several Christian workers among the English residents, of whom the most prominent and devoted was the late Mr Charles Phillips, Superintendent of the Sailors' Home for thirty-two years. Mr Phillips not only took his place as one of the regular preachers in the Malay language at the morning service and in English at the evening service, but translated a large number of English hymns into Malay for the use of the Straits Chinese congregation. He took a deep interest in the work of the Chinese Christian Association from the time of its inception in 1889 until his death in 1904. He was a man greatly beloved by the Straits Chinese, and Prinsep Street Church became a fitting repository for a mural tablet to his memory, which was unveiled by his oldest

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28 Some ten years after Maria Dyer (see n 26 above) left Singapore following the death of her husband in 1843, Sophia Cooke arrived from England. She took over the boarding school for Chinese girls that Dyer had been running out of her home on North Bridge Road. Cooke threw herself into her new role with enthusiasm, learning the Malay language. For the next 42 years she devoted herself to the education and development of the girls in her school, which became known lovingly as Miss Cooke's School, before finally becoming St Margaret's Primary School. See EA Walker, *Sophia Cooke: Forty-Two Years' Work in Singapore* by EA Walker (London: Elliot Stock, 1899).

29 Reverend JAB Cook purchased the church's building from the London Missionary Society, using funds from Singaporean merchants living in London. The church was renamed Prinsep Street Church and put under the administration of the English Presbyterian Church, from which Rev Cook hailed. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819-1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902), at 640.



friend, Mr CB Buckley.<sup>30</sup> Among other voluntary preachers who have passed away were Messrs Song Hoot Kiam,<sup>31</sup> Tan Kong Wee<sup>32</sup> and Na Tien Piet.<sup>33</sup> The jubilee of the Chapel was held on the 7th February 1893, when the memory of Mr Keasberry was associated with it, and although eighteen years had elapsed since his death, the service was crowded with those who had known him in Singapore and wished to do honour to one who had been among the pioneers in mission and educational work in Malaya. In 1902 the Rev W Murray<sup>34</sup> arrived in Singapore as a missionary of the EPC Mission to take charge of this

30 See *Straits Times*, 28 Apr 1905, at 5; and 'The late Mr C Philips: A Tablet Unveiled' *Straits Times*, 2 May 1905, at 8.

31 A student of James Legge, Song Hoot Kiam (1830-1900) studied at the Anglo-Chinese College in Malacca and then followed Legge to Hong Kong where he continued his studies. From there he went to England, and shortly after his return met and married his first wife. His strong voice made him a natural preacher at Reverend Keasberry's Prinsep Street chapel, at which he also led the singing. When his first wife passed away, he married Phan Fung Lean. Song Ong Siang is the eldest child from that marriage. Song Hoot Kiam is discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this volume.

32 The son of a gambier and pepper trader, Tan Kong Wee (1842-1888) was close to Song Hoot Kiam. Under Song's influence, Tan joined Reverend Keasberry's chapel against the wishes of his family. He also married Song's eldest daughter and had two sons. He worked as a cashier at the law firm Drew & Napier to support his family. The job earned him a comfortable living, allowing him to retire two years before his death. See JAB Cook, 'A Christian Baba' (1889) 20 *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 225-226.

33 A Chinese Peranakan from Bencoolen, Na Tien Piet was born in 1836 in Bencoolen. He spent his earlier years trading spices between Sumatra and Singapore before settling down in Singapore in 1872, where he lived for 24 years. He was a literary scholar and published a Malay poem, *Shaer Almarhoem Beginda Sultan Abubakar di Negri Johore* in 1896 under the pseudonym *Kalam Langit* or *Celestial Pen*, being a translation of his name in Malay. See Lee Geok Boi, *Pages from Yesteryear: A Look at the Printed Works of Singapore 1819-1959* (Singapore: Singapore Heritage Society, 1989) at 17.

34 Reverend William Murray retired in February 1936, and a farewell meeting was held in his honour at the Tomlinson Hall at the Singapore Presbyterian Church on Orchard Road. See 'Retirement of Rev William Murray' *Straits Times*, 7 Feb 1936, at 13.

church and of mission work among the Straits Chinese, and he has been here ever since engaged in steady, earnest and valuable work in their midst.

At this time (1843) Singapore was more than ever before infested with tigers. It was reported that not a day passed without one man being killed: not only Chinese engaged in planting in the country were attacked, but people on the New Harbour Road, or not far from Sepoy Lines, or on Mr Balestier's<sup>35</sup> sugar [60] plantation on Balestier Plain fell victims to these wild beasts. So serious was the situation that a deputation of Chinese planters waited upon the Resident Councillor for more drastic measures on the part of Government to deal with this scourge. The dread caused by the increased destruction of coolies employed in gambier and pepper gardens had become so intense that a number of plantations had to be abandoned. The Chinese in town, who formerly made advances to the cultivators and used to visit the plantations occasionally to collect their interest or instalments, no longer dared to venture into the jungle: and the value of these plantations very naturally began to depreciate. In one instance, a plantation which had cost the owner \$300 was sold for \$25 in consequence of the fact that the ravages from tigers had been so great there that the plantation had acquired a bad reputation and no labourers could be induced to live upon it. The Government reward of \$50 for every tiger brought to the police station, whether alive or dead, was increased to \$100 and later to \$150. Tiger-hunting expeditions were organised, and Mr WH

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35 An American who lived most of his life abroad, Joseph Balestier (1788-1858) was born in France and later moved to Southeast Asia where he became a planter and a merchant. He owned a 1,000-acre sugarcane and cotton plantation in Singapore as well as a plant manufacturing sugar and rum. He also served as the first United States consul in Riau and Singapore, as well as its Envoy and Diplomatic Agent for Southeast Asia. Balestier district, where his plantation stood, is named after him. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 27-28; and Richard Hale, *The Balestiers: The First American Residents of Singapore* (Singapore: Marshall-Cavendish, 2016).

Read<sup>36</sup> tells an amusing story of a tiger killed in 1843 in a pit not far from the present Botanical Gardens.

To earn the Government reward, Chinese, working in parties and sometimes singly, would dig pits or set traps, or arrange heavy beams of timber suspended from tree to tree over the tracks of these tigers, connected on the ground with springs. Often the tables were turned, and tigers killed the men when they went to see if their traps were successful. *The Free Press* of November 1843 has this paragraph:

On Tuesday evening, a Chinaman, while engaged in constructing a tiger pit at the back of Mr Balestier's sugar plantation, was pounced upon by a tiger, who, after killing him and sucking the blood, walked into the jungle, leaving the body behind. We suppose the [61] tiger, knowing the object of the Chinaman's labours, took the opportunity of giving a striking manifestation of his profound disapproval of all such latent and unfair methods of taking an enemy at disadvantage.

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36 [Song: *Play and Politics* (1901), p 158]. See WHM Read, *Play and Politics: Recollections of Malaya by an Old Resident* (London: W Gardner, Darton, 1901) at 158. Like many Scotsmen in his era who moved to Singapore, William Henry Macleod Read (1819-1909) came here with Johnston & Co, the largest trading firm here at the time. He lived here from 1841 to 1887, during which time he contributed greatly to Singapore society. A strong mediator, he was appointed Special Constable and was often called on to settle conflicts between the Hokkien and Cantonese communities. He was a volunteer with the Singapore Rifle Corps, Consul for the Netherlands, member of the Legislative Council and Head of the Chamber of Commerce. A good sportsman, he won the first Singapore Derby and went on to set up the Singapore Turf Club; he also organised Singapore's first regatta. He belonged to the Freemasons and led the Grand Lodge of the Eastern Archipelago, during which time a new hall was built here. One of his final contributions to Singapore was to lay a cylinder of the bridge over the Singapore River that bears his name today. See generally, CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819-1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) where Read's contributions and exploits are peppered throughout the book.

Major McNair<sup>37</sup> tells us that in 1859, when he was Superintendent of convicts, the number of tigers on the island and the number of people killed by them were still increasing, and after discussing the matter with Governor Cavenagh<sup>38</sup>, it was arranged for certain of the Indian convicts who were good 'shikarries'<sup>39</sup> to patrol Bukit Timah, Changi

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37 [Song: *Prisoners their own Warders*]. See Major JRA McNair, *Prisoners Their Own Warders* (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co, 1899). Joseph Frederick Aldophus McNair (1828-1910) was a colonial officer who had an illustrious career in India and the Straits Settlements. He held various positions in India, where he learned Hindi, and then in Malacca, Penang, Singapore and Perak. His knowledge of Hindi stood him in good stead, and in Singapore allowed him to work closely with Indian convicts as the Superintendent of Convicts. He was also Executive Engineer and head of Public Works. He resourcefully engaged the convicts under his charge to work on many municipal construction projects, constructing roads and buildings like St Andrew's Cathedral and the Istana. See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: J. Murray, 1921) at 97.

38 In 1826, Singapore became part of the Straits Settlements along with Malacca and Penang, marking its growth from its founding in 1819. The Governor of the Straits Settlements reported to the Governor-General of Calcutta, India, in whose hands power really lay. Under this arrangement, William Orfeur Cavenagh (1820-1881) was appointed Governor by the Indian office. He had already served in India as an officer in the army of the East India Company, and was no stranger to the Indian administration. For eight years he governed Singapore, from 1859 to 1867, at which point control of the settlement passed from India to London. The next governor of Singapore reported not to Calcutta but to the Colonial Office in London, marking Singapore's promotion to a Crown Colony. See JM Gullick, 'Cavenagh, Sir (William) Orfeur (1820-1891)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/98336; see also Justin Corfield, *Historical Dictionary of Singapore* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2011) at 50.

39 Hindi for 'sportsman' or 'guide'. The term *shikaree* or *shekarry* is used in three ways. In this case, it refers to a 'native expert, who either brings in game on his own account, or accompanies European sportsmen as guide and aid'. See Henry Yule & AC Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive*, William Crooke (ed) (London: John Murray, 1903) at 827.

and Chua Chu Kang districts, and these parties were successful in killing half a dozen or so in the course of the year.

The tiger scourge was frequently referred to in the columns of the *Free Press* of those days and was made the subject of a humorous paragraph in the London *Punch* of 27th October 1855, while the *Friend of India*, a Calcutta paper, suggested that so many deaths were scarcely likely to be caused by tigers, and that it was possible the Chinese secret societies might imitate tigers' wounds on murdered persons!

In 1844 was commenced the Tan Tock Seng Hospital 'for the sick of all nations', the oldest and one of the most useful of Straits Chinese institutions. It replaced an earlier Chinese hospital or Poor House which had been built from the proceeds of the Government Pork Farm (which had been imposed for that special purpose), but the Poor House was never used as such because the Convict lines were not then ready and the building became instead the Convict Gaol. For the accommodation of the diseased and the poor, an attap building was put up, contrary to the expectations of the Chinese community, and for this and other reasons it was avoided by the very people for whom it had been meant.

There were comparatively few wealthy Chinese in the 'Forties, but these few were public-spirited and keen to spend some of their hard-earned fortune for the [62] welfare of the general community. And so while the Press in 1844 complained that 'a number of diseased Chinese, lepers and others frequent almost every street in town, presenting a spectacle rarely to be met with, even in towns under a pagan government, and disgraceful in a civilised and Christian country, especially one under the government of Englishmen', it published also the good news that a Chinese merchant, Cham Chan Seng, then recently dead, had bequeathed \$2,000 to the hospital and that another Chinese merchant had presented \$5,000 towards the same object.

A public meeting was held on the 3rd February 1844 with Mr Tan Tock Seng in the chair, and several resolutions passed, the first being proposed by EJ Gilman and seconded by Tan Kim Seng and carried unanimously in the following terms:

That it appears to the meeting that the Government of Bengal is under a misconception in supposing that the proposed erection of a Pauper Hospital for the reception of the Chinese is to 'please the European and quasi-European' portion of the inhabitants, and that the Chinese are indifferent on the subject: that on the contrary it is the opinion of this meeting that the Chinese are, as a body, most anxious that the same should be carried into effect.

Mr Buckley truly says that:

... the Government had been slow to recognise the necessity for providing a hospital, and as the first introduction of anything like one was due to private enterprise, it was not thought to be astonishing that it was left to generous-minded individuals to do what they could to alleviate the necessities of the sick poor.

On the 25th May 1844, the foundation stone of the new Pauper Hospital at Pearl's Hill was laid over a brass plate bearing the following inscription: [63]

THE FOUNDATION STONE  
OF  
THE CHINESE PAUPER HOSPITAL  
SINGAPORE  
WAS LAID ON THE XXVTH MAY, MDCCCXLIV  
DURING THE GOVERNMENT OF  
THE HON'BLE COLONEL WJ BUTTERWORTH, C.B.  
GOVERNOR OF PRINCE OF WALES' ISLAND, SINGAPORE  
AND MALACCA  
THE HON'BLE T. CHURCH, ESQR.  
BEING RESIDENT COUNCILLOR AT SINGAPORE.  
THE FUNDS FOR THE ERECTION OF THIS BUILDING WERE  
FURNISHED BY THE HUMANE LIBERALITY OF  
TAN TOCK SENG, ESQR., J.P.  
CHINESE MERCHANT IN SINGAPORE.

The foundation stone of the European Seamen's Hospital was also laid at the same time on the same hill, and the two buildings, designed by the Government Surveyor, Mr JT Thomson<sup>40</sup>, were said to be handsome edifices, adding much to the appearance of the town.

Tan Tock Seng's Hospital was placed in the hands of a Committee of Management, with Hoo Ah Kay Whampoa as Treasurer, and Seah Eu Chin<sup>41</sup> looking after the food supply. The Government provided only medicines and medical attendance. The dieting was met by contributions and subscriptions from all classes of society.

In 1852, the accommodation in the Hospital having been inadequate for some time past, some of the principal Chinese residents interviewed the Governor, and after a discussion as to ways and means, Tan Kim Ching,<sup>42</sup> the eldest son of the founder, offered to defray the whole cost of the additions, while his generous example was followed

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40 Singapore owes much of its early infrastructure to civil engineer John Turnbull Thomson (1821-1884). Employed by the East India Company, he arrived in Malaya in 1838 and in the 1840s became Government Surveyor and Superintendent of Roads and Public Works in Singapore. His many accomplishments included important surveys such as the water survey that led to the establishment of MacRitchie Reservoir. He also oversaw the design and construction of a great number of roads and buildings such as Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, the Dalhousie Obelisk and, his biggest achievement, the Horsburgh Lighthouse. He returned in 1853 to England for a few years before moving to New Zealand, where he lived for the rest of his life. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 384-385.

41 See Chapter 3, n 54.

42 The eldest of Tan Tock Seng's sons, Tan Kim Ching (1829-1892) was an extremely wealthy and influential businessman. His business interests extended to Siam, Vietnam, Malaya and China, and he was Consul for Japan, Russia and Siam and also a member of the Siamese court. His extensive connections in Siam made him an important go-between for the colonial administration in Singapore and their Siamese counterparts. He was also the first Asian member of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, and when his father passed away, he became kapitan of the Straits Chinese community. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore 1819-1867* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 411 & 530.

by other Chinese merchants increasing their monthly subscriptions. In 1854 the additions were completed, and the following inscription was engraved on stone and fixed at the hospital gate: [64]

THIS HOSPITAL FOR THE  
DISEASED OF ALL COUNTRIES  
WAS BUILT A.D. 1844  
AT THE COST OF  
SEVEN THOUSAND DOLLARS  
WHOLLY DEFRAID BY  
TAN TOCK SENG.

THE WINGS WERE ADDED  
AND LARGE IMPROVEMENTS EFFECTED  
AT THE COST OF  
THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS  
WHOLLY DEFRAID BY  
TAN KIM CHING,  
SON OF THE FOUNDER.

During the Indian Mutiny (1857) the buildings at Pearl's Hill were taken over for military purposes, and together with the European Seamen's Hospital were converted into the present Ordnance and Commissariat Offices. The Tan Tock Seng Hospital was removed to the swampy ground on Balestier Plain, the premises being put up by the Government. The sick were accommodated in three blocks of brick buildings forming three sides of a square, while the fourth side, facing Serangoon Road, was for administrative requirements. It was not long before these buildings proved insufficient, and although the locality was condemned, ward after ward was put up as times were better and the revenue increased, and Mr Tan Beng Swee<sup>43</sup> built a tile-

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43 Another of Tan Tock Seng's sons, Tan Beng Swee (1828-1884) helped to run the hospital his father founded. He also supported some of his father's other



roofed ward at his own expense. Under the careful management of Dr Rowell<sup>44</sup>, PCMO, Tan Tock Seng Hospital became well organised, the whole place being a model of a poor-house and infirmary combined, and it was said that in 1884 it had become as much a contrast to what it had been in 1862 as a palace is to a pigsty.

In the 1867 Directory it was stated that the female [65] ward was built at the expense of Lee Seo Neo,<sup>45</sup> the widow of the founder.

In 1880 an Ordinance was passed incorporating the institution and appointing a Committee of Management consisting of the Colonial Secretary, the Principal Civil Medical Officer, the Inspector-General of Police, the Assistant Colonial Secretary and the Protector of

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interests – Kim Seng Chinese Free School on Amoy Street, which Beng Swee went on to open in Malacca, and the firm Kim Seng & Co, where he was partner. With his elder brother Tan Kim Ching, he set up Po Chek Kio temple and turned it into the headquarters for the Tan clan. He had strong ties to Malacca. He was President of the Chinese Temple there, and when he died he was brought to Malacca to be buried. See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 496, and Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908) at 631.

44 Colonial Surgeon Dr Thomas Irvine Rowell (1840–1932) oversaw the massive relocation and reorganisation of Tan Tock Seng Hospital when it moved from Pearl's Hill to Balestier Plain. He was also Registrar for Births and Deaths 1881, and President of the Municipality in 1888. Rowell was born in Aberdeen in 1840 and studied medicine in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Paris and Vienna before coming to Singapore in 1868 as Acting Colonial Surgeon. He retired in 1890 at the age of 50 when his health broke down. See 'Death at Age of Ninety-Two' *Straits Times*, 20 Jul 1932, at 11; Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 498, 502–503, & 518; see also Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 328.

45 The wife of Tan Tock Seng, Lee Seo Neo (1807-1877) played an active part in Tan Tock Seng Hospital. It is thought that she also owned a sizable coconut plantation in Geylang. See Kamala Devi Dhoraingham & Dhoraingham S Samuel, *Tan Tock Seng: Pioneer – His Life, Times, Contributions & Legacy* (Kota Kinabalu: Natural History Publications (Borneo), 2003).

Chinese (all ex officio), Mr CB Buckley and five representatives of the Chinese subscribers, including, as stipulated by the Ordinance, one of the male heirs of the founder. In the old days the Hospital was generously supported by the Chinese, with one notable exception. In 1857 Syed Ali bin Mohamed al Junied<sup>46</sup>, a wealthy Arab merchant, presented it with a piece of land containing about five acres, now known as 'Syed Ali's land' in Victoria Street, Queen Street and Arab Street, and from this land, leased out in lots for the term of ninety-nine years, is derived a yearly rental of \$1,200.

In 1909 the present buildings at Moulmein Road were completed at a cost of nearly half a million dollars. Government bore the expense of the site and erections, with the aid of the generous gift by Towkay Loke Yew<sup>47</sup> of \$50,000 and of a bequest by Mr Wee Boon Teck<sup>48</sup> of \$4,000 and the accumulated interest from these two sums. Five wards have been named after Loke Yew, one after Wee Boon Teck and one

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46 Aljunied Road is named after this scion of the wealthy Arab family, Syed Ali bin Mohamed Aljunied. Syed Ali had moved from Palembang to Singapore with his father, Syed Omar Aljunied. The Aljunieds maintained a family residence in Balestier for over a hundred years. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 14–15.

47 Chinese businessman Loke Yew (1845-1917) was both tenacious and generous. Arriving in Singapore at the tender age of 11, he managed to save \$99 in four years and opened his own shop. From there he went up the Peninsula to Larut where he went into mining, initially losing large sums of money. However, he persevered and ended up with a massive fortune. He was charitable; besides donating \$50,000 to Tan Tock Seng Hospital, he also gave \$50,000 to Raffles Hospital and another \$50,000 to the government to either improve the conditions for patients quarantined on St John's Island or to build a new paupers' hospital. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 893–895; see also Michael Godley, *The Mandarin-Capitalists from Nanyang: Overseas Chinese Enterprise in the Modernisation of China 1893–1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) at 12–14.

48 See 'New Tan Tock Seng Hospital' *Straits Times*, 19 Mar 1909, at 7.

after Tan Beng Swee. Sir John Anderson<sup>49</sup>, the then Governor, wisely decided that the Hospital should continue to bear the name of the founder Tan Tock Seng.

Mr Arthur Knight<sup>50</sup>, in his historical sketch of the above Hospital,<sup>51</sup> records that after the completion of the present buildings attention was drawn to the large number of Chinese inmates – nearly forty – who were incurably blind, most of whom were otherwise in good health, but who were occupying space which should be available for the sick. A separate ward for the blind was, by the sanction of HE the Governor, erected on a site adjoining the new buildings and named after [66] Mr Ong Kim Wee JP<sup>52</sup> of Malacca, who had given a donation of \$12,000 for that purpose.

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49 Sir John Anderson (1858-1918) was Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1904-1911. In 1916, he became Governor of Ceylon and passed away from illness in the midst of his term. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 123-124.

50 Arthur Knight (1833-1916) lived in Singapore for 50 years, participating actively in society. He held the positions of Assistant Auditor General, Assistant Colonial Secretary, Vice President of the Singapore Philharmonic Society and was Secretary of Tan Tock Seng Hospital for 30 years. See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 551-553.

51 [Song: *Journal, Str. Branch R.A.S.* (No. 64)] See Arthur Knight, 'Tan Tock Seng's Hospital, Singapore' (1913) 64 *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 72-75.

52 Known as the millionaire of Malacca, Ong Kim Wee (1851-1913) was a rubber magnate. He was born in Malacca, the son of Ong Keng Hoon, a successful planter and rice merchant. Educated at the Malacca Free School, he joined his father's business at an early age and took over from him when the latter died in 1904. He owned two extensive estates, one of 6,200 acres at Merlimau, and another of 5,000 acres near Port Dickson, planted with rubber and tapioca. Ong married a daughter of Chua Tiang Kiam. Generous with his wealth, he contributed to scholarship funds for St Francis' School in Malacca, and Anglo-Chinese School and St Joseph's Institution in Singapore. In 1897, he was made Justice of the Peace, and six years later, became a member of the Malacca Municipal Council. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impres-*

Born in 1798 in Malacca, Tan Tock Seng came to Singapore shortly after its foundation, with no capital but industry and thrift. He started as a vegetable, fruit and fowl seller, going into the country to buy and selling the same in town. Having saved a little money, he opened a shop on the river-side. Afterwards he joined in some speculations with Mr JH Whitehead of Shaw, Whitehead & Co<sup>53</sup> and it was chiefly by this means that he made most of his money. Mr Horrocks Whitehead died in September 1846 at the age of 36, and his tombstone, at the Old Cemetery on Fort Canning, was erected 'as a token of affection on the part of a Chinese friend, Tan Tock Seng'.

He was made a JP by Governor Butterworth, being the first Asiatic to receive such an appointment, and was very often occupied in settling disputes among his countrymen. His charities were very extensive and constant, and he was accustomed to bear the expense of burying poor Chinese. He died in 1850, at the age of 52 years, leaving a widow, Lee Seo Neo, three sons, Tan Kim Ching, Tan Teck Guan<sup>54</sup> and Tan Swee Lim, and three daughters, one of whom married Lee Cheng Tee, at one time the chief partner in the firm of Cheng-tee Watt-seng & Co, shipowners. Three of Mr Cheng Tee's sons are living, Lee Pek Hoon<sup>55</sup> (assistant manager, Straits Steamship Co), Lee Pek Swee

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*sions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 843.

- 53 The firm was originally called Graham Mackenzie & Co. When Colin Mackenzie left the firm on 31 December 1834, the name was changed to Shaw Whitehead & Co with John Horrocks Whitehead as partner. At the time of his death, the other partners of the firm were James Stephen in Singapore and Michie Forbes Davidson in England. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 234.
- 54 For more on Tan Teck Guan, see Chapter 7 of this volume.
- 55 A son of Lee Cheng Tee, Lee Pek Hoon (1866-1934) was educated at St Joseph's Institution, spoke several dialects and Japanese. He started work at the firm of Harris, Goodwin & Co, and in 1888 left to work in China for 10 years as agent for Bun Hin & Co to sell steamers in Hong Kong and Amoy. In 1898, he returned to Singapore and joined the Straits Steamship Co. He was also an avid rider, he owned race horses and belonged to the Chinese Riding Party in the

(in Java) and Lee Pek Hock,<sup>56</sup> a very valuable agent of the Government Food Control Department during the rice crisis.

The name of Lee Seo Neo has already been mentioned in connection with the female ward at the Tan Tock Seng Hospital. The Directory for 1873 gives her name as proprietress of a large coconut estate in Gaylang, known as Sri Gaylang, Ayer Molek.

The number of Straits-born Chinese at this time was a negligible quantity, but there was a steady stream of young men finding their way from Malacca to this [67] Settlement who practically settled down here altogether. One such individual was Cheong Ann Jan,<sup>57</sup> who was born in 1818 and came to Singapore in 1844. He entered the service of the firm of Hamilton, Padday & Co which afterwards became Hamilton, Gray & Co in Battery Road, and he rose to the position of storekeeper in the firm which he served until his death in March 1881. Of his five sons, Cheong Swee Kiat was compradore of the Mercantile Bank at the time of his death in 1891. Another son, Cheong Swee Whatt, became compradore of the Banque de l'Indo-Chine and died in 1907. His wide business experience was of great value to his two sons, Cheong Choon

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1900s. He married a daughter of Tan Kung Hoe of Malacca. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908) at 577.

56 Besides being an agent of the Government Food Control, Lee Pek Hock (dates unknown) also represented Gum & Co, a trading firm. He received an OBE in 1923 that was revoked because he was convicted of bribing a police superintendent. See *London Gazette*, 30 Aug 1929, at 5638.

57 Cheong Ann Jan (1818-1881) also owned 47 lots of freehold building allotments and a compound house, totalling '5 acres one rood and 31 poles', situated at Bukit Timah Road. The estate was auctioned off on 30 Jan 1920, after his son Cheong Swee Kiat's death. See 'Property Sale' *Singapore Free Press* 30 Jan 1920, at 12.



Cheong Swee Whatt

Kim<sup>58</sup> and Cheong Choon Beng,<sup>59</sup> in the early days of the firm of Yap Whatt & Co, which was established in 1893 as Commission Agents and Import and Export Merchants.

Cheong Ann Jan's only daughter married Tan Hoon Soon and was the mother of Tan Gin Hock, who was for many years managing partner of the firm of Hoon Keat & Co, general provision merchants in Raffles Place.

In the early part of 1844 Ho Chong Lay, a young man, about 22 years of age, arrived from Amoy. After serving a three-years' apprenticeship, he started on his own account as a general produce merchant under the chop Teng Hin, owning several junks and sailing vessels which made voyages to Siam and Saigon (the latter port then being under the governorship of a Chinese mandarin). His business proved successful and he began investing his profits in lands and houses in Singapore, where he died in 1861 at the age of 40. A son, Ho Yang Peng, was born in 1859 in Singapore, and after completing his education at Raffles Institution, he went to Amboyna (Moluccas) to wind up the business of a produce merchant left by an elder brother who had died there. In April 1886 Mr Ho Yang Peng joined the General Post Office and was the Chinese sub-postmaster for about twenty-one years. There were then some seventy shopkeepers (Hokien and Teochew) acting as [68] remittance agents and about 4,000 itinerant collectors who made it their business to make trips at regular intervals to their own villages in China, carrying with them the savings of the working

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58 The business that Cheong Choon Kim (d 1905) established in d'Almeida Street with his brother, Yap Whatt & Co, was the first Straits-born Chinese firm engaged in commission and the import and export trade in Singapore. In 1902 Cheong visited China and opened an office in Shanghai, but died of a stroke in 1905. His was the first Straits-born Chinese to commence a commission import and export trade in Singapore. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908) at 717-718.

59 The co-owner of Yap Whatt & Co, Cheong Choon Beng (d 1913) travelled to England in 1902 for the coronation of Edward VII, where he stayed in Alexandra Palace. Like his brother, he also died of a stroke. *Ibid*, at 718.

people here to their parents or families dwelling in the same villages. In the course of a year, something like a million dollars represented the total remittances by this means from Singapore. Mr Yang Peng advised the Cantonese, Hakka and Hylam tribes to arrange for shopkeepers to undertake this business, and now there are about 250 shops acting as remittance agents, while the itinerant collector has become a thing of the past. In 1902 Mr Yang Peng became a trustee and succeeded Mr Wee Theam Tew<sup>60</sup> as President of the Board of Trustees of the Gan Eng Seng Free School,<sup>61</sup> retiring in 1910. He bought in 1903 Mr Robert Little's<sup>62</sup> coconut estate (450 acres) at Siglap and developed it by

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60 Educated at Raffles Institution, Wee Theam Tew (1866-1918) was a lawyer. He also represented Rochore ward on the municipal board and acted as secretary to the military governor of Beijing. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 634.

61 The Gan Eng Seng School was one of the few schools in Singapore established and supported by an individual instead of an organisation. Its founder Gan Eng Seng (1844-1899) was known for his philanthropy, also contributing hugely to Thong Chai Medical Hall and Tan Tock Seng Hospital. On Gan Eng Seng, see Chapter 9 of this volume.

62 Dr Gilbert E Brooke offered the following sketch of Robert Little:

Dr Robert Little, MD, FRCS (Edin), was the son of an Edinburgh lawyer, and grandson of the minister at Applegarth, in Scotland. His two younger brothers, John Martin Little and Matthew Little, were resident in Singapore for many years, and were founders of Messrs Little, Cursetjee and Co, now John Little and Co. Dr Little lived at the Singapore Dispensary for a few years, but afterwards bought some property in River Valley Road, and occupied Bonnygrass House for over thirty-five years, which must be a record for continuous European domicile. His first wife was a daughter of Mrs Whittle, who kept a school in North Bridge Road in 1837. Dr Little was a man of courtly manners and personal charm. He had a striking personality, and was very neat, and had few idiosyncrasies, unless the habit of always wearing gloves out-of-doors can be included in that category. The extent of his interests and activities can be judged by the following notes extracted at random from various sources. In 1844 we find him as a moving spirit in the establishment of a library. Four years later he became Singapore's first Coroner. In January 1851 he opened a private hospital for seamen, charging them only fifty cents a day. A little later he was assisting to collect a Presbyterian congregation; and in another couple of years (1st January 1858) he was gazetted as Surgeon to the Singapore



planting rubber during the boom, spending a large sum of money on such development. This estate was afterwards sold at a considerable loss. Before joining the Post Office, Mr Ho Yang Peng had secured the monopoly as Farmer of all the then markets, Telok Ayer (Old Market), Ellenborough, Rochore and Clyde Terrace, and, later on, of Orchard Road market, and he continued to enjoy the rights of the monopoly until 1909, when the Farm was abolished and the Municipality assumed direct control over all markets.

On 18th September 1844 the following notification was issued by Government:

Authentic intelligence having been received that a naturalised British subject, but of Chinese origin, had incurred some risk of seizure and persecution by the Chinese authorities in consequence of his appearing at one of the Ports in China lately thrown open to British shipping as supercargo of a British vessel – and as cases of the same kind are likely to occur from the growing trade in British ships between the Ports of China and the Straits Settlements, it is hereby notified, with a view to protect persons so situated, that the Resident [69] Councillors in Penang, Singapore and Malacca will be prepared to furnish a certificate when required, intimating that they are naturalised British subjects. This document will be lodged with the British Consul at the first Port the vessel may touch in China.<sup>63</sup>

The attitude of the Straits Government at that date towards Chinese naturalised British subjects visiting the country of their birth forms a strange and striking contrast to its attitude within recent years towards Chinese natural-born British subjects visiting the country of

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Volunteer Rifles. When the Colony was transferred to the Colonial Office in 1867, he was one of the first Unofficial Members of Council. He finally retired about 1882, and settled at Blackheath, where he died on the 11th June 1888.

See Gilbert E Brooke, 'Medical Work and Institutions' in Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) 487–519, at 501.

63 See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 421.

their forefathers! The Government of those days did not recognise the claim of the Chinese authorities to exercise jurisdiction over their own nationals who had expatriated themselves, while the Government of our day issues a half-hearted form of passport to Straits-born Chinese going to China, in cases where their fathers were born on Chinese soil. The requirements made by the Chinese authorities that Straits-born Chinese applying for a passport to visit China must produce two well-known persons to declare the nationality and state the age of the applicant has often worked great hardship: and is an arrangement which the British Government should never have agreed to. Unlike the Dutch 'peranakans', the Straits-born Chinese have during the last twenty-five years been trained to realise the relationship in which they, as a community, stand to the British Throne and Empire. The proofs of loyalty and patriotism and the service in numerous forms to the British Empire given by that community during the Great War should justify the British Imperial Government in putting an end to diplomatic uncertainty and claiming the right to protect, by the issue of unqualified British passports, every Chinese born in the Colony, because he is a natural-born British subject, whether travelling to China or elsewhere. The local Government would then not be hampered by the observance of any special procedure of an irksome or embarrassing nature when applications for passports to China are made, and could issue such [70] passports with the same facilities and ease as are enjoyed by British subjects of all other races.

Among the grants of freehold land issued in 1845 in the district of Claymore, there were two grants numbered 1 and 25 to See Boon Tiong, who, on his retirement to Malacca in 1848, sold this property which forms part of the 'Waverley Estate' near the Tanglin end of Orchard Road. See Boon Tiong was born in Malacca about 1807 and came to Singapore in 1825, where he started in business, and carried it on for twenty-three years. He was for many years an intimate friend of

Mr AL Johnston<sup>64</sup> and Mr James Fraser.<sup>65</sup> In Malacca he was engaged in business as a merchant and started tapioca planting at Linggi. He was one of the first Chinese merchants in Malacca who were honoured by being made a JP. That was in the year 1860. He used to sit with the Resident Councillor of Malacca in Quarter Sessions when the Resident Councillor was local judge. He continued to invest his savings in house property in the town of Singapore, and such property realised good prices at auction in 1911. He died in Malacca on 1st November 1888 at the advanced age of 81, leaving grandsons, one of whom is Mr See Tiang Lim, at one time a member of the Opium and Spirit Farms and a partner in Tiang Lim Brothers, chop Kim Moh, and now a retired gentleman of means.

The first serious trouble with the Chinese secret societies occurred in 1846. The decay of the Tsing [Qing] dynasty had led to constant rebellions; and the political refugees in the nineteenth century came in great numbers, especially after the Tai-ping insurrection, to this part of the world. One of the direct consequences of this was the introduction into Malaya of the Triad Society and its endless variety

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64 Scotsman Alexander Laurie Johnston (d 1850) was one of the earliest settlers in Singapore, having arrived here in 1820. Favoured by Sir Stamford Raffles, he became the first Magistrate, and Justice of the Peace and one of the earliest trustees of Singapore Institution, the precursor to Raffles Institution. His firm AL Johnston & Co was the first European business here, acting as agents for ships, handling passengers and cargo, and auctioneering goods. He lived in Singapore for 22 years before returning to England in 1841 and then retiring in Scotland. See article on Alexander Laurie Johnston by Vernon Cornelius-Takahama in Singapore Infopedia: [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_535\\_2004-12-27.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_535_2004-12-27.html) (accessed 15 Oct 2015).

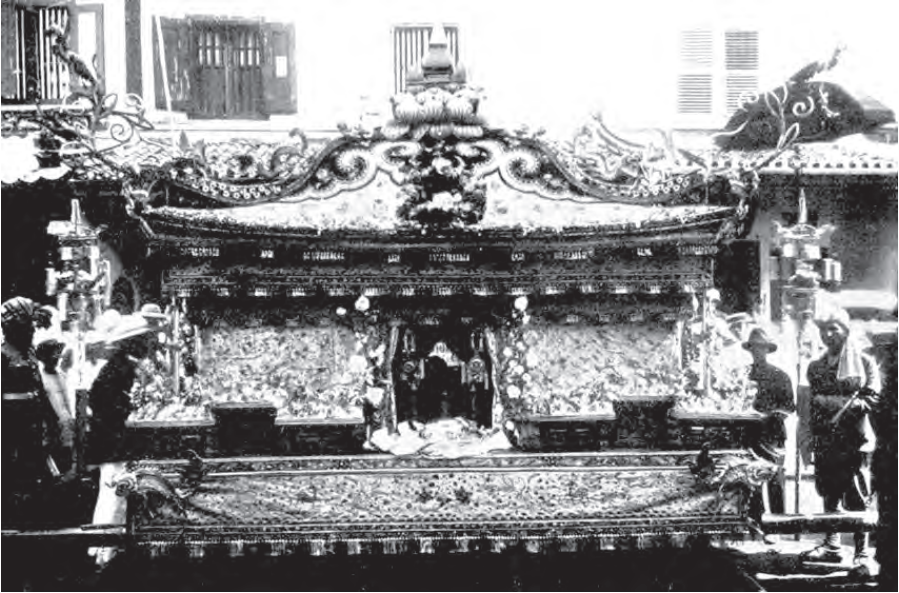
65 James Milner Fraser was an architect. He also founded the Boys' Brigade in Singapore, setting up the first company at Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church in 1930 with 12 boys. Enrolment increased gradually to 40 boys by the time the Brigade's headquarters in London officially recognised the company. Bible lessons, drill, concerts, wayfaring signalling, first aid, swimming, fencing, tumbling and other forms of physical recreation formed the core of their activities. See generally, *Underneath the Banner: The History of the Boys' Brigade in Singapore* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2013).

of sister institutions. The name Triad was given because the Society based its doctrines on the trinity of the Combined Powers, Human, Terrestrial and Celestial. The popular Chinese name is 'Thien-tihui' (天地会) – cosmic association – the name indicating that [71] the Society advocates principles that are deducible from Nature and that are in harmony with cosmic laws. It is in fact a kind of freemasonry with weird and mysterious rites of initiation, with an oath of sworn brotherhood and with an organisation which recalls that of the Jesuits. Fundamentally, its primary object was to overthrow the Manchus, which object in reality it has achieved: since the revolution of 1910-11 found its inspiration from men associated with the original movement. But the Triads became very powerful and very troublesome to the Chinese people and to the government of every country in which the societies prevailed. The influence of the anti-dynastic movement was very widespread. Certain funeral observances had a hidden meaning, intended to suggest to the children of the dead the duty of recovering the national heritage from the Manchus. As soon as a Chinese died, his friends clothed him in the ancient style of dress worn in the Ming dynasty. The eldest male representative was made to mount a chair or stool, and the undertaker – the master of the rites – announced that the dead would not stand on the earth belonging to the Tsing [Qing]. A straw hat was put on the head of the representative, the undertaker declaring that the dead would not be under the same heaven. The different suits of clothes intended for the corpse were worn inside out by the representative, one over the other, and then they were removed together and put on the dead body. This custom prevailed all over Malaya, and was rigidly observed as a perpetual reminder to the people of their duty to shake off the Manchu yoke.

Mr Pickering<sup>66</sup>, in his paper on the subject of Chinese Secret Societies, says:

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66 [Song: *Journal of the Straits Branch*, RAS No 1]. See WA Pickering, 'Chinese Secret Societies, Part I' (1878) 1 *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 63–84. A rare European who could speak Mandarin and Chinese dialects, William Pickering (1840-1907) was the first Chinese Protectorate in Singapore.



A Chinese embroidered catafalque enclosing a coffin

However degraded the Society may have become in its present hands, there is great reason to believe that originally, in the long past, it was a system of freemasonry, and that its object was to benefit mankind [72] by spreading a spirit of brotherhood and by teaching the duties of man to God and his neighbour. The motto of the Thien-ti-hui, whether acted upon or not, is 'Obey Heaven and work righteousness', and the association which could adopt this principle as its fundamental rule must have been composed of individuals raised far above the ideas of mere political adventurers.

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... The professed objects of the League have been in the Straits to a certain extent lost sight of. But at the same time it must be recollected that some years ago the leader of the 'Sie-to' or 'Small knife' rebellion at Amoy, was a Straits-born Chinese, and that there are doubtless now in the Straits several old Tai-ping rebels. The class of Chinese who flock to those colonies is certainly not composed of men who, either by position or education, can be expected to cherish very deeply the higher principles inculcated by the teaching of the Society: and as there are no patriotic aims to be attained under our gentle and liberal Government, the only objects for which they can strive are those lower interests which are only too dear to the average Chinese mind, such as intrigue, assistance

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He acted as a mediator in the Chinese community, dealing in particular with the triads. He learned the Chinese languages during a 10-year stint in Hong Kong's Chinese Maritime Customs Service, coming to Singapore in 1871 and became Protectorate in 1877. Effective at dealing with intra-Chinese conflict, he initiated peace talks between two businessmen openly warring over tin fields in Larut, and when the Hokkien and Teochew communities came to the brink of a riot over the right to send money and letters back to China, he calmed the situation by taking to the streets with his bagpipes. However, such intervention earned him the animosity of some, and in 1877 someone sent by the Ghee Hock Society attacked him with an axe to his head. Pickering survived the attack but never fully recovered and retired as Protectorate in 1899. See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 277–280.

in petty feuds, combination to extort money and to interfere with the course of justice.<sup>67</sup>

The death of the chief of one of the secret societies was the occasion of the trouble above referred to. Application to the magistrate to grant permission to bury the body in a particular burial ground (which rendered it necessary for the funeral procession to pass through the town) was granted on the condition that such procession would take the direct line of route to the burial ground and that the number of followers did not exceed one hundred. The heads of the Hoey agreed to this arrangement, but the members would not, and assembled to the number of several thousands in front of the temple at Rochore. The body of the deceased was placed in the middle of the street, and the crowd declared their intention to pass through the town, staying in such streets as they thought proper, to [73] perform ceremonies. The police attempted to stop them, and the superintendent, Captain Cuppage<sup>68</sup>, and Mr Dunman<sup>69</sup> were ill-treated by them. An express

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67 WA Pickering, 'Chinese Secret Societies, Part I' (1878) 1 *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 63–84, at 65–66.

68 William Cuppage (1807–1872) was Postmaster General in the 1840s, Superintendent of the Police and Assistant Resident. He had a nutmeg plantation on Emerald Hill. The plantation failed but he continued to live on Emerald Hill in two residences, Fern Cottage and Erin Lodge, until his death. He is buried on Fort Canning. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 96.

69 Thomas Dunman (1814–1877) was the first Commissioner of Police in Singapore, having been appointed to the post in 1857. He improved the working conditions of policemen, increasing their pay, reducing their working hours and introducing training and a pension scheme. Morale grew and crime thus dropped. Respected by the leaders of the various communities, Dunman had the support of influential Malays and Indians who felt victimised by the China gangs that fearlessly roamed the island. With the help of these leaders and of others from different social classes, Dunman obtained insider information to carry out police operations. Dunman left the police force in 1871 and retired on his coconut plantation, Grove Estate, in Mountbatten. See Roland St John Braddell, 'Crime: Its Punishment and Prevention' in Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years*

was then dispatched for the troops, and these were placed at the head of the principal thoroughfares, and lined the roadway, so that the procession was compelled to observe the conditions originally issued by the police.

The *Free Press* of February 1847 mentions the case of a Chinese who died from hydrophobia in the hospital, after having been bitten four months before by a mad dog, and as several such cases occurred at this time, the magistrates issued an order for the destruction of stray dogs on the first three days of each month (except Sundays).

The first account of the Chinese community in Singapore written by one of themselves appeared in Vol I of *Logan's Journal* (1847).<sup>70</sup> It was composed in Chinese by Seah Eu Chin<sup>71</sup> and dealt with the annual remittances made to China by all classes of the immigrant.

While the merchant sends his hundreds of dollars, the poor coolie sends his units or tens. The amount remitted each year varies considerably. ... In some years the aggregate amount reaches as high perhaps as \$70,000, while in other years it may fall as low as thirty or forty thousand dollars.<sup>72</sup>

In the following year appeared another paper from the same pen giving a general sketch of the numbers, tribes and occupations of the Chinese in Singapore:

The different trades and professions are schoolmasters, writers, cashiers, shopkeepers, apothecaries, coffin makers, grocers, goldsmiths, silversmiths, tinsmiths, dyers, tailors, barbers, shoemakers,

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*of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) 244–289, at 246–249; and M Akbur Peer *Policing Singapore in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Singapore: Singapore Police Force, 2002), at 18.

70 Siah U Chin, 'Annual Remittances by Chinese Immigrants in Singapore to Their Families in China' (1847) 1 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 35–37.

71 On Seah Eu Chin, see chapter 2.

72 Siah U Chin, 'Annual Remittances by Chinese Immigrants in Singapore to Their Families in China' (1847) 1 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 35, at 35–36.



basket makers, fishermen, sawyers, boat builders, cabinet makers, architects, masons, lime and brick burners, sailors, ferrymen, sago manufacturers, distillers of spirits, cultivators and manufacturers of gambier and of sugar, cultivators of pepper and nutmegs, vendors of cakes and [74] fruits, porters, play-actors, fortune-tellers, idle vagabonds – who have no work and of whom there are not a few – beggars, and, nightly, there are those villains, the thieves.<sup>73</sup>

The estimate given by Mr Eu Chin of the Chinese population was 40,000. This is incorrect, since the police census for 1849 showed only 24,700. The Chinese inhabitants were classified by Mr Eu Chin into six distinct groups as follows:<sup>74</sup>

1. Chinese from Hokien province: these come from the departments of Chiang-chiu, Chan-chiu and Engchun.
2. Malacca-born Chinese.
3. Chinese from the department of Tio-chiu, which is under the jurisdiction of Canton province.
4. Chinese from Canton – these men are here commonly called Macao Chinese.
5. Khek Chinese – these are men who come from the two provinces of Hokien and Canton.
6. Chinese from Hainan, which is also subject to the jurisdiction of Canton.

He thus writes of the labouring class:

They are mostly very poor. Originally, they come with the intention of returning to their native land after a sojourn of three or four years, but, out of ten, only one or two individuals are able to return after that time, and when they do retire, they do not take with them much wealth. ... There are some who are able to go back after five or six years, and others after seven, eight or ten years. There

73 Siah U Chin, 'The Chinese in Singapore: General Sketch of the Numbers, Tribes, and Avocations of the Chinese in Singapore' (1848) 2 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, 283–289, at 284.

74 *Ibid*, at 283.

are a great number who remain here upwards of ten and twenty years: and yet, unable to return, ultimately die and repose their ashes in this Settlement. Alas for those who originally intended to return to their native country after three years, and yet, after the lapse of more than nineteen years have not been able to fulfil their wish, but what is the reason of it? It is because they became addicted to the prevailing vice of opium smoking. After a continuous residence here they learn the habit [75] which afterwards becomes fixed. Many of the Chinese labourers, after having earned a little money, waste it upon opium or expend it in gambling. After a series of years they save nothing, and every day it becomes more and more difficult for them to return to their country.<sup>75</sup>

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75 Ibid, at 285.

## CHAPTER V

### THE FOURTH DECADE (1849-59)

TOWARDS the close of 1849, there returned to Singapore Song Hoot Kiam and Lee Kim Lin, two out of the three Straits Chinese youths who had been taken to England by Dr Legge to finish their education. Song Hoot Kiam<sup>1</sup> was born in Malacca in 1830. He was the second of three sons of Song Eng Chong, who was also born in Malacca, in 1799, and who died at the age of 76 years (in 1875) in Singapore. At the age of 11, Hoot Kiam was placed as a boarder in the Anglo Chinese College in Malacca, which had then the Rev James Legge (afterwards Professor of Chinese, Oxford University) as Principal, and remained there two years until Mr Legge left for Hongkong.<sup>2</sup> The family then came to this Settlement where Hoot Kiam was brought in contact with the Rev A Stronach, who had known Mr Legge intimately, and who, after having ascertained that both Kim Lin and Hoot Kiam were anxious to continue their studies under Mr Legge, arranged for the lads to

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- 1 According to Phyllis Ghim Lian Chew, *A Sociolinguistic History of Early Identities in Singapore: From Colonialism to Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), Song Hoot Kiam (1830-1900) the father of Song Ong Siang, the author of *One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore* was displayed as a 'Christian' and 'reported to speak English perfectly'. Song's new-found faith led him to reject his parents' choice of a non-Christian girl. Instead he married Yeo Choon Neo, a well-educated Straits Chinese girl, a union which is regarded as the start of the oldest Straits Chinese Christian family in Singapore. Influenced by his wife's mentor, the headmistress of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School, Miss Grant, Song took on a position as a teacher at the Singapore Free School. Although Song did not turn to full-time Christian work as Legge had hoped, he remained highly regarded for his Christian work, serving alongside Benjamin Keasberry at the Straits Chinese Church at Prinsep Street.
  - 2 On James Legge, see Helen Edith Legge, *James Legge, Missionary and Scholar* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1905); and NJ Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).



Dr Legge and his three Chinese pupils



Song Hoot Kiam

proceed to Hongkong at Mr Legge's expense. For the next few months after their arrival there, they were placed in the Anglo-Chinese college situated in the Chung-wan district to learn the Cantonese dialect.

Writing to his brother in Scotland on the 18th November 1845 on the eve of his departure on furlough, Dr Legge says:

You know I am bringing home three Chinese boys with me. They must just go to school as other boys. [77] The principal object is that they get hold of the English, so as to be able to read it with intelligence and to speak it.<sup>3</sup>

After a six-month voyage on a sailing vessel, the *Duke of Portland*, Dr Legge's party arrived in London, and the three lads were sent on to Huntly, in Banffshire, Scotland, and entered at the Duchess of Gordon's School. There they remained till the spring of 1848, attending the services at the Rev Thomas Hill's Congregational Church, where the Legge family worshipped, and where in November 1847 they received baptism in the presence of Dr Legge. Travelling southwards, the party halted at several places en route. The following letters are quoted from Miss Edith Legge's Biography of her father:

LEICESTER, Jan 24, 1848

... Tuesday morning took me and the Chinese lads to Manchester. ... The same evening we went on to Rochdale, and thence on Thursday to Hull. ... On Saturday we came on here, and I addressed about 1,000 children in the afternoon and preached in the evening. A meeting to-night, for which I have retained the lads, but to-morrow I shall send them on to London, following myself on Thursday. The fatigue and excitement have been too much for them and for myself also.<sup>4</sup>

LONDON, Feb 5, 1848

The principal engagement of to-day was a private audience first of Prince Albert and secondly of the Queen, along with the Chinese

3 [Song: *James Legge*, by Miss HE Legge (1905)]. Helen Edith Legge, *James Legge, Missionary and Scholar* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1905) at 52.

4 *Ibid*, at 56.

lads. I knew not of it till a letter came from Lord Morpeth, saying if I would be at the Palace at 3 o'clock to-day he would be there to conduct me to the presence. Our audience was very pleasant and courteous on the part of the Queen and His Royal Highness. He is a fine, handsome, gentlemanly looking man, and she is a sweet, quiet little body. She was dressed simply and unpretendingly.... Our conversation was all about China and the lads. The boys were much taken by surprise, having been expecting [78] to see a person gorgeously dressed with a crown and all the other paraphernalia of royalty.<sup>5</sup>

A few months after his return to Singapore, Mr Hoot Kiam married his first wife, Yeo Choon Neo, one of the pupils of Miss Grant, the representative of the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East, who had come out in 1843 to take charge of the Girls' School which had been begun by Mrs Dyer of the London Missionary Society. This young couple founded the oldest family of Straits Chinese Christians in Singapore. In 1853 Mr Hoot Kiam joined the service of the P&O Company which had in 1845 established a branch office here, and held the post of cashier until his retirement in 1895. He associated himself with the work of the Rev BP Keasberry, by whom the Malay chapel in Prinsep Street had been built and opened in 1843. Mr Hoot Kiam was the possessor of a fine voice, and in the days before there was such a thing as an organ in that chapel he was the 'precentor' and led the singing at the chapel services. From the Straits Directory of 1864, we find that he was at that time the treasurer of Mr Keasberry's chapel. Under his influence, a number of young men joined this church, among them being Tan Kong Wee,<sup>6</sup> Tan Boon Chin and Foo Teng Quee.

Mr Hoot Kiam was thrice married. After the death of his first wife, he married in 1870 Phan Fung Lean, belonging to a Christian family from Penang, and the eldest child of this union is Song Ong Siang. Although Mr Hoot Kiam never again met his old master – who had attained a world-wide reputation as a Chinese scholar – he had the

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5 Ibid.

6 On Tan Kong Wee, see Chapter 4, n 32.

pleasure of welcoming Dr Legge's second son in 1890 when the latter visited Singapore. Says the biographer:

Song Hoot Kiam spoke English perfectly, and was only too delighted to see and entertain his old friend, Dr Legge's son.<sup>7</sup>

About the same time Dr Legge, 'the most charming of old men' – then about 76 years old, but up at four o'clock [79] in the morning working away at a translation of some Chinese classics – had the young fellow, Ong Siang, to spend a few days with him at his house in Keble Road, Oxford. Mr Hoot Kiam died on 7th October 1900 at the age of 70, nine daughters and five sons surviving him.

'Song Hoot Kiam', says the *Straits Chinese Magazine*,<sup>8</sup>

was neither rich nor great, but he was a specimen of the best type of Chinese character. Sober, persevering and conservative, he was a mighty rock to his large family. Early associations and the friendship of the late Dr James Legge made him a Christian, and his sojourn in England from 1846 to 1848, during which he was presented to the Queen, completed his training for the faith which he had adopted. ... He toiled on quietly, and in hope and faith, raised up sons and daughters to worship God, and to work for the kingdom of heaven. ... He laboured well, though few heard of his arduous toil. ... As a servant, as a friend and as a father – he stands pre-eminent as an example for the Straits Chinese. Honest, punctual, sober, industrious and conscientious, he discharged his duties to the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company for a period of forty-two years. His masters did not overlook his merits, which, on his retirement, were recognised by a gratuity. Half a century of honest, steady and successful work for others is a sufficient commentary on the man's character. As a friend Mr Hoot Kiam is loved wherever he is known, but he is known only to a small circle. Being of a shy and retiring disposition, he spent most of his time among his family, and those of us who can realise the happiness of this simple domesticity may well envy the

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7 Ibid, at 52.

8 [Song: Vol IV (December 1900)].

coolness, the contentment and the goodness of our friend who has just departed.<sup>9</sup>

On the 21st November 1901 a marble tablet to his memory was unveiled at Prinsep Street Church by the Rev JAB Cook in the presence of a large gathering of his friends and fellow-workers. [80] The three-days' visit of the Marquis of Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India, to this Settlement in February 1850 was an event long remembered by the inhabitants, and before the end of the year the Obelisk, which now stands near the sea-wall on the north side of Anderson Bridge, had been erected by means of a \$5 subscription fund, as a permanent memorial of the event. The names of Tan Kim Seng, Seah Eu Chin and Ang Choon Seng appeared on the Committee of the Dalhousie Testimonial. On the day before Lord Dalhousie's departure, various addresses were presented to him, one of which was from the Chinese merchants. The Chinese people hit upon a happy idea. The *Free Press* says:

The forenoon of Wednesday, the day fixed for his Lordship's departure, was signalled by a display of feeling on the part of the Chinese community, which we believe to have been quite spontaneous. About nine o'clock the road up Government Hill was occupied by a long train of toy carriages, splendidly painted and gilded, some drawn by ponies, others by men, which were filled with gaily dressed Chinese children, sent by their mothers to wait upon Lady Dalhousie. It was altogether a most pleasing spectacle, and as a display of feeling on the part of our large Chinese community, is not devoid of importance. Her Ladyship, as well as Lord Dalhousie, received their youthful visitors with the utmost kindness, and appeared to take great delight in the novel and interesting sight. The great kindness and personal notice bestowed by her Ladyship on the children during the visit have, almost more than anything else, gained the hearts of the Chinese.<sup>10</sup>

Such a quaint procession, got up at a moment's notice, is impossible to-day, at least as far as the beautifully carved and gilt toy carriages

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9 (1900) *Straits Chinese Magazine*.

10 See 'The Visit of the Governor-General' *Singapore Free Press*, 5 Mar 1850, at 1.



('kreta Wang-kang') and the diamond-crusted head-dresses are concerned. These have all been consigned to the limbo of the past. More's the pity!

Ang Choon Seng<sup>11</sup> was born in Malacca in 1805. Coming [81] to Singapore at an early age, he started business in Philip Street under the chop Chin Seng as commission agent and provision merchant. He owned two schooners, *Patah Salam* and *Kong Kek*, trading to Saigon and Bangkok, and went in for nutmeg planting, which was for a little time successful. This nutmeg plantation was situated somewhere in Moulmein Road. At his death on 2nd February 1852 his elder son Ang Kim Cheak (who was born in 1827) continued the business, in which he was joined by his younger brother Ang Kim Tee (born in 1839) when he came of age. When Kim Cheak died in 1870, Ang Kim Tee carried on the same business as its sole proprietor, which ceased with his death on 14th December 1901. He married a daughter of Mr Lim Kong Wan and three of his daughters became successively the wives of the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, while another daughter is married to Mr Lim Tek Wee of the *Straits Times* office. His son Mr Ang Hock Siew is chief cashier to the Straits Steamship Co Ltd. Both Ang Kim Cheak and Ang Kim Tee took a special interest in the Kim Seng Free School for Chinese boys in Amoy Street, and held successively the post of treasurer.

A letter dated 23rd March 1850 to Governor Butterworth and signed by Tan Kim Seng, Seah Eu Chin, Lim Keng Liak, Chan Koo Chan, Cheang Sam Teo, Sim Ah Khay, Ang Choon Seng, Chee Teang Why, Yeo Hoot Seng, Wee Chong San and Ang Chat Wat is quoted *in extenso* as it sets out the nature of the petition of the Chinese inhabitants of that period praying for more sympathetic treatment:<sup>12</sup>

11 Also spelt 'Ung Choon Seng' (see *Straits Times*, 25 Nov 1851, at 5) or 'Ung Choon Sing' (see 'Address from the Inhabitants' *Singapore Free Press*, 5 Dec 1851, at 6).

12 See 'Singapore' *The South Australian*, 9 Jul 1850, at 3.

We have been requested to wait upon your Honour by the Chinese who signed the petition to the Most Noble the Marquis of Dalhousie, KT, Governor General of India, praying for liberty to observe the rites and customs appertaining to marriages and funerals and which are essential to their due celebration, the annual oblations to the manes of the deceased in the open air in front of each house, the oblations of the Fokien and [82] Kwangtung temples and the 'cho-hi' or plays in the enclosures in front in honour of the 'Sin' or deified mortals on their respective birthdays: the New Year festivities and worship extending over fifteen days, the annual procession and offerings to the queen of heaven of the people of the Junks from China and the beating of gongs on board the Chinese junks in the harbour on the arrival and departure of a junk.

We have communicated to our fellow petitioners your Honour's gracious compliance with the wishes of the Chinese community, and have intimated to them your objection to the firing of crackers, save on occasion of marriages when there is only to be one 'ko-phau' on leaving, and one on entering the house. We have also informed them that besides complying with the prayer of the petition, your Honour has been pleased out of consideration for their feelings to discountenance the practice hitherto prevailing amongst the police of seizing persons by the 'thau-chang', and that it has now been prohibited. They desire to join us in expressing our gratitude for the kindness and regard which you have evinced on this occasion to the Chinese community, and assuring you that if we had not been under a misapprehension as to the sentiment entertained by your Honour we would have long ago addressed you on the subject,

We have the honour to be, Honourable Sir,  
Your most obedient humble servants  
(sd.) TAN KIM SENG & OTHERS

The interior of the Settlement had been for some time in a disturbed state, owing to the steady persecution of the Chinese converts to the Roman Catholic faith by the Hoeyes, whose headmen found that the conversion of the Chinese in the interior had the effect of placing,

everywhere throughout the island, men who did not require the protection and assistance of the Hoeys: while, as it were, acting as a check upon their activities. The result was a general attack in 1851 upon the Christian Chinese in the country districts. The disturbances lasted for over a week, the Indian convicts were sent [83] out in gangs to follow the rioters into the jungles and disperse them, and finally it required the presence of the military to quell them. 'As it was', writes Major McNair, 'over 500 Chinese were killed, and among them many of the well-to-do Christian converts who had become planters.'<sup>13</sup> The Chinese Roman Catholics were not altogether free from blame, for they regarded themselves as a distinct brotherhood – the Hong-kahs – and any quarrel occurring between their members and outsiders was at once adopted by the whole body, and riots ensued. The readiness also of the Roman Catholic priests to espouse the grievances of their converts and to look after their Court cases doubtless was another source of irritation to the Hoeys. The Grand Jury, in their presentment in February 1851, again complained against the Chinese secret societies, 'whose power was dreaded by Chinese of all classes, and which by their recent destruction of numerous bangsals belonging to Christian Chinese and by their outrageous attack upon the police in the vicinity of Bukit Timah had exhibited a most dangerous combination against public security and peace'.

Again, in their presentment of August 1853, the Grand Jury drew attention to the necessity of adopting stringent measures to detain witnesses in very grave cases until the trial of the prisoners, particularly where the Hoeys were concerned, as it was believed that witnesses were frequently tampered with and disposed of by the secret societies, consequently defeating the ends of justice and encouraging crime. Notwithstanding these repeated warnings of the Grand Jury and the strong comments of the local papers, the Government did not appear

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13 [Song: *Prisoners Their Own Warders*]. See, J Frederick Adolphus McNair, *Prisoners Their Own Warders: A History of the Convict Establishments at Bencoolen, Penang and Malacca from the Year 1797* (Westminster: A Constable & Co, 1899) at 68.

to realise fully the seriousness of the danger to the population due to the growing activities of the various secret societies and to the great accession to their strength by the arrival of rebels from China who had been routed by the Imperial troops. Then, like a bolt from the blue, occurred in May 1854 the [84] biggest Chinese riots that have ever been known in Singapore.

Among the Malacca lads who ventured to Singapore in 1851 to seek Dame Fortune's favour was Wan Eng Kiat, then 17 years of age. For a little time he worked as a watchmaker, and then entered the service of Messrs Martin Dyce & Co. At the age of 24, he married Toh Nya Chik, who is still living. Mr Wan Eng Kiat, after his marriage, worked with Messrs Puttfarcken, Rheiner & Co and later with Messrs Puttfarcken & Co as storekeeper, retiring at the age of 68. He was a shrewd and careful investor in house properties, which at his death at the advanced age of 85, on 3rd May 1919,<sup>14</sup> were worth half a million dollars.

In November 1851, on the departure of Governor Butterworth for a holiday trip to Australia, the Chinese merchants, among others, presented an address, and the following passage appears in the Governor's reply thereto:

I take the advantage of this opportunity to notice the obligation the Chinese community, and the public generally, are under to Seah Eu Chin for his management of the Pauper Hospital, which involved great responsibility, pecuniary and otherwise, prior to the establishment of the present very efficient Committee, one of whose members, my friend Tan Kim Seng, is at the head of this deputation. I commend to the special attention and liberal support of the Chinese community, the aforesaid institution, founded by Tan Tock Seng, whose premature death prevented him endowing it, as he had proposed, with funds sufficient for the maintenance of a given number of its inmates.<sup>15</sup>

14 According to Kua Bak Lim, Wan was born in 1834. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 10.

15 'Address from the Inhabitants' *Singapore Free Press*, 5 Dec 1851, at 6.



Wan Eng Kiat

It is deserving of mention how much before the notice of the general community was the Tan Tock Seng Hospital of those days. Lord Dalhousie<sup>16</sup> during his brief stay here in 1850 presented the Hospital with 1,000 rupees, while in 1866 the English and Germans (who mixed together a great deal in social life) respectively staged a parody of an old opera and a farce for [85] its benefit. Mr Buckley tells the story of how at the eleventh hour, with the help of Mr JD Vaughan, a farce, with four characters in it, had to be studied and rehearsed to take the place of another previously arranged farce, and it was pronounced a great success, after just thirty hours' preparation.

The first St Andrew's Church, which was completed in 1837 and ceased to be used in 1852 as it was in a dangerous state, will be remembered as the alleged cause of the first two 'head scares' among the Chinese, Malays and Indians. The first scare is recorded by Abdullah in his *Hikayat*. He related how he himself made inquiries into the rumour that the blood of thirty-six men was required for the sanctification of the new church, and how he argued with several persons who really believed the truth of the rumour and how he failed to allay their fears. The matter became worse after respectable and intelligent Chinese had made inquiries and believed that nine heads had already been secured. What was the origin of the rumour or who was responsible for it remains a mystery.

Again, in 1853, the Press reported a most extraordinary delusion prevailing amongst the native population, and especially the Chinese section. Major McNair, referring to this incident, attributed it to the bad characters among the Chinese who resented the employment by

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16 A strong believer of western supremacy in every sense, Lord Dalhousie's administration marked the expansion of British Indian territories and the introduction of reforms and constructive activities. Dalhousie fought the second Sikh War (1848-49) and annexed the Punjab. He annexed a portion of Sikkim in 1850 and towards the end of 1852 his army fought the Second Burmese War and conquered lower Burma. See Suresh Chandra Ghosh, 'The Utilitarianism of Dalhousie and the Material Improvement of India' (1978) 12(1) *Modern Asian Studies* 97-110.

the Government of convict labour in public works and tried to get the convicts into trouble.

Placards in Chinese appeared all over the town that the Governor and all the Europeans had left off worshipping in St Andrew's Church, owing to the number of evil spirits there, and that in order to appease the spirits, the Governor required thirty heads, and had ordered the convicts to waylay people at night and kill them! The Governor, with a view to allaying the panic, issued a notice declaring the reports to be false and offering \$500 reward for the discovery of any person propagating such reports. As this notice only called forth other Chinese placards of a very improper nature, some [86] thirty of the leading Chinese merchants, at the request of the Government, signed a long appeal to their countrymen, in which they pointed out the benevolence of the English Government, and its anxiety to protect the lives of all persons under its care, even to the extent of offering rewards for the destruction of the tigers which killed people. This appeal was lithographed and distributed, and in two days the fears of the Chinese population were dispelled. In 1875 a similar 'head scare' occurred during the construction of the 'puddle trench' for the new Impounding Reservoir. In 1885 it occurred again, the rumour being that heads were required for the new market at Telok Ayer, and natives in the town, especially children, were afraid to go out at night. There were other later scares, e.g. when the Memorial Hall was begun and at the early stages of the construction of Anderson Bridge: and it is believed that these rumours were started by persons who were engaged in extensive smuggling or housebreaking operations.

*The Free Press* mentioned that among the arrivals from Amoy in 1853 were the wives and families of several of the most respectable Chinese merchants, and made a true remark that if the practice of the wives and families of our traders following them should continue, it might be expected to exercise a beneficial influence on the Chinese part of the population.

In the same year there arrived from England Miss Sophia Cooke<sup>17</sup> to take over from Miss Grant the charge of the Chinese Girls' School (then with twenty girls), which was for many years the only institution giving elementary English education, along with religious instruction, to Chinese girls. It was also an orphanage where many a Chinese orphan girl was brought up and educated and trained in household duties. This school has supplied wives to many of the early Chinese Protestant converts, and to-day in China, the Straits and FMS and the Dutch East Indies, there are still some of the old girls who have settled down there with their [87] husbands. For some years in the 'Seventies, the School had a branch establishment for day pupils under Miss Foster and Chinese women teachers in a shop house at Middle Road, and later in a lane off North Bridge Road. This branch school got to be known as the 'Ragged School'. Miss Cooke died in 1895, and for two years the work of the School was carried on by Miss Ryan, who, although now old and feeble, still takes an active share in the work she loves so well. Soon after the arrival of Miss Gage-Brown as its head, the School passed from the control of the Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East to that of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society. Owing to ill-health, Miss Gage-Brown had to return to England and the School is now under the charge of Miss Tolley, doing quiet but good work among the eighty Chinese girl boarders, orphans and day pupils.

The outstanding event in the year 1854 was the émeute between the natives of Fukien and Kwangtung. The ostensible cause was a quarrel on the 5th May between a Hokien and a Cantonese about a trifle of five catties of rice. Mr Vaughan cites this riot as an illustration in support of his contention that most of the riots that occurred in Singapore did not originate with the secret societies, and says that on this occasion the solemn obligations of the secret societies were thrown to the winds, and members of the same Hoey fought to the death against their brethren. Mr Buckley, however, says that the *casus belli* was the

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17 On Sophia Cooke, see Chapter 4, n 28.



refusal of the Hokiens to join the Kwangtung people in a subscription to assist the rebels who had been driven from Amoy by the Chinese Imperial troops.

Half an hour after its commencement, the town was a scene of fearful confusion: the police confessed their inability to quell the riot; brickbats were flying about in all directions: broken heads were plentiful: shops were pillaged: and, had it not been for the timely intervention of some Europeans, serious consequences might have ensued.<sup>18</sup>

[88] Governor Butterworth did not share the views of Mr Dunman, the Superintendent of Police, that the disturbance was going to develop into a serious affair which the Police could not cope with, and which would require the aid of the military forces. On the following morning the Governor rode into Hill Street near River Valley Road and was pelted by the mob, his hat being knocked off by a brickbat, and he had to retire. The military were called out and a body of marines landed from the British men-of-war in the harbour. The European community, to a man, offered their services and were sworn in as special constables.

Mr WH Read<sup>19</sup> was the first special constable sworn in and was immediately directed to proceed, along with Mr Tan Kim Seng, to collect the headmen of the different Hoeys for a palaver at the Reading Room in Raffles Square. Some thirty headmen were brought in, and after the Governor had addressed them they were told to sign a document binding themselves to use their influence in restoring

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18 See 'Old Times in Singapore' *Singapore Free Press*, 19 Jun 1886, at 7.

19 Aged 22, William Henry Read travelled to Singapore to take his father's place at AL Johnston & Company, Singapore's leading merchant company at that time, his father retiring and returning to England the following year (1842). Read was highly active in social and public affairs, and commercial life. He was also a generous donor to education, religious and social institutions. He was one of the early political agitators for the transfer of the Straits Settlements from British India control, to the Colonial Office in London. CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 367.

peace. When they had done so, Mr Read was again detailed to take eight constables and a well-known bad character named Moh Choon to proclaim peace through the town. Every hundred yards or so, Moh Choon<sup>20</sup> shouted something in Chinese which his escort did not understand. One of the special constables, naturally nervous as the party was surrounded by hundreds of Chinese, said to Mr Read: 'Suppose he was to call upon these fellows to assault us,' to which the prompt reply was given: 'I can't help that, but you may depend that, on the first hostile movement, I shall shoot my friend Moh Choon and take my chance afterwards.' Matters got from bad to worse, especially in the country districts where the Chinese rioters had been murdering, burning and destroying in all directions and committing unheard of atrocities. Men were impaled and chopped to bits: women had their breasts cut off and were tortured to death. During these disturbances, which lasted ten days, it was estimated that fully six hundred Chinese [89] had been killed, besides a larger number wounded, and three hundred houses had been burnt or pillaged.

Referring to this émeute in his address to the Grand Jury, Sir William Jeffcott<sup>21</sup>, the Recorder, said:

These people had hitherto lived peaceably together, transacting business with each other and living intermingled in the same street. Without any apparent cause, however, a spirit of discord appears suddenly to have arisen amongst them, which on the 5th of May broke out in acts of violence, riots occurring in different parts of the town, and at length resulting in houses being attacked and plundered. This state of things continued for seven or eight days,

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20 While it was believed that the Ghee Hin secret society was involved in mobilising Chinese opposition to the new sub-post office, not all secret society members were party to the violence. Chua Moh Choon, headman of the Ghee Hock society, instead helped to persuade the rioters to desist. See *Straits Times Overland Report*, 8 Feb 1877, at 3.

21 Sir William Jeffcott was selected for the Recordship of the United Settlement of Singapore and Malacca, arriving in Feb 1850. Sir William took a warm interest in the cause of education and was a member of the Irish Bar. See *Straits Times*, 15 Apr 1856, at 5.

although after the first three days the rioting in town gradually diminished. The police were incessantly employed, the military were called out, and the marines landed from the ships-of-war: and with a most praiseworthy alacrity, the European inhabitants came forward and offered most valuable assistance in preserving order, for which they were entitled to the gratitude of the community.

After the first two days, the disturbances spread into the country, where they assumed a very different character. The riotous proceedings there were much more serious and aggravated and quickly led to the plundering and burning of property, and eventually to the destruction of life and the committal of excesses of every kind of the most barbarous nature. The Grand Jury could easily understand how this difference should have taken place. While in town the people are comparatively civilised, the mass of the population in the jungle consists of men who have never for any length of time come in contact with Europeans or with the more orderly part of the town residents, and who live in a state of secluded semi-barbarism in the jungle, with little or no idea of what law or order is. When, therefore, the disturbances spread amongst them, they naturally plunged at once into far greater excesses than had characterised the town population, and the consequence was that for a series of days the rural districts were the scene of the most lamentable outrages – huts and villages being burnt down in every direction, and [90] murders committed, many of which had come to their knowledge, while it was to be feared many more had been perpetrated but remained unknown. Another cause, perhaps, of the different character which the disturbances in the country had assumed compared with those in the town might be found in the fact that while in the town the two parties were nearly equal, in the country one of them had the preponderance, and had the other party in a great measure in their power.<sup>22</sup>

About five hundred men had been arrested, of whom half were committed for trial. The Sessions lasted seventeen days. Six men were

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22 CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 594–595.

sentenced to death, but only two were executed: sixty-four were sentenced to various terms of hard labour, and eight were transported for fourteen years.

The year 1855 saw an increase in piracy. The most formidable pirates were Chinese who waylaid and fired on the junks and other native craft in their voyages to and from Singapore, in the China Sea and the Gulf of Siam. A public meeting was held in May to memorialise the Secretary of State on the subject. Among other resolutions, the following were passed:<sup>23</sup>

Proposed by Tan Beng Swee and seconded by JP Cumming:

that this meeting views with deep concern the ravages committed by pirates, Chinese especially, in the immediate vicinity of this port, to the great destruction of human life and detriment to trade.

Proposed by WH Read and seconded by Tan Kim Ching:

that in order to remedy the present insecurity of life and property, petitions be prepared and forwarded to the Supreme Government, the Houses of Parliament, and the Admiral on this Station, urging them to take vigorous measures to repress piracy in these parts.'

Mr Tan Beng Swee<sup>24</sup> was born in Singapore in 1828. [91] At an early age he went into his father's shop. The firm of Kim-seng & Co had been established before 1840 by Mr Tan Kim Seng. In 1847-9 Tan Soon Lim was a partner in that firm, and in 1850-1 his place was taken by Tan

23 Ibid, at 620.

24 Tan Beng Swee was the head of the Tan Clan Association and Chinese temples in Malacca and Singapore. He was also the longest serving member of the Legislative Council and fervently fought for the rights of the poor and the Chinese community. In honour of his contribution, the Tan Beng Swee clock tower in the middle of Malacca town was built by his son Tan Jiak Kim to fulfil his father's wish. Tan Beng Swee succeeded his father, Tan Kim Seng as head of Kim Seng & Co in 1863, upon the latter's death. He died in 1884. See Phyllis Chew, *Tan Jiak Kim (1859-1917): A Straits Chinese Leader*, Academic Exercise, Department of History (Singapore: University of Singapore, 1976).



Tan Beng Swee

Koh Teow. In 1852 Mr Beng Swee was admitted his father's partner and upon Mr Kim Seng's death in 1864 he became head of the firm, both here and in Malacca. The firm had also a branch office in Shanghai. Mr Beng Swee was one of the committee of five merchants who prepared the appeal to the Chinese public in 1853 in connection with the 'head scare.' For seventeen years he was the president of the Chinese Temple in Malacca, presented the clock tower there to the Government and also founded and endowed the Kim Seng Free School in that Settlement. He also supported the Kim Seng Chinese Free School in Amoy Street, Singapore, which had been founded by his father. He was on the list of Grand Jurors in 1864 and later was appointed a JP. In 1879 when he was a member of the Committee of Management of the Tan Tock Seng Hospital, he built at his own expense three wards, one of which was of permanent materials, accommodating about thirty patients. He died on 4th November 1884 (his eldest son being Mr Tan Jiak Kim) and was buried in Malacca. He was of a quiet and retiring disposition, but always open and obliging to those with whom he came in contact, either in business or otherwise.

That the firm of Kim-seng & Co had exceptionally close and extensive business relations and intercourse with several leading European firms of that period is evidenced by two handsome gifts, photographs of which are here shown, of massive silver epergnes of beautiful design and elaborate workmanship, greatly prized by the family. The earlier one was a gift from the partners of Hamilton, Gray & Co (viz. Walter Buchanan, MP, William Hamilton, George Garden Nicol, John Jarvie, George Henderson and Reginald Padday) to 'their old and much esteemed friend, Tan Kim Seng'. The [92] later gift was presented by 'Edward Boustead of London to Tan Kim Seng and Tan Beng Swee of Singapore as a mark of esteem and friendship, and in acknowledgment of the many and valuable services rendered to himself personally as well as to his firm (Boustead & Co of Singapore) during an uninterrupted friendly intercourse of nearly a quarter of a century, January 1862.'



Present to Tan Kim Seng from Hamilton, Gray & Co.



Boustead & Co's present to Tan Kim Seng and Tan Beng Swee.

Mr Tan Kim Ching,<sup>25</sup> the eldest of the three sons of Tan Tock Seng, was born in Singapore in 1829. On his father's death the firm of 'Tan Tock-seng' was changed to 'Tan Kim-ching' and the business was carried on at River-side (now Boat Quay) from 1851 to 1859 by Tan Kim Ching as sole owner. In 1860 the firm was known as 'Tan Kim-ching & Brother', chop Chin Seng Ho, Tan Swee Lim, a brother, having been admitted a partner, but a few months later Tan Swee Lim left the firm. The business which finally became known as Kim Ching & Co chop Chin Seng attained considerable success, owning rice mills at Saigon, Siam and elsewhere. Mr Tan Kim Ching was Consul-General and Special Commissioner for Siam in the Straits Settlements and had the title of *Phya Anukul Siamkitch Upanick Sit Siam Rath* conferred on him by the King of Siam. He had great influence on the Chinese outside the Colony, especially in the northern States bordering on Siam, viz. Kelantan and Patani. In Sir Andrew Clarke's time he was instrumental in settling a difficulty which had arisen between the Siamese Government and Perak, for which he received a special letter of thanks from the Governor. He was a commander of the Third Class of the Order of the Rising Sun of Japan, and the recipient of a special letter and honour from China for his contribution to the Famine Fund in 1890. Reference has been made to the timely assistance he gave in 1852 to the Hospital founded by his father in the shape of

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25 Tan Kim Ching (1829-1892), inherited his father's business acumen and had diverse business interests including property, plantations, tin mines in Southern Siam (Thailand) and rice mills in Bangkok. He also had a large tract of mining concessions not explored yet in Mount Ophir, Kampong Rusa and Patani among others. Tan was a noteworthy member of the Ghee Hin society and a supporter of the Raja Muda Abdullah of Perak and the Ghee Hin in Larut. Being a distinguished British ally, Tan also played a significant role in fostering relationships between Singapore and the Colonial Government on one hand, and Siam and its ruler King Mongkut (Rama IV) on the other. Tan helped Sir Harry Ord to secure a new treaty with Kedah in 1867 and played an integral role in ending the Larut wars by getting Abdullah to seek British intervention. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902), at 411, 412, 530, 576, 620, 644 & 703.





Tan Kim Ching

wings to the Hospital buildings at a cost of \$2,000. When the Tanjong Pagar Dock Co Ltd was started in 1863, Mr Kim Ching's name was [93] on the list of the committee of promoters. He was made a JP in 1865. Towards the end of his life a prosecution was instituted against him for keeping slaves, but he was discharged. He died in February 1892 and his remains were interred at his private burial ground at the thirteenth mile on the Changi Road. At his death, he was the owner of the steamers *Siam* and *Singapore*, and of a large number of concessions, including some at Mount Ophir, Kampong Rusa, Patani and various others which had not been prospected. As head of the Hokien Huay-kuan, which was located in the Chinese temple 'Thian-hok-kiong' in Telok Ayer Street, he was styled 'Capitan China.' It was then quite the regular thing for Hokien Chinese marriages to be registered in his office, and for the marriage certificate to bear his chop, although until the death of Mr Tan Beng Swee (of chop 'Hong Hin ') in 1884, by arrangement the marriage register was kept by Mr Beng Swee and marriage certificates were impressed with chop 'Hong Hin.' All the sons of Mr Kim Ching predeceased him, but the five grandsons, Boo Liat, Cheow Pin, Kwee Liang, Kwee Swee and Kwee Wah (all sons of the late Tan Soon Toh) are well-known members of the Chinese community. His daughter, Tan Cheng Gay Neo, who had been taught Chinese and also a little English, was the first among those appointed trustees of his estate to take out probate of his will - one of the rare instances of a Chinese lady being appointed and assuming the duties of executrix of the will of a Chinese testator.

In 1856, shortly after the arrival of the Rev TM Fraser, as the first minister to the Presbyterian congregation in Singapore, a mission to the Chinese was undertaken with Tan See Boo as catechist. Mr Tan See Boo<sup>26</sup> was one of the earliest converts of the Rev Wil-

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26 Tan See Boo began his missionary work for the Presbyterian Church in 1856 and established the first Chinese Gospel Hall in Singapore in 1867. Tan left the Presbyterian Communion because he differed from the Church on two issues. Firstly, he believed that baptism was only for believers and had to be carried out by immersion. Secondly, he believed that a Christian worker must look

liam Burns at Amoy, in China. He began his work in Singapore in a small building used as a Mission Chapel in the compound of Miss Cooke's Chinese Girls' School, then situated in Beach Road, where, a few months [94] before, the Church of England chaplain, at the request of Miss Cooke, had also commenced mission work among the Chinese. Some six years afterwards, Tan See Boo, along with the Rev Alexander Grant, who had come down from the English Presbyterian Mission at Amoy, left the Presbyterian communion, and founded the Chinese Mission of the Plymouth Brethren. A building site was secured on North Bridge Road, almost opposite the original English Mission Chapel, and in 1867 the Chinese Gospel House was erected thereon. It was then known as the Chinese Presbyterian Church with Mr Tan See Boo as the Ruling Elder. Mr See Boo lived at the back portion of the premises with his family and continued his work as a catechist until his death in December 1883 at the age of 51. He was twice married. Mr Tan Tek Soon<sup>27</sup> was the elder son by the first wife (who was one of Miss Cooke's pupils). Born in 1859, Mr Tek Soon was educated at Raffles Institution, where he won the Guthrie Scholarship for Chinese boys in 1873, being its first scholar, and then proceeded to Amoy, to prosecute his Chinese studies. After his return to Singapore, he was for a time in Government service and later was employed in the firm of Kim Ching & Co (in the Siamese consulate department).

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only to God for his financial support. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 640.

27 Also spelt 'Teck Soon'. Tan was a foundation member of the influential gentlemen's debating club known as the Straits Philosophical Society (1893-1916), and the only one of two Chinese members, the other being Dr Lim Boon Keng. Tan's most notable contribution as an intellect and writer was in reconceptualising Chinese civilisation as progressive and open to change, which challenged the prevailing Western idea that Chinese civilisation was antiquated and not progressive. The *Straits Chinese Magazine* was a journal that appeared in Singapore from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century that contained news, editorials, essays and short stories modelled after British periodicals *Blackwoods* and *Macmillans*. See Christine Doran, 'Bright Celestial: Progress in the Political Thought of Tan Teck Soon' (2006) 21(1) *Sojourn: Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 46-67.

He has a wonderful command of the English language, and the wide range of his studies has made him a brilliant and thoughtful writer, especially on subjects relating to China and the Chinese. He co-operated with the Rev A Lamont in producing in 1894 *Bright Celestials*, a story of Chinese life at home and abroad,<sup>28</sup> while he was a valued contributor to the *Straits Chinese Magazine* (1897–1907). The records of the Straits Philosophical Society, of which he has been for many years a member, contain several articles from his able pen. Mr Tan Tek Soon<sup>29</sup> is never ostentatious of his great literary attainments or his extensive and deep knowledge of things Chinese, and never rushes to print unless he has an important message to deliver or warning [95] to give. During recent years he has been living almost the life of a recluse, and it is often with the greatest difficulty and after much persuasion that he is induced to appear before the public as a lecturer. Probably his most recent appearance was at the YMCA Hall when, under the chairmanship of Sir John Bucknill, CJ, he lectured before a large audience on 'Some Chinese Customs' – tea-drinking, the ceremonies at a marriage and a funeral – and discoursed on an interesting similarity between Chinese customs and those of ancient Greece in the matter of household arrangements and structure, the seclusion of women from the vulgar gaze, the marriage formalities, puppet shows, jugglers, etc. What Greece and Rome were to the countries of Europe, India and China are to those of Asia.<sup>30</sup>

Mr Tan See Boo left a number of children by his second wife, two of whom are Dr YW Tan, a medical practitioner in the FMS and Mr YE Tan, a dentist practising with much success in Singapore.

Mention has already been made of the firm of Hooding & Co as a leading Chinese mercantile house in Boat Quay in 1840. This firm

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28 The full title of this novel is *Bright Celestials: The Chinaman at Home and Abroad*. It was published by TF Unwin in London in 1894 under the pseudonym 'John Coming Chinaman'.

29 [Song: Died in 1922].

30 See 'Some Chinese Customs' *Straits Times* 28 Mar 1916, at 7.

continued until 1865, when owing to the death of several of the partners it was dissolved. In 1851 two pieces of land comprised in Grants Nos 5 and 6 and containing the total area of 128 acres at Telok Blangah (now Pasir Panjang) were granted to Yeo Hooding, Yeo Chi Guan, Yeo Hoot King, Yeo Hoot Seng and Yeo Hoot Hin carrying on business in co-partnership under the firm of Hooding & Co chop Kong Cheang. This property, commonly known as Hooding Estate, was by a trust settlement made the 8th November 1882 between Tan Geok Hup (a sister of Mr Tan Beng Swee) of the one part and Yeo Hong Tye and Tan Jiak Kim of the other part dedicated as a burial ground called 'Hiap Guan Sun' for the burial, free of any cost or expense, of all persons of the Hokien tribe of the surname 'Yeo', and was duly licensed as such by the Municipality on the 10th April 1899. Of the five brothers, only one, Yeo Hoot Seng, was men [96]-tioned in public records. He was on the committee of the Tan Tock Seng Hospital in 1852-3.

Very early in the fifties there landed in Singapore a Hylam lad, eight years old, just as thousands of Hylam lads have done ever since, because their elder brothers or relations are already here, and can at once find employment for them. He was introduced into the service of Mr Song Hoot Kiam, an earnest young Christian who had the sympathy and co-operation of his wife in every good work. As the lad, whose name was Foo Teng Quee<sup>31</sup>, showed steadiness and high intelligence, it was arranged that he should go to school as companion to Ong Boo, the son of Mr Hoot Kiam. It turned out that Teng Quee proved a more apt scholar than his master's son, and having been carefully taught the elements of Christianity by Mr Hoot Kiam, Teng Quee expressed

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31 Foo Teng Quee (1846-1906) was born on 6 April 1846 at Haiphong, Hainan and died in Singapore. Foo was one of the heads in the Hainanese community who after his conversion served as a Deacon and Treasurer. Foo was married to Jew Neo Song. (see 'The Late Mr Foo Teng Quee' *Eastern Daily Mail & Straits Morning Advertiser*, 9 Apr 1906, at 3). He was involved in several businesses which he ran from his Teng Quee & Co. Among them was the supply of citronella grass and lallang for horse bedding (see *Straits Times*, 13 Aug 1902, at 4) and a bakery (see *Singapore Free Press*, 25 Nov 1908, at 1).

a desire to become a member of a Christian Church and was baptised. Shortly afterwards he entered the service of the P&O Co (where Mr Hoot Kiam was employed), and then became a salesman at John Little & Co, from which place he acquired all the necessary knowledge and experience to start a business of his own, 'Teng Quee & Co', which formed the foundation of his fortune.

His career as a shopkeeper and then as a merchant was one long series of strenuous work, and by dint of perseverance, patience and upright dealing he became a rich man. His most amiable disposition and obliging nature made for him countless friends. A man unassuming and unpretentious, he nevertheless did not allow a single opportunity in life to pass unchallenged, but made the most of his chances - which generally proved successful, more by reason of his arduous work and zealous attention than by virtue of any good luck. He was a man of humble disposition and was always content to take a back seat, in consequence of which the Chinese community lost the services of a good citizen of great business ability and sterling worth.

To the end of his days Mr Teng Quee showed the [97] great appreciation and esteem he truly felt towards Mr Hoot Kiam for the turn given to the whole course of his career, and he always had the greatest regard for, and took the warmest interest in, all the members of Mr Hoot Kiam's family. He joined the Prinsep Street Chapel, then under the ministration of the Rev BP Keasberry, and succeeded Mr Hoot Kiam as treasurer of the church funds. Mr Teng Quee was a loyal friend to the successive missionaries in charge and was ever ready with his extensive business experience to assist in all building operations of the Mission. He gave of his means liberally and his time and attention with unflinching assiduity to the work of the Mission.

He was well known as a man with a large and liberal heart, and many a poor man did not have to appeal to him for help in vain. On the other hand, many unscrupulous persons took mean advantage of his generous nature, and returned evil for the good he had done them.

He was never ashamed to own himself a Hylam, and to the Hylam community he was for a great many years their 'Twa-koh' (or el-

der brother) who was certain of imparting sound and valuable advice freely and ungrudgingly. He married an old pupil of Miss Cooke's School who had been left a widow with three young children and brought them up with tenderness and care as though they had been his own children: and by her he has an only son. Mr Ong Sam Leong was a partner with him in several profitable ventures. At the time of his death, which took place on 31st March 1906, he had large interests in Pahang.

Towards the close of his life he accepted a seat on the Chinese Advisory Board. His funeral took place on 1st April and was largely attended by people representing all classes of the community. 'It was a sight to move men unto good works, for the good word spoken of him on all sides and the deep and sincere regret expressed by everyone present amply testified to the universal esteem in which he was held by everyone with whom he came in contact in life, and it was a great [98] incentive to all to emulate his example.' A mural tablet to his memory in the Prinsep Street (Baba) Church bears this inscription:

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
FOO TENG QUEE  
(1843-1906)  
A LEADING MEMBER OF THE HYLAM  
COMMUNITY, A FRIEND TO THE NEEDY,  
A CHRISTIAN WORKER, A DEACON AND  
TREASURER OF THIS CHURCH FOR  
MANY YEARS.  
DILIGENT IN HIS BUSINESS.

Mr Ong Sam Leong<sup>32</sup> was born in Singapore in 1857, and at the age of 21 started a small commission agent's business on his own account.

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32 Ong Sam Leong was the key contractor supplying labourers to the mines in Christmas Island. He also owned other businesses such as brickworks and plantations in the Straits Settlements. Today his remains are housed in the largest tomb at Bukit Brown Cemetery in Singapore. The New World Theme Park,



Foo Teng Quee



Ong Sam Leong



His early land transactions turned out profitably, and he became interested in timber concessions in Pahang and Kemaman. In 1899 he secured the contract as universal provider to the Christmas Island Phosphate Co Ltd at that island under the name of Ong Sam Leong & Co, and the firm still holds the monopoly of the contract with the Company. He also owned the well-known Batam Brickworks and held large interests in numerous sawmills in Singapore. As part of his business activities, he engaged in house-building and rubber-planting, and at his death on 7th February 1918 his estate consisted of substantial landed properties and rubber estates, both local and outside the Colony. He was a popular member of several old and respectable Chinese clubs in Singapore and for many years was president of 'Ban Chye Ho' Club. He was keenly interested in the patriotic movement of the Straits Chinese community during the Great War and subscribed liberally to all local funds necessitated by that War. He further erected, at his own expense, the garage at the SVC Drill Hall, for the use of the Corps motor lorry, as an expression of his appreciation of the valuable work [99] which was then being done, at a number of outposts, for the defence of the Settlement by volunteers belonging to the various units. He continued to be a very busy and hard-working man till the end of his days, and the only relaxations he gave himself were motoring and sea-trips. He started life handicapped with a meagre education, but his perseverance and business acumen helped him to build up his own fortune, and before his death he had erected a fine house in Bukit Timah Road known as 'Bukit Rose', in which he entertained his friends on a lavish scale. His widow belongs to an old 'Yeo' family, several members of which were of the Christian faith: an aunt being the first wife of the late Mr Song Hoot Kiam, and an uncle being the well-known Yeo Koon Ho (alias Toleap Young). His surviving daughter is the wife of Khoo

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an iconic leisure centre, was built by his two sons, popularly referred to as the Ong Brothers. See Jeremy Au Yong, 'Tycoon's tomb uncovered' *The Straits Times*, 4 Jun 2006; and Lee Kip Lin, *Emerald Hill, The Story of a Street in Words and Pictures*. (Singapore: National Museum, 1984) at 24.

Pek Lock, the third son of Khoo Phee Soon, at one time one of the leading shipowners and rice merchants of Singapore.

Of his two sons, the elder one, Ong Boon Tat,<sup>33</sup> was born in Singapore in 1888 and educated at Raffles Institution, where he won the Guthrie Scholarship, which had been resuscitated after having been in abeyance for some years. At the age of 19 Mr Boon Tat commenced his business training under his father and is now a prominent man among Straits Chinese merchants of this Colony. He extended the business of Ong Sam Leong & Co., of which he is the chief, by opening a branch house in Penang which is meeting with much success. He is a JP and a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, and is one of the group of young Straits Chinese who are taking a practical interest in public affairs, having realised the duties of citizenship which devolve more especially on the men of education and standing in our community.

The younger son, Ong Peng Hock, who also received his education at Raffles Institution, was carefully trained by his father in the timber trade, and was [100] managing director of United Sawmills Ltd during the brief period of its existence. As a partner of Ong Sam Leong & Co. he goes on frequent visits to Penang to supervise the management of the branch business there.

There were several firms during this decade having large dealings with outports. Among these were Low Poh Jim & Co chop Joo Tye in Boat Quay (established in 1859) with the principal partner Low Poh Jim stationed in Bangkok; and Yap Sian Tee & Co chop Hong Tye in Boat Quay, whose managing partner Yap E Gin resided in Bangkok.

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33 Ong Boon Tat was the managing director of New World Limited (New World Park), a director at Overseas Assurance Corporation and a director of the Malayan Tribune Press Ltd. Together with his brother Ong Beng Hock, Ong jointly established New World Park as the pioneer amusement park in Singapore. Their venture was borne out of the inspiration of their mother, Mrs Ong Sam Leong, who was an ardent fan of the opera. Ong encountered an accident while inspecting a sea pavilion that collapsed and died on Jul 8 1941. See *Straits Times*, 27 Dec 1919, at 8.

These two firms had previously traded together as Yap E Gin & Co, the partners being Low Poh Jim (Bangkok) and Yap E Gin (China). Low Poh Jim & Co were the first consignees of the steamer *Chow Phya*, which was built at West Hartlepool in 1858 for the King of Siam or his Prime Minister and for many years was running between Bangkok and Singapore.

The firm of 'Teang-why & Co' carried on business in Market Street as merchants from 1840 to 1858. The proprietor was Chee Teang Why, who died in Singapore on the 8th October 1861, leaving a will in which he directed that his house in Bukit China district, and his plantation in Pringget district in Malacca, and his plantation in the district of Toah Pyoh (Thomson Road), Singapore, were not on any account to be sold or mortgaged but were to be reserved for ever as 'ancestral heritages', and the rents and profits thereof were to be applied towards paying the expenses of sacrificing to the sinchew or tablets of himself and his deceased ancestors from time to time 'agreeably to the custom of the Chinese'. Like a similar devise in Choa Chong Long's will, this devise was some fifty years afterwards (1908) pronounced to be void as infringing the Rule against perpetuities.

The firm of Khoo Cheng Tiong & Co chop Heng Chun at Boat Quay dealt extensively in Saigon rice. The founder was Khoo Cheng Tiong, who came to Singapore with very little means, commenced business about [101] 1850 and gradually became one of the best-known rice merchants in the Settlement, being worth at the time of his death over a million dollars which, very properly, were mostly invested in this Settlement. He had a wide acquaintance in Singapore, where he was for some time president of the Chinese charitable hospital ('Tongchay-e-sia') and one of the recognised heads of the Hokien community. The firm owned large rice mills at Saigon. Khoo Cheng Teow, his brother, was the manager of chop Heng Chun. Seeing that the business was very profitable, Cheng Teow started his own business as rice merchants under the chop Aik Seng & Co, taking Cheng Tiong into partnership with him. He appointed Khoo Syn Thuak to be manager of chop Aik Seng, which, after the death of Cheng Teow in



Khoo Cheng Tiong



Khoo Cheng Teow (left), and his son, Khoo Teck Siong.

January 1896, owing to bad management had to be closed. One of his sons, Khoo Kok Wah, commenced a new business as rice merchants under the name of Aik Seng & Co in Cecil Street, and this business is in a very prosperous condition to-day.

On the death of Mr Khoo Cheng Tiong in June 1896, at the age of 76, his second son, Khoo Teck Siong, became the managing partner of the concern. The eldest son, Khoo Teck Him (otherwise known as Khoo Seok Wan), took a literary degree in China. A man of enlightened views, he was strongly in sympathy with the revolutionary movement in China which culminated in the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty in 1911. He took a prominent part in entertaining such distinguished political refugees as Kang-yu-wei and Dr Sun-yat-sen during their sojourn in Singapore. His generous gift of \$3,000 towards the fund for starting the Singapore Chinese Girls' School in 1899 is worthy of more than a passing mention, for at that time our leading Straits Chinese were apathetic, if not inimical, to the cause of female education and refused to contribute anything towards that Fund. Both brothers, Seok Wan and Teck Siong, were executors and trustees of their father's will. Each of them inherited about \$700,000. Seok Wan [102] speculated in land and house property and in six years' time lost all his patrimony: while Teck Siong held shares in the Opium and Spirit Farm and lost money in that venture, and in December 1907 both brothers figured in the Bankruptcy Court.

Among the principal import and export merchants at this time was Heng Hin & Co, which imported directly French wines, Scotch whiskies and Manila cigars and tobacco. The business was established in 1856 at 12 Market Street by Lim Soon Tee, a Singapore Chinese, and exported largely to the Native States, Borneo and the surrounding islands. The firm also imported rattans, hides, gutta-percha and betelnuts and sold them to local traders. Mr Lim Soon Tee also owned a saw-mill at Syed Alwee Road and a number of bungalows at Almeida Road (now Balmoral Road). Quite recently the firm got into difficulties and in 1915 it ceased to exist. In 1893 Mr Lim Soon Tee had started another firm of Kim Hin & Co at 7 Kling Street which became one of

the most important Chinese firms engaged in the liquor trade. The management was placed in the hands of his nephew, Mr Lim Tek Siong, who is now sole proprietor of the concern: his good knowledge of English proving of material advantage in the conduct of his extensive business of Wine and Spirit Merchants, General Importers and Commission Agents, which is now carried on at No. 13 Kling Street.

Another firm of importance was Ah Hood & Co chop Koon Hong at Telok Ayer Street, which was started by Wee Ah Hood and dealt in Straits produce of all kinds. Ah Hood's father was a Teochew trader named Wee Ah Heng, who settled down in Malacca in 1810. He owned several junks and traded between Selangor and Singapore, running great risks owing to the prevalence of piracy in those early days. He got on friendly terms with one of the old Rajahs of Selangor by whom he was presented with a Malay spear, a kris and a golden image. He had only to place those objects in a conspicuous [103] place on his junk when Malay pirates approached to indicate that he was under the Rajah's protection, and his vessel was unmolested. He died in Malacca at the early age of 32, leaving his son, Ah Hood, a six months' old child. Wee Ah Hood was born in 1828, and began life as an assistant in a cloth-dealer's shop in Telok Ayer Street. By means of his steady application and diligence he was promoted to be manager. On his towkay's retirement, he established his own business. He was very successful in his transactions and became one of the biggest gambier and pepper merchants of his time. He was highly respected by the European firms with whom he dealt. He died in 1875 at his residence in Hill Street, now occupied by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. This building is one of the four well-known typical Chinese mansions in Singapore. Mr Wee Kim Yam, the eldest son, was born in 1855 and was opium and spirit farmer for the three years 1886-8. In his father's shop premises he carried on his business of Kim Yam & Co chop Khoon Lee, which was wound up shortly after his death on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1914. He took a great deal of interest in all public affairs concerning the Chinese community and was made a JP, and served zealously on the Committee of Tan Tock Seng Hospital, the Chinese



Wee Ah Hood



Wee Kim Yam

Advisory Board, the Po Leung Kuk, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Straits Chinese British Association. He has left a son, Wee Hean Boon, who is well educated both in English and Chinese. A young man of progressive views, Mr Hean Boon has been a staunch supporter of Dr Lim Boon Keng in connection with the night school for teaching the Mandarin dialect to Straits Chinese, and also in all movements for social, intellectual and moral reforms on Confucian lines.

Another Chinese firm of merchants had come into existence some time before 1859 under the style of Eng-wat, Moh-guan & Bros. Mr See Eng Wat<sup>34</sup> was born in Malacca and was one of the first Chinese British subject merchants in Amoy for a great number of years. [104] His second son, Mr See Ewe Boon, was educated at St Xavier's Institution, Penang, and for a short time was a trader at Amoy. In 1890 he became the compradore of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank at Singapore, holding that responsible post till his death in 1909 at the age of 50 years. Another son was Mr See Ewe Lay, who was for some years compradore of the Hongkong Bank and later started the Chinese daily newspaper, *Lat Pau*. When Mr Lim Eng Keng died, causing a vacancy on the Municipal Board early in 1892, the *Free Press*, in putting forward the suggestion for Mr Ewe Lay's nomination, mentioned that his knowledge of English was as good as that of most of the leading Chinese, and added that being connected with a newspaper as editor as

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34 See Eng Wat, also spelt 'See Eng Watt', was born in Malacca in 1826 and was the adopted son of See Hoot Keh (see 被命名为中峇鲁区街名的先贤, 星洲日报 (Sin Chew Jit Poh), 18 August 1980, at 37). He was one of the first Chinese British-subject merchants in Amoy for a great number of years. See founded Eng Wat, Moh Guan and Bros Co in 1859 with ships plying between Singapore and Xiamen. See was a Chinese pioneer in the shipping line and was also one of the founders of a Chinese free school known as Chui Eng Si E in Amoy Street. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 631. In 1854, See and his brothers See Moh Guan, See Koon Guan and See Teh Guan, established Eng Wat, Moh Guan and Brothers, Chop Kim Hin, at 10 Boat Quay (see *Straits Times*, 4 Apr 1854) at 4.





See Ewe Boon



Dr Lim Boon Keng's Mandarin Class

well as proprietor, he had had to keep in touch with the times; but Mr Ewe Lay declined to be nominated. He married a daughter of Mr Chia Ann Siang, and was a well-known and prominent figure among the Straits Chinese community. He died in August 1906 at the age of 55.

Mr See Teong Wah, the eldest son of Mr See Ewe Boon, was born in 1886 and educated at St Joseph's Institution, Singapore. He joined the Hongkong Bank as his father's assistant in 1901 and succeeded his father as compradore in 1909. He takes a keen interest in and devotes a great deal of his time to public affairs, and is a JP and a Municipal Commissioner, as well as a member of Committee of the Straits Settlements Association. He was elected in 1916 a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and is (1919) president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Hokien Huay-kuan.

Mr See Moh Guan<sup>35</sup> was born in Malacca, but was engaged in business in Singapore, where he died in November 1879 and his remains were embarked on board the *SS Benmore* for interment in Malacca. His son Mr See Kee Ann was born in the same Settlement, where he first engaged in tapioca, gambier and pepper planting, and in 1897 became a partner and manager [105] of the opium and spirit farms there. In 1895 he was made a Municipal Commissioner and in 1901 a JP. All his activities and interests are confined, however, to Malacca.

On the 2nd January 1857 all the shops were closed, the markets were deserted, and the boatmen and hack gharry syces refused to work.<sup>36</sup> The grievance alleged was that the new Municipal and Police Acts which had come into force had not been explained, and their objects were not understood by the natives. The strained state of affairs in China over the *Arrow* incident (which shortly after culminated in the Second China War) had given rise to some feelings of ill-will on the part of some of the lowest classes of the Chinese towards the Euro-

35 Also spelt 'Seet Moh Guan'. See was the adopted son of See Hoot Kee. See 'Malacca Tithe-Impropiators Bill' *Straits Times*, 31 Jul 1886, at 65.

36 See 'The Hack Gharry Strike' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 26 Jan 1884, at 3.

pean community in Singapore, and an attempt to induce a shopkeeper to open his shop resulted in a riot in which the police were roughly handled. The merchants lost no time in nipping the trouble in the bud. The Sheriff, who was an officer annually elected among the European merchants, convened a meeting on the same day, and a deputation of nine Europeans, with Messrs Whampoa and Tan Kim Ching<sup>37</sup>, called on the Governor and asked him to issue a proclamation in Chinese, which was done that very day. It reads as follows:

Now on account of all classes of the people closing their shops, and not wishing to do business because they have heard that the words of the new Act are not clearly understood; people do not understand it, therefore it is difficult for them to obey, and in consequence the present misunderstanding has arisen, and the closing of the shops has taken place. Now be it known that within one month hence, the definitions of the Act will be more clearly explained in order that it may be fully understood. If in the body of the Act there is anything objectionable to the mass of the population, such as know thereof may come within one month to the Court, and to the Governor may make known their complaint. Now you ought all to open [106] your shops and transact your business as usual and do not disobey this. This is given to understand.<sup>38</sup>

To this there was a counter-proclamation, which was pasted over the Government circular, to the effect that no faith was to be put in the Governor's promise to have the law explained, that he only wished to gain time and secure provisions, while the Chinese were quite ready to

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37 Tan Kim Ching was the eldest of three sons of Tan Tock Seng, founder and financier of Tan Tock Seng Hospital and was the first Asian member of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Tan inherited his father's business acumen and was also a wealthy Chinese towkay and the Consul General and Special Commissioner for Siam. Tan also cultivated a good relationship with the King of Siam and among the Chinese community. He was instrumental in helping the British resolve the succession conflict in Perak and also the mining concession between the two major secret societies of Hai San and Ghee Hin. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 411, 412 & 620.

38 Buckley, *ibid*, at 644.

sweep away every 'barbarian' from the island. The shops were, however, opened shortly afterwards and general business was resumed. The enforcement by the Police of this Act did cause a disturbance a month later, but it was among the Tamils. This was an unfortunate affair causing much bloodshed and loss of life. The law-abiding section of the Chinese people realised fully the value of British rule, as was shown by the address presented by the Chinese merchants on 6th June 1857 to Lord Elgin, who was on his way to China as British High Commissioner and Plenipotentiary. In that address, emphasis was laid on the great advantage the Chinese population here was enjoying under English government.

In 1855 Mr T Braddell (afterwards Attorney-General) had written his interesting 'Notes on the Chinese in the Straits' for *Logan's Journal*<sup>39</sup> in which he said:

The details of the great European trade of these settlements are managed almost exclusively by Chinese. The character and general habits of an European gentleman quite preclude him from dealing directly with the native traders, who visit our ports and bring the produce of their several countries to exchange with articles of different climates found collected there. These traders – Malays, Bugis, Chinese, Siamese, Cochin Chinese, Burmese – have their own modes of conducting business, founded on a status of civilisation very far below European models and which Europeans [107] cannot condescend to adopt. Here the Chinese step in as a middle class and conduct the business, apparently on their own account but really as a mere go-between. The Chinese puts himself on a level with the native traders, takes them to his shop, supplies them with *sireh* and other luxuries of a more questionable shape and joins them in their indulgences. Surrounding them with his numerous retainers and studious to make their stay agreeable, he listens calmly for hours to senseless twaddle and succeeds in

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39 [Song: Vol ix (1855)]. See Chapter 2, n 36.

dealing with the native on terms far inferior to what could have been obtained from the European merchants.<sup>40</sup>

Mr EA Blundell was the Governor at this time, but he was not liked either by the Singapore or Penang people. His action in connection with a quarrel between the Chinese and the police in Penang in 1856 had been strongly condemned by the Supreme Government, and the *Pinang Gazette* in February 1858 said that of the many unwise things that he had done during his government of the Straits, there were none which attained that which marked his treatment of the Chinese, or more undignified or childish than his reception of them.

In 1858 there arrived here a young man from Amoy, named Low Kim Pong,<sup>41</sup> who commenced business as a general trader. Meeting with success, he added to his business a Chinese druggist's store which under the chop Ban San has ever since been a profitable venture. He did also a private banking business which was much patronised in days before there were Chinese banking houses. He was on the Committee of the Chinese Advisory Board, the Po Leung Kuk and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, as well as a member of the Royal Society of Arts. As one of the leaders of the Hokien community, he, in conjunction with Mr Yeo Poon Seng, took an active interest in raising funds for the erection of the Buddhist temple known as 'Siong-lim-si' on Balestier Plain, at the farther end of Kim Keat Road. On the occasion of his sixty-ninth birthday (3rd December 1906) he gave an

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40 See Thomas Braddell, 'Notes on the Chinese in the Straits' (1855) 9 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 109-124, at 122.

41 Low Kim Pong was known for running one of the largest Chinese drug stores, Chop Ban San and later Chop Hock Nam at 86 Market Street. He came to Singapore from Amoy in 1858 and started out as a general merchant. Committed to social services, he was a member of the Chinese Advisory Board, the Po Leung Kuk, the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Royal Art Society of London. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 638.



Low Kim Pong

'At [108] Home' to his European and Chinese friends at his residence in Devonshire Road.

It was at his house that in September 1908 the Chinese and Indian merchants trading with the Borneo Co Ltd entertained Mr and Mrs St VB Down<sup>42</sup> on the eve of their departure for Europe on a holiday. Mr Kuek Swee Cheng's<sup>43</sup> motor car was sent to fetch the honoured guests, and on their arrival a photograph was taken. Mr Soh Kim Lian (苏金练) of chop Hock Moh read the address which conveyed the appreciation of the signatories for the 'great ability, tact, impartiality and kindnesses' shown to them by Mr Down as representative of the old-established firm of Borneo Co Ltd and which also contained a request to him to convey to Messrs PD Thomson and A Currie, the firm's directors, best wishes for their welfare and that of the firm. The address, which was illuminated and enclosed in a handsome silver casket, was handed to Mr Down by Mr Low Kim Pong, who made special reference to the interest taken by Mr Down in the native trading community. Mr Down replied in Malay, remarking that:

people sometimes said there was no friendship in business, but, from many years' experience, they all knew that those who met daily in business could esteem and respect one another without any *arrière-pensée*, and that matters were made much easier for all concerned when business men were on friendly terms.<sup>44</sup>

Low Kim Pong owned considerable property at his death, which took place on the 18th December 1909 at the age of 72. As he left no will, there was a great deal of litigation in connection with his estate among persons claiming to be his next of kin. One of these claimants was

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42 Mr and Mrs St VB Down were regular guests of the Borneo Co Ltd and often travelled on the vessel, the SS *Kuching*. They were also proud patrons of dog shows and won Third Prize at a state dog show in 1906. See *Straits Times*, 20 Aug 1906, at 8 and *The Sarawak Gazette*, Sep 1920, at 3.

43 Kuek Swee Cheng was one of the partners of Chop Tong Guan, together with Wee Hock Guan and Seow Eng Tin. The partnership was dissolved on 31 Mar 1910. See *Straits Times*, 9 Mar 1910, at 8.

44 We are unable to track the source of this quotation.

Ngai Lau Shia, who sued Low Chee Neo, the administratrix of the intestate's estate, for her share as a lawful daughter of the deceased. The evidence led on her behalf that her mother had been [109] married as a *tsai* (i.e. with first marriage ceremonies) to the deceased was rejected, and it was then argued for her that her mother should have been presumed from the fact of cohabitation and repute to have been a *tsip* (or secondary wife) of the deceased. The Court upheld this contention and decided that such presumption might be made upon satisfactory evidence being offered. This case went before the Appeal Court, which decided that the 'Six Widows' Case' had concluded the point that the law would presume marriage from repute and cohabitation. The Court further held that it was not necessary to prove in each case that the Chinese were polygamous. It could accept that fact without proof. Mr Justice Earnshaw commented on the need for legislation, after an inquiry by a properly constituted Commission of Inquiry, as he considered the position with regard to Chinese marriages somewhat unsatisfactory.

The 'Siong-lim-si' Temple<sup>45</sup> was begun about the year 1902 and took more than six years to complete. The total cost, it is believed, was in the neighbourhood of half a million dollars.

... Besides its fine architectural proportions there are deposited in the building several large marble Siamese Buddhas, and a fine specimen of Kuan-yin, the Buddhistic Goddess of Mercy. ...

On the temple walls is a long series of pictures depicting the tortures of souls of men and women after death, preparatory for the various stages of transmigration, prior to admission to Nirvana, the state of non-existence or perfect bliss.

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45 This is the Siong Lim Temple, also known as the Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery (蓬山双林寺) in Toa Payoh. Shuang Lin (双林) means Twin Groves of the Lotus Mountain and refers to the twin groves of sala trees located at the Bodhgaya in India, where Buddha was believed to have attained enlightenment. The Temple sits on a 40,000 square metre site owned by Low Kim Pong. See Lee Geok Boi, *Faith of Our Forefathers*: (Singapore: Preservation of Monuments Board, 2002) at 26.





'Siong-Lim-Si' Buddhist Temple in Kim Keat Road



Group of Chinese Buddhist monks

The pictures show scenes of prisoners at the bar, arranged before a judge and his officers – in fact a Mandarin's yamen and all its accessories – and the punishments inflicted are gruesome, cruel and terrible. ...

Lost souls are depicted in chains or wearing the cangue and are being driven along by whips of thorns.

Others, who have been beef-eaters, or butchers, are being gored by bulls: sportsmen with their guns in hand are having their brains plucked out by the birds they shot: others about to cross a bridge are being [110] hurled by pitchforks into a river of fire: while others are allowed to pass on. Another scene is where arms and legs and other parts of the body are being cut off, and one woman is having her eyes scooped out with a gouge: others are hung on trees the leaves of which are sharp knives, or are thrown on to banks where they are pierced through by projecting sharp stakes.

Liars are having their tongues cut out: while those who have used false weights and measures have their limbs and other portions of their bodies hung up or spread on the stalls of what looks like a butcher's shop. Other scenes illustrate human beings boiling in oil over fierce fires, being pounded to death, or having their entrails cut out while still alive. The last pictures in the long series show the final stage of the Buddhistic purgatory, where human beings rise at last after ages of sinning and suffering to reach Nirvana.<sup>46</sup>

The firm of Lee Cheng Yan & Co chop Chin Joo commenced its career in 1858 as commission agents and general traders. The founder was Lee Cheng Yan, who came from Malacca, where he was born in 1841, and who started, as usual, a small business in Telok Ayer Street. He was joined by his brother Lee Cheng Gum, and in ten years' time the firm had become one of the principal Chinese houses dealing with Europeans. The firm later removed to No. 10 Malacca Street and developed its business as financiers and house-property investors, and

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46 This description is taken almost verbatim from 'Buddhistic Temple: Gruesome Mural Paintings in Singapore' *Straits Times*, 11 Mar 1908, at 7. However, parts of the quote have been changed by the author to make it flow more smoothly.



Lee Cheng Yan



Lee Choon Guan

is now as prosperous as ever. Mr Lee Cheng Yan took a great deal of interest in all matters concerning the Chinese, and was on the Committee of the Tan Tock Seng Hospital, the Chinese Advisory Board and the Po Leung Kuk, and a JP. Realising the necessity of doing something in the matter of education for the poor, he founded and endowed the Hong Joo Chinese Free School in Serangoon Road which is attended by over seventy scholars. He was also one of the original trustees of the Gan Eng Seng (now known as the Anglo-Chinese) Free School, and on the Committee of the Toh Lam Chinese School in North Bridge Road (since re[111]-moved to Armenian Street). In company with Tay Geok Teat, he visited Europe in 1883. On his retirement from active business, his son, Mr Lee Choon Guan, took over the management, and after his death in May 1911 Mr Lee Choon Guan<sup>47</sup> became the sole proprietor. The interest of Mr Lee Cheng Gum in the firm ceased with his death. Mr Cheng Gum left considerable property to his son, Lee Keng Hee, who was born in 1870 and was educated at the High School, Malacca. In 1900 Mr Keng Hee opened up 5,000 acres of land at Bekoh, and planted tapioca and, later, rubber thereon. This estate has since been acquired by the Bekoh Rubber Estates Ltd. Mr Keng

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47 Lee Choon Guan (1868–1928) was born in 1868 in Singapore and was educated mainly at home by private tutors. At an early age, he joined his father's firm, Lee Cheng Yan & Co as an apprentice and in 1911, became the firm's proprietor upon his father's death. He served as a member in a number of public organisations, including the Straits Chinese British Association, the Chinese Advisory Board, and the management committee of Tan Tock Seng Hospital. As an accomplished businessman, some established rubber, tin and industrial companies had the advantage of his valuable experience and sound counsel as a director. His wife, Mrs Lee Choon Guan founded the Chinese Women's Association in 1915 and was conferred Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 1918 for her charity work and contributions to the British Red Cross during the First World War. See CF Yong, (*Chinese Leadership and Power in Colonial Singapore* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1992) at 58–61 & 70–72.

Hee is a partner of Guan Joo & Co, General Merchants and Commission Agents, carrying on business at No 10 Malacca Street.

Mr Lee Choon Guan was born in 1868 and was educated privately. He served as assistant in his father's business of Lee Cheng Yan & Co, chop Chin Joo, where he acquired his training as a merchant and financier. In the early days of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, Mr Lee Choon Guan was an enthusiastic member and a keen tennis player, and for some years held the office of President of that Club. For five years he sat as elected member for Central Ward on the Municipal Board. Following in his father's footsteps, he has taken a great interest in public affairs and in all movements for the social and educational advancement of the Straits Chinese community. He is a JP and a member of the Chinese Advisory Board and of the Committee of Management, Tan Tock Seng Hospital. He served on the Singapore Housing Commission and on the Board of Food Control. For many years he has been a director of the Straits Steamship Co Ltd and the South British Insurance Co Ltd (Malaya Branch) and is Chairman of Directors of the Chinese Commercial Bank. A number of rubber, tin and industrial companies has the advantage of his valuable experience and sound counsel as a director. By his first wife, who was a daughter of the late Mr Wee Boon Teck,<sup>48</sup> he has two [112] sons, Lee Pang Seng and Lee Pang Chuan, both well educated and young men of great promise, and two daughters, Mrs Choa Eng Wan and Mrs Tan Soon Keng. On the death of his first wife, Mr Lee Choon Guan married a daughter of the late Mr Tan Keong Saik<sup>49</sup> and has a son, Lee Pang Soo, who like his elder brothers was educated in England, and a daughter,

48 See also Chapter 4, n 48.

49 Tan Keong Saik was a social reformist for being one of the early advocates for education of Chinese girls. In 1885, Tan arranged for his daughters to be taught English by Miss Sophie Blackmore. He also rendered Bishop Oldham much assistance in the establishment of the Anglo Chinese Schools and St Joseph's Institution. Tan was elected to the Singapore Municipal Commission in 1887 and upon his retirement appointed as Justice of the Peace. See Tan Ban Huat, 'Street talking: Tan Keong Saik' *The Straits Times* 3 Jan 1978, at 6.

Miss Lee Poh Neo. Mr and Mrs Lee Choon Guan have travelled extensively and have made more than one trip round the world. Endowed with a considerable fortune, Mr Lee Choon Guan has given liberally to charitable and educational institutions, including a handsome gift of \$50,000 to the proposed Methodist College, and another of \$60,000 to the endowment fund of Raffles College. He and his wife each gave \$5,000 to the building fund of the St Andrew's Hospital for Women and Children. During the absence of Dr Lim Boon Keng in China towards the end of 1918, Mr Lee Choon Guan was acting Chinese member of the Legislative Council.

It was in the early days of the year 1859 that a boy of 10 arrived from Penang to stay with his uncle, Mr Hoo Ah Kay Whampoa,<sup>50</sup> by whom he was sent to Raffles Institution for his education. This was Tchan Chun Fook, whose grandfather, Tchan Faat, had emigrated from the Kwangtung province to Penang, where he started a flour mill. His father, Tchan Yow Chuen, was a great sportsman in his younger days, and in his hunting expeditions penetrated far into the forest regions of the Malay Peninsula. There Mr Yow Chuen and his party came across the savage aborigines who supplied them with all kinds of jungle produce and medicinal roots and herbs in exchange for tobacco, beads, cutlery and gaudy trinkets dear to the heart of the savage. He contracted illness in the jungle and died at an early age. Mr Chun Fook entered the service of Mr Whampoa at the age of 17 and at Mr Whampoa's death in 1880 he managed the various activities of 'Whampoa & Co' along with the eldest son, Hoo Ah Yip, to whom reference [113] has already been made. In 1906 he left the firm after forty years' service and started business on his own account. He was a jolly character, and always preferred to look at the comic side of things. He was a popular man and always kindly disposed towards the poor. In 1885 he was appointed on the Committee of the Po Leung Kuk and in 1890 was given

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50 On Whampoa, see Chapter 4 of this volume.

a seat on the Chinese Advisory Board. He was made a JP in 1916. He died on the 23rd August 1919, and during the later years of his life he was a firm believer in spiritualism, devoting much of his time to the study of the spirit world.<sup>51</sup>

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51 This entire paragraph was taken practically verbatim from Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 636.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FIFTH DECADE (1859-69)

MENTION has been made of the firm of 'Chong-san Seng-chai',<sup>1</sup> the partners of which were Wee Chong Seng,<sup>2</sup> Lim Seng Chai and See Eng Wat.<sup>3</sup> This firm, which did a large business as Commission Agents and was well known in its time, continued its membership till 1860 in the Chamber of Commerce, long after other Chinese firms had ceased to be members thereof. Apparently after that date the Chamber closed its doors to Chinese. Lim Seng Chai<sup>4</sup> was a wealthy and influential man and was for a short time a member of the Tan Tock Seng Hospital Committee. His son Lim Soon Yang married a daughter of Mr Tan Beng Gum, and held the post of 'Kang-chu'<sup>5</sup> of all the Pasir Panjang property of Kim Seng & Co until this part of Kim Seng's estate was turned into a limited liability Company known as 'Kim Seng Land Co Ltd'.

Another firm that was rapidly becoming prominent at this time was Wee Bin & Co chop Hong Guan in Market Street. This firm carried on business as Merchants and Shipowners, owing its existence to

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1 Also spelt 'Chong Sun Sing Chai & Co'; see *Straits Times*, 28 Mar 1846, at 1.

2 This appears to be a typographical error. Song most probably means Wee Chong San, especially since the name of the firm is 'Chong-san Seng-chai'; see Chapter 4 of this volume.

3 On See Eng Wat, see n 34 of Chapter 5 of this volume.

4 Lim Seng Chai's earlier partnership with Wee Chong San and See Boon Tiong was dissolved in March 1846. Lim continued business at the old premises in co-partnership with Wee Chong Seng, See Chow Keong and See Eng Watt. See *Straits Times*, 28 Mar 1846, at 1.

5 *Kangchu* (港主) was the title given to the Chinese headman of a river settlement. On the origins and development of the system, see Carl A Trocki, 'The Origins of the Kangchu System 1740-1860' (1976) 49(2) *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 132-155.





Wee Bin



Wee Boon Teck

Mr Wee Bin, who was born in China in 1823. The firm at first began business relations with various houses in Bali in the Dutch Indies, and eventually became the greatest importer of products from that port. The firm also traded in all kinds of earthenware, and later on built up a fleet of over twenty vessels for the Chinese and Dutch Indies trade. Mr Wee Bin led a strenuous life, devoting all his time, attention and energy to his [115] rapidly expanding business. He was twice married and died in 1868 at the age of 45,<sup>6</sup> leaving an only son, Wee Boon Teck, and an only daughter who became the wife of Lim Ho Puah.

Mr Wee Boon Teck materially improved and strengthened the position of the firm of Wee Bin & Co and died on the 22nd September 1888 at the comparatively early age of 38. He was on the Committee of Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Po Leung Kuk. He was a man of a kindly and charitable disposition, a notable instance being his gift of \$4,000 to the Tan Tock Seng Hospital, which bequest was invested by Government for some twenty years and was then applied towards the cost of building one ward bearing his name in the present Hospital in Moulmein Road.

The firm continued its prosperous career in the hands of Wee Siang Tat (the only son of Mr Wee Boon Teck), and of Lim Ho Puah. Wee Siang Tat died at the age of 26 in the year 1901. He was very fond of music and was one of the original members of the musical section of the Chinese Philomathic Society – consisting of about a dozen young Straits Chinese who for a few years met regularly for practice on the violin under the tuition of Mr Salzmänn at 'Siam House', the residence of the late Mr Tan Kim Ching, on North Bridge Road.

On Mr Siang Tat's death, Mr Lim Ho Puah became the sole surviving partner in the firm of Wee Bin & Co, which was liquidated in

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6 Wee was born in China in 1823 and passed away in Singapore in 1868. See 柯木林, *新华历史人物列传* (Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 181.



Lim Ho Puah



Lim Peng Siang

1911, when the greater part of the firm's business, including all the large steamers,<sup>7</sup> was taken over by his son, Mr Lim Peng Siang.

Mr Lim Ho Puah was born in Amoy in 1841 and coming to Singapore at an early age entered the service of Wee Bin & Co in a humble capacity. His industry and business intelligence soon attracted the notice of his employer, Mr Wee Bin, and he became the towkay's son-in-law. During his long residence in Singapore, he took much interest in local public affairs. He was at one time a Director of the Tanjong Pagar Dock Co, and served also as a member of the Chinese Advisory [116] Board and on the Committee of the Po Leung Kuk, and was made a JP. He died in February 1913 at the age of 72. His remains were interred in China.<sup>8</sup>

Mr Lim Peng Siang<sup>9</sup> was born in Amoy in the Fukien province of China in 1872. After receiving his education in Chinese, he came to Singapore when he was still very young. He acquired most of his English education from private tuition, though to complete same he was for a year a student at the St Joseph's Institution. He afterwards joined the now defunct firm of Wee Bin & Co, which was then under

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7 Lim also established the Central Engine Works, a shop repairing workshop originally intended to service Wee Bin's line of steamers. The business was so successful that it began servicing battleships and cruisers. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 650. In 1906, Lim also started Ho Hong Oil and Rice Mills, the latter being the largest rice mill in Singapore in its day. See 'Business Enterprise' *Straits Times*, 2 Jan 1906, at 5.

8 Lim's funeral procession was described as 'spectacular' and 'the longest ever seen in Singapore'. His \$200 silken coffin drape was stolen during the procession. See 'The Coffin Cover' *Singapore Free Press*, 24 Mar 1914, at 7. Ho Puay Quay (now expunged) was named after him in 1907. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 150.

9 Lim Peng Siang was one of Lim Ho Puah's eleven sons, and is credited with having established Ho Hong Oil and Rice Mills in 1904. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 652; and 'The Late Mr Lim Ho Puah' *Straits Times*, 13 Feb 1914, at 9.

the management of his father, the late Mr Lim Ho Puah. His business acumen was of a high order, and the firm of Ho Hong Co, which he first started in 1904 with a modest capital, soon developed into the big concern which it is to-day.

Unlike most Chinese, who either send their accumulated wealth to China or have it invested in mortgages or real estate, Mr Lim Peng Siang utilised practically every cent of his money in various industrial developments, thereby giving employment to several thousand people. Among the other Ho Hong concerns which owe their existence to Mr Lim Peng Siang are The Ho Hong Steamship Co Ltd, The Ho Hong Oil Mills Ltd, The Ho Hong Parboiled Rice Mill, The Ho Hong Bank Ltd, and the Ho Hong Portland Cement Works Ltd. He has other schemes and the necessary machinery ready for a bucket-making factory and for the reclamation and development of several big pieces of swampy land in a big industrial area in the immediate neighbourhood of Singapore Town. It will be seen therefore how great a benefactor Mr Lim Peng Siang has been to the Colony. It is hardly necessary to mention here how much a country depends on industry and shipping for its wealth and importance. It can be clearly seen to what extent Mr Lim Peng Siang has contributed to both these factors. From time to time severe competition with other steamship lines reduced deck-passage rates to a ridiculously low figure and it also meant [117] heavy loss to the firm: but this proved a boon to thousands of the labouring classes who were enabled to leave their homes in China and come to the Straits Settlements and the Netherlands East Indies to supply the labour market.

Like his father, Mr Lim Peng Siang is a naturalised British subject. He has been so since 1902. He is one of the leading men among the Chinese merchants of Singapore and is greatly respected by the community. He took an active interest in the formation of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and has been one of its Presidents. He is a member of the Chinese Advisory Board, on which he has served for many years as one of the representatives of the Hokien (Fukien) community, and is a JP. He is a director of a number of public

companies, including the Central Engine Works Ltd and the Central Motors Ltd. Of late years he has been of a retiring disposition in so far as public activities are concerned, and though offered a seat on the Legislative Council on several occasions he has been obliged to decline it, having to give his whole attention to the numerous industries which he has built up. Besides, the years of hard work and incessant toil had begun to tell rather heavily on his health. During the Great War he proved his patriotism by working hard in helping to raise money for the various funds, besides himself liberally contributing to such funds. He has never been known to refuse help to a deserving cause, and innumerable are the charities to which he has liberally contributed. He has set an example worthy of being followed by the rising members of the Chinese community.

The firm of Chan Koo Chan & Co chop Jiew Wan, which was established in 1852 as Commission Agents and General Merchants in Market Street, became insolvent early in 1861, and under a deed of arrangement the property, goods and effects of Chan Koo Chan, Oon Toh and Moh Lim were assigned to three Chinese merchants, Cheang Sam Teo,<sup>10</sup> Choa Ho Lam and Teo [118] Kit for the benefit of creditors. In June and July, Solomon Henry & Co advertised for sale by public auction certain house properties belonging to these insolvents and situate in the populous parts of Chinatown: three brick-built houses in Church Street, six in Upper Hokien Street, three in Hongkong Street, four in Synagogue Street and nine in George Street. The Directory for 1864 showed that Chan Koo Chan continued to own a gunpowder magazine at Kallang River, but less than seven years afterwards it passed into the hands of the firm of Cheng-tee Seng-Poh & Co which removed the magazine known as 'Alexandra Magazine' to Tanah Merah Kitchil.

Chan Koo Chan, who was a China-born, also owned a large estate at Kallang, and the large house in which he lived was standing till about twenty years ago. The road leading to his estate was for a long

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10 Also spelt 'Cheang Sam Teoh'. See *Straits Times*, 23 Mar 1872, at 2.

time known as Koo Chan Road. His extensive business was ruined through the mismanagement of his son-in-law, who had been left in charge during Koo Chan's absence in China, and the loss of his fortune hastened his death. His wife, who was a sister of Mr Tan Tock Seng, died at an advanced age. Many of the older people still remember 'Nenek Yan' visiting their homes in black apparel, dropping on her knees at intervals and lifting her hands in the attitude of prayer. Disappointment and grief had preyed on her mind, and to a certain extent unhinged it. It is believed that she embraced the Roman Catholic faith in the latter years of her life, but many considered her as just an eccentric character. There were two sons, Moh Lim and Moh Seng by name, who proved failures in life's race. The family was well known, but the descendants cannot now be traced.

In 1861 the names of Heng Bun Soon and Wee Bock Seng appeared on the Committee of Management of Tan Tock Seng Hospital. The former sat on the Committee for seven years, and the latter for eleven years. Wee Bock Seng was the founder of the firm of Wee Bock Seng & Co chop Why Geck Kee in Philip Street [119] and owned several vessels, among them being *Sin Kim Seng* and *Sri Malacca*.

A number of Chinese firms were already in existence at this time as owners of vessels of some sort plying between Singapore and neighbouring ports. Among these were Lim Kong Wan & Son (chop Tiang Moh) in Malacca Street; Teo Kit & Co (chop Tiang Guan) in Market Street; Hock Eng & Co (chop Kim Hup) in Flint Street; Cheng-tee Watseng & Co (chop Eng Joo) in North Boat Quay; and Lee Cheng Yan & Co (chop Chin Joo) in Telok Ayer Street; while among shipowners were found the names of Choa Lum, Tay Ho Swee, Cheang Hong Lim, Tan Kim Tian and Ang Kim Cheak.

All these Chinese shipping companies and shipowners did a flourishing business. In 1866 of one hundred and seventy-eight vessels belonging to Singapore, registered under Act of Parliament – schooners, barques, brigs, junks and ships – fifty-eight belonged to Europeans, Indians and Malays, while the rest were owned by Chinese.



Tay Ho Swee



Tay Ho Swee was the son of Tay Han Long, who is believed to have been the first opium and spirit farmer in Singapore, his business being known as 'Hiap Hong Watt Seng'. Ho Swee was born in Singapore in 1834 and in his early years he owned two sailing vessels in which he shipped planks to Tien-Tsin and Shanghai. One of these vessels was caught in a storm and foundered with all on board. The chinchew of that ill-fated boat was the youngest brother of Chia Ann Siang. Later on, Tay Ho Swee became interested and held shares in his father's Opium-Farm venture, and was a partner with Cheang Sam Teo when the latter was the Opium and Spirit farmer. Ho Swee also owned a steamer called *Batara Bayu Sri*, which called at the ports of Tringganu and at Singgora. He was an influential man in the Chinese community in the 'Seventies, and his name invariably appeared as one of the signatories to Chinese petitions and memorials to Govern-[120]ment at this period. Bukit Ho Swee off Havelock Road still remains to keep his memory green. He died here on the 2nd November 1903 in his seventieth year.

On the 3rd July 1861 the public were notified that Cheong Kam Leng, Laow Leong Ann and Laow Teum Long had entered into partnership as merchants under the chop 'Heng Hin An Kie'. Laow Leong Ann died intestate, leaving two widows, both of whom petitioned the Court for administration to the estate of the deceased. The Recorder (Sir PB Maxwell) in 1867 held that while letters of administration would be granted to the first wife of a Chinese, in preference to the second wife, the second wife of a Chinese was entitled to an equal share of the intestate's property with the first wife.<sup>11</sup> In this case, the law of China as gathered from the provisions of her Penal Code dealing with offences by or against the first (or principal) wife and the second (or inferior) wife was considered. In the course of his judgment, the Recorder said:

As it was much urged, in resisting the claim of the second wife, that the condition of the latter was not that of a wife but merely

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11 See *In re goods of Lao Leong An* [1867] 1 *Straits Settlements Law Reports* 1.

of a concubine, I think it right to say that I had to consider the question some years ago in Penang, and that I was of opinion that a second or inferior wife was to all intents and purposes a lawful spouse and entitled to share with the first or superior wife in the property of her deceased husband, and it may be as well if I state now the grounds of my opinion. It may seem difficult to apply the English statute of distribution where polygamy is a recognised institution: but this difficulty was long ago solved in this Settlement by holding that where a Mohamedan died intestate leaving two or more wives, they were entitled to share equally among themselves the share which the statute of distribution allots to the widow of a deceased person. In the case of Mohamedans, however, all the wives are equal. Chinese polygamy differs in this respect: and the first question for determination is whether the second wife can be regarded as a lawful spouse at all. ... That they are wives and not concubines seems to [121] me clear from the fact that certain forms of espousal are always performed, and that besides their children inherit in default of issue of the principal wife, and that throughout the Penal Code of China they are treated as wives to all intents and purposes as well as the first. ... It may be true, as was contended, that in China the inferior wives have no share in the estate and effects of their deceased husband. ... The intestate was domiciled in the Settlement, and his personal estate must therefore be distributed according to the law of the Settlement. He had, besides, real estate here, and this independently of his domicile must devolve according to the *lex loci*, that is, in the same way as chattel property, according to the construction, long established, of the Act of 1837. The rights of his wives therefore must be determined by our law, and not by that of China. And here comes the second question for determination, viz. as to the relative rights of the first and inferior wives *inter se* in dividing the share which our law allots to the widow. They are not on a footing of equality like Mohamedan wives, but our law, to which polygamy is not only foreign but also repugnant, furnishes no rule for determining in what proportion wives of higher and lower rank shall share the widow's share, and I am unable to see any adequate grounds for any other division than an equal one. This judge-made law has

ever since governed similar cases and was followed in the famous 'Six Widows' Case' (Choo Eng Choon deceased's estate).<sup>12</sup>

On the 2nd August 1861 a coroner's inquest was held on a Chinese workman killed by the fall of a new building in the course of erection on Messrs d'Almeida's premises.<sup>13</sup> The jury, composed of Chinese, returned a verdict of manslaughter against the architect superintending the building, and the Chinese contractor and the accused were, on application made to the Recorder's Court, released on bail.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> October 1861 the *Free Press* published the full text of the Rules and Regulations made by the French Government as to residence, rights and disabilities of the Chinese in Cochin China. A careful [122] perusal of these rules and regulations and of similar ones that are made specially to apply to Chinese in Netherlands India will not only prove instructive to the Chinese people resident in this Colony, but will enable them to realise how much greater benefits, advantages and privileges are theirs through dwelling under the aegis of the Union Jack. It is partly from ignorance and partly from the very liberties which they enjoy that our Straits-born Chinese, who are British subjects, have been slow to learn the lesson, which their leaders have tried to inculcate, that privileges involve duties and responsibilities towards the British Throne and Empire.

In the beginning of the year 1862, there were a number of cases of cholera amongst the native population. With the view of driving away this scourge, the Chinese expended large sums of money in getting up processions, which for some days completely obstructed the principal thoroughfares in the towns, and were accompanied by the burning of joss paper, the firing of crackers and the beating of gongs, making it dangerous to attempt passing along the streets in carriages. The police were much blamed for the complete immunity they seemed to allow the Chinese in the 'perpetration of these nuisances, no steps having apparently been taken to preserve any semblance of order'.

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12 Ibid.

13 See 'Local' *The Overland Singapore Free Press*, 21 Aug 1861, at 1.

In 1863 the firm of Geok Teat & Co was established in Battery Road as Warehousemen and Commission Agents. The partners were Tay Geok Teat, Tan Kim Tian, Tan Sam Chie and Chia Ann Siang, with Chia Ann Lock as an assistant in the firm. Two years later, the goodwill came to be acquired by two outsiders, Low Tuan Locke and Yeo Hong Ghee, who carried on the same business in Raffles Place under the style of 'Locke, Hong Ghee & Co'. This firm, however, had only a mushroom existence, for in 1868 we find Mr Tay Geok Teat reappearing as the sole proprietor of Geok Teat & Co in Battery Road.

Tay Geok Teat<sup>14</sup> was born in Malacca in 1832, being [123] the son of Tay Song Quee, a native of Cheang-chew, China, who emigrated to the Straits and settled down as a trader in Malacca in the early part of last century. Mr Geok Teat came to Singapore when he was quite a boy. He was for a brief period a member of the Municipal Commission. In 1883 along with Mr Lee Cheng Yan he made a visit to Europe, touring through most of the principal European cities: and while in England, special attention was paid to most of the manufacturing towns. Some five years later, he travelled extensively in China and also paid a visit to Japan. He was fond of music, his favourite instrument being the violin. He formed and conducted his own family band on his return from Europe, the musicians being his grandchildren. The band was composed of a clarinet, flute, triangle, bass and side drums, in which he often joined playing his violin. In 1871 he took his son Tay Kim Tee into his business, and on his death on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 1893<sup>15</sup> Mr Kim Tee continued to run the firm of Geok Teat & Co with much success until 1906, when it was closed down in consequence of an administration action instituted against him by his own sons for a very large sum of money alleged to represent the residuary personal estate of the late

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14 Geok Teat Street (now expunged) was named after him. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 135.

15 See 'The Late Mr Geok Teat' *Singapore Free Press*, 21 Apr 1893, at 2. He was buried at his family's burial ground in Alexandra Road. See *Daily Advertiser*, 5 Jun 1893, at 3.



Chia Ann Siang



Tay Geok Teat

Tay Geok Teat.<sup>16</sup> He died on the 9th June 1906, leaving among his sons GB Taye, an enterprising young man, who some years ago formed the Colonial Stores Ltd, Drapers and Outfitters, which, however, went into liquidation. Mr GB Taye has been for several years acting as special representative of the China Mutual Life Insurance Co, and has made more than one visit to Europe, a rare privilege even in these days of rapid transit.

Chia Ann Siang was born in Malacca in 1832, being one of a large family of sons of Chia Poh Eng, a native of Malacca who was mentioned by Abdullah Munshi in his *Hikayat Pelayaran* and who was one of the leading merchants of his time. Chia Ann Siang entered the firm of Boustead & Co at the age of 16, and after eight years' service was promoted to be chief produce store-[124] keeper. During his long connection with that firm extending over a period of forty-two years, he gradually built up a fortune, so that at his death in 1892 he was a wealthy man and landowner on a large scale. He was buried in his private burial ground adjoining the Hokien cemetery in Bukit Timah Road, the land for which had been given by him to the Municipality for the purposes of a public burial ground.<sup>17</sup>

Mr A Loudon, Chief Secretary to the Netherlands India Government, who visited Siam in 1862 to exchange the ratification of the Treaty between Holland and that country, published an account of his voyage in one of the Batavia scientific journals. The *Free Press* of the 8<sup>th</sup> January 1863 translated certain extracts which had appeared in the *Java Bode*, and we quote the following remarks anent the Chinese:

It is reckoned there are 75,000 Chinese in the island (of Singapore), amongst whom a constant mutation, caused by arrivals and de-

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16 It appears that the legal action was commenced by one Kana Pana Vieyana Rana Roona Kurpen Chitty (quite possibly a Chettiar moneylender) against the company and Tay Kim Tee. See 'Notices' *Straits Times*, 2 Jan 1906, at 6.

17 Ann Siang Road and Ann Siang Hill which are named after him lie within the Central Business District. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 20.

partures, takes place – a circumstance which naturally interferes very much with the maintenance of good police among them. The Chinese quarters are regularly built: they are so commanded by the forts on the hills that by a few hours' cannonade they could be destroyed. The probability that such a measure might be found necessary does not seem to have been lost sight of by the English. And with justice, for a more unruly set than the Chinese it would be difficult to meet with elsewhere.

The scarcity of women is very great among the Chinese, as well as the other foreign Asiatics: the number of women being reckoned at 11 to 12 per cent of the male population. It is easily to be understood that this must be productive of great immorality.<sup>18</sup>

The Chinese in October 1863 gave a great deal of trouble to the police by their clan and faction fights, and several murders occurred in the course of the disturbances. Mr Read has given an account of how he assisted in effectually suppressing the riot on this occasion. Finding a number of Chinese (about twenty [125] of them) sitting in the police office where Mr Read was officiating as a magistrate, he conceived the idea of utilising their services as special constables to maintain order in the Chinese quarter of the town. With the sanction of the Governor, Col Cavenagh, he divided them into two parties, and sent off the first party with police escort to parade the streets, four hours on and four hours off, from 6 am till 10 pm. These 'specials' who were the headmen of the secret societies, thought it a joke at first, but the next day they complained to Mr Read that they were not only tired and footsore but that they were kept away from their business. In reply, they were told that they would be allowed to return to their homes as soon as peace and quiet had been restored, but until then they must continue their unpleasant perambulations. The third day they gave in, but before dismissing them Mr Read addressed them, pointing out the folly of their conduct, and particularly warned one of them, who had been rather insolent, that if he was found mixed up with any of the Hoey riots in future, he would receive 'two dozen strokes with a

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18 *Singapore Free Press*, 8 Jan 1863, at 3.

rattan on a certain part of his bare body'. An announcement appeared in the newspapers, within forty-eight hours, to say that Tan Wee Kow (the name of the insolent headman) had no further connection with any secret society.

During the latter part of the year a large number of females arrived from China, and it is said that several of them had been imported by the secret societies as a means of increasing their influence. The attention of the Government and the police was called to the abuses likely to arise from permitting this, and they were urged to take some steps to ameliorate the condition of these female immigrants, which was represented to be a species of slavery of the worst description.

'This was the first recorded reference,' writes Dr Boon Keng,<sup>19</sup>

... of the Hetairas, who have since increased and flourished through the length and breadth of the [126] Archipelago, fulfilling, it is true, an organic need, but costing the individual, the State and Society an incalculable amount in life and in treasure. Young girls were bought or decoyed or kidnapped, and brought into Singapore and disposed of like slaves in the open market in the special quarters occupied by these unfortunate people. But the habit of the new-comers in bringing their womenfolk with them has tended to diminish the lucrativeness of Hetairism to a small extent, and has resulted in the production of a pure race of Chinese in Malaya. This fact should be known, as otherwise the study of the ethnological characters of the Straits-born population would be complicated. In the last few decades, the old families have given way to the inroads of new-comers; some have decayed and disappeared, and a few have migrated elsewhere. The remnants are mostly wage-earners, eking out a laborious existence by a life-long drudgery in the counting-house, without rest and without prospects, compared with the new-comers, who are venturesome, take to trade and industries naturally and with energy, and rapidly acquire handsome fortunes. During the last twenty-five years, however, Chinese merchants and scholars have visited Malaya with their families and have adopted the different places in

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19 For more on Dr Lim Boon Keng, see Chapter 8 of this volume.



the Archipelago as their permanent domicile. The Chinese colony in Singapore, as in every large town in this part of the world, consists therefore of a very mixed community of Chinese from different parts of the Middle Kingdom, as well as of the families which have made their homes in these parts. A distinct line of demarcation separates the two elements – the permanent families or *peranakans*, and the migratory population who hope eventually to return from the Tropics to China.<sup>20</sup>

The year 1864 began with great depression in trade, and the *Free Press* of the 21<sup>st</sup> May has this note:

The commercial crisis in Singapore which began some months ago appears to have now reached its height. The failure of two firms with liabilities of over a million dollars and largely indebted to Chinese traders of all kinds has naturally reacted on the latter and they are [127] now almost daily suspending payment. This is not the first crisis of the kind in Singapore, although probably the most severe, owing to greater facilities which now exist for obtaining discount and which has naturally led to overtrading among native dealers. The system on which business is conducted here – sale of goods on three months' credit – has been frequently blamed as the cause of these disasters. The real evil is the indiscriminate credit given to everyone who chooses to start as a trader. It has often been said that a coolie has only to put on a clean *baju* and go to European godowns, when he will obtain as much goods on credit as he wishes. In ordinary times these men manage to keep afloat and extend their business, but when any derangement of trade occurs and a pressure ensues, they collapse and it is found they have been carrying on business without any capital. The competition amongst European houses to effect sales is too keen to allow of a proper discrimination in the selection of buyers being exercised and in this lies the root of the evil. The best palliative would consist in Banks restricting the amount of accommodation, and laying down the rule that in case of native traders, their notes will be discounted to a certain moderate amount in each case. Some such

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20 We have not been able to trace the source of this quotation.

plan will have to be enforced to stop recurrence of these periodical smashes in the native trade.<sup>21</sup>

About a month later, and during this period of trade depression, a rather ludicrous episode occurred. The natives suddenly lost faith in the currency value of the bank-notes which they held, and commenced a run upon the banks for silver in exchange. Their demands were promptly met and the panic soon subsided. At one of the banks, orders were given to pay all cheques presented by natives in silver, and some of the presenters of these cheques were rather dismayed when they were invited to take away a heavy load of dollars.

In June 1864 the Parsee firm of Byramjee Hormusjee Cama & Co opened a school for the teaching of English in Tanjong Pagar Road. This school was carried on [128] for some years, being kept up at the expense of Mr Cama<sup>22</sup> as a free school for the children of Chinese and others, and was closed on his death. At the end of the first month there were 103 pupils, mostly Chinese. This fact is here recorded as an incentive to the large number of wealthy Chinese of the present day in Singapore to do a great deal more than they have ever yet done in the way of opening and maintaining elementary schools in which children (Chinese as well as other races) may be provided with education, if not free, at all events at a cheap rate.

Exactly ten years before (1854), the Grand Jury had made a presentment on the disgraceful provision for education up to that time:

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21 *Singapore Free Press*, 19 May 1864, at 3. Song appears to have been mistaken as to the date on which this editorial was published.

22 In June 1864, the Parsi firm of Byramjee Hormusjee Cama and Company, led by Mr Cama, started a school for the teaching of English in a bungalow in Tanjong Pagar that had formerly been occupied by him. The school functioned for several years at the personal expense of Cama as a free school for Chinese children and others. See CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 711; and John R Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora: Religion and Migration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) at 8, n 11.

[T]hough the population of the town and suburbs', said the Grand Jurors, 'amounts to close upon 70,000 and the trade aggregates nearly £10,000,000, there does not exist a Government educational institution of any kind, at least such as deserves the name. The Grand Jurors are aware that small donations are given to the Raffles Institution: but that is a school maintained by public subscription, and is utterly inadequate to the wants of the Settlement. There are also other schools, Protestant and Roman Catholic, but all of them are provided for by private subscriptions: and the Grand Jurors are of opinion that it is most discreditable that a British Settlement which has so increased in population and in wealth should have reached that point without any provision having been made by Government for the education and improvement of the mass of children who must be growing up in ignorance or vice.<sup>23</sup>

A year later (1855) Mr Thomas Braddell had expressed his views on the same subject with particular reference to the posterity of the wealthy Chinese merchants who were allowed to grow up illiterate:

One marked feature of the want of education is the tendency of the children of wealthy natives to [129] dissipate the fortunes left by their painstaking parents. This feature in native manners is especially hurtful as it prevents the retention of those fortunes, the possession of which enables men to devote themselves from their youth to moral and elevating pursuits in opposition to the baser and more degrading tendencies of an exclusive attention to the accumulation of wealth. One or two generations of educated and wealthy Chinese would make a wonderful change in the position of these Colonies.<sup>24</sup>

The list of jurors for 1864 showed that while there were five Chinese gentlemen on the Grand Jury, viz. Seah Eu Chin, Tan Kim Seng, Tan

23 CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 610.

24 We are unable to trace the exact source of this quotation as many issues of the 1855 *Singapore Free Press* are missing.

Beng Swee, Tan Kim Ching and Whampoa, not a single Chinese name appeared on the list of Petty Jurors.

The 1864 Directory mentions the firm of Koh Eng Hoon & Co chop Soon Bee in Malacca Street. The founder Koh Eng Hoon was born in Malacca, which was the birthplace of his father, Koh Kee Oot, as well as of his grandfather, Koh Teck Hin. The older people were interested in the junk trade, following in the footsteps of Koh Chin, the father of Koh Teck Hin, who left his native place in China and settled down in Malacca some two hundred years ago. Koh Eng Hoon in 1840 at the age of 17 came to Singapore, which offered better prospects to an enterprising young man, and was employed in a Chinese shop. About a year later the chop ceased to carry on business and he joined Boustead & Co as cashier. In 1845 he started in business as merchants and commission agents and had large dealings with Bugis traders. In 1863 in his fortieth year he practically ceased taking an active part in business, which was left in charge of his eldest son-in-law Soh Hong Chuan, his elder sons Koh San Tee, Koh San Chuan and Koh San Lim being still minors. He spent much of his time in Malacca, where he died in 1880,<sup>25</sup> owning at the time of his death considerable properties both in Singapore and Malacca. He left a large family and an elaborate will. Among his sons-in-law were Soh Hong [130] Chuan, whom he specially requested in his will to continue the management of the firm until his son Koh San Hoh, to whom he bequeathed the business, had acquired sufficient experience to take personal charge; Lee Keng Kiat, one of whose sons is Lee Chim Tuan – the right-hand man of Mr Lee Choon Guan and energetic as well as enthusiastic in all matters concerning the public welfare; and Tan Keng Guan, whose daughter Tan Seok Yang was one of the wives of Choo Eng Choon and figured as one of the defendants in that cause célèbre the 'Six Widows' Case.<sup>26</sup>

25 Eng Hoon Street in Tiong Bahru is named after him. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 116.

26 See *Re Choo Eng Choon (Dec'd)* [1908] 12 *Straits Settlements Law Reports* 120.



Koh Eng Hoon



Koh San Hin

In his will, dated the 31st January 1879 and signed in Singapore, after giving large legacies to his family and a long list of relatives, Mr Eng Hoon made a bequest of \$500 to the Trustees of Raffles Institution for the purposes of that Institution, but they unfortunately never got it, for by his codicil dated the 6<sup>th</sup> September 1880 and signed at Malacca he revoked this bequest, and his motive for so doing remains a mystery. At his death, on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1880, the business was thriving, but the manager, Soh Hong Chuan, left in 1883 to start his own business, and, shortly after, the firm began to venture in big tin speculations with the result that it lost heavily and suspended payment in 1890. The name of Koh Eng Hoon & Co ceased to be used, but one of his sons continued to trade under the chop Soon Bee Beng Kee until 1900, when the other sons petitioned the Court for its opinion as to a clause in the testator's will directing the employment of his residuary estate in the continuation of his business, and having obtained judicial sanction to continue such business, the former firm was revived under the name of Koh Eng Hoon & Sons chop Soon Bee, which is now practically confined to the manufacture of Sarawak sago flour, which brand is well known in the local market as Soon Bee Ann or SBA sago flour.<sup>27</sup> This business is under the management of the eldest son, Koh San Tee.<sup>28</sup> A younger son, Koh San Hin, made a big fortune in rubber, and is now a director of many companies. He takes keen [131] interest in public affairs, has been President of the Straits Chinese British Association since 1913, and is a member of the Rent Assessment Board and on the Committee of the Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

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27 See 'Supreme Court' *Singapore Free Press*, 29 Mar 1893, at 2.

28 Koh San Tee passed away on 19 Feb 1932 at the age of 77 at his home at 279 Joo Chiat Road. He was survived by two widows; five sons (Kim Guan, Kim Choo, Ek Wan, Kim Soo and Tan Yean Swee), five daughters, five sons-in-law, several grandchildren and great-grandchildren, two brothers, six sisters and several nephews. He was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery. See 'Domestic Occurrences' *Singapore Free Press*, 20 Feb 1932, at 10.

When Seah Eu Chin<sup>29</sup> retired from business in 1864, Tan Seng Poh (his brother-in-law), who had been an assistant in the firm for some years previously, became manager and carried on the business in conjunction with the two elder sons of the founder until 1876, when he retired. He was made a JP in 1871 and was on the roster of Honorary Magistrates for 1872. Together with Lee Cheng Tee<sup>30</sup> and Seah Cheo Seah,<sup>31</sup> he was proprietor of the 'Alexandra' gunpowder magazine at Tanah Merah Kitchil in 1871. Mr Tan Seng Poh was born in Perak about 1830, and when nine years old he accompanied his sister, who had married Mr Seah Eu Chin, to Singapore and was educated here.

Mr Gulland, who had become acquainted with Tan Seng Poh in the 'Seventies, has this interesting sketch of him:

At the time I write of, he was head of the Opium Farm. He was a well-groomed Chinaman, with all his appointments of the best. The Opium Farm consists of a syndicate of Chinese, and it was over the periodical letting of this monopoly that the Executive Council in the eyes of its critics was always coming to grief. Neither wonder if they did, for it is no easy matter to go into any business transaction on his own ground with John Chinaman and come out of the deal on the right side. Moreover, it is not to the advantage of the Colony to wring the last penny out of the Farmer. The poor coolie that he serves has to be thought of as well as the

29 On Seah Eu Chin, see Chapter 3, n 54.

30 Lee Cheng Tee carried on business under the name of Cheng Tee Wat Seng & Co as a shipowner. When the French occupied Indo-China, his firm carried out an extensive rice trade with Saigon. He married a daughter of Tan Tock Seng. He died at his home in Bencoolen Street on 12 Mar 1901, and converted to Christianity just before his death, having been baptised by the Reverend Romes of the Church of England. See *Singapore Free Press*, 15 Mar 1901, at 2.

31 Also spelt 'Seah Cheoh Seah', 'Seah Choak Seah', 'Seah Cho Sia' or 'Seah Cho Seah'. Seah Cheo Seah (1846–1885) was the eldest son of Seah Eu Chin. He was a Justice of the Peace, and a member of Po Leung Kuk and the Tan Tock Seng Hospital. Seah died at the relatively young age of 39. See *The London & China Telegraph*, 29 Dec 1885, at 114. He built a large house at Clark Quay which was considered one of the four major *Chu* 厝 of the Teochews. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 104.

amount of revenue that can be squeezed out of the Farm, and it is generally best in the interests of all parties that the Farm should be in strong hands doing well for themselves by the business. If the Government can get two or three syndicates in the field anxious to secure the Farm, then the letting is a comparatively easy matter, but on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread these different factions [132] sometimes combine and work together against the Government. It is the duty of the head of the Farm to judge of the means and position of any probable opposition and to decide whether the new concern should be fought, squared, or to what extent taken into partnership.

A very anxious time Seng Poh must often have had, but he was a very able man and appeared to manage matters highly to the advantage of himself and his friends, all of whom seemed to grow rich.

Sometimes Seng Poh was not above trying on some excuse or other to get a reduction on the rent during the term of the agreement. One time he tried his little game on with the late Sultan of Johore but came off second best. He was told that the request would be considered and in a few days he was sent for, when His Highness addressing him said: 'Seng Poh, you know I have always been your friend and nothing is further from my wish than that you or anyone should lose money in Johore, so as (naming some Johore Chinaman) is willing to pay me more than you do, although he may not be so rich or so able as you, still, I have decided to set you free and accept his offer.' This was the last thing that Seng Poh had bargained for, as His Highness very well knew, and he expressed himself as hurt that mention should have been made of the matter to any third party and ended by begging that His Highness would say nothing more on the subject to anyone, as he would keep the Farm on.<sup>32</sup>

Mr Tan Seng Poh was appointed a Municipal Commissioner in 1870. He was offered the appointment of Chinese Major at Johore in 1876, but declined the honour. He was the first Chinese who served on the Municipal Commission. His genuine public spirit and his keenness

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32 We are unable to trace the exact source of this quotation.



in municipal affairs were shown by the fact that he served for three consecutive terms of three years each. At the expiration of his term of office in 1873, he offered himself for re-election, but the seat was contested by Mr EJ Wells, Manager of the Gas Works. Mr Seng Poh, however, polled 59 votes against his opponent's 38 and was reappointed for a fresh term of [133] three years. He died on the 18th December 1879. His two sons, Tan Keng Swee and Tan Keng Wah, were well-known men of their time.

In 1865 Chia Ann Lock<sup>33</sup> started business as Warehousemen and Commission Agents under the style of Ann-lock, Eng-siew & Co with Tan Eng Siew, Tan Kim Tian and Chia Ann Lim as his partners. In 1867 Tan Eng Siew in partnership with Cheong Ann Bee (钟安美) commenced business as Ship-chandlers in Raffles Place under the name of Ann-bee, Eng-siew & Co. Three years afterwards there was another split resulting in the establishment of three firms, Ann Lock & Co, Eng Siew & Co and Ann Bee & Co.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1865, during divine service at St Andrew's Cathedral amongst the Chinese Christians, a revolver was fired by a man on the premises at the Chinese catechist who was then engaged in preaching. The shot did not take effect. On cries for help reaching the B Police station opposite, a party of police was sent over and the intruder (a Hylam) arrested. On his person was found a revolver, a box of caps and a small paper containing loose powder and grains of rice, but no ball or shot. The assailant, who gave his name as Leong See Boon, stated that the revolver had been charged with powder and grains of rice, and that he had purposely fired off the charge publicly and in open daylight in order to leave a permanent mark on the catechist by way of a protest against his having imported a Hylam female into Singapore, contrary to the Kiangchow Mandarin's edict. It transpired that in February the catechist had returned from a visit

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33 According to Kua Bak Lim, Chia started out as an employee in 玉德 Company in Battery Road in 1863. Ann Lock & Co was located at 7A Battery Road. See柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 194.

to China, that he had called at the Island of Hainan, where a girl of 5 years of age had been given by the mother to be adopted by him as he had no children of his own, and that the incident was known to the neighbours who were fully aware that he was taking the child to Singapore. The prisoner was tried at the Criminal Sessions and sentenced to transportation for life.

The Report of the Trustees of Raffles Institution for [134] 1864, published in May 1865, contained an appeal to the merchants for \$500 to found Chinese scholarships at the Institution. The Trustees felt it a matter of great importance to have young men of high moral principles employed as Chinese interpreters, and quoted the opinion of Mr WW Shaw expressed in a letter he had written some time previously to Mr Dunman,<sup>34</sup> the Chief of Police, asking for Government support in securing teachers to teach the lads at the Institution the different Chinese dialects, since 'a great deal of harm arising from the Secret Societies would be checked, as the police would know what they were doing, instead of being dependent, as the police then were, on a Chinaman as interpreter who was probably a member and who was afraid to state the truth, knowing the consequences to himself'. The Report added that a Chinese class, with the sanction and support of the Government, had been started and that there were twenty-six pupils under their Chinese teacher Tan Tiam Cheang. In November of that year it was announced that Mr Tan Seng Poh had succeeded in raising the \$500 required for scholarships for European and Eurasian scholars.

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34 Thomas Dunman (1814–1887) was the first Commissioner of Police in Singapore from 1857 to 1871. See Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) at 88; M Akbur Peer, *Policing Singapore in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Singapore: Singapore Police Force, 2002) at 18. Dunman Road and Dunman Lane in the Katong area of Singapore are named after him. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 105.

Towards the close of the year there was a great and continuous outcry by the local papers on the impropriety and danger of allowing maimed and diseased paupers to go at large throughout the Town and to invite the charity of passers-by by the exposure of their sores. The Government was invited to take up the work of providing a leper hospital as a necessary measure, and not leave the matter to charity. The *Straits Times* drew attention to the fact that the Tan Tock Seng Hospital was then \$4,000 in debt, and to the backwardness of the Chinese merchants in supporting the institution because it was becoming a hospital for the Archipelago. The press sympathised with the natural repugnance of the local Chinese to support the establishment when the sick, maimed and diseased from the neighbouring islands were brought in without any [135] police regulations to prevent such importation, and suggested the re-establishment of the Gambling Farm. The Chinese merchants expressed their willingness to support the Hospital and asked for the re-establishment of the Pork Farm which had been abolished in 1836-7.

Shortly after, a petition was presented by the Chinese to Government opposing the suggestion to re-establish a Gambling Farm, to the great disgust of the *Straits Times*.

The name of Wee Guan Ho appeared in the list of Grand Jurors for 1865-6. He owned a plot of ground at the fourth milestone in Bukit Timah Road, and on his death in 1884 his son, Wee Teng Cheow, buried him there, after taking out a licence for the land to be used as the family cemetery. The land was, however, encumbered, and was sold by the mortgagee in 1895 to Wee Teng Hong, another son of Wee Guan Ho. It happened that in March 1901 the wife of Wee Teng Kay died and the remains were interred in this private cemetery of Wee Teng Hong. The brothers not being on good terms, the action of Wee Teng Kay in having given his deceased spouse a resting-place in a private burial ground of another person - albeit a brother - was deeply resented by Wee Teng Hong, who commenced proceedings in the Supreme Court to have the remains removed. Law J decided that as the law did not allow the exhumation of corpses save for official purposes of its

own, the remains of Mrs Wee Teng Kay should not be disturbed, but awarded the aggrieved Wee Teng Hong twenty cents damages.<sup>35</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1866 the *Straits Times* published an article giving an insight into the lives of the poorer classes of the Chinese:

I wonder what we should be able to do here without them in the tailoring, hardware, coolie line, etc – not to mention the indomitable perseverance, with but scant reward, to supply our tables with fresh vegetables. Not very long ago I had occasion to be in town by 5 am and it being a fine morning and a bright moon [136] shining, I decided upon starting from home on foot and walking the distance. Whilst proceeding along, I was surprised to see a Chinaman hard at work in his potato patch by the side of the road, hoeing up his potato plants vigorously. ... A man hoeing up his potato ridges by moonlight, at 4.30 in the morning, there was industry for you. ... It proves one thing – that Chinamen are made of the right stuff for downright and persevering industry.

Anyone taking a constitutional at break of day on any of the high roads leading to the early morning markets may meet with strings of Chinamen, single and in groups, great and small, all wending their way to the bazaars with every variety of materials for food, animal or vegetable, which they may happen to have on hand for sale. Some carry for miles 15 cents' worth of kladie leaves, used for feeding hogs: others eggs, fowls, many or few, and sundry miscellaneous articles: and the small quantities they will occasionally convey for long distances to turn the penny requires to be witnessed to be believed. The money obtained for their vegetables, kladie leaves, etc, they invest in rice, fish and other provisions or stores, and quickly return home, so that the whole business is commonly concluded between four and eight in the morning. The heaps of potatoes, leaves, breadstuff, etc, exposed for sale in these morning markets are really refreshing to the eye, and show wonderfully the germ of persevering industry inherent in the race and their hopeful capabilities.

In fact in consequence of this quality, the tide has turned very much in John Chinaman's favour throughout the settled portions

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35 See *Straits Times*, 1 Nov 1901, at 2.

of Australia – and particularly near some of the diggings where they have proved themselves to be highly beneficial and worthy of encouragement. In proof of this, many paragraphs may be seen in the Australian newspapers regarding the astonishment and satisfaction created by John Chinaman's vegetable gardens being created almost as if by magic where it had been thought impossible for anything to grow. People in those parts crowded to see the cabbages and greens and radishes springing up in bountiful profusion – and the supplies thus raised appeared just [137] in the nick of time to supply a crying want and to raise John Chinaman several degrees in their estimation, as a benefactor to the human race in that quarter in place of being esteemed a nuisance to their society thereaway.

John Chinaman is willing and able to perform those inferior offices for the European and other residents of Singapore at which other portions of the population would turn up their noses in supercilious disgust. Are coolies wanted to make a drain or clear out a cesspool?

There are China coolies always at hand ready and willing to undertake the task. Are there three or four hundred wanted to dig and tunnel for the waterworks, or five hundred to a thousand wanted for earthworks to a fort? They are immediately procurable in superabundance. Then see them at sunrise as they hurry forth in Indian file to their appointed labour with baskets and poles and ropes: there they hurry along in light marching order, grinning and chattering, in good humour and strong bodily health, the very beau ideal of the daily labourer. ... In fact to whatever other part of the East they may be carried, they are sure to find some office or calling which they may fill with some benefit to society. They are also open to change of life from that system, which has been hammered into their system for ages, to something savouring of civilisation.<sup>36</sup>

On the 20<sup>th</sup> March on the approaching departure of the Recorder, Sir Richard McCausland, farewell addresses were presented to him by

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36 We are unable to trace the exact source of this quotation as issues of the *Straits Times* from 1866 are missing.

the various communities and public bodies, and among them was one by the Chinese merchants and inhabitants of Singapore. We quote extracts therefrom:

God created everything, and for the well government of society there are kings, princes, governors, teachers, rulers and laws. Now the English law is good and just, having for its object the prudent government of its subjects and founded on the wise judgments and sound reasonings of learned men, but it is absolutely necessary to have a skilful, able, just, impartial, merciful and righteous person to administer the law and look [138] upon the thousands of human beings under him as his children, so that the wronged may obtain redress, the just be maintained in his rights and the guilty punished, all of which we have found in the person of the Hon Sir Richard McCausland. During ten years' administration of the law, your Honour has displayed sound judgment, mercy, leniency, wise discretion and great patience in your inquiry after truth without exhibiting anger or rash judgment, and although exalted by the dignity of your high office, yet you have been condescending, liberal, and kind to people of the humblest station in life and society. You have in particular proved a father to the poor orphans who were thrown under your consideration.<sup>37</sup>

With the address, the Chinese presented the Recorder with a handsome Chinese silk umbrella, interwoven with gold thread, said to have cost \$300. We quote also a portion of the Recorder's reply:

Of all the classes of the mixed and varied population of which the community of Singapore is composed, there is none for which I have learnt to entertain a more sincere respect and esteem than the Chinese. Their indefatigable industry, their mutual support of each other and consequent success in all their undertakings; their ready skill in adopting the language and manners of the most polished Europeans, their liberality and general benefactions to the poor, their respect for the laws by which their lives, their lib-

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37 We are unable to trace the exact source of this quotation as issues of the *Straits Times* from 1866 are missing.

erties, and their properties are protected (when once those laws have been fully expounded to them) as well as for the rulers and judges by whom those laws are administered, have stamped the Chinese as the best colonists which the world has produced, and have tended in a high degree to promote the unrivalled prosperity of the Settlement of Singapore.

In taking leave of the Chinese merchants and inhabitants of Singapore it is most gratifying to carry with me the esteem and regard of so numerous and intelligent a class, and in accepting with the most sincere thanks the magnificent token with which this [139] address is accompanied, I beg leave to acknowledge the high and distinguished honour which their present is intended to convey; an honour reserved only for those who fill with credit, amongst the Chinese, offices of the highest dignity and trust, and sheds upon those on whom such an honour is conferred a lustre like the sun, which God causes to shine alike upon all men that they may be thereby drawn to the glory of their Creator. Farewell.<sup>38</sup>

In June the annual report of the Trustees of Raffles Institution for 1865 was published. Paragraph 14 says that the Chinese class was making good progress, \$2,000 being available for endowment of Chinese scholarships so soon as any of the pupils were sufficiently advanced to claim them, and that Messrs Tan Beng Swee, Whampoa and Seah Eu Chin had kindly consented to act as a Committee to examine and report upon the progress of the class.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> July in the absence of any other subject for discussion, the *Straits Times*, dealing with Straits educational establishments, condemned the system of making pupil teachers of Chinese lads and allowing them to impart their limited knowledge of the English language to the lads in the junior classes, and venturing the opinion that it was impossible for Chinese to teach the English language to Chinese!

On the 10th September 1866 it was advertised that the interest and responsibility of Low Sam in the firm of Low Ah Jit & Co chop

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38 We are unable to trace the exact source of this quotation as issues of the *Straits Times* from 1866 are missing.

Yong Hong ceased on that date, and that the business would continue to be carried on by Low Ah Jit<sup>39</sup> and Low Tan Hee. Less than a year before, Low Sam had been admitted as a partner in that firm. He afterwards established his own business as merchants at Boat Quay under the chop 'Low Sam & Co.'

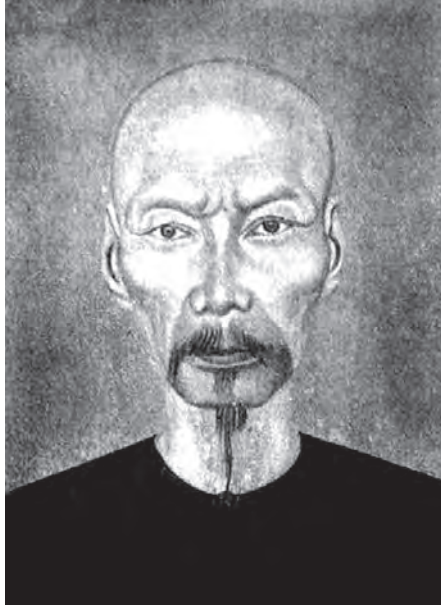
Mr Gulland has left this little sketch of Low Sam:

Of all the Singapore dealers, this was my favourite. A clean, well-dressed, thin, delicate-looking Chinaman, [140] full of fun and ever ready for a joke, he was in great request at all Chinese festivities, the consequence being that he did a great deal more dining out than was good for him and often turned up at the office of a morning in a very dilapidated condition: but ever ready nevertheless to enjoy and join in any chaff that was going on among the other dealers as they sat round the writer's desk. Mrs Low Sam No 1 resided permanently at or near Swatow – that being his home, where it was her duty by the laws of China to tend and wait upon his aged mother: but Mrs Low Sam No 2 was a Cantonese lady who spent most of her time in Singapore, visiting her native city at such times as her lord and master returned to Swatow. One day Low Sam arrived with as grave a face as he was possible of, to state that he had just received bad news from Swatow of his mother's health and must hurry home at once to get her coffin, etc, ready: it being the duty of every faithful son to make the necessary arrangements during the lifetime of his parents who are supposed to gather comfort from seeing that every intention exists of paying all honour to their remains after death. In this case, the worthy lady must have been of a nervous temperament, or objected, as some people in all countries do, to the manners and customs of the nation to which she belonged, for Low Sam told me he was not going

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39 Low Ah Jit was the founder of Low Ah Jit & Co at 57 Boat Quay. He dealt with produce such as gutta percha, rubber and operated as a general merchant. He died intestate in Swatow in May 1884, survived by three sons and five daughters. His three sons took over the firm and renamed it Low Ah Jit & Sons, chop Yong Hong. See 'Supreme Court: Dispute Over Old Business' *Singapore Free Press*, 26 Jun 1929, at 10.





Low Ah Jit

to let his mother know the object of his unexpected home-coming, or 'her heart might shake'.

Low Sam was very much given to Sabbath observance in so far that, business with Europeans being impossible, he regularly repaired to the Chinese club in the country where he spent the day in feasting, smoking, drinking and gambling, the result being that he always turned up on Monday mornings feeling more or less seedy, but, as before stated, this was the case more days of the week than one.

The steamer *Ban Yong Seng* belonged to Low Sam and traded regularly to Bangkok where he also carried on business. Chinaman-like, he begrudged paying for insurance, so the steamer and her cargo were at his risk, and he told me he was always glad to hear of her safe arrival, saying that the *Ban Yong Seng* had a [141] different steam whistle from any of the other Singapore steamers and that the captain had orders to blow it whenever he arrived, so that Low Sam, whether in town or at the Chinese club in the country, could hear it and know that the *Ban Yong Seng* had once more arrived.

Good honest fellows are many of these Chinese. In all countries, whatever the religion thereof, man seems more or less to be made after the image of God.<sup>40</sup>

In 1866 Boey Ah Foo was a keen competitor with Messrs Whampoa & Co in the bakery business. His shop was located in Upper Circular Road. Meeting with success, he launched out as a building contractor, and among the works which he carried through were several contracts for the Government, including the erection of the flagstaff, in connection with which he was presented with a gold watch and chain and a testimonial expressing appreciation of his services. He erected the block of shophouses facing North Bridge Road, Rochore Road and Malabar Street, which were sold in January 1919 by public auction in pursuance of an Order of Court and realised more than \$800,000. He died on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1889. One of the executors of his will was Boey

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40 We are unable to trace the exact source of this quotation as newspapers from this period are unavailable.

Lian Chin, his son – at one time manager of the Kwong Yik Bank (now in liquidation).

The firm of Low Ah Jit & Co, already referred to, dealt in gutta percha and other produce. Its founder, Low Ah Jit, came from China when he was about thirty years old, and by his great energy soon built up a good business connection. On his death, two of his sons, Cheang Yee and Koon Yee, continued the business under the style of Low Ah Jit & Sons chop Yong Hong. Later on they opened two branch shops in the town, chops Yong Lee and Yong Ngiap. Mr Low Cheang Yee was born in Singapore and was educated at Raffles Institution with Tan Kong Wee, Seow Cue Mee, and Lim Thean Geow (Dr Boon Keng's father) as his contemporaries. When the Straits Chinese British Association was founded in 1900, Mr Cheang Yee was elected a member [142] of the first committee. In 1891 he was appointed a member of the Chinese Advisory Board and also served on the Committee of the Po Leung Kuk. He was a prominent member of the Teochew community, and was much liked and respected by European merchants with whom he had dealings. He died in Swatow, China, in 1915 at the age of 67. The firm still carries on business at the old premises No 53 Boat Quay with Mr Low Peng Yam, the third son of Mr Low Cheang Yee, as managing partner. Mr Low Peng Yam was born in Singapore in 1876. He married a daughter of General Fang of Kwangtung fame, better known as 'Pung Tai Jin'. He is a director of the Sze Hai Tong Bank and holds a very large portion of that Bank's shares. Of a quiet disposition, he is a shrewd and exceedingly capable man of business.

On the 1st August 1866 the Act of Parliament intituled 'An Act to provide for the Government of the Straits Settlements' received the Royal assent, and on the 1st April 1867 the ceremony of the formal transfer of the Straits Settlements from the Indian Government to the Crown took place in the Town Hall. Ten years before this the European community in Singapore had presented a Petition to the two Houses of Parliament praying that the Straits Settlements might be placed directly under the Crown, with a separate Government, and not as then under a delegated authority in India. In the debate on the Petition

in the House of Commons, Sir J Elphinstone (Member for Portsmouth) took part. He said that he possessed some knowledge of Singapore, having been in the island in 1820 shortly after its foundation.

The following extraordinary statements were then made by him:

The population which resorted to Singapore was drawn from the most lawless and savage of eastern races: the Bugis, the Sarawak Dyaks, the Syaks, inhabitants of Sumatra, and other wild races furnished their quota to the population of Singapore. In addition, however, there was a large Chinese population [143] who resorted to the Settlement in order to make money, with which to return to China. These men came unaccompanied by women, and they associated with the native women of the country, from which connection had sprung a race called Kling, a most disorderly people!!!<sup>41</sup>

Earl Canning, Governor-General of India, in his minute written in November 1859 on the proposed Transfer, said:

The character of the Chinese, the most important and at times a very unmanageable part of the population of the Straits Settlements, is quite different from that of any people with which Indian officers have to deal. Democratic in spite of the outward form of their own government, enterprising and persevering, the Chinese are imbued with a strong tendency to self-government, and are therefore the very opposite of our Indian fellow subjects. I am satisfied that if the Straits Settlements are to remain under the control of the Indian Government, it will be absolutely necessary to devise a plan, by which the persons employed in administering the civil government shall receive a special training; and that without this, the Indian Government cannot do justice to these Settlements.<sup>42</sup>

In a pamphlet dated 9th January 1864 containing a long report on the desirability of the proposed Transfer which had been prepared by the

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41 CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902) at 762. Note that the three exclamation marks were added by Song and do not appear in Buckley's original.

42 Ibid, at 765.

Committee appointed at a meeting held in the Town Hall on the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1863, the name of Mr Seah Eu Chin was given as having been present at that meeting – apparently the solitary representative of the small body of Chinese merchants and men of wealth and influence and of the educated section of Chinese British subjects who could appreciate or at least understand the reasons for that persistent agitation.

The firm of 'Goh Siew Swee & Co chop Ban Ann' had been established at this time, as general merchants and shipowners, by Goh Siew Swee,<sup>43</sup> a China-born [144] Chinese.<sup>44</sup> The business rapidly developed, and the firm became the owners of seven small steamers plying between this port and the neighbouring Dutch and British possessions, besides working tin mines and running a saw-mill at Kallang. At his death in April 1892, the business continued to be carried on at the same premises, No 257 Telok Ayer Street, by his son Goh Siew Tin (alias Goh Tat Pang) under the chop 'Ann Ho'. When the Chinese Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1906, Mr Goh Siew Tin was elected its first President. He was for a number of years on the Committee of the Po Leung Kuk. He died on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1909 at the age of 55, and his remains were removed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March to Tanjong Pagar en route for China. He had traded largely with Java, and on the day of his funeral all the Chinese shops trading in Java produce were closed, while the pupils of the Toh Lam (Hokien) Mandarin School (of which Mr Goh Siew Tin was President) en masse attended the funeral. He was one of the most influential Chinese merchants of his day and was greatly respected. His eldest son, Mr Goh Eng Loon, took up the management of chop Ann Ho after his death.

43 Also spelt 'Koh Soh Swee' (see Mervyn Llewelyn Wynne, *Triad and Tabut: A Survey of the Origin and Diffusion of Chinese and Mohamedan Secret Societies in the Malay Peninsula AD 1800–1935* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1941) at 150) or 'Go Siew Swee' (see 'The Flower Show' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 1 Apr 1890, at 3).

44 According to Kua Bak Lim, Goh was born in Chao-an (绍安) in Fujian Province. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 62.



Goh Siew Swee

In October 1866 a notorious Hylam thief was arrested and ordered to be deported under the provisions of Act III of 1864. This was the first instance of a Chinese outlawed or banished from the Colony.

In April 1867 an attempt was made to set fire to the extensive premises of Ho Ah Chong and to murder him. This shipwright, who had come to Singapore in the 'Forties, had been until 1864 the foreman at Messrs Tivendale's yard at Sandy Point (Tanjong Ru). In that year he started business as shipwright and blacksmith, next to his former employer's premises, and employed between two and three hundred men. He had to discharge some twenty carpenters - recent arrivals from Hongkong - who were not up to the mark in their work. On receiving information of the plot, he consulted Mr Tan Kim Ching, who informed him that he [145] might confine the intruders if they were found on his premises after 10 pm. He accordingly made all necessary preparations to meet the attack, barricaded his doors at night, sent his wife and children to town, set watchmen about his premises and procured a few revolvers, intending to sell his life as dearly as possible. On two successive nights, the miscreants landed at Tanjong Ru from boats and made a rush for Ah Chong's house, but an alarm having been given by one of the watchmen the defenders were fully prepared to meet the attack and successfully drove their assailants back to their boats. One man found crouching behind the door with a knife in each hand was captured by a burly Malay watchman, after he had once escaped from his custodian by cutting off his 'tow-chang.'

The *Government Gazette* of 5<sup>th</sup> July gives the names of eleven Chinese and one Hadji to whom certificates of naturalisation were granted under the provisions of the Naturalisation Ordinance which had come into force on the 15th May 1867. The chronicler investigated the names carefully, but was unable to recognise any name as that of a leading or influential Chinese of that date.

The second half of this year was characterised by the peace of the Settlement being several times endangered by squabbles between the various secret societies, but fortunately they did not develop into the seriousness or assume the proportions of the Chinese riots in Penang,

whither the Governor proceeded in the *Peiho* with a small armed force to render assistance to quell the disturbances, but found on arrival that the outbreak had been suppressed.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> July, as differences still appeared to exist between the various tribes of Chinese, the Assistant Commissioner of Police appointed twelve Chinese as special constables (6 Hok-hin Hoey, 4 Khehs and 2 Macaos). These men were employed for two days to patrol Upper Hokien Street and Upper Nankin Street, where the disturbances had lately originated, with [146] satisfactory results. The Assistant Commissioner was, in this respect, repeating the experiment tried by Mr Read to put down the riots in 1863. Again, on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, there was trouble between the Hok-hin and Ghee-hin societies, owing to a number of the most turbulent and disreputable characters who had been expelled from Hok-hin being admitted into membership of Ghee-hin, and twelve headmen from these two societies were appointed and sworn in as special constables.

In August the Hon Mr Thomas Scott introduced into the Legislative Council a Bill for the better regulation of societies, and for the prevention of unlawful assemblies. In his Objects and Reasons, Mr Scott says:

It has long been felt that some legislative enactment was required to deal with the secret societies so common in the Colony, but great difficulties have existed as to the manner in which the subject ought to be treated, owing to the element of secrecy in a country where the Officers of Police have no knowledge of the language of the greater number of the persons forming such combinations. ...

The societies are believed to have their origin in praiseworthy and benevolent motives, but, after a little time, are apt to degenerate into unlawful combinations. It is proposed by the present Bill to require all the societies to be registered under certain rules, ... and to give notice of their meetings.<sup>45</sup>

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45 Thomas Scott made this speech in the Legislative Council on 31 July 1867 (see 'Proceedings of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council' CO 275/6 at 13. However Scott's speech is not reported verbatim in the Legislative Council's minutes and this speech appears to have been reported in the newspapers on



This Bill was, however, shelved.

On the 9th November 1867 a number of leading Chinese merchants waited upon the Governor at the Council Chamber to receive His Excellency's reply to a petition which they had presented requesting to be allowed to have their usual 'Chingay' procession. The Governor informed them that after consideration with the authorities and seeing that their request was recommended by some of the principal merchants in the Settlements, he [147] had decided to grant the permission which they sought, but only on the distinct understanding that they would guarantee that there should be no breach of the peace on that occasion. They were also informed that the permission then granted was not to be considered as a permanent one, and that sanction for similar processions in subsequent years would depend entirely upon the manner in which the Chinese population should conduct themselves during each year. The Governor further stated that he was glad of the opportunity of marking his sense of the orderly manner in which the Chinese here had conducted themselves since his arrival in the Colony in contra-distinction to their countrymen in Penang. This procession was held ten days later and paraded through the streets of the town and suburbs prescribed by the Police Commissioner, and was described as one of the largest processions ever witnessed by the public.

The *Straits Times* leader of the 4<sup>th</sup> December deals with the duty of the Europeans here as 'colonists'. We give below a few extracts:

The duty we mean is that of every civilised and enlightened community, to use every endeavour to civilise and enlighten those with whom they are brought into contact. And how far have we performed that duty? Our predecessors certainly felt considerable interest in this matter, and the Government has given every encouragement to the cause of education. But the mere establishment of an educational institution and contributing to its support is by no means all that is required of us.<sup>46</sup>

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the days following the Council's sitting. Unfortunately, no newspapers from 1867 survive.

46 We are unable to ascertain the exact source of this quotation as no newspapers from this period survive.

After drawing attention to the increasing number of unemployed local youths – Chinese and Eurasians – who had received a smattering knowledge of English at school, the Editor proceeds:

The future of the Straits Settlements depends in a great measure upon the conduct of its present mercantile [148] men. They should make every exertion to prove that we have not only bettered our commercial prospects, but have bettered our internal condition, by becoming a colony. For this end, it is not for us to blindly await the action of the Executive: but we must cordially co-operate, or, if need be, take the initiative, in matters affecting our peculiar internal organisation. ... Legislation often awaits the action of the people. Therefore we must first bestir ourselves in the welfare of our youth. We must educate them properly, enabling them to compete favourably with the youth from other parts of the world in obtaining employment, or even in carving out their own fortunes here or elsewhere.

We have not schools enough. In every part of the Colony, where they could obtain pupils, free primary schools should be established, and parents should be persuaded or compelled to send their children to such schools. Through these schools the pupils could be prepared not only to attempt, but to understand, the more comprehensive studies which might then be taught in the higher schools. ... Private beneficence and private exertion must take the initiative of providing free education, ere the Government will recognise the importance of the measure.

The writer desires to see the time when the English language, and not Malay, would be the language in educated Asiatic households. It may be years before this will be accomplished, but when it is, we may be able to see our youth advancing in intelligence until they shall in time share with, and eventually supersede us in the positions we now occupy, and be able to maintain their commercial relations without our assistance.<sup>47</sup>

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47 We are unable to ascertain the exact source of this quotation as no newspapers from this period survive.

In writing a summary of events for 1868, the *Straits Times* recorded dullness of business: nevertheless more produce was exported to Europe and America during the year than in any previous year. The same newspaper mentioned as a notable fact that steam communication between the three Settlements was unceasing, owing solely to the indefatigable enterprise of the Chinese merchants.

In this year Hoon Keat & Co was established as [149] Commission Agents and Warehousemen. The founder of the firm was Tan Hoon Keat, who was born in Singapore. He had previously been in partnership with Koh Choon Seng in the firm of Hoon Keat, Choon Seng & Co, but the partnership was dissolved, and Tan Hoon Keat became the sole proprietor of Hoon Keat & Co. He was a considerable landowner, and among the large properties standing in his name at his death were Bukit Hoon Keat (now known as Dickenson Hill) with frontages on Neil Road and Sago Street, and Dunearn Estate comprising an area of 48 acres, one side of which is bounded by Chancery Lane, and here both he and his wife were buried. Hoon Keat built a big house on Dickenson Hill and lived in it. This property was recently sold by a Chitty mortgagee to Mr Pang Teck Joon. Mr Hoon Keat presented to the Government a piece of land whereon now stands the Kreta Ayer Police Station. After his death on the 21st December 1884, his nephew, Mr Tan Gin Hock, became sole partner of the firm of Hoon Keat & Co. Some nine years later Mr Ching Keng Lee<sup>48</sup> was admitted a partner. The firm ceased to exist in 1916.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1868 Sir Benson Maxwell, Chief Justice, addressed a spirited letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on a subject of great constitutional importance. The Chief Justice was at that time an official member of the Legislative Council and was absent from the meeting of the Council in the earlier part of the year when at a single sitting and without any previous intimation the Preservation of the Peace Ordinance (which had come into force in 1867 as a temporary measure, for one year) was re-enacted for another year.

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48 For more on Ching Keng Lee, see Chapter 11 of this volume.

The object of that Ordinance was to deal with faction fights among the Chinese inhabitants, but the penalties provided and the powers given were out of all proportion to the seriousness of the offence intended to be checked thereby. The principal objections to which the Chief Justice drew attention were: (1) that it gave power to the Governor to deport [150] both aliens and naturalised subjects of the Crown, of the Chinese race, without even the check of a written information to justify his action, without its being even in his opinion necessary for the preservation of the peace, without any hearing of the party to be deported, and without appeal; (2) that it would authorise the killing of rioters without necessity – that its provisions would justify the firing upon them even if they offered no resistance to authority, and were ready to disperse on the call of the magistrate.

One passage in Sir Benson Maxwell's letter deserves to be held in permanent remembrance:

'I have now administered the law of England in these Settlements,' he says, 'for upwards of twelve years, and I have often reflected with admiration on the prosperity and happiness which the law, with its noble respect for human rights and its safeguards for personal liberty, has diffused among the oriental races which compose the bulk of our population. And my admiration has not been unmixed with something of national pride, when I contrasted the freedom and protection which these races found here, and which they repaid by respect and attachment to our rule, and by an abundant contribution to the material well-being of the Colony, with the oppressive rigour to which they are subject in the colonies of other European nations. I should therefore deeply regret, not only for the Asiatic inhabitants of the colony, but for ourselves, if such principles as are embodied in this Act were to be now introduced into our law.'<sup>49</sup>

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49 See 'Misgovernment in the Straits' in (1869) XI(310) *The London and China Telegraph, Japan Herald and Journal of the Eastern Archipelago*, 19 Apr 1869, at 185.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SIXTH DECADE (1869-79)

ON the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> February 1869 a disastrous fire broke out on the premises of Locke, Hong Ghee & Co, Storekeepers, in Raffles Place, which resulted in the total destruction of their godowns and the office of the *Straits Times* and *Singapore Journal of Commerce*<sup>1</sup> located above these godowns. On the 23rd March on information laid by Wee Ah Teng,<sup>2</sup> a coolie lately employed by Locke, Hong Ghee & Co, the two partners Low Thuan Locke and Yeo Hong Ghee<sup>3</sup> were arrested and charged with arson, bail being allowed in the sum of \$10,000 each. The case came on for hearing on the 29th March before Mr FH Gottlieb, the sitting magistrate, when the evidence of the informant Wee

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- 1 After this fire the name of the paper was changed to the *Singapore Daily Times*, and so continued until 1883, when it reverted to the *Straits Times*. During the period 1870 to 1883 the *Straits Times* was the name given to the weekly issue, published on Saturdays.
  - 2 While is not surprising that as a 'coolie', little is known of Wee Ah Teng, various newspaper reports show him to be quite involved with the criminal elements on the island. He was involved in a perjury case in July 1869 (see *Straits Times* 10 Jul 1869, at 2); a housebreaking by night and theft case for which he was sentenced to four years' imprisonment and 25 strokes of the rattan (see *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 16 Sep 1879, at 5); an anti-gambling raid at a gaming house in Stanley Street in August 1909 (see 'Chap Jee Kee Raid' *Straits Times*, 23 Aug 1909, at 7); and possession of counterfeit notes in June 1922 (see 'Further Cases of Counterfeit Notes' *Straits Times*, 20 Jul 1922, at 10). He was also charged with another house-breaking at night case in January 1906 but was discharged for want of proof (see 'Police News' *Straits Times*, 3 Jan 1906, at 5).
  - 3 Yeo Hong Ghee was a partner in the firm of Cheng Keat and Co chop Hong Guan, alongside Tay Cheng Keat and Sim Yeo Gee. See *Straits Times*, 5 Dec 1848, at 3.

Ah Teng, the only witness for the prosecution, completely broke down, and in acquitting the accused the Magistrate said:

It is a matter of most serious moment to reflect that a coolie might at any moment come forward and endanger the liberty, and perhaps the lives, of any of us. With reference to the defendants, I regret extremely that such a charge has been brought by means of such an instrument, and in discharging you I have only to say that you leave the Court without the smallest imputation or stain on your characters whatever.<sup>4</sup>

Mr Low Thuan Locke was one of the few Straits-[152] born Chinese of that period able to read and write English correctly and to speak it fluently. He remained in the service of Mr Cheang Hong Lim up to the death of the latter in 1893 and died shortly after.<sup>5</sup> One of his sons was Low Cheng Chuan, who was for many years book-keeper to Messrs Rodyk & Davidson. Mr Cheng Chuan's elder daughter is the wife of Mr Poh Cheng Tee, an enterprising young man with good business aptitude, who has lately been a liberal supporter of Straits Chinese educational institutions.

After the fire at Locke, Hong Ghee & Co's premises, the firm continued for a little time longer, but finding the competition with Geok Teat & Co, which had made its appearance again, too keen, the partners decided to close up their business. Yeo Hong Ghee some years later entered the service of Mr IS Bond,<sup>6</sup> solicitor, as Chinese interpret-

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4 See 'The Charge of Arson' *Straits Times*, 3 Apr 1869, at 1.

5 Low Thuan Locke also ran a godown business in Raffles Place with his partners in Locke, Hong Ghee & Co Storekeepers. Low was one of the few Straits-born Chinese who was able to read and write English fluently at that time, and once worked for Cheang Hong Lim as 'Head English Clerk'. See *The Chronicle & Directory for China, Corea, Japan, the Philippines, Cohin-China, Annam, Tonquin, Siam, Borneo, Straits Settlements, Malay States etc for the Year 1889* (Hong Kong: Daily Press, 1889) at 693.

6 Isaac Swinburne Bond was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple on 26 Jan 1867 and was admitted to the Straits Settlements Bar on 31 Jul 1869. He practised alone till 1881, when he was joined by Alfred Drew (who had been admitted as a solicitor in England in 1881). Bond was the first lawyer to sit on the Straits

er, remaining for nearly thirty years in the firm (which subsequently became Bond & Drew, and then Drew & Napier). In his old age, he might have been seen daily taking his afternoon drive with his aged wife in his phaeton and pair of horses. He was appointed in 1899 to be one of the trustees of 'Hiap Guan Sun' Burial Ground at Upper Telok Blangah, and died in November 1902.

One result of the fire was the formation among the Europeans of a Volunteer Fire Brigade, while several of the wealthy Chinese merchants seriously contemplated establishing a local Marine and Fire Insurance Company, and wrote to China, Penang and elsewhere to solicit the co-operation of their friends. It was not, however, until the year 1913 that the Eastern United Assurance Corporation Limited was formed with Chinese capital, thereby realising the project which had germinated forty-four years before.

Another sequel to the fire was the prosecution of Wee Ah Teng, the coolie who had sworn the false information against his former employers, and his conviction on a charge of perjury and sentence to seven years' rigorous imprisonment. [153]

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1869 a circular was issued by some Chinese requesting their friends to draw a line of distinction between the higher and the lower classes of the Chinese community by the wearing of stockings. The signatories to the circular bound themselves, on failure to observe the self-imposed regulation, to pay a fine of \$30 (subsequently reduced to \$10), which was to go to the Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

An advertisement by Wee Kay Cheang announced that Wee Eng Wee had ceased to be a partner with him in the timber sawyer business at Telok Ayer, and further that the business had closed down.

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Settlements Legislative Council in which he served from 1877 to 1886. After Bond retired, Drew practised alone until 1889 when he was joined by Sir Walter John Napier whereupon the firm was renamed Drew & Napier. See Roland St J Braddell, 'Law and the Lawyers' in Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) 160-244, at 225.

Wee Eng Wee came from China and opened a rice shop and also did business as a boat-builder, taking up sub-contracts from Messrs Buyers & Robb, shipwrights at Telok Ayer. Later, he owned a saw-mill at Tanjong Ru, chop Sin Hup Hin, being one of the pioneers in that form of enterprise. A few months before his death he purchased a piece of land about 48 acres in extent at the fifth mile on Thomson Road and started planting all kinds of fruit thereon, but death on the 6th July 1886 cut short the development of his plan. His son-in-law Yeo Poon Seng,<sup>7</sup> a native of Kim-mng (金門),<sup>8</sup> in Amoy, China, who had been his chief assistant in the saw-mill business, acquired the same on Eng Wee's death and extended it under the style of chop Gim Hong. The saw-mill premises were destroyed accidentally by fire, but instead of losing heart he found the money to restore the works, and before his death in 1906 he had two sawmills running under the style of chops 'Gim Hong' and 'Gim Whatt'. They were profitable concerns so long as his experienced hand was at the helm, but he had unwisely involved his financial position by becoming surety to an intimate friend, also in the saw-mill business, who died in 1904 leaving Yeo Poon Seng the legacy of his debts. Two years later, at the early age of 47, Yeo Poon Seng himself died, and the saw-mill concerns had to be sold in order to meet the claims of his friend's creditors. In July 1888 the *Government Gazette* announced that Mr Yeo Poon Seng had been granted a certificate of naturalisation. Three of Mr Poon Seng's daughters are Mesdames Song Ong Siang, Kiong Chin Eng and Tan Soo Bin.

For the Spring Race meeting held in April 1869 the Chinese merchants presented the 'Confucius' Cup, value \$250 – which was won by

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7 Yeo Poon Seng, together with leader of the Hokkien community, Low Kim Pong, raised funds for the building of the Siong Lim temple, the oldest Buddhist monastery in Singapore. The full name of the temple in Mandarin is *Lian Shan Shuang Lin Si*, which translates as 'Twin Grove of the Lotus Mountain Temple'. Temple construction began in 1902, and took more than six years to complete. See Lee Giok Boey, *The Religious Monuments of Singapore: Faiths of Our Forefathers* (Singapore: Preservation of Monuments Board, 2002) at 26.

8 Also known as Kinmen or Quemoy.



Capt Moysey's 'Bismarck'. The first race-meeting was in 1843, and for the first twenty-five years or so racing was confined to gentlemen riders exclusively. The first record of any interest taken by Chinese in this form of sport was the ball given in May 1861 during Race Week by Mr Tan Kim Seng. In 1867 Mr Cheang Hong Lim presented a cup which was called by his name, and at several race-meetings in later years the 'Cheang Hong Lim' Cup was one of the prizes competed for. Nor did the Chinese merchants confine themselves to that one effort already mentioned, for at the Autumn Race-meeting of 1869 they came forward again and presented the 'Celestial Plate'. In 1873 the 'Celestial Plate' appeared as one of the events in the Race programme, as also occasionally in later years. Mr Tan Keng Swee (son of Mr Tan Seng Poh) was the first Chinese to own race-horses, and his horse won the Maharajah of Johore's Cup at the Spring meeting in 1879. In the following year, Mr Koh Eng Hoon<sup>9</sup> had a race-horse 'Moracia', to compete at the Autumn meeting. There were two new parties, the Kang-chus of Johore and the Gambier and Pepper Merchants, who, at this same meeting, presented the Kang-chu Cup and the Kong-kek Cup respectively. Some years elapsed after this date before other Straits Chinese gentlemen like Tan Boo Liat, Tan Hup Seng, Lee Pek Hoon, Seah Eng Kun and Tan Hood Guan participated in racing as owners of horses. These gentlemen, along with a few other Straits Chinese, were for a number of years members of the Sporting Club and tarried off many prizes with racers belonging to their stables. In 1898 'Vanitas', owned by Mr Tan Boo Liat, won the [155] Viceroy's Cup in India - the only occasion on which a horse from the Straits or Federated Malay States has secured this handsome and coveted trophy.

On the 31st July 1869 Tan Seng Poh and Lee Cheng Tee gave a public luncheon at the opening of their new Gunpowder Magazine at Tanah Merah. About two hundred guests were present, including the Lieut-Governor, the Chief Justice and most of the residents. Two steamers were engaged to convey the guests to and from the Magazine,

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9 On Koh Eng Hoon, see Chapter 6 of this volume.



Tan Boo Liat



Tan Hood Guan

and the entertainment was one of the most brilliant that had taken place in Singapore for a long time.<sup>10</sup>

In August a large building consisting of a billiard room and two bowling alleys was erected by the Chinese near the Chinese theatre in Cross Street at a cost of \$2,000.<sup>11</sup> Mr Vaughan mentions that during the visit of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh to Singapore in December 1869 he bowled with the Babas at a Chinese Club and expressed himself highly pleased with their pluck. The *Daily Times* made no mention of this incident, but the Chinese Club must have been the bowling alley in Cross Street above referred to as having been opened just four months previously.

In September 1869 a Bill for amending the Preservation of the Peace Ordinance was introduced in the Legislative Council. Its real *raison d'être* was to provide indemnity to magistrates and police officers, who had imprisoned Boey Yu Kong and Ku Poh, the two headmen who had been deported in connection with the 'Toa-pek-kong' riots at Penang and who had returned to the Colony.<sup>12</sup> There was strong opposition at the second reading of the Bill by the Chief Justice, who was supported by the two unofficial members, owing to the penal and retrospective character of the measure. The Chief Justice (Sir Benson Maxwell) said:

I have abstained from argument, except upon the [156] abstract principles of right. ... The man in question (Boey Yu Kong) is a Chinaman; but that is immaterial. Our law, and those who preside over its administration cannot too frequently repeat it, gives the same protection to the meanest Chinaman, Malay or inhabitant of India, as to the best of us.<sup>13</sup>

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10 See 'The New Powder Magazine' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 13 Aug 1869, at 2.

11 The building was built 'on the vacant piece of ground in Cross Street'. See *Straits Times*, 21 Aug 1869, at 2.

12 See 'The Penang Riots' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 13 Aug 1869, at 2.

13 See 'Short-Hand Report of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 24 Sep 1869, at 3.

Notwithstanding the Bill passed into law.

A regrettable affair occurred in November which led to Mr Whampoa issuing a notice restricting the privilege of visiting his fine gardens at Serangoon Road only to those who should obtain his written permission. A favourite bird of the stork species, which had been a familiar feature of these gardens for six years, had been killed by two visitors who appeared to be Europeans, dressed in the garb of priests.<sup>14</sup>

On the occasion of the visit of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, the Chinese portion of the town presented a fairy-like appearance, being very handsomely illuminated. Market Street, Telok Ayer Street, Boat Quay, Kling Street, Circular and South Canal Roads, Carpenter Street and China Street were brilliantly lighted beneath the canvas covering, and every doorway along the route was illuminated with paper lanterns and transparencies, specially prepared for the occasion and bearing inscriptions in Chinese characters – welcoming and honouring the Prince. At the Levee held on the 3rd December at the Town Hall, Mr Tan Kim Ching, a member of the Reception Committee, presented an Address from the Chinese community to His Royal Highness. The Address was upon red silk, in the form of a book, with ornamental sandalwood cover, and was written in yellow Chinese characters, with a translation in English. Upon the back of the Address was a view of Singapore from Telok Ayer Hill, drawn in India ink upon white silk. The Address had no fringe or border, since, according to Chinese belief, this would be contrary to etiquette in addressing a Prince, as implying a limit or boundary to his position. More than eighty names appeared at the foot of the Address, and every name was [157] that of a well-known and prosperous Chinese merchant of that time.<sup>15</sup>

On the 21<sup>st</sup> December Mr Whampoa<sup>16</sup> was appointed a member of the Legislative Council, and the *Daily Times* in making the announcement says:

14 See 'News of the Week' *Straits Times*, 4 Dec 1869, at 2.

15 See 'The Chinese Address' *Straits Times*, 4 Dec 1869, at 1.

16 On Whampoa, see Chapter 4 of this volume.

Mr Whampoa is almost as much an Englishman as he is a Chinaman, and the influence for good which he has had among the Chinese of this place can scarcely be over-estimated; he has also shown himself a large benefactor of every good and charitable project which has been set on foot here, and if ever a man merited a special recognition of good citizenship, Mr Whampoa has done so. Moreover there can be no doubt that Mr Whampoa's presence at the Council board will carry with it many advantages on all points relating to the Chinese – and how little of our legislation does not apply to them – he will be a valuable referee; and while he will aid our Councils in this way, he will secure for them in a great degree the sympathy and support of the Chinese.<sup>17</sup>

In this year (1869) there settled down at South Bridge Road the first qualified Chinese dentist. Mr Cheong Chun Tin was born in Hong-kong and went to San Francisco to qualify as a dental surgeon. In his younger days he was quite an expert in the art of modern Chinese boxing. His surgery was well patronised, for he became well known as a careful and efficient dentist. In 1893 he was appointed by the World's Columbian Dental Congress held in Chicago, USA, as Honorary President for the Straits Settlements.<sup>18</sup> He died in 1898 and was succeeded by his two sons, Cheong Chin Nam and Cheong Chin Heng, who are still practising dentistry in the same neighbourhood under the firm-name of Cheong Brothers,<sup>19</sup> and who also are general merchants and

17 See 'Legislative Council' *Straits Times*, 1 Jan 1870, at 1.

18 See AW Harlan & Louis Ottofy (ed), *Transactions of the World's Columbia Dental Congress, Vol 1* (Chicago, Illinois: Knight, Leonard, 1894) at xxii. Cheong Chun Tin's original dental clinic was at 29 South Bridge Road. In 1890, he moved next door to 27 South Bridge Road (see 'Local and General' *Daily Advertiser* 2 Dec 1890, at 2). An advertisement from September 1891 lists Cheong Chun Tin's clinic to be on the second floor of 27 South Bridge Road, and proclaims it to be the 'oldest and most successful dentist in Singapore'. See 'Cheong Chun Tin' *Daily Advertiser*, 14 Sep 1891, at 3.

19 An advertisement from February 1902, headlined 'Modern European Dentistry: Messrs Cheong Brothers', state that the sons of the late Cheong Chun Tin 'in order to meet the requirements of European ladies and gentlemen, who have so many years supported their establishment, have now opened premises at No



Cheong Chun Tin

landed property and rubber estates owners. Mr Cheong Chin Heng is an old member of the SVI, in which he holds the rank of Sergeant. He takes great interest in shooting and never misses a competition [158] at the Range except when he is visiting his rubber estates in Johore.

An episode which occurred in May 1870 showed the high-handed action of one of the Secret Societies. A month before a Cantonese had landed in Singapore from one of the Dutch islands, bearing with him credentials of respectability from the authorities there. The new arrival gave out that he was a priest as well as a medical practitioner, and in the latter capacity he was asked to attend an inmate of a house of ill-fame in Hongkong Street. Whilst there, a member of the Ghi-hok society entered the house and, on finding a priest in such doubtful company, he started to chaff and jeer at him. This treatment was resented by the priest doctor: a quarrel ensued and the priest dealt the first blow. The Ghi-hok man returned the compliment, and the priest smashed a cup over his head and was arrested. On the day following, he appeared before the magistrate for assault and was acquitted. That evening, two members of the Ghi-hok society called on him and coolly told him that, though he had been acquitted at the Police Court, their kongsis had ordered him to pay a fine of \$25 – which they had come to collect. Upon his refusal to pay, a crowd of Ghi-hok men, armed with knives and sticks, entered his room and mercilessly beat and wounded the priest so severely that he had to remain in hospital for about a month. Several members of the Ghi-hok society were arrested and brought before the magistrate, but as the complainant was unable to identify any of his assailants, the case was dismissed.<sup>20</sup>

During October the peace of the town was several times disturbed by quarrels between the members belonging to four secret societies. The headmen were enrolled as special constables, and after

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225 South Bridge Road, where only the higher classes will be treated, and the furnishings and accommodation will be found to be all that are desired'. See *Straits Times*, 4 Feb 1902, at 3.

20 This paragraph was taken, practically word for word (with slight modifications) from a report in *Straits Times*, 21 May 1870, at 2.

doing some very arduous police duty decided to settle the quarrel. A month later, however, the Ghi-hok and the Seh<sup>n</sup> Tan Kongsis had fresh differences, but the vigilance of the police and the proclamation by the Governor in Council [159] of the Preservation of the Peace Ordinance prevented the quarrel assuming a serious form. All the headmen of the two Kongsis were enrolled as special constables, and after doing police duty for some days were bound over to keep the peace for six months.

The *Daily Times* reports the amalgamation of the Singapore, Malacca, Rhio and Johore Opium Farms in November, whereby the Syndicate was able to establish a uniform price for chandu at the four Settlements. The co-operation of Mr Tan Seng Poh, the Rhio Opium Farmer at the time, afforded valuable assistance to the Syndicate in crushing out the organised system of smuggling which had for some time robbed the farmers of a large portion of the lawful fruits of their monopoly.

The well-known firm of Ann Lock & Co, Commission Agents and Warehousemen, which was established in 1870, is still flourishing as Merchants and Storekeepers at 7A Battery Road. After the death of the original partners, Chia Ann Lock and Chia Ann Lim, the business was taken over by Chia Ann Liew. Later on he was succeeded by Messrs Chia Keng Chay and Chia Keng Chin. The firm specialises in wines and spirits, and saddlery and harness, which they import from Walsall. It has a large local trade, caters for canteens and supplies liquors to the neighbouring islands. The present partners are Chia Keng Chin JP, and Lee Cheow Lim. Mr Keng Chin was born in 1865 and was educated at Raffles Institution, being one of the few Chinese boarders during the period when there was a boarding department attached to that Institution. He was one of the founders of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club. His pleasant and obliging manners made his firm popular with the British regiments from time to time stationed here. In 1902 he was one of the representatives of the Singapore Volunteer Infantry (Chinese Co) at the coronation of His late Majesty King Edward VII. In 1910 he was elected Municipal Commissioner for [160]



Rochore Ward, and in 1913 was one of the four Chinese Municipal Commissioners nominated by the Governor.<sup>21</sup>

In the long list of petty jurors for this year, not a single Chinese name was to be found.

The Hon Mr Hoo Ah Kay Whampoa was elected this year to be vice-president of the Agri-Horticultural Society. This Society had been established in 1860, the Government giving the large extent of ground where the Gardens still are, for this purpose. Fancy fairs were held in 1864 and 1866 for the benefit of the Botanical Gardens which were then supported by private subscriptions under a committee of the above Society. In later years the Government took the whole thing over, but Mr Buckley says that in these early days when Mr Niven<sup>22</sup> was Superintendent there were many more large beds of pretty flowers which made the Gardens look very attractive.

At the annual general meeting of the Tanjong Pagar Dock Co Ltd in 1871, Ong Kew Ho was among the shareholders present. He was one of the few Chinese merchants who believed in the future of this local enterprise. Mr Ong Kew Ho came from Malacca, where his eldest brother, Ong Keng Hoon, was a planter and rice merchant and where in more recent times his nephew, Ong Kim Wee, JP, the original owner of the well-known Merlimau Estate, played such a prominent part in the social and public life of that Settlement. Kew Ho was himself uneducated, and on arrival here was engaged by Chan Koo Chan in his shop. Afterwards he entered the service of Kian Seng, who carried on business at Boat Quay as a commission agent and sago merchant under the chop Guan Tong, and who, noticing the business aptitude

21 See 'Municipal Boards' *Straits Times*, 3 Jun 1913, at 9.

22 Lawrence Niven was hired as superintendent and landscape designer to turn what were essentially overgrown plantations and a tangle of virgin rainforest into a public park. The layout of the Gardens as it is today is largely based on Niven's design. The Agri Horticultural Society, however, ran out of funds and, in 1874, the colonial government took over the management of the Gardens. See Bonnie Tinsley, *Gardens of Perpetual Summer: The Singapore Botanic Gardens* (Singapore: Singapore Botanic Gardens, 2009) at 28–32.



Mr & Mrs Ong Keng Hoon

of the young man, took him later to be his partner. At Kian Seng's death, Kew Ho acquired his senior partner's share in the firm and turned it into a very successful venture. Subsequently he admitted another brother, Ong Poh Guat, into partnership with him. He grew rich but did not forget Kian Seng's [161] family which got into straitened circumstances, and he provided regular support for the widow as well as defrayed the funeral expenses of Kian Seng's old mother. In conjunction with Ong Ewe Hai and Ong Chong Chew, Kew Ho bought land at Bukit Timah Road, known as Bukit Brown (next the Teck Rubber Estate at the fourth milestone), and dedicated it as a cemetery for people belonging to the Seh<sup>n</sup> Ong. He was one of the supporters of the Anglo-Chinese School in its very early days, both financially and practically, by putting his younger son, Ong Tek Lim, in the boarding establishment then just begun by the Rev W (now Dr) Oldham, who gave the lad a sound English education. Mr Kew Ho was also a regular supporter of the 'Ghi-ok' (Kim Seng Chinese Free School) and was keen that Chinese boys should find it easy to get some education and not be handicapped, as he himself had been in early life, from the want of it. He was one of the Trustees of the Anglo-Chinese Boarding School until his death in 1889.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1871 a meeting was held at the office of Messrs Boustead & Co for the purpose of forming a limited liability company to construct a railway from the town to the wharves of the Tanjong Pagar Dock Co Ltd. Among those present were Khoo Cheng Tiong and Ong Kew Ho. It was decided to form the Singapore Railway Co Ltd with a capital of \$100,000 and the Chinese merchants signified their intention of subscribing \$20,000.<sup>23</sup> The Hon Mr HAK Whampoa was elected one of the provisional directors. There were at that time only two other limited liability companies in existence, viz. the Tanjong Pagar Dock Co Ltd and the Singapore Gas Co Ltd and

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23 See 'Singapore Railway Company, Limited' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 15 Feb 1871, at 6.

Mr Whampoa was a Director of the former and on the Committee of Management of the latter.

A Flower Show was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> March at the Agri-Horticultural Gardens, at which HM the King of Siam was present. Mr Whampoa contributed two fine lots, one of ornamental plants, trained to represent [162] animals, urns, etc, and the other of flowers in pots, both of which received honourable mention.<sup>24</sup>

On the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1871 the Chinese merchants and inhabitants of Singapore presented a farewell address to the Chief Justice (Sir Peter Benson Maxwell) on his retirement from the Bench. The Address mentioned that the Chief Justice had materially assisted in promoting the prosperity of Singapore by upholding the wise laws of the great English nation and in administering justice with impartiality, and that he had given general satisfaction to all classes.<sup>25</sup>

A public levee was held by Lieut-Col Anson, the Administrator of the Government, at 1 pm on the 26<sup>th</sup> May at Government House, and a ball was given in the evening on the occasion of Her Majesty the Queen's Birthday. The following Chinese gentlemen were present: Hon Mr HAK Whampoa, and Messrs Tan Kim Ching, Seah Eu Chin and his two sons Seah Cheo Seah and Seah Liang Seah<sup>26</sup>, Tan Seng Poh, Chun Seah Chey, Tan Yeok Nee, Wuing Boon Whatt, Leong Fook and Chia Yeok Leong.

The first Chinese who found the law attractive and took up its pursuit was Mr Wuing Boon Whatt. He was born in Malacca, and coming to Singapore, he joined the firm of Hamilton, Gray & Co as a clerk. In 1861 his name appeared in the Directory as a clerk in the office of Mr CKE Woods, Attorney, and three years later as articled clerk to him. We next find him established as a pleader in the Court of Requests and a Conveyancer. He was a fluent English speaker and writer and found many clients who required his services in writing

24 See 'The Flower Show' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 29 Mar 1871, at 2.

25 See *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 20 May 1871, at 4.

26 For more on Seah Liang Seah, see Chapter 8 of this volume.

petitions, memorials and important business letters. He was popular and well known, and the appellation 'Lawyer Boon Whatt' stuck to him even after he had ceased to practise. He was a tall, fairly stout and good-looking man. The *Daily Times* reports an action brought in July 1876 by Mr Geiger, the P & O Agent, against him to recover \$120 for 15 shares in the Chindras Mining Co Ltd at \$8 per share.

[163] The essence of the contract entered into between the parties was that delivery of the shares must be made within three days. On the third day Mr Geiger tendered to Mr Boon Whatt a transfer of the shares without the script, which had not been signed by the Company's directors then, and the latter refused acceptance. The Chief Justice, Sir Thomas Sidgreaves,<sup>27</sup> held that delivery of the deed of transfer was sufficient to transfer the shares, the certificate of shares signed by the Directors later was only an index of the property transferred, and gave judgment for the Plaintiff. Mr Boon Whatt died in 1883. One of his daughters married Mr Tan Soon Toh and was the mother of Mr Tan Boo Liat and his four brothers.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1871 the Hon Mr Thomas Scott presented to the Legislative Council a petition on behalf of a number of Chinese merchants and influential residents for a much-needed measure for the protection of Chinese immigrants from the impositions practised upon them by a set of 'blackguards' who, taking advantage of their igno-

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27 According to Roland Braddell, Sir Thomas Sidgreaves, was born in 1831, and was educated at Stonyhurst and London University. He was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1857 and went on the Northern Circuit. He was knighted in 1873. Sir Thomas did not enrich the law to any great extent, but he was greatly respected and liked by the Bar. He was 'a sound, if not a great lawyer, his strong common sense and knowledge of the world enabled him to overcome the difficulties of his position; he was, perhaps, most in his element as a criminal judge, his summings-up in particular being models of judicial oratory'. See Roland St John Braddell, 'Law and the Lawyers' in Walter Makepeace, Gilbert E Brooke & Roland St J Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) 160–244, at 210. Sidgreaves committed suicide, apparently due to depression resulting from 'money troubles', on 22 December 1889. See 'A Suicide' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 31 Dec 1889, at 1; and 'The Suicide of Sir Thomas Sidgreaves' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 4 Feb 1890, at 2.

rance, represented themselves as clothed with authority to demand fees before permitting them to land. The petition suggested the establishment of an immigration office, where the coolies should be landed, informed of their freedom and rights under British laws and then allowed to go whither they pleased.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> August Kim Tian & Co purchased the British India Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Rangoon* for \$40,000. The founder of the firm was Tan Kim Tian, a Straits-born Chinese, of whom this interesting sketch has been given by Mr Gulland, in whose service he was for a great many years:

Mr Tan Kim Tian was compradore or head storekeeper to Paterson Simons & Co, which firm he entered as a small boy. He taught himself to read and write English and rose by degrees to the above position. He was a big, tall, fine-looking Chinaman, always very well dressed but very much pock-marked. Chinaman-like, he was many-sided and in addition to filling the [164] above position carried on, on his own account, the business of merchant and steamship owner, having been one of the first in the coasting trade to replace sailing vessels by steamers. It may be wondered why a man in such a large way of business should have continued to fill the post of storekeeper with a salary of some \$100 a month, but Chinamen do not hold any post merely for the sake of the salary. It is the opportunities that the office affords indirectly of making profit that gives value to any position in their eyes. Of course, the larger the business of the firm, the better for the storekeeper: but how or in what way the opportunity was turned to advantage, or to what extent, I do not think any European has ever been able exactly to ascertain. In China, he who will see any Mandarin on matters connected with his office must first fee the great man's servant before he can gain admittance, and so in the East whosoever will do business with a foreign house must pay the storekeeper's squeeze. When joked on the subject, Kim Tian would have it believed that beyond a few oranges at New Year, there was nothing to be gained by holding the berth, but all the same the chances are that instead of, for appearance' sake, drawing a nominal salary, he would have been willing to have paid, if need have been, a good round sum

per annum to retain the post. Chinamen have their own customs, and although apparently falling in with European ways, their own systems are going on under the surface, recognised and adhered to by all. In theory this may be utterly wrong, but in practice it seems to work fairly well in the interests of all concerned.

Mr and Mrs Tan Kim Tian lost two or three of their first babies: so to change the luck they adopted a boy, after which a row of sturdy little Kim Tians, male and female, duly made their appearance: but the adopted son was always treated as the eldest of the family and acted as such on his father's death, getting his proper share of the family property. Kim Tian had more faith in luck than belief in worth being recognised and appreciated in the every-day workings of things generally. He once bought a large lot of coffee for shipment to Europe, but instead of shipping it as [165] one parcel, as he had been instructed to do, he had it divided into two, and differently marked. When asked why he had done so, the reply was to give it luck. Sure enough, the one mark sold at 2s to 3s per cent, more than the other mark: and Kim Tian no doubt held that if only one mark had been employed, the lower price alone would have been obtained.<sup>28</sup>

In 1882 Mr Kim Tian, described by the local press as 'a first class Raffles School boy of forty years ago', liberally subscribed for the makeshift play-shed for the boys of Raffles Institution to be replaced by a well-built tile-roofed one, and he received the thanks of the Trustees for this act of generosity.<sup>29</sup>

The Directory for 1871 mentions the firm of Cheng-tee Watt-seng, chop Eng Joo, as carrying on business at North Boat Quay. Lee Cheng Tee was born in Malacca in 1833 and in his early days traded with Labuan and Brunei. Afterwards he took as his partner Wee Watt Seng, who had been in the service of a Chinese firm owned by Lee Chiang Watt, which had failed. The firm of Cheng-tee Watt-seng traded for many years with Java ports. Mention is made elsewhere of his marriage with Tan Hay Neo, a sister of Mr Tan Kim Ching, who settled on

28 We are unable to trace the exact source of this quotation.

29 See 'Boys' School' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 20 Jun 1883, at 7.

her that valuable property, now the Municipal Offices, in St Andrew's Road, the proceeds of sale of which, after Mr Cheng Tee's death, were divided among her children. Messrs Cheng-tee Watt-seng & Co owned the steamer *Telegraph*, sailing to Malacca and Penang. Mr Cheng Tee in partnership with Mr Tan Seng Poh owned the gunpowder magazine at Tanah Merah Kitchil. Retiring at a comparatively early age from business, he built a very large and substantial compound house in Victoria Street and lived there with his family for a long time until it was acquired by Mr A Frankel for the purposes of his extensive furniture business. Like many of his contemporaries who came from Malacca to this place as young men, Mr Lee Cheng Tee was a tall and well-built man and lived to the age of 68. In the evening of his days he embraced the Christian faith, and [166] on his death on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1901 he was buried in the Christian cemetery on Bukit Timah Road.<sup>30</sup>

There were serious Chinese riots both in 1871 and 1872. In the former year they lasted five days (21st to 26th October) and the Government had recourse to flogging, triangles for that purpose being erected all over the town. There were two of these triangles in Mr Read's district, which was the most rowdy part of the town, at the chief market, close to Philip Street, and at the Temple there. The *Daily Times* of the 26th October mentions that Mr Tan Seng Poh was appointed by HE the Administrator to be a Justice of the Peace and a Magistrate of Police, and Mr Tan Beng Swee was also made a Magistrate of Police on the same day.

Just a year after, a riot broke out between the Teochews and the Hokiens. Mr Tan Kim Ching was one of the JPs summoned to and sat on the Committee to consider how best to quell the disturbances. The Committee once again decided in favour of flogging, considering the sort of immigrants (most of them sweepings of the gaols and streets of Amoy and other Chinese cities) that formed the bulk of the rioters. Mr Tan Kim Ching sat as a magistrate in the Police Court and tried many cases, invariably sentencing the guilty offenders to be flogged;

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30 See *Singapore Free Press*, 15 Mar 1901, at 2.



and by means of this severe measure the disturbances were very soon put down.

The Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the Singapore riots of 1872 concluded (1) that it was desirable to establish a system of Chinese immigration; and (2) that the best way of governing the Chinese was through the Chinese, following the practice in vogue in the Dutch possessions and in Saigon.

In March 1872 there arrived in Singapore a young man, Chan Kim Boon, whose early history is full of interest. The son of Chan Yong Chuan, a trader of Padang in Sumatra, he was born in Penang in 1851, and educated at the Free School there. Proceeding to China, he studied at the Foochow Naval School, paying special attention to military tactics, but owing to his [167] weak constitution he declined to become an army officer. For a time he was assistant tutor in mathematics, and had amongst his pupils Admiral Sah, the late Admiral Yin and the late Sir Chi-chen Lo Feng-luh, sometime Chinese Minister in London, whose elder daughter became the first wife of Lieut Tan Soo Bin. Mr Kim Boon threw up his work in China owing to the prediction of a fortune teller that he would not live to see his twenty-fifth birthday, and in January 1872 he returned to Penang to visit his widowed mother. On his arrival here, he joined the legal firm of Aitken & Rodyk (subsequently Aitken & Co and now Donaldson & Burkinshaw) as book-keeper and cashier. He made good use of his knowledge of Chinese by translating into Romanised Malay during his hours of leisure the *Sam-kok* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*) and numerous Chinese stories. He is still hale and hearty, as genial and popular as ever, having lived forty-three years beyond the span allotted by the fortune teller, who missed the vision of the large family of children and grandchildren gladdening the heart of Mr Chan Kim Boon in the evening of his days.

One of the outstanding incidents of the year 1872 occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup> April when Cheang Hong Lim, Wee Bock Seng, Low Thuan Locke and Tan Beng Chie were arraigned before the Chief Justice, Sir Thomas Sidgreaves, on an indictment for forgery of the will of Cheang Sam



Chan Kim Boon

Teo, the father of Cheang Hong Lim and Cheang Hong Guan.<sup>31</sup> The charge was made by Cheang Hong Guan, who appeared as Queen's evidence. The forgery was alleged by the prosecutor to have been effected by inking over an old signature of the testator with Chinese ink, taking a negative from it on a piece of paper, and after putting fresh ink on the negative, making an impression from it on the will. The only evidence led as to the alleged forgery was the statement of Hong Guan and the signature on the will and a power of attorney executed by the late Cheang Sam Teo, the [168] latter being said to be the document from which the impression had been taken. The trial lasted five days, but the reluctant manner in which all the other Crown witnesses gave their evidence in cross-examination, the important discrepancies between their evidence in Court and that given to the Police Magistrate, and the palpable absurdity of the entire story persuaded the jury to stop the case in the midst of the speech of the counsel for the defence. In addressing the prisoners, the Chief Justice said:

You Cheang Hong Lim, you Low Thuan Locke, you Wee Bock Seng and you Tan Beng Chie, the jury have found not guilty of the crime wherewith you are charged. I fully concur in the view they have taken of your case, and you now leave the Court without a stain on your character.<sup>32</sup>

A banquet was given on the 21st May to Mr Cheang Hong Lim by the Chinese community in honour of his acquittal. The feast was a generous one and was well attended, while there were Chinese theatrical performances, etc, at Pasir Panjang to celebrate the happy ending of a sordid affair.<sup>33</sup>

Mr Cheang Hong Lim, who was born in Singapore, was the eldest of four sons of Cheang Sam Teo, who had migrated from China and started in business in partnership with Tay Han Long (father of Tay

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31 See *Straits Times*, 23 Mar 1872, at 2; and 'Supreme Court' *Straits Times*, 20 Apr 1872, at 2.

32 See 'Fifth Day' *Straits Times*, 20 Apr 1872, at 4.

33 See *Straits Times*, 25 May 1872, at 2.



Cheang Hong Lim

Ho Swee) under the chop Teang Wat at Telok Ayer Street, and for some time held the monopoly of the Opium and Sirih Farms. After Cheang Sam Teo's death, the firm was known as Cheang Hong Lim & Co chop Teang Wat Wan Kee, which in later years became chop Wan Seng. Mr Hong Lim was for a number of years the Opium and Spirit Farmer; Messrs Tan Seng Poh and Tan Yeok Nee were his partners. In 1876 he offered to supply the necessary funds – \$3,000 – for converting the space in front of the Police Office into a public garden, and thereafter to provide two gardeners to keep it in order.<sup>34</sup> This offer was accepted, and the iron railings round the park which was then known as Hong Lim Green (now known as Dunman's Green and used as a recreation ground by the Straits Chinese Recreation Club) were erected at his expense.<sup>35</sup> His Spirit Farm was under the control and management of Mr Lim Mah Peng (the grandfather of Dr Lim Boon Keng) and his assistant in the Opium Farm was Mr Lim Thean Geow (the father of Dr Lim Boon Keng). He erected at his own cost the Chinese temple in Havelock Road known as 'Geok Hong Tian' and for several years maintained a market on the present site of Hong Lim Market. He was a man who trusted too readily to other people's honesty and advanced more money to the stall-holders and fishermen than he should have done, with the result that many of them disappeared from the market premises without settling their debts. Eventually the private market was abandoned. Mr Cheang Hong Lim was a large house-property

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34 See 'Municipal Commissioners' *Straits Observer*, 30 Jun 1876, at 3; and 'Municipal Commissioners' *Straits Times*, 1 Jul 1876, at 1. According to a later report, the amount of Cheang's donation was \$8,000. See *Daily Advertiser*, 15 Mar 1893, at 2.

35 Hong Lim Park or Hong Lim Green (bounded by New Bridge, North Canal and South Bridge Roads and Upper Pickering Street), the former site of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club (later known as Singapore Chinese Recreation Club) is named after Cheang. Hong Lim Quay (now expunged) was also named after him. The Quay ran alongside the Singapore River right where Merchant Road currently is, just in front of Riverside Point. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 152.

owner, and from one year's end to another he was building new houses along Havelock Road (starting from the corner of Chin Swee Road towards the upper reaches of the Singapore River) as well as within the town itself. In many directions Mr Hong Lim actively identified himself with the public life of the Settlement. He was for many years on the Committee of the Po Leong Kuk and of several other public bodies, and was made a JP in 1873. He received the thanks of the Governor for being the largest subscriber towards the fund for providing Maxim guns for the Singapore Volunteer Artillery. Gifts to charitable institutions were numerous and frequent, and almost at the close of his life he gave a donation of \$3,000 (one-tenth of the cost) towards the erection of the long, large building at the southern boundary of the Convent School premises. He was also well known in Saigon, and at the instance of Bishop Gasnier he received a medal from the French Government for his acts of charity. It is stated on good authority that his benefactions to the poor amounted to \$100,000.<sup>36</sup> At his death it was found that the enormous sum of \$400,000 had been lent by him to so-called friends and that these debts were all statute-barred. He died [170] on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1893,<sup>37</sup> leaving considerable landed property for distribution among his numerous children. His eldest daughter

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36 See 'Death of Mr Cheang Hong Lim' *Straits Times*, 11 Feb 1893, at 2.

37 Cheang's funeral took place only on 12 May 1893. The cortege left his mansion at 108 Havelock Road at 2.00 pm, passing through New Bridge Road and Outram Road and then towards Havelock Road and Alexandra Road where he was buried at 'a special grave at the corner of Alexandra and Havelock Roads'. See 'Local and General' *Daily Advertiser*, 9 May 1893, at 3; and *Singapore Free Press*, 19 Apr 1893, at 2. Though Cheang had been appointed 'Headman' of the Hokkien community, he was not popular among some quarters of the Chinese Baba community. The newspapers relate an incident in which after Cheang's death, some 'evil disposed Babas made a straw figure about two or three feet in length to represent Mr Hong Lim, and placing it in a rickshaw in a sitting posture, instructed the puller to go through the streets of the Town, and then *ironically* called it by the name of 'Chow Lang' literally meaning stinking man, by way of insult'. See 'The Late Mr Cheang Hong Lim, Deceased' *Daily Advertiser*, 21 Mar 1893, at 3.

Cheang Cheow Lian Neo (wife of Mr Lim Kwee Eng)<sup>38</sup> was the first trustee to take out probate of his will – another of those rare instances in which a woman was entrusted with the administration of a rich Chinese gentleman's estate.

An unique honour that was conferred on the Chinese Justices of the Peace – there were five of them in 1872, viz. Tan Kim Ching, Hoo Ah Kay (Whampoa), Seah Eu Chin, Tan Beng Swee and Tan Seng Poh – was their appointment among the Honorary Magistrates, no sinecure post in those days, for, as we have seen, one of them at least found himself called upon to assist in the administration of justice.

In September 1872 Teo Kit died. Coming from China, he established the firm of Teo Kit & Co chop Tiang Guan, in Market Street, acting as commission agents and dealing in earthenware goods. He was also a partner in the Opium and Spirit Farm during the period when Cheang Hong Lim, Tan Seng Poh and Tan Yeok Nee were the Farmers. He owned a fishing-stake at Tanjong Pagar which proved a very profitable concern. In connection with his business as a commission agent, he became a shipowner, acquiring tongkangs and schooners which brought in produce from Samarang, Sourabaya and other Java ports, and Chinese wares from China.<sup>39</sup> He was a prominent man among the produce merchants in the 'Sixties. He married a sister of Tay Ho Swee. Dying in Singapore, he was buried at Bukit Timah. Teo Guan Tye, the eldest of his four sons, continued his business for some years, but had to wind it up owing to litigation with his brothers, who sued him as executor of the father's will.<sup>40</sup>

The death occurred on the 4th December 1872 of Chia Lek, the senior partner of the firm of Chia Lek, Tek See & Co chop Guan Whatt. He was born in China, and soon after his arrival here he entered the service of one Koh Lock. A few years later he [171] started business in partnership with Kho Tek See, a Malacca-born Chinese, as

38 On Lim Kwee Eng, see Chapter 8 of this volume.

39 See 'Shipping in the Harbour' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 20 Dec 1871, at 12.

40 See 'Supreme Court' *Straits Observer*, 22 Feb 1875, at 3.

Tea and Salt Merchants, with branches in Dutch Borneo, Sengkawang, Sambas and Biliton. This firm had been thirty years in existence at the time of Chia Lek's death. His son, Chia Guan Eng, continued to carry on the business until 1894, when, as the result of several heavy losses, the firm failed. Mr Guan Eng was appointed in 1895 manager of chop Guan Whatt Seng, dealing chiefly in tea and salt, and served in that capacity until 1897, when he left to become manager of chop Eng Guan Whatt. Ten years later he retired into private life and died in 1911. One of his sons is Mr Chia Tek Chye, head of the firm of Chia & Co, share brokers; and another, Mr Chia Cheng Kang (CK Chea), in 1909 claimed to be the Colony's champion for Long-distance Swimming.<sup>41</sup>

The firm of Ong Ewe Hai & Co, in its present form, was established in 1872. Ong Ewe Hai, the founder, was born in Singapore in February 1830. At the age of 7 he lost his father, Ong Koon Tian, a native of Hokien province in China. His mother, with very little money left by her husband and with three sons and three daughters on her hands, had great difficulty in bringing up her young children. In consequence, young Ong Ewe Hai had practically little education, which in those days was of a very elementary kind. At the age of 16, in order to support the family, he launched out as a petty trader. Hearing there was good business to be done in Sarawak, by the primitive method of bartering with the natives, he resolved to go thither in the company of an older man who was to be his companion and guide. This was one Lim Eng Moh, with whom he made the voyage in a sailing vessel to his El Dorado. Having found the country full of promise for a business venture and correctly gauged the needs of the natives, Ewe Hai returned to Singapore to get the wares and merchandise likely to be readily saleable in Sarawak. These were secured, partly by cash payment - he had but small means then - and chiefly on credit, which in those days [172] was readily given if the man asking for it was known

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41 See 'Swimming' *Straits Times*, 5 Jul 1909, at 8; and 'Long Distance Swimming' *Straits Times*, 14 Apr 1909, at 8.





Chia Guan Eng

to be straightforward and honest. Travelling in those far-away days of sailing vessels was very irksome and uncomfortable, and the voyage to Sarawak often took from three to seven, and even ten days.

As a result of the visit with Lim Eng Moh to Sarawak, the firm of Ewe Hai, Moh & Co was established in 1846, and from the start it prospered. Having at that time no firm or representative in Singapore to act as consignee, the young trader had to bring the Sarawak produce to Singapore himself. With all the proceeds of each sale Ewe Hai purchased a miscellaneous lot of suitable and attractive goods which he took with him back to Sarawak.

Becoming known to the merchants here as a man of straightforward dealing and good character, Mr Ewe Hai easily got any amount of trade wares on credit, and he took full advantage of his opportunity. After some ten years' experience as a travelling merchant, the firm of Kay Cheang, Ewe Hai & Co was founded in Singapore in 1856, and this firm in 1872 became Ong Ewe Hai & Co.

In the early part of his stay in Sarawak, Ong Ewe Hai had to pass through much novel experience as regards means of subsistence and quarters. Luckily for him he happened to make the acquaintance of a petty Malay chief with whom he lived for some time, eating whatever food the chief had prepared for himself and his family. In his later years, when he had amassed a fortune and was able to rest on his oars, it gave him pleasure to relate his early adventures in Sarawak, how he had with his partner Lim Eng Moh every morning to go out paddling on the river in a small prahu to collect the produce gathered by the natives – and how, as there were numerous banana trees in the yard of his Malay host, a preparation from the banana shoot and rice would suffice for breakfast.

Mr Ong Ewe Hai died in Singapore on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1889 in his sixtieth year,<sup>42</sup> and was buried in his estate off Bukit Timah Road, behind Holland Road railway station, where also was buried his wife,

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42 See 'Sarawak News' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 10 Jul 1889, at 5. At the time of his death, Ong was said to be worth \$800,000. He was survived by 17 children.

who died on the [173] 11<sup>th</sup> June 1895 at the age of 64. After his death the firm was carried on by his sons Ong Tiang Soon and Ong Soon Tee and son-in-law Khoo Chong Seng, who left the firm in 1900. Mr Ong Ewe Hai was a man of commanding appearance, well-built, and taller than the average Baba, of a kindly and generous disposition, and not easily ruffled in his temper. He built that fine residence 'Bonny Grass' in River Valley Road,<sup>43</sup> but died before the house was finished. To this day, the firm of Ong Ewe Hai & Co maintains its extensive business relations with Sarawak and acts as agents for the Sarawak and Singapore Steamship Co Ltd.

Mr Ong Soon Tee was born in December 1871 and was educated at the Anglo-Chinese school, being one of the first pupils of the Rev W Oldham. After leaving school he joined his brother, Mr Ong Tiang Soon, in the management of the firm of Ong Ewe Hai & Co, at North Boat Quay. Under the chop Soon Whatt the firm traded extensively in the export of rice and European manufactured goods to Borneo and surrounding places, while it imported pepper, gambier, sago-flour, rattan and rubber from these countries and also acted as steamship agents. Mr Ong Soon Tee was one of the earnest supporters of the movement in the early 'Nineties for social and educational reform of the Straits Chinese community, and was a prominent member of the Chinese Philomathic Society and of Mr Salzmänn's Violin Party. He became the first Hon Secretary of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School, and since 1899<sup>44</sup> he has served assiduously in that capacity. Latterly when Mr Chia Hood Theam resigned the post of Hon Treasurer of that School, Mr Ong Soon Tee very gallantly undertook these duties also.<sup>45</sup> Despite his engagements as an active man of business, Mr Soon Tee found time to maintain a keen interest in public affairs. He was

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43 For a photograph of 'Bonny Grass' see Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 639.

44 See 'Singapore Chinese Girls' School' *Singapore Free Press*, 24 Apr 1899, at 1.

45 See *Straits Times*, 25 Mar 1908, at 6.



Ong Ewe Hai



Ong Tiang Soon

made a JP in 1915<sup>46</sup> and is a director of the Great Eastern Life Assurance Co, and of the Eastern United Assurance Corporation Ltd.<sup>47</sup> He is President of the Sago Flour Association and of the Chinese Produce Exchange.<sup>48</sup>

[174] One of his sons, Ong Siow Sian, was a volunteer during the Great War, while another son, Ong Siow Hian, is studying medicine at Hongkong University.

A petition dated the 20th May 1873 on the subject of trade and particularly on the development of mines in the Malay States was presented by Messrs Whampoa and Tan Kim Ching to the Governor, Sir Harry Ord. This was acknowledged in July in a letter addressed to Mr Kim Ching in which he was requested to inform the Chinese residents and traders in the Malay States that their petition had been forwarded to the Secretary of State.

A Commission appointed in this year to inquire into the desirability of introducing Chinese into the police force made an unfavourable report. The Legislative Council concurred with its conclusions, while the Hon Dr Little gave a dissenting vote, and the Hon Mr Read agreed, subject to a rider that the system prevailing in Java would be worthy of adoption for governing the Chinese effectively, and would make it unnecessary to employ Chinese as policemen. Mr Read referred to a somewhat similar arrangement which had prevailed here, when the late Tan Tock Seng and Tan Kim Seng as well as Tan Kim Ching acted as Captains of the Chinese. Though possessed of no legal power,

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46 See *Straits Times*, 5 Jun 1915, at 8.

47 See 'Chinese Assurance' *Straits Times*, 28 Sep 1914, at 9.

48 Ong Soon Tee passed away at his home at 61 Cairnhill Road and was survived by two wives, and six sons: Siow Sian, Siow Hian, Siow Kee, Siow Giap, Siow Hin and Siow Leong. He was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery. See 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 11 Feb 1946, at 3. Ong's first wife, Wee Ong Neo died on 7 May 1912 (see 'Death', *Straits Times*, 8 May 1912, at 6). Teo Choon Neo, one of Ong's two surviving wives died on 23 Feb 1953 and was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery as well (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 24 Feb 1953, at 7).

they exercised very considerable control over their countrymen, and on several occasions rendered important services to Government.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1873 a public meeting of the principal inhabitants was held in the Town Hall and passed unanimously resolutions (1) against the abolition of the Grand Jury in the Colony, and (2) against the proposed Chinese Coolie Immigration Act on the grounds that it would be impolitic and unnecessary. Mr Wuing Boon Whatt was the only Chinese mentioned by the *Daily Times* as having been present.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> September at a meeting of the Legislative Council, at which Messrs T Scott, Whampoa, WR Scott and R Little, the unofficial members, were present, Mr Thomas Scott stated that, in consequence of [175] the Governor, Sir Harry Ord, having disregarded the unanimous protest of the non-official members of Council and the very strong expression of public opinion on the abolition of the Grand Jury, he and Dr Little and Mr WR Scott had decided to resign.<sup>49</sup> These three members then retired from the Council, and the action of Mr Whampoa in not following their example was severely criticised by the press.

An illustration of what was a frequent source of quarrel between the secret societies was given on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1874, when, as a funeral procession was passing along Neil Road, a party of armed *samsengs*, who were hiding on the hill known as Bukit Pasoh, attacked the coffin bearers. A general fight ensued for a few minutes, but, an alarm being raised by sentries posted for the purpose that the police were coming from Sepoy Lines, the whole of the attacking party rushed off in various directions. This fight arose out of rivalry between the Hai-san and Ghi-hin Kongsis as to which should have the honour of carrying the remains of the deceased, who had two sons, one in each kongsi.

In this year the Government had under consideration a Chinese Immigration Bill. This was the outcome of two petitions presented by the Chinese merchants and citizens in 1871 and 1873 praying for protection of Chinese *sinkehs* (新客 or new-comers) from China. The

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49 See 'Legislative Council' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 4 Oct 1873, at 5.

Chamber of Commerce took the matter up for discussion, and held meetings at one of which the Hon Mr Whampoa and Messrs Tan Kim Ching and Tan Seng Poh were invited to attend. They gave evidence as to the practice of kidnapping Chinese coolies in China and bringing them to labour on estates in Malaya. They stated that Moh Choon,<sup>50</sup> head of the Ghi-hok society, used to send out sampans to the immigrant vessels, ostensibly to protect the coolies, but in reality to 'sell' them for Deli, Linggi and other places. By 'selling' them was meant that brokers offered to engage coolies and did so through the Society. The engagements were for three or six years at wages ranging from \$4 to \$6 a [176] month. Six months' wages were paid in advance to the intermediaries, who gave perhaps a quarter of the money to the coolie and pocketed the balance. The coolies were invariably engaged under the belief that they were going to Johore, Rhio or some other place close by, and some of them had been known to commit suicide on discovering that they had been deceived. Messrs Whampoa, Kim Ching and Seng Poh were of opinion that these *sinkehs* should be allowed to come in as they pleased without restriction, and that a Government immigration agent should visit the coolie ships to prevent any imposition. The Bill before Council, in its then form, was considered by these Chinese leaders to be useless. The Chamber held the same view and sent in a petition to the Governor opposing the measure.

In spite of strenuous opposition by the unofficial members and the public, the Governor, Sir Harry Ord, carried the Bill through Council by the official majority. This was an amending Bill recasting the Chinese Immigrants' Ordinance of 1873, on instructions received from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and contained more stringent regulations. This Bill did not become law until 1877 – Ordinance II, which in its turn was repealed by the Chinese Immigrants' Ordinance of 1880.

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50 Chua Moh Choon, see *infra*.

In November 1874 Khoo Tiong Poh,<sup>51</sup> who had been in business as a partner in chop Teong Ho in Market Street, retired from the firm and in conjunction with Rajah Wichit of Phya Puket commenced the business of Bun Hin & Co as shipowners, which a few years later became one of the best known and leading Chinese firms in the place.

Towards the end of the year, there was an attempted strike on the part of the Chinese bullock cartmen under compulsion, it is believed, from certain headmen of the Ghi-hin Kongsì, who threatened with violent assault any cartmen who might give their carts for hire. The prompt measures taken by Capt Dunlop, Chief of Police, to arrest the ringleaders in the course of a fight in Tanjong Pagar Road between the strikers and a posse of police who, [177] in the guise of cartmen, had been sent out to drive bullock carts along the road, were successful, and the strike among the cartmen fizzled out.

In connection with the disturbed state of affairs generally in the native states of the Malay Peninsula, the Hon Mr Whampoa said in Council:

I am able to state from my own personal knowledge that the Chinese in the several native states have the greatest confidence in Your Excellency's Government. Many Chinese who have visited Singapore from Perak and other native states on the coast have come to me anxiously inquiring when the Government was going to send British Residents to the several native courts for the protection of life and property, saying that that would give them every confidence to live there. They have also asked me to use my influence to induce Chinese with capital to come down from China

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51 Born in China, Khoo Tiong Poh came to the Straits Settlements when he was 22. He went on to be a prominent shipping figure and leader among the Hokkien community. At the time of his death, he was the Senior Partner of Bun Hin & Co. He had been ailing for some time and was said to be in a serious condition before his death. His body was taken to Penang where it was buried. He was survived by eight sons. See 'The late Mr Khoo Tiong Poh), *Singapore Free Press*, 3 Mar 1892, at 2.



to form companies for working the tin mines, by which means a large business could be done.<sup>52</sup>

It is interesting to note that at the ordinary meeting of the Municipal Commissioners held on the 11th January 1875 Mr Tan Seng Poh was elected chairman in the absence of the President. Among the matters dealt with were a petition from the boatmen for building landing steps near the Clyde Terrace Market, and another from cart owners in Upper Macao Street for permission to keep in each house more than ten head of cattle, the number restricted under Act XIV of 1856. In the former case, the Commissioners were of opinion that another public landing-place at Kampong Glam was really necessary, and directed the Municipal Engineer to erect a granite one at the end of Clyde Terrace Road. In the latter case the prayer was refused, because the Municipality had enough trouble to see that the cattle pens and piggeries already in existence in town were kept in a clean state.

The public spirit of Mr Cheang Hong Lim was shown by an advertisement to the public issued on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1875 by Mr AP Locke, late Principal of [178] Telok Ayer Grammar School, announcing that under the liberal patronage of Mr Cheang Hong Lim, lads of all ages and creeds would be admitted, free of all charges, for instruction in English, into the 'Cheang Wan Seng School' situated at No 2 Cheang Wan Seng Place, Telok Ayer.<sup>53</sup>

On the 21<sup>st</sup> April a meeting was held in the Exchange Rooms for the purpose of making the necessary arrangements for the Ball and Supper to be given to Sir Andrew and Lady Clarke on the 5th May, and the following Chinese residents, Tan Seng Poh, Seah Cheo Seah, Tan

52 See 'Legislative Council' *Straits Times Overland Journal* 3 Oct 1874, at 1.

53 See 'Notice' *Straits Observer*, 29 Mar 1875, at 2. The Principal of the Cheang Wan Seng School in Telok Ayer, was Alfred Percival Locke, formerly Principal of the Telok Ayer Grammar School. Subjects taught at the school included Grammar (inclusive of Parsing, Sonstruing and Correction of Erroneous Sentences), Composition, Reading, Spelling, Malay Translation, Writing, Arithmetic, Geometry and Algebra.

Kim Ching, Tan Beng Swee and Cheang Hong Lim, were invited to sit on the Committee appointed for the above purpose.

The Governor's Ball given in honour of Her Majesty's Birthday this year was held on the 29<sup>th</sup> July, to which a large number of the Chinese residents were invited, including the influential men of Penang and Malacca.<sup>54</sup> One of the guests was Mr Tan Teck Guan, a brother of Mr Tan Kim Ching, who had become a prominent citizen of Malacca, and he along with Mr Chan Teck Chiang received a graceful tribute in the form of a letter signed by all the leading Malacca Chinese merchants and published in the *Daily Times* on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1876 for having succeeded in settling a dispute between two rival secret societies in Malacca and in getting the headmen to sign a bond, drafted by a lawyer, to keep the peace or forfeit \$500 to the Pauper Hospital Fund. Mr Tan Teck Guan, who was made a JP in 1879, died in October 1891, leaving a considerable fortune to his three sons, Tan Chay Yan, Tan Tat Yan and Tan Wi Yan, and to their male issues. Mr Teck Guan was a keen student of botany, and his knowledge of the various local plants was large and reliable. He sent specimens of Straits produce to various exhibitions, including London, Melbourne and the Singapore Flower Show, and obtained several honours, and at the time of his death he was a member of the Malacca committee for collecting exhibits for the Colonial Institute. He [179] was the founder of the Tan Teck Guan Scholarship at the High School, Malacca, which, although not of great value, was the first of its kind in that Settlement.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> August 1875 Mr Cheang Hong Lim petitioned the Hon Major JFA McNair, Colonial Engineer and Surveyor-General, applying for the grant of a title to Peak Island (now known as Pulo Kusu) and protesting against the island being used as a burial ground. This island was used by the Chinese and native inhabitants for the purpose of making sacrifices and paying their vows to certain deities there, known as Toa-pek-kong Kusu and Dato Kramat. The reply was that

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54 See 'The Queen's Birthday Ball' *Straits Times*, 31 Jul 1875, at 1.



Tan Teck Guan



Lim Leack

the Government was unable to grant the title, but no more burials should take place upon that island.<sup>55</sup>

A petition signed by Koh Eng Hoon and sixty-three other land-owners was presented on the 17<sup>th</sup> August to the Governor, asking that no charge be made by way of premium in cases of applications to extend leases from 99 to 999 years, but only a certain increase in the annual quit rents. This request was not approved by Government, but it was stated that consideration would be given specially to any cases of actual hardship.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> October a petition from Chinese and other Asiatic owners of house property against certain sections of the Gambling Houses Ordinance (1870) was sent in, asking for amendment of the objectionable sections and for greater facilities to eject tenants from houses which had been declared to be 'common gaming houses.'

A telegram from Hongkong dated the 1st September was received here announcing the death on the 22nd August of the well-known and much-respected Chinese merchant, Lim Leack,<sup>56</sup> of the firm of 'Leack, Chin Seng & Co chop Hiap Chin' in Market Street. Lim Leack came from China in or about the year 1825, and was a great promoter of tin mining in the Peninsula as well as of cultivation of tapioca in Malacca and did a large business with China. The firm had a branch office in Malacca. As early as 1851 the firm had owned [180] several schooners flying the British flag. Lim Leack was looked upon by his countrymen and others as an upright and honest merchant and a most enterprising man. He married a Straits-born wife, and among his descendants is Mr Lim Chan Sin (cashier to Sandilands, Buttery & Co) who is a grandson. His large business relations with China caused him to make frequent visits to his native country, and he died there at the age of 71 years.<sup>57</sup>

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55 See *Straits Times*, 14 Aug 1875, at 2.

56 Also spelt 'Lim Leak', 'Lim Liak', 'Lim Liack' and 'Lim Lee Ak'.

57 See *London and China Telegraph*, 11 Oct 1875, at 5, announcing Lim's death.

Mr Tan Chin Seng, the other partner, came from Malacca, and in 1853 was already one of the influential men in the Chinese community. His name appeared as one of the committee of five merchants who prepared the address to their countrymen pointing out the absurdity of their fear and nervousness about the 'head scare'. Of his three sons, Hoon Guan and Hoon Hin settled down in Malacca, where they were prominent citizens during their lifetime. His eldest son, Tan Hoon Chiang,<sup>58</sup> continued the business of 'Leack, Chin Seng & Co' in Market Street, and on his retirement, from old age, his eldest son, Tan Cheng Tee, became principal partner of that firm.<sup>59</sup> Tan Cheng Tee predeceased his father on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 1914,<sup>60</sup> holding at his death the post of President of the Chinese Produce Exchange, which he had been largely instrumental in forming in 1911. Mr Tan Cheng Tee was widely known to the European firms dealing in tin and tapioca.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> May 1876 the first investiture ceremony was held, in the Town Hall, when the Hon Mr HAK Whampo received the decoration of CMG<sup>61</sup> at the hands of the Governor, Sir William Jervois.<sup>62</sup> In

58 The magnate Tan Hoon Chiang (buried in Malacca), was one of the founders of the Straits Steamship Co. His daughter married Chi Hong Cheng, the son of the late Chi Jin Siew of Malacca (see Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 160). His wife, who died in 1912, was buried at the Bukit Timah Road Cemetery (see 'Death' *Singapore Free Press*, 8 Jul 1912, at 6).

59 See *Straits Times*, 10 Jun 1892, at 2.

60 See 'Death', *Straits Times*, 5 Feb 1914, at 8. Tan Cheng Tee was buried on 8 Feb 1914 at the Alexander Road Cemetery.

61 See 'Public Investiture at the Town Hall' *Straits Times*, 13 May 1876, at 2.

62 Sir William Jervois (1821-1897) served as Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1875 to 1877. He was born in 1821, the eldest son of General Jervois at Cowes, Isle of Wight. In 1839, he entered the service of the Royal Engineers and was promoted to the rank of captain in 1847, brevet lieutenant-colonel in 1861, colonel in 1872, major-general in 1877 and lieutenant-general in 1882. After he stepped down as Governor of the Straits Settlement, Jervois advised the Governments of the Australian colonies on the defence of their principal ports. He later became Governor of South Australia and then New Zealand. Jervois was

his speech the Governor mentioned that the firm of Whampoa & Co had been well known for over fifty years as HM's naval contractors at Singapore.

The name of Mr Whampoa junior is well known not only to British people, but to Russians, Germans, French, Austrians and other European people. It is also well known to our kinsmen in the United States [181] of America. Thus I may say that Mr Whampoa enjoys a world-wide reputation. It was during the Chinese campaign that the name of Whampoa was brought prominently forward as the merchant who undertook the contract for supplying the Europeans with provisions.<sup>63</sup>

After referring to his valuable services in assisting to restore order during the riots since 1854, the Governor added:

I may say that these Settlements may well be proud of the many naturalised Chinese gentlemen living in them, and of the unhesitating loyalty with which they support and assist the Government and their fellow colonists.<sup>64</sup>

He concluded with these words:

Fellow-countrymen of Mr Whampoa, the honour which Her Majesty the Queen has been pleased to confer upon Mr Whampoa is no less conferred upon you than on him. Through him the Queen honours you and shows – as far as conferring a decoration *can* show – how closely you are all regarded by the British Government as British subjects who, by industry and enterprise, unite with Europeans in the advancement of commerce and in the material development of these Settlements and Dependencies.<sup>65</sup>

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killed in a carriage accident when the horse of his carriage bolted and Jervois 'was thrown violently to the ground, his head striking the stone'. See 'The Late Sir William Jervois' *Singapore Free Press*, 13 Sep 1897, at 2.

63 This quote has been slightly altered from the original. See 'Public Investiture at the Town Hall' *Straits Times*, 13 May 1876, at 2.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

There was a very large attendance of the influential and prominent inhabitants of the city, representing all nationalities, to witness the ceremony: the Chinese, according to the newspaper reporter, being dressed in white 'bajus'.

A little more than three months afterwards, on the 23rd August, there was another investiture ceremony held in the Town Hall, when Governor Jervois decorated the Maharajah of Johore with the KCMG.<sup>66</sup> After the ceremony, an adjournment was made to the residence of Mr Tan Seng Poh, who had issued invitations to the Government House party and the principal residents to [182] a luncheon in honour of the event. A writer describing the gathering said that 'Irishmen, Europeans, Malays and Chinese have probably never been brought before into such close contact'.

Mr Pickering's article on 'The Chinese in the Straits of Malacca' appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* for October 1876.<sup>67</sup> He dealt with the subject of the Chinese secret societies difficulty, making the following points: (1) that the registration of societies is a mere farce, the real records being kept back, and the books and lists produced for the inspection of the authorities being faked up for the purpose of misleading the Government. The real wire-pullers are unknown and the authorities have no hold on them. (2) The Dangerous Societies Ordinance of 1869 which was made perpetual by Ordinance V of 1872 was not effective. He suggested as a solution of the difficulty the introduction of responsible self-government among the Chinese, by the division of the community into wards with headmen and a Captain over all. This system would strike at the root of the secret societies, bring the Chinese communities into closer relations with the Government and render coolie kidnapping impossible.

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66 See 'The Grand Cross' *Straits Times*, 26 Aug 1876, at 1.

67 See WA Pickering, 'The Chinese in the Straits of Malacca' (1876) 14 *Fraser's Magazine* 438-445.

Major Dunlop,<sup>68</sup> as Inspector-General of Police, in his annual report for 1875, ventured a similar suggestion: while the Committee upon the Chinese Immigration question proposed, in order to obtain the desired influence and win the confidence of the Chinese community, the establishment of a sort of Chinese Department with a Protector of Immigrants at its head. The Committee doubted, however, whether this would give more effectual control of the secret societies, and added that there was another method well worth considering – one which Sir Andrew Clarke had intended to carry out, viz. the Dutch colonial system of Chinese headmen and Captains.

'Phoenix', who recently contributed an article on 'Singapore in the 'Seventies' to the *Straits Times*,<sup>69</sup> after describing that the Criminal Prison in those days was [183] situated on the recreation ground between Stamford Road and Bras Basah Road (still known as the Old Gaol site) with long wards in which the prisoners were locked for the night, instead of the separate cells in which they are confined in the present Sepoy Lines Gaol, said:

At that period, Singapore was swarming with dangerous secret societies, and the prison was full of the most daring criminals, and in consequence the prison discipline had to be very strict. The Government were not then armed with that powerful weapon, deportation. ... The prison authorities had no time to put cases off for the Visiting Justices, and action had to be taken at once. One day (the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1875) several hundreds of the Chinese prisoners broke out and killed the Superintendent, Capt Dent, and rushed the main gates in Bras Basah Road. The inner gate was locked on the outside. Mrs Lamb, the wife of the gaoler, secured the door in the nick of time, and then defended the gate with a long sword. She slashed and cut at the feet and legs at the bottom of the gateway

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68 Colonel Samuel Dunlop became Inspector-General of Police of the Straits Settlements in 1875 and became President of the Municipal Commission in 1889 and retired the year after. See Roland St John Braddell, 'Law and Crime' in Walter Makepeace, Gilbert E Brooke & Roland St J Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) 244–300, at 249.

69 See 'Singapore in the '70s' *Straits Times*, 28 Jul 1914, at 10.



and thus prevented the escape of the Chinese, many of whom were in for long sentences and a good number for life.<sup>70</sup>

'Phoenix' related how an ex-soldier, then serving a life sentence for causing the death of a Malay policeman with his belt in a fight between drunken sailors and soldiers at a public-house called the 'Fortune of War' at the site of the present Ricksha Station in Neil Road, came to the assistance of the gaol-keepers, and along with other European prisoners, incarcerated for minor offences, broke into the armoury, and seized Snider rifles and buckshot ammunition. They fired a volley on the rioters and shot down the ringleaders. The rest of the Chinese prisoners were driven back to their wards and securely locked in. The horde of Chinese criminals would have succeeded in making their escape, but for the prompt aid rendered by the European prisoners. The ex-soldier was pardoned, and the Government [184] supplied him with clothes and money and sent him back to England.

On the 3rd November a certificate of naturalisation was granted to Boey Nam Lock, who owned a large tannery business in Kallang Road. He died on the 20th March 1914, but his name is still preserved in Nam Lock Street.

The benefactions of Mr Cheang Hong Lim were not confined to this Settlement. The *Daily Times* of the 8th November 1876 mentions that an appeal for assistance towards the Penang Free School had been met by the liberal donation of \$3,000 by Mr Hong Lim.<sup>71</sup> To the end of his life, this large-hearted gentleman appears to have fixed \$3,000 as his contribution towards any deserving charity which appealed to him.

In December 1876 occurred the Chinese Post Office riot.<sup>72</sup> 'Most of the trouble between the Chinese and Europeans', says Dr Lim Boon Keng,

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70 Ibid.

71 See *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 16 Nov 1876, at 13.

72 See 'The Riots' *Straits Times*, 23 Dec 1876, at 1.

has arisen from misunderstanding and from racial prejudice. In many cases the susceptibilities of the Chinese have been ignored, while the Chinese, on their part, imagine that the Europeans design something harmful to themselves. Doubtless, to a modern mind, the figment of the uneducated Chinese mind is something ludicrous or absurd, but the intellectual ken of an oriental proletariat must be viewed from a special standpoint, with due reference to the actual state of education.<sup>73</sup>

Dr Boon Keng quotes this Post Office riot as a concrete example.

It would appear that the Chinese coolies had been persuaded to believe that the establishment of the sub-post office was intended as a 'squeeze upon the poorer classes of Chinese, and that instead of reaping the advantages they had hitherto done of transmitting small sums of money cheaply to their families in China, they would in future, in the hands of their own countrymen, be subjected to that process of squeezing which is well [185] understood in their country'. Notices believed to have emanated from some leaders of the secret societies, offering a reward for the head of the Chinese agent who was deputed to conduct the sub-post office, were alleged to have been circulated; and despite the assurance given by the authorities to the leading men among the Chinese that the arrangement was made for the especial convenience of the poorer classes of their countrymen, on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> December, soon after the sub-post office was opened for business, a riotous crowd collected in Market Street and attacked the office. Sticks and bottles were freely used, and eventually the post office, a small Chinese shop, was entered and every article of furniture therein destroyed. The Coat of Arms over the door was pulled down, and everything in the place breakable was smashed to pieces. The police under Mr Maxwell were quickly on the spot, but the rioters being in an excited state attacked them and Mr Maxwell was knocked down and severely handled. A portion of the rioters then made an attack on the Telok Ayer Police Station and also the Ellenborough Market

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73 We are unable to trace exact source of this quote.

Police Station in such force and with so much determination that the police fired upon them and killed three, while several were wounded. A considerable number of the rioters was arrested, and of twenty-five brought before the magistrate, seventeen were sentenced to three months' rigorous imprisonment and thirty stripes with a rattan each. Six, however, of the convicted offenders were declared unfit to receive the stripes allotted to them. Three of the rioters who were convicted for crying out 'Pah! Pah!' and urging on others to fight, were each sent to prison for six months (including one week in solitary confinement) and also bound over to keep the peace.

Mr Read thinks it was during the disturbances of 1876 that – some twenty of these secret-society headmen were arrested and placed on board the Government steamer, [186] which was sent to anchor outside the harbour. A strong north-east monsoon was blowing at the time and a heavy surge coming in from the China Sea. From the shore, the vessel could be seen pitching bows under, and rolling scuppers in the water.

The unfortunate Chinese were kept there for forty-eight hours, and were then landed pale, prostrate and penitent.<sup>74</sup>

In this year 1876, through the efforts of Tan Kim Ching and Tan Beng Swee, the institution known as 'Tan Seng Haw' or 'Po Chek Kiong' was built in Magazine Road (Kampong Malacca) as the assembly hall and temple of the 'Tan' clan.<sup>75</sup> One portion of the premises has been used as the repository for the *sinchew* or ancestral tablets of men of that clan, while another portion has been used as a Chinese school. There is a large reception room on the right of the building, where worshippers pay their respects to the picture of the goddess 'Kwan Im'. Messrs Tan Kim Tian and Tan Hoon Keat were the first President and

74 See WH Read, *Play and Politics: Recollections of Malaya by an Old Resident* (London: Wells, Gardiner, Darton & Co, 1901) at 107-108.

75 This is known today as the Tan Si Chong Su Temple or Po Chiak Keng.

Vice-President respectively of this institution. Mr Tan Cheng Siong, JP, is the present President.

In January 1877 were published the reports by Mr Pickering as Protector of Chinese and Mr Maxwell<sup>76</sup> as Chief Police Officer, which threw considerable light upon the origin and character of the Post Office riots. These riots were not a secret-society affair, properly speaking – but the instigators were the Chinese towkays whose business as remitters of money to China would be affected by the establishment of the Government Post Office and Money Order Office, and who, though perfectly aware of the benevolent intentions of the Government, had deliberately misrepresented them to the coolies and their more ignorant countrymen. The course of events, e.g. the continued closing of the shops for two days after the actual rioting had been suppressed, furnished proof of the general sympathy of the petty shopkeepers and traders with the instigators. It was not so much an émeute against Government as an out- [187] burst of Chinese conservatism against reform and progress.<sup>77</sup> The towkays had said to Mr Pickering: 'The Chinese did not like any alteration in the present way of doing things: they like to do things in Chinese fashion.'<sup>78</sup>

Ten days before the outbreak, Mr Trotter, Postmaster-General, had prepared his notification of the proposed establishment of the Chinese sub-post office. Chua Moh Choon, head of the Ghi-hok Kongsì, warned Major Dunlop that the Chinese remitting agents would try to cause trouble, ostensibly on the ground that Government had farmed

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76 Robert Walter Maxwell was Inspector-General of Police from 1891–1894. He was the third son of Sir Peter Benson Maxwell, Chief Justice of the Straits Settlements from 1867 to 1871. Robert Maxwell served as his father's secretary from 1869 to 1871 when he joined the police. He retired in August 1894 on account of ill health and died in England in 1895. See Roland St John Braddell, 'Law and Crime' in Walter Makepeace, Gilbert E Brooke & Roland St J Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) 244–300, at 255.

77 See 'The Riot Reports' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 8 Feb 1877, at 3.

78 Ibid.

the Chinese post office to two Hokien Babas from Penang, but really to compel Government to give way. The notification, in its original form, had stated that remittances through the Chinese sub-post office were compulsory, but this statement was expunged by Mr Pickering, and the actual notification distributed on the 11th December 1876 was accompanied by a plain explanatory notice by Mr Trotter, after both documents had been pronounced by Tan Seng Poh, Tan Soon Toh (Mr Tan Kim Ching's son) and Chua Moh Choon to be quite fair to the aggrieved towkays. On the morning of the 13th the police discovered that placards had been stuck up during the night offering 100 taels for the heads of the Chinese Post Office 'farmers' as they were called, and a police notice was immediately issued offering \$200 for the apprehension of the authors of the Chinese placards. The aggrieved towkays were sent for, and after further explanations were given to them by Mr Pickering and Mr Maxwell, they dispersed with this parting shot to the Chinese interpreter, Chong Marcus: 'It's all very fine, but we don't believe what they say.' And thus it happened that when the doors of the new Chinese sub-post office were opened on the morning of the 15th December, the elements for a determined disturbance were ready, and only awaited the hurling of a brickbat from the opposite house as the signal for a general attack. Besides the Chinese sub-post office and the two police stations already mentioned [188] as the scenes of the riots, an attack was made on the house of a Chinese merchant, Lim Eng Keng, in Amoy Street, which was immediately suppressed. Nothing is known as to why Mr Lim Eng Keng's house was singled out for an attack by the rioters.

Mr Lim Eng Keng<sup>79</sup> was a prominent citizen of that time. He was, after the death of his father, Lim Lan in July 1875, the senior partner of the firm of Lim Lan & Co chop Swee Tye, General Merchants and

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79 Lim Eng Keng (1837-1892) was the eldest of the three sons of Lim Lan, his brothers being Eng Wan and Eng Yong. He had been managing partner of the firm Lim Lan & Co for years and in that position, as a Municipal Commissioner and as a Director of the Singapore Insurance Co and the Singapore Land Co. He had been held in great respect as a quiet but earnest representative of the

Commission Agents in Boat Quay. The firm had already become well known in 1869 and had branches at Palembang and Sarawak. Lim Lan was known to his friends by the nickname of 'Pai Lan' because he was lame on one foot. In 1876 Mr Lim Eng Keng was mentioned as one of the partners along with Syed Mohamed Alsagoff, Cheong Ann Bee and Khoo Tiong Poh in the shipchandlery firm of Ann Bee, Keng Lam & Co chop Sin Bee Siang, while his son, Lim Chin Swee,<sup>80</sup> after whom Chin Swee Road is named,<sup>81</sup> is mentioned in the same year as being a partner with Syed Mohamed and Seet Guan Swee in the firm of Seet Guan Swee & Co chop E Thye. The last-mentioned firm was dissolved in 1879, being succeeded by Lim Chin Swee & Co chop E Thye, with Syed Mohamed Alsagoff, Lim Chin Swee and Lim Eng Keng as partners.<sup>82</sup>

Lim Eng Keng became a director of the Singapore Insurance Co, and also of the Singapore Land Co, and was made a JP. In 1889 he

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best interests of the Baba class in the Straits. See 'Death of Mr Lim Eng Keng' *Singapore Free Press*, 1 Feb 1892, at 3.

- 80 *The Chronicle & Directory for China, Corea, Japan, The Philippines, Cochinchina, Annam, Tonquin, Siam, Borneo, Straits Settlements, Malay States Etc for the Year 1889* (Hongkong: Daily Press, 1890) at 689.
- 81 See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 76.
- 82 Lim Chin Swee had commenced business under his own name in the firm of Lim Chin Swee & Co, chop Hee Tye at 29 Boat Quay. However, the company went into liquidation when Lim was adjudged a bankrupt in 1886 (see 'Notices' *Straits Times*, 4 Mar 1886, at 2). He was later admitted as a partner of Lim Lan & Co, chop Swee Tye in 1892 (see *Straits Times*, 21 Apr 1892, at 3). In 1896, he ceased to be a partner of Lim Lan & Co (located at 65 Boat Quay) and started another business under the name and style of chop Swee Kee at 3 Boat Quay as general merchant and commission agent. Lim Eng Guan, Lim Eng Yong and Koh Tew Neo continued the business of Lim Lan & Co. See *Straits Times*, 17 Jun 1896, at 2. In his last years, Lim was embroiled in financial problems and was taken to court by his creditors (see 'A Chinese Property' *Singapore Free Press*, 27 Jul 1905, at 3; and 'The Supreme Court' *Singapore Free Press*, 5 Oct 1906, at 8). He died on 26 Mar 1905 (see *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, 1935, at 1202).

was elected a Municipal Commissioner and served the public in that capacity until his death on the 27th January 1892, at the age of 55. He was held in great respect as a quiet but earnest representative of the best interests of the Straits-born Chinese. On the Municipal Board he was a conservative in all questions connected with the Chinese, but nevertheless was able to give much valuable aid on the Board. He was one of the Commissioners to retire in December 1889, but agreed to be re-elected, and in supporting his nomination the *Free Press* referred to him as 'a man of sense, judgment and business capacity'.

[189] Cheong Ann Bee was born in Malacca in 1833 and came to Singapore at the age of 10. His father, Cheong Koe Boon, who was a China-born, migrated to Malacca, where he settled down as a trader. Cheong Ann Bee knew no English, but as a boy he attended a Chinese school. After serving in the European firms of Messrs Dare & Co and W Mansfield & Co, he started a shipchandlery business in partnership with Tan Eng Siew in 1867 under the name of Ann-bee, Eng-siew & Co. In 1870 the two partners decided to carry on business separately. Six years later Ann-bee & Co. became Ann-bee, Keng-lam & Co, until the retirement of Keng Lam, and Cheong Ann Bee took Syed Mohamed Alsagoff and Lim Eng Keng into partnership with him in the firm of Ann-bee & Co, which was wound up in 1898. Cheong Ann Bee died on the 9th March 1896 in his sixty-third year.<sup>83</sup> He was a man of charitable disposition and used to give away freely eye salve to people suffering from any complaint of that organ. People of the coolie class often sought his aid when troubled with their eyes. On one occasion in June 1890 while Mr Ann Bee was examining the eyes of a coolie, he was stabbed by the patient, fortunately not severely: the injuries being a cut on the shoulder and two cuts on the head. His assailant also attacked a European police constable, who tried to arrest him, and afterwards appeared at the Assizes, where he received a sentence of two years' imprisonment.

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83 See *Singapore Free Press*, 16 Mar 1896, at 2.



Cheong Ann Bee



Mr Ann Bee left two sons, Koon Seng and Koon Hong,<sup>84</sup> who built the well-known Theatre Royal in North Bridge Road and are the proprietors of the Star Opera Co which performs nightly (except Thursday) in the Malay language dramatic pieces ranging from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and stories from the *Arabian Nights* to Chinese legends like *Sam-pek Eng-tai*.<sup>85</sup> The theatre is under the management of Mr Cheong Koon Seng, a well-educated young man, who has begun to take an intelligent interest in public affairs.<sup>86</sup> His thorough training in the auctioneering firm of Powell & Co and the Commercial Rubber Co Ltd,<sup>87</sup> coupled with [190] a sound business head and an affable and obliging disposition, will ensure for him a successful career when he launches out in a business of his own.<sup>88</sup>

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84 This is confirmed by the engraving of his tombstone at Bukit Brown Cemetery which also lists six daughters: Siew Neo, Chin Neo, Seok Neo, Wee Neo, Chew Neo and Lian Neo.

85 See *Straits Times*, 29 Sep 1911, at 6.

86 Cheong was married to Chia Chye Hay Neo who died on 16 May 1916. See *Straits Times*, 17 May 1916, at 8.

87 See 'Notice' *Straits Times*, 2 Mar 1917, at 5.

88 Cheong, who was born in 1880, was educated at the Anglo-Chinese School, and worked with Powell & Co for 25 years before becoming manager of the Commercial Rubber Co Ltd from 1918 to 1920. In 1920, Cheong left the service of Commercial Rubber Co, along with Ong Hong Guan and commenced business as general auctioneers and valuers at 80 Kling Street (now Chulia Street) under the name and style of Cheong Koon Seng and Co which was to become one of the leading auctioneers in Singapore. In 1925, Ong Hong Guan passed away and the business was carried on by Cheong and his eldest son. He had many interests outside of business and was for many years, President of the Chinese Swimming Club, the Chinese Association of Singapore, the Funeral Association, the City Club and the Straits Hunting Party. He was also Vice-President of the Singapore Chinese British Association, and served on the committees of the Straits Settlements Association, the Licensing Justices and the Boxing Board of Control. Cheong also served as a member of the Municipal Commission and was Justice of the Peace. In 1932, he went on a much-publicised round-the-world trip. He died on 20 Mar 1934 at his home at 299 River Valley Road. See 'Mr Cheong Koon Seng' *Singapore Free Press*, 21 Mar 1934, at 3.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> October 1877 the Chinese community gave a grand Chinese wayang at Kampong Malacca as a farewell entertainment in honour of Col Anson,<sup>89</sup> the Administrator to the Government. His Excellency and suite were received with much ceremony on their arrival at the door of the theatre by Messrs Whampoa, Tan Beng Swee, Tan Kim Ching, Tan Seng Poh, Cheang Hong Lim and other leading Chinese residents. A large number of European ladies and gentlemen were present by invitation, and during the evening refreshments were served to the guests.<sup>90</sup>

At the last Criminal Sessions this year, Low How Kim, a Chinese holding a good position in the Colony, was tried on a charge of culpable homicide amounting to murder. For the prosecution it was shown that the deceased woman and the accused had lived unhappily together, and that a few hours before her death the accused had administered some green or blue stuff in a cup to her, while the post-mortem examination which was held nine days after her burial showed traces of sulphate of copper in her stomach. Mr Baumgarten,<sup>91</sup> the leading counsel for the defence, candidly confessed that the accused did administer sulphate of copper, but with the best of intentions. How Kim had had to complain to the police of the conduct of the deceased, who often left home in the company of a woman whom he greatly disliked, because he suspected that this woman had been taking the deceased

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89 See *Straits Times*, 13 Oct 1877, at 2. Colonel (later Major-General) Edward Archibald Harbord Anson (1826–1925), was the last Lieutenant-Governor of Penang, serving from 1867 to 1882. He was also Acting Governor of the Straits Settlements for various periods between 1871 and 1880. See 'Sir Archibald Anson' *Singapore Free Press*, 4 Apr 1925, at 11.

90 See *Straits Times*, 13 Oct 1877, at 2.

91 Christian Baumgarten was Registrar of the Supreme Court of the Straits Settlements from 1857 to 1874. He had been admitted as law agent in Singapore in 1846 and started out as a private practitioner. After he retired as Registrar, he recommenced private practice. He died in 1887. See Roland St John Braddell, 'Law and the Lawyers' in Walter Makepeace, Gilbert E Brooke & Roland St J Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) 160–244, at 194.

to gambling houses or improper places. On the morning of her death the deceased appeared to have been much annoyed at the displeasure which her conduct had caused the accused, who had threatened to put the police on her track, and she poisoned herself with opium. The sulphate of copper was given by the accused as a common, though powerful, emetic. Evidence of the deceased having herself taken opium and of Dr Robertson that the quantity of copper found in the [191] stomach of the deceased was not sufficient to have caused death having been tendered, the jury returned a unanimous verdict of Not Guilty, in which the Acting Chief Justice, Sir T Ford, concurred.<sup>92</sup>

Low How Kim was a son of Low Ah Jit<sup>93</sup> and was born in China.<sup>94</sup> His father being in business here, he came to Singapore at an early age. His name is given in the *Directory* for 1877 as the chief assistant in the Opium Farm, which then had its place of business at No 12 North Canal Road, Mr Cheang Hong Lim being the Farmer. Until 1880 he held a power of attorney to manage the affairs of Low Ah Jit, and to control chop Eng Lee and four other firms belonging to Low Ah Jit. Later on, with the help of Tan Yeok Nee, he started his own business of Low How Kim & Co chop Buan Joo Long, Gambier and Pepper Merchants. On his death, his son, Low Long Teng, became sole proprietor. The firm also deals extensively in gutta and rubber as well as piece goods. Mr Low Long Teng, JP, is a member of the Chinese Advisory Board and on the Committee of the Po Leung Kuk, and is one of the leading men of the Teochew community.

92 See 'Fortnight Summary' *Straits Times*, 3 Nov 1877, at 1.

93 Low Ah Jit established the firm of Low Ah Jit & Sons, chop Yeng Hong at 57 Boat Quay some time in the early 1870s. Shortly before his death in 1906, he returned to China where he died intestate and was survived by eight children (three sons and five daughters). Upon his death, the business was managed by his eldest son, Low Long Teng who managed it till his own death on 3 Jul 1915. See 'Dispute Over Old Business' *Singapore Free Press*, 26 Jun 1929, at 10.

94 Low How Kim's date is unknown but he died on 2 May 1885. See *Straits Times*, 26 Jan 1886, at 4.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> December a disturbance between the Ghi-hin and Ghi-hok societies broke out in Pulo Mata Ikan. The Acting Inspector-General of Police and Mr Pickering proceeded to the spot to investigate the matter and learnt that the quarrel had arisen out of a gambling transaction. Though a number of spears were discovered by the police in the houses of the combatants, only three men were wounded. 'The riot in this instance,' says the *Daily Times*, 'took the shape of sacking houses and stealing property rather than the infliction of personal injury.' Some fifty-eight persons were arrested and appeared before the magistrate. The heads of the combating societies were summoned before the Colonial Secretary, who soundly lectured them and threatened that, in the event of the difference between the two parties not being settled at once, six headmen from each of the societies concerned [192] would be deported. This threat had the desired effect, and the two parties came to terms.

In this year (1877) a young dentist arrived here after some years' practice in Hongkong. Look Yan Kit was born in Canton in 1849 and studied his profession in Hongkong. He started his surgery in South Bridge Road, in close proximity to the dental rooms of Cheong Chun Tin, and his care and skill quickly enabled him to acquire a big connection. In 1884 he went on a special visit to Sourabaya and adjacent towns, among his patients being the Raja of Solo, and in a few months' time returned to Singapore with a handsome purse of \$10,000. He was a personal friend of the late Sultan Abubakar of Johore, and until lately paid professional visits once every quarter to Johore. He invested his savings in house property and is at present the owner of about seventy houses and two rubber plantations in Singapore. He was one of those who took a great interest in the founding of the Kwong Wai Shiu (Cantonese) Hospital in 1910, and has served on its committee of management, and he is one of the Cantonese representatives on the committee of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.<sup>95</sup>

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95 According to Wright and Cartwright, Look was born in Canton (Guangzhou) in 1849, the son of Look Peng Hoo, a 'Mandarin of the fifth grade' who died



Look Yan Kit

On the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1878 a piece of freehold land was conveyed to Chong Ah Siew (alias Chong Siew Ngian) and others as trustees of the Kye-eng-chew Khek Chinese and was dedicated as a public burial ground known as 'Sung-leong-san', for people of that community. The licence to use the land, which is situate in the district of Tanglin and contains 98 acres, for that purpose was signed by Mr WH Read, as Municipal President.

Chong Siew Ngian was born in China and left his native city to join his father, then trading in Muntok.<sup>96</sup> Later he came to Singapore and started a business as commission agent in Telok Ayer Street under the chop Poh Guan. He died some twenty years ago. His son, Chong Soo Leong,<sup>97</sup> was born here in 1865, and was educated at Raf-

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some time around 1898. Look studied in Japan and Hong Kong and had 'for many years been recognised as one of the leading Chinese dentists in Singapore, and his surgery at 28 North Canal Road, owned and built by him at a cost of over 35,000 dollars, is fitted with the latest instruments and appliances from London'. Besides Sultan Abubakar, Look's other clients include 'several of the native Rajas of Malaya and the Chinese Consul-General of Singapore'. He owned no fewer than 51 houses 'in the best parts of Singapore'. See, Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 640. He died in 1931, leaving an 'estate worth several million dollars' and was survived by six sons, among whom were: Chan Tock, Chan Kuan, Chan Heng, Chan Hoi and Chan Wai. See 'Late Millionaire's Sons' *Straits Times*, 28 Apr 1932, at 12; and 'Millionaire's Sons at Variance' *Straits Times*, 29 Apr 1932, at 12.

96 According to Wright and Cartwright, Chong was born in China 'but came to Singapore at an early age and built up a flourishing business as a general merchant'. He also had extensive connections with Batavia, Samarang, Sourabaya and Timor firms. See, Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 638.

97 Chong Soo Leong was the great grandson of Chong Lok Chan, who first went to Malacca but moved to Muntok, believing the business opportunities in the Dutch colonies to be better. Chong Soo Leong's son, Chong Loon Sen, and grandson, Chong Siew Ngan carried on the family business. Chong Soo Leong had two other sons: Fok Lin and Choon Lin. See, Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 638.



Chong Soo Leong

fles Institution. He went into business [193] as a commission agent under the chop Nam Chan, trading at first with Java ports and later with Timor Dilly (Portuguese), Timor Kupang (Dutch) and Macassar. He was founder of the Yin-sin Chinese school – the first of its kind conducted on modern lines, the curriculum comprising reading (with explanations), physical drill, drawing, geography, history, arithmetic and singing, and lessons being given both in Chinese and English. The school was begun in 1904 on a small scale in a shophouse in Loke Yew Street, but is now located in the premises of the Yin-ho-kuan (Temple) in Telok Ayer Street,<sup>98</sup> with an enrolment of 110 boys and 20 girls.

There was a great famine in Shantung, North China, in the year 1877, and in the month of April Messrs Tan Beng Swee, Tan Seng Poh and Whampoa, as respective leaders of the Hokien, Teochew and Cantonese sections of the Chinese here, raised the total sum of \$17,178, which was forwarded to the Relief Committee.<sup>99</sup> On the 21st January 1878 Mr Whampoa collected in two days by subscription the sum of about \$11,000 for the same purpose.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> February Mr Cheang Hong Lim entertained the community with an exhibition of fireworks on the Esplanade.<sup>100</sup>

On the motion of Mr E Koek, seconded by the Hon Mr J Douglas,<sup>101</sup> Mr Tan Kim Ching was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March elected a member of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, which had been formed four months earlier.<sup>102</sup>

98 This building is today known as the Ying Fo Fui Kun and is situated at 98 Telok Ayer Street. It is a National Monument. Ying Xin School operated in these premises from 1905 to 1970.

99 See *Straits Times*, 14 Apr 1877, at 1.

100 See 'Fireworks on the Esplanade' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 28 Feb 1878, at 9.

101 John Douglas served as Colonial Secretary in Singapore from 1876 to 1878.

102 See 'Summary of the Week' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 11 Apr 1878, at 1; and JM Gullick, 'A Short History of the Society' (1995) 68 *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 67–79.



A public ball was given on the 27<sup>th</sup> December 1878 in the Town Hall by Mr Tan Beng Swee in honour of the marriage of his son, Tan Jiak Kim.

The decorations were the most striking feature, and they mingled in character the two prettiest features of European and Oriental display. ... At the head of the staircase stood two very beautiful Chinese children<sup>103</sup> attired in all the gorgeous habiliments of Chinese full-dress costume, each presenting a salver containing the dance programme of the evening. The [194] vestibule of the upper hall was filled with growing shrubs, plants and flowers, and in the centre was a very tastefully arranged rockery, with a fountain playing. At the entrance to the hall stood Mr Tan Beng Swee and the bridegroom to receive the guests as they arrived.<sup>104</sup>

Supper being over, the Chief Justice, Sir Thomas Sidgreaves, proposed the health of Mr Tan Beng Swee, saying how much such an entertainment served to cement the kindly relations and 'foster unanimity of sentiment between the great nationalities of the East and West that peopled and gave life and prosperity to the Settlement.'<sup>105</sup> Mr Tan Beng Swee replied in Malay. Then Mr McArthur proposed the health of the bride and bridegroom in a speech full of point and humour, and the bridegroom replied briefly in English, but – the bride was not there.

The *Daily Times* wound up its description of the ball with this remark:

You have done well, Mr Beng Swee, well for the vindication of your own cordial feeling towards your Western friends, well for the growth of kindly relations between your countrymen and the Europeans, and well, in a way, we venture to think, for Society in general.<sup>106</sup>

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103 In the original quote, the phrase read 'Chinese girl children'. See 'Public Ball in the Town Hall' *Straits Times*, 28 Dec 1878, at 1.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.



Tan Jiak Kim

Mr Tan Jiak Kim was born in Singapore on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1859.<sup>107</sup> After being educated privately, he entered the firm of Kim Seng & Co, as apprentice, at the age of 18. He acquired practical experience of the varied activities of that business house and on the death of his father, Mr Tan Beng Swee, in 1884, he was taken into partnership by his uncle Mr Tan Beng Gum. In 1886 he was elected a Municipal Commissioner on the passing of the first Municipal Ordinance,<sup>108</sup> and resigned at the end of his second term of office, partly owing to his disgust that no influential Chinese gentleman would agree to be nominated for election to the seat on the Board vacated by the death of Mr Lim Eng Keng. In 1889 he was appointed a member of the Legislative [195] Council for three years.<sup>109</sup> In April 1902 he was once again appointed to the Council for a further term in place of Dr Lim Boon Keng, and continued to serve as Chinese Member of Council until May 1915, when he resigned owing to indifferent health. He joined the Committee of the Po Leung Kuk and was one of the Hokien representatives on the Chinese Advisory Board when that body was created, until 1906.<sup>110</sup> He was a member of the Committee of Management of the Tan Tock Seng Hospital and also a trustee of Raffles Institution until it was taken over by Government. He was in China in 1894 during the China-Japan War, and again visited China and Japan in 1908 with his wife and younger son. When in England in 1901 he strongly supported the memorial of the Straits Chinese British Association (formed in 1900) offering the services of Straits-born Chinese, as British subjects, in the defence of

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107 Song's account of Tan Jiak Kim draws heavily on the account by Wright and Cartwright; see Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 631–633.

108 See 'Meeting of the Municipal Commissioners' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 19 Jul 1889, at 11.

109 See 'Resignation of Mr Tan Jiak Kim' *Straits Times*, 3 Nov 1893, at 2.

110 See 'Government Gazette' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 4 Feb 1890, at 13.

the Colony.<sup>111</sup> In an interview with Lord Onslow, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr Jiak Kim had his son, Tan Soo Bin, with him, and to the question put by Lord Onslow: 'Will you allow your son to become a volunteer?' the reply came unhesitatingly: 'Certainly, my lord.' He had the satisfaction on his return to the Colony of seeing the first beginnings of the Chinese Company of the SVI, and, true to the pledge given, his son took his place in the ranks. On the occasion of the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York to Singapore in 1901, he was presented to their Royal Highnesses. He was, in conjunction with Mr Barnes, the prime mover in procuring the establishment of the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States Government Medical School,<sup>112</sup> and was a member of committee of that School (now called King Edward VII Medical School), to which seat, since his death, Mr Tan Soo Bin<sup>113</sup> has succeeded. Not only did he subscribe a large sum of money himself, but he also persuaded the leading and wealthy men of the Chinese community to give the project their generous support. He was made a JP, and served on several important [196] Government Commissions, the last being the Opium Commission. He went to England in 1911 with his second wife, as one of the representatives of the Colony at the coronation of His Majesty King George V, and was present in Westminster Abbey to witness the Coronation ceremony. He had the honour at a Levee to be presented to the King and Queen. His wife died in London during this visit and was buried in Brookwood Cemetery, Surrey. He was created a CMG in 1912,<sup>114</sup>

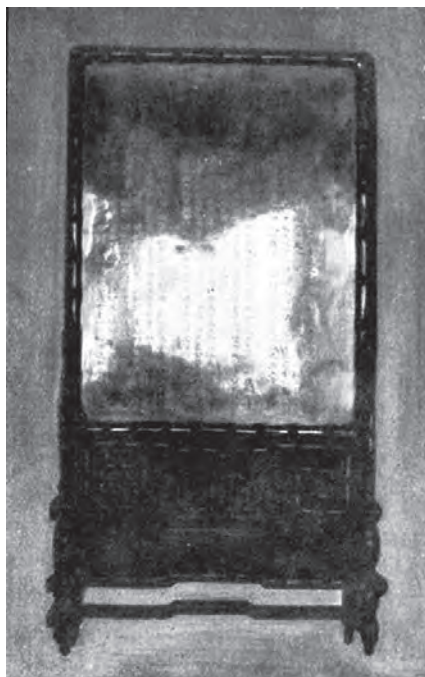
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111 See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 592.

112 See 'King Edward Memorial' *Singapore Free Press*, 2 Dec 1910, at 5.

113 Tan Soo Bin was one of the fellow volunteers alongside Song Ong Siang, Tan Chow Him and Tan Piah Eng that won the Warren Shield. Tan Piah Eng, one of the volunteers, served a four-year term dividing his time between his work in the Bukit Timah Rubber Estate and his duties at the Drill Hall as the Quartermaster. See 'The Long Service Medal' *Singapore Free Press*, 19 May 1922 at 7.

114 See 'New Year Honours' *Singapore Free Press*, 3 Jan 1912, at 7.



Silver urn and silver screen from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce to Mr Tan Jiak Kim on his being made CMG

the ceremony of investiture being held in the Council Chamber on the 3rd April 1912 by the Governor, Sir Arthur Young, in the presence of a large and representative gathering of the Chinese community. He contributed liberally to the war funds, two conspicuous donations being \$18,000 to the Prince of Wales' Relief Fund, and \$19,200, the cost of an aeroplane fighter bearing his name.

On his retirement from Council in June 1915, sincere tributes to him, the senior unofficial member, were paid by HE the Governor, by Mr Wilkinson,<sup>115</sup> the Colonial Secretary, and by the Hon Mr Darbishire<sup>116</sup> for the Unofficials. We quote the following passages from the remarks made by Mr Wilkinson:

The position and the authority of Mr Tan Jiak Kim made him for many years the spokesman and the representative of the largest section of the population of this Colony. Week after week, if not day after day, Mr Tan Jiak Kim had occasion to discuss either with the Governor, or with me on the Governor's behalf, some question of administration that affected, in a greater or less degree, the welfare of the large community that he represented. I can only say, personally, that I owe him a deep debt of gratitude for assistance given me on all matters connected with the Chinese, and I can say that I never met anyone who was a more loyal subject of the King.

Mr Jiak Kim never grudged either his time or his money or his efforts when it came to endeavouring to help the Government to avoid some mistake or to clear up some of those misunderstand-

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115 Richard James Wilkinson (1867–1941) was a colonial administrator and scholar. From 1911, he was appointed Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements and served in that capacity till 1916 when he became Governor of Sierra Leone. See JM Gullick, 'Richard James Wilkinson (1867–1941): A Man of Parts' (2001) 74(1) *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19–42.

116 Charles William Darbishire was one of the managing directors of Paterson Simons & Co. He lived in Singapore for some years and became involved in public and military service there as well as commercial life, serving as a member of the Municipal Commission (1908–1910) and an Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council (1910–1919). See K Mulliner & Lian The-Mulliner, *Historical Dictionary of Singapore* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1991) at 143–144.

ings [197] which are the most fruitful cause of trouble in a mixed community such as the population of this Colony.<sup>117</sup>

Mr Darbishire said:

The Hon the Colonial Secretary has expressed the obligation, under which the Government has laboured for so many years, to Mr Tan Jiak Kim for his sage advice and assistance in connection with Chinese affairs. We who represent the unofficial element on this Council are no less conscious of these services.

The Chinese community bulks very largely in the life of these Settlements, and we who are in daily touch with the Chinese cannot fail to realise how overwhelmingly the welfare of these Settlements depends upon their goodwill and upon a mutual understanding. This goodwill and understanding and confidence of British rule which we have here is unhesitatingly granted to us, and we recognise that it is so granted to us in no small degree because we have been fortunate in finding men ready to assist us amongst the enlightened members of the Chinese community.

These leaders are broadminded enough to grasp the Western point of view and to weld it easily and smoothly with the Eastern point of view.

... Here [in Singapore] East and West intermingle and work harmoniously for the welfare and prosperity of these Settlements. That this state of affairs exists, I think, is in a large measure due to such men as Mr Tan Jiak Kim.<sup>118</sup>

Mr Jiak Kim made good use of the experience gained from his travels, and his views on many subjects of public interest became broader and more liberal with each successive travel. To take one instance. When the Singapore Chinese Girls' School was founded in 1899, Mr Jiak Kim was nervous as to the wisdom of the promoters in providing education for Chinese girls, and declined to be a party to the scheme. Years before his death, however, he had become a contributor to the school funds and attended the annual prize function, gladly allowing

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117 *Proceedings of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council*, 11 Jun 1915, at B30.

118 *Ibid.*

his name to appear among the prize [198] donors. He was one of the founders of the Straits Steamship Company Ltd,<sup>119</sup> and was on the Board of Directors for more than twenty years. When he resigned his seat on the Legislative Council in May 1915 owing to ill-health, it was generally believed and hoped that, with health restored, he would again undertake public duties, but that was not to be. As soon as it became known that he had decided to retire altogether from public life, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce honoured him by giving a party in their large hall on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1916. Mr See Teong Wah, acting President, in eulogistic terms dealt with his great and varied work over a period of thirty years in the interests not only of the Chinese community of Malaya but of all the inhabitants of this Colony, and reminded the assembly of his numerous public benefactions which had served as a splendid stimulus and example to other members of the Chinese community.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1917 his death occurred at the age of 59,<sup>120</sup> and at the Legislative Council meeting on the same day HE the Governor (Sir Arthur Young) said:

Everyone knows that Mr Tan Jiak Kim was one of the most prominent members not only of the Chinese community, but of the whole of the Colony. We all know Mr Jiak Kim's kindly disposition, in fact I think one may say that Tan Jiak Kim had a disposition that could never make an enemy. He had a host of friends and not a single enemy. He was a man, too, who was most generous. Whenever there was a good cause, one of the first persons to go to was Tan Jiak Kim, and his purse was always open to any good cause which was brought before him. ... He was one of those landmarks in Singapore who have gone from us now.<sup>121</sup>

119 See 'Straits Steamship Co' *Straits Times*, 20 Mar 1902, at 5.

120 See 'Death of Mr Tan Jiak Kim CMG' *Straits Times*, 22 Oct 1917, at 10.

121 Song quotes the Governor's speech inaccurately. The relevant portion of the speech reads:

Also, gentlemen, before I sit down – as I came into the Council I received the news of the death of an old friend, Mr Tan Jiak Kim. As you know, he was a



The great concourse of people who attended his funeral on the 28<sup>th</sup> October, including the Governor and members of the Legislative Council, the Chinese Company, SVI, under their Chinese officers, repre-[199] sentatives of the principal communities, and the pupils of the Ghi-ok Free School in Amoy Street (founded by his grandfather, the late Mr Tan Kim Seng), testified to the esteem and respect felt for a worthy scion of a house which had for three generations played a prominent part in the making of Singapore.<sup>122</sup>

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member of this Council – I am not wrong, I think, in saying that it was for over sixteen years that he was a member of the Council. Everyone knows that he was one of the most prominent members, not only of the Chinese community but of the whole Colony.

We all know, too, Tan Jiak Kim's kindly disposition. In fact, I think that one could say that Tan Jiak Kim was of a disposition that could never make an enemy – he had a host of friends, but not a single enemy.

... He was a man, too, who was generous – most generous. Whenever there was a good cause, one of the first persons to go to was Tan Jiak Kim, and his pocket was always open to any good cause that was brought before him. ... He was one of those landmarks in Singapore that have gone from us now, and I will ask also that the sympathies of this Council be with his widow and children in their sorrow. See *Proceedings of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council*, 22 Oct 1917, at B114.

122 See 'The Late Mr Tan Jiak Kim' *Straits Times*, 29 Oct 1917, at 10.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SEVENTH DECADE (1879-89)

ON the 23rd May 1879, at a meeting of the Municipal Commissioners, the Secretary was directed to forward to Government a copy of a petition from Tan Tung Hup and others on behalf of the Khek tribe in Singapore, applying for permission to form a public burial ground, and requesting the Governor's sanction. Nine years afterwards, a Lease of Government land in the district of Upper Tanglin (Holland Road, off Bukit Timah Road), containing an area of 150 acres, was demised by HE the Governor, Sir Cecil C Smith,<sup>1</sup> unto Chong Yew Chee, Foo Sze Tat, Tan Tung Hup and Yong Kit Siong, Trustees of the Fung-yun-tai Society of Khek Chinese and Managers of the Yok-san-tin burial ground, 'upon trust for the said Society for the purposes of the said premises being used for the term of 999 years as the Yok-san-tin burial ground and for no other purpose'.<sup>2</sup>

'Fung-yun-tai' (丰永大) is a generic term, indicating the three principal districts of Hakka-land, viz. Fung-soon (丰顺), Yun-tin (永定) and Tai-pu (大埔), whose representatives had taken up their abode here. Quite recently an application was made by the trustees that some 33 acres of this Lease, low-lying and swampy and not suitable for use as places of interment, might be devoted to agricultural purposes, and

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1 Sir Cecil Clementi Smith (1840-1916) was born in London on 23 Dec 1840, the son of Reverend John Smith and Cecilia Clementi (whose father was the well-known Italian composer Muzio Clementi). He was educated at St Paul's School and then at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Smith completed a competitive examination in 1862 and was elected one of the first student interpreters in Hong Kong. Thereafter, he rose steadily up the ranks, serving as Colonial Treasurer, Hong Kong; Colonial Secretary, Straits Settlements (1878); Lieutenant-Governor, Ceylon, and finally, as Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1887 to 1893. He died in 1916. See 'Sir Clementi Smith Dead' *Singapore Free Press*, 9 Feb 1916, at 6.

2 See 'In a Chinese Shrine' *Singapore Free Press*, 29 Apr 1925, at 7.

early in 1919 the Government gave the trustees permission to let the same to vegetable planters for planting vegetables on payment of \$1 per acre per annum.

In the same month a meeting of shipowners interested [200] in the coasting trade was held at the office of Bun Hin & Co, to consider the working of Ordinance IX of 1873<sup>3</sup> relating to employment of engineers and compulsory survey of British-owned ships every six months, and its non-application to vessels under foreign flags, which worked unfairly to British subjects. Mr Tan Kim Tian was voted to the chair. With the exception of Capts Bowers and JD Ross and Syed Mas-sin, all the other shipowners present were Chinese, including Bun Hin & Co, Lim Kong Wan & Son, Leack Chin Seng & Co, Lee Keng Yong Bros, Low Sam, Lim Tiang Wah & Co and Wee Bin & Co. Certain resolutions were passed and Capt Bowers was deputed to approach the Government with a view to getting the Ordinance amended.<sup>4</sup>

The firm of Bun Hin & Co was very well known at this time and for many years after. The founder and sole proprietor was Khoo Tiong Poh,<sup>5</sup> who was also interested in the shipchandlery business of Ann Bee & Co. His own business was that of steamship owners, with branches at Hongkong, Penang, Amoy and Swatow. In 1879 Bun Hin & Co in Malacca Street were the owners of the steamers *Cheang Hock Kian*, *Carisbrooke*, *Pearl* and *Petrel*. In 1880 Quah Beng Hong, a relative of Mr Khoo Tiong Poh, and a young man of great ability and promise, came here from Penang as assistant with authority to sign *per pro*. His death as the result of an accident in 1885 is narrated on a later page. The *Daily Times* for 1880 reproduced lengthy accounts from the Hongkong papers of the arbitrary treatment of the SS *Cheang Hock Kian* by Mr HA Giles, the British Consul at Amoy, against whom proceedings were taken by the shipowners before the Supreme Court at Shanghai

3 Steam Vessels Ordinance, Ord IX of 1873 (Straits Settlements).

4 See 'Ship Owners and Engineers' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 3 Jun 1879, at 7.

5 For more on Khoo Tiong Poh, see Chapter 7 of this volume.

for the return of £5,000 claimed to have been wrongfully levied by way of fine and for £10,000 damages for detention of the ship. In 1888 Mr Lee Pek Hoon<sup>6</sup> was appointed to act as agent at Hongkong, Amoy and Swatow of Bun Hin & Co's line of steamers, and for ten years he was in residence in China holding that responsible position.

[202] Khoo Tiong Poh died on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1892 at the age of 62. He was born in China and came to the Straits when he was about 22 years old. For many years he was a prominent figure in shipping and commercial circles, and one of the leaders among the Hokien community. His remains were sent to Penang for burial.

The *Government Gazette* of the 19<sup>th</sup> September 1879 announced that three new wards attached to the Tan Tock Seng Hospital in Balesier Road having been completed at the entire charge of Mr Tan Beng Swee, JP,<sup>7</sup> at a cost of \$5,000, the Governor had appointed him to be a life member of the Committee of Management of that Institution.

In December the term of office of Mr Tan Seng Poh<sup>8</sup> as a Municipal Commissioner having expired, the ratepayers were called upon to elect his successor. Mr Seng Poh gallantly offered himself for re-election and was opposed by Mr Edwin Koek, solicitor. The result of the polling was 77 votes for Mr Koek and 18 for Mr Seng Poh. The *Daily Times* drew attention to the fact that there were 665 qualified ratepay-

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6 Lee Pek Hoon was born in Singapore and was educated in St Joseph's Institution in both English and Chinese. He also spoke several dialects and some Japanese. Lee first joined Messrs Harris, Goodwin and Co before taking up in 1888 an appointment to act as an agent for Hong Kong, Amoy and Swatow for Lloyds' Khw Tiong Po Bun Hin & Co line of steamships and for 10 years managed it from China before moving back to Singapore in 1898, becoming the Assistant Manager of the Straits Steamship Company. Lee Pek Hoon also owned a theatre named 'Lee Peck Soon Theatre' at 499 North Bridge Road, which performed Malay and Indian theatre performances. See, Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908) at 577.

7 On Tan Beng Swee, see Chapter 5 of this volume.

8 On Tan Seng Poh, see Chapter 6 of this volume.

ers, but, owing to indifference and lack of interest in public affairs, only 95 had exercised their privilege.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1879 Mr Tan Seng Poh died.<sup>9</sup>

'He gave the benefit of his ability and local knowledge to the public as a Municipal Commissioner,' says the *Daily Times*, 'and his connection alone with the Opium and Spirit Farms entitled him to the distinction of being a public man. He was much respected among his countrymen and Europeans, and in any charitable cause his name was ever on the list of subscribers.'

On the 26<sup>th</sup> January 1880 the funeral of Mr Tan Seng Poh took place, as also that of Chua Moh Choon, head of the Ghi-hok secret society, whose acquaintance we made as far back as 1854 in connection with the big Hoey riots of that year. More than once after that date [203] did his name appear again in unsavoury prominence, but he was always careful to keep within the four corners of the law. He was mentioned in the 1871 Directory as carrying on business under the style of Moh Choon & Co chop Hong Lee at Boat Quay, and he was one of the principal Teochew traders having dealings with Europeans. The fact that he was already a prominent figure in the Ghi-hok Hoey in 1854, and was the headman of that Society for many years until his death in 1880, would show that he must have been a man of ability and force of character.

The Hon HAK Whampoa<sup>10</sup> passed away at his residence in Serangoon Road on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1880. He had been ill for three months of a disease pronounced incurable, but his death was somewhat sudden and caused a shock, surprise and regret through the community. As the late consul for Russia, China and Japan, the various national flags were half-masted, to show respect to his memory.

9 Song states Tan Seng Poh's date of death as 13 Dec 1879 but this seems to be erroneous. According to the *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 20 Dec 1879, at 7, Tan died on the morning of 18 Dec 1879.

10 For more on Whampoa Hoo Ah Kay, see Chapter 4 of this volume.

We quote the following passages from his obituary notice which appeared in the *Daily Times*, of the 29<sup>th</sup> March 1880:

There is not a book of travels touching on Singapore within the last thirty years but mentions the name of Mr Whampoa. He was pre-eminently distinguished for his large-hearted benevolence and liberal-minded character, and for his tact and judgment. ... Speaking English with the accent and idiom of a well-bred and well-read English gentleman, he was well acquainted with the literature and science of the West, and had a liking for its customs and manners, but still remained true to his own nationality and sometimes jealous in asserting it. ...

Ever a friend of order, his influence, advice and services were always at the command and were often availed of by the successive Governors who have ruled in the Straits during his career. His tact and judgment were shown by the fact that while regarded with respect and esteem by all classes of the community – natives and Europeans alike – he enjoyed the confidence and personal friendship of each successive Governor and all the officials.<sup>11</sup>

The earliest recorded instance of a Chinese applying for a patent was that of Mr Lim Tiang Swee (of Lim Kong Wan & Son), who in October 1880 was authorised to file a specification for 'cleaning cargo rice and

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11 'The Late hon'ble Hoh Ah Kay Whampoa, CMG and MLC' *Daily Times*, 29 March 1880, reprinted in *Straits Times*, 3 Apr 1880 at 1. Song quotes this passage inaccurately. The relevant quote should read:

There is not a book of travels touching on Singapore within the last thirty years but mentions his name. ... It is sufficient to say that he was pre-eminently distinguished for his large-hearted benevolence and liberal-minded character and for his tact and judgment. Speaking English with the accent and idiom of a well-bred and well-read English gentleman, he was well-acquainted with the literature and science of the West, and had a liking for its customs and manners, but he remained true to his own nationality and was sometimes jealous in asserting it. ... Ever the friend of order, his influence, advice, and services were always at the command of, and were often availed of by the successive Governors who have ruled in the Straits during his career. And his tact and judgment were shown by the fact that, while regarded with respect and esteem by all classes of the community, he also enjoyed the confidence and personal friendship of each successive Governor and all the officials.

converting same into white rice to be worked by steam power' under the provisions of the Inventions Ordinance, 1871.<sup>12</sup>

An advertisement appeared during this month announcing that Cheang Hong Lim<sup>13</sup> had appointed his son-in-law Lim Kwee Eng to be his attorney to manage chop Wan Seng and his affairs generally in Singapore, as also his interest in the Hongkong Opium Farm (1879-82).

Lim Kwee Eng (whose literary name is Lim Tong Kok) was born in Amoy, China, in 1858. He was the son of Lim Boon Heng, who gave him a sound Chinese education and trained him for a business career. At the age of 18, he came to Singapore and entered the service of Mr Cheang Hong Lim as book-keeper in his firm of chop Wan Seng. Evidently he soon found favour in the eyes of his employer, who gave his eldest daughter<sup>14</sup> in marriage to him in 1879. For some years Mr Kwee Eng was interested as a partner in the Opium and Spirit Farm. Inheriting a large fortune, he started in business as a pineapple preserver under the style of Choo Lam & Co, which proved to be a profitable concern. At that time there were only eight pineapple factories, both European and Chinese, in the place, but later the number of competitors grew and grew until there were no less than forty of these factories in full swing: and Mr Kwee Eng decided to withdraw from this business. He was one of the promoters of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, established in 1906, and was its Secretary from 1909 to 1918,<sup>15</sup> when he was re-elected to the post but declined the honour. In 1908 he went with Dr Lim Boon Keng to Shanghai to repre- [205] sent

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12 Together with his brother Lim Tiang Hee, he expanded the business of Lim Kong Wan & Son from shipping into rice, establishing a rice mill in Havelock Road. Lim died tragically in an accident along Havelock while travelling to inspect his rice mill on 21 Jan 1881 when he tried jumping out of his carriage when his horse suddenly bolted. He was survived by two sons, Tay Lim and Tay Bee. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 119; and 'Summary of the Week' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 25 Jan 1881, at 1.

13 On Cheang Hong Lim, see Chapter 7 of this volume.

14 This was Cheang Cheow Lian Neo.

15 See *Straits Times*, 2 Feb 1909, at 6.



Mrs Lim Boon Heng (mother of Lim Kwee Eng)



Lim Kwee Eng



the Singapore Chinese Chamber at the convention of Chinese Chambers of Commerce throughout the world, which discussed and made representations to the Chinese Government on the advantages of a uniform method to be adopted and applied throughout the Chinese Empire in trade and commerce. Mr Kwee Eng, known to his friends as Teok Chye, was appointed the first superintendent of the Ton Lam (Hokien) Chinese School of which Mr Goh Siew Tin was one of the chief promoters. This school was started twelve years ago at 'Siam House' in North Bridge Road, the former residence of the late Mr Tan Kim Ching, and recently acquired by Mr M Meyer for the erection of up-to-date shop premises. The Toh Lam School has now its own buildings in Armenian Street – a substantial three-storied house – the site being the gift of Mr Oei Tiong Ham<sup>16</sup> and the buildings being put up by public subscriptions from Hokien Chinese.

In November 1880 Tan Keng Cheow<sup>17</sup> invited the public to patronise the Singapore Steam Laundry, which he had established in Stevens Road and placed in charge of a first-class manager from one of the largest laundries in London.<sup>18</sup> The town office was located in Kling Street<sup>19</sup> to receive and dispatch parcels. A week or two after the business was in full swing, the dhobies had made up their minds that they did not want a rival in a steamwashing machine, and severely handled five of the employees, besides threatening the manager.<sup>20</sup> In

16 On Oei Tiong Ham, see Chapter 10 of this volume.

17 Keng Cheow Street is named after a Hokkien called Tan Keng Cheow, who owned a steam laundry in the Steven Roads area in 1880. Known as *kam kong ma lah kam sam pa yang teng au* in Hokkien, it means 'behind the praying pavilion in Kampong Malacca'. See Savage, Victor and Yeoh, Brenda, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013), at 208.

18 See 'Straits Settlements Laundry' *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 18 Feb 1880, at 5.

19 The town office was located at 97 Kling Street (now Chulia Street), at the junction with Market Street. See *Straits Times*, 9 Jan 1883, at 2.

20 The laundry suffered other problems as well, including the irregularity in delivery of clothes, 'ten or twelve days being not an unusual detention'. See *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 30 Jun 1881, at 7. By January 1883, Tan Keng Cheow

1884 the *Straits Times* devoted a leader to this enterprise, commenting on the impending failure of its spirited proprietor as having been due to two causes: (1) the employment as workmen of Klings who were open to intimidation or bribery; (2) the want of knowledge in the use of machinery, or want of care in applying it, since the rate of speed and pressure in washers and wringers which suited a tablecloth almost ruined a piece of muslin. The suggestion to form a limited company in which all European residents should take a share, or that Keng Cheow & Co should sell a part of their [206] interest in the laundry business to Europeans, was not taken up, and eventually the concern had to shut down, involving great loss to the promoter.<sup>21</sup> Mr Keng Cheow carried on business as a shipchandler in Kling Street under the firm-name of Keng Cheow & Co, as sole proprietor. The premises were destroyed by fire on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1889.<sup>22</sup> The shipchandlery business was started by his father, Tan Hock Eng, in 1844 as Hock Eng & Co, and thirty years later when his father died Tan Keng Cheow continued the concern as Keng Cheow & Co. About four years before the fire Keng Cheow had withdrawn from the active management of the firm which was placed in the charge of his son, Tan Hood Keat. The evidence at the inquiry showed that the firm was not in difficulties. In 1890 the Municipality prosecuted Mr Keng Cheow for continuing to run a sago factory in River Valley Road without a licence.<sup>23</sup> This establishment was the largest of its kind at that time in the neighbourhood.

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was looking to divest himself of the laundry 'should he receive a favourable offer for the same'. See *Straits Times*, 9 Jan 1883, at 2. The Singapore Steam Laundry Company eventually wound up in 1885 and its assets were auctioned off in May 1885. See 'For Sale' *Straits Times*, 2 Jun 1885, at 2.

21 See 'The Steam Laundry' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 22 Nov 1884, at 6.

22 See 'The Fire in Market Street' *Straits Times* 3 Oct 1889, at 3.

23 It appears that Tan Keng Cheow was only the owner of the premises and that the sago factory was being operated by the occupier, Tan Kee Pek. See 'The Municipal Health Officer's Report for January' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 25 Feb 1890, at 5.

The first instance occurred in December 1880 of the hanging of a Chinese female, together with her paramour. They were both convicted of the murder of her husband at Balestier Road, on the evidence of the eldest son.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> January 1881 the Chinese merchants here presented an address to the Hon Mr Robert Campbell, managing partner of Martin, Dyce & Co, touching upon his great popularity and stating that by his uniform courtesy and conscientious uprightness of character he had gained the implicit confidence of the entire Chinese mercantile community. Among the signatories were Tan Beng Gum (Kim Seng & Co), Lim Tiang Swee (Lim Kong Wan & Son), Koh San Tee (Koh Eng Hoon & Son), Wee Boon Teck (Wee Bin & Co), Lee Keng Kiat (Keng Yong Bros), Wee Kim Yam (We Ah Hood & Co), Leack Chin Seng, Lee Cheng Yan, Eng Cheng & Co, and the Gambier and Pepper Society.

Just ten days after, the death of Mr Lim Tiang Swee, then head of the firm of Lim Kong Wan & Son, occurred [207] as the result of an accident. It appears that Mr Tiang Swee, his child (Lim Tay Bee) and one of his clerks had gone to the rice mill in Havelock Road belonging to the firm, and all three had just got into the phaeton to return, when before the syce could mount the coach box the horse bolted off at a furious gallop. The clerk sprang off the carriage unhurt, and Mr Tiang Swee (林长水) first threw out the child, who sustained some bruises, and then attempted to jump out, but in so doing he was thrown with great violence on his back, and killed.

The firm of Lim Kong Wan & Son had become well known long before 1871. The founder of the firm was Lim Kong Wan, who was born in Malacca, and after a brief sojourn in Penang settled down in Singapore, where he started in business in a small way as a produce merchant in Chinchew Street, under the chop Tiang Moh. The business prospered and occupied larger premises in Malacca Street, and Mr Lim Kong Wan became the owner of several schooners which collected the produce from the various outports with which he traded. He afterwards took his eldest son, Lim Tiang Swee, as his partner, and the firm became known as Lim Kong Wan & Son. Upon the death of

Lim Kong Wan in 1869, Lim Tiang Swee was sole proprietor of the firm, his younger brother Lim Tiang Hee being an assistant, and Tan Keong Saik the shipping clerk. After Tiang Swee's death as already narrated, Lim Tiang Hee and Lim Tay Lim (son of Lim Tiang Swee) continued the business, being the owners of the steamers *Flintshire* and *Goh Kuan Sia*, as well as agents for four or five other steamers. Mr Lim Kong Wan's second daughter and her own granddaughter (now Mrs Lim Peng Chin) and Lim Tay Bee (younger son of Lim Tiang Swee) made a voyage to England in 1889 in the *Goh Kuan Sia*, and the writer remembers being invited to Mr Jasper Young's house 'Mayfield' in Clapham, London, to meet them. The firm met with severe reverses of fortune about this time, in consequence of rash speculation in tin, black pepper and shares by Lim Tiang Hee, the proofs of [208] debts admitted totalling a quarter of a million dollars, and in 1889 closed down. Lim Tiang Hee launched out in business as a merchant and commission agent and died in 1893. The estate of Lim Kong Wan was finally wound up in 1916, when the houses Nos 19 and 20 Malacca Street, which had been the place of business of Lim Kong Wan & Son for about thirty years, were sold; as also the plantation in Payah Lebar containing some fifty acres, where may be seen the graves of Mr Lim Kong Wan and some of his descendants. This plantation was bought and is now owned by Mr Lim Tay Yam (the eldest son of Mr Lim Tiang Hee).

In connection with the visit of Their Royal Highnesses Prince Albert Victor of Wales and Prince George (now His Majesty the King) in January 1882, the Chinese were as keen as any other community in beautifying the town. The principal Chinese streets and business houses were decorated and brilliantly illuminated with lanterns of quaint devices and many forms. The Royal Princes landed at Johnston's Pier in the afternoon of the 11th January 1882, and were the recipients of an address presented by a deputation representing the various communities. The Chinese members of the deputation were Lim Tiang Wah, Lim Teck Ghee, Seah Cheo Seah, Tan Yeok Nee and Wong Ah Siah. Prince Albert Victor expressed himself as extremely

pleased with the loyalty manifested by the Chinese and all classes and the good behaviour of the numerous crowds.

In February, Li Cheung, a Singapore-born Chinese, who had been in the service of the Hongkong Government in the Central Station charge room and in the magistracy, left for Hawaii to take up his appointment there as Chinese interpreter to King Kalakaua.<sup>24</sup> Before leaving for his new sphere of service, he was entertained to a dinner by his friends in the Colony.

The Straits Chinese have never taken much interest in adding to the collection of exhibits in the Raffles Museum, but it is on record that in April 1882 Mr Seah Cheo Seah presented a crowned pigeon and a golden [209] pheasant, and Mr Wan Kim Toon<sup>25</sup> presented two yellow wattled mynahs to the Museum.

A small steamer named *Heng Seng Tye* built by Ho Ah Chong to the order of Eng Cheng & Co and intended for trade between this port and Bengkalis, Siak and Tanah Puteh (Sumatra) made her trial trip on the 26th April round the Island. About forty guests were invited by the owner, Mr Eng Cheng, among them being the Chinese Consul Mr Tso Ping Lung, and Tan Keng Wah (son of Mr Tan Seng Poh). The trip was a great success and speeches were made wishing prosperity to the firm.

24 Li is listed in the *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual for 1890* as 'Chinese Interpreter' (at 118). He was, however, dropped from this post in 1904, see 'Interpreters lose their jobs' *The Hawaiian Star*, 1 Jul 1904.

25 Wan Kim Toon was the nephew of Wan Eng Kiat and one of the executors of his will (see *Straits Times*, 7 Feb 1921, at 16). He appeared to have been involved in a number of businesses, including moneylending and rubber planting (see *Straits Times*, 26 Jul 1922, at 7). In 1924, he alleged that two well-known businessmen, Wan Boon Seng and Wee Kim Chuan abetted in a murder attempt on his life but the case was dismissed (see 'Well-known Towkays Charged' *Straits Times*, 25 Jul 1924, at 8). In January 1927, Wan Kim Toon was murdered when his car was stopped at Thomson Road by a bullock cart and two assassins shot him and his five grandchildren at close range (see 'Thomson Road Shooting' *Straits Times*, 28 Jan 1927, at 9).

On the 19<sup>th</sup> May 1882 the ceremony of unveiling and formal opening of the Memorial Fountain to the late Mr Tan Kim Seng took place. The fountain – a handsome, showy iron structure – was made by Andrew Handyside & Co Ltd, of Derby and London, and was erected on its present site in the square facing the Exchange Building. The unveiling was performed by Thomas Scott, Esq, President of the Municipal Commissioners, in the presence of the Chief Justice, the Colonial Secretary and Mr Tan Beng Swee, the son of the late Mr Tan Kim Seng, ‘without whose generous gift, though none of the money was used for the purpose, probably our water supply would have been a thing of the future, instead of an accomplished fact’.

The opening meeting of a debating society for Chinese under the name of the Celestial Reasoning Association was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> May, at the house of the Chinese Consul, who delivered an able address in proposing the toast of ‘Prosperity to the Association’, inculcating the utility of that higher education which was only to be gained by the working of such institutions.<sup>26</sup> The objects of this society, the first of its kind among educated Chinese, were to improve the members in English and generally to encourage learning and morality.

This was the earliest instance of a literary society formed among the Chinese, and for the next three years [210] it led a vigorous existence. At that time there was the Singapore Debating Society for the Europeans, which met fortnightly and discussed all kinds of political and social questions. The Celestial Reasoning Association also held fortnightly meetings which were presided over by Mr Tso Ping Lung, the Chinese Consul, a man of enlightenment and liberal education. The first anniversary of this Society was celebrated on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 1883, and the annual report read by the Hon Secretary, Low Cheng Geok (a son of Mr Low Thuan Locke), mentioned that the members had begun to realise the benefits of debating questions of interest among themselves, that their minds had been much expanded and

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26 See ‘The Celestial Reasoning Association’ *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 31 May 1883, at 8.

improved, and their intelligence enlightened. In 1884 the anniversary meeting took the form of a dinner at 'Kew Villa' the residence of Mr Khoo Boon Lim. The Chinese Consul continued to be President, with Mr Tchan Chun Fook as Vice-President, and Mr Ho Yiang Moh, for many years shroff of the Chartered Bank, a councillor.

In July Mr Tan Quee Lan presented a monkey to the Raffles Museum, while Mr Tan Kim Tian presented a cassowary egg, a Zulu full dress, a piece of Larut tin ore and a bamboo case containing poisoned arrows to the same institution.

On the 31st July a handsomely modelled steamer was launched from the shipbuilding yard of Ho Ah Chong at Tanjong Ru to the order of Messrs Song Soon Guan & Co. This firm, which dealt extensively in raw produce, had been established some years before by Song Tiang Kay and was managed by Song Soon Guan. Both were first cousins of Mr Song Hoot Kiam<sup>27</sup> and were born in Malacca. They were tall, well-built and hefty specimens of Malacca-born Chinese. Mr Song Tiang Kay was storekeeper in the old firm of Gilfillan, Wood & Co, and continued in service when the firm was remodelled as Adamson, Gilfillan & Co until his death in 1913 at the age of 78. His long and faithful service has been recognised by his employers granting a monthly allowance [211] to his only surviving daughter, a widow. Mr Tiang Kay was at one time a wealthy man, and the fine mansion in Chinese style in North Bridge Road which was built by him in the 'Eighties was occupied by him for many years until the failure of the firm of Song Soon Guan & Co, followed by other reverses of fortune, reduced him almost to penury. His residence was used for several years as a pineapple factory by the late Mr Scaife, who, during his lifetime, did a flourishing business in preserved pineapples.<sup>28</sup> One of Mr Tiang Kay's sons-in-law is Mr Kho Keng Chuan, a very capable business man, who, starting as

27 On Song Hoot Kiam, see Chapter 5 of this volume.

28 George Scaife operated a pineapple factory producing 'Sultan' brand preserved pineapples at 66 North Bridge Road. Upon his death, the business was sold to T Tsutada. See 'Sale of a Pineapple Business' *Singapore Free Press*, 13 Dec 1906, at 8.



Song Tiang Kay



salesman in the early 'Nineties to Mr Arthur Barker, is now his partner in the firm of Barker & Keng Chuan.<sup>29</sup>

In this year (1882) Mr Cheang Hong Lim commenced those works of public utility which stamped him as one of the most public-spirited Chinese citizens of his time. He started to fill up the mangrove swamp that skirted Havelock and Kim Seng Roads and to erect a row of brick houses on the corner of River Valley Road and Kim Seng Road, opposite Mt Carey. After filling up this swamp with great difficulty, he began to erect on it a market so as to supply the residents in that vicinity with a convenient place for obtaining their provisions, which before that time had been only procurable from town, save such as could be purchased from a number of petty stalls along the roadside. This market bears an inscription above the main entrance, 'Cheang Hong Lim Market, 1882'. Beside the main market is the small Fish Market on the edge of a creek which was named Hong Lim Creek. To carry out the project, Mr Hong Lim had to make the creek passable for boats by the deepening of its bed. He next arranged for a supply of fish by getting some fifteen fishing prahus of his own, besides encouraging a number of Malay fishermen to squat upon his still unreclaimed swamp land, on the stipulation that they were to bring their fish to his market. Mr Hong Lim next built, all around the market and on both sides of the road leading thereto, [212] long rows of substantial and elegant-looking tenements until the place resembled a miniature city.

The *Daily Times* states that in August 1882 Mr Tan Beng Swee was offered the vacancy in the Legislative Council caused by the departure of the Hon Mr FC Bishop, but declined it on account of his indifferent knowledge of the English language. 'It is satisfactory to observe that Government has recognised the personal worth, merit and

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29 Kho died after a long and protracted illness in April 1930. He was born in Malacca and educated at Raffles Institution in Singapore before joining the firm of Adamson Gilfillan & Co Ltd. He retired in April 1929 after serving as a partner of Barker and Kengchuan. See 'Mr Kho Keng Chuan' *Straits Times*, 17 Apr 1930, at 14.

generosity of one of our leading Chinese citizens by offering to make him a member of the Legislative Council.'

On the 5<sup>th</sup> January 1883 a deputation of the Chinese, Arab and Parsee merchants waited upon the Hon Cecil Clementi Smith, Colonial Secretary, and presented him with a complimentary address on the occasion of his going home on leave of absence. The Chinese members of the deputation were Chew Sin Yeong, Cheang Hong Lim, Seah Liang Seah, Seah Cheo Seah, Lee Keng Yong and Tan Keong Saik. The address, which was signed by about ninety of the leading Chinese, Arab and Parsee merchants in the Colony, was read by Mr Tan Keong Saik. It expressed the great esteem and respect which the various communities resident and trading in these Settlements entertained towards the Colonial Secretary, not only in his public and official character, but also as a private citizen.

Some four months after, on the eve of the departure for Europe of Mr AW Pickering, Protector of Chinese, an address signed by the Hon Mr Seah Liang Seah among others was presented to him, eulogising him on the able and energetic manner in which he had performed the duties of his office, and commenting on his courteous demeanour towards everyone who had had to deal with him.

Mr Seah Liang Seah was born in 1850 and studied Chinese with a private tutor under his father Mr Eu Chin's immediate supervision, and for a short time he learnt English at St Joseph's Institution. He married at the age of 17, and after his marriage he became an [213] assistant in the firm of Eu-chin & Co, and for many years acted as his father's secretary. He took a keen interest in public affairs, and on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 1883, when the Hon Mr A Currie went on leave, Mr Liang Seah was appointed by the Governor, Sir Frederick Weld, as a temporary member of the Legislative Council.<sup>30</sup> On this occasion a representative deputation of Chinese merchants called upon him to

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30 See Walter Makepeace, 'The Legislative Council' in Walter Makepeace, Gilbert Edward Brooke and Roland St John Braddell (eds), *One Hundred Years of Singapore, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1921) 149–159, at 152.



Seah Liang Seah

present him with an illuminated address in English and Chinese, congratulating him on his appointment and expressing the satisfaction of the Chinese community in his nomination. At the time of Mr Liang Seah's appointment, there had been no Chinese member of Council since the death of Mr Whampoia in 1880. In November 1883 his appointment as a permanent member of Council received the sanction of Her Majesty.<sup>31</sup> In the year 1890 he resigned his seat owing to great increase of private business and to ill-health. For his services on the Council he received in 1891 the thanks of the Secretary of State communicated to him by the Governor, Sir Cecil Smith. In 1894, on the resignation of Mr Tan Jiak Kim, he was again appointed to sit in the Legislative Council, but resigned in 1895, together with the other Singapore unofficial members of Council, by way of protest against the unsympathetic attitude of the Home Government over the Military contribution.

Reference is made to him by Mrs Florence Candy in her book *To Siam and Malaya in the Duke of Sutherland's yacht, Sans Peur* (1889). We make the quotation, which will afford amusing reading:

When the afternoon cooled a little, we took two carriages and drove to the reservoir...and then to the house of a rich Chinaman, Sia Liang Sia, who had invited us to tea. He spoke English perfectly, but he was thoroughly a Chinese, although, curiously enough, he had never yet been in China. He knew Europe well. He smiled as we sat by the table, with the smile that was childlike and bland, to see us enjoy our tea - a very pale coloured liquid - it was 'a dream'. There were dishes [214] of curious confectionery, and all the fruits of the country arranged with flowers, ferns, and above all roses. Singapore is too hot for roses to bloom well, but, as Sia Liang Sia said, a Chinaman cannot exist without roses, so he sends to the Flowery Land for fresh rose-bushes every year. Chinamen cannot exist without fish-ponds either, and tiny ornamental bridges and general willow-pattern landscape gardening: so he has all of these, and open-worked traceried screens painted in white and

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31 See 'Summary of the Week' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 3 Nov 1883, at 1.

pale porcelain colours all over his house as partitions to the rooms, with the few solid wall spaces hung with the Japanese pictures called Kakemonos, making the whole house one veiled aerial perspective set with flowers all about the open courts and pathways. Here he sits, in azure silk raiment, and amuses himself and his friends with fishing for fat carp from his windows, and feeding them with dozens of slices of bread.<sup>32</sup>

The *Birmingham Daily Gazette* of the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1883 mentioned a visit to Birmingham of Messrs Tay Geok Teat and Lee Cheng Yan of this port.<sup>33</sup> A few days later these two gentlemen were in Glasgow, and the *Glasgow Herald* of the 30<sup>th</sup> July spoke of this visit as notable because these were the first British-born Chinese from the Straits who had visited the British Isles for commercial reasons. While in Glasgow, Messrs Geok Teat and Cheng Yan inspected several of the public works and other places of interest, including the Trossachs: and expressed themselves in high terms of all that they had seen. They returned to Singapore on the 21<sup>st</sup> September, and the *Straits Times* says:

The accounts they are enabled to give of what they have seen of the large manufactories and the thriving cities they have visited will no doubt have the effect of inducing many of their friends to follow their example.<sup>34</sup>

It may here be recorded that several members of Mr Lee Cheng Yan's family have since visited England, viz. Mr and Mrs Lee Choon Guan in 1914; and Lee Pang Seng (grandson), who left in 1911 and returned in 1915 after being educated at Cambridge; while Lee [215] Keng Tye (a son) and Lee Pang Chuan and Lee Pang Soo (grandsons) were educated at Haileybury and Cambridge. Keng Tye and Pang Chuan joined the College OTC at the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, and early in

32 Florence Candy, *To Siam and Malaya in The Duke of Sutherland's Yacht 'Sans Peur'* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1889) at 84–85.

33 See 'Two Singapore Chinese Citizens in Birmingham' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 23 Aug 1883, at 13.

34 See *Straits Times*, 22 Sep 1883, at 2.

1918 Pang Chuan applied to the War Office to join the Army, but his offer was not accepted.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> November a very largely attended meeting was held at the Exchange Rooms of landholders and mortgagees to protest against the Crown Lands Encroachment Ordinance X of 1883, the measure being intended to create Crown land by appropriating to Government all unoccupied or waste lands owned by private individuals, but neglected for three years.<sup>35</sup> The Chinese community was well represented, among them being Lim Eng Keng, Chia Guan Eng, Ong Kew Ho, Tan Beng Swee, Tan Keong Saik, Tan Soon Toh, Tan Quee Lan, Wee Boon Teck and Khoo Cheng Tiong.

The sufferers by the disaster from the Krakatoa eruption in the Straits of Sunda during this year were not forgotten, and the Hon Seah Liang Seah and several other influential Chinese merchants served on the Relief Committee which collected substantial subscriptions from the generous public.<sup>36</sup>

In the year 1884 an interesting suit was instituted by Tan Hoon Chiang (executor of Tan Chin Seng deceased) and others against the Hon Mr DFA Hervey (Resident Councillor of Malacca), who had taken possession of a piece of freehold land situated at Pringget in Malacca for the purpose of building thereon a Government House, and who had placed a fence round the land. The grant had been made in 1867 to Tan Chin Seng (of Leack, Chin Seng & Co) and others for ever on condition that one-quarter should be cleared and cultivated within ten years. There were also a number of graves on the land which the defendant had threatened to remove. The case was tried on a preliminary point in Singapore when the Attorney-General for the defendant stated that the defendant would withdraw from the land and pay all costs of the action.<sup>37</sup>

35 See 'The Crown Land Encroachment Ordinance' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 17 Nov 1883, at 7.

36 See 'Legislative Council' *Straits Times*, 18 Sep 1883, at 2.

37 See 'An Important Land Case' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 2 Oct 1884, at 6.

[216] The *Straits Times* of the 14<sup>th</sup> January 1885 speaks of the Straits Chinese having started a club called the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, for the purpose of playing lawn tennis, cricket and practising English athletic sports. The Government cordially encouraged the movement and supported the Club's application to the Municipal Commissioners for the use of Hong Lim Green, which the Commissioners readily granted.<sup>38</sup> The Straits Chinese Recreation Club may be considered the first club adopting English outdoor sports ever established by the Chinese. The founders were Koh Tiong Yan, Koh Seck Tian, Chia Keng Chin, Tan Chew Kim and Ong Kim Cheow. The Club was exempted from registration on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1890. In its early days cricket was indulged in regularly, and football and hockey occasionally: but the members confine themselves now to tennis and football for outdoor sports, and chess and billiards for indoor games. The first cricket matches were played in March 1885 with the Sepoy Lines Cricket Club. For a number of years the Chinese New Year Sports were held on the Club ground. The first pavilion, which was octagonal in shape, used to stand right at the centre of the playing-field, but this was pulled down in 1914 and the new pavilion, a handsome and commodious one-storied structure with up-to-date lighting and conveniences, was erected at a cost of \$12,000 with its entrance facing New Bridge Road. The Club has a membership of 195, and the President for 1919 is Mr SJ Chan.<sup>39</sup> Very few China-born Chinese have taken up tennis there, the most notable instance being Taotai Lew Yuk Lin<sup>40</sup> when he was Chinese Consul-General here. He was an enthusiast at the game and played it regularly for years, until he left to take up the

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38 See *Straits Times*, 14 Jan 1885, at 2.

39 For more on Chan Sze Jin (SJ Chan), see Chapter 10 of this volume.

40 Lew Yuk Lin, acted as Consul-General for China in Singapore in February 1898 to August 1899 and was regarded by his countrymen as an extremely able official (see 'Mr Lew Yuk Lin, *Straits Times*, 22 Aug 1899, at 2). By 1901 he had left Singapore and served in numerous capacities on behalf of the Chinese government, including Minister to London (see 'Mr Lew Yuk Lin' *Straits Times*, 22 Oct 1913).



Taotai Lew Yuk Lin



Chinese Temple on Telok Ayer Street (Thian Hock Keng Temple)





Straits Chinese Recreation Club



Straits Chinese Recreation Club (Present Day)

appointment of Secretary to the Chinese Legation in London. The first tennis champion was Mr Koh Tiong Yan, a fine left-handed cricketer and tennis-player. The late Mr Chia Hood Teck was the Club's tennis champion for several years until he had to yield the coveted honour to his brother-in-law, the late Mr Ong [217] Tek Lim, who retained the championship for several years until his death in 1912. The present champion is Mr Chia Keng Tye (nephew of Mr Chia Hood Teck), who wrested the title in 1918 from Mr Tan Chong Khee, the holder of the Championship Shield from 1914 to 1917.

In January 1885 judgment was given by Mr Justice Ford in an important bankruptcy case, the hearing of which lasted a whole week.<sup>41</sup> Briefly the facts are as follows:

the bankrupts Seow Cheng Lam, Seow Cheng Watt, Ang Kee Guan and his mother Goh Eng Neo were carrying on business under the chop Heng Moh, and in the early part of December 1884 suspended payment, their liabilities amounting to \$200,000. For some time previous to this, they appeared to have found difficulty in obtaining credit and applied for assistance to Ang Kim Tee and Seow Tiang Swee, trading under the style of Ang Kim Cheak & Co in English, and under the Chinese chop Ang Chin Seng, the chop being only used in their dealings with Chinese firms. Ang Kim Tee was the uncle of Ang Kee Guan, and Seow Tiang Swee the father of Cheng Lam and Cheng Watt of the bankrupt firm, and they had become sureties to the extent of many thousand dollars to the young firm, partly secured by mortgage to them over certain property of the bankrupts. It was therefore sought by the creditors to make Ang Kim Tee and Seow Tiang Swee, individually, and their firm, collectively, partners in the bankrupt firm of Heng Moh.<sup>42</sup>

41 See 'Important Bankruptcy Case' *Straits Times*, 16 Jan 1885, at 2.

42 Ibid. However, the last sentence in this passage makes no sense and was probably mistakenly truncated by Song. The last sentence in the newspaper report reads: 'It was therefore sought by the creditors to make Ang Kim Tee and Seow Tiang Swee, individually, and their firm, collectively, partners in the bankrupt firm of Heng Moh, and for this purpose, one Tan Tock came forward and issued a Debtor Summons upon Ang Kim Tee, another against Seow Tiang Swee, and

Counsel for the petitioning creditor Tan Tock relied on three points: (1) conduct, in the fact that Ang Kim Tee kept the chop or seal of Heng Moh in his own office, (2) alleged conversations, and (3) documentary evidence, viz. two delivery orders for rice bought by Heng Moh from Bun Hin, stamped with Ang Kim Tee's chop. Much stress also was placed upon the signature of Ang Kim Cheak & Co appearing on a promissory note for \$4,000, drawn by Heng Moh on the 24<sup>th</sup> August 1884 in favour of Tan Tock.

[218] The defence of Ang Kim Tee was a denial of the alleged conversations, and he accounted for the possession of Heng Moh's chop by saying that it had been brought to him by Ang Kee Guan as a precaution, on account of the indiscretion of one of his partners, who had, without his knowledge, affixed the chop to a promissory note of another firm for \$2,500 which Heng Moh had been obliged to pay, and therefore, to guard against further liabilities of a similar nature, the partners had decided to leave the chop with their uncle and father. It was urged that it was not at all strange for Chinese to do this, they always reverencing and trusting their parents and the elders of their family. The signing of the delivery orders for rice was explained by Ang Kim Tee, who said that the bankrupts had told him that Bun Hin had refused to deliver the rice unless they could get Ang Kim Tee's signature, and that, on these representations, he had affixed the chop Ang Chin Seng to the delivery orders merely as a guarantee, in order to help Heng Moh in what appeared to him to be a desirable transaction. Judgment was given against the petitioning creditor Tan Tock with costs.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> March the death of Quah Beng Hong took place.<sup>43</sup> A month previously he had been thrown from his horse and severely injured about the head, which confined him to his house for about a fortnight. At the end of that time he felt well enough to return to business,

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a third one against Ang Tiow Guan, to show cause why they should not be declared bankrupts.'

43 See *Straits Times*, 4 Mar 1885, at 10.

but bad symptoms set in and he died. Coming from Penang in 1880 to join the firm of Bun Hin & Co, whose steamers were then so well known at all the ports between Burmah and China, Mr Beng Hong rose to the responsible position of managing partner. He was educated in Penang and was a good English scholar. He was ever courteous and respectful in his intercourse with business people, and his pleasant manners made him a great favourite. He was a director of the Straits Insurance Co Ltd, and was connected with many local enterprises. His friends had looked forward to seeing him take an active part in public affairs, but, alas! [219] *pallida Mors* intervened to dash all their fond hopes to the ground.

Two months later occurred the sudden death of Lee Gek Lee, a highly respected trader, due to the bursting of a blood-vessel. The deceased was a keen sporting man, being part owner of 'Prophet' and one or two China ponies, and part owner of 'Burrane', the winner of the Maiden Plate at the race-meeting a few days previously. Mr Gek Lee was at the race-course on the second day of the races, in apparent good health and spirits, but in driving home his horse got restive and he had hard work to rein him in, after which he complained of a pain in his chest. In the early hours of the following morning there was a copious flow of blood from the mouth, and, despite medical assistance, he sank gradually and expired the same day.<sup>44</sup> Mr Gek Lee was a Roman Catholic and had been a generous contributor to the Chinese Roman Catholic Mission here, having built at his own expense the fine parochial house of St Peter's Church in Queen Street. He was well and favourably known to the European merchants, with whom he had frequent dealings, as a man of probity and strict commercial integrity.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> June one of the most enterprising Chinese residents, Mr Tan Chin Hoon sent his son, Tan Boon Cheng, to be educated in England. The *Straits Times* spoke of this as the first instance in which a Chinese Raffles boy had been sent to England to complete his education. The young lad, however, like some other Straits Chinese youths

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44 Lee died on 15 May 1885. See *Straits Times*, 11 Jun 1885, at 2.

since his time sent by their wealthy fathers to Europe to complete their education and take up a profession, disappointed his father's hopes, and returned without any qualification to Singapore, where he died, after a long illness.

In 1886 Mr Cheang Hong Lim had his own Fire Brigade, which was kept at Havelock Road for the protection of that district, in which he was very largely interested, in case of fire. On the occasion of a fire in March at the premises of Drummond, Hodges & Co, [220] Ship-chandlers, Hong Lim's engine, which arrived on the scene after the police engine, was pouring streams of water on the fire long before the latter, which had not managed to get steam up.<sup>45</sup> Hong Lim's engine was manned by 37 persons working by turns, all dressed in uniform and wearing caps bearing the Chinese inscription 'chop Wan-seng'.

In April the wife of the Chinese Consul, Mr Tso Ping Lung, died in the thirty-seventh year of her age. She had accompanied him in his diplomatic mission to England and had made friends there, but owing to her delicate health when she came to Singapore with her husband she was unable to help him in his endeavours to interest the Straits-born Chinese in the direction of a better social intercourse and a higher intellectual life. In 1888, after having been in Singapore for seven years (the ordinary term of office being only three years), Mr Tso, who was the first Chinese official to be appointed to the Straits Settlements in a consular capacity, on the recommendation of the Chinese Minister in London, was promoted from the rank of District Magistrate in China to that of a Prefect. Mr Tso had been the president of the Celestial Reasoning Association since its inception in 1882. He was Secretary to the Chinese Commission that visited London in 1906, and came back in 1907 to Singapore as Chinese Consul-General.

On the return of the Sultan of Johore from Europe on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 1886, there were addresses from the Chamber of Commerce, and the Chinese and Arab communities, congratulating him upon the fact that his assumption of the title of Sultan had been recognised by Her Maj-

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45 See 'The Fire' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 29 Apr 1886, at 1.

esty Queen Victoria. The address of the Chinese merchants, which was in English and contained more than 150 signatures, was read by Mr Lee Keng Kiat (of Keng Yong Brothers). Mr Lee Keng Kiat was a son of Lee Quee Lim and was born in Malacca in 1851, and educated at St Xavier's Institution, Penang. He was for many years connected with the firm of Keng [221] Yong Brothers and later joined the service of the Straits Steamship Co as sub-manager, retiring in 1911. In December 1888 he contested the seat for Central Ward at the Municipal election, securing 21 votes as against 80 votes for Mr Tan Beng Wan,<sup>46</sup> who stood at the head of the poll. He was elected a member of committee of the Straits Chinese British Association in 1900 on the formation of that institution. He enlisted as one of the original members of the Singapore Volunteer Infantry (Chinese Company) in 1901 when he was fifty years old, to show in a practical manner his intense patriotism and his keen sense of duty as a citizen of the British Empire. He was a well-educated man, and his support could always be counted on in all movements aiming at the true welfare of the Straits Chinese community. He died on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 1917, at the age of 66, leaving five sons, two of whom, Lee Chim Tuan and Lee Chim Huk, are on the active list of the SVI.

A number of prominent Straits-born Chinese attended the general meeting of the Singapore Branch of the Imperial Federation League held during this month. The Governor Sir F Weld presided. The Hon Secretary (JP Joaquim) stated that the list of members showed a majority of British-born Chinese who from the formation of the Branch had taken an active interest in the object of the League. The Governor made a speech in which he said he was glad to see so many Chinese gentlemen of influence present, who, in common with all other subjects of the Queen, received benefits from the British Government by the advance and progress of the Empire, and showed by their presence at that meeting that they took an interest in the objects of the League.

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46 On Tan Beng Wan, see Chapter 9 of this volume.



Lee Keng Kiat



Tan Choon Bock

In October the Hon Seah Liang Seah gave a dance at his country house in Thomson Road, next the Reservoir. The proceedings were enlivened by the full band of the regiment ('The Buffs') located on a stage expressly put up and roofed in over the water.

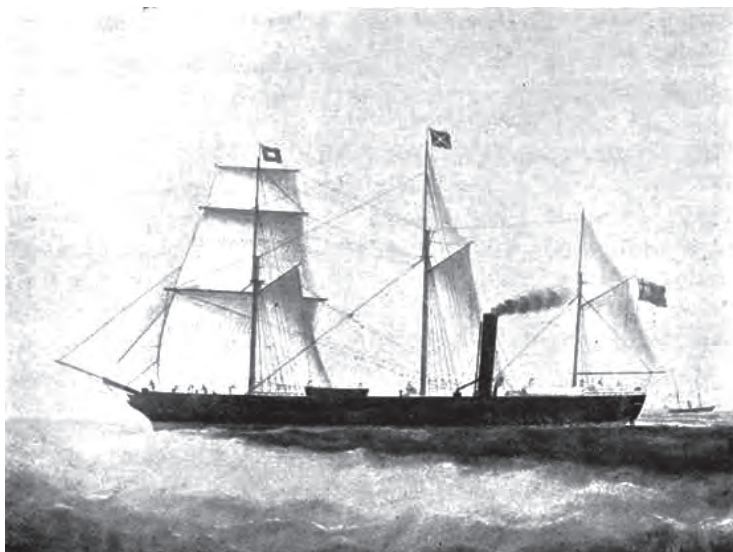
[222] Mr Tan Keong Saik, JP, was one of the five Municipal Commissioners for 1886. A son of Tan Choon Sian, he was born in Malacca on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1850, and was sent to Penang for his education. Coming to Singapore, he joined Messrs Lim Kong Wan & Sons as shipping clerk and later was storekeeper to the Borneo Co. His business capacity very quickly raised him to a prominent position in the mercantile life of the Settlement. In spite of his business interests, he found time to participate largely in public affairs: and, until ill-health compelled him to live in retirement at the seaside bungalow at Changi, his opinion on matters of policy was frequently sought, and highly valued, by the Government. His father, together with his uncle Tan Choon Bock and Tan Beng Swee, commenced with the *Benmore*, *Japan* and *Sharpshooter* the business of coasting steamers, which afterwards developed into the Straits Steamship Co Ltd, and Mr Tan Keong Saik was on the Board of Directors until his death on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 1909. His eldest son, Mr Tan Cheng Kee, had the honour of receiving, through the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, an expression of condolence from Sir Cecil Smith, who honoured the late Mr Tan Keong Saik with his friendship.<sup>47</sup> A man of good education and sound views, he played a prominent part in the social and intellectual life of the Chinese community.<sup>48</sup> At a great public meeting held on the 28th August 1889, he

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47 See 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 1 Dec 1909, at 6.

48 Tan Cheng Kee rebuilt Alhambra Cinema in 1914 and reopened it in 1916 (see 'The New Alhambra' *Straits Times*, 13 Feb 1914, at 9; and 'The New Alhambra' *Singapore Free Press*, 13 Jan 1916, at 12); as well as the Marlborough cinema (see 'The New Marlborough' *Straits Times*, 26 Feb 1918, at 7). In 1917, Tan became founding President of the Eastern Kinematograph Association (see 'Eastern Kinematographs' *Straits Times*, 13 Mar 1917, at 8). He married Ong Whye Guan (1877-1927) (see 'Domestic Occurrences' *Singapore Free Press*, 26 Jan 1927, at 10) and when he died on 12 September 1939, he was survived by his son Soon Lay, and his daughter Josephine (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 13 Sep 1939, at 2).





*SS Sharpshooter*



*SS Benmore*



Tan Keong Saik

seconded the resolution approving of the Municipality appropriating the Town Hall and Theatre for office accommodation for the Municipal staff, and placing the sum of \$75,000 at the disposal of the public towards the cost of erection of suitable Assembly Rooms and Theatre. The counter-proposition was that the Municipal offices should be located on the site of the Fish Market at Telok Ayer. In the course of his speech Mr Tan Keong Saik said:

Another point was that with the growth of education they must expect the growth of intelligence, and the first result of that intelligence would be an aspiration [223] after local self-government, and when Municipal autonomy should be attained, they would agree that that Hall would be a suitable office for the Lord Mayor.<sup>49</sup>

This resolution was lost against an amendment to appoint a committee to consider the proposal of the Commissioners, such proposal to be approved by the Meeting if the Committee reported that better accommodation than the existing Hall could be found for the public. Mr Tan Keong Saik was one of the first members of the Chinese Advisory Board and of the Po Leung Kuk. In 1890 he was a director of the Singapore Slipway Co Ltd and the Tanjong Pagar Dock Co Ltd, and, later, was a member of the Tanjong Pagar Dock Board, from which position he retired early in 1909, owing to ill health. He was for many years the manager for Capitan Yap Kwan Seng of his chop Sin Heng Tye, at first located in Philip Street and later in Robinson Road. He was one of the early advocates of education for Chinese girls in non-Christian homes, and when the Methodists started mission work in 1885, arranged with Miss Blackmore of that Mission to give lessons in English to his daughters at his house. His third daughter is Mrs Lee Choon Guan<sup>50</sup>, MBE. His death removed a great, prominent, patriotic and useful Chinese citizen who was as highly respected by the European community as

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His embalmed body was buried in a bronze casket in Bidadari Cemetery (see 'Funeral of Mr Tan Cheng Kee' *Straits Times*, 21 Sep 1939, at 11).

49 See 'The Town Hall Question' *Straits Times Weekly Edition*, 21 Aug 1889, at 8.

50 On Lee Choon Guan, see Chapter 13 of this volume.

he was by his own countrymen. A courteous gentleman, of a merry disposition, with great social gifts, he was always accessible to those seeking advice, and was ever ready to take up the cudgels in the cause of justice and fair play.

Early in 1887 Teo Guan Tye (son of Teo Kit), who carried on the business of fruit preserver, spirit manufacturer, etc, at No 99 Telok Ayer Street, under the chop Thye Seng Bee & Co, sent to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition his preserved pineapple, guava and plantain jellies, and many other kinds of sweets made of fruits, besides several ornamental articles made of ivory and wood, and was awarded a medal in bronze for [224] some of the exhibits, and also a certificate in commendation of the excellent quality of his sauce.

A *Free Press* leader (January 1887) noting from the Reports by the Medical Officers of the Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs that the officials and merchants of Hoihow (in Hainan) had voluntarily subscribed a large sum to open a hospital, with foreign-trained Chinese doctors as its medical attendants, urged on the Government to give encouragement to clever Chinese lads to become medical students, and qualify as dressers and apothecaries.

They are quiet, neat-handed and painstaking, and, in the few cases in which they have entered the higher ranks of the profession, have proved expert operators. ... They would appeal to a class which at present never seeks European medical advice, partly from prejudice, no doubt, but much more from inability to pay what they consider the high fees demanded. A Chinese could afford to work much cheaper, because his clientele would lie amongst a population outnumbering us (Europeans) by twenty to one.<sup>51</sup>

'The scholarships now established' (the first two scholars [1886], CS Angus for Engineering, and James Aitken for Law, had left for England just two months before) 'are all very well, but one qualified Chinese medical man would be of greater service to his countrymen than a

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51 We are unable to trace the exact location of this quotation as copies of the *Singapore Free Press* for the year 1887 are missing.



**Queen's Scholars 1886-1888**

L-R: J Aitken, Song Ong Siang, CS Angus, PV Locke, DA Aeria, & Song Ong Siang.

dozen lawyers or engineers'. The Editor's view was that young Chinese lads should be sent to Calcutta or Melbourne, and that, if they merely became the equals of the admirable class of Assistants in our Colonial hospitals, they would be able to do immense good among the vast number of Chinese beneath the British flag in these waters. 'There would be no necessity for their becoming full-blown MD's or LRCS's at once. Those who aspired, and could afford, to place themselves in the same position as a European practitioner, could, of course, do so by proceeding to Europe, and passing the usual examinations. [225] The Government would have given them the groundwork.'

Although the Editor expressed the hope that some effort in this direction would, before long, be made, some eighteen years elapsed before the objects aimed at by the above-quoted view were brought once again into prominence, resulting in the foundation of the Straits and FMS Medical School.

The following extract from the Annual Report for 1886 of Mr WA Pickering, Protector of Chinese, on the unenviable position of the registered societies will be read with interest:

Although there have been no serious disturbances during 1886, the state of things amongst the Chinese in Singapore is not altogether satisfactory. The so-called Friendly Societies Tong Meng, etc ... were called upon to furnish further particulars according to section 3 of Ordinance XIX of 1869 as being dangerous to the public peace: on receiving due notices from the Registrars, they took legal advice and contrived to evade supervision by dissolving themselves and handing their books and paraphernalia over to the Government. The headmen, however, secretly keep up their organisations, and cause much trouble by enlisting members from the registered societies, quarrelling with each other and fomenting such trouble that, if some steps are not taken to break them up and to punish the Straits-born Chinese who manage them, these unlawful associations will, in a short time, become a very serious element of disorder in the Settlement. To complicate matters, the Teo-kun Ghee-hin society, suppressed ten years ago, has revived, and some of its most turbulent headmen have kept the members

together, and, in connection with the above-named societies, carry out their designs against the registered branches of the Thian-te-hoey. The chiefs of the registered societies are often put to great straits to keep their men from retaliating against the attacks made by illicit Hoeyes: they also complain that, whilst they themselves are kept under strict supervision and have not only to obey the law but also to be responsible for their members, the managers of the unregistered societies (free from restraint and responsibility) are allowed to evade the law and to carry on their intrigues with impunity. Gambling is still being carried on by the very same headmen and members of societies who were threatened with deportation in January last. These men, who defied the Commission, still keep up some of their gaming houses in spite of the efforts made to suppress them by Messrs Cuscaden and Falkner, and these are now only waiting for the result of the Commission report. If an immunity from deportation should follow, they will not only resume their former extensive scale of operations, but will also cause trouble by endeavouring to revenge themselves on the headmen who gave evidence against them before the Commission.<sup>52</sup>

The members of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club opened their first Club House on the night of the 2nd July 1887, and more than 100 Chinese and European gentlemen were invited. The band of the 2nd South Lancashire Regiment was in attendance. The pavilion (designed by Mr HD Richards) was brilliantly decorated and illuminated. Mr Tso Ping Lung, the Chinese consul, opened the Club and proposed the toast of its success and prosperity, coupling it with the name of Mr Tan Keng Wah, the President. In the course of his speech Mr Tso said:

Whilst in China, I am sorry to say, no play whatever is allowed to students in the school. Those who study too hard very often suffer from consumption or other diseases merely on account of not having sufficient exercise. It is a pity that they do not understand what the proverb says: 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' I believe no member of this Club is likely to become a dull boy:

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52 *Annual Report on Singapore Chinese Secret Societies 1886*, GN 80/1887.

certainly not. Should any outsider feel dull, let him lose no time in joining the Club, and then he will, no doubt, feel much better. ...We must not forget to return our thanks to those who deserve it. We should, first of all, thank the Straits Government for having freely given us this whole piece [227] of ground at the back of the Police Court. Secondly, we should thank Mr Cheang Hong Lim for having liberally spent his money to fence this piece of land with iron rails, and, lastly, thank all the subscribers who support this Club, with a hope that it may do a great deal of good to our Straits Chinese for many, many years.<sup>53</sup>

The Hon Secretary, Mr Low Cheng Koon, in his reply mentioned that 'the Club was started about the end of the year 1884, and that during its infancy the members used to play lawn-tennis at a place quite beyond the centre of the town, a place not worth mentioning', and praised the efforts of Mr Tan Chew Kim (the Assistant Hon Secretary) and about half a dozen of the original members in collecting the funds for the building.

The *Free Press* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1887 says:

Of the many different events arranged by the Hon H Trotter and other members of the Jubilee Committee, there is none, we are sure, more to be congratulated upon than the immense Chinese procession on the night of the 28th June. The promoters rightly grasped the idea of how best to enlist the sympathies for the occasion of that large and important section which has come, and is coming, from the Flowery Land to add to the wealth and prosperity of this Colony. We are certain that all who had the good fortune to see the procession pass will agree with us that the Chinese did, by the way they came forward with men and money to render it a success, testify to an eminent degree their respect and loyalty to Her Majesty. It must be remembered how liberally they have

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53 We are unable to trace the exact location of this quotation as copies of the *Singapore Free Press* for the year 1887 are missing.



subscribed to the Imperial Institute which a good many of them may never look at.<sup>54</sup>

The address of congratulation from the Chinese community was an interesting item of the Jubilee celebrations at the Town Hall. It was printed on crimson silk. The Hon Seah Liang Seah read it in English, in true rhetorical style, with great distinctness of utterance, [228] marking the prominent points in it by appropriate bows. It runs thus:

To

Her Most Gracious Majesty, Victoria, by the grace of God, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, Empress of India.

May it please your Majesty,

We, the members of the Chinese community of Singapore, venture to approach Your Majesty, and to offer to Your Majesty our humble but earnest and heartfelt congratulations on this Fiftieth anniversary of Your Majesty's accession to the Throne of Great Britain and Ireland.

Many of us have the great good fortune to be natural-born subjects of Your Majesty, while others have been led to make a home in this Colony. We venture to say that no class or section of the inhabitants of Your Majesty's widespread dominions have greater reason to rejoice on this occasion of Your Majesty's Jubilee than we. Fifty years ago when Your Majesty ascended the Throne, the now flourishing Settlement of Singapore was in its infancy, and during these fifty years it has, under Your Majesty's wise and enlightened rule, made a progress, we believe, unexampled in the history of the world. Here, and in the adjacent Settlements of Penang and Malacca, no less than 172,000 of our fellow-countrymen have found a home, and learnt to appreciate the just and wise laws, and the strong but equitable government of the land of their adoption.

We rejoice in the opportunity which is now afforded us of giving expression to the strong feelings of loyalty and attachment to

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54 We are unable to trace the exact location of this quotation as copies of the *Singapore Free Press* for the year 1887 are missing.

Your Majesty's Throne as well as of gratitude for the security and prosperity we have enjoyed under Your Majesty's Rule, which animates us in common with all races and classes in the Colony. We pray the God who is the Lord of all the nations upon the Earth that He may in His mercy prolong Your Majesty's years in health and happiness, and continue in peace and prosperity a reign which has had so beneficial an influence upon the happiness of millions of people of all races and creeds.<sup>55</sup>

[229] The State Durbar which was held in the Town Hall for the purpose of receiving the congratulations of the consular representatives of Foreign Powers, and addresses drawn up in honour of the occasion by committees of every section of the community, was a brilliant function. There was a sprinkling of Chinese merchants, and the 'gorgeous Chinese dress of the Hon Seah Liang Seah is counterbalanced on the opposite side of the room by the equally magnificent costume of Tan Kim Ching,<sup>56</sup> the Siamese Consul'.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> July a deputation consisting of Messrs Tan Keong Saik, Tan Jiak Kim, Lee Keng Kiat, Tan Beng Wan, Koh San Tee and some twenty others in their 'picturesque full-dress' and representing nearly all the Chinese firms in Singapore, waited upon the Hon T Cuthbertson at his residence and presented him with an address as a tribute of the genuine sentiment of respect with which the whole community remembered his hard work in the Legislative Council for the community.

Mr Cuthbertson in replying said that if he had succeeded in securing the confidence of the Chinese merchants and traders, it was due to his putting into practice the principle of doing to others as he would be done by. With regard to his work in Council, he had certainly endeavoured, in all the measures which had been brought forward affecting the community, Chinese or otherwise, to do his best to secure fair and equitable legislation. In concluding, he acknowledged that the

55 We are unable to trace the exact location of this quotation as copies of the *Singapore Free Press* for the year 1887 are missing.

56 On Tan Kim Ching, see Chapter 5 of this volume.

Chinese had done much for the welfare of the Colony, and while that welfare was mainly due to the fact that all people were entitled to the same protection of the law, yet it was to Chinese enterprise and capital that the progress of the Colony was largely indebted.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> July it was announced that the Jubilee Prize presented by the Hon AM Skinner<sup>57</sup> for the best inscription for the new Statue of Sir Stamford Raffles (which had been unveiled on the 27<sup>th</sup> June by the Governor, Sir FA Weld) had been awarded to Lim [230] Koon Tye, an old Rafflesian. Mr Lim Koon Tye<sup>58</sup> was born in Singapore on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 1866. His father was Lim Kee, a Hakka emigrant from the province of Kweichow in China. Educated at Raffles Institution, he was on two successive occasions placed first in the annual examination for Government scholarships. He entered the service of Guthrie & Co as a copying clerk in February 1882, and left in September 1906, when he was holding the post of book-keeper. In 1887 he won Mr Skinner's prize of \$25 (Mr Skinner's own inscription, sent in anony-

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57 Allan Maclean Skinner (1846–1901) was born on 20 March 1846 in Brighton, the second son of Sir Allan Maclean Skinner QC, Recorder of Windsor. Skinner junior was himself a lawyer and was called to the Bar in 1867 at Lincoln's Inn before joining the Straits Settlements Civil Service. He was appointed Auditor-General in 1881, and was Colonial Secretary from 1884 to 1889, and Deputy Governor in 1885. He was also concurrently Resident of Penang from 1887 till his retirement in 1897 owing to his ill health. At the time of his death, he was engaged in the writing of a history of the Straits Settlements. See 'The Late Mr AM Skinner' *Straits Times*, 23 Jul 1901, at 2.

58 Lim Koon Tye was born in 1865 and was educated at Raffles Institution, being 'one of the best and smartest pupils in the early years of the late Mr RW Hullett's regime as principal, and was for two successive occasions, placed first in the annual examination for Government scholarships'. On leaving school, he joined the firm of Guthrie & Co and remained in their service for the next 24 years. In 1890, Lim took part in the formation of the Chinese Football Club and was its first honorary secretary. He was also an original member of the Chinese Company, Singapore Volunteer Infantry. He also served on the committee of the Straits Chinese British Association and as secretary of the United Sawmills Ltd. At the time of his death, he was in the service of William Jacks & Co, and was survived by his wife and a young daughter. See 'The Late Mr Lim Koon Tye' *Straits Times*, 27 Sep 1921, at 10.



Lim Koon Tye



A Group of Rafflesians, 1885.

mously, being adjudged the best). Later, he won the first prize of \$50 at the first commercial examination held by the Singapore Chamber of Commerce (1904).

In 1889 he read a paper at a meeting of the Presbyterian Church Young Men's Society on 'The Recreations of the Straits Chinese' in which he appealed to Christians to take a special interest in the Straits Chinese community,<sup>59</sup> making the remark that 'he who would bring about a reform in the physical, moral and mental constitution of a Chinaman must begin that work in the Chinaman's home, and with the assistance of the Chinaman's wife and mother'. This led to the appointment of a committee consisting of the late Mr Arthur Knight, Mr John Haffenden of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Mr W Swan and Mr Lim Koon Tye to look into the matter, and their labours resulted in the foundation of the Chinese Christian Association in October 1889.

Mr Koon Tye married in July 1885 Wee Loon Neo, eldest daughter of Mr Wee Lim Guan, who was for many years in the service of Messrs Guthrie & Co. In 1887 he taught himself Pitman's shorthand with the aid of the textbooks, gaining the Proficiency certificate signed by 'Eizak Pitman' himself. In 1890 he took part in forming the Chinese Football Club and became its first Hon Secretary. He was a member of the SVI, from December 1901 to August 1906, which he left with the rank of sergeant. For some years he served on the [231] Committee of the Straits Chinese British Association. Of a retiring disposition, he is known only to his circle of friends, with whom he is very popular. He possesses a fine command of the English language and is a writer of great literary merit.<sup>60</sup>

In July 1887 a very grave attempt was made to murder Mr Pickering, CMG, while he was seated at work in his office in the Chinese protectorate, by Choa Ah Siok, a Teochew carpenter, who appeared

59 See 'The Late Mr Lim Koon Tye', *ibid.*

60 [Song: Died in 1921]. Much of the foregoing account is taken, with minor modifications from 'The Late Mr Lim Koon Tye', *ibid.*

to have been instigated to commit the crime by certain members of the Ghi-hok society. He walked up to the front of Mr Pickering's desk and threw at his face the iron head of a carpenter's axe, which struck Mr Pickering with its butt-end, full on the forehead, causing a severe wound. The assailant, who was arrested on the spot, stated that, although hired to cause death, he had determined not to kill a public officer, but to do such injury only as he could by throwing an axe without its handle. He was tried at the November assizes on the charge of voluntarily causing grievous hurt instead of the graver charge of attempting to murder, and, pleading guilty, was sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment.<sup>61</sup>

In connection with this affair, three members of the Ghi-hok society, being Chinese subjects, who had been committed for trial on a charge of abetting the murderous attack and discharged on a *nolle prosequi*<sup>62</sup> by the Attorney-General, were banished, by Order in Council under the Preservation of the Peace Ordinance, 1872, for being concerned in the murder of the Lieutenant China of the Carimons in April 1887.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> August the death occurred of Mr Hoo Ah Yip Whampoa,<sup>63</sup> at the family residence in Serangoon Road at the age of 49. Our readers will remember the reference made to him in Admiral Keppel's book.<sup>64</sup> After the death of his father (the Hon Hoo Ah Kay), he had the management of the business of Whampoa & Co, [232] and took an active interest in public affairs which affected the Chinese community.

Two Bills before the Legislative Council greatly exercised the minds of the Chinese people at this time. A number of Chinese own-

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61 See 'The Late Attack upon the Protector of Chinese' *Straits Times*, 7 Sep 1887, at 9; and 'Sixth Criminal Assizes' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 28 Nov 1887, at 9.

62 Latin for 'unwilling to prosecute'. This phrase is used to describe the prosecutor's decision to voluntarily discontinue criminal proceedings against an accused.

63 [Song: *A Sailor's Life Under Four Sovereigns*, vol ii, 80.]

64 See, Sir Henry Keppel, *A Sailor's Life under Four Sovereigns*, Vol 2 (London: Mac-Millan & Co, 1899) at 80.

ers of property, and Syed Mohamed Alsagoff and Syed Abubakar al Junied, together with Mr Donaldson on behalf of Mr Cheang Hong Lim who was unwell, and Mr Koek, interviewed the Colonial Secretary on August 10<sup>th</sup> on several points considered to be defects in the Municipal Bill, viz: (i) omission of exemption from rates of vacant houses, because the payment of heavy assessment on empty houses (there being at that time nearly 900 houses which had been more than two months empty) would bear very hardly on small property owners, such as widows and others, dependent for their income upon the rents of a few houses; and (2) the withholding from the Commissioners of a voice in the election of the paid President.

On the motion for the second reading of the Burials Bill the Hon Seah Liang Seah asked for a postponement in a speech reflecting his belief that the provisions of that Bill aimed at the suppression of private burial grounds – a calamity to the better class of Chinese, among whom it was a much-cherished custom to have private burial grounds for their ancestors. The Colonial Secretary, in agreeing to a three days' postponement, said:

The Ordinance is drawn with a full regard for the feelings of the Chinese, and there is no intention to interfere with them, or with any other section of the community, in a matter of this kind, which touches so closely the feelings and religious sentiment of every race in the world, except so far as may be necessary for that highest consideration of all, safety and well-being of the living.<sup>65</sup>

After quoting from a translation of an article in the *Lat Pau* giving instances showing how little any superstitious or other feelings were allowed by the Mandarins [233] in China to interfere with any step which they might deem necessary for the public good, he proceeded:

The Government are willing to respect the feelings and sentiments of the Chinese here, respecting the burial of the dead, even though they may give to it an outward expression which people in China itself do not. ... But it is not right that all other classes of the

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65 *Report of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council*, 15 Aug 1887, at B102.

community should be sacrificed to the desires of one section to secure, for instance, all the small hills which are the only places suitable for healthy houses in these countries, and take them for ever, sometimes merely as a monument to the honour of one Chinese family and the personal vanity of one Chinese individual. ... The Government has a very limited object in view in this Bill, so far as the Chinese community is concerned. It desires to prevent the whole of the hills and land in this Colony being converted into a Chinese burial ground. At the same time it desires that the customs of the Chinese shall be thoroughly and honestly respected, and that every possible opportunity shall be given to that valuable portion of the community to do honour to its dead, but it must be within reasonable limits and without sacrificing the good of the community.<sup>66</sup>

In November a petition to the Secretary of State for the Colonies was forwarded by the Chinese of Singapore, which the *Free Press* declared to be weaker in its reasoning, though bolder in its assumptions, than the petition from the Chinese of Penang on the same subject praying for exemption from the operation of the Burials Ordinance (No XI of 1887), which had become law on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 1887. The memorial pointed out that the Chinese burial grounds were divided into three classes:

(a) Grounds presented to the Chinese community by wealthy Chinese and by subscriptions among Chinese to give decent burial to the Chinese poor. These grounds are divided into different sections to bury respectively Ho-kiens, Hylams, Kehs, Macaos, Cantonese and Tay Chews. In these grounds there is [234] still room for perhaps some ten thousand more bodies, and your Memorialists pray that these grounds, so purchased by Chinese and set aside for the special purpose of burying the Chinese poor, may not be taken away and desecrated to serve the interests of a small European population.

(b) Grounds in various districts belonging to separate 'Says'. These grounds have been set aside by the Chinese as separate burial

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66 Ibid, at B103.



places for the better class of Chinese who are buried in strongly built vaults in watertight coffins.

(c) Grounds belonging to separate Chinese families of position who have settled with their families in Singapore and built substantial residences on their burial grounds so as to be near, and to worship in, the presence of their ancestral dead.

The memorialists prayed only that their rights to existing burial grounds should not be interfered with, and that they might not be prevented from burying the dead of their own families amongst the bones of their ancestors in existing burial grounds; after the closing of such burial grounds, they were willing to bury their dead in cemeteries provided by Government.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> December the new Chinese Church at Bukit Timah in connection with the English Presbyterian Chinese Mission was opened by the Rev HL Mackenzie of Swatow. The foundation stone had been laid four months previously by Col Dunlop, CMG, with whom was associated Mrs Keasberry. The mission work among the Chinese in Bukit Timah district had been begun in 1861 by Mr Tan See Boo, catechist, and the Rev BP Keasberry.<sup>67</sup>

In this year the first Chinese lad won the first 'Higher' Scholarship, which had been founded by Sir Cecil Smith the previous year.<sup>68</sup> This was Lim Boon Keng,<sup>69</sup> the second son of Mr Lim Thean Geow, who was born on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1869. He began his English edu-

67 See 'Opening of Bukit Timah Presbyterian Chinese Mission Church' *Straits Times*, 22 Dec 1887, at 4; and 'New Chinese Church at Bukit Timah' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 10 Aug 1887, at 5.

68 On the history of the Queen's Scholarships, see Wu Lien-Teh, *The Queen's Scholarships of Malaya, 1885-1948* (Penang: Penang Premier Press, 1949).

69 On Lim Boon Keng generally, see Lim Guan Kin, 'Lim Boon Keng' in Leo Suryidinata (ed), *Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent: A Biographical Dictionary* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012), at 594-597. See also 李元瑾 《东西文化的撞击与新华知识分子的三种回应 — 邱菽园、林文庆、宋旺相的比较研究》 (Singapore: World Scientific, 2001).

cation at the Government Cross Street School, whence he pro- [235] ceeded to Raffles. He quickly attracted the attention of the Principal, Mr Hullett, who devoted a great deal of his spare time to him, and when, after his father's death, it looked as if it would be necessary that the lad should leave school to earn his living, Mr Hullett called on Mr Cheang Hong Lim and got him to persuade the womenfolk to permit Boon Keng to continue his studies at school. In the examination in 1886 Boon Keng took the thirteenth place, but he made such rapid progress that, in the following year, he came second, and Ong Siang, who took the first place, being disqualified owing to his not having yet attained the age limit, the first scholarship was awarded to Boon Keng, who proceeded to Edinburgh University, where he had a distinguished career and in 1892 took his degrees of MB, CM.

At the annual prize distribution of Raffles Institution in February 1888, Mr Hullett said: 'I am quite sure that Boon Keng will distinguish himself, for I have watched many boys leave school and go out into the world, and I seldom parted with anyone of whose future I feel more confident.' Returning to Singapore, by dint of strenuous and steady work he soon built up a large and valuable practice in his profession. His abilities were of no mean order, and in 1895 he was appointed the Chinese member of the Legislative Council in place of Mr Seah Liang Seah. Two years later he co-operated with Song Ong Siang in editing the *Straits Chinese Magazine*, 'a quarterly journal of occidental and oriental culture', which, through lack of support and interest from the very community it had been intended to benefit, came to an untimely end in 1907. He was an enthusiast in all moral, social and educational reforms among the Chinese in the Colony, and in 1899 was one of the promoters of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School, and in 1900 of the Straits Chinese British Association. Mainly through his lectures delivered between 1894 and 1910, there has been a Confucian revival throughout Malaya, with its reflex action upon China herself. The direct result has been the resuscitation of Chinese schools, [236] which now exist over the whole Malayan region. Twelve years before the Revolution in China, Dr Boon Keng began the crusade against



**Editors of the Straits Chinese Magazine**  
L-R: Song Ong Siang, Gnoh Lean Tuck & Lim Boon Keng



The Late Mrs Lim Boon Keng



Dr & Mrs Lim Boon Keng & Family



Members of the Straits Chinese Reform Party

the *towchang* (or queue),<sup>70</sup> and, despite the angry opposition of the influential Chinese, he persuaded a few followers to discard the long hair as the sure sign of their willingness to adopt necessary social and other reforms. The introduction of new ideas became easy after the establishment of the Republic, and the Chinese of Malaya, soon after the overthrow of the Manchus, excepting the ricksha pullers and a few others, adopted the modern European style of cropping their hair.

For many years Dr Lim Boon Keng has rendered service as a Justice of the Peace, as a Municipal Commissioner and as a member of the Chinese Advisory Board. He founded the Chinese Philomathic Society, which for a few years carried on a vigorous existence and brought together a number of young men and some of the older folks for the regular study of English literature, Western music and the Chinese language. On the formation of the Chinese Company, SVI, in November 1901, he showed a good example to the young men of respectable and wealthy families of the duties of British citizenship by enlisting as a private, and for four years he served faithfully in the ranks, retiring when holding the rank of colour sergeant. He was one of the Coronation contingent in 1902 to London, and holds the Coronation medal of King Edward, as well as that of King George in 1911.

His first wife, whom he married in December 1896 at the Presbyterian Church in Orchard Road, was the elder daughter of Mr Wong Nai Siong, of Foo-chow. She was a refined, enlightened and well-educated gentlewoman. The experiences which she had gained through her visit to England and America, prior to her marriage, enabled her to take a sympathetic and active interest in all the reform movements of this period, in which her husband played the chief role. When the Singapore Chinese Girls' School was founded in 1899, she undertook [237] the task of giving the pupils lessons in Chinese twice a week. Belonging to the Wesleyan Methodist communion, she occasionally worshipped at both the Methodist Episcopal Church in Coleman Street and the Prinsep Street Church, and was greatly liked and

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70 See 'Dr Lim Boon Keng' *Straits Times*, 14 Mar 1898, at 2.

admired by her Chinese Christian friends. She died in 1905, leaving four sons, of whom the eldest is Robert, who has just taken his degrees of MB, BCh at Edinburgh University. During the War, Robert served as a surgical dresser to the Indian Hospital at Netley, Hants. Classed among the 'privileged surgical dressers' he was allowed to wear an officer's uniform, but with non-commissioned rank.

The late Mrs Boon Keng's younger sister married Dr Gnoh Lean Tuck (Wu Lien Teh), the 1896 Queen's Scholar from Penang, who had a brilliant career at Cambridge University and acquired a world-wide reputation in connection with the measures taken to combat the great pneumonic plague epidemic of 1910-11 in Manchuria. In recognition of these services the Hongkong University conferred on him the honorary degree of LL.D. Dr Lean Tuck is now Medical Adviser to the Foreign Office, Peking.<sup>71</sup>

By his present wife, who is a sister of Dr SC Yin, and whom he married in 1908, the Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng has one daughter and one son.

In 1911 Dr Boon Keng was on a nine months' tour in Europe studying the political and social conditions of the principal countries there. He attended, as a delegate, the First Universal Races Congress and the Hygienic Conference held in London and Dresden respectively and gave several addresses. He also held the position of a secretary of the Chinese Legation, London, for a time. In 1915, when Mr Tan Jiak Kim resigned his seat in the Legislative Council, Dr Lim Boon Keng once again was appointed to fill the vacancy,<sup>72</sup> and during the remainder of the War he worked hard to get the Chinese community to subscribe liberally to the National War Loan (1915), the FMS 6 per cent [238] War Loan and the Straits Settlements War Loan. He also addressed public meetings of Straits-born Chinese with a view to im-

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71 See Wu Lien-Teh, *Plague Fighter: An Autobiography of a Modern Chinese Physician* (Cambridge: W Heffer, 1959); and Wu Yu-lin, *Memories of Dr Wu Lien-Teh: A Plague Fighter* (Singapore: World Scientific, 1995).

72 See *Straits Times*, 17 Aug 1915, at 6.



Dr Gnoh Lean Tuck @ Wu Lien Teh

pressing upon them their duty to King and country and to recruiting for a double-company strength of Chinese volunteers. His effort to raise a body of Straits Chinese Civil Guard among the older men, however, proved a sad failure. Within recent years, his connection as a director on a number of rubber and tin companies, industrial concerns, banking and insurance corporations has left him little or no time to continue the practice of his profession.

He is an accomplished linguist, and a prolific contributor to many of the leading European medical and other journals. He is the author of *The Chinese Crisis from Within*, a book published in 1901 in London<sup>73</sup> and favourably reviewed by the leading English papers. He is a member and ex-president of the Straits Philosophical Society, a Fellow of the Royal Medical Society, Edinburgh, a member of the Council of the Malaya Branch of the British Medical Association, a corresponding member of the Medical Society of Ghent and member of the Medical Society of Kioto. In recognition of his long and varied services as a public man, His Majesty the King conferred on him the order of OBE in 1918,<sup>74</sup> while at the third congregation of the Hongkong University held on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 1919, he was admitted to the degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD), *honoris causa*.

The Domestic Servants Registration Ordinance came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1888. It met, however, with strong and concerted opposition from the Hylams, who formed then, as they do now, the vast majority of the domestic servants. Several of the Hylam headmen were arrested and deported for boycott and intimidation of such Hylam servants as were willing to register. The Hylam Ghi-hin kongsi was suppressed for the same reason. The leaders of the Hylam community did their best to make the provisions of the Ordinance understood, and what had been active resistance assumed, a little while

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73 This book was published by Lim using the Chinese transliteration of his first name 'Boon Keng'. See Wen Ching, *The Chinese Crisis from Within* (London: Grant Richards, 1901).

74 See 'Local Honours' *Straits Times*, 15 Mar 1918, at 8.



after, a passive form: the Hylams simply keeping [239] out of the way and leaving their boy-less masters severely alone. In October 1888, on the second reading of the Bill for the repeal of the above Ordinance, the Hon Mr Adamson, in support, said that the householders would not assist the Government in the working of the Ordinance, that what they wanted was for Government to do something and themselves nothing, and that, when Europeans with some conscience and sense of responsibility showed perfect indifference towards the requirements of the Ordinance, it could not be expected that the native masters would do better. The Governor, Sir Cecil Smith, said:

As regards the question of introducing another Registration Bill on the same subject, I will have none of it. ... I have seen its failure in Ceylon, and so far as I am concerned, I will not allow the Administration, while I am here, to attempt to do what is in my opinion impossible.<sup>75</sup>

On the 20<sup>th</sup> February the Verandah riots broke out. Municipal inspectors under orders from the President, Dr Rowell, issued in spite of the recommendation of the Commissioners to move slowly, started to clear the verandahs of houses in Arab Street, Rochore Road and Clyde Terrace Market, where the stall-keepers were roughly and forcibly turned away. The disturbance spread through the town, shops were closed everywhere, and a good deal of damage was done to public conveyances. A number of Europeans were stoned and injured.

The miscreants were confined to the *samsengs* and the lowest among the coolie class. The towkays did what they could to assist the police by stopping the stone-throwing. The police strength was reinforced by blue-jackets from the *Constance* and *Audacious*. On the 21<sup>st</sup> February at a special meeting of the Commissioners, the President remarked: 'I attribute a great deal of the disturbances to Mr T Scott.' At a subsequent Board meeting, Mr Scott asked for an inquiry, after repeating his explanation of the incident [240] in Orchard Road, in which it was alleged that Mr Scott had interfered with the President's

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75 *Proceedings of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council*, 11 Oct 1888, at B66.

orders, and as the President expressed satisfaction at such further explanation, the matter was allowed to drop. The Ordinance required that no obstruction or inconvenience was to be created, and the Commissioners passed a resolution calling upon occupiers to clear their verandahs sufficiently to allow two persons to pass abreast. On the following day (22<sup>nd</sup>) shops were opened and business was carried on as usual, but coaling coolies at Tanjong Pagar and Borneo Wharf threw down their baskets and began to create disorder, attacking a number of Europeans in the neighbourhood. As the result of the riots, about one hundred persons were brought before the magistrates, and those who were convicted were, in addition to various terms of imprisonment, ordered to be whipped: while several rioters were killed by the police.

In February 1888 occurred the death of Mr Tan Kong Wee. The son of a gambler and pepper trader, he was born in Singapore in 1842 and was educated at Raffles Institution. He entered the service of Mr Atchison, solicitor, and continued in the service of his successor, Mr IS Bond (later, Bond & Drew), at first as a conveyancing clerk, and afterwards as managing clerk and cashier. At an early age he came in contact with Mr Song Hoot Kiam and embraced the Christian faith, despite the opposition of his mother and relatives. He married the eldest daughter of Mr Hoot Kiam, and she had much to do with the subsequent life and usefulness of her husband. In 1886 he retired, having saved sufficient money to live comfortably the rest of his days. His two sons, Tan Boon Hong and Tan Boon Guan, were then growing up, and the parents decided to take them away to Madras, where they would be far removed from the debasing influences of Chinese idolatry and where they might receive the impress of a Christian training under favourable conditions and environment. The two sons were sent to Doveton Protestant College, [241] where they studied for three years, but had to abandon the idea of proceeding to a university course, owing to the premature death of their father. A severe liver complaint began to trouble Mr Tan Kong Wee, and early in 1888 he was compelled to leave his sons in Madras, and returned with his wife to Singapore



Tan Kong Wee & Family

to visit his mother and to see if the sea voyage would not put him right again, but the disease proved fatal. The Rev JAB Cook says:

He was certainly the most hearty and enthusiastic Chinaman I ever came across. So frank and outspoken, it was quite refreshing to speak with him.<sup>76</sup>

Until he left for Madras, he was one of the local preachers in the Malay language at the Prinsep Street Church. Of his two sons, Tan Boon Hong succeeded his father as cashier to Messrs Drew & Napier, retiring in 1917; while Tan Boon Guan is cashier at the Police Courts and is a local preacher and superintendent of the Sunday school at Prinsep Street Church. Mr Tan Boon Guan is a clever, fluent and effective speaker, and, being gifted with a facile pen, he has been a regular and prominent contributor to the pages of the *Prinsep Street Church Messenger*, a religious monthly magazine.<sup>77</sup>

On the 1st March 1888 Messrs Tan Kim Ching, Tan Jiak Kim and Lim Eng Keng were elected Commissioners under the Municipal Ordinance of 1887, which had then just come into operation. It is interesting to note that there were fifteen candidates for the five seats for which the ratepayers were given the right to elect their representatives, and of these candidates six were Chinese. Messrs Lee Keng Yam, Tchan Chun Fook and Khoo Boon Lim were the defeated Chinese candidates.

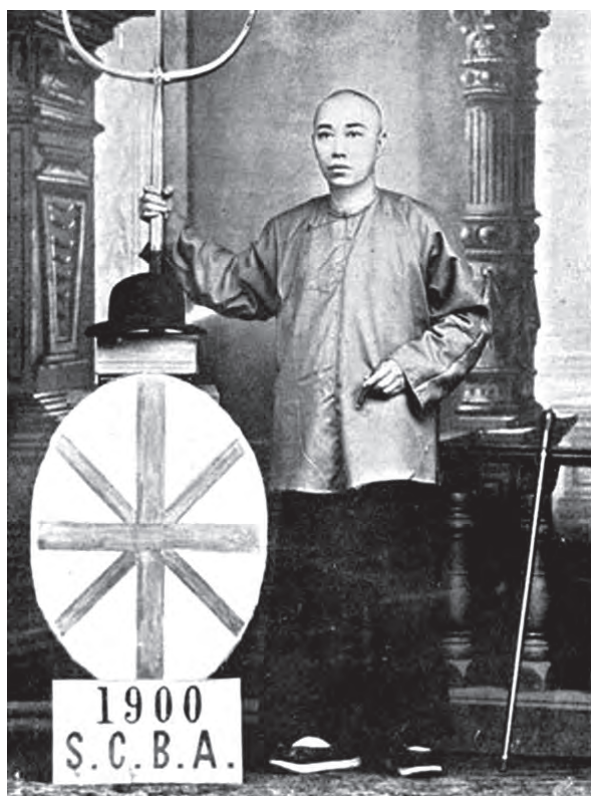
In August the Mikado of Japan conferred the 3<sup>rd</sup> class decoration of the Order of the Rising Sun on Mr Tan Kim Ching, the Siamese Consul, for his courtesy and kindness to Prince Komatsu of Japan when in Singapore on a special diplomatic mission to the Court of the King of Siam.

Mr Lee Keng Yam, well known as the head of the Opium Farm since 1885, died on the 28<sup>th</sup> September at [242] his residence in Telok Ayer Street, at the age of 46, and was buried in the family burial

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76 We are unable to trace the exact location of this quotation as copies of the *Singapore Free Press* for the year 1888 are missing.

77 See 'Death of Straits Chinese Leader: Mr Tan Boon Guan' *Straits Times*, 28 Mar 1936, at 9.



Tchan Chun Fook

ground at Ching in Malacca. He was a son of Mr Lee Quee Lim of Malacca, whose other sons were Lee Keng Yong, Lee Keng Liat, Lee Keng Kiat and Lee Sek Long. For thirteen years he was in Messrs Kim Seng & Co's branch firm in Shanghai, and came to Singapore in 1885. He was the holder of the Dutch farms in the neighbourhood, and, just two months before his death, he had secured a three years' contract for the Hongkong Opium Farm.

At a general meeting of the members of the Straits Settlements Association (Singapore Branch) on the 17<sup>th</sup> October for the formal constitution of the Branch Association, the appointment of officers and the passing of rules, the following Chinese members of the original association were present, namely, Tay Geok Teat, Tan Beng Wan, Lim Eng Keng, Tan Keng Cheow, Tan Kim Ching, Tchan Chun Fook and Ong Kew Ho. Twenty-two Chinese names appeared in a list of 110 original members, and Messrs Tan Kim Ching and Tchan Chun Fook were among the gentlemen elected on the first Committee.

At the Raffles Institution prize distribution on the 21<sup>st</sup> December 1888 the Governor, Sir Cecil Smith, after congratulating the School upon having won with Song Ong Siang and DA Aeria the 'Higher' Scholarships for the third year in succession, said:

With reference to the Higher Scholarships I hope, if I may make a suggestion, that the Trustees will place upon the walls of the principal room of the School the names of the successful holders, so that, in years to come, not only will there be an historical association connected with the School, but the list of names will be an additional incentive to future boys to emulate those who have gone before.<sup>78</sup>

This suggestion, however, was never carried out.

Song Ong Siang,<sup>79</sup> the eldest surviving son of the late Mr Song Hoot Kiam, was born in Singapore on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 1871. He entered

78 We are unable to trace the exact location of this quotation as copies of the *Singapore Free Press* for the year 1888 are missing.

79 On Song Ong Siang generally, see Lee Guan Kin, 'Song Ong Siang' in Leo Suryadinata (ed), *Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent: A Biographical Dic-*

Raffles Institution in [243] 1878, at a time when the lowest Form in the School was known as the Tenth Class, and the highest the First Class, from which promising pupils were promoted to the Special Class. The lad was put into the Seventh Class, but a few months later, on the introduction of a new rule in the School that all Chinese boys must appear with their heads clean shaved every Monday morning and on Mr Hoot Kiam not approving such rule, the lad was sent to the Christian Brothers' School (since called St Joseph's Institution), where he was carefully trained in calligraphy. His mother, who could read and write Malay characters, gave him his first lessons in that language, the study of which he continued in the Malay Class at Raffles Institution, then held under Mr Daud (now Major Daud of the Johore Forces). In 1880 Song Ong Siang rejoined Raffles Institution and was placed in the Fourth Class. At the age of 12, he won the Guthrie Scholarship, then awarded to the 'dux' of the Chinese pupils in that School, and he held the record of having won this scholarship for five consecutive years. In 1888 he went to England as the winner of the First Higher Scholarship for that year. Both in 1886 and 1887 he had obtained the first place in the examination for the Higher Scholarships, but was disqualified as he had not attained his sixteenth birthday at the date of the examination. When the founder of these valuable scholarships, Sir Cecil Smith, came personally to Raffles Institution to congratulate the winners and to inquire what profession they intended to take up, Mr Hullett asked Ong Siang for the date of his birth. This was given and Mr Hullett remarked, 'Why, I became Principal of this school a week before you were born, and I have lived to see you win a Higher Scholarship.' The interesting Reports from Boon Keng of the life of a first-year medical student in Edinburgh made Ong Siang desirous of taking up the medical profession, but the remarkable success reported in the London

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*tionary* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012), at 1008-1010; Ching Seow Ying, *A King's Chinese: A Study of Song Ong Siang*, BA Hons Thesis, Department of History (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 1972); and 李元瑾 《东西文化的撞击与新华知识分子的三种回应 — 邱菽园、林文庆、宋旺相的比较研究》 (Singapore: World Scientific, 2001).



The wedding of Mr & Mrs Song Ong Siang (seated, centre)



Captain & Mrs Song Ong Siang



*Times* of Mr Moungh Chan-toon, the Burmese gentleman who had just then been called to [244] the Bar and who as a student had won some eight scholarships in open competition among students of the Inns of Court, fired Ong Siang's ambition, and he decided for the Law.

Entering the Middle Temple in Hilary, 1889, Mr Hullett, then in England, arranged for an old friend, Mr W Douglas Edwards, to become Ong Siang's law tutor, on the usual fee of five guineas a month. This left the young fellow with a miserable pittance to live on out of his monthly scholarship allowance of £16 13s 4d (from which were further deducted income-tax and £5 in repayment to the Crown Agents for the advance of £150 made to him for his entrance fee at the Middle Temple). In June 1889 Ong Siang secured the first prize of 100 guineas from his Inn for Constitutional Law and Private International Law. Exactly a year later he won one of the two Scholarships of the value of 100 guineas for one year, awarded by the Inns of Court for Jurisprudence and Roman Law. It had been his ambition to take a degree at his former master's University, and the handsome money prizes he had won enabled him to realise that ambition. He entered Downing College, Cambridge, in the Michaelmas Term of 1890, and in addition to his work for the Law Tripos he competed for the Dr Whewell Scholarships in International Law and received honourable mention.<sup>80</sup> He came out top of the Second Class in Part I of the Law Tripos (1892), and again obtained a Second Class in June 1893 in Part II of the Law Tripos, along with his schoolmate Mr CM Phillips (an 1889 Queen's Scholar), and immediately afterwards graduated BA, LLB. He was called to the Bar on the 14th June 1893, and was admitted to the degrees of MA, LLM in absentia in 1900. At the University he made many valued and lifelong friends. The absence of 'putting on side' by undergraduates of noble birth was well exemplified by the following incident. On the first Sunday after going up to the University, Ong Siang [245] attended the service of the Presbyterian Church held in

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80 [Song: Vide *Life of Charles Vickery Hawkins*, p 117]. See *Charles Vickery Hawkins: Memorials of His Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1896) at 117.

the Guildhall (there being at that time no Presbyterian Church building in Cambridge). At the close of the service a young man, wearing the Trinity College gown, came up to him and asked if he was a freshman. He replied in the affirmative, and his questioner said: 'Well, I have just come up too, and I want to make friends with you. Come and see me at my rooms. My name is Cassells.' He handed Ong Siang a card, which found its way into the latter's pocket. On reaching his rooms, Ong Siang took out the card and read 'The Earl of Cassillis'. It should here be mentioned that the financial assistance at the end of his University course, rendered by the late Mr Thomas Scott (of Guthrie & Co) through representations made on his behalf by another schoolmate, Mr (now Dr) RF McNair Scott, then also studying at Cambridge, made it possible for Ong Siang to complete his University career, and he is ever grateful for that kindly and generous act.

Returning to Singapore in October 1893, Song Ong Siang in conjunction with an old schoolmate, Mr James Aitken (an 1886 Queen's Scholar), started the legal firm of Aitken & Ong Siang. Before he left England, Sir Cecil Smith had said to him:

Do not seek pastures new, but go back to Singapore and try to do the best you can for the Colony which has enabled you to get such a good start in life, and especially for your own countrymen.<sup>81</sup>

His career since his return has been a humble endeavour to carry out faithfully that injunction of the founder of the Queen's Scholarships.

At the end of 1893 he was elected President of the Chinese Christian Association, a post which he still fills. In the hope of enlightening the Straits Chinese community in particular, he started in July 1894 the publication of the *Bintang Timor*, a daily newspaper in Romanised Malay, in which effort he had Mr Tan Boon Chin as coadjutor, but the venture had to be abandoned after twelve months. In 1897 in collaboration with Dr Lim Boon Keng he produced the *Straits [246] Chinese*

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81 It is unclear if this quotation comes from a written source or was the product of the author's own recollection since he was the subject to whom it was addressed.

*Magazine*, which ran on for eleven years and in the pages of which are to be found many articles or series of articles of permanent interest. From 1894 to 1899 he was Assistant Editor of the *Straits Settlements Law Reports*. As colleague of Dr Lim Boon Keng, he worked hard to improve the status of the Straits Chinese community, by helping in the formation of such institutions as the Chinese Philomathic Society, the Singapore Chinese Girls' School, the Straits Chinese British Association and the Chinese Volunteer Company.

He is one of the few original members of the SVI Chinese Company formed in November 1901, and was one of the seven men selected to represent the Company in the Straits Contingent at the coronation of King Edward VII, in 1902. He acted as manager in the publication on board the SS *Ceylon* of the only two issues of the *Lyre* ('the Unofficial Organ of vagrants travelling at Government rates'), while his pen has preserved the doings of that contingent quartered on the extensive grounds of Alexandra Palace, London, in the pages of the *Straits Chinese Magazine*. He succeeded Dr Lim Boon Keng, on his resignation in 1905, as Colour-Sergeant of the Company, and in April 1907 was appointed a 2nd Lieutenant, and on the reorganisation of the SVC units into double companies in 1915, he was promoted to the rank of Captain.

In September 1907 he married Miss Yeo Hee Neo (Helen), the second daughter of Mr Yeo Poon Seng, at the Presbyterian Church. Lieut EA Brown, the senior subaltern of the Chinese Company, acted as best man, while the members of the company not only lined the entrance to the church, but paid Lieut and Mrs Song Ong Siang the unique honour, on their leaving the church, of pulling their carriage, by means of drag ropes, all the way to 'Hollandia', Lloyd Road, where the reception was held. Lieut Ong Siang, like all the officers of the SVC who attended the ceremony at the church, which was performed by Rev JAB Cook assisted by Rev JA Gray, was in white uniform. [247] As the newly married couple left the church, the officers of the SVC formed an arch of steel with their swords for them to pass under. It was the first of its kind - a military wedding of a Chinese volun-

teer officer. Sir William Hyndman-Jones, the Chief Justice, in a happy speech, proposed the toast of the bride and bridegroom, which was suitably acknowledged. A new departure was the going away for the honeymoon. As the bride left the house, she was presented with a beautiful bouquet by the Chinese Company. Sergt Tan Soo Bin drove the couple in his splendid motor car, decorated with a mass of fresh flowers, to 'Dingwall', Pasir Panjang, kindly lent by the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim.

A keen tennis player, he was in 1906 and 1909 challenger to Mr Ong Tek Lim, the then champion of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, but failed to oust the champion. He was sometime President of that Club. In May 1914 Mr Aitken, his partner, left Singapore on a five years' furlough, and single-handed during the whole period of the Great War Mr Ong Siang conducted the business of the firm, with the assistance of his exceedingly capable and thoroughly experienced managing clerk, Mr WP Cork, a son of the well-known lawyer Mr FT Cork. As Administration officer of the Chinese Co SVC, Capt Song Ong Siang carried on the strenuous and (towards the latter part of the War) irksome duties connected with the mobilisation of the Chinese volunteers to do Guard duty at various strategical posts on the island. At the outbreak of the War, he was one of the leaders in the movement, under the auspices of the Straits Chinese British Association, to get the Straits Chinese as British subjects to render whatever services they were capable of to King and Country 'in the hour of sore trial', and contributed several short articles to the brochure *Duty to the British Empire* (being an elementary guide for Straits Chinese) during the Great War, published in 1915 at the expense of that Association and distributed gratis to the educated section of the Straits Chinese community. His pamphlet entitled [248] *The Straits Chinese and a local Patriotic League* (1915) was intended to inculcate among his own people the spirit of patriotism and loyalty to the British Throne.

Connected with the Prinsep Street Church from infancy, Mr Ong Siang on his return from England took his place on the list of voluntary preachers, was secretary of the Deacons' Court, and succeeded

his father, at his death in 1900, as an elder of the church. For eight years from October 1908 when the first number of the *Prinsep Street Church Messenger* (a four-page religious monthly in Romanised Malay and English) was issued, Mr Ong Siang was the editor, to which post Mr Tan Boon Chin succeeded in October 1916.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE EIGHTH DECADE (1889-99)

ON the 26<sup>th</sup> February 1889 took place the unveiling in the Ballroom, Government House, of the statue of Her Majesty Queen Victoria by the Governor, Sir Cecil Smith, in the presence of the Chinese subscribers to the Statue Fund during the Jubilee year. The inscription appears on the pedestal of the statue (which represents Her Majesty in an erect and dignified position, with the orb and sceptre in her hands, her figure draped with Imperial robes), and reads as follows:

The statue of the Queen Victoria was presented by the Chinese community of Singapore in the year of Her Majesty's Jubilee to be placed in the Government House as a memento of the loyal affections of Her Majesty's Chinese subjects and of their gratitude for the benefit of her rule.

The Hon Mr Seah Liang Seah was the promoter of the scheme.

The Governor, addressing the company, said that he had invited them there to receive formally from them the handsome present of the statue, and that it was especially gratifying to him, as he had been so long connected with the Chinese in this Colony. He had seen Her Majesty during Jubilee year, and could vouch for the statue being an admirable likeness of her, and he most cordially thanked the subscribers on behalf of himself and his successors.

Mr Liang Seah replied:

The thirty-four Chinese beside me, who, at my proposal, so readily offered the means to have this statue [250] made and now have the honour to present it, are among the most loyal of Her Majesty's subjects in Singapore. They were either born in this settlement, or have resided for very many years in the place and have their families here, living under the wise and liberal rule of Her Majesty's Government. They desire to take this opportunity to express their deep respect for Her Most Gracious Majesty and the hope that



Unveiling a Statue of Her Late Majesty Queen Victoria at Government House

she may long be spared to rule over the great nation of England to which we owe the happiness and security we enjoy in Singapore.<sup>1</sup>

In honour of the marriage and accession of the Emperor Kwang-su to the Throne of China on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> February, an entertainment was given by Mr Tso Ping Lung to the principal Chinese merchants, and his friends of the Celestial Reasoning Association, and the 'Tong Lock Huay', at the consulate on the 4<sup>th</sup> March. It was a brilliant success, addresses being presented by the Chinese community and by the Celestial Reasoning Association, of which Consul Tso was president. The latter address, which was signed among others by Tchan Chun Fook, Chan Kim Boon, Tan Keong Saik, Khoo Boon Lim, Wee Theam Tew and Low Cheng Chuan, contains the following paragraphs:

In Singapore, which though but a small colony has among its inhabitants hundreds of thousands of your Chinese subjects, industriously toiling for their daily food, your presence here as the worthy representative of His Imperial Majesty has contributed, not a little, to remind them of their connection with home and to stimulate them to display the great marks of loyalty and deep respect which have been shown on this auspicious occasion by the numerous tribes now residing in this distant spot of the world.

As members of the Celestial Reasoning Association, we avail ourselves of this opportunity to publicly thank you, as president of the Society, for all that you have done to promote the welfare of its members, and for the much good and sound advice you have so often given us in all important social and educational matters.<sup>2</sup>

[251] The Chinese made the event a gala season, decorating and illuminating their houses, with theatrical performances in different parts of the town. Market Street was en fête, with masts erected on each side of the street, along and across which poles were suspended, bearing

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1 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

2 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.



lamps and lanterns by hundreds, while a canopy of red and white cloth extended along the whole length of the street.

These celebrations closed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, with a display of fireworks on Hong Lim Green. The Governor attended and was received by the Reception Committee consisting of Lee Cheng Yan, Wee Kim Yam, Goh Sin Kho, Tan Keng Swee and Gan Eng Seng, and was presented with an address delivered by the President of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club. The function was enlivened with music provided by the band of the 58th Regiment.

The famine in North China aroused the sympathy of the Straits public. On the 7th March the Acting Colonial Secretary (Hon AM Skinner) in moving the vote of \$25,000 by Council in aid of the Fund said:

The Governor took steps to sound the feelings of the Chinese community, and in consequence of these steps a very large sum has already been collected. The most recent figures are \$53,000, and of this sum upwards of \$27,600 has been contributed in Singapore alone. Mr Tan Kim Ching has given \$4,000 and the Captain China of Selangor \$3,000. It is proper that these large contributions should be made and that they should be supplemented, as they have been, by other donations and by the public grant I now ask for. The Chinese here, as we all know, are the energetic, active, prosperous and prosperity-bringing section of the native community. The Chinese do and naturally ought to feel interested, even in that part of China which they do not come from. This Colony and this Council as representing it, resting so much as it does on the Chinese portion of the community, would be wanting in its duty, if it did not, in an emergency like this, come forward with a donation from the public funds.<sup>3</sup>

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3 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation. However it is reprinted in 'Chinese Topics in Malaya' *Straits Times* 15 Jul 1932, at 19.

[252] It is interesting to find the *Lat Pau* Press of the 9<sup>th</sup> March making a strong appeal to the Chinese merchants to contribute liberally to the subscription list for the purchase of Maxim guns for the SVA.

'The volunteers' says the editor,

are not lawless vagrants who are fond of fighting and quarrelling, but are all merchants or gentlemen of reputation, who are most energetic in protecting the Settlements, and being prompted by a sense of duty do not shrink from any dangers or troubles. ... Now, supposing the volunteers do not care to make preparations for the future, but prefer a life of idleness, who can punish them for so doing? But no, they are most ardent to make their Corps efficient, and those who hear of them ought to be just as ardent in responding to their appeal, which consists in merely subscribing money.<sup>4</sup>

The total amount subscribed was \$10,524, of which \$7,000 came from the Chinese (including \$2,500 from Mr Cheang Hong Lim). The translation of this *Lat Pau* appeal, which was published in the *Free Press*, was reproduced in several English papers, including *Reynolds's Weekly*, under the title 'Bravo, Singapore!' commending highly the generous action of the Chinese community.

On the 3rd September a large number of influential Chinese gentlemen assembled at 'Belle Vue' to say goodbye to the Rev W Oldham and his wife, on the eve of their departure for America. Consul Tso Ping Lung presented Mr Oldham with a handsomely engraved address, which was read out by Mr Tan Keong Saik, and after the function Mr and Mrs Oldham drove away in the carriage of the Hon Mr Seah Liang Seah amid cheers and fireworks. The Governor sent a letter of thanks to Mr Oldham for having established the Anglo-Chinese school, which then had an enrolment of 350 pupils.

The *Lat Pau* of the 4<sup>th</sup> September drew attention to the increasing number of blind singing girls in Singapore, [253] and, from inquiries made, the editor learnt that the life of this class of singers was a very hard one. Some wicked women in China made it their occupation to

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4 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

buy blind girls and train them to be musicians and singers. When their education was completed, they were taken out at night, in charge of some old woman, to sing for anyone who might call them as they passed along the streets, and whatever they earned was taken from them by their owners. They were generally very badly treated and forced to lead immoral lives.

At the Municipal Meeting held on the 11<sup>th</sup> September Mr Tan Jiak Kim, in a very able and strong speech, introduced his motion:

That as the absence of any regulations for checking the spread of certain contagious diseases, arising from the dangerous trade or practice of prostitution, is proving injurious to the health of the public of this place, it is hereby resolved that it is expedient that steps be taken by the Municipal Commissioners to make and enforce, under section 56 of the Municipal Ordinance, such regulations as may be found necessary for the protection of public health.<sup>5</sup>

Mr Jiak Kim dwelt on the enormous difference in the position of the young girls who formed the bulk of the prostitutes here, as compared with the same class in Europe. The liberty of the subject as regards these Chinese unfortunates was an empty name, and no Protection of Women and Girls Ordinance could assist them in resisting the system of which they formed helpless units. Owing to the abolition of the Contagious Diseases Ordinance, the safety of the community was at stake, and, as guardians of public health, the Commissioners would fail in their duty to the public were they to remain quiet and not attempt to do something to remedy this crying evil.

Mr Tan Beng Wan was one of the supporters of the motion. On the ground that the Commissioners had no power under the Municipal Ordinance to draw up [254] by-laws on the subject, Major McCallum proposed as an amendment:

That a Committee be appointed to collect statistics and information relative to the effects of the repeal of the CDO, with a view

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5 'Municipal Commissioners' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 17 Sep 1889, at 5.

to a report being framed and forwarded to Government, by which clauses may be introduced in the Municipal Amending Ordinance, under which the practice of prostitution in Singapore may be regulated.<sup>6</sup>

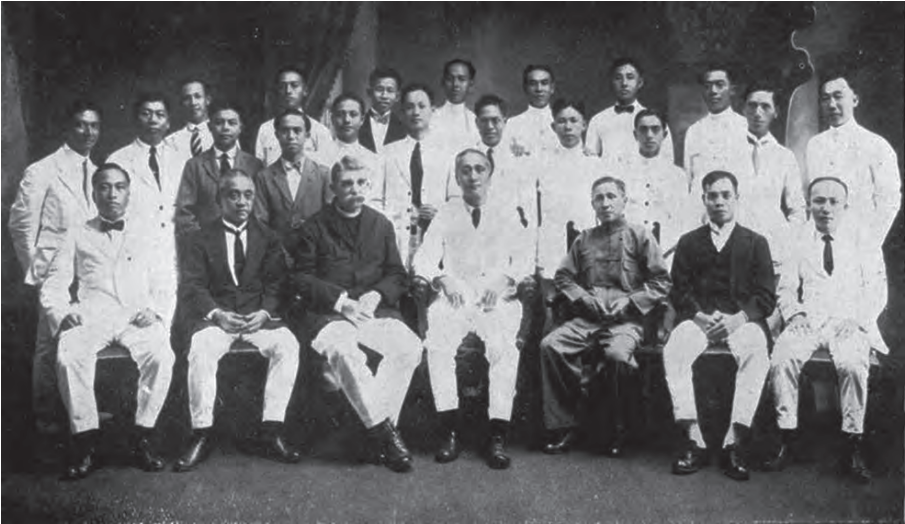
Mr Jiak Kim withdrew his motion, and the amendment was carried unanimously.

In October 1889 the Chinese Christian Association came into existence, and on the 26th March 1890 it appeared in the first list of institutions exempted from registration under the Societies Ordinance (1889). The Chinese Christian Association, as has already been narrated, was the outcome of the report of the Committee appointed by the Presbyterian Church Young Men's Society, to devise ways and means for giving effect to the suggestion, made by Mr Lim Koon Tye in his paper read before that Society, that Christian people should take a special interest in the highest welfare of the Straits Chinese community. The Celestial Reasoning Association, which had aimed at the intellectual training and advancement of that community and which had for a few years led a vigorous existence, was then defunct. The spiritual as well as the moral education and progress of Straits-born Chinese, by means of an organised institution with those objects primarily in view, had not been attempted hitherto. When the Chinese Christian Association, therefore, was founded, it was definitely announced that it was to be an association for Chinese Christians, but that its doors would always be thrown open to all Straits Chinese seeking religious and moral enlightenment and intellectual improvement. Earnest Christian men like Col Tuck, Col Watson, Rev JAB Cook and Messrs John Haffenden, Arthur Knight and Charles Phillips were associated with the work of the [255] Society from its inception, and served as leaders in Bible reading and study, and in devotional exercises.

The regular meetings of the Association have always been held in Prinsep Street Church, and, owing to this fact, Straits Chinese Christians connected with other local churches have, with some few excep-

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6 Ibid.



Chinese Christian Association

tions, been misled into thinking that it is intended only for members of Prinsep Street (Baba) Church. The work of the Association has been carried on steadily since that time, and, although its membership has never been large, its yearly syllabus of lectures, Bible classes and debates has attracted many young and old Straits Chinese to attend the fortnightly meetings and to be enrolled as associates. The Society has had the great advantage of having Mr Tan Boon Chin as Hon Secretary since 1891 and Mr Teo Choon Hian<sup>7</sup> as Hon Treasurer since 1892; and the value of the work of these two devoted men in their respective posts cannot be over-estimated. Each anniversary of the Association, during the past twenty-nine years, has been celebrated in the form of a social and musical evening. To this entertainment, friends of both sexes of the members have been invited to enjoy the excellent music provided by European and Straits Chinese vocalists and instrumentalists, to listen to the report of the year's work and to an address of an inspiring, elevating and helpful character from some influential or well-known Christian gentleman.

The efforts of Mr Song Ong Siang, who has been its president since 1893, and of the Rev W Murray, who has been its vice-president since 1905, have been directed to extend the usefulness of the Association by helping the members to aspire to be better citizens, as well as more serviceable and more efficient units of society, and by training the members to take a higher and a Christian view of life and service. Since 1908, at the suggestion of Mr Song Ong Joo,<sup>8</sup> a Reading Club section has been added, and this has been a most encouraging and interesting feature of the activities of the Association. The Reading Club, under the leadership of Mr Ong Siang [256] for the senior division,

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7 Little is known of Mr Teo Choon Hian save that he was active in the Chinese Christian Association (see 'The Chinese Christian Association' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 21 Nov 1893, at 11) and that he was a Trustee of the St Andrew's Hospital (see 'St Andrew's Hospital', *Straits Times*, 26 Dec 1924, at 10) and was involved in the building of the St Andrew's Mission Hospital (see St Andrew's Mission Hospital Ordinance, Cap 376, Singapore Statutes).

8 For more on Song Ong Joo, see Chapter 12.

and of Mr Murray for the junior, meets regularly, once a week, for the study of the English language and of standard English literature. From time to time, young men, who have attended the Reading Club meetings faithfully, have testified to the benefits they have derived therefrom and have commended the institution to their friends. There is now, also, a Dramatic section under Mr Murray, and the members of that section have not only prepared dramatic sketches for their own enjoyment, but also for the entertainment of Straits Chinese and others at social gatherings of several literary societies. The Association also possesses a small library of religious books and works of standard authors.

The annual prize distribution at Raffles Institution took place on the 20th December, and Mr Hullett, the Principal, whose memory must remain ever fresh with many of the better-educated Straits Chinese who passed through his hands, took the opportunity of thanking Sir Cecil Smith for having done so much for that school, and for education in the Colony: for he had made it possible for boys in this Colony to finish their studies in England, and in future years, when the Colony had grown great, his name would be associated with the founder of that school — Sir Stamford Raffles.

The Governor, in his speech, said that he looked back with great gratification on the success which had attended the establishment of the Higher Scholarships, and, after mentioning what each of the eight lads who had won scholarships during the preceding four years had already done, he announced that these scholarships would in the future be known as Queen's Scholarships. His Excellency continued: 'If it had done that so early in the scheme, there need be no hesitation in saying that we have done something for the education of the Colony, which I have so much at heart.'<sup>9</sup> Little did he dream that, in less than a generation, there should arise people who threw cold water on his glorious scheme and that, before the last page of this History is reached, [257] we should be under the painful necessity of having to record the

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9 We are unable to trace the exact source of this quotation.

entire abolition of these scholarships for nothing better in the direction of encouraging the bright and promising lads of this Colony towards higher education and a wider outlook on life.

The great event of the year was undoubtedly the passing into law of the Societies Ordinance.<sup>10</sup> The Bill<sup>11</sup> attracted deepest interest on account of the great change it was to effect in the nature of the organisation of a large mass of the Chinese in the Colony. While it was generally felt that the abolition of the Secret Societies was absolutely necessary, there was uncertainty as to what the practical outcome of such an irrevocable step as their complete suppression might be. The unofficial members had solidly opposed the second reading, but, in the progress of the Bill through committee, the Government made certain concessions, and the Governor explained the modus operandi of the measure, and the third reading was taken without opposition. After some delay, caused by the consideration by the Secretary of State of a memorial against the Bill forwarded by the Ghi-hin society, the Royal Assent was finally notified, and the Ordinance came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1890, with six months' grace for the secret societies to wind up their affairs and distribute or otherwise dispose of their property and funds.

In this year (1889) there landed in Singapore a young man, Tan Kheam Hock, who has taken and is still taking a prominent part in the public life of this Settlement. Mr Tan Kheam Hock, a son of the late Tan Teng Pong, who was a well-known merchant of Penang, was born there on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1862.<sup>12</sup> After completing his education at the Penang Free School, he entered the service of the Mercantile Bank, and some years later he proceeded to Calcutta to start a general produce business there. Two years away from his countrymen was enough for him, and, in 1889, he came to Singapore and joined the Syndicate

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10 See 'Government Gazette Extraordinary, 30<sup>th</sup> September' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 7 Oct 1889, at 2.

11 See 'The Societies Bill' *Straits Times*, 22 Feb 1889, at 5.

12 'Late Mr Tan Kheam Hock' *Straits Times*, 29 Apr 1922, at 9.





Tan Kheam Hock

which (with the exception of the period 1898-1900) held the monopoly of the Opium and [258] Spirit Farms till 1906. Since December 1901 he has been labour contractor to the Tanjong Pagar Dock Co Ltd (now the Singapore Harbour Board), having under his control a permanent labour force numbering some thousands of souls. In 1910 he received the special thanks of the Governor for his advice and assistance in connection with the establishment of the Government Monopolies Department. He was one of the last Municipal Commissioners elected before the Municipal Ordinance of 1913 came into operation, and has since served for two terms on the Board as a nominated Commissioner. In 1912 he was made a JP. A staunch supporter of the Straits Chinese British Association, he was for a number of years on the committee of that institution. Besides having a seat on the Chinese Advisory Board, and serving on the committee of the Po Leung Kuk, he is also a member of the Board of Licensing Justices, of the Hospital Board and of the Council of King Edward VII Medical School. He is chairman of the Eastern United Assurance Corporation Ltd, and a director of quite an array of rubber, tin and industrial companies. Mr Tan Kheam Hock<sup>13</sup> is a man of progressive ideas and is a sincere friend to the cause of education for Chinese girls. For a period of thirty years he has identified himself with all movements for the welfare of the Chinese community here and is always ready to assist with his purse and sound advice in every good cause. In 1913 he visited England, taking with him his two younger sons, Chong Chew and Chong Teck,<sup>14</sup> with the object of giving them a university education, but domestic affairs necessitated their return to Singapore after they had been for a short time at a

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13 Tan Kheam Hock died at his home at 106 River Valley Road on 21 April 1922. See 'Death' *Singapore Free Press*, 22 Apr 1922, at 6.

14 According to the inscription on his tomb, Tan Chong Teck was born on 12 Apr 1896 and died on 5 Dec 1956 and was buried at the Bukit Brown Chinese Cemetery. See <<http://mymindisrojak.blogspot.sg/2012/07/tan-kheam-hock-bukit-brown.html>> (accessed 15 Feb 2015)).

private school in England.<sup>15</sup> At the reception held by Mr and Mrs Tan Kheam Hock, in July 1915, on the marriage of Tan Chong Chew,<sup>16</sup> Mr JR Nicholson,<sup>17</sup> manager of the Singapore Harbour Board, proposed the health of the newly wedded pair, the toast being acknowledged in quite English fashion by the bridegroom, [259] who then led a small informal dance, during which the bride played several selections on the piano. Mr Kheam Hock's two elder sons, Chong Khee and Chong

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15 In April 1913, Tan Kheam Hock accompanied his younger sons Chong Chew and Chong Teck to London where they were 'going to complete their education' (see 'Social and Personal' *Strait Times*, 11 Apr 1913, at 8) but they had to return when their mother died while they were still on the way to London (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 5 May 1913, at 8). In 1914, he was admitted to the King Edward VII Medical School but it is not known if he graduated from the School (see 'King Edward VII Medical School' *Straits Times*, 30 May 1914, at 8).

16 Tan Chong Chew (alias Chen Tsung Chou) was the third son of Tan Kheam Hock and Oh Peang Neo ('Local News' *Weekly Sun*, 28 Jan 1911, at 7) and younger brother of Tan Chong Khee and Tan Chong Lay, and elder brother of Tan Chong Teck. He married Foo Gim Yong, 'the accomplished daughter of Mr and Mrs Foo Boon Seah, of Penang' at a lavish ceremony at the family residence at 30 Enggor Street (see 'Chinese Wedding' *Straits Times*, 19 Jul 1915, at 10). He has been listed as having been Manager of the Eastern Mining and Rubber Co Ltd (see *Straits Times*, 23 Nov 1920, at 15); Manager of Liberty Hall Cinema (see *Singapore Free Press*, 11 Oct 1920, at 2); Director of the Malacca Pinda Rubber Estates Ltd (see 'Malacca Pinda Estates' *Straits Times*, 31 Dec 1919, at 9). He died on 23 Mar 1969 and was survived by two sons, Huck Wan and Huck Hean and one daughter, Daisy (see <<http://mymindisrojak.blogspot.sg/2012/07/tan-kheam-hock-bukit-brown.html>> (accessed 15 Feb 2015)).

17 Sir John Rumney Nicholson was born in 1865 in Langwathby, Cumberland. He was educated at St Bees and the College of Science at Newcastle. He worked as an engineer in Newcastle before coming to Singapore in 1902 as the General Manager of the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company. When the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company was transformed into the Singapore Harbour Board, Nicholson was appointed Chairman and Chief Engineer. He was knighted in 1914 (see 'Mr JR Nicholson, CMG' *Weekly Sun*, 30 Aug 1913, at 10). He died at Red House, Underskiddaw, Keswick on 22 Nov 1939 (see 'Ex-SHB Head Dies at 74, Sir JR Nicholson' *Straits Times* 6 Dec 1939, at 10).

Lay,<sup>18</sup> have been volunteers. Mr Tan Chong Khee has for several years held the tennis championship of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, and is a director of York Estates Ltd and other limited companies.

In January 1890 the Koh Yew Hean Press started a new eight-page Chinese daily called the *Sing Pau*. It was printed in red ink.

In February the first meeting of the newly created Chinese Advisory Board for Singapore was held. The Hokien representatives were Tan Jiak Kim, Tan Beng Wan, Lim Eng Keng and Lee Cheng Yan; Teochew representatives Seah Liang Seah, Tan Yong Siak<sup>19</sup> and Low Cheang Yee; while Boey Ah Sam and Wang Joon Siang represented the Cantonese and Hylam sections. The first matter taken up was the Government Science classes, in the form of a motion by Mr Tan Jiak Kim that 'such classes should be an independent institution and not be attached to any particular school or placed under the supervision of the Principal of any school in the Colony'. This motion was carried unanimously.

On the occasion of a brief visit paid to this port by TRH the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, a Flower Show was held, and Messrs Seah Song Seah, Whampoa and Choa Kim Keat figured among the prize-winners.<sup>20</sup>

In the following month, at the Chinese Club in Kampong Java Road, Admirals Ting and Lang of the Chinese squadron were entertained by Chinese merchants. The Chinese naval band was in attendance. Messrs Tan Jiak Kim and Tan Beng Wan were chiefly responsible for the successful entertainment.

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18 Tan Chong Lay was the second son of Tan Kheam Hock. He was born in 1887. He married Lim Mui Geck, fourth daughter of Lim Nee Soon and they had one son, Tan Huck Khong (1913–1943) and two daughters, Poey Suan and Poey Kee. Tan Chong Lay and his family lived at 133 Devonshire Road. He died on 31 Dec 1932 and was buried at Bukit Brown Chinese Cemetery (see <<http://mymindisrojak.blogspot.sg/2012/07/tan-kheam-hock-bukit-brown.html>> (accessed 15 Feb 2015)).

19 On Tan Yong Siak, see Chapter 10.

20 'The Flower Show' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 23 Jun 1891, at 7.



Low Cheang Yee



Boey Ah Sam

The King and Queen of Siam landed here on the 30th May and stayed at 'Siam House', the residence of Mr Tan Kim Ching in North Bridge Road. The King's first visit was in 1871. Among other places of interest which were shown to the Royal visitors was the [260] Tan Tock Seng Hospital, to which the King gave a donation of \$1,000. A levee was held at the Town Hall, and, among others, the Chinese residents presented an address which was responded to by the King in English.

In June, Boey Ah Sam (a member of the Advisory Board) was arrested for the instigation of the murder of Haji Amat Marican (otherwise known as Haji Puteh) by several Chinese in Havelock Road.<sup>21</sup> Boey Ah Sam had a Farm concession over a river in Batu Pahat, and for several years the murdered man had acted as his attorney in managing the Farmer's rights. Certain sums of money were claimed to be due to him by Boey Ah Sam, and an action had been instituted a few months previously in the Supreme Court by the deceased against the accused to recover the sum of \$7,000. After some evidence had been given in the Police Court on behalf of the prosecution, the police were instructed to withdraw the case, and two of the Malay witnesses for the Crown were arrested and tried for perjury at the Assizes, when they were acquitted.

Boey Ah Sam<sup>22</sup> was born in Canton on the 14th July 1829. In 1843, at the age of 14, he came to Singapore. Shortly after his arrival he made the acquaintance of Mr James Guthrie of Messrs Guthrie & Co, through whose assistance he started a bakery business. About ten years later he closed down this concern, and opened a Cantonese sundry business at No. 21 Market Street, in partnership with his eldest brother, Boey Ah Soo,<sup>23</sup> under the style of Boey Ah Soo & Co chop

21 See 'The Assizes' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 17 Sep 1890, at 4.

22 Boey Ah Sam, also known as Boey Sam was born in Canton in 1829 and arrived in Singapore in 1842, see *Straits Times*, 27 Dec 1913, at 8.

23 Boey Ah Soo was also known as Boey Soo. Little is known of him save that he was the elder brother of Boey Ah Sam and that in 1848, he donated \$5 towards the rebuilding of the Ning Yang Hui Guan; and in 1854 donated \$30 towards

Swee Wo, with branches at Canton, Hongkong, Penang and Calcutta.<sup>24</sup> About 1893 he wound up all his business and went to Batu Pahat, where he was engaged in planting till 1913.<sup>25</sup> He died at the age of 84 on the 25th December 1913, at the residence of his son Boey Chuan Poh<sup>26</sup> in Singapore,<sup>27</sup> and was buried at Pek San Teng, the Cantonese cemetery in Thomson Road.<sup>28</sup>

The case of *Khoo Tiong Poh v SS Kirklands* was decided in this year.<sup>29</sup> It was an action instituted by the plaintiff as owner of the SS

the renovation of the Da Bo Gong Temple, see 陈荊和《新加坡华文碑铭集录》(香港: 香港中文大学, 1970) at 71 & 185.

24 Boey established this business through the assistance of James Guthrie. It was initially located at Telok Ayer Street before moving to 21 Market Street. This company was wound up in 1890, see *Straits Times*, 27 Dec 1913, at 8.

25 Boey planted gambier, pepper and rubber in Batu Pahat, *ibid*.

26 Boey Chuan Poh (also spelt Boey Chian Poh or Buey Chuan Poh) was born in 1873 in Malacca, and like his father, was engaged in a miscellany of businesses, including supplying granite from Pulau Ubin to the government. It was in this connection that Boey got into financial difficulties since the Government would not countenance a revision of prices ('Municipal Meeting' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 6 Jul 1907, at 3) and the 'wealthy friend in Seremban' who had 'offered to put money into' Boey's contracting business 'died before the promise could materialise' ('Bankruptcy' *Singapore Free Press*, 25 Jun 1910, at 12). He established the Union Press, a local newspaper that published in Chinese and English and was its sole proprietor and editor. Boey encountered many problems in connection with the press, as he was at the receiving end of several libel suits (see for example, *Straits Times* 20 Sep 1923, at 10; and 'News and Rubber' *Singapore Free Press*, 18 Mar 1914, at 7) and charges (see for example, 'Wednesday' *Weekly Sun*, 8 Apr 1911, at 5). He died on 19 August 1926 at his home at 49 Devonshire Road, leaving behind his wife and two daughters. He was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery, see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 21 Aug 1926, at 8.

27 In 1913, Boey Chuan Poh's residence was Eng Ho House at 46 Cairnhill Road. Boey Ah Sam was survived by five sons, four daughters and a large number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. See 'Death' *Straits Times*, 27 Dec 1913, at 8.

28 Boey Ah Sam was instrumental in raising funds to the construction of a temple at Pek San Teng in 1890 as well as in opening up the roads around the cemetery, see '广惠肇碧山亭.118.年', 《联合早报》 (*Lianhe Zaobao*), 25 Sep 1988, at 34.

29 See 'Vice Admiralty Court To-day' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 25 Feb 1890, at 2.

*Petrel* for salvage services [261] rendered to the *Kirklands*, which went ashore two miles west of Diamond Point near Acheen. The case was of interest as it involved the question of the relative powers of the master and chinchew of a steamer, on behalf and as representatives of the owner, to treat with another party.

In 1891 the Colonial Secretary (Sir F Dickson)<sup>30</sup> introduced in Council an amendment to the Chinese Immigrants Ordinance of 1880 necessitated by a judgment of the Supreme Court in June 1890 to the effect that the law gave no power to detain an immigrant on account of his passage money, alleged to have been paid for him to shipowners by people who had brought him down from China. It had been the practice since 1880 to consider that such a person had a hold on the coolie and power to detain him for ten days until he entered into a contract to labour. This amending Ordinance was to legalise such practice and was stated to be a temporary measure, but it was not till 1902 that a new Immigration Ordinance took its place.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> March a mass meeting was held at the Town Hall to protest against the Military Exaction imposed on the Colony's revenue by the Home Government. Mr Tan Keong Saik, who was one of the numerous speakers, said:

I do not deny that we are liable for a certain portion of the military expenditure. On the contrary, I admit that we are liable for a great portion of the cost of European troops here, whether for Imperial or local interests, but then the contribution should be in proportion to our revenue. ... Looking to the great civilising influence that is being worked against the vice of opium smoking, we may one day be without any of the revenue we now receive from that source. It is on that consideration, as well as others that we now protest, because, in exacting from us this £100,000 with probably

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30 Sir John Frederick Dickson was Colonial Secretary and later Administrator of the Straits Settlements between 1887 and 1890. Dickson Road in Kampong Kapor (now expunged) was named after him. See Victor R Savage and Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 103.



a large increase in the future, it is undermining the prosperity of the Colony.<sup>31</sup>

The resolution protesting against the policy of charging [262] the cost of troops, chiefly for imperial purposes, to local revenue was passed unanimously. A few days later the Chinese Advisory Board met, and a resolution, proposed by Mr Lee Cheng Yan, and seconded by Mr Tan Beng Wan, 'that the Chinese Advisory Board agrees in every respect with the protest made by the Official and Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council and the chief speakers at the late public meeting against the large increase to the military contribution demanded by the Home Government', was also passed unanimously.

There was a spirited discussion, in March, at the ordinary meeting of the Municipal Board, as to the interpretation of section 45 of the Municipal Ordinance 1888. Messrs Tan Jiak Kim, Tan Beng Wan and Lim Eng Keng were the Chinese Municipal Commissioners. Mr Jiak Kim strongly urged the claims of old Municipal servants to consideration for a gratuity, and on Mr Miller's amendment, that no scheme that does not make service prior to 1888 reckon for gratuities be considered, a vote was taken, the amendment being carried by 5 votes to 4, and the whole proceedings were forwarded to the Governor in Council for consideration.

After the dismissal of the appeal of *Yeo Kian Guan versus Seah Liang Seah*,<sup>32</sup> the Chinese showed their feelings of joy and satisfaction that a Court of law had upheld the honourable character of the late Seah Eu Chin, which had been impugned by the nature of the plaintiff's claim, by giving a wayang at Mr Liang Seah's house to which Europeans were invited, and, further, by the presentation of a silk scroll on which were set forth the virtues of the late Seah Eu Chin.

31 See 'The Military Extraction' *Straits Times Weekly Issue* 17 Mar 1891, at 6.

32 See 'Yeo Kian Guan, Appellant versus Seah Liang Seah, Respondent' *Straits Times*, 10 Apr 1891, at 2.

In July, Lu Thien<sup>33</sup> and four others were arrested under banishment orders for being concerned in the Tong Beng secret society. Others again were tried at the Assizes and convicted. It was alleged that this society, which had its headquarters in Kampong Glam, had terrorised the district and levied blackmail on shopkeepers through the agency of paid *samsengs*, and that [263] the headman had so much power that he was known as 'the king of Kampong Glam'. Lu Thien's case became notorious inasmuch as he invoked the aid of the Court to set aside the order. On the return of the writ of Habeas Corpus, his counsel, Mr Nanson, argued the case at great length and quoted the speech of the Governor, when the Bill was introduced in Council, that no banishment order would be made against an alien unless after an inquiry held in the presence of the party to be affected by the inquiry. In a lengthy judgment, the Chief Justice (Sir EL O'Malley) said:

The inquiry prescribed by the Ordinance is to be an inquiry as to the facts making out a case for necessity on public grounds, and the Governor in Council shall be the sole judge of what inquiry is necessary for that purpose, of its scope, the evidence to be received and the parties to be present. ... The duty incumbent on the Governor of observing the laws of natural justice is no longer a legal duty that the law can enforce. It is a matter within their own discretion, conferred upon them by the plain words of the Ordinance, under which the Court has no legal power to interfere. If it is said that the man is left without the legal protection of those rights which natural justice would accord him, the answer is that this legal protection is properly and advisedly taken away by the Legislature.<sup>34</sup>

There was next an application for Lu Thien's release on bail pending an appeal, then the hearing before the Court of Appeal, and finally a petition before the Appeal Court for leave to appeal to the Privy

33 This was Loo Thian Hin or Loo Thien. See 'The Banishment Case: The Prisoner Remains in Custody' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 15 Jul 1891, at 11.

34 'The Banishment Case: The Prisoner Remains in Custody' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 15 Jul 1891, at 11.

Council. In all these applications he was unsuccessful, but what no doubt encouraged him to press his suit was the knowledge that the banishment orders against two out of the five persons to be deported had been cancelled. The closing scene took place when Lu Thien was placed on board a China-bound steamer and dispatched to Hongkong.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> December 1891 Mr Tan Beng Wan died. [264] He was born in Annam and was adopted by Mr Tan Kim Tian. He was educated at Raffles School, and at the age of 15 he joined the firm of Kim Tian & Co, of which he became the managing partner on the death of Mr Tan Kim Tian. Although at the time of his death Mr Tan Beng Wan was only 40 years old, he had already shown that he was possessed of public spirit, for in December 1888 he was elected Municipal Commissioner for Central Ward. In December 1889 he was re-elected for a term of three years, but death overtook him just after he had served two years of the new term. He was also a Director of the Straits Insurance Company at the time of his death.<sup>35</sup>

In this year (1891) an association was registered under the Societies Ordinance under the name of the Oriental Association or 'Ho Lian Tek', its Chinese equivalent. Quarterly meetings are held in the house of each member in rotation, as the Association has no club house. There is a monthly subscription. The general funds are applied in the purchase of an embroidered pall and other funeral ornaments and decorations which are lent to members at funeral ceremonies. A special subscription is collected from the members when a death occurs and the amount subscribed is given to help defray the funeral expenses of a deceased member, his wife and his parents. On the occasion of the marriage of a member or his children, a similar call is made from every member to provide a wedding purse. Certain rites are observed by the members at a marriage or funeral function. This Association is still in existence. There are now a great many associations having similar benevolent objects, and these societies have become popular,

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35 See 'The Late Mr Tan Beng Wan' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 30 Dec 1891, at 7. Tan died at his residence, Botan House, in Neil Road.

as they serve a useful purpose. At a wedding dinner the members help the host to entertain the other guests, while at a funeral, which is an elaborate affair, they render various forms of service.

The deaths of Messrs Tan Beng Wan and Lim Eng Keng in rapid succession left the Hon Tan Jiak Kim as the sole representative of Chinese interests on the [265] Municipal Board at the end of January 1892. A meeting of the principal Chinese ratepayers was held on the 24th February at which both Mr Seah Liang Seah and Mr Tan Keong Saik declined to stand for the Rochore Ward vacancy. Mr Tay Geok Teat's name was then proposed by Mr Tan Jiak Kim and seconded by Mr Lee Cheng Yan. A deputation was immediately dispatched to Mr Geok Teat and returned with him to the meeting, at which he intimated his acceptance of the nomination. He served as Municipal Commissioner for the year 1892 only, and died in April 1893.<sup>36</sup>

On the 4<sup>th</sup> February 1892 a case of running amok occurred in a house in Japan Street, when eight persons, all members of a Chinese family closely related to Mr Ho Yang Peng, the Chinese postmaster, were more or less seriously injured by a Chinese cook,<sup>37</sup> formerly in the service of Hang Kee Wan,<sup>38</sup> the Beach Farmer for 1891, who was one of the persons injured. The cook claimed, besides \$50 due to him by the Farmer, which was paid, a further sum of \$200; and when his demand was refused, he left the house and returned in an hour's time armed with two large knives and slashed away at some children and then at the elderly inmates. Of the three children one was almost completely scalped, and the knife was used with so much force that it went right to the bone, across the forehead to the left eye, cutting that

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36 See 'The Late Mr Geok Teat' *Singapore Free Press*, 21 Apr 1893, at 2.

37 According to a newspaper report, the cook's name was Chee Geng. See 'A Chinaman Runs Amok' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 10 Feb 1892, at 74. In another report, his name was given as 'Chu Heong'; see 'The Japan Street Amok Case' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 9 Mar 1892, at 2.

38 According to the newspaper report, his name was How Kee Wan, *ibid.*

organ so badly that it had to be removed. This girl, Phua Poh Choo,<sup>39</sup> a daughter of the late Mr Phua Choon Yang,<sup>40</sup> was afterwards one of the brightest products of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School in Hill Street, and she is now happily married to Mr Gwee Jim Swee of the Labuan Government Service.<sup>41</sup>

On the 25th April the Rev A Lamont, MA,<sup>42</sup> of the English Presbyterian Chinese Mission, announced a reconstitution of the Committee of the Singapore Chinese Educational Institute which had come into existence in 1891. Mr Tan Tek Soon was Chairman, Mr Lim Koon Tye Hon Secretary, and Mr Tan Boon Guan Hon Treasurer. Evening

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39 Phua Poh Choo was born in 1885 and died on 6 Nov 1956 at her home at 11 Sirat Road, off Hillside Drive. She was survived by two sons, Eng Choon and Kim Bock, five daughters and 18 grandchildren. See 'Death' *Straits Times*, 8 Nov 1956, at 8.

40 For more on Phua Choon Yang, see Chapter 12.

41 From at least 1917, Gwee was listed as Chief Clerk in the Labuan Treasury Department, see *The Directory and Chronicle for China, Japan, Corea, Indo-China, Straits Settlements, Malay States, Siam, Netherlands India, Borneo, the Philippines, and etc for the Year 1917* (Hongkong: The Hongkong Daily Press, 1918) at 1501.

42 Archibald Lamont (1864–1933) was a Scottish minister. He was born in Port Bannatyne, on the Isle of Bute, Scotland and obtained an MA from the University of Glasgow. In 1889, he was ordained by the presbytery of Glasgow and inducted as a missionary of the Presbyterian Church of England in Singapore. After studying Hokkien in Amoy (Xiamen) for some months, he began conducting services in Hokkien. In 1891, he started the Singapore Chinese Educational Institute at his home to prepare young Chinese men for the responsibilities of leadership. In 1893, he purchased the Eastern School – an Anglo-Chinese grant-in-aid school which had been founded in 1890 but which was threatened with closure because of mismanagement – and merged it with his Institute. On 25 Apr 1852, it was reconstituted under the leadership of Tan Teck Soon, Lim Koon Tye and Tan Guan Hon. In 1894, he co-authored an English novel, *Bright Celestials: The Chinaman at Home and Abroad* (London: TF Unwin, 1894) with Tan Teck Soon. In 1896, when the English Presbyterian Mission withdrew its support for the Eastern School, Lamont resigned and returned to Scotland. He later became a permanent resident of South Africa and died there in 1933. See Anne Johnson, 'Archibald Lamont' in the *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*, available at <<http://www.bdconline.net/en/stories/1/lamont-archibald.php>> (accessed 3 Feb 2015).

classes for English History and [266] Literature, Chinese History and Literature, Mathematics and Shorthand were held in one of the school-rooms of Raffles Institution by kind permission of the Trustees, and, in September, a three months' course of lectures on a number of interesting subjects, by some of the most prominent and best-known men in Singapore, was announced. The meetings were held weekly on Saturday evenings. The inaugural address was given by Mr RW Hullett upon the subject of Education, with the Hon Tan Jiak Kim presiding. The lecturer dwelt upon the importance of young Chinese here trying to carry on their education somewhat further after leaving school. Generally, a Chinese youth, after leaving school, had to work hard all day long in a godown, and, when he went home, he found it difficult to get anything in the way of education as there was nobody at home with whom he could talk in English. Mr Lamont, by his energy and benevolence in starting the Institute, had very much removed this difficulty, so that any Chinese who liked had reasonable facilities for carrying on his education. One great advantage of education was the cultivation of the imagination as a means of making this hard and matter-of-fact world happier and more beautiful. Reading the works of great thinkers would aid in the education of the imagination, which also should be stimulated by the study of poems and novels. 'I believe', said the lecturer,

... that every man who pretends to be educated and every man who wants to be educated must sometimes read poetry, and I hope you will all do what I do, and that is, when you come across a piece of poetry that seems especially beautiful, that you will copy it out and learn it by heart.

It is astonishing how much good you will get out of the little bits of poetry that one thus learns: they hang like pictures round the walls of your heart. The other thing is the study of novels. When I was a child I was taught that it was wicked to learn to read novels. When I go back to the time of my childhood I remember that there were four things which I was told to particularly avoid: [267] one was reading novels, another was going to horseracing,

another was dancing, and another was playing cards. Well, I have got a great deal of good in my life from some of these things.

I am sure you will get a great deal of good out of reading novels. I can quite understand why horseracing and playing cards are considered as evils, because they lead to gambling, and gambling is one of the most wicked things in the world. But I am quite sure that no man's education is complete unless he knows the great writers of fiction – Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot. No one can claim average intelligence who has not read the *Pickwick Papers*, *Vanity Fair* and *Adam Bede*.<sup>43</sup>

Mr Hullett commented on education as fitting people for the battle of life. Power in the world was passing into the hands of the people and their opinion was beginning to hold sway. The change would come slowly in an Asiatic colony like the Straits Settlements, but he hoped that many of the students would live to see the colony governed to a large extent by public opinion, especially by that of the Chinese.

The Educational Institute was a sort of Continuation School for those who had finished their ordinary schooling and were wage-earners. The classes were originally held in a shophouse in Neil Road, which was also the residence of the Rev A Lamont. The Institute had also for its aim the training of young men in the art of public speaking, and qualifying them for their civic responsibilities and making them fit citizens generally.

It was, therefore, one of the earliest organisations to undertake this important work, which to-day is carried on by several associations and societies. That the Institute, during its all too brief existence, has accomplished great and lasting work, educationally and in other respects, is amply testified by those who have benefited thereby, and who even to-day speak gratefully, and in glowing terms of appreciation, of [268] the labour of love rendered them by their past teacher and friend, Mr Lamont.

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43 See 'The Chinese Educational Institute' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 13 Sep 1892, at 555.

The work of the Chinese Educational Institute was only discontinued because of the greater scholastic activities undertaken by Mr Lamont: and it was merged in the Eastern School, which was at first housed in River Valley Road, and afterwards in much larger premises in Club Street.<sup>44</sup> This institution continued its educational work for ten years under the Rev A Lamont and his successor Mr Rankin, but, owing to lack of funds and the departure of Mr Rankin to Amoy,<sup>45</sup> it had to be abruptly closed on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 1902.<sup>46</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> August<sup>47</sup> the third anniversary of the Chinese Christian Association was held at Prinsep Street Chapel, with Mr Tan Boon Chin in the chair. In the course of his remarks the chairman said:

I hope many young men will join the Debating Society so as to become efficient in the use of the English language, which is destined to be the language of the world's commerce, and is, already, the language of the greatest literature in the world. I desire also that they should hear what religion has to say to them, and realise that it does not demand of them the sacrifice of their youthful spirits and cheerfulness. The Association makes provision for a variety of wants, and desires to create a spirit utterly opposed to all the habits and characteristics of that individual known as 'the fast young man.' The 'sowing of wild oats' means nothing manly or graceful. In the Association, all the natural impulses of youth can find an innocent vent.<sup>48</sup>

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44 The school moved from its Club Street (Gemmill's Hill) premises to a 'large building in Neil Road at the junction of Cantonment Road' in March 1902. See *Straits Times*, 1 Mar 1902, at 4.

45 Rankin left for Amoy in October 1900. See *Singapore Free Press*, 22 Oct 1900, at 3.

46 This date is incorrect. The *Straits Times* published a news report of the sudden closure of the Eastern School on 27 October 1902. See 'Closed Without Notice: Abrupt Collapse of the Anglo-Chinese Eastern School' *Straits Times*, 27 Oct 1902, at 5.

47 This is incorrect. The 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary meeting of the Association was held on 5<sup>th</sup> August. See 'Local and General' *Daily Advertiser*, 5 Aug 1892, at 3.

48 Song Ong Siang takes liberties with this speech. The only reports of Tan Boon Chin's speech are reported in the third person while Song transforms it into a first person account. The report reads:



Mr Tan Boon Chin was born in Malacca on the 26th May 1857, and, after spending four years at a Chinese school there, came to Singapore at the age of 12. Along with his younger brother, Tan Boon Chew, he found a home in the family of an uncle, Mr Wee Lim Guan, and was sent for education to Raffles Institution. Here he made rapid progress in his school work, getting promoted twice in one year, and, at the age of 16, [269] he had attained to the first class – the highest class in the school at that time, excepting the Special Class. The Headmaster, at this time, was a Mr Armstrong, and he from June 1871 was followed by Mr RW Hullett. The school classes were divided at that time into:

1. The ABC Class, where the younger children began to learn their alphabet.
2. The 'Papan' Class, where they began to spell and read.
3. The Third Class, where Grammar, Geography, Arithmetic up to Simple Proportion, and maps, were studied under a Mr Yzelman.
4. The Second Class, with two divisions, in which were taught Euclid, Algebra, History, Compound Proportion, the use of the globe, etc, with a Mr Brown as master.
5. The First Class, where advanced lessons were taught by Mr Armstrong.

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Mr Tan Boon Chin said he hoped many young men would join the Debating Society, so as to become efficient in the use of the English language, which was destined to be the language of the world's commerce, and was already the language of the greatest literature of the world. He desired also that they should hear what religion has to say to them, and realise that it does not demand of them the sacrifices of their youthful spirits and cheerfulness. The Association makes provisions for a variety of wants, and desires to create a spirit utterly opposed to all the habits and characteristics of that despicable being – the fast young man. The 'sowing of wild oats' means nothing manly nor graceful. In the association all the natural impulses of youth can find an innocent vent.

See 'Singapore Chinese Christian Association' *Straits Times*, 6 Aug 1892, at 2.



Silver Wedding of Mr and Mrs Tan Boon Chin

The death of his father at Klang, who was engaged there in tin mining, compelled Tan Boon Chin to close his school career at the age of 16. Joining the firm of Guthrie & Co in February 1873, he served through all the departments of their business, comprising shipping, sales, bookkeeping, produce, insurance, rental and properties, until his retirement in 1916.<sup>49</sup> His employers regarded him with great esteem, and showed their appreciation of his efficient and faithful service over a period of forty-three years by granting him a pension. He married in 1880 a daughter of Mr Song Hoot Kiam and has a family of four sons and seven daughters. One daughter, married to Mr Tan Boon Guan, has been the lady organist of Prinsep Street Church for some years, while another daughter<sup>50</sup> is the wife of Dr Jap Ah Chit.<sup>51</sup> In 1905, when the silver wedding of Mr and Mrs Tan Boon Chin was celebrated, among the guests was Mr (now Sir John) Anderson, one of the witnesses who had signed the register on the occasion of their marriage.

Mr Tan Boon Chin has, since 1891, been the Hon [270] Secretary of the Chinese Christian Association, and has been on the list of voluntary preachers, in the Malay language, at Prinsep Street Church since 1886. He is also editor of the *Prinsep Street Church Messenger*, a religious monthly magazine started in 1908 and distributed gratis. Until Sunday services in the Criminal Prison were banned, Mr Boon Chin went there regularly with the late Mr Charles Phillips, on Sun-

49 See 'Forty Years' Service: Mr Tan Boon Chin Retires from Messrs Guthrie' *Straits Times*, 9 May 1916, at 8.

50 Mrs Jap Ah Chit was Ms Tan Guat Tiong, see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 8 Apr 1914, at 8. She was born 1888, was an accomplished musician ('Musical Entertainment by Straits-Born Chinese' *Straits Times*, 23 Sep 1901, at 3) and in 1936 became one of only eight women to study dentistry at the King Edward VII Medical College ('Malaya's Locally Trained Women Dentists' *Straits Times*, 23 Jan 1936, at 3). She died on 16 August 1947 at her home at 321 River Valley Road following a short illness and was buried at Bidadari Christian Cemetery two days later ('Deaths' *Straits Times*, 18 Aug 1947, at 4).

51 Dr Jap Ah Chit married Tan Boon Chin's daughter Guat Tiong in April 1914. See *Singapore Free Press*, 9 Apr 1914, at 6.

days, to preach to the prisoners. He is a man of great personal charm, and, in many quiet ways, has worked hard and steadily for the welfare of the Straits Chinese community, of which he himself has always been universally regarded as a most highly respected, valued and outstanding member.<sup>52</sup>

Dr AC Jap was born in Banka, Netherlands India, and was educated at the Anglo-Chinese School, Singapore.<sup>53</sup> He proceeded to Great Britain, where he resided for twelve years,<sup>54</sup> and obtained the degrees of MBBS (Durham), FRCS (Edin), MRCS (Eng) and LRCP (Lond).<sup>55</sup> After his marriage, in April 1914, he took his wife to North China, where it was his original intention to settle down in practice, but after a time he decided to return to Singapore. He now enjoys a large private practice in partnership with Dr (Mrs) Dexter Allen. The firm has a private nursing home known as 'The Clinic' in a commodious house off River Valley Road, the property of Ho Sok Choo Neo,<sup>56</sup> the wealthy

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52 Tan Boon Chin died on 18 Jun 1933 at his home at 59 Cairnhill Road, survived by four sons (Teck Heng, Teck Guan, Teck Eam and Teck Seen) and seven daughters (Mrs Goh Lye Mong, Mrs Ee Kiong Cheng, Mrs Tan Boon Guan, Mrs Jap Ah Chit, Mrs Lim Thian Pee, Ms Lizzie Tan and Ms Grace Tan). He was buried at Bidadari Christian Cemetery. See 'Death' *Straits Times*, 19 Jun 1933, at 10.

53 Jap's father, Jap Soey Kiauw was a merchant in Banka. See *ibid*.

54 Jap told the *Straits Times* that he in fact spent 15 years in Britain for his studies. See *Straits Times*, 30 Apr 1914, at 8.

55 See *Singapore Free Press*, 9 Apr 1914, at 6.

56 Ho Sok Choo Neo (also spelt Ho Sok Chui Neo) was born in 1874. Little is known of her early life. She shot to prominence when she married her second husband, Tan Moeng Tho in 1909. Her first husband, Wee Siang Tat died on 14 Mar 1901 and left her a large inheritance including a large house at 28 Killiney Road ('Notice: In the Estate of Wee Siang Tat (Deceased)' *Straits Times*, 19 Apr 1910, at 8). They had a son, Wee Eng Wan ('Wee Siang Tat Will' *Straits Times*, 23 Aug 1934, at 11). In 1925, she donated \$5,000 (in her own name), and another \$5,000 (in memory of her late husband, Wee Siang Tat) towards the Singapore Chinese Girls' School New Building Fund ('The Singapore Chinese Girls' School New Building Fund' *Singapore Free Press*, 13 Jul 1925, at 16); and two classrooms were named after her and her husband respectively ('Singapore

widow, successively, of the late Mr Wee Siang Tat and the late Mr Tan Moeng Tho.<sup>57</sup>

An interesting function took place on the 1st October. Mr Cheang Hong Lim having been officially recognised by Government as the leading member of the Hokien community, the Hokiens publicly demonstrated their approval in a large procession to his house at Havelock Road to congratulate him on his honorary elevation. The procession was quite an elaborate affair, with the St Joseph's Band in attendance. About three weeks afterwards Mr Hong Lim gave an 'At Home' in his house, at which the Governor, Sir Cecil Smith, was the [271] principal guest, while the Johore Band contributed much to the success of the social function. This proved to be the last of the many occasions on which this worthy citizen used his wealth for the entertainment and welfare of his fellow-men, for he died in the following year.

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Chinese Girls' School' *Singapore Free Press*, 13 Oct 1925, at 5). In 1928, she married Wee Siak Long but separated from him a year later ('Notice', *Straits Times*, 19 Jan 1929, at 5). She died on 18 Sep 1931 and was buried at the Hakka Cemetery off Holland Road. Ho had gone into a partnership with Dr Jap Ah Chit and carried on a business under the name and style of Chop Shoot Fatt, at 7 Philip Street as rubber and general merchants and commission agents (see *Straits Times*, 14 Nov 1919, 16).

57 Tan Moeng Tho was born in 1874. He was the second husband of Ho Sok Choo Neo whom he married on 7 Mar 1909 (*Straits Times*, 12 Mar 1909, at 6). Tan was a mine owner ('Automobilism' *Straits Times*, 2 Apr 1909, at 11) and co-owner of the Melekek Rubber Company (*Straits Times*, 7 Jan 1911, at 9). He died on 15 May 1919 and was survived by his two infant sons, Tan Tat Min and Tan Kong Kin ('Involved Litigation' *Singapore Free Press*, 16 Apr 1925, at 7). Tan was a native of Jiaying County, Canton Province and was, in 1906, the founding President of Yin Sin School (应新学堂). He was also listed as being on the inaugural Board of Directors of the Singapore Nanyang Overseas Chinese Middle School (later Chinese High School). Tan was actively involved in the Tong Ming Hui and served as its Vice President. See 新华历史人物列传, at 92.

Among the numerous sons of Mr Cheang Hong Lim, the best known is Mr Cheang Jim Chuan,<sup>58</sup> who was born in Singapore on the 15th July 1878. He was one of the executors of his father's will, but he was a minor at the time of his father's death, and his elder sister, Cheang Cheow Lean Neo, was the first of those appointed to take out probate. Inheriting a large fortune, he has by careful and prudent management been able greatly to enhance its value, and he is to-day one of the largest property owners in the Settlement, owning important office buildings in Raffles Square and its vicinity. In consequence of indifferent health, he has never taken an active part in public affairs, but to deserving charities he is always ready to render a helping hand and subscribe liberally. He was also a large subscriber to the War Funds. He is modest, unassuming and retiring in disposition, and of thrifty habits, a quality seldom considered a virtue by persons of his position in life. Though not possessing a large circle of friends, he is held in high esteem by those who know him.

In December, Mr Justice Wood heard and dismissed the suit brought by Tan Koon San, who claimed to be entitled to a share in the estate of the late Tan Keng Hoon as his son by an alleged second wife, married according to the usual Chinese customs,<sup>59</sup> or in the alternative as his adopted son, who had been recognised as a member of the family by the widow, Ang Luan Hong, who had appointed him her attorney to manage the estate of the deceased in Saigon.<sup>60</sup> Tan Keng Hoon, who was born in Singapore, was Opium Farmer in Saigon at the time of his

58 Cheang Jim Chuan (also spelt Chiang Jim Chuan or Cheang Jim Chwan) (章壬全 / 章任銓) lived at *Riviera*, at 113 Pasir Panjang Road. He was married to Chan Kim Hong Neo and they had two sons, Theam Chu and Theam Kee, and four daughters (see 'Domestic Occurrences' *Straits Times*, 1 Mar 1934, at 10). He died on 22 May 1940 and was buried at Bukit Brown Chinese Cemetery (see 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 23 May 1940, at 2). Cheong Jim Chuan Lane (now expunged) and Jim Chuan Hill (expunged) were named after him (see 〈新加坡街名紀念漳僑考〉, 《南洋商報》, *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 5 Dec 1954, at 8).

59 For a report of *In re Tan Keng Hoon*, see 'Supreme Court' *Singapore Free Press*, 20 Sep 1892, at 2; and *Singapore Free Press*, 10 Sep 1892, at 2.

60 'Supreme Court' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 21 Sep 1892, at 571.



Cheang Jim Chuan

death in 1877.<sup>61</sup> He left considerable property in both places, including the well-known Bukit Pasoh estate.<sup>62</sup> Dying intestate, the whole of his great [272] wealth eventually passed to his only daughter, Tan Yean Neo, who married Ang Teow Guan, the son of Ang Kim Cheak.

In the same month the foundation stone of the Anglo-Chinese School in Coleman Street was laid by Sir Cecil Smith.<sup>63</sup> Mr Polglase, in the course of his speech at the above ceremony, mentioned that in 1885 the Rev W Oldham<sup>64</sup> had begun his educational work with three or four boys from Mr Cheang Hong Lim's house, that the entire cost of the first school buildings (\$5,500) had been defrayed by Chinese residents, and that the acquisition of 'Belle-vue', standing just off Government domain, for use as a boarding department of the school, had been made possible by the liberal and substantial help of a few Chinese gentlemen.

On the 10th December the Sultan of Johore held an 'At Home' at Tyersall, which had then just been completed, on the occasion of his investiture with the first grade of the First Class of the Order of the Double Dragon. One of the largest gatherings of Chinese towkays assembled to witness the presentation. The Chinese Consul explained

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61 In 1865, the French in Cochinchina gave a revenue farming contract to a group of Singapore Chinese led by Ngan Wee (known by his trade name of Banhap) and his partners, the Tan brothers (Tan Keng Ho, Tan Keng Hoon and Tan Keng Seng). They dominated the Cochin-Chinese farms for nearly two decades, from 1865 to 1882. See Carl A Trocki, 'Chinese Revenue Farms and Borders in Southeast Asia' (2008) *Modern Asian Studies* 1–28, at 21; see also Carl A Trocki, 'The Chinese Water Frontier: Ebbs and Flows', Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Australian Association of Asian Studies, Canberra, 28 June–2 July 2004, at 9.

62 According to Savage and Yeoh, Tan Keng Hoon was the owner of Bukit Pasoh (the hill) at the time of his death in 1877. See Victor R Savage & Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 55.

63 See 'The Anglo-Chinese School: The Laying of the Foundation Stone of the New Building' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 11 Oct 1892, at 2.

64 On the life and works of Bishop Oldham, see Theodore R Doraisamy, *Oldham – Called of God* (Singapore: Methodist Book Room, 1979).



that the Emperor of China had bestowed this honour upon the Sultan in token of the kindness shown by the Government of Johore towards the numerous subjects of the Chinese Empire dwelling within its territory, and for the sympathy and goodwill manifested by the Sultan in sending aid to China for sufferers in the famine-stricken districts devastated by the recent great floods. The Sultan in his reply said that the Chinese had done so much for his country that it was no exaggeration to say that, without the Chinese, Johore would never have become what it was and might even have ceased to exist. He added that the Emperor's subjects in Johore were his best friends and his people's best friends, and, so long as they remained here, he would never have occasion to entertain any anxiety for its continued welfare and prosperity. The Hon Tan Jiak Kim also made a speech reminding the audience that the Sultan had already been [273] decorated with two distinguished Orders by Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and led the gathering with three cheers for the Sultan, in regular British style.

The annual report of Tan Tock Seng's Hospital for 1892 made mention of the generous gift by Gan Eng Seng of a freehold property at Rochore, comprised in Government Grant No 279, to that Institution. Mr Gan Eng Seng was already a prominent figure in the community at this date. He was born in Malacca, in 1844, of poor family, and started life with a limited education. He came to Singapore at the age of 17 years, when he joined the commercial house of Guthrie & Co, as an apprentice in their storekeeper's department. Mr Scott of that firm took great interest in the lad and gave him every encouragement. He worked with this firm until his death in 1899, after twenty-five years' service as their chief comprador.<sup>65</sup> He was financially interested in some fifteen local businesses in Singapore at his death. He was also labour contractor to the Tanjong Pagar Dock Co Ltd, and from this venture, in which he was assisted by the able management of his son,

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65 Gan died of blood poisoning caused by a prick of the thumb from a piece of iron. See, 'Death of Mr Gan Eng Seng' *Singapore Free Press*, 9 Sep 1899, at 2.



Gan Eng Seng

Gan Tiang Tock,<sup>66</sup> he made a considerable part of his fortune. He was a useful member of the Chinese Advisory Board. He founded the Anglo-Chinese Free School in Telok Ayer Street, and the piece of land on which the school stands was his gift. His object in establishing this institution was to provide free education to the children of poor parents in the locality. The foundation stone of the present school was laid by the then Governor, Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, and the building was completed in 1893. Mr Gan Eng Seng was a landed proprietor on a considerable scale, and his benevolence in all works of charity was well known. Thousands of dollars were given away by him to local hospital funds, and he was always ready with his purse to help to bury the indigent. He founded a school for the children of the poor at Sam-toh in the Fukien province of China, where his forefathers were born, the Chinese Government recognising this benevolent act [274] by conferring on him a title. He was the first Chinese gentleman in the Colony who made it possible for young men of promise to realise their ambition in advanced education. This was always done without ostentation, and thus was this item of his generosity known only to a few. An instance of this kind was the case of Wee Theam Tew, who, by the financial generosity of Mr Gan Eng Seng, gave up a clerical appointment with Messrs Macalister & Co and proceeded to England, where at his patron's charge he was enabled to study and qualify for the Bar.

The chronicler happens to know that no member of the establishment was held in higher esteem and respect, for his integrity and other qualities, than was Mr Gan Eng Seng by the partners of Guthrie & Co, to whom he gave the valuable and faithful service of a lifetime.

Mr Wee Theam Tew was born in Singapore and educated at Raffles Institution. He was a great student of English and Chinese literature in his younger days, and was interested in mesmerism. He gave

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66 Gan Tiang Tock (also spelt Gan Tiang Tok or Gan Tiong Tock) was born in 1859 and died in August 1927 at the age of 68. Gan had been in ill health since the time he took over his father's business in 1903 till the time of his death. He was buried in Bukit Brown Cemetery, see <<http://mymindisrojak.blogspot.sg/2012/12/gan-eng-seng-and-family-bukit-brown.html>> (accessed 1 Feb 2015)

much help and encouragement to Dr Lim Boon Keng in his studies at school. In 1897 he was called to the Bar, and on his return to the Colony he started practice as an Advocate and Solicitor. In 1904 he was appointed to be secretary to Prince Su, the military governor of Peking and Minister to the Emperor, and proceeded to China. He occupied the post for a short time only. In the following year he was back again in Singapore, where he resumed his legal practice, securing a good footing in his profession and having a large circle of clients. He worked hard, as a trustee of Gan Eng Seng Free School, to secure the sympathy and co-operation of the Straits Chinese community for that Institution. He also served on the Municipal Board as the elected member for Rochore Ward in 1901. He was a man with popular gifts and splendid social qualities, but, unfortunately, gradually failing health led to a serious illness from which he never recovered. He died on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 1918 at the age of 52.<sup>67</sup>

[275] As indicating Straits Chinese interest in English education, the *Straits Times* of the 14<sup>th</sup> March 1893 reported that –

the considerable increase to the circulation of this paper that has occurred during the last few years has largely arisen from the increase of the number of Chinese subscribers, and it is interesting to observe that the increase has continued steadily, notwithstanding the depression in trade which may be supposed to have enforced economy among the Chinese.<sup>68</sup>

On the 4<sup>th</sup> April 1893 the opening of the buildings of the Gan Eng Seng Free School by the Governor, Sir Cecil Smith, took place in the

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67 The career of Wee Theam Tew came to a rather inglorious end when he was found guilty of perjury and criminal breach of trust in 1910 (see *Straits Times*, 19 Oct 1910, at 8; and 'The Assizes' *Straits Times*, 2 Nov 1910, at 8) for which he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment (see 'Wee Theam Tew Sentenced' *Weekly Sun*, 5 Nov 1910, at 4) and disbarred. Some time in 1917, he was admitted into the Lunatic Asylum, dying there on the morning of 19 Jan 1918 (see *Singapore Free Press* 24 Jan 1918, at 58). It is interesting that Song chose to omit the less savoury aspects of Wee's career.

68 It is unclear where Song extracted this passage from. A perusal through the whole of the *Straits Times*, of 14 Mar 1893 reveals no such article or passage.

presence of a distinguished gathering. Mr Tan Keong Saik briefly gave a history of that institution which had come into existence in 1886, the work being carried on in some shophouses in Telok Ayer Street belonging to Mr Gan Eng Seng, its founder. The demand for admission was so great that Mr Eng Seng decided to put up suitable premises capable of accommodating 300 boys. In the course of the Governor's speech he said:

This school is, I think, the only school in the Settlement which has been founded by the Chinese for teaching their boys the language of the country to which they owe their presence here<sup>69</sup>. ... The school might be devoted to the study of English, but I am glad to know that a knowledge of Chinese will also be gained there, which to me appears an essential part of the education of a Chinese boy. ... The boys who grow up with a knowledge of that language and also attach to it a knowledge of English will prove better citizens than those boys who throw off the language of the country to which they naturally belong and adopt the English language simply from a utilitarian sense of the time they are going to spend in this Settlement.<sup>70</sup>

There were 68 boys presented for annual inspection for the first time in 1891, and 123 boys in 1895, and the report for 1895 read by the Principal, Mr Robert Little, [276] at the prize distribution, mentioned that the boys were taught not only in English but in Chinese also.

The Chinese communities in the different Settlements memorialised the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Lord Ripon) praying that the term of office of Sir Cecil Smith as Governor might be extended.<sup>71</sup> On the 23<sup>rd</sup> June the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim received a letter from the

69 The first part of this quote is inaccurate and should read: '... the Singapore school is, I think the only school in the Settlements that has been founded by the Chinese for teaching their boys the language of the country to which they owe their presence here.' See 'The Anglo-Chinese Free School: The Opening Ceremony' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 11 Apr 1893, at 211.

70 'The Anglo-Chinese "Free" School' *Singapore Free Press*, 5 Apr 1893, at 2.

71 See 'Text of the Penang Petition' *Daily Advertiser*, 11 Mar 1893, at 2.

Colonial Secretary conveying the reply of Lord Ripon that arrangements had been made for Sir Cecil Smith vacating his appointment at the termination of his commission.

The Chinese residents interested in education assembled on the 18<sup>th</sup> July at Prinsep Street Chapel to consider the presentation of a vote of thanks to HE the Governor for his services in promoting higher education in the Colony. Mr Tan Tek Soon occupied the chair. The proposal to found a Sir CC Smith Scholarship by voluntary subscriptions received the hearty support of Dr Lim Boon Keng, who had then recently returned to Singapore, and a committee of six gentlemen was appointed to formulate the scheme.<sup>72</sup>

On the 21<sup>st</sup> August a farewell banquet to the retiring Governor was given at the Town Hall by the general community, and there were twenty-one Chinese gentlemen present, including the Hon Tan Jiak Kim, Dr Lim Boon Keng, and Messrs Seah Liang Seah, Gan Eng Seng, Lee Cheng Yan, Tan Hup Seng, Tchan Chun Fook and Wee Theam Tew.<sup>73</sup>

A deputation consisting of sixty persons, dressed in long silken robes and representing all sections of the Chinese community, attended at Government House to present the Governor with an address. The Hon Tan Jiak Kim, who headed the deputation, mentioned the keen disappointment of the Chinese at the reply of the Secretary of State, disallowing the Governor accepting a silver screen, their gift to him, and asked for permission to use the Governor's name in connection with the Cecil Smith Scholarship. To this the Governor replied that 'the form in which the Chinese propose to perpetuate [277] my name is the one nearest my heart. I have done the best I can to promote education in the Colony, and the establishing of a Scholarship in my name is the best return for my humble efforts.'

72 See 'Meeting of Singapore Chinese' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 25 Jul 1893, at 9.

73 See 'The Farewell Banquet to HE The Governor' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 29 Aug 1893, at 3.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> September Mr Tan Beng Gum, senior partner of Kim Seng & Co, died.<sup>74</sup> He had large interests in Malacca, and, after the death of Mr Tan Beng Swee, was leader of the Chinese community in that Settlement. He was on the committee of the Po Leung Kuk and started the library of the Anglo-Chinese School here, while the Malacca High School and the Malacca Hospital benefited under his will. He was buried in the family burial ground at Pasir Panjang. His only son, Mr Tan Jiak Chuan,<sup>75</sup> was of a quiet and retiring disposition and gave his whole attention to the business of Kim Seng & Co. He died on the 4th January 1909, at the age of 51,<sup>76</sup> leaving two sons, Tan Soo Jin<sup>77</sup> and

74 See 'The Late Mr Tan Beng Gum' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 19 Sep 1893, at 5.

75 Tan Jiak Chuan (1858–1909) was the only son of Tan Beng Gum. He was admitted as a partner in the firm of Kim Seng & Co in 1893 (see 'The late Mr Tan Jiak Chuan' *Straits Times*, 16 Feb 1909, at 6) and was a shareholder of the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company (see 'Tanjong Pagar Company' *Straits Times*, 26 Mar 1904, at 5).

76 Tan died of hyperpyrexia (extreme high fever) at his residence, Panglima Prang in River Valley Road after returning from Malacca where he visited some hot springs (see 'The late Mr Tan Jiak Chuan' *Straits Times*, 16 Feb 1909, at 6). He left three legacies of \$1,000 each to Raffles Institution, the Chinese Free School at Amoy Street and the Tan Tock Seng Hospital (see 'The Late Mr Tan Jiak Chuan' *Straits Times*, 16 Feb 1909, at 6). When he was alive, Tan Jiak Chuan subscribed \$8,000 to the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States Government Medical School (later King Edward VII Medical School) in his father's name (See 'Death of Mr Tan Jiak Chuan' *Straits Times*, 4 Jan 1909, at 7). Jiak Chuan Road is named after him.

77 Little is known of Tan Soo Jin save that he was born in 1864, was educated at Raffles Institution where he won a scholarship (see 'Raffles Institution Prize Distribution' *Singapore Free Press*, 24 Dec 1901, at 3), and was active in the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, serving as Honorary Treasurer in 1909 (see 'Straits Chinese Recreation Club' *Straits Times*, 5 Oct 1908, at 7). He died at his home at 117 Pasir Panjang Road on 2 May 1952 and was buried at the family burial ground at Alexandra Road (see 'Deaths', *Straits Times*, 14 May 1952, at 6; and 'The Late Mr Tan Jiak Chuan' *Straits Times*, 18 Feb 1909, at 7).



Tan Beng Gum



Tan Jiak Chuan





Tan Soo Jin



Tan Soo Guan

Tan Soo Guan, who are well-known and influential members of the Straits Chinese community.<sup>78</sup>

Nothing is ever heard nowadays of the Chinese Girls' Home, at Kandang Kerbau, under the control of the Committee of the Po Leung Kuk,<sup>79</sup> but twenty-five years ago, when missionaries were permitted to visit the Home, entertainments and like functions were got up from time to time to brighten the lives of the inmates. One such instance took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1894, when these inmates were entertained with a Christmas tree and treat. The proceedings consisted of a hymn sung in Chinese and several recitations in Chinese by the girls. The Christmas tree was then stripped of its 'fruits' which were distributed among the children by Mrs Maxwell, assisted by Mrs Waddell, the Hon Secretary of the Ladies' Committee, and other ladies present. Each girl got a garment made by herself, a piece of cloth to make another for Chinese New Year, a looking-glass, a fan, a pocket-handkerchief and a cake of soap. Mrs Davis, the matron, worked hard to make the affair a success.

In this year (1893) a young enterprising Straits [278] Chinese, Cheong Choon Kim, established the firm of Yap Whatt & Co, in d'Almeida Street, which was the first Straits-born Chinese firm engaged in commission, import and export trade in the Colony.<sup>80</sup> With the assistance of his younger brother, Cheong Choon Beng, the firm became well known as intermediary in business between the Chinese dealers and shopkeepers and the European manufacturers. In 1902 Mr Choon Kim visited China and opened a branch of his firm in Shanghai. On his death in 1905 the business was continued by Mr Cheong

78 'Death of Mr Tan Jiak Chuan' *Straits Times*, 4 Jan 1909, at 7. In addition to his sons, he was survived by seven daughters (from his first wife), and his second wife.

79 See, for example, 'Report of the Chinese Protectorate' *Daily Advertiser*, 15 Jun 1891, at 2.

80 See generally Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 717-718.

Choon Beng, who, by his winsome manners, was very popular with all commercial travellers. Mr Choon Beng was one of the original members of the Chinese Co SVI, and, in 1902, went to England as one of the Straits Coronation contingent, and made good use of his time there in visiting and making the acquaintance of the heads of the manufacturing firms with which Yap Whatt & Co had business dealings. He died on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1913, like his elder brother, from an apoplectic stroke. Their brother-in-law, Mr Wee Tiong Chai (now with Messrs Chow Kit & Co Ltd), received his practical commercial training in Yap Whatt & Co, and was a sound guide and adviser to Cheong Chee Koon, the eldest son of Mr Cheong Choon Kim, who continued the business of the firm, which was closed after the early death of Cheong Chee Koon. Like his uncle, Mr Chee Koon was strongly imbued with the spirit of loyalty to the British Crown, and enrolled as a volunteer. It was during his mobilisation as Lance-Corporal of the Drill Hall Guard that he was struck down with apoplexy and died, a few hours afterwards, at the General Hospital, on the 18th May 1917. He was accorded a military funeral. His widow has since been in the receipt of \$25 monthly allowance from the local Prince of Wales's Relief Fund. The eldest son of Mr Choon Beng is Dr Cheong Chee Hai,<sup>81</sup> who was born on the 29th May 1893. He was educated at Raffles Institution, and was, for three years in succession (1907-9), Cecil Smith scholar.<sup>82</sup> On the abolition [279] of the Queen's Scholarship, he joined the local Medical School in 1910,<sup>83</sup> whence he proceeded three years later to Hongkong University and graduated MBBS in 1916.<sup>84</sup> He returned to Singapore the same year and holds now a secure position among the

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81 Cheong Chee Hai died on 3 December 1945, see柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 156.

82 See 'Scholarships Examination' *Straits Times*, 24 Apr 1909, at 7.

83 See 'Straits Medical School' *Straits Times*, 27 Dec 1911, at 7.

84 See *The Hong Kong Government Gazette*, vol 68 (1922) at 199.



Cheong Choon Beng



Dr Cheong Chee Hai

young medical practitioners. He is married to the eldest daughter of Mr Cheang Jim Chuan.<sup>85</sup>

The *Straits Times* reproduced the text of a Chinese Imperial decree published on the 13th January 1894 in the *Sin-wan-pao*, announcing that 'Chinese from the Malayan Seas may return in safety to their own land, whether permanently or on a visit.' The decree recited that 150 years ago (circa 1750, in the reign of Kien-lung), a Chinaman, Chen-i-lao,<sup>86</sup> who had gone to the East Indian islands, where he filled the position of headman (Capitan), was punished on his return to China. It proceeded to state that treaties had been made with the United States and Peru, whereby the perfect right of Chinese subjects to change their allegiance or domicile had been recognised, and that the old laws had been practically abrogated:

I have to observe that, as all law-abiding Chinese subjects who have crossed the seas are still children of the Empire, they must, on their return, be treated in exactly the same way as the other residents. Hereafter, all persons who interfere with, or in any way molest, returned emigrants from abroad will be severely punished. ... As regards the returned emigrants themselves, they must endeavour to conduct themselves in a peaceable and law-abiding

85 See 'Death' *Singapore Free Press*, 3 Mar 1934, at 8.

86 Also known as Tan I Lo, see AS Marcus & Pax Benedanto (eds), *Kesastraan Melayu Tionghoa dan Kebangsaan Indonesia*, Vol 10 (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Popular Gramedia, 2001) at 38–39. See also, Ng Chin Keong, 'The Case of Ch'en I-lao: Maritime Trade and Overseas Chinese in Ch'ing Policies, 1717–1754' in Roderich Ptak & Dietmar Rothermund (eds), *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, c 1400–1750* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991) 373–399. According to Leonard Blussé, when Chen I-lao 'left Batavia and sought to retire in his native village in Fujian province in 1749, he was apprehended and tried by the Qing authorities on five points: sneaking out to foreign lands, rendering services to foreigners, smuggling, bringing back foreign nationals (among whom was his Makassarese wife and children), and possessing a wealth of several hundred thousand taels, and was effectively banished for life to the Xinjiang frontier' (see Leonard Blussé 'One Hundred Weddings and Many More Funerals a Year: Chinese Civil Society in Batavia at the End of the Seventeenth Century' in Leonard Blussé & Chen Menghong (eds), *The Archives of the Kong Koan of Batavia* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 8–28, at 16.

manner: they must not represent themselves to be of foreign nationality in order to evade revenue laws, as by so doing they render themselves liable to punishment.<sup>87</sup>

At the prize distribution of Raffles Institution on the 26<sup>th</sup> January, Mr Hullett stated that four old Raffles boys who had won Queen's Scholarships had returned to the Colony. The possibility of a reduction or total abolition of these truly valuable incentives to higher [280] education, owing to a very considerable financial crisis which the Colony was then passing through, was foreshadowed in Mr Hullett's speech, although he believed that such a retrograde step in the matter of education would only be for a short time.<sup>88</sup>

The Acting Governor, Mr WE Maxwell, in the course of his exceedingly interesting reply, said:

I am entirely with Mr Hullett when he spoke just now of the great wisdom of the step taken by Sir Cecil Smith, when he established the Queen's Scholarships in the Straits Settlements. I look upon that step as the means which may give us here a body of men belonging to the Colony who are able and worthy to fill posts of distinction. There is, practically, no post in the Colony that is not open to boys here, if they will qualify themselves for it and work hard. One of the matters alluded to just now by Mr Hullett was whether or not there was a possibility that at some future time the Queen's Scholarships may not be available. ... I take now another opportunity of stating what I did on a past occasion that, as far as my personal influence will move in the matter, the Queen's Scholarships will certainly remain an institution of this Colony.<sup>89</sup>

In June 1894 the libel action brought by Lim Loh<sup>90</sup> against Tan Tek Soon and the Rev A Lamont came on for hearing. The plaintiff claimed \$5,000 damages from the defendants, as manager and editor respec-

87 'The Treatment of Chinese Emigrants Returning to China: An Imperial Decree for Their Protection' *Straits Times*, 30 Jan 1894, at 3.

88 See 'Raffles Institution' *Singapore Free Press*, 27 Jan 1894, at 3.

89 See 'The Raffles Schools' *Straits Times*, 27 Jan 1894, at 3.

90 On Lim Loh, see Chapter 10.

tively of a local newspaper, for the publication of an article therein entitled 'The Social Cancer,' which article, the plaintiff alleged, contained libellous and defamatory statements upon his character. Chief Justice Cox held that the words complained of were neither fair comment nor could be for the public benefit, and that what had been published were allegations as to facts denied by plaintiff, which the defendants had failed to substantiate and must therefore be considered as false: and awarded the plaintiff \$125 damages and costs.<sup>91</sup>

To interest in the world's news and progress that large section of the Straits Chinese who knew only a little [281] English a daily newspaper, *Bintang Timor*, in Romanised Malay, under the editorship of Mr Song Ong Siang, was started on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1894. For nine months it appeared daily (Sunday excepted), and for another three months tri-weekly: and at the end of that time the paper was discontinued, being unable to pay its way. One of its heartiest supporters and regular contributors was the Dato Bintara Luar of Johore (who was a son of Abdullah Munshi).

The *Straits Times* editorial of the 5<sup>th</sup> July discussed 'Education and the Chinese,'<sup>92</sup> while the Retrenchment Committee was still engaged in considering its Report, and remarked that the Chinese had evidently overlooked the fact that the majority of the youths turned out by the public schools aspired to clerkships or other sedentary means of livelihood rather than to become mechanics or agriculturists, and added that the education which the youth of the Colony received did not teach them (in the words of Sir Cecil Smith) 'to recognise the dignity of labour.' The suggestion was thrown out that, as the Chinese were beginning to speak with appreciation about a technical school in which boys would be taught the rudiments of mechanics and the theory and practice of agriculture, the Chinese should be the first to move for the inauguration of such a school by endowing the scheme with large donations. It is a matter for regret that technical schools or technical

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91 See 'A Local Libel Action' *Straits Times*, 15 Jun 1894, at 3.

92 See 'Education and the Chinese' *Straits Times*, 5 Jul 1894, at 2.

departments in the larger schools have not yet been introduced into the educational policy of the Colony.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> July, at the meetings of the Chinese Advisory Board and the Po Leung Kuk Committee, resolutions were unanimously passed against the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Ordinance, and Mr Tan Jiak Kim, speaking in support, said: 'Exeter Hall does not know as much of the Straits as we do here, and why have we not been consulted ? ... We cannot always be governed by English methods.'

Reference has been made to the promulgation of an Imperial Chinese decree promising protection to Chinese [282] residing outside the Chinese Empire on returning to China. Mr Huang Tsun Hsien, the Chinese Consul-General, introduced a system of granting 'passports', on payment of fees ranging from \$1 to \$4, to Chinese who were returning to their native land, and issued 'Ju-tans', or letters of instructions, appointing certain Hokien merchants in Singapore his agents to acquaint the Hokien community of the new consulate regulations. This provoked the issue by the Straits Government, through the Protector of Chinese, of a Proclamation in the Chinese language, which was posted everywhere in the Settlement, and ran as follows:

Recently, without any reference to the local Government, the Chinese Consul-General has taken on himself to act ultra vires and go beyond the rights and privileges of his consular position. As this is a matter that may lead to serious misunderstanding amongst Chinese traders and others, ... it is necessary to explain to you that Chinese consular officers are appointed in the Straits Settlements as commercial agents on behalf of China, and that they can in no way exercise any local power or issue notices with reference to local affairs, or like local officers give official commands to Chinese living here under English rule. It is their duty to foster trade and encourage and assist their countrymen in all commercial undertakings. With reference to the matters of the Chinese Consul-General issuing Jutans or letters of instructions to Chinese living in this colony, it is beyond the power of the Chinese consul to act in this way. This is putting himself on a footing with the local officers of Her Majesty's Government, and taking upon himself to give



Chinese Government instructions in an English-governed country to Chinese living under English rule. Still further, in issuing Jutans to Chinese who are British subjects by birth, the Chinese Consul-General has committed a grave mistake and gone still further beyond his legitimate powers. In order to make this matter clear, it is my duty to explain fully to the Chinese living here, that they are, as long as they reside here, under the control and rule of Her Majesty's Government, and that the Chinese Consul- [283] General can in no way be allowed to come between the Chinese and the local Government. It will be wrong to be under the misapprehension that the Chinese consul is able to interpose in any way in local affairs, where Chinese are interested, except in conjunction with and with the knowledge and consent of the local Government.<sup>93</sup>

The year 1895 began with the resignation of the Singapore Unofficial members of the Legislative Council, the Justices of the Peace and the Chinese Advisory Board from their respective public offices as a protest against the decision of Her Majesty's Government as to the amount of the Military Contribution demanded from the Colony. It will be remembered that, in 1891, a great meeting held in the Town Hall protested against the levying of £100,000 for Imperial military establishment, without success, and that, throughout the period 1891-4, the persistent representations made by this Colony for substantial relief owing to bad financial times were unheeded.

A crowded public meeting, on the 11<sup>th</sup> January, at the Town Hall, presided over by Mr W Nanson, unanimously carried a resolution moved by Mr (now Sir Walter) Napier and seconded by Dr Lim Boon Keng, that:

This meeting heartily approves of the action of the members of the Legislative Council, the Justices of the Peace and the members of the Chinese Advisory Board in resigning their offices as a protest against the decision of the Imperial Government with regard to the Military Contribution of the Colony.<sup>94</sup>

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93 'Proclamation by the Straits Government' *Straits Times*, 3 Dec 1894, at 3.

94 'The Military Contribution' *Straits Times*, 12 Jan 1895, at 2.

Dr Lim Boon Keng, in the course of his remarks, dealt with the criticism of the *Straits Times* over the hesitation of the Chinese signatories to the letters of resignation, and defended their action because –

most of these Chinese were born in China; they are not all Straits-born. It is only right, being aliens here, [284] and being privileged in advising the Government, that they should consider very carefully any such scheme, its practicability, and its advisability, before giving it their unanimous support.<sup>95</sup>

He quoted Mencius to vindicate the policy of resignation by an inferior authority under provocation from a superior Government.

For a matter of seven months, the seats of the Singapore Unofficials remained vacant, and it was only after receipt of Lord Ripon's dispatch, dated the 27<sup>th</sup> June, fixing the Military Contribution at 17½ per cent of the Colonial revenues, that the three vacant seats were again filled, and Dr Lim Boon Keng succeeded Mr Seah Liang Seah as the Chinese member of Council.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> March Mr Tan Hup Leong,<sup>96</sup> the third son of the late Mr Tan Kim Tian and a partner in the firm of Kim Tian & Sons, left by the SS *Teucer*, with Mr J Robb as his travelling companion, for a world tour. This was the first instance of a young Straits-born Chinese doing a globe-trotting voyage, which had been expected to take up eight months, but which was actually accomplished in three.<sup>97</sup> At the request of the *Straits Times*, Mr Hup Leong contributed, for publication in that newspaper, impressions of his visits to a number of cities in both hemispheres: and these letters, from the nature of his tour, read like the experiences of the typical American globe-trotter. He was just a fortnight in Great Britain, was wonderfully impressed with the majestic Falls of Niagara, and, after seeing New York and the prodigious

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95 Ibid.

96 Tan Hup Leong, alias Tan Hap Leong, alias Tan Hap Liong was born in 1870, the son of Tan Kim Tian. He died on 5 August 1926 at his home at 953 Serangoon Road, at the age of 56. See 'A Local Pioneer' *Straits Times*, 6 Aug 1926, at 9.

97 'A Local Pioneer' *Straits Times*, 6 Aug 1926, at 9.

height of the buildings there, expressed himself as in favour of London. Both Mr Tan Hup Leong and his elder brother Mr Tan Hup Seng were, at this time and until the liquidation of the steamship business of Kim Tian & Sons, prominent men in sporting and social circles, as well as liberal supporters of various educational and philanthropic institutions.<sup>98</sup>

Mr Seah Liang Seah gave a reception on the 27<sup>th</sup> [285] March at the opening of his new house at Serangoon Road, 'Bendemeer' (formerly Mr Whampoa's residence), and the Governor, Sir Charles Mitchell, was invited to perform the ceremony of opening the front door of the handsomely furnished house with a gold key.

An interesting event, in the form of the launching of the SS *Ban Fo Soon*, the first steel steamer built by Messrs Riley Hargreaves & Co, from their shipbuilding yard at Tanjong Ru, took place on the 23rd July. The owner was Lim Ah Sam, a well-known merchant trading between here and Dutch ports. Replying to the toast of prosperity of the newly launched steamer which was proposed by the Rev GM Reith, Mr Jackson Millar, head of Messrs Riley Hargreaves & Co, said:

On behalf of the owner, who I think shows an enormous amount of pluck in that the Chinese should be the first to have sufficient faith in Europeans in this Colony to place such a vessel as that in our hands, and who deserves an enormous amount of credit for so

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98 Tan Hup Leong was, together with Dr Lim Boon Keng, Tan Jiak Kim and others, a co-founder of the Chinese Volunteers and represented the Straits Settlements in London at the coronation of King Edward VII. His business interests were in rubber, banking and shipping and accumulated a large fortune through his enterprises, *ibid.* Tan did, however, become a bankrupt in 1908 on account of his 'rash speculation and extravagant living' but was discharged six months later, see 'Bankruptcy Day' *Singapore Free Press*, 3 Apr 1908, at 5. He founded the shipping firm, Ban Aik & Co Ltd in 1917, see *Straits Times*, 17 May 1917, at 6. He was survived by five sons at the time of his death: Cheng Yong, Cheng Watt, Cheng Hin, Cheng Chye and Nghoh Loh, see 'Flower Show' *Singapore Free Press*, 5 Jul 1895, at 2.

doing, I thank the gathering for the handsome manner in which you have responded to the toast.<sup>99</sup>

Mr Millar also announced that his firm was about to lay the keel of a 1,000 tons boat to the order of another Chinese merchant, Ang Lim Thye.<sup>100</sup>

A very interesting lecture on 'Education for the Chinese', at the Town Hall, on the 20<sup>th</sup> August, by Dr Lim Boon Keng,<sup>101</sup> was delivered before a large audience, consisting chiefly of Straits Chinese, with a good sprinkling of well-known European ladies and gentlemen. Mr (now Sir Walter) Napier presided over the assembly. The lecture had been intended primarily as an incentive to pupils joining the evening classes at the Eastern School, but the lecturer discussed educational matters in the interests of the Chinese community from a wider viewpoint. He emphasised that -

the method of educating public opinion and of elevating the tone of public sentiment is to be done by [286] the spread of sound views on the duties of citizenship, and by the creation of a public spirit or conscience amongst the masses. When the common people have recognised the real source of their strength, they will appreciate the teaching of Mencius and will profit by the experience of Europe. Not waiting for governmental action, they will initiate reform work and compel the authorities to give them a hearing. To effect such a desirable change, the Chinese people must survey their own social world with impartiality and with a clear vision.<sup>102</sup>

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99 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation. However, it is reported in the third person in 'Launch at Tanjong Rhu' *Singapore Free Press*, 23 Jul 1895, at 2.

100 Ang Lim Thye (also spelt Ang Lim Tye or Ang Lim Thay) (see, 'The Sarie Borneo' *Straits Times*, 29 Jul 1896, at 3) was a well-known shipowner operating from No 10 Boat Quay. Ang also imported and sold exotic sea shells from Ambonia (see 'On Sale' *Straits Times*, 6 Nov 1901, at 1). The date of his birth is unknown and he died sometime in 1902 or 1903.

101 *Mid-day Herald*, 31 Aug 1895, at 3.

102 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

On the subject of moral education, he asked:

What had the British Government done for Chinese Babas (who are British subjects) to teach them their obligations? They were not taught as they should be, or they would be a strong element in the support of the British Empire. But moral education could not be gained from any school: it must be taught at home. The health and moral and intellectual future of the Babas lay in the parents' hands, and these parents had thus a great responsibility laid on them. It was the duty of the better class of Chinese in Singapore to combine and form an association whereby the education of the growing generation might be directed in the right way.<sup>103</sup>

The collapse of the front portion of the handsome and extensive premises, situated between Kling Street and Boat Quay, before completion, caused the death of eleven persons, besides injuring Mr and Mrs Nicholson, of Fort Canning Signal Station, who happened to be passing by at the time in a ricksha.<sup>104</sup> The premises were constructed for Messrs Katz Brothers by Mr Tan Jiak Kim as trustee of the estate of the late Tan Kim Seng deceased. All Saturday night a party of gunners from Fort Canning and a party of the Fusiliers under Captain Fletcher assisted the Municipal coolies in removing the tons of debris in the hope of saving life, and succeeded in extricating two men who had escaped death in a [287] miraculous manner. Two of the eleven corpses recovered from the ruins were found to grasp flutes in their hands, and their fingers were pressed upon the keys with the vice-grip of death. They had been amusing their fellow-workmen at the time of the catastrophe.

As a sequel to this building disaster, Tan Joo Guan, the superintendent of the work, was tried at the Assizes on the charge of having caused the death of a number of persons by doing a negligent act not amounting to culpable homicide, and was acquitted: the jury adding a rider that they considered the owner greatly to blame for not supplying proper supervision for a building of that size and weight, and the

103 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

104 See 'Disaster in Singapore: Collapse of a Building' *Straits Times*, 30 Sep 1895, at 3.

building inspector remiss in his duty in not reporting to his superiors the deviation from the plan.<sup>105</sup>

The *Government Gazette* of the 15<sup>th</sup> November mentions the grant of a certificate of naturalisation to Chin Ah Pat, whose father, Chin Lan Chin, had arrived from China some eighty years ago and traded successfully with Borneo. On his death Chin Ah Pat came to reside here permanently, starting business as a commercial agent. A few years later he seized the opportunity of opening business for himself as a merchant and met with considerable success. He was a charitable man and took an active interest in public affairs. In 1891 he was given a seat on the Chinese Advisory Board,<sup>106</sup> and, a year later, was appointed a member of committee of the Po Leung Kuk. As one of the prominent men of the Khek (Hak-ka) section of the Chinese community, he was made President of the Yin Foh Guild. He died in 1897, and his elder son, Chin Yong Kwong, who was one of the early supporters of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, was elected a member of committee in 1907.

Mr Chin Yong Kwong was associated with Mr Cheong Soo Leong in starting the Yin-sin Mandarin school, already referred to.

The Straits Chinese Recreation Club inaugurated the first Chinese New Year Sports on Hong Lim Green on [288] the 22nd February 1896. For three years, successively, previous to this, similar sports at Chinese New Year, on a less ambitious scale, had been held, on land at Telok Ayer lent by the Straits Insurance Company, under the auspices of the Straits Chinese National Football Association, which had been founded in 1891. The St Cecilia Band, on this occasion, took the place of the Drum and Fife Band, composed of the grandchildren of the late Mr Tay Geok Teat, which had enlivened the proceedings at Telok Ayer. The result of this first meeting was very gratifying to the promoters, and the handsome prizes were presented by the President,

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105 See 'The Building Disaster' *Straits Times*, 4 Oct 1895, at 3; see also 'The Kling Street Disaster' *Singapore Free Press*, 24 Oct 1895, at 2.

106 See 'Govt Gazette' *Daily Advertiser*, 24 Aug 1891, at 21.



Chin Ah Pat

Mr Tan Hup Seng, the eldest surviving son of the late Mr Tan Kim Tian, then the managing partner of the Tan Kim Tian line of steamers.

On the 20th February Wong Ah Shak, proprietor of chop Tong Ann Tong of Philip Street, died at his residence in Victoria Street, at the age of 77. He was another instance of the enterprising Chinese lad who left his native land and found his El Dorado here. At the age of 17 he had come from Canton, poor in pocket but full of determination and energy, and at his death he was a wealthy man. Besides his druggist shop, which still is located at Philip Street, he speculated in gambier and pepper and also owned shares in some tin mines in Selangor. He was buried in his private plantation in Holland Road. His residence was for some years used as the Bible Repository and is now the business premises of the Victoria Confectionery.

In March the Chinese mercantile community from each of the three Settlements petitioned the Governor against certain provisions in the Amending Bill to the Bankruptcy Ordinance. These amendments were based upon the report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council appointed, some years previously, to inquire into the workings of the Bankruptcy Department and Ordinance. The opposition of the Chinese petitioners was chiefly against clause 5 of the Amending Bill, which required the Supreme Court, on making a receive- [289] ing order, to detain or arrest a debtor, and commit him to the Civil Prison, unless he furnished satisfactory security that he would not abscond. 'As the judges', said the Attorney-General, 'took natural exception to being ordered to do a specific thing without being allowed to exercise any discretion', clause 5 was amended by the substitution of the word 'may' for 'shall' thus making the order by a judge for the arrest of bankrupts, under suspicion of absconding, optional instead of compulsory.

The arrival on the 14th of April of His Excellency Li Hung Chang, on his way to Russia as Chinese Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at the coronation of the Czar, with his suite of some fifty-three persons, gave the inhabitants of Singapore an opportunity of seeing the statesman who had played a prominent part in the di-



sastrous war with Japan. At the reception at Government House, between forty and fifty of the principal Chinese residents were invited by the Governor to meet Li Hung Chang, and instead of the Kow-tow ceremony, a low bow with bended knee was substituted. After a little rest, His Excellency drove in one of the Governor's carriages to the Chinese Consulate, where he was received by the Chinese Consul, Chang Chen Hsun (Thio Tiau-w Siat), and the Assistant Consul, Mr Liu Yuk Lin.<sup>107</sup> After a grand banquet, His Excellency went for a drive around Singapore, in the Governor's carriage, calling at Mr Seah Liang Seah's charming gardens at 'Bendemeer', where he was hospitably entertained, and thence he drove straight to his ship at the Borneo Wharf. As it was known that many Chinese people entertained bitter feelings against Li Hung Chang over the China-Japan War, very complete measures for his protection were taken by the police.

On the 26th June Mr Choa Kim Keat gave one of his popular garden parties, at his country house in Balestier Road,<sup>108</sup> to inspect his exceptionally fine display of flowers and plants. It was numerous-

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107 Liu Yuk Lin (alias Lew Yuk Lin or Liu Pao-lin) was born in September 1862 in Xiangshan (now Zhongshan), the son of a diplomat. He studied at China's first foreign-language school in Shanghai, and at age 12, was one of 30 young men sent to study in America. He returned to China in 1881 and enrolled in a school in Tainjin. In 1886, he was sent to the Chinese consulate in New York as an interpreter. In 1893, he was sent to Singapore as interpreter in the consulate, and was promoted to Consul-General the following year. He remained at this post till 1904 when he was sent to South Africa. He died in Macao in 1942 and was buried at the St Miguel Cemetery there. See, Louise do Rosario, 'Diplomacy at its Best', available at: <[http://www.macaomagazine.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=221:diplomacy-at-its-best&catid=47:issue-12](http://www.macaomagazine.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=221:diplomacy-at-its-best&catid=47:issue-12)> (accessed 3 Mar 2015).

108 This property was known simply as Choa Kim Keat's Garden. See *Singapore Free Press*, 27 Feb 1907, at 3. It thus comes as little surprise that Kim Keat Road / Avenue / Close / Lane / Link, all of which lie off Balestier Road are named after Choa Kim Keat. See Victor R Savage & Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 214. According to his grandson, Eric Choa Watt Chiang, Choa Kim Keat owned a huge tract of land in what is now Kim Keat Road. Most of it was acquired by the Government and the remainder was sold by Eric Choa just after the Jap-



Chang Chen Hsun @ Thio Tiau Siat

ly attended both by European and Chinese friends of the host, and proved [290] so great a success that the *Free Press* hinted that some of his influential fellow-citizens might follow such a good lead. He was, however, one of the very few Straits Chinese who from time to time took a real interest in horticulture.<sup>109</sup>

For the last time, in August 1905, he gave a garden party 'to see real Fairyland', which was attended by a gathering comprising, according to the *Straits Times*, the financial, industrial and tin-producing interests of the Colony, as well as representatives of the Legislative Council and Municipality, the Civil Service and the Liberal Professions, and the ecclesiastical and military sections of the European community, as well as the Chinese elite of Singapore.

The grounds of his residence 'Fairyland', at the 5½ milestone on the Pasir Panjang Road, had been transformed, for the nonce, into a miniature picture of the regions inhabited by fairies and sprites. From the gateway to the seashore – a distance of a hundred yards or so – the sheltering fronds of graceful coconut palms whispered to the breezes. Rockeries of corals and great shells enclosed the roots of these palms, and from the crevices rose lilies and rare ferns, caladiums, begonias, orchids and cactuses. The larger bungalow did duty as a refreshment saloon, while between the smaller bungalow and the sea was a wonderful kiosk, simply smothered in flowers; its doorway being guarded by two extraordinary Chinese dragons composed entirely of the blooms of roses, lilies, ylang ylang, and other flowers.

The centre of attraction was the rock-bound fastness of the Fairy Cave or grotto, which nestled half hidden among the trees, about midway between the gateway and the seashore. The grotto was surrounded by miniature fishponds and great granite trough-like vases, while

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anese Occupation. See Eric Choa Watt Chiang Oral History Interview, Reel 4 (National Archives Singapore).

109 Less than two months of Choa's death in January 1907, his 'Large and very Valuable Collection of Well-Grown Plants Including Many Rare Specimens' was put up for auction. See 'Advertisements' *Singapore Free Press*, 27 Feb 1907, at 3.

four singing girls from Foochow discoursed appropriate strains, accompanying themselves on the guitar. Afar off by the seashore, a band at intervals entertained the guests to European music.

[291] Choa Kim Keat was the only son of Choa Kai Hoon, a native of Malacca, who came to Singapore and entered the service of Choa Boon Buan & Co (chop Khye Guan Tong), Commission Agents in Boat Quay, and who later succeeded his brother Choa Chuan Ghiok as manager, in Rangoon, of the branch business of Leack, Chin Seng & Co, and died there in 1865. Choa Kim Keat himself began life as salesman to Lim Tiang Wah & Sons, and, on the formation in 1886 of the Straits Trading Co Ltd, he acted as tin salesman<sup>110</sup> until his death at the age of 48 years, on the 5th January 1907.<sup>111</sup> In 1902, along with Lee Tian Lye<sup>112</sup> and Chia Hood Theam, he went on a trip to China and Japan, and the Kim Ban Choon Club entertained the trio at dinner to wish them bon voyage.<sup>113</sup> In all his dealings, Choa Kim Keat was tactful and upright, and earned the respect of the successive managing directors of the Straits Trading Company and of the European heads of firms with whom he came daily in contact in the course of his tin business. It was his proud delight to exhibit the tangible tokens of esteem received by him from some of the foremost businessmen of the

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110 'Death of Mr Choa Kim Keat' *Singapore Free Press*, 8 Jan 1907, at 8.

111 Choa had been ailing for some time, and despite an operation some months earlier and convalescence trips to Burma and Calcutta, he succumbed to his illness 'sooner than had been anticipated' at his residence at 149 Neil Road. Ibid. He was buried at a Chinese cemetery in Alexandra Road in a handsome coffin 'covered with bright silk draperies' and 'ornamented with gold work'. See 'The Late Mr Choa Kim Keat' *Straits Times*, 10 Jan 1907, at 7.

112 Also spelt 'Lee Tien Lye'. Lee was born in 1842 and worked as Chief Coal Clerk at the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company (see *Straits Times*, 22 Mar 1901, at 2). He died on 26 Jul 1921 at his home at Joo Chiat Terrace aged 80 (see 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 27 Jul 1921, at 8) and was buried at the Alexandra Road Cemetery. He was survived by one son, Lee Kian Soo, three daughters, 14 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren (see 'Death' *Singapore Free Press*, 29 Jul 1921, at 6).

113 *Straits Times*, 25 Mar 1902, at 5.



Choa Kim Keat

Colony, who had long retired from the East.<sup>114</sup> For many years, also, he successfully managed the large rice business of Kim Ching & Co.<sup>115</sup> He married a daughter<sup>116</sup> of Mr Tan Kim Ching, and his son, Choa Joon Hean,<sup>117</sup> who is now in the Overseas Assurance Corporation Ltd, is a young man of great promise.

It will be remembered that, at the launching of the SS *Ban Fo Soon*, Mr Jackson Millar intimated that an order had been placed with Messrs Riley Hargreaves & Co for another steamer. This was the SS *Sarie Borneo*, built for Mr Ang Lim Thye, which was launched in August 1896, in brilliant weather, and in the presence of a large assembly from the shipyard of that enterprising engineering firm at Tanjong Ru. The toast of prosperity to the steamer and its owner was proposed by the Rev SS Walker and responded to by Mr Jackson Millar.<sup>118</sup>

A letter to the newspapers published on the 25<sup>th</sup> July [292] 1896 from the pen of 'Isaiah' drew the attention of the Government and the Chinese public to the report made to an American religious organ by the Rev C Kelso, Principal of the Methodist School, of the successful proselytising work carried on among the pupils attending that school, despite the 'compact' or understanding between the Rev W Oldham and the original Chinese supporters of that school that the education which would be given to Chinese children would be of a purely secular nature. This resulted in the resignation of Messrs Tan Jiak Kim, Tan Hup Seng and Tan Boo Liat from the Board of Trustees of the

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114 Ibid.

115 He retired from Tan Kim Ching & Co in 1906, *ibid*.

116 Tan Hoon Neo (1858–1935). Tan was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery. See 'Domestic Occurrences' *Straits Times*, 2 Feb 1935, at 2.

117 Also spelt 'Chua Joon Hean'. Choa Joon Hean was married to Cheong Swat Leh (d 1929) and they had two sons: Eric Choa Watt Chiang (1916–2009), and Walter Choa Watt Seng; and two daughters: Jeanne Choa Kwee Neo and Nancy Choa Kim Neo. Eric Choa later became a well-known lawyer, founding the firm of Oehlers and Choa with Sir George Oehlers. H died at his residence at 149 Neil Road on 17 Sep 1945 (see 'Obituary' *Straits Times*, 19 Sep 1945, at 2).

118 See 'Launch at Tanjong Rhu' *Singapore Free Press*, 23 Jul 1895, at 2.

Boarding School, and the withdrawal of a large number of the Chinese pupils attending the Methodist School (otherwise known as the Anglo-Chinese School). The controversy was a bitter one, and the motto of the 'innocence of the dove and the subtlety of the serpent' for mission work in the East used by the Rev DD Moore, in his article which appeared in the *Gospel in All Lands* for May 1896, became a byword. Mr Tan Keong Saik took part in the discussion and stated in his letter that 'some years ago when I heard of the breach of this "compact" I warned Mr Kelso, and particularly Bishop Thoburn, that, if what I had learnt was true, and the Chinese community were to know of it, the parents would withdraw their children'. The indignation that was felt by the Chinese trustees and the parents, when some of them accidentally came upon a copy of the May number of the *Gospel in All Lands*, appeared to be unreal. The average non-Christian Chinese parent who, through lack of the necessary knowledge, did not trouble to give his children any moral or religious instruction of any kind, was perfectly indifferent as to what his children were taught in school, in addition to the three R's. This has been abundantly proved by the fact that the Christian educational institutions have been patronised by the non-Christian Chinese families as largely as the secular schools.

The charge made by 'Isaiah', that the Methodist [293] school authorities had tampered with the assurance given by the Rev W Oldham to his wealthy Chinese supporters that no religious instruction would be introduced either in the day school or in the boarding establishment, was, however, not refuted. In this connection, it is interesting to recall the speech of the Governor, Sir Cecil Smith, at the prize distribution of the Methodist School in December 1890. He said:

It is very gratifying to see that the teachers do not stop at mere standard work, but devote considerable attention to what might be called, for want of a better word, moral teaching: and that the large body of influential Chinese are not opposed to their doing this. It

is pleasing to see so many Chinese boys putting themselves under regular instruction, and this must be productive of much good.<sup>119</sup>

Mr Tan Kim Ching, at the same function, referred to the many different nationalities represented among the boys, who all sang the same hymns in unison and received the same instruction, and he declared that he was proud to have been one of the founders of such a school.

The members of the Weekly Entertainment Club celebrated the fifth anniversary of this very select social club with a Fancy Dress Ball in October. It was a unique function. The dresses looked brilliant. Some of the members wore costumes of kings, princes and sultans, while one member was dressed up like Li Hung Chang. This Club is perhaps the only example of a proprietary club among the Straits Chinese. It possesses a fine and commodious club house on Ann Siang Hill. Its members are composed of the elite of Straits Chinese society and meet together, regularly, every week-end, for social intercourse. Mr Lee Choon Guan has been the president of the Club since its foundation.

It was in this year (1896) that Mr Tan Chay Yan, the eldest son of Mr Tan Teck Guan, of Malacca, was persuaded by Mr Ridley to take up rubber planting as a commercial enterprise. He has thereby become [294] known, in the history of the rubber industry, as the first rubber planter in Malaya. He planted the seedlings, given free from

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119 This is most likely a paraphrase of the Governor's actual speech which reads:

There is one particular feature in this school which I, for one, have watched with very great pleasure indeed, it is that those who have charge have not simply dealt with the question of instruction in those subjects which the Government takes particular notice of, but they have taken in hand the charge as far as they can of the moral character of the school by what I may, for want of a better word call 'moral teaching'. It is a marvellous fact that the boys in this school who are principally Chinese although there are many Mohammedans readily listen to this teaching, which in this instance it is in fact the duty of the masters to press on the boys, and I understand also that the parents not only take no exception to it, but that they rejoice at it, and feel the benefits of it in their own homes.

See 'The Anglo-Chinese School' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 17 Dec 1890, at 8.





A Chinese Fancy Dress Ball (Oriental Association)



Singapore Chinese Weekly Entertainment Club



Tan Chay Yan



Directors of the United Singapore Rubber Estates Ltd  
(Plantation in Yio Chu Kang Road)

**L-R (front row):** Yow Ngan Pan; Tan Jiak Kim, D Machado (Manager);  
Dr Lim Boon Keng; Tan Chay Yan (Chairman); Lee Choon Guan;  
Choa Giang Thye, Seah Eng Kiat; and Chan Keng Swi.

the Singapore Economic Gardens, on a forty-acres plantation at Bukit Lintang in Malacca, and, after three years' experiment, he found that the trees thrived well, and he was encouraged to undertake planting on a large scale on Bukit Asahan estate, comprising 3,000 acres. This estate was afterwards acquired by a London syndicate and floated as the Malacca Rubber Plantations Ltd. Mr Tan Chay Yan was born in Malacca and educated at the High School there. At the age of 24 he was appointed a JP, and also served as a Municipal Commissioner. He made frequent visits to Singapore to advise and encourage his friends to take up rubber planting in Singapore, and he had large interests in several of the earlier plantations. Intensely patriotic and public-spirited, he was elected one of the original committee of the Straits Chinese British Association in 1900, and was largely instrumental in forming the Malacca Branch, of which he was the first President. Inheriting a large fortune from his father, he provided the money required for the Tan Teck Guan building, an annexe to the Medical School, to perpetuate the memory of his father, thus setting a splendid example which has been followed by Messrs Lee Choon Guan and Tan Soo Guan, in connection with endowments to Raffles College. He was a man of liberal and progressive views, and all movements for the social betterment and educational advancement of the Straits Chinese community found in him a warm supporter. Together with his wife, he visited England in 1911, where a daughter was born to them – the first Straits Chinese girl who can claim that England is 'the land of my birth'. He died in 1916 at a comparatively early age.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> January 1897 a strike of ricksha owners and pullers commenced, and lasted for four days. The Municipal Commissioners held a special meeting and learnt, from certain of the ringleaders who had been arrested, that some of the grievances were extortion [295] by the Malay peons; the increase by Mr Hooper, the Registrar of Vehicles, of the number of days' suspension for offences; and the fitting up of rickshas, with new materials, every four months, which the owners said would ruin their business. The hack gharries did not venture out for fear of being attacked by the strikers. There were disturbances at

the Beach Road Ricksha Depot and in Victoria Street, and many arrests were made. On the 9th January the Deputy Governor (the Hon JA Swettenham) issued a Proclamation under the Preservation of the Peace Ordinance, 1870, and copies, printed in Chinese, were placarded throughout the town. As a counter move, Chinese circulars, setting forth the grievances of the ricksha owners and demanding redress, were posted in various parts of the town. These were accompanied by some exceedingly comical pen-and-ink sketches illustrating (1) a rickshaw broken by a heartless peon, (2) a ricksha peon beating a puller till the blood gushes out of his mouth, (3) a peon enforcing bribes and (4) a puller in despair throwing himself into the sea, while a ricksha peon stands unconcernedly by. The strike fizzled out owing to the firm attitude adopted by the authorities. Koh Chye,<sup>120</sup> a large ricksha owner, was arrested and deported.<sup>121</sup>

The first number of the *Straits Chinese Magazine*, edited by Dr Lim Boon Keng and Mr Song Ong Siang, was published early in April. From the large and enthusiastic support then given to it, hope was entertained that it would have a long and successful career. Eight hundred copies of this first number were printed and sold out, so that those who subsequently became interested in the Magazine and tried to secure back numbers were unable to obtain a copy of this issue. The *Straits Times* in reviewing this first issue said that the Magazine might be almost regarded as being a contribution by the Straits-born Chinese to the rejoicings of the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. And yet it was a mere coincidence that this Magazine made its appearance in Jubilee year. The idea really [296] arose out of a Manuscript Magazine, on the lines of similar magazines in London Literary Societies, consisting of contributions by members of the Chinese

120 Also spelt 'Kho Chye', see 'Kho Chye' *Straits Times*, 22 Nov 1897, at 2.

121 See, 'The Strike' *Straits Times*, 9 Jan 1897, at 3. He was given free passage to China on board the SS *Glaucus* 'for his share in the rikisha strike', see 'The Rebellion in the Philippines' *Singapore Free Press* 20 Feb 1897, at 2. Koh somehow made his way back to Singapore and was re-arrested and re-deported in November 1897 (see 'Kho Chye' *Straits Times*, 22 Nov 1897, at 2).

Christian Association, of which Mr Song Ong Siang was president, and read at the final meeting of that Society before the close of the year 1896. The meeting thought that some of the articles were excellent and should be printed for perusal of the Straits Chinese community. The hearty co-operation of Dr Lim Boon Keng to be joint editor was secured, and the result was the *Straits Chinese Magazine*, which was launched as a quarterly journal, and continued its existence till December 1907, after which date, through lack of financial support, the venture had to be abandoned. During the later years of its career, Dr PVS Locke (of Penang) and Dr Gnoh Lean Tuck (of Kwala Lumpor) were co-opted on the editorial board.

In connection with the various schemes proposed to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in Singapore, on the 25<sup>th</sup> May the Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng, and Messrs Tan Jiak Kim and Seah Liang Seah, formed the Chinese deputation to the Governor, to whom they intimated that the Chinese people would subscribe at least \$30,000 for a proposed Victoria Institute to be established as a Home for the aged and infirm poor. His Excellency pointed out the weak point in the proposition, viz. the foundation in a year of enthusiasm of an institution that would become a drag on the public purse for all time, owing to the absence of an endowment and maintenance fund; while he further showed that such an institution would be bad and dangerous in principle, as it might encourage sick people to flock here from surrounding countries. The deputation, before withdrawing, stated that the Chinese would support the Town Hall scheme, but requested that a sufficient sum be set aside out of the Fund for a Victoria Diamond Jubilee scholarship.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> June a dinner was given to Mr Khoo Syn Chye,<sup>122</sup> in recognition of the valuable services rendered by him during a period of twenty-five years to the 'Khoo' and 'Chan' clan in the capacity of trustee of their common burial ground known as 'Leong San

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122 Also spelt 'Khoo Syn Chai'.

Tong'.<sup>123</sup> In the address, which was read in English by Mr Chan Kian Watt,<sup>124</sup> and afterwards handed to Mr Khoo Syn Chye by Mr Khoo Teck Kheng, reference was made to the late Chan Khoo Chan as the first gentleman who had, in the 'Forties, watched keenly the interests of the 'Khoo' and 'Chan' clan, and cared for that same burial ground. After his death, the management of these affairs had been entrusted to Mr Khoo Cheng Tiong and Mr Khoo Pat Cheng, and on their retirement in the early 'Seventies, Mr Khoo Syn Chye had been unanimously appointed trustee, and had discharged his duties well.

The Diamond Jubilee celebrations, which began on Sunday the 20th June, with Thanksgiving Services in all the churches, and ended on Friday the 25th June, with a monster Chinese procession which took an hour and a half to pass a given point and was two miles in length, with parade of the troops, the presentation of addresses by the various communities, the children's treat on the Esplanade, the feeding of the poor, the treat to the inmates of Tan Tock Seng's Hospital, the fireworks, the Government House Ball and the illuminations which transformed Singapore at night into a fairyland of light, will long live in the memory of every inhabitant who either took part in or witnessed some of these events.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> June the Council Chamber presented a brilliant spectacle, when a special meeting of the Legislative Council was held, to pass a loyal resolution to Her Majesty the Queen-Empress, on the motion of the Acting Colonial Secretary (Hon Mr CW Sneyd-Kynnersley) supported by the Hon Messrs Vermont, GS Murray and Lim Boon Keng.

In the course of his remarks Dr Boon Keng said:

The Chinese in this colony know perfectly well what [298] British justice and British Government are: the humaner side of British methods is fully known to the Chinese in the lands of our Most

123 See 'A Chinese Function' *Straits Times*, 14 Jun 1897, at 2.

124 Also spelt Chan Kian Whatt (see 'A Chinese Function' *Straits Times*, 14 Jun 1897, at 2).

Gracious Queen, and, indeed, her younger Chinese subjects in this colony do not know any other form of government than this. I can assure Your Excellency that to no other of Her Majesty's subjects will the Chinese of Singapore yield in loyalty and adhesion to Her Majesty, and I have the greatest pleasure therefore in supporting the resolution.<sup>125</sup>

At the Town Hall, addresses were presented by the Consular Corps, the Municipal Commissioners, the Chamber of Commerce and the various communities. The Chinese address was read by Dr Lim Boon Keng, and concluded thus:

We, Your Majesty's Chinese subjects, are treated with special kindness, being given the very same privileges as those enjoyed by Englishmen.

To encourage trade, no duties are levied, and travellers come and go without let or hindrance.

To promote education, schools are opened or assisted with grants, and scholarships are given in Your Majesty's name to enable successful students to proceed to England for the completion of their education.

In this Your Majesty's Colony of the Straits Settlements the Chinese alone number 300,000, nor can any place south of the China Sea be compared to this Colony in prosperity, peace and comfort.

For all these blessings we most humbly and heartily thank Your Majesty, while assuring Your Majesty of our undying loyalty, and praying that Your Majesty may be long spared to reign over us in peace, happiness and glory. This is an earnest prayer offered up by all Chinese, resident in Singapore.<sup>126</sup>

Messrs Tan Jiak Kim and Seah Liang Seah having intimated their intention to resign from the Municipal Board, the *Straits Times* suggest-

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125 Song substituted the opening of the quote with the words 'The Chinese in this colony' for 'They'. See 'The Diamond Jubilee' *Straits Times*, 23 Jun 1897, at 2.

126 See 'The Diamond Jubilee' *Straits Times*, 23 Jun 1897, at 2.

ed that young, and not elderly, Chinese gentlemen should offer their services.

[299] The younger generation of Chinamen have necessarily a more thorough acquaintance with the English language than have those of an earlier generation, and they are, or ought to be, more indoctrinated with the principles of public life as those principles are understood in English communities. ... They need not be wealthy men, all that is desired in that respect is that they shall be men of sufficient means to put them beyond the influence of undue pressure from any section of the community.<sup>127</sup>

Mr Choa Giang Thye was nominated by the Governor to succeed Mr Seah Liang Seah, while Mr Tan Cheng Tuan<sup>128</sup> was elected for the Central Ward in succession to Mr Tan Jiak Kim. At the close of the year, Mr Cheng Tuan was one of the Commissioners to retire by rotation, and was re-elected for the term of three years.

Mr Choa Giang Thye was the second son<sup>129</sup> of Choa Chuan Ghiok.<sup>130</sup> Born in Malacca, Mr Chuan Ghiok came to Singapore at an early age and entered the service of Jose D'Almeida & Sons as a clerk, but shortly afterwards he went to Rangoon to manage the business of Leack, Chin Seng & Co.<sup>131</sup> For about forty years Mr Chuan Ghiok was one of the leading Chinese merchants of Rangoon. He returned to Singapore a rich man, and died here in 1900.<sup>132</sup> Mr Giang Thye was born in Malacca in 1865, and at the age of 12 he came to Singapore

127 See 'Straits Chinese and Public Life' *Straits Times*, 9 Jul 1897, at 2. The phrase 'They need not be wealthy men ...' should read 'They need not necessarily be wealthy men ...'

128 For more on Tan Cheng Tuan, see Chapter 10.

129 See 'Death of Mr Choa Chuan Ghiock' *Straits Times*, 25 Jan 1900, at 2.

130 Choa Chuan Ghiok has been alternatively spelt: Chua Chuan Ghiok, Choa Chuan Geok, Choa Chuan Giok, Choa Chuan Ghiock, and Choa Chuan Cheock.

131 See 'Local and General' *Daily Advertiser*, 23 Feb 1892, at 3.

132 See 'Death of Mr Choa Chuan Ghiock' *Straits Times*, 25 Jan 1900, at 2. Choa died at his residence at 107 Amoy Street after being ill for 25 days. He was buried at Alexandra Road Cemetery (see *Straits Times*, 17 Feb 1900, at 2).





Choa Chuan Ghiok



Choa Giang Thye

and was educated privately in English, which he spoke fluently. He and his brother, Giang Whee,<sup>133</sup> for some years carried on business as Commission Agents under the style of 'Giang Bros.' Acquiring from the Straits Development Company the Singapore Steam Saw Mills at about a quarter of the actual value, he made the business, run with Chinese labour, for a number of years a profitable concern. He served as a Municipal Commissioner for eight years, and had also a seat on the Chinese Advisory Board and on the Committee of the Po Leung Kuk. He was made a JP in May 1910, and died in 1911, leaving an only son, Mr Choa Eng Wan, who married the elder daughter of Mr Lee Choon Guan, [300] and is manager of the Investment Department of Lee Cheng Yan & Co. Mr Eng Wan served in the ranks of the Chinese Co SVI, during the War, and has begun to take an interest in public affairs.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> September two Chinese notices were found posted on the walls in South Bridge Road, near the Central Police Station, and at the Kling Temple, stating that the Government was in various ways oppressing the poorer inhabitants, e.g. by the regulations as to the slaughter of animals at the abattoirs, the increased tax on rickshas, the orders about the quality of the cloth for ricksha hoods, and the closing of wells.

'Able-bodied and well-meaning persons' were called upon by the Leader of the League to strike a blow, on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the 9<sup>th</sup> moon (4<sup>th</sup> October), on which day it was proposed to raise the standard of patriotism, and the heads of the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, Members of Council, the Protector of Chinese and the Inspector-General of Police were to be taken, for each of which a reward of \$500 would be paid. There was a good deal of discontent among the poorer classes at this time owing to the increased cost of living and the incidence of taxation, as well as the coming into force of certain clauses of the Copper

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133 Also spelt 'Chua Giang Wee' or 'Choa Giang Wee'. The date of Choa Giang Whee's birth is unknown although he was the elder brother of Choa Giang Thye, which means that he would have been born in 1864 or earlier. He died on 1 Sep 1909 (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 6 Sep 1909, at 6).

Coin Ordinance, making it illegal to circulate copper coin other than that of the Straits Settlements. As the 4<sup>th</sup> October drew near, it became evident that the whole town was on tenterhooks, while nervous residents began to lay in provisions by way of preparation for a state of siege which, they alleged, was to last three days. On the evening of the 3rd October, a very little disturbance was sufficient to raise the alarm that the *gadoh besar* (big riot) had begun. In China Street a rowdy kicked over the basket of a hawker, who raised the cry for police. This was interpreted to be the sign for the riot to commence: shopkeepers closed their shops and the ricksha pullers ran like madmen for their homes. Similar disturbances took place at about the same time at the corner of Malay Street, where a drunken sailor refused to pay his ricksha [301] hire, and, after an altercation, chased the puller. The police turned out in force, but all was quiet. A company of the Rifle Brigade was stationed at Fort Canning, the SVA paraded at the Drill Hall and a detachment of marines was landed from HMS *Plover*, but the services of all these reserves were not requisitioned. In connection with this incident, Tan Ki Chuan alias Bun Eng, 'not being a natural-born subject of Her Majesty', although he claimed to be a son of the late Mr Tan Kim Ching by a Siamese woman, was banished to Siam for life.<sup>134</sup>

In December, one, O Khun Yiong, who held a British passport, was arrested and imprisoned in Amoy, and on his behalf Messrs Brad-dell Brothers were instructed to forward a petition to the local Government for his release.<sup>135</sup> The British Minister at Peking, replying to the wire from this Government, explained that Khun Yiong had not been recognised as a British subject, as he had not registered himself at the Amoy Consulate until a judgment had been obtained against him in China, after which he had absconded to Singapore, where he had applied for and obtained a passport, without a disclosure of the above facts. The reply also drew attention to a regulation made in October 1868 (and published in the *Government Gazette* of the 13th November

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134 See 'Twice Deported' *Straits Times*, 15 Jul 1898, at 2.

135 See 'The Amoy Incident' *Straits Times*, 7 Dec 1897, at 2.

1868) that no protection would be given to any British subject travelling in China, unless, when in China, he discarded his Chinese dress. In his petition, O Khun Yiong stated that he was born at Singapore of parents who were British subjects, and carried on business here under the style of 'Teng Cheong'; that, at the instance of a German firm at Amoy, which alleged that he had a share in the chartering of a steamer plying between that port and the Straits, his property in China had been seized; and that the British Consul had refused him protection and had advised him to see the German Consul, who demanded a deposit of \$20,000 as security, on refusal of which the German Consul had arrested him and handed him over to the Chinese authorities to be lodged in prison.<sup>136</sup>

The reply of the local Government to the above [302] petition, which was published in the *Government Gazette* of July 1898, stated that Khun Yiong had never asserted his British nationality in China, but had traded there as a Chinese subject, and concluded:

Her Majesty's Government cannot allow persons of Chinese race, born in this Colony, to enjoy the benefits of a double nationality – that is to say, it cannot permit them after acting as the petitioner has done as if they were subjects of the Emperor of China by residing and owning property in the interior forbidden to British subjects, afterwards to deny Chinese nationality and obtain as British subjects that full protection and countenance which can be accorded only to those who have consistently from their birth conducted themselves and been registered as British subjects.<sup>137</sup>

The Supreme Court, in March 1898, heard a petition brought by Yeo Cheng Hai<sup>138</sup> and others representing the 'Yeo' clan, praying for the

136 See 'The Amoy Incident' *Straits Times*, 16 Dec 1897, at 2.

137 See 'Briton or Chinaman' *Straits Times*, 2 Jul 1898, at 3.

138 Yeo Cheng Hai operated a business, Yeo Oh Kow & Co, Chop Heng Moh at 5 Synagogue Street, along with Yeo Poon Miah, Yeo Cheow Toe, Yeo Cheng Thwan (all of Rangoon) and Yeo Cheow Hock (of Singapore) (see 'Notice' *Straits Times*, 30 May 1896, at 3). In 1912, when the first Hokkien bank, the Chinese Commercial Bank was established, Yeo Cheng Hai was listed as one of the

removal of Yeo Cheow Wai and Yeo Toh, the trustees of 'Hiap Guan Sun' burial ground. It will be remembered that this trust was created by Tan Geok Hup in 1882 by a deed wherein Messrs Yeo Hong Tye and Tan Jiak Kim were appointed trustees and it was declared that all Hokiens bearing the surname 'Yeo' should be allowed to be buried in this burial ground free of cost. On the 30th March 1897 an Order had been made by the Court appointing Yeo Cheow Wai and Yeo Toh trustees in place of Mr Tan Jiak Kim retiring. Tan Cheng Neo, the executrix of the will of the late Yeo Hong Tye, had, however, always resisted the carrying out of the trusts and had claimed to be entitled to the rents of the buildings erected on the ground. The allegations of the petitioners were that the trustees had not carried out the trusts and no funerals had taken place since their appointment. No order was made, but in 1899 Yeo Toh retired and Yeo Hong Ghee took his place. There have been several changes since, the present trustees being Mr Yeo Hock Hoe who was appointed in 1905 and Yeo Cheng Hai in 1918.

[303] Mr Yeo Hock Hoe was born in Singapore and educated at Raffles Institution. After some years' service under Government, he joined the firm of Ching Keng Lee & Co, Auctioneers and Valuers and Estate Agents,<sup>139</sup> in which he is now managing partner. From the nature of his business and training, he has gradually acquired an in-

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original directors (see 'Proposed Hokien Bank for Singapore' *Weekly Sun*, 24 Aug 1912, at 6). Yeo was married to Gang Ang Neo; they had three sons and two daughters. He died on 4 April 1927 (see 'Chop Tong Bee' *Straits Times*, 10 Oct 1928, at 15).

139 See, 'Notice' *Straits Times*, 16 Feb 1911, at 8. In 1920, the firm was renamed Estate and Trust Agencies Ltd with Yeo as managing director (see, *Straits Times*, 3 Jul 1920, at 7). Little else is known of Yeo save that he was active in the Straits Chinese British Association, being elected onto its Committee in 1913, 1915 and 1917 (see *Straits Times*, 23 Aug 1913, at 8; 'Straits Chinese and the War' *Straits Times*, 27 Sep 1915, at 10; and 'Straits Chinese British Association' *Singapore Free Press*, 13 Dec 1917, at 371), and that he was a director of several companies, including the Eastern United Assurance Corporation Ltd (see *Straits Times*, 3 Sep 1913, at 6) and the Ulu Pandan (Singapore) Rubber Estates Ltd (see 'Ulu Pandan Report' *Singapore Free Press*, 19 Jun 1915, at 10). He was also President of the Cheng Kee Hean Association (see, *Singapore Free Press*, 25 Jan 1915, at 4).

timate and sound knowledge of the market value of land and house properties in Singapore, and, consequently, his services as a valuer are constantly in requisition for various purposes. He takes an intelligent and active interest in public matters affecting the Chinese community. He is a painstaking and careful man of business and a conscientious worker.<sup>140</sup>

The controversy over the subject of Straits Chinese discarding the queue became so bitter that, early in March 1898, two placards, in Chinese, were found posted, one near the Municipal offices and the other outside the Dispensary, of which Dr Lim Boon Keng was part owner. The text of these placards was of a scandalous nature. Later in the year, when his term of office on the Legislative Council was about to expire, the supporters and opponents of the Hon'ble Doctor crossed swords in the columns of the daily papers as to whether the Governor should renominate him for a fresh term of three years. The *Pinang Gazette* contributed to the discussion by suggesting that either one of the influential Penang Chinese should be nominated or that an additional seat be created for a Penang Chinese Member of Council. On the 23rd August, however, at the meeting of the Legislative Council, Dr Lim Boon Keng took the oaths as the Chinese member, for a fresh term of three years.

In July a new regulation imposed by the Opium Farmer increasing the minimum quantity of chandu to be sold to consumers from three to four hoons was met with wide public opposition. Both the Chinese Advisory Board and the Straits Settlements Association took the matter up in the interests of the small consumers of the drug, forming the poorest classes of Chinese in the [304] Settlement. The Government replied that it had no power under the Opium Ordinance to interfere with the discretion of the Farmer. At the annual general meeting of the Straits Settlements Association on the 10<sup>th</sup> August, a res-

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140 Yeo died on 3 May 1924 at his home at 1 Cairnhill Circle at the age of 49 and was buried at the Senh Yeo Burial Ground in Telok Blangah. See 'Death' *Singapore Free Press*, 6 May 1924, at 6.

olution proposed by Mr T Scott and seconded by Mr Tan Jiak Kim that 'this meeting appeals to the Government to, without delay, introduce an Ordinance to amend No. IX of 1894, so that purchasers of prepared opium shall have, if they so desire, the right to buy from the present Opium Farmer opium in packets of three hoons each, and from future Farmers opium in packets of two hoons', was carried unanimously.

The *Straits Chinese Magazine* for June 1898 records the appearance of a new Chinese daily in Singapore known as the *Thien Nan Shin Pao* (天南新报), conducted by men who had studied Western systems and who were alive to the great need of the Chinese people for some plain speaking in matters domestic and foreign. This new daily aims at giving every facility for the expression of progressive ideas, taking, in politics, the standpoint of Chinese nationalism.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> August at 'San Giang Wee', the residence of Mr Tan Hup Leong,<sup>141</sup> on Thomson Road, 'what might be styled,' said the *Straits Times*, 'the first Chinese political dinner in the Straits Settlements' was given in honour of Dr Lim Boon Keng on his renomination to the Legislative Council. The toast of the evening was, of course, the health of the Doctor, in proposing which Mr Ong Siang laid stress on the Doctor's efforts in the past for the welfare of the Chinese community and hoped that he would continue to help their community to rise 'on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things.' Mr Wee Theam Tew, who had returned to Singapore as a new-fledged Barrister, proposed the toast of the guests, which was responded to by Mr Hullett, the old schoolmaster of many of those present at the function.

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141 Tan Hup Leong was the son of Tan Kim Tian and holds the distinction of being the first Straits Chinese to 'go round the world'. He was a leader of the Reform Movement, alongside Lim Boon Keng, and lived at 953 Serangoon Road. He died on 5 Aug 1926 at the age of 56. See 'A Local Pioneer' *Straits Times*, 6 Aug 1926, at 9.

## CHAPTER X

### THE NINTH DECADE (1899-1909)

#### FIRST PART

IN April 1899 a provisional committee consisting of five young Straits Chinese formulated a scheme for instituting a school for the education in Romanised Malay, Chinese and English, Arithmetic, Geography, Music and Sewing, of Chinese girls, 'the future mothers of a future generation'. The circular inviting financial aid stated that 'the object of the school is to demonstrate the feasibility of reforming Chinese conducting the education of their children on improved and modern systems, distinctively in consonance with Chinese principles as laid down in the classical works of Confucius: but entirely at variance with existing methods.' The promoters were impatient to commence operations, and with \$6,000 (half of which was a generous contribution from Mr Khoo Seok Wan, the proprietor of the *Thien Nan Shin Pao*, and a son of the late Mr Khoo Cheng Tiong) as initial capital, a large and representative body of Chinese gentlemen met on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April at the Chinese Consulate, passed rules and elected the first Committee. Mr Lew Yuk Lin,<sup>1</sup> the Chinese Consul, was elected President; Messrs Khoo Seok Wan and Tan Hup Seng, Vice-Presidents; Mr Ong Soon Tee, Hon Secretary; Mr Tan Boo Liat, Hon Treasurer; and Messrs Seah Pek Seah, Lim Keng Kuee,<sup>2</sup> Song Ong Siang and Dr Lim Boon Keng, committee.<sup>3</sup> The school was opened in June with seven girls on the register, and two months later it was reported that there were thirty girls attend- [306] ing as pupils, and that Mrs Lim Boon Keng was

1 On Lew Yuk Lin, see Chapter 9 of this volume.

2 Also spelt 'Lim Keng Kwee', see 'Singapore Chinese Girls' School' *Singapore Free Press*, 24 Apr 1899, at 1.

3 See 'Singapore Chinese Girls' School' *Singapore Free Press*, 24 Apr 1899, at 1.



giving lessons in Chinese to the elder girls. The sum of \$200 had been promised as monthly subscriptions for current expenses by a number of supporters, but their enthusiasm was short-lived, and in a short time this method of carrying on the work of the school had to be abandoned. Despite the fact that the older and leading men of the Straits Chinese community looked askance at this institution and declined to give it any financial aid, the promoters 'having put their hands to the plough 'never once looked back, while encouragement came in the form of a slow but steady increase in the enrolment of girls from just the right class of homes. The finances were from time to time, in these early days, at a low ebb, but, whenever money was needed to wipe off liabilities, it was found by the importunate 'beggars' for a good and winning cause.

In 1908 the school was formed into a limited liability company, under the provisions of the Companies Ordinance (1889) dealing with Associations not for profit, and the Government generously gave a ninety-nine years' lease of the land and building formerly used by the Government Analyst at the junction of Hill Street and Coleman Street, a central and suitable site, in which the work of this school is now being carried on under great difficulties and disadvantages, owing to an insufficient endowment fund and to the lack of proper accommodation, for within the last few years the Straits Chinese parents have been more sensible of the necessity of having their girls educated, and the school has now an enrolment of some 250 children. It is worthy of note that Mr Ong Soon Tee still continues to discharge the strenuous duties of Hon Secretary, while Dr Lim Boon Keng (President), Mr Song Ong Siang (Vice-President) and Messrs Chia Hood Theam and Lim Koon Yang (members of the Board of Directors) have for twenty years worked incessantly in the interests of the school.

Mr Lim Koon Yang is the only surviving son of Lim [307] Sam Koh, who was a trader in Singapore in the 'Fifties. His father married Choo Guek Neo,<sup>4</sup> one of the pupils of Miss Cooke's Chinese Girls'

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4 Also spelt 'Choo Gwek Neo'.

School, then located in Beach Road. Lim Koon Yang was born on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 1860, in Orchard Road near the present market, which was then a fruit plantation owned by his father. Later on his father gave up his town business and bought a large fruit plantation in Yeo Chu Kang Road, where he lived with his family for many years. The present Japanese cemetery forms part of that plantation. Continued ill-health compelled him to sell his plantation and to remove to Kramat Road, where he died at the ripe age of 78 years, and he was buried at the Christian cemetery in Bukit Timah Road. Lim Koon Yang was educated for four years at Miss Cooke's School, and at the age of 14 went to Raffles Institution, which he left in November 1878. After a few months in the Land Office, then under John Blundell, he entered in 1879 the service of Mr JD Vaughan, Advocate and Solicitor, who had an office in a lane behind the premises of John Little & Co Ltd, and who was the author of *Manners and Customs of the Chinese in the Straits Settlements*.<sup>5</sup> He remained there till the tragic disappearance of Mr Vaughan, in November 1890, from the SS *Malacca*.<sup>6</sup> In the same month he secured a post in the legal firm of Messrs Braddell Bros & Matthews (now Braddell Brothers),<sup>7</sup> where he has been ever since.<sup>8</sup> He married on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 1888 Ee Gek Eng,<sup>9</sup> the second daughter of the late Mr Ee Koon Hoey, one of the first members of the Celestial Reasoning Association, the first Straits Chinese debating society. His

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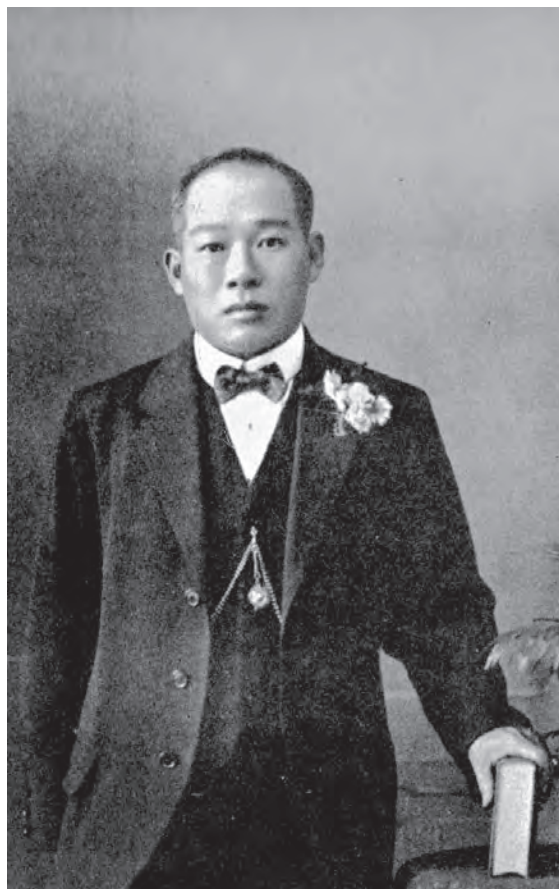
5 Jonas Daniel Vaughan, *The Manners and Customs of the Chinese of the Straits Settlements* (Singapore: Mission Press, 1879).

6 See 'Mysterious Disappearance of Mr JD Vaughan' *Singapore Free Press*, 19 Oct 1891, at 2.

7 See *The Singapore and Straits Directory 1910*, at 138.

8 Lim retired on pension from his position as Managing Clerk at Braddell Brothers in April 1932, at the age of 70 (see 'Mr Lim Koon Yang' *Straits Times*, 1 Apr 1932, at 14). He died on 18 Jun 1934 from heart failure and was buried at the Bukit Timah Christian Cemetery, survived by his son Keng Hock and two daughters and 13 grandchildren (see 'Mr Lim Koon Yang' *Singapore Free Press*, 20 Jun 1934, at 2).

9 Ee Gek Eng died on 4 May 1906 aged 37 and was buried at the Bukit Timah Christian Cemetery (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 5 May 1906, at 4).



Lim Koon Yang



First Year of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School (1900)



Singapore Chinese Girls' School (1913)

wife died at the early age of 35.<sup>10</sup> His only surviving son, Lim Keng Hock, who has been in the same legal firm since 1907, served as a volunteer during the Great War, and devotes his spare time to the guitar. His three daughters were all educated at the Singapore Chinese Girls' School and are accomplished pianists.<sup>11</sup> The youngest daughter has assisted with violin items at several Straits Chinese social functions. Mr Lim Koon [308] Yang sits on the committee of the Straits Chinese British Association, of which he is a life member. His activities in connection with the work of the Church of England Mission are shown by his being one of the managers of St Andrew's School and St Peter's Mission Church and a member of committee of the Singapore Diocesan Association.

Mr Chia Hood Theam is the eldest son of the late Chia Leong Chuan,<sup>12</sup> who was for many years head shroff of the Mercantile Bank. He was educated at Raffles Institution and became assistant to his father, and, on his father's death, he succeeded to the post of head shroff of the same Bank. He has shown real interest in the movement for female education by undertaking the duties of Hon Treasurer of the SC Girls' School for several years. Of a quiet and unassuming disposition, he is much respected for his integrity of character by the

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10 See 'Obituary' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 5 May 1906, at 2. The death notice in the *Straits Times* of 5 May 1906, at 4: states that she died at the age of 37.

11 Lim Keng Hock married Voon Choy Sim, second daughter of Voon Thian Soo in Ipoh on 12 September 1918 (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 27 Aug 1918, at 6). This was most probably Lim's second marriage since *One Hundred Years of the Chinese in Singapore* was published in 1921, and it would have been impossible for Lim to have had three accomplished daughters by then.

12 Chia Leong Chuan was the son of Chia Kay Tuan and brother of Chia Leong Kiat (1851–1927). He had two wives – 'Gemok' (literally meaning 'fat') and Song Chit Neo (1858–1911). He had four sons Hood Theam (1863–1938), Hood Cheng, Hood Sang (1867–1925), and Hood Teck; and one daughter Wat Neo (1862–1953) from his first marriage; and one daughter Lim Neo (1875–1911) from his second marriage. See 'Grave of Song Chit Neo (wife of Chia Leong Chuan)', available at <<https://chiafamily.wordpress.com/2013/05/12/grave-of-song-chit-neo-wife-of-chia-leong-chuan/>> (accessed 15 Feb 2015).



Chia Hood Theam

Chinese community. Among his sons, Chia Keng Tye is one of the best tennis players among the Straits-born Chinese, Chia Keng Hoe<sup>13</sup> is a local medical practitioner and Chia Keng Boon<sup>14</sup> is a keen volunteer.<sup>15</sup>

There were two other gentlemen whose names appear among the seven signatories to the Memorandum of Association of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School. They were among the small batch of Straits Chinese who were in sympathy with the cause of female education during the early days of the movement. Their names were Chan Kian Watt and Yeo Swee Hee. Mr Chan Kian Watt, who was a bookkeeper to Meyer Brothers, faithfully discharged the duties of Hon Treasurer until his death.

Mr Yeo Swee Hee, first as a member of the school committee, and later as a director, worked hard to make the institution a success, and

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13 Chia Keng Hoe graduated from the King Edward VII Medical School in 1917 (see Faridah Abdul Rashid, *Biography of the Early Malay Doctors 1900–1957 Malaya and Singapore* (Singapore: Xlibris, 2012) at 483; and 'King Edward VII Medical School' *Singapore Free Press*, 3 Sep 1917, at 8). A keen sportsman, he was President of the Bukit Mas Football Association (see 'Football' *Straits Times* 1 Dec 1921, at 9) and Patron of the Eclipse Badminton Party (see 'Eclipse BP' *Straits Times*, 28 Feb 1937, at 26). He died in 1980 (see *Straits Times*, 17 May 1980, at 26).

14 Chia Keng Boon was educated at Anglo-Chinese School where he completed his Cambridge Local Examinations in 1916 ('Singapore Scholars' *Straits Times*, 30 Apr 1917, at 10). A keen footballer, he represented the Bukit Mas Football Association and in 1923 became its Honorary Treasurer (see 'Football' *Straits Times*, 2 Dec 1924, at 10). In 1937, he was listed as being the Shroff of the Mercantile Bank of India in Kuantan. Chia married Pang Quee-Song and they had four sons (Eddie, Henry, George, and Freddie) and one daughter (Lily Chia Kean-Neo). His second son Henry married Cherry Tan Yong Sim, eldest daughter of Tan Chooi Leong; third son George married Lim Pheck Lian, eldest daughter of Lim Chu Yan (see *Straits Times*, 24 Dec 1950, at 10); while his youngest son Henry married Patricia Ang Kim Hay, youngest daughter of Ang Boon Tuan (see 'Air Traffic Officer Weds' *Straits Times*, 15 Feb 1956, at 4). Chia's date of death is not known although it can be ascertained that he died between 1951 and 1956.

15 See 'Chinese Volunteer Club' *Straits Times*, 30 Mar 1921, at 8, which lists Chia as a Lance-Corporal.



Yeo Swee Hee



by his death on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1909, at the age of 49,<sup>16</sup> the school lost a devoted supporter. The son of Yeo Kwan whose own father had come down from Swatow as one of the early settlers, Mr Yeo Swee Hee was born in Singapore in 1861, and was educated at Raffles Institution, For [309] twenty-seven years he was in the service of Messrs Huttenbach Bros, and the wide experience he acquired in the shipping, coal and petroleum departments of the firm fitted him for the post of general assistant to which his employers promoted him. He was the proprietor of the Singapore Cold Storage retail depot in Orchard Road, which since his death, has been run by the Company itself. Mr Swee Hee was on the committee of the Anglo-Chinese Free School and the Straits Chinese British Association. He was greatly interested in the Chinese volunteer movement and was one of the few Chinese honorary members of the SVC. His eldest son, Mr Yeo Boon Guan, was one of the young men who responded to the appeal for recruits in 1915 and served the SVI till the end of the War.

An interesting point touching the liberty of the subject came before the Supreme Court in August 1899. The Protector of Chinese, Mr Evans, on certain information that a girl under 16 years of age was being trained for immoral purposes, had committed her to the 'Home', under the provisions of the Women and Girls' Protection Ordinance of 1896. On the return of a writ of *Habeas Corpus* issued on the application of the girl's father, the Chief Justice overruled the contention of the Attorney-General that the Protector's warrant was final and conclusive, and held that the Ordinance did not take away from the Court its inherent power, viz. of having brought before it by *Habeas Corpus* all persons detained in prison against their will. The Chief Justice found, on the evidence before him, that the girl was 17 years old and that she had not been kept in her 'aunt's' house for immoral purposes, and discharged her.

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16 Yeo died at his home at 2 Short Street after 'ailing for several months' (see, 'Death of Mr Yeo Swee Hee' *Straits Times*, 12 Oct 1909, at 7). Song relies mainly on this newspaper report for his account of Yeo's life.

In April 1899 Goh Lai Hee won the Queen's Scholarship, being the third and last Chinese lad to secure this coveted honour for Singapore.<sup>17</sup> Born in 1881, he was educated at Raffles Institution, and on arriving in England he entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he graduated BA on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1902 and took [310] his MA degree on the 15th February 1906. A brilliant chess player, even while at school, he won his 'blue' for chess in Cambridge, and was secretary and vice-president of the Cambridge University Chess Club. For some years he was president of the Far Eastern Society, an association of Oriental students at that University. Remaining in England, he started business as a commission agent under the firm-name of Hong Seng & Co, at 54 Lower Thames Street, London, and in 1914, just before the outbreak of the War, he went out to Peking in China, in connection with that business. He has been there ever since engaged in journalistic work.<sup>18</sup>

In September, on the second reading of the Bill to amend the Banishment Ordinance (1888) by the introduction of a very sweeping clause, that a banishment order should be conclusive evidence for all purposes that the person to be banished was not a British subject, the Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng led the opposition, pointing out that such an order might be made against a British subject, who would be deprived of his constitutional right of appealing to the Supreme Court to deter-

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17 Goh was an outstanding student at Raffles Institution, having won the Institution Prize in 1892, 1895 and 1898, as well as the Tan Jiak Kim Scholarship in 1898 (see 'Raffles Institution' *Singapore Free Press*, 16 Apr 1900, at 2). Goh was born in 1881, the son of Goh Keng Hock and was also known as 'Wu Lai-hsi'. He had five brothers: Lai Kiat, Lai Mong, Lai Mui, Lai Seah and Lai Kang (see 'Deaths' *Singapore Free Press* 24 Aug 1921, at 6). He died in August 1951 from pneumonia, leaving behind a widow and two sons (see 'S'pore man dies in China' *Straits Times*, 31 Aug 1951, at 8). Goh was also appointed Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in China as well as Pacification Commissioner to Nanyang (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 7 Sep 1927, at 8). In Beijing, Goh was acknowledged as an expert on Chinese porcelain (see *Singapore Free Press*, 22 Feb 1929, at 8).

18 When Goh went to China, it was as editor of the *Peking Gazette*, an English daily (see 'S'pore man dies in China' *Straits Times*, 31 Aug 1951, at 8).



Goh Lai Hee

mine his nationality. On a vote being taken for the second reading, Dr Boon Keng was in the minority with two supporters, Messrs Stringer and GS Murray. At the next Council meeting, Mr Burkinshaw's amendment that the Supreme Court should finally decide the question of nationality was lost, but in Committee the Governor accepted Dr Boon Keng's amendment in the form of a proviso that 'nothing herein contained shall prevent the person against whom the banishment order has been issued from submitting fresh evidence to the Governor in Council to prove his nationality: and if, after hearing such evidence, the Governor in Council is satisfied that such person is a natural-born subject of the Queen, the Governor in Council shall forthwith cancel the order of banishment'. On the motion for the third reading, the Governor said that Mr Burkinshaw 'was bound in honour as a leading member of [311] the Bar to protest or object against anything that might seem to affect the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court', and that the official members detested this banishment work, but 'they all felt that the safety of the Colony in this matter depended on the exceptional jurisdiction given to the Executive Council'. This exceptional power was necessary so that 'they might not be thwarted by any man possessing sufficient money to set up a string of legal proceedings'.

Some public interest was shown over the decision of Cox, CJ, in the case of *Nye Rai v Lim Loh*, or 'the Raffles Square case'. The plaintiff claimed, as administrator of Prah Primoon Sombat, possession of land in Raffles Place, acquired by purchase from Khoo Cheng Tiong by deed dated 10th February 1873. The land claimed was sold at public auction, under an Order of Court, as forming part of the estate of Khoo Tiong Poh deceased, and was purchased for \$71,000 by Lim Loh,<sup>19</sup> who pulled down the old buildings and erected an imposing

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19 Lim Loh (c1858–1929) was also known as Lim Chee Ghee. He was born in Nan An, Fujian Province, China. It is not known when he came to Singapore but by the late 1890s was already a well-known brick-maker (Hock Ann Brickworks) and builder with offices at 31 Upper Macau Street and 4 Telok Ayer Street (Chop Teng Seng Hin). Lim also owned the Johore Tin Mining Company, and a rubber plantation where he built three bungalows for his family. He died

three-storied block of buildings on the site. The plaintiff succeeded in his action, but possession was made conditional on payment of what might be found to be due for the value of the buildings erected and improvements made by Lim Loh on the property.<sup>20</sup> On this judgment, the *Straits Times* remarked that 'when a builder buys a building with a doubtful title, and straightway knocks it down and erects a new building on what he knows to be (probably) another man's ground, it might, perhaps, be more reasonable that he should not receive compensation for the building he has so erected'.<sup>21</sup> Lim Loh complained that such adverse criticism and comments were causing him harm and injuring his reputation as a builder of twenty-five years' standing. He maintained that he was an innocent purchaser and had taken legal opinion before he purchased the property in question.

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on 1 Nov 1929 at the age of 78. He was survived by at least five wives and 28 children, the most well-known of whom was the war hero, Lim Bo Seng (1909–1944). Lim was a highly-skilled carpenter and builder and had the reputation of being a 'living Lu Ban' (鲁班, the patron saint of Chinese builders and carpenters) and was responsible for building many major buildings in Singapore, including the Victoria Memorial Hall, the Hong San See Temple, and the Goodwood Park Hotel. In 1908, he built a magnificent mansion in his home village of Hou Pu in Nan Ann for his family. It had four blocks and a total of 99 rooms. It is now a protected building. In Singapore, he purchased a large piece of land at the 4<sup>th</sup> milestone, Serangoon Road which he named Hock Ann Yuan and where he established his Hock Ann Brickworks, operated a rubber estate and built three houses for his large family. There, in an attap hut, he stored the incense ash from his ancestral village temple. In 1919, he erected a temple in place of the attap house. It was known as Kai Hock Tong Temple and was relocated to Tampines in 1996. In August 2008, his descendants donated a life-sized portrait of Lim done by the famous Chinese painter Xu Beihong to the Singapore Art Museum. See Raymond Goh, 'A Final House for Lim Loh – Part I', available at <<http://blog.bukitbrown.org/post/44373486519/a-final-house-for-lim-loh-part-i>> (accessed 16 Feb 2015); and 'Lim Loh' (Bukit Brown), available at <<http://mymindisrojak.blogspot.sg/2012/10/lim-loh-bukit-brown.html>> (accessed 16 Feb 2015).

20 See 'The Lim Loh Case' *Straits Times*, 21 Jan 1902, at 3.

21 Ibid.

The judgment of Cox, CJ, was reversed by the Court of Appeal, on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 1900, which held that Rajah Wichit was the real purchaser in 1873, and [312] that, consequently, the plaintiff could not maintain his suit to recover possession from the defendant, Lim Loh. The appellant, Nye Rai, took the case up to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, before whom Mr RW Braddell, of the legal firm of Messrs Braddell Brothers, had the honour of appearing as one of the counsel for the respondent, Lim Loh. Their lordships held that though the title was in the name of Primoon, the appellant's father, he had not at any time the beneficial ownership of the property. It followed that he had no right or title either to question the title of Khoo Tiong Poh or to challenge the accuracy of the declarations. The appeal was therefore dismissed with costs.<sup>22</sup>

The cause of the local reform party which had been advocating the cutting off of the 'towchang' received encouragement from an unexpected quarter in November 1899. It appears that, in consequence of representations made by the Chinese Government to the British Foreign Office, strict instructions had been given by the British Foreign Office to Colonial Governors that 'no Chinaman proceeding from the Straits or Hongkong to China will get a passport as a British subject unless he cut off his queue'.

In connection with the South African War, the *Straits Times* in November started the Transvaal War Fund for the relief of the dependents of the soldiers and sailors who might fall in fighting the British Empire's cause.<sup>23</sup> This Fund was taken over and absorbed a month later by the Straits and Malayan South African War Relief Fund, as the result of a great public meeting in the Town Hall. Ten Chinese gentlemen representing all Chinese sections of the community were appointed on the General Committee. The Chinese donations came in freely. In March 1900 the Indian Famine Fund was opened, and for several months afterwards the two Funds continued their respective

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22 See 'The Lim Loh Case' *Straits Times*, 21 Jan 1902, at 3.

23 See 'Transvaal War Fund' *Straits Times*, 20 Nov 1899, at 3.

appeals, which met with quick and generous response from all communities in the Straits Settlements and Malaya. As [313] regards the War Fund, the Officer Administering the Government, in his report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, stated that the total amount collected (including \$50,000 voted by Government) was approximately \$215,000 and that 'the Chinese community subscribed very handsomely indeed.' Among the principal subscribers were: Capitan Chang Keng Kui (Perak),<sup>24</sup> \$15,000; Capitan Yap Kuan Seng (Selangor), \$10,000; Towkay Tet Shin,<sup>25</sup> \$10,000; Chop Chin Moh Hin, \$3,000; and Mr Khoo Seok Wan, \$1,100. It is equally gratifying to be able to record that the total amount raised for the Indian Famine Fund was \$146,000.

After the Peking coup d'état, in the summer of 1898, resulting in the dethronement of the Emperor Kwang-su, Kang Yu Wei and his henchman Liang Chi Ch'ao fled to Japan, and established Reform Associations in America, Canada and Australia among the Chinese settlers. During 1899 it appears that a few Chinese in Singapore had gone

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24 Better known as 'Chung Keng Quee'. Chung (1821–1901) was a Hakka who came to Malaya from Xin Cun Village in Guangdong Province in 1841. Over the next two decades, he amassed a fortune through mining, revenue farming and other businesses and was, by the 1870s the undisputed leader of the Chinese in Taiping. In 1877, the British appointed him Kapitan China. Chung was also the leader of the feared Hai San secret society. See *Historical Personalities of Penang* (Penang: Historical Personalities of Penang Committee, 1986) at 47 & 81.

25 This is Yau Tet Shin (also spelt Yeow Tet Shin) (姚德胜) of Ipoh. According to Wright, Yau Tet Shin was a well-known miner and merchant in the Kinta District, operating under the style of Chop Tat Fob. He was born in China, the son of Yan Chee Thin, and came to the Federated Malay States at a young age where he amassed a fortune by mining. Yau's business tentacles ranged far and wide and he held gambling farms and other monopolies from the Government of Negri Sembilan, and was said to be one of the largest property owners in Ipoh, with over 250 houses to his name (see Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 539–541). Yau was also a charitable man, donating a new ward for the Ipoh Hospital and also presenting an X-ray machine to the Hospital in 1893 (see Khoo Salma Nasution & Abdur-Razzaq Lubis, *Kinta Valley: Pioneering Malaysia's Modern Development* (Penang: Areca Books, 2005), at 40 & 45).

the length of sending telegrams to the Dowager Empress entreating her to give up the reins of power, and to the Tsung-li-ya-men (总理衙门)<sup>26</sup> intimating that the reform party would do their best to bring about the restoration of the Emperor. Later injudicious telegrams were to the effect that the Chinese of Singapore would defend the Emperor with their lives. The *Straits Times* promptly warned the China-born Chinese that such extravagant assertions only jeopardised their relatives and friends in China, and that any attempt to wage war with any Asiatic power in alliance or at peace with the Queen would be punishable with penal servitude for life.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1900 Kang Yu Wei arrived here and remained in hiding, at first in a house in Boat Quay, and later, for several months, in the late Khoo Cheng Tiong's house in Thomson Road, under the protection of a Sikh police guard. To hoodwink the desperadoes alleged to be on the track of Kang Yu Wei to kill him, it was announced that he would leave for Europe on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February. On that day Kang Yu Wei went [314] on board the P & O mail, which started on her voyage, but by arrangement he returned to Singapore and continued in hiding. In July two Japanese arrived here, well supplied with money and having arms in their possession, to seek an interview with Kang Yu Wei. These two men, in spite of representations by the Japanese Consul that they were respectable, were banished for five years, and, on the 12th July, they were placed on board the *Sado Maru* bound for Hongkong.

Arising out of a 'chap-ji-ki' police case, the Straits Chinese community became alarmed at the craze of their womenfolk over this form of gambling with male Chinese professional gamblers who acted as 'bankers' and suggestions were made for Government to deport such men after a conviction so as to check this evil.

On the 21st February a concert arranged by the Chinese Philomathic Society was held at 'Siam House', the residence of Mr Tan Boo

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26 Abbreviation for 总理各国事务衙门, or 'Office in Charge of Affairs of All Nations', the Qing Government's body in charge of foreign affairs between 1861 and 1901. See Tan Koon San, *Dynastic China: An Elementary History* (Petaling Jaya: The Other Press, 2014) at 421, n 148.



Liat, in North Bridge Road. Besides the items given by the Violin Class under Mr Salzmänn, Misses Abrams and Werry and Messrs Doyle and Glover contributed songs. Mr Song Ong Joo was particularly successful in his impersonation of a negro minstrel.

Tan Boo Liat is the eldest son of Tan Soon Toh, and grandson of Tan Kim Ching, and was educated at Raffles Institution. When the Chinese Queen's scholars returned to Singapore, full of enthusiasm for the reform and progress of the Straits Chinese community, Mr Tan Boo Liat was one of their few supporters. In 'Siam House', the palatial residence of the Kim Ching family, a class in advanced English was conducted for several years by this writer, and the musical section of the Chinese Philomathic Society held regular practices under Mr E Salzmänn. Although a young man, Tan Boo Liat was looked upon as one of the leaders and influential men among the Hokien community, and, as such, was one of the trustees of the Hokien Temple in Telok Ayer Street. Until the 'Isaiah' controversy in [315] 1896, he was one of the trustees of the Anglo-Chinese Boarding School. He was one of the founders of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School, in 1899, undertaking the office of Hon Treasurer. As the oldest male descendant of the late Tan Tock Seng, he has been a statutory member of the Committee of Management of Tan Tock Seng Hospital for a number of years. He served on the committee of the Straits Chinese British Association and as an active volunteer for several years, and was one of the Chinese representatives in the Straits contingent at the Coronation of King Edward VII. Although the post of Siamese Consul in Singapore ceased with the death of his grandfather, Mr Tan Boo Liat is a *persona grata* at the Siamese Court, and has had conferred on him the title of Phra Anukul Siamkitch by the King of Siam. He was a great patron of sport, and, for several years, his racing colours were regularly seen at the half-yearly meetings of the Singapore Sporting Club. The 'Chinese Riding Party' during the brief period of its existence found in him a consistent supporter. In matters of public interest, as well as in movements for the welfare of the Chinese community, Mr Boo Liat has been a prominent figure. He is possessed of suave and charming

manners. His kindness of heart and liberality, however, made him an easy victim to unscrupulous people, and he is to-day a somewhat poorer, but a wiser man.

In February 1900 the Methodist Girls' School in Short Street was opened with an enrolment of 150 girls. There was a dedicatory service presided over by the Hon Mr Kynnersley. The Rev WG Shellabear briefly outlined the history of the school, which began in 1887, in a private house in Telok Ayer district, with Miss Blackmore as Principal. Later, the venue of the school was transferred to the Christian Institute premises in Middle Road, but, owing to the increasing number of pupils which could not be accommodated in the Middle Road School, it became necessary, in 1898, to acquire the site in Short Street, which then cost the Mission [316] just a trifle over \$13,000. Towards these charges the Government had contributed a building grant of \$3,000.

The 'Chinese Esau' case, in March 1900, was followed with great interest by many Babas. Tan Koon Swee, of Malacca,<sup>27</sup> died, leaving several properties in Cecil Street, d'Almeida Street and Malacca Street, the *Straits Times* office, and Borneo Co premises, to his grandsons, subject to a life interest to his son Tan Chin Hoon.<sup>28</sup> Before the death of Mr Chin Hoon in March 1899, Tan Boon Teck, one of the grandsons, had mortgaged his one-third share in the estate to a Chitty, who sold the same at auction, and, eventually, such share was acquired for \$2,000 by Wee Kay Poh,<sup>29</sup> Kay Hock and Kay Yam. The purchasers in-

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27 Tan Koon Swee is listed as one of the original 36 founders of the Thian Hock Keng Temple at Telok Ayer Street in Singapore (see 'Keng Teck Whye: Celebrating the Virtues of the Sages', available at <<http://blog.bukitbrown.org/page/3>> (accessed 15 Feb 2015).

28 See *In the Matter of the Estate of Tan Koon Swee, Deceased (1808-1809) Kyshe* 585.

29 Wee Kay Poh was born in 1871, the son of Wee Seoh Kee and Low Ong Neoh. Wee Seoh Kee probably came to Singapore from China in the 1850s. Wee Kay Poh was educated at Raffles Institution for five years and apprenticed with Brinkmann & Co after leaving school. In 1892, he started his own business and in 1907 became managing partner of the Singapore Opium & Liquors Farm. In 1891, he married Khoo Liang Neoh, daughter of Khoo Boon Seng, and they had three sons – the elder two named Kin Hock and Poh Soon – and one daughter.



Wee Kay Poh



Tan Chin Hoon

stituted proceedings against Tan Boon Teck,<sup>30</sup> Boon Cheng<sup>31</sup> and Boon Wha<sup>32</sup> (the grandsons of Tan Koon Swee) to have the estate administered and a receiver appointed, and succeeded in their action.<sup>33</sup>

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His residence was named *Benlmond* at 124 River Valley Road. See, Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908) at 156 & 707. Wee was also listed as a partner of the Johore Opium Farm with an interest of \$300,000 (see 'Johore Opium Farm', *Straits Times*, 17 Dec 1909, at 7). He died on 8 Oct 1915 at 113 Waterloo Street after 'ailing for some time' (see 'Social and Personal', *Straits Times*, 15 Oct 1915, at 6).

- 30 Tan Boon Teck started business as a trader in April 1903 with a capital of \$3,000 (comprising \$2,000 from the sale of his wife's jewellery and \$1,000 of old stock from an old business in which he had been unsuccessful). After six months, he found that he was losing money and moved to a shop in North Bridge Road which was damaged by a fire in March 1904. He ceased trading in May 1904 and was made a bankrupt. In April 1905, the Official Assignee's petition to have him imprisoned under the Bankruptcy Ordinance was dismissed by Mr Justice Leslie Thornton (see 'Bankruptcy Court' *Straits Times*, 6 Apr 1905, at 5).
- 31 Tan Boon Cheng (also known as Tan Boon Chang) was born in Singapore in 1870 and educated at Raffles Institution. Thereafter, his father sent him to England to 'complete his education'. He was placed in the care of one Mr Sugden, who was to take him to England and hand him over to Mr W Mulholland of the Borneo Company who was entrusted with enrolling him either in Rugby or Eton with the view to preparing him for university. The local papers noted that this was 'the first instance in which a Chinese Raffles School boy has been sent to England to complete his education' (see *Straits Times*, 4 Jun 1885, at 2). Tan succeeded in entering Trinity Hall, Cambridge University where he was listed as a student in Lent term, 1888, but does not appear to have graduated with a degree (see *The Book of Matriculations and Degrees: A Catalogue of those who have been Matriculated or admitted to any Degree in the University of Cambridge from 1851 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902) at 586). He was also admitted to Lincoln's Inn on 4 Mar 1890 but does not appear to have been called to the Bar either (see *The Records of the Honorable Society of Lincoln's Inn, Vol 2: Admissions from AD 1800 to AD 1893 and Chapel Registers* (London: Lincoln's Inn, 1896) at 430).
- 32 Also spelt Tan Boon Wah (see, 'A Chinese Essau' *Straits Times*, 13 Mar 1900, at 2).
- 33 See 'Supreme Court' *Singapore Free Press*, 13 Mar 1900, at 2; and 'An Estate Claim' *Singapore Free Press*, 4 Feb 1901, at 3.

In April Mr Tan Cheng Tuan resigned his seat as Municipal Commissioner owing to a contemplated trip to Europe,<sup>34</sup> and Mr Lee Choon Guan was elected by Central Ward voters as his successor. Mr Wee Theam Tew would have been nominated a candidate for that Ward, but his name had been omitted from the list of persons qualified to be elected, and he had not taken steps to get such omission rectified.

Mr Tan Cheng Tuan<sup>35</sup> was born in Singapore in 1864. His father, Tan Kim Swee, was known as the Temenggong of Brunei.<sup>36</sup> He did a large business in jungle produce with Brunei and Malay ports, but his home was in Singapore. He married a niece of Ong Kew Ho, and Cheng Tuan was his only son. In partnership with Song Soon Kay, Tan Cheng Tuan went into business as shipchandlers,<sup>37</sup> but the venture failed, and he subsequently launched out on his own account, in a similar business, at Boat Quay, under the style of Seng Tek Bee, which was wound up shortly after his death. He visited Peking; just after the Boxer revolt, and used to speak with pride of the occasion on which he sat for a few [317] minutes on the throne of the late Emperor of China. Dying soon after his return to Singapore, his superstitious friends at-

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34 Tan Cheng Tuan was elected Municipal Commissioner for Central Ward in August 1897 (see 'Municipal Election' *Straits Times*, 3 Aug 1897, at 23). He resigned on 25 Apr 1900 (see 'Municipal Commission' *Singapore Free Press*, 26 Apr 1900, at 3). Tan was also Hokkien representative in the Chinese Advisory Board (see Yen Ching-hwang, 'Class Structure and Social Mobility in the Chinese Community in Singapore and Malaya 1800-1911' (1987) 21(3) *Modern Asian Studies* 417-445).

35 Tan Cheng Tuan owned land and had six shophouses along Tanjong Pagar Road. Cheng Tuan Street (now expunged) off Tanjong Pagar Road, is named after him (see, Victor R Savage & Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 73).

36 Tan Kim Swee died in May 1891 (see *The Colonies & India* (newspaper), 21 May 1891, at 22). According to Buckley, he operated a 'large business on Boat Quay between Market Street and Bonham Street; and between 1832 and 1834 built the houses that he occupied at the end of the Bridge'. He also owned land in High Street. See, CB Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902), at 151 and 215.

37 See *Straits Times*, 8 Jul 1891, at 3.



Tan Cheng Tuan

tributed his death to his having dared to sit on the Chinese Emperor's throne! At his death, which took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1902,<sup>38</sup> he was a director of the China Mutual Life Insurance Co. He was a man of affable manners and was very popular with the Straits Chinese community. His patriotic spirit was shown by his joining the SVI on its formation in November 1901, and his funeral was attended not only by members of the Chinese Company, but also by a large number of the Eurasian volunteers. As uniforms and equipment had not yet then been issued, all volunteers attended the funeral in black clothes, and on arrival at the Alexandra Road burial ground, the heavy coffin was carried to the graveside by members of both companies of the SVI.<sup>39</sup>

Mr Tan Cheng Tuan had two wives, and when in 1900 he was seriously ill and was ordered by his medical advisers to go abroad, he made a will. After giving a life interest in his estate to his first wife and a legacy to his only daughter by that wife, he left the reversionary interest in his estate to any son who might be 'born after my death.' He was then expecting to be presented with a child by his secondary wife, but his state of health led him to expect it would be a posthumous child. He, however, returned to Singapore, and a month later his secondary wife gave birth to a son. The will was not altered, and the words 'born after my death', therefore, remained in his will when he died in 1902. Ten years afterwards, his first wife died, and it became necessary to seek the aid of the Court to construe the words 'born after my death' in relation to the claim of Tan Soo Beng, the boy born after the date of the will but during the testator's lifetime, to succeed to the reversionary interest. Mr van Someren and Mr Knowles appeared for Tan Soo Beng, Mr Ong Siang for the executors, and Mr Swee Teow for an infant daughter born after the testator's death. The Chief Justice, Sir W Hyndman- [318] Jones, gave judgment for Tan Soo Beng, holding that the testator undoubtedly intended to benefit him under his will.<sup>40</sup>

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38 See *Straits Times*, 7 Apr 1902, at 4.

39 See 'Mr Cheng Tuan's Funeral' *Straits Times*, 15 Apr 1902, at 5.

40 See 'A Will Case' *Straits Times*, 24 Sep 1913, at 8.

At the Legislative Council meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> April, the Hon Mr Napier moved a resolution to revoke a Government notification No 364 of 1900, announcing an offer of one Queen's Scholarship of £250 for competition, and cancelling Government notification No 753 of 1899 whereby two scholarships of £200 each had been offered for competition. 'As the mouthpiece of the boys of the Colony', and in the interests of education in the Colony, he urged that, as the Government had promised two scholarships and the boys had been working in reliance on that promise, in honour bound the Government must fulfil that promise.

'It was not the first scholarship that was of so much importance: it was the second which gave an impetus to education in the Colony, and by abolishing the second scholarship that impetus to education would simply be taken away.'<sup>41</sup>

Dr Lim Boon Keng seconded the resolution, which was carried unanimously, but the Acting Governor (Sir Alexander Swettenham) would not pledge the Government to any scheme for 1901 that they would grant two, or one, or any number of these 'life annuities'. The character of these scholarships had changed from being a grant-in-aid to scholars to enable them to complete their education in England to being one to meet the whole of the reasonable wants of a scholar during the time he was in Europe.

The successful appeal of Goh Sin Kho (head of the firm of Goh Guan Loo & Co, owning several saw-mills at Kallang and carrying on business as steamship owners at Telok Ayer Street) from a police court conviction of three months' simple imprisonment and \$250 fine, on charges of abetment of striking the police by calling out 'Pah' and of rescuing prisoners from custody, gave much satisfaction to the Chi-

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41 The *Singapore Free Press* report on the Legislative Council Proceedings, stated that Napier 'did not believe that the number of scholarships should be diminished. The second scholarship gave an impetus to the education in the Colony. The first scholarship was not thought so much of because the winner was spotted at an early date'. See 'Legislative Council' *Singapore Free Press*, 25 Apr 1900, at 3.



nese community. [319] Goh Sin Kho was an old and much-respected citizen, who had led an orderly, decorous and becoming life, and upon his conviction, Chinese influential men as well as the big firms sent in a memorial on his behalf to Government. Leach J in quashing the conviction was satisfied that it would be unsafe to convict, on the ground that the police evidence was contradictory.

'Mafeking Day' and 'Pretoria Day' were occasions of great rejoicings here. In anticipation of the entry of British troops into Pretoria, which would be the final scene in the South African War, a dinner was given at the Weekly Entertainment Club on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June, to which a number of the leading Europeans were invited: and a general discussion took place as to the best methods of celebrating the event. On the night of the fall of Pretoria (June 5<sup>th</sup>), there was a monster procession of the China-born Chinese, followed, on the next night, by a grand procession in which all communities participated. The latter was the demonstration initiated by the Weekly Club, and the premier place in the procession was given to a Chinese detachment of British subjects, each man being dressed in white. After them came the members of the Straits Chinese Social Club, each wearing a Union Jack across his breast and carrying illuminated lanterns with the query 'Where are the Straits Chinese volunteers?' The *Straits Times* says: 'We most legitimately applaud, in the name of the Empire, the zeal and enthusiasm of the Straits-born Chinese.'<sup>42</sup>

The immediate sequel was the formation of the Straits Chinese British Association, on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1900, which was exempted from registration for the whole Colony. Some of the objects which this institution desired to achieve were:

- (a) To promote among the members an intelligent interest in the affairs of the British Empire, and to encourage and maintain their loyalty as subjects of the Queen. [320]

42 Song reverses part of the original quote, which reads: 'We most legitimately applaud, in the name of the Empire, the zeal and enthusiasm of the Chinese Straits-born.' See 'The Straits Born' *Straits Times*, 5 Jun 1900, at 2.



Straits Chinese British Association  
First Committee, 1900

- (b) To afford facilities for the discussion of all questions relating to the social, intellectual and moral welfare of the Chinese British subjects in the Colony.
- (c) To promote the general welfare of the Chinese British subjects in any other lawful or constitutional manner.
- (d) To appoint a representative committee in London to watch the interests of the Association.
- (e) To encourage higher and technical education for the Chinese in some practical way.
- (f) To take any requisite lawful step for the defence of the rights and privileges of British subjects.

In commenting on this new movement, the *Straits Times* remarks:

If only two or three of the objects be attained, the Association will not have existed in vain. This proposed Association may well run to a membership of over a solid thousand of Straits Chinese British subjects, and it is capable of doing great things for the Chinese and the Colony.<sup>43</sup>

The original list of Singapore members contains over 800 names.

The Malacca branch came into existence in October. There was an enthusiastic meeting of Chinese British subjects held at the Lawn Tennis Club in Malacca, and about 200 persons were enrolled as members. Mr Lee Keng Liat was elected President, Mr Tan Chay Yan Vice-President, Mr Goh Lye Quee Hon Secretary and Mr Ong Kim Wee Hon Treasurer, while Messrs Tan Hoon Guan, Tan Jiak Lim,<sup>44</sup>

43 See 'The Straits Chinese' *Straits Times*, 18 Jun 1900, at 2.

44 Also spelt 'Tan Jeak Lim'. Tan was born in 1867, one of four sons of Tan Beng Guat and Wee Giok Lam in Malacca. Together with his brother Jiak Hoe and a friend, purchased 4,500 acres of land in Tebong, 23 miles outside Malacca town in 1902 and planted it with tapioca and rubber. He was President of the Malacca (Chinese) Club (see, Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908) at 497–498) and member of the Malacca branch of the Straits Chi-



Mr & Mrs Tan Jiak Liam

Neo Ong Hee,<sup>45</sup> Chan Koon Chiang,<sup>46</sup> Chee Hoon Bong<sup>47</sup> and Lee Chim Hee<sup>48</sup> constituted the Committee.

The 'Boxer' troubles in North China called forth, in July, an appeal, in the form of expresses, in Romanised Malay, from Mr Wee Theam Tew, for a contingent [321] of Straits Chinese to volunteer their services with the British troops in fighting against the Boxers and Manchus. Very rightly, this ill-advised enthusiasm was checked by wise counsellors who pointed out the futility of such an expedition

nese British Association (see 'Straits Chinese British Association' *Straits Times*, 22 Oct 1900, at 2).

- 45 Neo Ong Hee was a businessman most closely associated with the Bukit KB Rubber Company. He was first elected to the Board of Directors in 1910 and became its Chairman in 1915 (see 'Bukit KB Rubber' *Singapore Free Press*, 6 Sep 1915, at 10).
- 46 Chan Koon Chiang (1865–1908) was the elder brother of Chan Koon Cheng JP. He died on 4 November 1908 at his home in 137 Jonker Street, Malacca (see 'Notes from Malacca', *Straits Times*, 25 Jan 1917, at 7)
- 47 Chee Hoon Bong was one of the seven sons of Chee Yean Chuan (徐炎泉, 1818–1862) and Tan Lian Kian, the others being Jin Siew, Him Bong, Lim Bong, Hee Bong, Quee Bong and Beck Bong. He also had two sisters. He started out as a tapioca planter and opened up an estate in Bukit Beruang in Malacca. He later went into partnership in the firm of Leack Chin Seng & Co, the City Saw Mills, and the Opium Farm. Chee had four sons, including Yong Cheng, Tye Cheng (1860–1921) Chee Swee Cheng (1866–1938), and Chee Sim Cheng (1873–1916). See, Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908) at 904–905.
- 48 Lee Chim Hee was the son of Lee Keng Yong and Kow Chim Neo and grandson of Lee Quee Lim. He was married to Yeo Bee Geok and had one son (Yew Peng) and four daughters (Choo Wan, Guat Lee, Guat Hoe, and Guat Eng) (see <<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=cj18&id=I1105>> (accessed 15 Feb 2015). Lee was listed as a trader at Heeren Street, Malacca in 1904 and was on the list of Malacca Jurors (*List of Qualified Jurors, Malacca, 1904* by The Straits Settlements Government Gazette, December 23, 1904). He and his business partner, Chan Hong Kwee formed a company, Chop Hong Bun, but were adjudged bankrupts in 1904. Ten years later, he applied to be discharged as a bankrupt, but it is unknown if the application was successful (*Straits Times*, 11 Nov 1914, at 8).

without preliminary training in military discipline, in musketry and in the powers of physical endurance.

The above subject gave the opportunity to a facetious critic, 'Borong Hantu', to draw up the following appointments for the proposed contingent:

GOC	Mr Tiakim
ADC	Mr Tooiat
Senior Major	Mr Soneah
Major	Mr Wimam
Captain	Mr Gagnee
Lieutenants	All the rest of the corps

Mr Wamew will accompany the detachment to argue any points of dispute with the Boxers, and Mr Limbeng will act as self-advertising agent.<sup>49</sup>

Through the enterprising spirit of the brothers Go Boon Kwan and Go Boon Chan,<sup>50</sup> the Ho Ho Biscuit Factory was established in November 1898 in Chin Swee Road, and converted into a limited liability company in 1900. In this factory, machine-made biscuits are manufactured, and the daily output is about 4,000 pounds. The premises are spacious, clean and well ventilated. Everything is done by machinery, except the 'icing' of fancy biscuits and the packing in boxes. By machinery the sugar is ground and sifted, and the flour is mixed and kneaded into dough. Then the prepared dough is passed under a roller and thence on to the stamping and cutting press. The cakes fall into trays and pass on to men who carry them to the oven. During the passage through the oven, the biscuits are baked. At the exit of the oven, the trays are met by an attendant who removes them to a receptacle ready to receive them, thence they are taken to the packing rooms, papered, [322] labelled and made ready for export, principally to Java and the FMS. In 1902 at the Hanoi Exhibition the Company obtained a diploma and bronze medal for their biscuits. The business has flourished

49 See 'Straits-Born Chinese to Fight the Boxers' *Straits Times*, 25 Aug 1900, at 14.

50 Also known as 'Gaw Boon Chan', 'Goh Boon Chan', 'Gaw Boon Tjhan', and 'Go Boen Tjhan'.



Gaw Boon Chan

wonderfully, and, after the death of Mr Go Boon Chan, it has been under the able management of Mr Gaw Khek Khiam, one of our best known, influential and public-spirited young men.<sup>51</sup>

Mr Go Boon Chan (who changed the spelling of his surname to Gaw)<sup>52</sup> was born in Semarang, but settled down in Singapore after he had made his fortune in the place of his birth, and became a naturalised British subject. He died on the 30<sup>th</sup> August 1911,<sup>53</sup> leaving several sons, the three youngest, Khek Swee,<sup>54</sup> Khek Chew<sup>55</sup> and Khek

51 Gaw married Tan Eng Neo, who bore him five sons (Khek Sin, Khek Khiam, Khek Swee, Kek Law and Kek Chim). Eng Neo Avenue is named after her.

52 See 'Notice of Change in Spelling of Name' *Singapore Free Press*, 2 May 1911, at 2.

53 Gaw was murdered by two Chinese men 'dressed in black and wearing straw hats' while he was temporarily staying at Villa St Joseph, at 63 Pasir Panjang Road between 9.00–9.30 pm on 30 Aug 1911. Gaw and several friends were lounging on the verandah of the bungalow when the two men strolled into the house, identified Gaw and then shot him with an automatic pistol at point blank. Gaw managed to stagger into one of the inner rooms but was pursued by the gunman and shot several more times, whereupon he died (see 'A Daring Crime' *Straits Times*, 23 Jan 1912, at 9). Gaw's son, Khek Khiam offered a reward of \$10,000 for information that would lead to the arrest of the murderers (see 'Murder of a Well-Known Chinese Towkay' *Straits Times*, 31 Aug 1911, at 7). A few months later, two men, Hoh Ah Thye and Wong Ho Cheng were arrested in Bangkok in connection with the murder (see 'The Pasir Panjang Murder' *Straits Times*, 6 Mar 1912, at 7). In April 1912, Hoh was found guilty and sentenced to death (see 'Pasir Panjang Murder' *Singapore Free Press*, 26 Apr 1912, at 12) while Wong was discharged and released on account of the lack of evidence (see *Weekly Sun* 2 Mar 1912, at 5). Chan Kam, who allegedly fired the shots that killed Gaw was found guilty and sentenced to death in September 1912 (see 'The Pasir Panjang Tragedy' *Straits Times*, 7 Sep 1912, at 9). Gaw, whose residence was *Sunlight House* at 15 Syed Ali Road, was buried at his private plot at the 5<sup>th</sup> mile Bukit Timah Road (see 'Notices' *Straits Times*, 16 Sep 1911, at 16).

54 He married Wee Inn Neo and they had two sons (Synn Laye and Synn Ghee) and one daughter (Julian) (see 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 8 Mar 1981, at 24).

55 Also spelt 'Gaw Khek Chiew' or 'Gaw Kek Chiew' (1895–1971). Gaw was educated at Raffles Institution and was among the Directors of the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation (see 'Chinese Bank Follows Safe Course' *Singapore Free Press*, 19 Jun 1935, at 10). He died on 5 July 1971 at the age of 76 at his home



Jim,<sup>56</sup> being enrolled as volunteers in the SVI at the outbreak of the War in 1914 and doing their bit cheerfully for about two years in that tedious and strenuous form of military service – guard duty.

The second son was Mr Gaw Khek Khiam,<sup>57</sup> who was born in Samarang on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1885, and received his English education at Raffles Institution, Singapore. Proceeding to England, he did a three years' course at the Redruth School of Mines, Cornwall, and obtained in 1904 the school certificate.<sup>58</sup> He won the first prize of the City and Guilds of London Institute (a silver medal and a sum in cash) for his paper on 'The Raising and Preparation of Ores generally', and the bronze medal of that Institute for his paper on 'Mine Surveying.' His father having settled down in Singapore and become naturalised while he and his younger brothers were still infants, the status of naturalised British subjects has been acquired by the children by operation of law. A man of enlightened and progressive views, Mr Gaw Khek Khiam takes a keen and active interest in all matters relating to the public welfare. He is a shrewd and smart man of business, and in addition to managing the business of the Ho Ho Biscuit Factory Limited, he is a Director of the Eastern United Assurance Corporation Ltd<sup>59</sup> and

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at 251 Pasir Panjang Road, leaving behind his wife, Wee Ek Neo and daughter, Geok Lan. He was buried at Bidadari Christian Cemetery (see 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 6 Jul 1971, at 20). On 1 January 1958, he registered an orchid *Aranda Memoria Gaw Boon-Chan* in memory of his late father (see website of the Royal Horticultural Society at <<http://apps.rhs.org.uk/horticulturaldatabase/orchidregister/orchiddetails.asp?ID=18217>> (accessed 15 Feb 2015).

56 Also spelt 'Go Kek Chim' (1896–1963). Go was the younger brother of Gaw Khek Khiam. He was educated at Raffles Institution and married Bee Twee Nio (see 'Death' *Straits Times* 7 Aug 1952, at 6). Go died on 2 Sep 1963, aged 67, at the General Hospital and was buried at Bidadari Christian Cemetery (see 'Notices' *Straits Times*, 14 Nov 1964, at 17; and 'Acknowledgment' *Straits Times*, 3 Sep 1963, at 11).

57 Also spelt 'Go Khek Khiam' or 'Goh Khek Khiam' or 'Gaw Kek Khiam'.

58 See 'A Trip to Europe' *Straits Times*, 5 Dec 1901, at 3.

59 See 'Announcement' *Straits Times*, 1 Oct 1913, at 11.

the Managing Director of the Chinese [323] Commercial Bank,<sup>60</sup> and a member of committee of the Straits Chinese British Association. He also served as a member of the Income-tax Committee in 1916, and of the Commission in 1917 to inquire into the shortage of subsidiary silver in active circulation. Since 1917 he has served on the Rent Assessment Board and attended its weekly meetings regularly. He was appointed a JP in 1918. His pleasant and obliging manners and sociable qualities have made him a popular figure among the Chinese community. His sound and intelligent views on public questions, which he has the ability of expressing fluently and effectively, have marked him out as one of our rising young men.<sup>61</sup>

On the 8<sup>th</sup> January 1901 the Hon Mr Napier moved the following resolution in the Legislative Council:

That the condition on which the Queen's Scholarships are awarded, whereby the recipients' choice of a University is confined to the residential Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Dublin, is undesirable and should be abolished.<sup>62</sup>

This resolution was lost by the official majority. In the discussion on the Supply Bill on the 29<sup>th</sup> October, Dr Lim Boon Keng expressed satisfaction that Government had seen its way to allow the Queen's Scholars to study in Scotland, where there are no residential Universities, and where, at least, a student might hope to make ends meet with the limited funds provided by his scholarship.

The first inter-Settlement football and tennis match between a Penang Chinese team and a picked team of Singapore Chinese took place here in April. The football match ended in a draw, each side winning one game, and the visitors were entertained at the Straits

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60 See 'Chinese Commercial Bank' *Singapore Free Press*, 2 Dec 1918, at 3.

61 Gaw died suddenly while on board the SS *Conte Verde* on 13 Sep 1936 (see 'Mr Gaw Khek Khiam's Sudden Death' *Straits Times*, 17 Sep 1936, at 12). He was survived by two sons (Sin Teck and George) and two daughters (Elsie Gaw Khwye Neo and Eileen Gaw Bee Neo).

62 See 'Legislative Council' *Straits Times*, 3 Jan 1901, at 3.

Chinese Recreation Club to tiffin, and at the Weekly Entertainment Club to dinner.

In connection with the visit of TRH the Duke and Duchess of York (our present King and Queen) great preparations were made, and the newly formed Straits Chinese British Association conceived and carried out the idea of erecting a Chinese pagoda surmounted by [324] a figure of Britannia holding a torch in her uplifted hand – an emblem of the Chinese social fabric illumined by the light of science and Western progress. The Royal party landed at Johnston's Pier on Sunday, the 22<sup>nd</sup> April, and drove to Government House, the route, which was lined by the Volunteers and Garrison troops and thronged with enormous crowds, being gay with bunting and banners and decorated houses.<sup>63</sup>

The entertainment to the Royal visitors on Sunday night took the form of a ricksha drive through China Town, which was a blaze of light and colour. High Street and Market Street were canopied in coloured cloth and along each side of these thoroughfares were numerous lanterns, while from the centre of the canopy were hung, at intervals, illuminated Chinese representations of dragons, fishes and other devices, forming a picturesque sight. The Governor, Sir Frank Swettenham, in a ricksha, preceded the carriage in which rode the Duke and Duchess, while several of the staff followed in other rickshas, the pullers of which were clothed in red *bajus* and pants, with fantastic Chinese hats.

Among the numerous loyal addresses presented to the Royal visitors at the Town Hall on the following morning was one from the Chinese community, a portion of which reads thus:

We are deeply sensible that it was to the very liberal and benevolent policy of Her late Majesty the Great Queen Victoria of Blessed and Glorious memory that we owe in a very great measure our present prosperity.

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63 See 'Our Royal Visitors: Singapore Gives Them a Hearty Welcome' *Straits Times*, 23 Apr 1901, at 2.



Visit of TRH the Duke & Duchess of York  
SCBA Pagoda on old gaol site



Visit of THR the Duke & Duchess of York  
Chinese arch of welcome, Armenian Street

We are also fully conscious that it was to the noble and generously tolerant spirit of the British Nation, at the head of which is your Royal Father, His Most Gracious Majesty the King, that we enjoy freedom in the observance of our religious practices.

The just and impartial treatment accorded to all residents of this Colony, irrespective of nationality, has raised the prestige and reputation of the British people to an eminence unknown in the history of other colonis-[325] ing Powers. It has also tended to promote the increase of our industrial population and has encouraged and stimulated individual energy to such an extent that it has contributed in no small degree to the progress of the Colony and the development of its resources. ...<sup>64</sup>

The reply of His Royal Highness was received on the 11th May, through the Colonial Secretary's Office, by Mr Seah Liang Seah, and runs: 'It has given me much pleasure to revisit Singapore, which owes much of its prosperity to the Chinese who have made it their home.'<sup>65</sup>

On Monday afternoon (the 23<sup>rd</sup> April), en route to the Thomson Road Waterworks, the Royal Visitors drove through the Old Gaol site to receive the welcome of about 5,000 school children. One entrance to the children's enclosure was formed by the SCBA Pagoda, and the entrance at the other end by an arch of the Darul Askekan Malay Club. Inside the pagoda a raised dais had been erected, and in front of it the Royal carriage stopped, and Her Royal Highness was presented with a bouquet of choicest flowers from Mr Choa Kim Keat's gardens, by a daughter of Mr Seah Liang Seah, who was attended by six other Chinese girls, in full Chinese costume.

The Straits Chinese British Association had the honour of presenting to the Royal Visitors a handsome album containing a choice selection of very artistic photographs taken from Chinese life. There were about a hundred pictures done in platinotype by Messrs Lambert & Co of Chinese street scenes, buildings, interior of temples, schools, theatres, hospitals, clubs, and children in their lovely New Year dress-

64 'The Royal Departure' *Singapore Free Press*, 24 Apr 1901, at 2.

65 'The Royal Tour' *Straits Times*, 16 Apr 1901, at 3.

es. The cover of the album was of black morocco leather, and the four corners were elaborately ornamented with silverwork. The centre had a silver plate, shield shape, on which the inscription was neatly engraved in English letters. The silver clasp was very neatly made with a miniature Chinese lock and key. The whole of the silver work was of Chinese design and workmanship.<sup>66</sup> The first [326] page of the album contained the illuminated address, and on the other side all the names of the Committee, this beautiful piece of work being executed by Sergeant-Major Hinderer, RE. The celebrations on the part of the Asiatic communities closed with a torchlight procession to Government House. The Malays led, and were followed by the Japanese and Arab sections. Then came the Tamils and lastly the Chinese. The press opinion was, that though the procession was not on so large a scale as had previously been witnessed, it was the finest ever seen in Singapore.

*The Chinese Crisis from Within*, by Wen Ching (Lim Boon Keng), was published by Grant Richards, London, in June 1901, with a preface by the Rev GM Reith, and an introductory note by Mr WG St Clair, Editor of the *Singapore Free Press*. The book was a reprint in a collected, compressed and rearranged form of a series of articles from the pen of Dr Lim Boon Keng which had appeared in that newspaper while the Chinese crisis was in an acute stage in 1900.

While the Government was bringing in a Bill for compulsory education, it was announced that the Cheang Jim Hean Free School in Havelock Road would be closed, on the 1st July, through lack of funds. This school was founded by the late Cheang Hong Lim in the early 'Nineties just before his death, and was named after his son, Jim Hean,<sup>67</sup> who faithfully carried out the good work entrusted to him

66 See 'The Presentations to TRH The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York' *Straits Times*, 25 Apr 1901, at 2.

67 Cheang Jim Hean (1873–1901) was the eldest son of Cheang Hong Lim (see *Straits Times*, 13 May 1901, at 2). He died in April 1901 after a short illness at his family's residence, *Annan Bank* at River Valley Road and was buried at the family's burial ground in Alexandra Road. In 1893, following his father's death,

and maintained it as a free school for poor boys until his own death on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 1901. In 1897 more than 100 poor children attended this school, which cost their benefactor \$1,200 a year to upkeep. His only daughter, Cheang Tew Muey,<sup>68</sup> now a rich heiress,<sup>69</sup> was an infant when he died; otherwise she might have had the privilege of continuing the good work initiated by her grandfather. There were 216 free pupils on the registers when this institution had to be given up. Such, indeed, might have been the fate of the Gan Eng Seng (or Anglo-Chinese Free) School, to [327] maintain which, in an efficient condition, the Board of Trustees, from time to time, tried, with little success, to arouse sufficient interest among the Straits Chinese community, if the Government had not during the Centenary year decided to abolish grants-in-aid to non-Government schools and introduced the scheme of meeting the debit balances incurred by such schools in carrying on their educational work.

Arising out of an announcement made by the Commandant of the Singapore Volunteer Rifles, in April, that Government intended to increase the strength of the Corps by the addition of two Eurasian companies, the memorial of a number of Straits-born Chinese praying

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Cheang Jim Hean took over the running of the Cheang Jim Hean School at Cheang Hong Lim Market at his own expense (see *Straits Times*, 13 May 1901, at 2). He was survived by his wife Khoo Ek Neo (see 'Cheang Jim Hean (Deceased)' *Straits Times*, 19 Jun 1901, at 2). Cheang Jim Hean Street (now expunged) was named after him.

68 Muriel Cheang Tew Muey married Loh Hean Heng in 1922 (see 'Announcements' *Straits Times*, 6 May 1922, at 8) and passed away on 21 October 1987 at the age of 89. She was survived by three sons (Albert, Francis, and Andre) and two daughters (Catherine and Honey). See 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 22 Oct 1987, at 29.

69 In 1909, Cheang Tew Muey was listed as being the owner of Cheang Hong Lim Market located between Havelock Road and Kim Seng Road (see, 'Notice' *Straits Times*, 14 Jun 1909, at 8). In 1930, she filed a suit against the trustees of her father's estate – *Cheang Tew Muey & Ors v Cheang Cheow Lean Neo & Ors* – see, MB Hooker, 'The Relationship Between Chinese Law and Common Law in Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong' (1969) 28(4) *Journal of Asian Studies* 723–742.

to be enrolled as volunteers for local defence, which was supported by the Straits Chinese British Association, was forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies through the Straits Government. The London Committee also backed up the movement, and Mr WH Read wrote:

As to the proposed 'Chinese Volunteers' I shall be happy to afford any assistance I can, as it was a subject I brought to the notice of the local Government many years ago, but was not approved of at that time. The faithful conduct of the Chinese regiment lately at Tientsin will probably convince the Government of the valuable assistance such a corps might render should their services be required.

The petition was referred to the Colonial Defence Committee appointed by the War Office, and the reply from the Colonial Secretary, dated the 6<sup>th</sup> November 1901, stated that

His Majesty's Government has received with much gratification this evidence of the patriotic and loyal spirit which animates the Straits born Chinese and hopes that it will be possible to utilise their services as Volunteers.

Immediately after, one hundred Straits Chinese British subjects were enrolled and sworn in as Volunteers. This Company was then known as No 2 Company, [328] Singapore Volunteer Infantry, with Lieut K Jennings as OC and Lieut Pritchard as acting Adjutant.

In the debate on the Supply Bill (the 29<sup>th</sup> October 1901) Dr Lim Boon Keng referred to the Volunteer vote, and said he was glad to see that, after a good many vain applications to Government, the appeal of the British subjects born in this Colony to become Volunteers had received recognition and reply. The proposed formation of the Singapore Volunteer Infantry, consisting of Eurasians and Straits-born Chinese, would be hailed with enthusiasm and gratitude by a very large number of the intelligent and progressive subjects of His Majesty who have had the good fortune to be born and brought up here. He had every confidence in saying that, whenever the Singapore Volunteer Infantry were put to the test, they would prove worthy of the island and worthy of the education the British Government had given them. In reply, the



Governor would only say, as regards the new Volunteer companies, that what was proposed was an experiment, and whilst personally he would always hesitate to enter the field of prophecy, he trusted that Dr Boon Keng's anticipation of the work of the Corps of Eurasians and Straits Chinese would be amply realised.

Singapore awoke on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> October to find that there was not a ricksha on the streets.<sup>70</sup> The few rickshas that did venture out were badly smashed and their occupants were roughly handled. The strike was confined to the Heng Hua and Hock Chia clans in the region of Pearl's Hill. At the Municipal meeting, the President (Mr Anthonisz) explained that the cause of the strike was a direction from the Governor to the Inspector-General of Police to put into force with greater stringency the existing laws regulating traffic. Several of the ricksha owners were taken to Government House, where the Governor told them firmly that the traffic rules and regulations must be observed, that they were on British soil and would be held responsible for their actions according to law [329] and, if necessary, they might be deported as a punishment for disobedience. The strike was over in two days' time, and a month later Lee Chong Hin, the principal owner among the Heng Huas, was banished from the Colony for three years.

A largely attended public meeting was held at the Town Hall on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1901 under the presidency of the Governor, who proposed the resolution 'That, in order to worthily perpetuate the memory of Her late Majesty, Queen Victoria, and her glorious reign, a building to be called the Victoria Memorial Hall be erected on the site and in accordance with the plans submitted to this meeting.' The resolution was seconded by the Hon Mr Stringer, and carried unanimously. The Committee appointed to collect subscriptions included Messrs Lee Cheng Yan, Seah Liang Seah and Tan Jiak Kim. Before closing the meeting, the Governor intimated that certain Chinese gentlemen in Singapore had already promised \$13,000 towards the object.

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70 See 'The Ricksha Strike' *Singapore Free Press*, 25 Oct 1901, at 2.

In this year (1901), the FMS Government awarded a scholarship, similar to the Queen's Scholarships, to Chan Sze Pong, who was born at Kwala Lumpor,<sup>71</sup> and who had done brilliantly at Raffles Institution as a student. He entered Caius College,<sup>72</sup> Cambridge, as a medical student, took his BA degree in the Natural Sciences Tripos, and his MB Degree at the end of the medical course.<sup>73</sup> He is now in charge of the Isolation Hospital in Peking.<sup>74</sup>

A younger brother, Chan Sze Jin, was the second and last FMS scholar in 1904. Born on the 6<sup>th</sup> September 1886, Mr Sze Jin was educated at Victoria Institution, Kwala Lumpor, and the Free School, Penang. He entered Downing College, Cambridge, in 1904, and took his BA, LLB, in 1907, in the Law Tripos. In 1908 he took a Second Class in the History Tripos. In the same year he became a law student at Gray's Inn, and was called to the Bar in 1910, having won a studentship of the Inns of Court of 100 guineas for [330] three years for the

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71 According to another source, Chan Sze Pong was born in Sarawak (see, *Biographical History of Gonville and Caius College, Vol IV* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912) at 19). In any case, Chan was born in 1884.

72 This should be Gonville and Caius College. The college was originally founded as Gonville Hall in 1348 and refounded in 1557 by John Caius as Gonville and Caius College.

73 See 'The First FMS Scholar' *Singapore Free Press*, 25 Jul 1901, at 2. Chan Sze Pong discarded his queue just prior to departing for England in 1901 (see *Singapore Free Press*, 23 Aug 1901, at 2).

74 In 1925, Chan Sze Pong was listed as Director of the Peking Central Hospital (see 'Straits Chinese Doctors' *Straits Times*, 9 Oct 1925, at 9). In China, he was known as 'Chen Szu-pang' or 'Chen Sibang'. According to John Watt, Chan was at one time medical officer of the North Manchurian Plague Prevention Service in Harbin and later Director of the small government Isolation Hospital that opened in Beijing in 1915. From January till May 20, 1918 he served as one of three commissioners on the Shanxi Plague Commission, with responsibility for investigating plague conditions in Shanxi around Datong and the Beijing-Suiyuan railroad. By 1919 he was Medical Director of Beijing's Central Hospital and a Lecturer in Medicine at the Peking Union Medical College (see, John R Watt, *Saving Lives in Wartime China: How Medical Reformers Built Modern Healthcare Systems Amid War and Epidemics, 1928-1945* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2014) at 28, n 42).



Chan Sze Onn



Chan Sze Jin (SJ Chan)

highest place in the final examination. He was admitted to the local Bar in 1911, and, in partnership with Mr Wee Swee Teow,<sup>75</sup> established the legal firm of Chan & Swee Teow. Of a quiet disposition, Mr SJ Chan is nevertheless popular with a large circle of friends and was elected President of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club for 1919. For some years he has been on the Board of Trustees of the Anglo-Chinese Free School.

A third brother, Chan Sze Onn, was born in Kwala Lumpor in 1899. He was educated at Victoria Institution, at which he was on the teaching staff from 1906 to 1908. He took good places both in the Senior Cambridge Local (1905) and the Senior Normal (Teachers) in 1907. After a year as teacher in Anderson School, Mr Sze Onn came to Singapore in 1910 and started business as Secretary to Public Com-

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75 Wee Swee Teow (1880–1954) was born in Singapore, the eldest son of Wee Kim Chuan and Tan Tim Neo. He was educated at Kampong Glam Government Branch School and then at Raffles Institution where he came in fifth in the Queen's Scholarship examinations. After leaving school, he worked for a time in a commercial firm before returning to Raffles Institution as a teacher and remained there till 1908 when he left and proceeded to England to read for the Bar. He did well and obtained Second Class Honours in the Bar finals. He was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn in 1911 and was admitted to the Singapore Bar in 1912 whereupon he commenced practice with Chan Sze Jin in the firm of Chan & Swee Teow, at Change Alley. The partnership dissolved when Chan left in 1920 to form the firm of Chan & Eber while Wee continued as sole practitioner under the style of Wee Swee Teow & Co. Wee was a prominent leader of the Straits Chinese community, and served as President of Straits Chinese British Association (1925-1927); Member of Municipal Commission (1927-1930), Legislative Council (1930-1933) and Executive Council of Straits Settlements (1933); Vice-President of Board of Trustees of Anglo-Chinese Free School (1913-1922); and Member of Council of the King Edward VII College of Medicine (1928-1933), Education Board (1928-1930), Singapore Advisory Council (1946) and Public Service Commission (1951-1952). He died on 3 June 1954 at his home in Stevens Road. He was survived by his son Eng Lock (who carried on legal practice in his firm) and four daughters. This account is summarised from Kevin YL Tan, *Wee Swee Teow & Co: A Centenary Legacy* (Singapore: Wee Swee Teow & Co, 2012).

panies. Later on, with Messrs Chia Cheng Jin,<sup>76</sup> Kwa Siew Tee<sup>77</sup> and Tan Luang Kia<sup>78</sup> as his partners, the firm became known as Chan Sze

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76 Chia Cheng Jin was born in Singapore in 1889 and was educated at Raffles Institution where he entered the Commerce class (see 'Raffles Institution' *Singapore Free Press*, 25 Apr 1908, at 12). In 1909, he commenced his training as a teacher (see 'Training of Local Teachers' *Straits Times*, 21 Sep 1909). He was active in the Singapore Shorthand Writers' Association, serving as Honorary Secretary and Treasurer (1913), Vice-President (1916) and President (1923). In 1921, he started the accounting firm of Chia Cheng Jin & Co at 9 Raffles Chamber and ran it as sole proprietor till his death ten years later. Chia died on 12 Jun 1931 at the age of 42 at his home at 17 Kim Yam Road, leaving behind his mother, wife, a son and two daughters (see 'Domestic Occurrences' *Straits Times*, 13 Jun 1931, at 10). He was buried at Bukit Brown Chinese Cemetery.

77 Kwa Siew Tee was born in Semarang, Dutch East Indies. The date of his birth is not ascertained. He arrived in Singapore sometime between 1913 and 1914 and was Company Secretary to the Eastern United Assurance Corporation Limited (1914) among other companies. In 1917, Kwa was listed as a 'planter' and in this connection obtained a patent for 'coagulating and smoking rubber' (see *Singapore Free Press*, 15 Sep 1917 at 6) in 1918 (see 'Gazette Items' *Singapore Free Press*, 17 Jan 1918, at 41). He lived at 66 Scotts Road and was a keen tennis player and amateur photographer. Kwa subsequently joined Ho Hong Bank and when Ho Hong Bank merged with the Chinese Commercial Bank and the Oversea Chinese Bank to form the Oversea Chinese Banking Corporation (OCBC), Kwa became its General Manager (see Grace Loh, Goh Chor Boon & Tan Teng Lang, *Building Bridges, Carving Niches: An Enduring Legacy* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 2000)). Kwa married Wee Yew Neo, daughter of Wee Theam Seng (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 4 Feb 1946, at 4), and among their children was Geok Choo, who became Mrs Lee Kuan Yew. He was a Justice of the Peace (see 'Certificate of Honour for Two Malayans' *Singapore Free Press*, 5 Jul 1940, at 7), member of the Municipal Commission from 1947 to 1949 (see 'New Municipal Commissioners' *Straits Times*, 28 Feb 1947, at 6; and 'Commissioner Resigns' *Singapore Free Press*, 1 Feb 1949, at 5); Chairman of the Visiting Committee of Hospitals Board (see 'Hospital Board' *Straits Times*, 23 Aug 1949, at 4); and a temporary member of the Public Services Commission (see 'New Member' *Straits Times*, 26 Sep 1953, at 7). Kwa was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Law degree by the University of Malaya in 1951 (see '3 Asians get hon degree of LD' *Straits Times* 18 May 1951, at 7).

78 Tan Luang Kia was born in 1890 in Singapore, the son of Tan Keng Wah and grandson of Tan Seng Poh. He was educated at Raffles Institution where he completed his Cambridge Local Junior Examination in 1901 (see *Singapore Free*

Onn & Co, undertaking secretarial duties of a large number of local rubber, mining and other companies, and audit and accountancy work as well. Although a subject of a British Protected State, he responded to the appeal in 1915 for recruits to make up the strength of the Chinese Co SVI under the new infantry organisation: and his three years' service as a Volunteer, during those trying and anxious times, deserves commendation, while it ought to put to shame many of the young men who claim the privileges of British subjects but shirk their duty to the British Empire.

The father of these three young men<sup>79</sup> is Mr Chan Fook Nyan, who was born in China in 1858 and left his home in boyhood for Sarawak, coming on later to Kwala Lumpur, where he joined Government service, and is now living in Singapore in well-earned retirement.<sup>80</sup>

On the Supply debate in October 1901, Dr Boon Keng on the subject of education had said that he hoped Government would do something to help Raffles [331] Institution in its endeavour to improve education in that institution, and that the Trustees were quite unable to give a sound higher education without the help of the Government and were intending to appeal to Government for substantial help.

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*Press*, 27 Mar 1901, at 2). In 1915, he was elected as a committee member of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club (see *Straits Times*, 7 Oct 1914, at 10). He started his career in the Mercantile Bank of India where he rose through the ranks to become Chief Clerk. He left the Bank after 14 years and joined the firm of Chan Sze Onn & Co in 1916. He worked there for 30 years, rising to the position of senior partner. He retired in March 1946 (see *Straits Times*, 10 Mar 1946, at 3). His date of death remains uncertain.

- 79 While Song states that Chan Fook Nyan had three sons, a newspaper report announcing his death in 1933 stated that he had four sons, the eldest of whom was Chan Sze Kiong, Chief Clerk of the firm of DG Robertson & Co. Sze Kiong is not mentioned in Song's book at all (see 'Mr Chan Fook Nyan' *Straits Times*, 25 Nov 1933, at 12). He had at least one daughter, Chan Chew Hoh, who married Fam Chun Leong (son of Fam Chong) at St Mary's Church in Kuala Lumpur (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 8 Sep 1909, at 6).
- 80 Chan served for years as Chief Clerk of the Kuala Lumpur Sanitary Board and later as Inspector in the Chinese Secretariat. He retired on pension in 1909. See 'Mr Chan Fook Nyan' *Straits Times*, 25 Nov 1933, at 12.

The Governor in his reply stated that it would be a good thing if some of the wealthy Chinese were approached in the hope that their generosity might take the form of establishing some school, or, at any rate, of placing in the hands of Government a considerable sum of money which might be devoted to some such excellent purpose as making Raffles Institution a better institution than it had hitherto been.

In January 1902 Mr Napier introduced his motion that Government should institute and maintain in Singapore an institution for improved secondary education and education in commercial and technical subjects.<sup>81</sup> This was agreed to, but it was understood that nothing would be done to give effect to it, as Government was about to appoint a Commission to inquire into and report upon the system of English education in the Colony, especially as regards secondary and technical education. In supporting Mr Napier's resolution, Dr Boon Keng referred to the Governor's remarks on the Supply debate as to Chinese benefactions for the encouragement of education, and said that he had no doubt something of the kind would come, but it could only come in the next generation, or the generation after that, when the Chinese had been shown, by the school for higher education, the great value of technical education: then he had no doubt those people who had so much money would freely spend it on education. We are glad to be able to record that in connection with the proposed Raffles College Mr Oei Tiong Ham has paid \$150,000 for a Central Hall, and Messrs Lee Choon Guan and Tan Soo Guan have promised \$60,000 each towards cost of buildings, while for scholarships the following handsome donations have been promised: Estate of Loke Yew, deceased, \$50,000; Mr Lim Peng [332] Siang, \$60,000; Mr Lee Choon Guan, \$60,000; Mr

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81 See 'Legislative Council' *Straits Times*, 22 Jan 1902, at 5.



Oei Tiong Ham



Tan Soo Guan,<sup>82</sup> \$60,000; and Estate of Tye Kee Yoon,<sup>83</sup> deceased (of Penang), \$50,000; while the Hon Mr Eu Tong Sen (of Perak) has paid \$100,000.

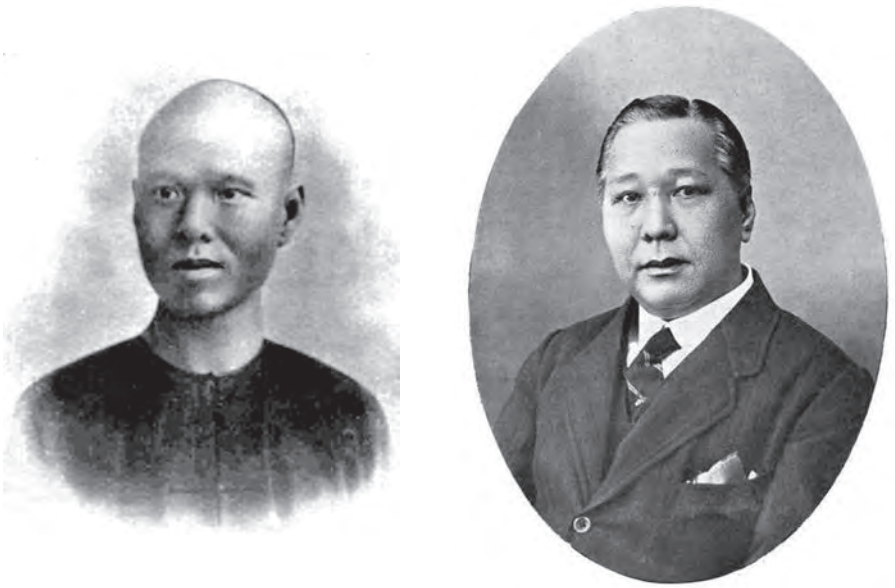
Mr Eu Tong Sen was born in Penang on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1877. He went to China when he was quite young, and did not return to the Colony until 1892. His father, Eu Kong, was one of the leading Chinese miners in Perak, but died at the early age of 38 years.<sup>84</sup> Mr Tong Sen

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82 Tan Soo Guan (1881–1939) was the eldest son of Tan Jiak Chuan and grandson of Tan Beng Gum. He and his brother, Soo Jin, were influential members of the Straits Chinese community. From an early age, Tan was involved in the family's business interests. In 1912, he was appointed Secretary for Kim Seng Land Company Ltd, and two years later was appointed Manager in the same firm (see *Straits Times* 13 Feb 1912, at 7; and 21 Jan 1914, at 11). He also established his own company, the General Trading Company. In 1920, he joined the Board of Directors of Overseas Assurance Corporation Ltd (see *Singapore Free Press*, 30 Apr 1920, at 5). Tan was a generous benefactor, especially in educational causes. In 1919, he donated \$120,000 to Raffles College. Half this amount was for the building fund while the remaining half was to endow a scholarship for Chinese students to be named after his grandfather, Tan Beng Gum, and his father, Tan Jiak Chuan (see 'Raffles College Scholarships' *Straits Times*, 6 May 1919, at 6). Tan was elected Municipal Commissioner in 1922, taking the place of his brother Soo Jin, who was departing Singapore (see 'Municipal Commission' *Singapore Free Press*, 27 May 1922, at 16). Tan Soo Guan built a beautiful beachfront villa in Katong in 1914. His descendants sold the house and property to United Industrial Corp Ltd in 2005 for S\$65.5m, and the land was developed into a 121-unit condominium named *Grand Duchess*. The two magnificent buildings have been preserved and converted into the condominium's clubhouse.

83 Tye Kee Yoon (1848–1919) was Consul for China in Penang. He was a well-known millionaire and philanthropist and was, at the time of his death, reputedly the richest man in Penang (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 17 May 1919, at 8).

84 Eu Kong's real name was 'Eu Kwong Pai' or 'Eu Kong Pui'. He was born in Foshan, Guandong Province in 1853 and migrated to Penang in 1876 with his wife Leung Ah Yau and his younger brother Eu Kong Chun. His father, Eu Hok Pang, was a respected geomancer and the family was relatively well-off. Eu Kong started working in a fabric shop, Wo Yuen and before long, he became a business partner of the shop. Unfortunately, the shop closed down as it was not profitable and Eu Kong started a general grocery and sundry shop to sell



Eu Kong (left) and his son, Eu Tong Sen



'Eu Villa', Mount Sophia  
Mr Eu Tong Sen's house.

took over the management of the business when he was 21, and, by his enterprise and foresight, he has built up a large fortune. He was the Chinese representative in the Federal Council for nine years (1911-20) and for his meritorious services the British Government conferred upon him the Order of OBE. During the Great War he presented a 'Tank' to the Home Government at a cost of £6,000, besides an aeroplane, and made munificent donations to the Prince of Wales's and other Relief Funds.<sup>85</sup> He offered to send 200 Chinese artisans at his expense to England to assist in the munitions work, but his offer was not accepted. When he visited Hongkong in 1918 he gave \$55,000 (equivalent to \$80,000 Straits currency at that time) to Hongkong University. He made a tour in Europe in 1911 and was so pleased with that visit that he hopes to go there again when he retires from business.

His business concerns are spread not only throughout the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States, but are found also in Hongkong and Canton. He owns a great number of beautiful private residences in the chief towns of the Colony and the FMS. The one in Singapore, known as 'Eu Villa', has cost him not less than \$1,000,000.<sup>86</sup> It is built on an ideal spot and occupies a very conspicuous position.

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daily necessities to the increasing number of Chinese labourers. This business also collapsed for want of capital and Eu Kong went to work as shop assistant in Yue Sang, another grocery shop. His only son, Eu Tong Sen was born in 1877 and in 1881, Eu Kong took his young family back to Foshan. He then returned to Penang alone to pursue his business. There he met and married Man Woon Chang, a native of Penang. She proved to be a great help in his business as she could speak English and had good contacts. Later, Eu Kong established a few tin mines in Perak and began making a fortune. In 1891, he fell sick and died on 24<sup>th</sup> March at the age of 38. This highly summarised account of Eu Kong's life is gleaned from Stephanie Po-Yin Chung, 'Surviving Economic Crises in Southeast Asia and Southern China: The History of Eu Yang San Business Conglomerates in Penang, Singapore and Hong Kong (2002) 36(3) *Modern Asian Studies* 597-617; and Ilsa Sharp, *Path of the Righteous Crane: The Life and Legacy of Eu Tong Sen* (Singapore: Landmark Books, 2009).

85 In honour of Eu's contributions, the British Government named Eu Tong Sen Street in his honour, in 1919.

86 See 'Mr Eu Tong Sen's Million Dollar Villa' *Straits Times*, 9 Sep 1934, at 4.

The handsome furniture was supplied by well-known firms in Paris and London, while the marble statues are fine examples of Florentine art. He has a reinforced concrete pier built on the seaside at Tanjong Katong, and [333] his Penang mansion on the Hill (near Crag Hotel) is a very pleasant and cool spot to spend a holiday.

He is the owner of a large number of tin mines and rubber estates in Perak and Selangor, and his tin mines are equipped with up-to-date machinery. Mr Tong Sen has a family of five sons and five daughters. The eldest son, Keng Chee,<sup>87</sup> has been in England for a number of years. He has graduated at Cambridge University and is now going through a course in Chartered Accountancy.<sup>88</sup>

Mr Eu Tong Sen's mother is still hale and strong, despite her 66 years,<sup>89</sup> and is in residence mostly at Kwala Lumpur. Mr Tong Sen himself is still comparatively young. He is a level-headed man of business, of a frank, genial and sociable disposition and a warm-hearted friend. With the sole exception of the late Mr Loke Yew, he can easily claim to be the richest man in the FMS. It is the fervent desire of his well-wishers that Mr Eu Tong Sen may live to a good old age to enjoy the fruits of his labour and to leave some further evidences in this part of the world of his great public spirit.<sup>90</sup>

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87 Eu Keng Chee (1900–1957) was the eldest son of Eu Tong Sen. He studied in England for 14 years, obtaining an MA from Cambridge University and ACA and qualified as a Chartered Accountant (see 'Matters Chinese' *Singapore Free Press*, 3 Oct 1925, at 9). In 1924, he married Gertrude Edith but divorced her in 1947 on grounds of her adultery (see 'Decree Nisi Granted' *Straits Times*, 24 Apr 1947, at 5). He died on 2 Apr 1957 in Hong Kong and his body was brought back to Singapore for burial at Peck San Teng Cemetery (Bishan) (see *Straits Times*, 18 Apr 1957, at 10).

88 See 'Mr Eu Tong Sen' *Straits Times*, 16 Jun 1935, at 14.

89 Mrs Eu Kong *nee* Leong Kam Yow died at Eu Villa on 9 Feb 1927 at the age of 73 (see 'Death' *Singapore Free Press*, 12 Feb 1927, at 10).

90 Eu Tong Sen died on 11 May 1941 at the age of 64 in Hong Kong after suffering a heart attack. See 'Eu Tong Sen, Malayan Multi-Millionaire, Dies in Hong Kong' *Straits Times*, 12 May 1941, at 8.

The Volunteers, especially the newly formed Companies, were immensely pleased on the receipt of a telegram in March from the Secretary of State for the Colonies announcing that a contingent of fifty members selected from the whole of the Volunteer Corps in the Colony should proceed to England to represent the Straits Settlements at the Coronation of His Majesty King Edward VII.

The Chinese Co SVI, was represented by Sergt Lim Boon Keng, Corpl Song Ong Siang, Lance-Corpl Chia Keng Chin and Ptes Tan Chew Kim, Seah Cheng Joo, Cheong Choon Beng and Tan Kwee Wah, while Ptes Tan Boo Liat and Tan Hood Guan also went at their own expense. Mr Tan Hup Leong paid a second visit to London in the role of a sight-seer. One week before the Singapore detachment of the Volunteer Corps left, there was an inspection of the whole Corps on [334] Raffles Reclamation by the Governor, Sir Frank Swettenham, who, addressing the Contingent, reminded them that they were going to represent the Colony at the Coronation celebrations and not on a pleasure trip. The SS *Ceylon*, on the 26<sup>th</sup> April, took the Contingent away from those shores. The story of their life in camp on Alexandra Palace grounds has been chronicled in the *Straits Chinese Magazine*.<sup>91</sup>

In consequence of the serious illness of the King, the Coronation ceremony was postponed for a couple of months, and the Contingent returned to Singapore in the SS *Java* on the 26<sup>th</sup> September. During their stay in London the Chinese members of the Contingent attended the dinner on the 18<sup>th</sup> June of the Straits Settlements Association at the Hotel Metropole. Sir Cecil Smith presided over a large company, including HH the Sultan of Perak and many visitors who had come from long distances to take part in the Coronation festivities. This event is recorded as it was the only occasion in the century on which a batch of Straits Chinese were present at an annual dinner of the Straits Settlements Association in England.

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91 [Song: Vol vi, p 123].



A Group of the SS Contingent on Board the 'Ceylon'



A Group of Singapore Volunteers on Alexandra Palace Grounds

The murder of Mr Rutherford,<sup>92</sup> the managing director of Tanjong Pagar Dock Co Ltd, on the 10<sup>th</sup> April, was the most sensational crime perpetrated in Singapore for a long time.<sup>93</sup> It was noteworthy from the fact that just twenty-two days later, three Chinese ruffians, who had been arrested and after the usual preliminary inquiry before a magistrate, had been tried by a special Assize Court, were punished: in the case of two of them with the extreme penalty of the law, and in the case of the third (against whom only circumstantial evidence had been led) with fourteen years' penal servitude. Two of the special jurors were Messrs Choa Giang Thye<sup>94</sup> and Tan Tek Soon. There was a good deal of nervousness about as the result of this murder, and among suggestions made by correspondents in the daily press, one was for the murderers to be hanged in public and another for [335] the introduction of the curfew law compelling natives and Chinese to carry lights after dark.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1902 the death occurred of Tan Yeok Nee at the village of Sa-ling, in Teochew prefecture, China, where he had been

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92 George Rutherford became Managing Director of the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company in December 1901, having just before that appointment been Managing Director of the Mercantile Pontoon Company (Limited) in Cardiff, Wales (see 'Tanjong Pagar's New Managing Director' *Straits Times*, 28 Dec 1901, at 3).

93 The murder took place when a gang of burglars broke into Rutherford's home, *Draycott*, in the small hours of the night and stabbed him and one Miss Gunn, a house guest (see 'Murder in Tanglin' *Straits Times*, 10 Apr 1902, at 4).

94 Choa Giang Thye alias Chia Giang Thye (1865–1911) was born in Malacca, the son of Choa Chun Chick (Ghiok). He came to Singapore at the age of 12 and received an English education. Together with his brother, Choa Giang Whee, he established Giang Brothers, a firm of commission agents. Choa was also partner and manager of Chop Guan Hock Hin, the Opium and Spirit Farms, whose offices were located at 80-84 Cecil Street. From 1897 to 1904, Choa served as a member of the Municipal Commission. Choa was also a member of the Chinese Advisory Board and a Justice of the Peace (from 1910). See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 205–206; and *The Directory & Chronicle for China, Japan, Corea, Indo-China, Straits Settlements, Malay States, Siam, Netherlands India, Borneo, the Philippines etc, 1908* (Hongkong: The Hongkong Daily Press Office, 1909) at 1217.



Tan Yeok Nee



born 75 years before. At an early age Tan Yeok Nee left his native town and came to Singapore. He began his career as a cloth pedlar, making daily visits to Telok Blangah, where the Temenggong's family became his customers, and he struck up a friendship with the Temenggong Abubakar, who afterwards was styled, successively, Maharajah and Sultan of Johore. By 1866 Tan Yeok Nee had already established himself as a prosperous gambier and pepper trader at Boat Quay under the chop Kwang Hong, and obtained extensive *kang-chu* rights in Johore territory. He was made Major China of Johore by the Maharajah in or about 1870, and went into partnership with Cheang Hong Lim and Tan Seng Poh in the Singapore and Johore Opium and Spirit Farms.<sup>95</sup> He amassed a large fortune which was judiciously invested in the purchase of house property situated in what are to-day the busy parts of Singapore. During the visit of the Royal Princes (Albert Victor and George) to Johore in 1882, Tan Yeok Nee was one of the Entertainment committee. He was in his time a prominent Teochew towkay, both here and in Johore. When he gave up entirely his connection with Johore, the present Hôtel de la Paix, in Coleman Street, became his residence until he built the typical Chinese mansion in Tank Road (now St Mary's Home), which was the family house until acquired for the purposes of the railway. His sons predeceased him, and all his landed property in Singapore (which was considerable) was devised to his eight grandsons, of whom Tan Chin Boon, Tan Chin Teat and Tan Chin Yeow are well-known members of the Teochew community.<sup>96</sup> Tan Yeok Nee's mansion was the last of the four residences built in typical Chinese architectural design and style. The earliest was Tan Seng Poh's in Hill Street, erected in 1869 and for many [336] years used as the Chinese Consulate and now the site of the block of shophouses facing Hill Street and Loke Yew Street; the second was Seah Cheo Seah's in Boat Quay, built in 1872 and still occupied by the

95 See Carl A Trocki, 'The Rise of Singapore's Great Opium Syndicate, 1840–86' (1987) 18(1) *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 58–80.

96 See 'A Chinese Grandfather and His Will' *Singapore Free Press*, 8 Apr 1908, at 7.

family of the late Seah Eu Chin; and the third was Wee Ah Hood's in Hill Street, built in 1878 and now owned and occupied by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

In reply to applications by American firms in the Philippines for permission to engage from the Straits Settlements 'Baba' or Straits-born Chinese, whose services were badly needed as 'cashiers, godown keepers and clerks', the General Collector of Customs in July 1902 issued a circular note that under the provisions of the Chinese Exclusion Act not only Chinese, but people of Chinese descent, unless they were 'skilled workmen', were prohibited from entering the Philippines.

The action of Mr Evans, Protector of Chinese, in going personally to a coolie depot in Wayang Street in order to deal with a dispute between certain insubordinate coolies and their labour contractor, was unwise and unnecessary. Report had been made to him that the coolies in that depot had adopted a defiant attitude, and the aid of the police should have been invoked from the start. One Vong Chee, stated to be an old hand, had influenced some ten coolies (new-comers) who had signed contracts at the Protectorate to work at Pulo Sambu, not to fulfil the terms of their contracts.

When Mr Evans with his Hylam writer reached the back room on the top floor of the house in which these coolies were quartered, he asked for the men who had signed contracts. Vong Chee came out in front of the other coolies and told them not to go to Pulo Sambu. Three times he interrupted the proceedings, and, on the third occasion, Mr Evans pushed him into the front room and slapped him. It was after that slap that Vong Chee called out, 'Strike, kill him'; but the coolies who assaulted him fortunately did so with their fists. The trap-door at the head of the stairs was shut down. It [337] was opened, at Mr Evans's request, to permit the entrance of four assistants, two of them Chinese clerks, from the Protectorate; but the trap-door was shut down again, and they were all prisoners.

The coolies then armed themselves with banister posts (after wrecking the railing at the head of the stairs) and struck out at Mr Bailey, Assistant Protector of Chinese, and others who were trying



A Typical Chinese Gateway

to break through the trap-door. The Chief Police Officer, Mr Grove, shortly after came on the scene with several police officers, carrying rifles, but Vong Chee would not open the door, nor would he allow Mr Evans to leave the room. Meanwhile, a large crowd of people had collected outside the depot. Mr Brockman, the senior magistrate, was sent for, and he gave three warnings, which were interpreted, that, if the coolies did not throw down their sticks and open the door, the police would be ordered to open fire. At this, Vong Chee pointed to his chest and shouted 'Shoot me', and he was shot. The police immediately rushed the staircase, three more shots were fired, the trap-door was forced, and all the coolies in the room were cornered and severely beaten by the police. Five men, who were pointed out by Mr Evans to the Chief Police Officer as having taken no part in the affair, but who, nevertheless, had also been struck by the police, were released. Besides Vong Chee, one other man was shot dead, and two others were so badly wounded that they had to be sent to hospital.

The accused, twenty-six in number, who looked a puny lot of men and in their very much 'undress' garb had the appearance more of a somewhat overgrown troupe of wayang actors than the desperadoes they had been made out to be, were arraigned at the following January Assizes on charges of rioting, confining Government officials and assaulting them. They were all convicted and the sentences ranged from two years' to three months' rigorous imprisonment.<sup>97</sup>

The prize distribution at Raffles Institution on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 1902 marked the last of a long series of [338] annual functions of that Institution as a public school under the management of trustees. On that very afternoon the Colonial Secretary had moved the first reading of a Bill 'for the transfer to the Crown of the property of Raffles Institution and for the relief of the Trustees of that Institution'. It was

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97 This detailed account of this affray draws heavily on: 'Serious Fight' *Straits Times*, 5 Dec 1902, at 5; 'Affray in Wayang Street' *Singapore Free Press*, 5 Dec 1902, at 2; and 'Wayang Street Affair' *Straits Times*, 13 Dec 1902, at 5. See also, Edwin Lee, *The British as Rulers: Governing Multiracial Singapore, 1867–1914* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1991) at 236.

fitting, therefore, that the Governor in his speech after the prize distribution should have eulogised the work of Mr Hullett, as Principal of that Institution, in these words:

He has spent the best part of thirty years of his life in its service, and has made it what it is. I personally recognise the good Mr Hullett has done for the school and I hope he will stay on when the school is taken over by Government.<sup>98</sup>

This acquisition Bill was the outcome of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the system of English education in the Colony published in April 1902. Raffles School, since its foundation through the efforts of Sir Stamford Raffles in 1823, had never been what its founder had intended it to be. The Institution had been endowed by Sir Stamford Raffles with a large amount of valuable land, part of which had been illegally resumed by Government in 1827 and other parts of the land probably also illegally sold by the Trustees of an early period.

The result was that from an early date the Institution was crippled by want of funds, and the large schemes of its founder seem not to have been realised further than by the establishment of an English school and some desultory attempts, soon abandoned, at vernacular education. Generations of Straits Chinese have received their English education at this school, and, from 1871, boys of all nationalities who attended Raffles Institution cannot but retain grateful recollections of their association with their 'Alma Mater', with Mr Hullett as the presiding genius, doing his best to improve the standard of education with the very limited and inadequate funds at the disposal of the Trustees.

At the annual prize distribution of Raffles Institution, [339] in December 1905, which was attended by Mr Hullett as Director of Public Instruction for the last time, Mr CM Phillips, the Acting Principal, paid the following graceful encomium to his former chief:

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98 This speech was in fact reported in the third person, but Song changes it into a first-person account. See 'Raffles Institution: Annual Prize Day' *Straits Times*, 20 Dec 1902, at 5.

By none will the departure of Mr Hullett from the Colony be more regretted than by all his old pupils, and, in particular, by all past and present Queen's Scholars, by whom he has always been regarded with loyal respect and deep gratitude for such success in life as they now enjoy and rightly attribute in the main to his early labours on their behalf. All are glad, however, that he does not retire through ill-health, and sincerely trust that Mr Hullett, who has spent many and the best part of his years in benefiting others, may long continue in health to enjoy the well-deserved leisure now immediately before him. It is the lot of most to be forgotten soon after their disappearance, but Mr Hullett has been so long and honourably identified with Raffles Institution that, for a very long time to come, it will be almost impossible to name the one without calling to mind the other.<sup>99</sup>

Memory, at its best, is but short-lived and fickle without something tangible to help to keep it green: and it is well that, on the departure of Mr Hullett from the Colony in 1906 after several years ably discharging the duties of the newly created post of Director of Public Instruction, old Rafflesians raised the sum of \$1,290 to found a 'Hullett scholarship'. Yearly, since 1908, a Raffles School boy has been awarded this scholarship of the annual value of \$60.

The presentation ceremony, which was attended by quite a large gathering of old Rafflesians, took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1906, in the old prize distribution hall. Dr Lim Boon Keng, who presided, opened the proceedings with a speech in which he dwelt on Mr Hullett's ability as a teacher, the strictness and firmness with which he taught his boys, and at the same time the kind-heartedness he had shown some of them, to him in particular, at a time when the speaker's parents wanted him to leave school, and only [340] Mr Hullett's exhortations and influence induced them to let him stay on, and later, with Mr Hullett's assistance in many other ways, he was enabled to win a Queen's Scholarship, and thereby to earn his living at the present day. He owed a deep debt of gratitude to Mr Hullett. He laid spe-

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99 See 'The Governor at Raffles Institution' *Straits Times*, 22 Dec 1905, at 5.

cial stress on Mr Hullett's care in the teaching of English to his pupils, and the horror he had for bad pronunciation, and thought there was no better teacher of English in the Colony. He then presented Mr Hullett with a gold watch and chain as a memento for his personal use from his past pupils, and asked Mr Phillips to accept an enlargement of Mr Hullett's portrait to be hung up in the school.<sup>100</sup>

Mr Song Ong Siang followed with a statement of the Hullett Memorial Scholarship Fund, and mentioned that some handsome donations had come from old Rafflesians in the Native States and Johore, and contributions had been received from England, Scotland, Bangkok and other lands. He then presented a copy of the enlarged portrait to Mr Hullett. Mr Tan Tek Soon, one of the earliest of Mr Hullett's Chinese boys, was proud of the fact that he was an old pupil, and said that both he and his son owed much to Mr Hullett, and wished him every happiness in his retired life.

Mr Hullett, who was much moved by the references to him, said it was very difficult for him to express in words what his heart would like to say. He thanked the meeting for the kind expressions, the beautiful present and the liberality with which his old pupils were subscribing to the fund for the scholarship to be named after him. He said that it would always be a source of pleasure to him to think that his name would not die out. Looking back to the past thirty-five years he had spent there, he could see three landmarks in the history of the School and education generally. The first was the establishment of two subsidiary schools by Sir Andrew Clarke to serve as feeders to Raffles Institu-[341]tion, which it was the aim of that Governor to make into a High School, and this had always been borne in mind by the Trustees. The second was the starting of the Queen's Scholarships by Sir Cecil Smith.<sup>101</sup> There had been much discussion as to the desirability

100 See 'Presentation to Mr Hullett' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 28 Sep 1906, at 3; and 'Mr Hullett's Retirement: Interesting Presentation Yesterday Afternoon' *Straits Times*, 28 Sep 1906, at 5.

101 See 'The Queen's Scholars Since 1885 in Malaya' *Straits Times*, 16 Nov 1948, at 6.

or otherwise of retaining these scholarships and to the conditions on which they should be awarded, but it could not be denied that they had done a great amount of good. They had been the means of producing some brilliant citizens, and had induced boys to remain longer in school, thus raising to a great extent the standard of education in the Colony. The third landmark was the taking over of Raffles Institution by the Government in Sir Frank Swettenham's time, a step which he considered a good and wise one. The Government had taken away the endowments of the school, and it was meet that it should step in and take over the school altogether. He expressed pleasure at seeing an increase in the number of Chinese boys in Raffles Institution. He had great hopes in the Chinese and believed that China had a great future before her. He concluded by saying that the most difficult task before him was to say good-bye. He would not likely see most of them again, but he would always remember them, and thought that they would always have a little corner in their hearts for their old schoolmaster.

The *Straits Times* reprinted articles on 'Education in Malaya' and 'The Chinese in Malaya' which had been contributed by a Mr FW Eddy to an Australian paper,<sup>102</sup> and also a sketch of 'The Chinaman in the Straits' which had been published in the *North China Daily News*. These articles presented a distorted picture of the Chinese people here, inasmuch as they gave prominence to certain traits of their character and suppressed other traits.

Thus, writing of 'Education in Malaya', Mr Eddy tells his readers of the laissez-faire attitude of the Malay towards this subject and adds:

[342]

Malay neglect, fortunately, is not fatal to the general school balance, for the Chinese right it. They wish to know everything useful that can be learnt, and especially English. One of the merits of a Chinese coolie is that he intends his son to be an improvement upon himself. He will trudge cheerfully through life lugging baskets at the coal wharves or bending his shoulders under truck yet

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102 It is not clear which Australian newspaper this article is located but the same article was republished as 'Education in Malaya' *Straits Times*, 10 Mar 1902, at 2.



more menial, and will pay out all his scant earnings above bare living allowance if thereby he can fit his boy to enter into a commercial house, or make a start on his own account in a small business. The great mass of coolies know only their own dialects, but the Straits Chinese speak English and keep in touch with current affairs. ... Many Chinese boys attend both Chinese and English schools, and keep at it until they finish all the ordinary grades. Their purpose is wholly utilitarian. It means dollars to them.<sup>103</sup>

In the article on 'Chinese in Malaya' this paragraph appears:

When a man settles down, he wishes for a family and finds the way to get one. He may become naturalised to the extent of becoming a British subject against every nation except China. The Colonial Office has left in unsatisfactory shapes the status of Chinese born in this Colony, but the numbers keep on increasing until there are more than 44,000 in a Chinese population of nearly 282,000. The majority of them have never been to China, and one visit usually contents those who grow up with a notion that they would like to look in upon the land of their fathers.... They keep the strain pure by marrying only with their own, they adhere to Chinese customs, including superstitions, and the influence of the women retains the queue. ... The second generation commonly reaches the adult stage before a family acquires any considerable property. In this generation abounds an element which feels superior to its elders and quite as good as anybody. It figures out that the Chinese are the mainstay of the Colony, and, as such, are entitled to ride a high horse. Banishment may not apply personally to them, but its infliction on others has excellent corrective effect.<sup>104</sup>

[343] From 'The Chinaman in the Straits' we read that:

... he has absolutely given up the speech of his forefathers and that a very considerable proportion of Chinamen in Singapore and in the Straits generally are absolutely incapable of speaking Chinese, or of understanding it when it is spoken. There are perhaps 200,000 people, all told, in Singapore, and of these, a rough guess

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103 'Education in Malaya' *Straits Times*, 10 Mar 1902, at 2.

104 'Chinese in Malaya' *Straits Times*, 11 Mar 1902, at 3.

would put the Chinese at more than half. Street after street is given up almost exclusively to them. They monopolise many branches of trade. ... Business – trading – money-making is the Chinaman's strong point in the South as elsewhere. Things that were done for him ten or twenty years ago he now does himself direct, and thus is steadily getting a larger and larger share of the local trade into his own hands.

While all of us are, perhaps, more or less familiar with the statement that Chinese trade is the backbone of our commercial prosperity, it is possible that very few among us have ever ventured to inquire what is comprised under the term 'Chinese Trade': how it is usually conducted, and what is its exact economic value in the development of the general trade of the Colony.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, Mr Tan Tek Soon introduced the subject 'Chinese Local Trade' before the Straits Philosophical Society, and a perusal of this ably written and highly informative paper, published in the *Straits Chinese Magazine*,<sup>106</sup> will well repay the reader who desires accurate information as to the part played by Chinese in the opening up, maintenance and development of local trade – one of the important factors in the commercial prosperity of this Colony.

Towards the close of 1902 a Committee of experts sat in London to inquire into the agitation that had gone on for ten years over the change of the Straits currency. In opposition to a petition in favour of fixity of exchange promoted by the Chamber of Commerce, the Chinese and other Asiatic merchants and traders submitted for consideration a counter-petition [344] setting forth the belief of the petitioners that 'on the whole cheap dollars have contributed largely to stimulate the development of the resources of these Settlements and the Federated Malay States and will continue their beneficial influence in that direction so long as China continues to use free silver as her currency', but containing the confession that the petitioners included many Asiatic traders who had signed the petition for a gold currency,

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105 'The Chinaman of the Straits' *Straits Times*, 12 Jul 1902, at 3.

106 [Song: Vol vi, p 89].

but who had since reconsidered the issues involved and had asked to be allowed to join in this counter-petition.

Mr Tan Keong Saik was one of the leading exponents for the Chinese mercantile community against fixity of exchange, and his article on 'The Currency Question', in the *Straits Chinese Magazine*,<sup>107</sup> written in 1897, was unearthed and tackled categorically by Mr G Pertile in February 1903 in the columns of the *Straits Times*.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> May 1903 the Colonial Secretary moved the adoption by the Legislative Council of the recommendations of the Committee on Straits Currency for fixity of exchange and a gold standard. The Hon Tan Jiak Kim said that, as the Chinese counter-petition had been considered by the London Committee, he was expressing the feelings of the Chinese when he said that they would now submit to the conclusions of that Committee, in whom they had the greatest confidence, and would do all they could to support the Government in carrying out the scheme. His criticism of the Report was directed to the absence of any provision as to the method of getting rid of the Mexican and British dollars when the time came to demonetise them, and this, he thought, would create a good deal of excitement in the minds of the Chinese and natives generally. In October the new Straits dollar minted in India began to arrive and was immediately put into circulation, while, by Orders in Council under the Coin Import and Export Ordinance, the Governor prohibited the exportation of the new Straits dollar, and the importation [345] of the Mexican and the British trade dollar. Just a month later, there were already many spurious new dollars being made by counterfeiters and circulated.

The story of the ill-treatment in German New Guinea of Chinese coolies from Singapore is here given to point a moral which our people are slow to learn, because so few of them have visited the eastern colonies of other European Powers. The news reached the *Straits Times* in January 1903, from two independent correspondents who graphically described how at the port of Herbertshohe, in German New Guinea,

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107 [Song: Vol i, p 144].

some ten coolies, who had gone from Singapore to be employed by the German Government, were stripped naked and given ten strokes of a stout rattan, about an inch thick and four feet long, by order of the Judge, Herr Wolf, without any trial or official inquiry. The flesh was ripped off, and the men howled dolorously. No doctor was present to certify if the men could bear flogging or not. They had refused to work on Sunday, and it was stated that their contracts exempted them from Sunday labour. One correspondent wrote: 'Chinamen seem to be outside the law as far as German New Guinea goes. A native can seemingly murder a Chinese without fear of punishment.' Although Mr Eschke, the German Consul here, resented the publication of such news and intimated that he had taken up the matter officially and an investigation was to be made of the full facts of the case, nothing further seems to have been heard of the matter.

In July Government accepted the splendid offer of \$50,000 from Towkay Loke Yew, who wished to provide better accommodation for passengers quarantined at St John's Island or to establish a new Pauper Hospital for the poorer classes of Chinese in Singapore. In October the Colonial Secretary moved for an initial vote of \$60,000 (towards an estimated cost of \$167,000) for additions to and improvements of the accommodation at the Quarantine Station.

Between these dates, certain complaints had been [346] made on behalf of Chinese coolies, who had been quarantined, that they had been sleeping on the bare clay floor in the attap wards, and had been made to work and been underfed. These coolies had come down from China on their way to the FMS under the medical charge of Dr Skinner and of Rev Dr Luering, who heard these complaints without being able to verify them, as they were not allowed to visit the Island. The reply by the Port Health Officer, in what the *Straits Times* described as a 'whitewashing report', taken in conjunction with the curt reply by the President of the Municipal Board to Dr Murray Robertson's questions relating to affairs at St John's Island, which, in effect, told him that it was none of his business, 'led the public to infer that there

was something going on behind the scenes which it were well to keep under cover'.

The Chinese Advisory Board and other influential Chinese gentlemen in Singapore were found fault with by 'X', because they had left the ventilation of this subject to the pens and voices of Europeans, in particular of himself. And yet the gift of Towkay Loke Yew, who had had similar complaints brought to his attention ad nauseam, was but the expression of the desire on the part of a humane and kind-hearted man that better accommodation at least should be provided for quarantined passengers, even though they were only coolies, the sick amongst whom never so much as dreamt of expecting the amenities and comforts accorded to a certain European patient, suffering at that time from small-pox, and kept at Government expense for a month on the Island, in a well-cemented room with plenty of ventilation, sleeping on a good bed with a mosquito curtain and supplied with tempting food and occasionally with 'delicacies'.

An interesting question came before the Supreme Court, in October 1903, as to the rights of a Chinese widow to retain as 'paraphernalia' all jewellery which were in her possession at the time of her husband's death. Ong Kong Guan<sup>108</sup> had taken out administration on the death of his son, Ong Soon Lee, and sued Chua Chwee Geok, the widow of the deceased, for the return of a large quantity of valuable jewels, which she had kept back on Soon Lee's death.<sup>109</sup> The widow alleged that some of the jewels were wedding presents from her husband and the rest were placed in her custody for use during her husband's lifetime, and she claimed that all jewellery fell to her as

108 Ong Kong Guan passed away on 13 May 1925 at 5.00 pm, at his home at 24 Mohamed Sultan Road. He was 90 years old and was survived by his wife, two sons (Soon Hee and Bah Chee), three daughters and sons-in-law (Tan Teck Chuan, Seow Tiong Lin, Lee Guan Chuan), seven grandsons, seven granddaughters and seven great-grandchildren, and was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery on Sun 17 May 1925 at 10.00 am. See 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 14 May 1925, at 8.

109 See, 'A Widow's Rights' *Straits Times*, 30 Sep 1903, at 5; and 'The Chinese Widow's Rights' *Straits Times*, 22 Oct 1903, at 5.

'paraphernalia' at her husband's death. Cox, CJ, held that even were the English law of paraphernalia applicable, the term could only include the *tek-pai* or presents given to her on her wedding, while all other jewels belonged and must be returned to the estate, as representing investment of capital.

The callousness of certain Hylam 'boys' who were convulsed with mirth at the frantic efforts of a Chinese frog-catcher to extricate himself from a bog near Dalvey Road into which he was gradually disappearing, and who refused to render any assistance to Mrs Romenij<sup>110</sup> and another lady in their efforts to drag him out of his perilous situation,<sup>111</sup> called forth queries as to whether the law was powerless to deal with these 'moral murderers'. In this case, which happened in December 1903, the frog-catcher died after admission into hospital. Just a year before (September 1902), a crowd, chiefly of Hylams, had laughed and joked round a well opposite the Sepoy Lines Police Station into which a Tamil coolie had fallen and was struggling in seven feet of water. The noise made by these onlookers attracted the attention of a Straits Chinese, Mr Goh Cheng Lim (now Manager of Wee Brothers Steamship Co Ltd), who went to the assistance of the drowning man and, with the help of some policemen, rescued him after he had swallowed a quantity of water. Fortunately, in this case, the Tamil coolie recovered. The Hylam 'boys' explained that they were afraid to call the police, who might suspect them of having pushed the man into the well; although that did not explain [348] why they should have treated the drowning man's struggles for life as a funny joke. From time to time such incidents have occurred in our midst, illustrating a selfish

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110 Mrs Romenij was the wife of Jacob Everhard Romenij (1862–1914) who arrived in Penang in 1883 and joined the firm of Mansfield, Bogaardt and Co before moving to Singapore in 1886 to join the office of Mansfield & Co of which he became a partner in 1904 (see 'The Late Mr JE Romenij' *Singapore Free Press*, 9 Feb 1914, at 5).

111 See 'Rescued from a Swamp: Singapore Ladies Save a Chinese Frog Catcher' *Straits Times*, 11 Dec 1903, at 4.

trait in the character of the immigrant Chinese, which those of us who are educated and enlightened cannot but regret.

In January 1910 Mr Goh Cheng Lim started the *Malaysia Advocate*, a weekly paper, in Romanised Malay, with the object of enlightening and elevating the Straits-born Chinese by giving them the news of the world, with special reference to the progress of nations and peoples: but the venture was short-lived, as had been the case with the *Bintang Timor* fifteen years before.

Among the prize-winners at the third annual meeting of the Singapore Rifle Association (1903) appeared for the first time the names of Chinese Volunteers – Sergt Tay Boon Teck and Tan Soo Bin. The Company began to show a keen interest in shooting, and its Quarterly Rifle Shooting Handicap competition, which was instituted in July 1903, was carried on regularly until October 1905, when it was superseded by the monthly shoots organised by the Singapore Rifle Association.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> September<sup>112</sup> the first military funeral of a Chinese Volunteer took place. The late Pte Tan Choon Kiat had been one of the first to enlist in the SVI and worked hard to make himself efficient.<sup>113</sup> Both the Eurasian and Chinese Companies turned up in strength at the Bras Basah Road Drill Hall at 10.30 am, and marched to the deceased's house in Prinsep Street. Here the heavy Chinese coffin, placed on a specially constructed lorry, was taken over by the SVI, headed by the Town and Volunteer Band and a firing party; the cortege moved off to the strains of the Dead March, creating a solemn impression of the event on the onlookers as they compared it with the pandemonium and confusion at an ordinary Chinese funeral at the moment of starting. As the burial ground was at the [349] fifth mile on Thomson Road, the military party fell out at Bukit Timah Road

112 The date of Tan Choon Kiat's funeral is erroneous. A *Straits Times* report of 7 Sep 1903 (at p 4) stated that the funeral took place on the morning of 6 Sep 1903 (see also 'A Military Funeral' *Singapore Free Press*, 7 Sep 1903, at 3). Tan had died on 1 Sep 1903 (see 'SVC Orders' *Straits Times*, 19 Sep 1903, at 6).

113 See *Straits Times*, 4 Sep 1903, at 4.

and proceeded to the cemetery in vehicles which were provided. The cortege re-formed outside the cemetery entrance, and at the graveside the firing party discharged the usual three volleys and Bugler Seth (of the Eurasian Co) sounded the 'Last Post'. The stillness of that Cantonese burial ground had never before been disturbed in that fashion.<sup>114</sup>

In the Horse and Dog Show, which was held at the Race-course in September 1903, there was a very poor list of Chinese exhibitors, and these were all Straits-born. In the Dogs' Section only Mr Yeo Chow Bock and Mr Chia Keng Bock<sup>115</sup> entered a bulldog each. In the Horses' Section we note Mr Tan Kwee Swee's *Lady Rose* in Gentlemen's Hacks; Mr Tan Boo Liat's *Mary* and Mr Boey Chuan Poh's *Brilliant* in Gentlemen's Saddle Horses; Mr Tan Boo Liat's *Domino* in Jumping Horses; Mr Tan Kwee Wah's *Jessie*, Mr Tan Boo Liat's *Sultan*, Mr Tan Kwee Liang's *Beauty* and Mr Tan Kwee Swee's *Lady Ann* in Single Harness Horses. Mr Tan Boo Liat got highly commended for his cob *Sultan*, while Mr Tan Kwee Liang's *Beauty* 'moved with good action and thoroughly deserved the white rosette'.

The *Hongkong Free Press* in comparing the relative progressiveness of Chinese shipowners in Hongkong and this Colony, concluded that 'the Babas in the Straits' far outdistanced the Hongkong Chinese. In one week's arrivals, in Singapore, out of 83 steamers (not including deep-water steamers that sailed to Europe, Australia, Japan and India where the Chinese did not compete), there were 45 consigned to Chinese firms or individuals. Prominent among Baba shipowners trading to China ports were Wee Bin & Co, Beng Brothers, Guan Hoe Bee, Ban

114 This entire account of the funeral is drawn, in most part, word-for-word from 'A Military Funeral' *Singapore Free Press*, 7 Sep 1903, at 3.

115 Also spelt 'Chea Keng Bock' (see *Singapore Free Press*, 10 Dec 1892, at 2). Chia Keng Bock was the son of Chia Ann Siang who disputed the will of his father in a suit against his siblings (see *Singapore Free Press*, 2 Oct 1919, at 1). Chia Keng Bock was made a bankrupt in July 1908 (see 'Notices' *Singapore Free Press*, 16 Jul 1908, at 2). Chia had a son (Teck Kim) and a daughter (see <<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=lawrencetan&id=19973>> (accessed 15 Feb 2015)).



Swee Hong<sup>116</sup> and Koe Guan & Co – the best known being Wee Bin & Co (since absorbed in the Ho Hong Steamship Co Ltd). That journal related how on the Straits Steamship Co refusing to sell a share in their concern, Koe Guan & Co decided to have their [350] own fleet, and by purchasing a number of steamers from the Union Line of New Zealand became the largest steamship concern in Penang.

There were at this time quite a number of Chinese merchants and firms owning steamers which plied to ports in the Malay Peninsula and the Dutch Islands and were engaged in extensive coastal trade. The principal firms were Tan Kim Tian & Co Ltd, Goh Guan Loo & Co, Kim Hock Hoe, Heap Eng Moh, Teo Hoo Lye, Tan Say Lee, Low Sam, Kim Hoe Bee, Ong Ewe Hai & Co and Tan Yong Siak.

Teo Hoo Lye was born in China in 1853 and came to Singapore at the age of 18, earning his living by manual labour, but with indomitable perseverance he was able to start, a few years later, a small grocer's business under the chop 'Soon Bee' in Rochore Road. When 25 years old he went to the Natuna and Anambas Islands and got into the copra trade. He became the owner of the steamers *Aing Hong*, *Flevo*, *Bata-vier* and *Benuit*, and his firm acted as consignee of ships belonging to other Chinese owners. He also employed a fleet of native sailing craft for conveying copra, sago and other produce from the Natunas to this port. In 1909 he started a mill for turning out parboiled rice only, but the mill ceased working just before the War, owing to the shortness of padi. He is a large house property owner and has two sago factories – the Hock Soon Guan in Havelock Road and the Hock Bee Guan at Gayling. In 1900 he became a naturalised British subject. For some years he was on the Committee of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Being of a reserved disposition, he has preferred to remain in the background, although he has readily given financial help towards charitable institutions. He still continues to take an active control of

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116 Ban Swee Hong was a well-known merchandiser and shipping firm with its offices at 289 Beach Street (see *International Chinese Business Directory of the World for the Year 1913* (San Francisco: International Chinese Business Directory Co Inc, 1913) at 1101.



Teo Hoo Lye



Teo Teow Peng

his various concerns, with the assistance of his eldest son, Mr Teo Teow Peng,<sup>117</sup> who was born in 1882 in Singapore<sup>118</sup> and educated at Raffles Institution, and who is a fluent English speaker as well as a Chinese scholar. Mr Teow Peng is on the [351] Board of Directors of the Sze Hai Tong Bank<sup>119</sup> and the Ho Aik Steamship Co Ltd.

The firm of Kim Hock Hoe & Co, general shipowners and commission agents, was founded in 1893 by Wee Leong Tan.<sup>120</sup> At an early age Leong Tan left his home in the Amoy region and went to Benkalis, on the east coast of Sumatra, where he became the Opium Farmer under the chop Kim Hock Lee. For his twenty-nine years' service as an honorary officer of the Dutch Government, first as Captain and afterwards as Major China, he received in 1900 an Imperial Order and gold medal from Queen Wilhelmina (of Holland). His two elder sons, Wee Ann Kee<sup>121</sup> and Wee Kim Cheng,<sup>122</sup> were his partners in chop Kim Hock Hoe, which has been converted into a limited liability company known as Kim Hock Hoe Ltd, with Mr Goh Cheng Lim as

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117 According to Tregonning, Teo Hoo Lye was also into shipping, but he 'appears never to have registered his ships as a separate Company, but ran various services to Sarawak (Sibu), Muar and to south Sumatra' with his son Teow Peng managing them. See KG Tregonning, *Home Port Singapore: A History of the Straits Steamship Company Limited, 1890–1965* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1967) at 138.

118 Teo Teow Peng was the eldest son of Teo Hoo Lye and Tan Chee Neo; his younger brothers were Teow Gim and Teow Geok (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 7 Jul 1940, at 7). In 1908, Teo was arrested at Pulau Tujoh (near Bangka) for robbery but was discharged by the Senior Magistrate when the Dutch authorities failed to send a warrant for arrest (see *Straits Times*, 24 Oct 1908, at 6).

119 See 'Sze Hai Tong Bank' *Singapore Free Press*, 13 Feb 1915, at 10.

120 Wee Leong Tan was also known as 'Wee Tan' and 'Oei Leong Tan'. He was born in 1853.

121 Wee Ann Kee was born in 1874, the son of Chua Seok Neo, second wife of Wee Leong Tan. He died on 26 Jul 1914 at the age of 40 at his home at 28 Stanley Street survived by his widow and four sons (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 28 Jul 1914, at 8).

122 Like his elder brother Wee Ann Kee, he was the son of Chua Seok Neo, second wife of Wee Leong Tan.

chairman of the Board of Directors, and having its registered office at Market Street and doing business as general merchants and commission agents. The shipping business of the old firm was acquired by another company which was incorporated in 1908 under the name of Wee Brothers Steamship Co Ltd.

Mr Wee Leong Tan died in May 1913, at the age of 78, and was buried at Benkalis<sup>123</sup> in the family vault.<sup>124</sup> The fleet of Wee Brothers Steamship Co was placed at the disposal of sympathisers and friends from Singapore to attend the funeral, and a large crowd took advantage of a free trip to Benkalis. On the evening after the burial ceremonies, which were very imposing and elaborate, a firework display was given by the fleet, which immediately afterwards set sail for Singapore.

Tan Yong Siak's interest as a steamship owner began in the later years of his life. He came to Singapore in the 'Fifties, and, after a few years' apprenticeship, he started as a cloth merchant and commission agent under the chop Yong Hak Seng at No 49 Circular Road in 1863.<sup>125</sup> Meeting with much success, he established chop Ban Seng Soon, dealing in rattan and general produce and Siam rice which was milled in his own rice mill at [352] Bangkok. This business was started in 1879 and carried on at No 71 Boat Quay. He was an influential man among the Teochews, and, before the Chinese Chamber of Commerce came

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123 Bengkalis Island is located in the Indonesian Riau Archipelago and is now part of Indonesia.

124 Wee was survived by seven sons, three of whom hold office as honorary captains and lieutenants on the east coast of Sumatra (see Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908) at 640).

125 Tan Yong Siak (1831–1915) was a Teochew merchant and sole proprietor of Chop Ban Seng Soon at 71 Boat Quay. Tan died on 4 Aug 1915 in China (see 'In the Estate of Tan Yong Siak, Deceased' *Straits Times*, 5 Oct 1915, at 5). In January 1890, he was appointed one of the Teochew representatives on the Chinese Advisory Board for Singapore (see 'Government Gazette, 31<sup>st</sup> Jan' *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 4 Feb 1890, at 13). Yong Siak Street in Tiong Bahru is named after him (See Chan Siew Loon, 'Their Names Live on' *Singapore Free Press*, 18 Jul 1955, at 12).



Tan Yong Siak (left) and his son, Tan Jiak Ngoh



Chew Joon Hiang

into existence, he was often a peacemaker and arbitrator in settling disputes and differences between traders. He died in 1914, at the ripe age of 83, and his business concerns have been under the management of his second son, Tan Jiak Ngoh (also known as Tan Tuan Hean), who is himself the proprietor of a cloth and silk shop in Circular Road carried on under the chop Ban Yong Guan.

Chew Joon Hiang, on the other hand, concentrated his attention on the business of shipowner and ship's agent. He started chop Heap Eng Moh in 1880, and for many years was consignee of German and Austrian steamers trading to China and Dutch ports. In 1912 he sold the business to Mr Oei Tiong Ham, the Chinese Mayor of Samarang, who converted it into a limited liability company under the name of the Heap Eng Moh Steamship Co Ltd, owning the largest share therein. Mr Chew Joon Hiang became the first managing director. This line of steamers runs between Singapore and Java, the fleet consisting of the *Giang Seng*, *Ban Hong Liong*, *Edendale*, *Ban Poh Guan*, *Giang Ann* and *Soon Ann*. The present managing director of the Heap Eng Moh SS Co Ltd is Mr Lee Hoon Leong, who was born in Singapore in 1873 and educated at Raffles Institution. He has the distinction of being the father of Dr Lee Choo Neo, the first Straits Chinese lady who qualified from the local Medical School.

Born in 1895, Dr Lee Choo Neo received her education at first in the Singapore Chinese Girls' School, whence she proceeded to Raffles Girls' School, remaining there for three years. She obtained in 1911 her Senior Cambridge certificate, being the first Straits Chinese girl to secure that scholastic honour. In 1912 she joined the Medical School and received her diploma in 1919, and is the first woman to qualify in Medicine from that institution. She holds the appointment of Lady Assist-[353]ant Surgeon at the General Hospital and is in charge of the Native Female Ward (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> classes).

Mr Oei Tiong Ham is a son of the late Mr Oei Tjie Sien, a merchant of Samarang. He is considered the most successful sugar merchant in the Netherlands East Indies, owning a number of sugar plantations in Java and having agencies in various parts of the world of



Lee Hoon Leong



Dr Lee Choo Neo

his firm of Handel Maatschappij 'Kian Gwan.' He was the principal partner of the Samarang Steamship Navigation Co, but in 1912 the vessels belonging to that Company were acquired by the Heap Eng Moh Steamship Co Ltd, with its registered office at No 22 Telok Ayer Street, Singapore, and Mr Oei Tiong Ham occupies the position of chairman of that Company and its Consulting Committee. During recent years he has principally resided in this Settlement, where he has been a liberal supporter of Chinese educational institutions. His handsome gift of \$150,000 for a Central Hall in the proposed Raffles College makes him the largest contributor from the Chinese community. He has an able and energetic assistant in Mr Kum Cheng Soo, who is a son-in-law of the late Chew Joon Hiang, and acts as his attorney during the absence of Mr Oei Tiong Ham from Singapore. Mr Kum Cheng Soo is a director of Heap Eng Moh SS Co Ltd, and though comparatively young he is developing keen interest in Chinese schools and in the cause of sound education of Chinese children. A sister of Mr Oei Tiong Ham married Mr Lim E Ging, at one time a well-known merchant here,



Kum Cheng Soo



owning large brickworks at Pasir Panjang, and two of her sons, Dr Albert Lim<sup>126</sup> and Dr Harold Lim,<sup>127</sup> are in practice here.<sup>128</sup>

The Kwong Yik Bank was established in 1903, being the first banking institution in Singapore run by the Chinese. It supplied a long-felt want among the numerous Chinese traders. Through the mismanagement of some of the Directors, the Bank went into liquidation in November 1913. Messrs Lim Peng Siang, Liao Chia Heng<sup>129</sup> and

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126 Dr Albert Lim Liat Juay (1890–1970) was educated at George Watson's College in Edinburgh and received his medical training at the University of Edinburgh, being one of the few Asians to receive an MD from Edinburgh on haematology. He was a Municipal Commissioner for several years and served on the council of Raffles College, the Committee on Tuberculosis and the Visitors' Board of the General Hospital. He died on 2 Jan 1970 at his home at 72 Cuscaden Road after a long illness and was survived by a son (Jerry Lim Kian Tho) and four daughters, all of whom were doctors and married doctors. See, 'Dr Albert Lim, aged 80, dies at home' *Straits Times*, 2 Jan 1970, at 4. Following his death, Dr Chee Phui Hung inaugurated two Albert Lim Liat Juay Medals at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Singapore, for students scoring the best (Silver Medal) and second-best (Bronze Medal) results in the Final Fourth Professional Examination (see <<http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/edu/awards/rulesofaward-a.html>> (accessed 15 Feb 2015). In 1974, the Albert Lim Award was inaugurated by Lim's children in his memory to honour those who have made significant contributions to the College of Medicine. In 1999, it was re-instituted as the Albert and Mary Lim Award and is currently the highest accolade for individuals who have contributed to the College of Medicine and to the discipline of Family Medicine (see 'The Albert and Mary Lim Awards' (2009) 35(4) *The College Mirror* 8.

127 Harold Lim Liat Hin (1893–1979) was one of the first Asians to become a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons for Surgery from Edinburgh University (1918). He was educated at Raffles Institution and then at Watson's College in Scotland and obtained his first medical degree from Edinburgh University. He was a very keen golfer and was founder-member of the Singapore Island Country Club. Known affectionately as 'Uncle Harold', he died 24 Jan 1979 after a short illness and was survived by his wife Helen, son Kian Poen and daughters Joyce and Connie. See, 'Uncle Harold dies after illness' *Straits Times*, 27 Jan 1979, at 6.

128 See, 'Sugar King Dead' *Straits Times*, 4 Jun 1924, at 9.

129 Also spelt 'Liao Chia-Heng' or 'Leow Chia-Heng'. Liao (1874–1934) started life as a hawker, selling noodles. He later established Chop Buan Teck Heng at 86-

W Lowther Kemp were [354] appointed Liquidators by the Supreme Court, on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 1913, and up to date seven dividends have been declared, totalling 88 per cent, of claims admitted.

One of the promoters of the Kwong Yik Bank was Mr Wong Ah Fook, who left Hongkong in 1851 at the age of 16, in a Chinese open sailing boat, and, on arrival in Singapore, worked in a carpenter's shop. He gradually improved his position until he was able to commence business on his own account. After a few years he became one of the most successful contractors here. Then he turned his attention to Johore, and devoted all his energies to help open the country, and many of the buildings both in town and country (including the Sultan's Palace) were constructed by him. His services were appreciated by the Johore Government, and in 1904 he was made a SMJ. He owned considerable landed property both in Singapore and Johore, and on his estates in Mersing and elsewhere in Johore are planted gambier, pepper, tapioca and rubber. To facilitate payment of his numerous employees, he put in circulation his own paper currency, but this could not be used anywhere except on his own estates, and the notes retained their full value only to him. He married at the age of 33, and of his five sons, three were educated in England and qualified as professional men, viz. SQ Wong, SC Wong and SY Wong. Mr Wong Ah Fook was made a JP, being for many years an influential man and leader of the Cantonese community. Of a charitable disposition, he founded a hospital for indigent Chinese in Singapore. He died in 1918.

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87 Circular Road to deal in textiles and silk. Hard work and a sharp business sense saw him rise as a businessman and financier. In 1906, he was among a group of Teochew entrepreneurs who founded the Sze Hai Tong Banking and Insurance Company Limited. Liau became its first Managing Director. Liau also served as a Director of the Chinese Commercial Bank Limited (see Yong Chin Fatt, 'A Preliminary Study of Chinese Leadership in Singapore, 1900-1941' (1968) 9(2) *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 258-285, at 273; President of the General Chinese Trade Affairs Association of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and was Founding President of the Nanyang Confucian Association (1914-1931) (see 孔圣降生二五四五周年纪念, 南洋孔教会成立八十周年纪念双庆特刊, at 8).



Wong Ah Fook



Wong Siew Qui (SQ Wong)

His three sons already referred to were educated at Raffles Institution under Mr CM Phillips, MA, LLB, as Principal. They made such good progress that the father was advised to send them to England to study for a profession. Wong Siew Qui was called to the Bar from the Middle Temple in 1910,<sup>130</sup> and, on returning to the East, he was appointed Attorney-General of Kwang-[355]tung Province, China,<sup>131</sup> but he retired from this post after the Second Revolution and returned to Singapore. He joined the legal firm of Messrs Chan & Swee Teow, leaving in 1915 for Johore, where he is a partner in the legal firm of Messrs Cooper & Wong. He is a director of a good many companies.<sup>132</sup>

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130 See 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 20 Jul 1910, at 8. Wong had completed his law degree at Jesus College, Cambridge and was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple on 8 June 1910.

131 See 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 29 May 1913, at 8. The report states that Wong was Chief Procurator, rather than Attorney-General.

132 SQ Wong, who was born in Singapore on 23 October 1888, graduated with a law degree from Cambridge University in 1908. In addition to his legal practice, Wong was an accomplished businessman. He was Director and then Chairman of the Overseas Assurance Corporation Limited (1931-1969); President of the Straits Chinese British Association (1924); Member of the Singapore Municipal Commission (1921-1938); Member of the Johore State Council (1921-1938); Member of the Johore Executive Council (1933-1942); Member of the Singapore Improvement Trust (1927-1939); Chairman of Singapore Traction Company (1964-1968) and Great Eastern Life Assurance Company (1951-1969); and Director of the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited (1932-1968) and Sime Darby Holdings Limited (1964-1972). Wong died on 11 Oct 1980 at his home at 10 Cairnhill Circle at the age of 92. In 1924, Wong married Ng Yung Chee and they had five sons and five daughters. Ng died in 1942. See Lee Kam Hing & Chow Mun Seong, *Biographical Dictionary of the Chinese in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1997) 176-177, 181; and Victor Sim, *Biographies of Prominent Chinese in Singapore* (Singapore: Nan Kok Publication Co, 1950) at 24; and Sharon Siddique, *Nutmeg and a Touch of Spice: The Story of Cairnhill Road* (Singapore: Sembawang Properties, 2000) at 32 & 34; and *Who's Who in Malaya 1939: A Biographical Record of Prominent Members of Malaya's Community in Official, Professional and Commercial Circles* (Singapore: Fishers, 1939) at 144.

Wong Siew Chan<sup>133</sup> studied at Oxford and the Inner Temple and was called to the Bar in 1913, and is now engaged in looking after his father's business, Him Yuen & Co, at No 32 Robinson Road, Singapore. Wong Siew Yuen graduated at the Camborne School of Mines in 1909.<sup>134</sup> He was for a time connected with the Canton-Hankow Railway, but is now in charge, as a certificated civil and mining engineer, of Mr SQ Wong's tin mining concessions in the Mersing Valley, Johore.<sup>135</sup>

Other Chinese Banking Institutions which followed in the wake of the Kwong Yik Bank were the Sze Hai Tong Bank, incorporated in November 1906, the Bank of Communications (Kow Thong), incorporated in Peking, which opened a branch in Singapore on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 1910, the Chinese Commercial Bank, incorporated in September 1912, and the Ho Hong Bank, incorporated in January 1917.

What the *Straits Times* called 'An Amazing Hoax' occurred on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 1903.<sup>136</sup> It was alleged that friction had arisen between the Teochews and Cantonese during a 'Chingay' procession two days previously, in which both tribes had taken part. The rumour went round that the quarrel was to be settled in Biblical style by a champi-

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133 According to Kua Bak Lim, Wong Siew Chan was born in Singapore in 1887 and studied at Raffles Institution before departing for Oxford to read law. He was the third son of Wong Ah Fook and was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in 1913. Jalan Siu Chin in Johor Baru was named after him. See 柯木林《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 174.

134 See 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 7 Sep 1909, at 6.

135 Wong Siew Yuen was educated at Raffles Institution where he won the Guthrie Scholarship in 1903 (see 'Raffles Institution' *Straits Times*, 19 Dec 1903, at 5) before proceeding to the Cranborne School of Mines. In addition to working with his brother Siew Qui, he was also a Director of the Titi Tin Co Ltd. He was active in civic affairs and served on the committees of the British Chinese Association of Malaya, the Strait Chinese British Association, and the Singapore Volunteer Corps (where he was awarded the King's Silver Jubilee Medal). He married Sara Mark Shou Young. He passed away on 21 Nov 1973 (see 'Notice' *Straits Times*, 21 Nov 1974, at 22).

136 See 'An Amazing Hoax!' *Straits Times*, 15 Dec 1903, at 5.

on, selected from each of the aggrieved parties, to engage in a 'monster prize fight', on the Esplanade at 4 o'clock. Early in the afternoon, there was already a fairly large crowd on the green, eager to be in the front row of spectators of what was going to be an historic event. At 3 pm the police got orders to get the huge concourse on to the roadway, and, being under the impression that this was the preliminary to keep the arena clear for the cham-[356]pions, the throng good-naturedly went into the roadway.

As the hour named for the fray grew near, the crowds increased in size, became excited, and shouted for the appearance of the combatants. Their shouts even disturbed the prosaic proceedings in the Supreme Court, and Bench and Bar were visibly annoyed. Four o'clock struck, and as the minutes flew by without any fresh development, the multitude began to realise that they had been 'sold'. The police tactfully proceeded to 'move on' the crowd, and by six o'clock the seething mass of Chinese coolie-dom had vanished into thin air. Although an armed body of police had been quartered in the Marine Station just behind the Supreme Court ready for any emergency, the crowd did not know of it, and dispersed in picnic humour; and the perpetrators of the hoax were never discovered.

A few days before the close of the year, the Chinese residents, on the occasion of the departure of Mr W Evans from the Colony, on promotion to South Africa to organise Chinese labour for the Rand after the South African War, presented him with an Address signed by 68 representatives of the Chinese community. The Hon Tan Jiak Kim headed a deputation of 14 Chinese gentlemen, and read the Address, which expressed gratitude –

... for the many acts of kindness and tokens of sympathy shown by you to our fellow-countrymen during your thirteen years of office as Chinese Protector of this Colony, and the just and impartial way in which you have always treated and dealt with all questions concerning Chinese affairs has commanded the respect and esteem of all classes of the Chinese community, and the poorer section of the

community has good reason to gratefully remember your various attempts to ameliorate, wherever feasible, their hard lot in life.

We cannot forget that the successful suppression of the dangerous secret societies in Penang in 1890 was due in no small measure to your good tact and judgment, and that it was also due to your wisdom and [357] discreet judgment that the distribution of the funds of the suppressed societies was accomplished without litigation or demur.

We desire also to remember the interest you have always shown in the subjects of the protection of Chinese women and girls in this Colony, and in the administration of that Ordinance by the amendments which, from time to time, were made to that Ordinance through your suggestions and recommendations. ...<sup>137</sup>

The gambling propensities of Straits Chinese women and the frequency with which Nyonyas appeared in the police courts on a charge of gambling furnished the theme for an article on 'Our Nyonyas' in the *Straits Chinese Magazine*:

Not many decades ago, the Nyonya was a modest retiring creature, as fearful to be seen of the male sex as a rabbit to be observed by the sportsman. In those halcyon days, there was no travelling for the Nyonya except in closed-up palanquins like hammocks called 'redis'. A *redi* was a kind of canvas hammock suspended from a pole carried by two Malays, and the lady occupant and hammock were covered over by a broad piece of kajang palm leaves. ... As soon as the age of 14 or 15 was reached, the girls were warned off the hall and the verandah, and thenceforward they must cultivate with philosophic equanimity the solitude of the zenana, their affections unstimulated by the zeal of the ardent wooer, nor their emotion roused in any way by tempting sight, sound or literature. In the gloom of ignorance they must develop whatever womanly virtues they possess, and they may while away the tedium of their confinement by devotion to needlework, cookery, or such other menial occupations which shall have the effect of keeping them to the earth, earthy.

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137 'Mr Evans's Departure' *Straits Times*, 24 Dec 1903, at 5.

A change came over our people. With good intentions, certain people relaxed the old rules and gradually the old restrictions became impossible, and almost all at once our Nyonyas insisted on their *rights*, [358] and we are ushered into this era of crisis out of which we hope the Straits Chinese will emerge in every respect a better and happier race.

All the evils complained of against the Nyonyas may be traced to the pernicious bondage under which they have been brought up. Gambling will disappear whenever our women learn to make a better use of their time.

Systematic education is the only remedy. ... The girls must be taught one language thoroughly, must be given lessons in needlework and cooking, and must be provided with moral lessons in the course of their studies. But our wealthy Chinese will not come forward to do for their community what the rich Parsees of Bombay have done and are doing for their women.

There can be no general improvement in the social condition of the race until the women are refined and elevated by a sensible education and by the increase in social amenities which only enlightenment can ensure.<sup>138</sup>

In February 1904 nine Eurasian and ten Chinese Volunteers appeared in the Court of Requests to answer summonses issued at the instance of the Commandant, SVC, for the recovery from each man of \$20, being the amount of capitation grant lost to the Corps by the defendants having failed to make themselves efficient. Some pleaded inability to get permission from their employers to leave office earlier on drill days. The want of sympathy shown to the Chinese Volunteer movement, not only at this time but also during the Great War, by certain British employers is truly a sad thing to have to record: but the Chinese Company has lived through it all – even though great was the temptation and, at times, the provocation to follow in the footsteps of

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138 (1903) 7 *Straits Chinese Magazine* 129.



the SVR (which was disbanded in March 1904) and of the SVI No 1 Eurasian Co (which was disbanded in 1907).

The history of the Chinese Volunteer Company can only be given in scraps in these pages, but it is a record of which the Straits Chinese community may well be proud. From year to year the spirit of service for [359] King and Country animated a certain number of our young men to volunteer to fill the gaps in the ranks caused by the resignation of time-expired men, and the strength of the Company was not only well maintained, but almost doubled during the Great War.

In aid of the fund for repairing the roof of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club on Hong Lim Green, a concert and variety entertainment was got up by the members, and all the items were rendered by Straits Chinese. A farce, entitled *A Race for a Dinner*, was presented to the large audience in the second half of the programme. Mr Seow Poh Leng<sup>139</sup> in the principal character of Sponge, an adventurer and on the look-out for a dinner, was exceedingly good. Mr Song Ong Joo appeared as Doric, the merchant whose daughter was to be married to Measureton (Dr TB Sia).<sup>140</sup> It was the first attempt of the Straits Chi-

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139 Seow Poh Leng (1883–1942) was the son of Seow Chye Watt. He was educated at the Anglo-Chinese School. He had a varied career as a chemist's assistant, a Schoolmaster, a law clerk, a stock-broker and insurance agent and a Company liquidator. Seow also served as Honorary Secretary of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club; Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the South Malaya Boy Scouts Association; Vice-President of Tanjong Katong Swimming Party (now the Chinese Swimming Club). He married Polly Tan Poh Li at his residence, *Oberon* on Emerald Hill.

140 Sia Tien Bao (Sieh Ta-pao) was Chinese Consul-General for the Straits Settlements. In 1905, he was appointed Customs Surgeon in Shanghai, the first Chinese to 'receive a position of this character' (see *Eastern Daily Mail*, 21 Sep 1905, at 3). In 1906, he obtained the degree of Doctor of Literature (*Chinshih* 進士 degree) in the Chinese Imperial examinations (see 'The Literary Examinations Under the New Regime' *North China Herald*, 26 Oct 1906, at 209). In July 1916, he was appointed Consul-General of China in British North Borneo (see *Singapore Free Press*, 11 Sep 1916, at 4) and in that capacity, opened 'the first properly constituted Chinese School' in Jesselton two years later (see *Straits Times*, 23 Apr 1918, at 6). In 1922, he was arrested in Java by Dutch authorities



Cast of 'A Race for a Dinner'

nese at a dramatic representation, and every one of the ten characters played his part creditably.

The subject of the introduction of Chinese indentured labour in South Africa elicited a letter to the London *Times*, on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 1904, from Sir Frank Swettenham, who had but a few months before retired from the Governorship of this Colony. Parts of this letter are quoted, because the opinion of an English gentleman with thirty years' close acquaintance with Chinese capitalists, traders, miners and agriculturists, who had held all official positions from a Cadet in the Colonial Secretary's Office to Governor, is of peculiar value in this record as to the great part played by the Chinese people in opening up this Colony and Malaya, in developing their resources and in contributing to their prosperity.

The result of Chinese labour in the Malay Peninsula has been that, in less than 30 years, four small Malay States, jungle-covered, pathless, unknown, have been turned into flourishing communities, with a total revenue of over £2,000,000 sterling per annum, a trade [360] of £10,000,000 sterling per annum, 350 miles of excellent railway, thousands of miles of roads and telegraphs, waterworks – in fact all the machinery of the most modern administration – with no debt of any sort and a balance of over £1,500,000, ready to be spent on further railway extension and other works of development. What is specially interesting in this connection is that, while this federation of Malay States has sprung into a position which places them ahead of every Crown Colony in the British Empire, their prosperity has had a marked effect on the progress of their neighbours, the Straits Settlements Colony. The development of the tin mines in British Malaya is the work of indentured Chinese labourers, and it may safely be said that the same results could not have been obtained with any other class of labour.

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who deported him to China. There was speculation that he had been 'sent to Java for Bolshevik propaganda'. (see 'Bolshevik Propaganda' *Straits Times*, 21 Jul 1922, at 9). His last-known posting was as Consul-General in the Philippines (1923–1924).

Of the value of the Chinese as labourers I suppose there is no question: indeed, so far as I have seen, it is their industry and thrift which constitute their main objection in the eyes of white men, who are placed, or are likely to be placed, in a position of rivalry to them. I have heard a good deal of Chinese vices from those who wanted an excuse for excluding Chinese labour from what are called 'white men's countries'. Personally, though I have lived for so many years amongst Chinese, I have seen amongst them no more evidence of vice than amongst other nationalities. It is true that they work long hours for small wages, and if that is a vice they share it with the people of India, Japan, Java and other Eastern countries. A certain proportion are smokers of opium, and drinkers of Chinese spirits, but those who smoke to excess are comparatively few, and I cannot remember having ever seen an intoxicated Chinese in the streets or heard of a case of 'drunk and disorderly' being brought before the Courts. Over 200,000 Chinese were landed at the ports of the Straits Settlements during 1902, so drinking to excess cannot be common. The Straits Settlements form a British colony where the laws are much the same as in other British possessions, and those who regard the Chinese as a people of peculiar vices, not fit to live in the same country with Europeans, can easily ascertain whether the records of the police and other [361] Courts justify the charge. I say they do not. On the contrary, the Chinese are honest, hard-working, thrifty and sober as people go. They are easy to govern for those who understand them, and their value as a source of taxation and revenue is recognised by all those who have had to deal with them. In British possessions and places under British control, there must be 1,000,000 Chinese, many of whom are British subjects. Amongst the Volunteer forces of Singapore are one or two companies of Chinese, and representatives of these companies formed part of the Volunteer Contingent which visited England at the time of His Majesty's Coronation.<sup>141</sup>

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141 *The Times* 26 Feb 1924.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE NINTH DECADE (1899-1909)

#### SECOND PART

ON the 21st June 1904 HE Sir John Anderson laid the foundation stone of the Hokien Chinese Church and Reading Room in Tanjong Pagar Road. A number of Europeans was present, while hundreds of Chinese witnessed the ceremony from every coign of vantage near the site.

After the Governor had declared the stone – a marble slab – ‘well and truly laid’, he congratulated the members of the Hokien Church on the very practical proof they had given of the sincerity of their Christianity in coming forward to provide funds for the building, and commended the prominent Chinese who, not being themselves Christians, had contributed to the funds.<sup>1</sup>

He was glad that the congregation in making provision for their spiritual wants had not forgotten their intellectual needs, and that part of the building was to be devoted to a Reading Room. As a member of the Presbyterian Church and as their Governor, it was exceedingly pleasant for him to take part in that ceremony, for the more the moral and intellectual life of the community was stimulated, the easier would be the work of the Governor and his advisers.

The church building was completed and dedicated on the 13th January 1905 in the presence of a large number of European and Chinese Christians. The Rev W Murray presided, and in the devotional exercises the Rev SS Walker, the Rev Dr West (of the Metho-[363] dist Episcopal Church) and representatives of the various congregations of the Chinese Presbytery took part. At the close of the service, tea and cakes were served in the spacious hall above the church, which is designed for use as a Reading Room and Lecture Hall.

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1 See ‘Hokien Chinese Church’ *Straits Times*, 22 Jun 1904, at 5.



Reverend Tay Sek Tin



Chinese Presbyterian Church,  
Tanjong Pagar Road

On Sunday the 15th January the Rev T Barclay, on his way back to his mission field in Formosa, preached the first sermon in the new church. The first pastor was the Rev Tay Sek Tin,<sup>2</sup> a man of marked ability and of great influence, not only over his own congregation, but also among the Chinese people outside his church. Born in Hokien Province in 1872, he became a Christian at the age of 13. After a course of studies in the Mission School, he joined the Theology class of the London Missionary Society, in Amoy, when he was 19, and became a pastor in 1896. His health breaking down a year later, he was advised to try the warmer climate of Singapore. He migrated here, and soon found favour with the Hokien (Presbyterian) congregation, which had been got together by the Rev A Lamont, and he was ordained pastor. The church services were then held in a small house by the side of the Eastern School in Club Street, and, later, in rented premises in Bernam Street, off Tanjong Pagar Road.

In 1903 he assisted the Rev JAB Cook in starting the Payah Lebar Church, and in 1908 in starting a church at Seletar on a piece of land presented by Mr Teo Eng Hock.

In 1902 Mr Tay Sek Tin helped to establish the 'Su Po Sia' (Chinese Reading Room) in Cross Street, and this institution, on the completion of Tanjong Pagar Church building, moved into the spacious lecture hall on the first floor, where it has continued to carry on its work of enlightening the Chinese people by newspapers, magazines, and literature generally, relating to all subjects that make for the spiritual, moral and social welfare of China and her people.<sup>3</sup>

In 1906 Mr Tay Sek Tin was largely instrumental in raising several thousands of dollars from the Chinese [364] community to continue the work of the 'Khai Eng Soh' – the Opium Refuge – which had been started at the Chinese consulate premises by Mr Sun Sze Ting,

2 Tay Sek Tin (1872–1944). See 柯木林, 《新华历史人物列传》 (Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 117.

3 See 'Hokkien Church and Reading Room, Tanjong Pagar' *Straits Times*, 15 Jun 1905, at 5.

the Chinese Consul-General. The scheme was the outcome of a report made to Mr Sun by Dr SC Yin, who had cured two young Chinese merchants of the opium habit. This hospital, of which Dr Yin was in charge, was able to accommodate only thirty patients at a time, the treatment lasting a fortnight. This benevolent institution, located in a rented house in Tank Road, lived for about a year, during which period about 500 opium habitues were treated and discharged as cured. It was, however, discovered that many of the cured patients, through lack of will power, had taken to the opium pipe again. A dispensary was therefore opened in Middle Road for the free distribution of a medicine made from the decoction of a Malayan plant (*Combretum Sundaicum*) and recommended by the Anti-Opium Society as containing certain curative properties for combating the craving for the drug. This experiment was tried by Mr Tay Sek Tin for about five years, being discontinued when the stock of this plant gave out.

Owing to a breakdown in his health, the Rev Tay Sek Tin gave up the strenuous work of his pastorate, and became interested in rubber enterprise. He was for a time a director of Han Yang Plantations Ltd, and is still associated with the rubber firm of Lim Nee Soon & Co. He has continued to be an honorary pastor, rendering service, voluntarily, when required, and resuming active supervision during the vacancy in the pastorate of the Tanjong Pagar Church (1917-19).

In the 1904 Singapore Bisley, Sergt Tan Soo Bin won the first prize, in the Individual Snap-shooting competition, with 60 per cent of hits on the head and shoulders of a man in the bull's-eye ring on the target, while Col-Sergt Song Ong Siang got into the third stage of the Governor's Cup, taking the eighth place with 287 points: the winner of the Cup being Capt Elliot, SVI, with the score of 312.

[365] Capt Ellis, the OC of the Chinese Company, presented a fine shield for annual competition between the four sections of his Company, which was shot off for the first time this year. The ranges were 200, 300, 400, 500 and 600 yards and each section was represented by five men. Section 4 (Col-Sergt Song Ong Siang) came first, with a





total of 608, with section 3 (Sergt Tan Soo Bin) a close second, scoring 600, and section 1 (Col-Sergt Lim Boon Keng) third with a total of 552.

In September 1904 the following petition praying that a Medical School might be established was addressed to the Governor, Sir John Anderson, by the leading Chinese and other non-European communities of Singapore:

Your petitioners desire to bring to Your Excellency's notice the desirability of establishing and maintaining in Singapore a Medical School where residents in this Colony and the Federated Malay States may be trained so that they may be able to enter the Government service as Assistant Surgeons or practise their profession as general practitioners.

The establishment of such a school was first advocated by Dr Simon, CMG, late PCMO, and has had considerable support in other quarters. The Commissioners appointed to inquire into the system of English education in the Colony adverted to the scheme in para. 30 of their report of April 1902, and, after pointing to the conflicting nature of the evidence upon the subject, made the following statement: 'The Commission ... feel the great advantage which would accrue to the Colony and the Native States by the introduction of a system of training which would produce, out of local material, men better qualified to supply the demand for Assistant Surgeons and general practitioners among the native population and the poorer inhabitants. The introduction of this would pave the way to limiting practice to men who had attained the necessary qualifications.'

Your petitioners are convinced that there are no insuperable difficulties in carrying out a scheme for the establishment of such a Medical School and they [366] are much impressed by the great practical good which would result from it. A large portion of the native population are unable or unwilling, either on the ground of expense or of ignorant prejudice, to avail themselves of the service of European practitioners and are accordingly thrown back upon persons with little or no medical training, with results very far from satisfactory.

The importance of a general comprehension of proper sanitary conditions and habits is of paramount importance to any country, and your petitioners feel that no measure can so successfully diffuse this understanding as the provision of a proper supply of trained medical men who are in racial sympathy with those whom they attend.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that Your Excellency will give this matter your earnest consideration and take steps to get a proper scheme framed for the establishment of a Medical School in Singapore.

(Sd.) TAN JIAK KIM and others.<sup>4</sup>

The Governor's reply was given a month later. It pointed to the evidence before the Education Commission that the principal obstacle to the establishment of a medical school had been the lack of material. It regarded such an establishment as an experiment, the success of which would be too problematical for the Government undertaking it without some guarantee both as to part, at least, of the expenditure involved, and as to the active co-operation of the leading men in the Chinese and other races represented among the signatories to the Memorial. It challenged the Chinese and other Asiatic communities in the Colony and the Federated Malay States to raise by subscription \$71,000, and promised that, as soon as the funds considered necessary were forthcoming, the Governor would have pleasure in submitting to the Legislative Council of the Colony and the Government of the Federated Malay States the measures necessary for the establishment of the school.

The petitioners were in dead earnest, and, immediately [367] on receipt of the Governor's reply, a meeting of the leading Chinese was held at the Chinese Protectorate, Singapore, at which the Governor's offer was gratefully accepted and arrangements made for the collection

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4 This petition is not reported verbatim in the newspapers nor in the minutes of the Legislative Council meetings. It is cited in full and dated 8 Sep 1904 in YK Lee, 'The Founding of the Medical School in Singapore in 1905' (2005) 34(6) *Annals of the Academy of Medicine* 4C-13C, at 8C.

of the necessary funds. The Hon Tan Jiak Kim headed the list with the handsome donation of \$12,000, and when the list closed with a total subscription of \$87,077 it was found that the Singapore Chinese had contributed \$53,700, Penang Chinese \$20,000, the Selangor General Farm by Mr Loke Yew \$9,000 and Mr E Chin Seng (of Saigon) \$3,000.

With the sanction of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, a Bill to incorporate the Council of the School was introduced in June 1905 in the Legislative Council, and duly became law. The school began work on the 3rd July 1905, and was formally opened on the 28th September 1905, by the Governor Sir John Anderson, who had the pleasure of presenting the first licentiates, seven in number, with their diplomas in May 1910. In this first batch of qualified medical practitioners only one was Chinese, Dr Chen Su Lan, a native of Foochow, who now enjoys a large private practice.<sup>5</sup> In 1911 the Tan Teck Guan

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5 Chen Su Lan (1885-1972) was born in Fuzhou, the younger son of Chen Hui Mei and Dang Li Meng. His father died when he was very young, and his mother, a nurse trained by Methodist missionaries fled to the countryside when a foreign gunboat approached Fuzhou. He studied Chinese classics and sat for the Xiu Cai (秀才) examinations at the age of 16 and thereafter enrolled in the Anglo-Chinese College in Fuzhou. In 1905, aged 20, he came to Singapore to study medicine at the newly-established Medical College. He graduated in 1910, topping his class in every subject except pathology and established a medical practice on South Bridge Road. Immediately after graduation, Chen plunged headlong into local affairs and joined the Singapore Anti-Opium Society that had been established in 1906 by Lim Boon Keng and SC Yin. Chen campaigned ferociously against opium, and in 1929 became President of the Society. In 1933, he established an Anti-Opium Clinic where some 7,000 opium addicts were successfully treated. The Clinic closed in 1937 when Japanese invaded China and donations to the Clinic were diverted to the China Relief Fund. From 1928 to 1931, Chen campaigned against prostitution, which was then rampant and succeeded in getting the colonial authorities to close down public brothels. Chen was also concerned about the scourge of tuberculosis and his agitation and advocacy led to the establishment of the Rotary Anti-Tuberculosis Clinic and the Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association (SATA). After the Japanese Occupation, he was appointed to the Advisory Council but soon tired of 'speech-making', preferring to work on the ground. Anxious to deal with the problem of displaced and demoralised youth, he re-established the Chinese YMCA (later Metropolitan YMCA) in 1945, becoming its founding Chairman.

Building, comprising a large class-room, reading-room, museum, etc, for the erection of which the sum of \$15,000 had been given by Mr Tan Chay Yan in memory of his father, the late Mr Tan Teck Guan, was opened by the Acting Governor, the Hon Mr EL Brockman, CMG. By Ordinance XII of 1913, the Institution received its present designation of the King Edward VII Medical School. In 1917 Mr Tan Jiak Kim presented the sum of \$1,500 for two Travelling Scholarships of \$750 each, to enable the student gaining the greatest distinction in the final examination to proceed to some other centre of medical teaching, and to study there for a period of six months some special subject of medical or surgical interest. These scholarships were awarded to Dr Loh Poon Lip (1917)<sup>6</sup> and Dr Lee Ee Liat (1919). Out of ninety-two licentiatees of the school up to the end of 1918, twenty-five are [368] Chinese.

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In 1947, he established the Chen Su Lan trust to provide Christian organisations with funding for charitable and philanthropic work, and beneficiaries of the Trust included the Scripture Union and the Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home. Chen died on 5 May 1972 after a long illness, survived by his seven children. In 2005, during the National University of Singapore's centennial celebrations, the Trust donated \$2.5 million to establish the Chen Su Lan Centennial Professorship of Medical Ethics. This account is a paraphrase of Kevin YL Tan, 'Chen Su Lan' in Leo Suryadinata (ed), *Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent* (Singapore: Chinese Heritage Centre & Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012) at 109–111.

- 6 See 'King Edward VII Medical School' *Singapore Free Press*, 9 Oct 1919, at 7. Loh Poon Lip (1896–1962) was an outstanding scholar and sportsman. Starting in 1905, he won a prize as a Standard III student at Raffles Institution (see 'His Excellency on Local Education' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 22 Dec 1905, at 3) and chalked up numerous scholastic prizes all the way through his studies at the King Edward VII Medical School. He then specialised in gynaecology and went to the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin to further his studies. Loh was also active in the Straits Chinese community and was in 1935 elected President of the Chinese Association. In 1948, he was appointed Municipal Commissioner in the absence of Kwa Siew Tee (see 'Dr Loh Poon Lip' *Singapore Free Press*, 2 Oct 1948, at 3). He was killed in a head-on car crash in 1962 (see 'Well-known Dr Loh dies in car smash', *Straits Times*, 23 Apr 1962, at 9). His son, Robert Loh Choo Kiat (b 1925) was also a prominent medical practitioner and community leader.

On the Council for 1919, consisting of eleven members, are the Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng (as the nominee of the Straits Branch of the British Medical Association), and Messrs Yow Ngan Pan,<sup>7</sup> Tan Kheam Hock, Tan Cheng Kee, Koh San Hin and Tan Soo Bin.

Tan Soo Bin,<sup>8</sup> the second son of the late Mr Tan Jiak Kim, was born in Singapore on the 15th December 1882. After studying Chinese and the elements of English at home, he was sent at the age of 12 to the Anglo-Chinese School, from which, as the result of the 'Isaiah' controversy, he was withdrawn, and he completed his education at Raffles Institution. In 1901 he accompanied his father to England and on his return he was enrolled as one of the original members of the Chinese Company, SVI. He very soon developed into one of the best rifle shots in the Company, and won the General's Cup in the SRA annual meeting in 1905. He was a member of the Singapore Interport team for 1908 and 1909, while several times he figured in the final stage of the Governor's Cup. He was a keen Volunteer and held the rank of Col-Sergeant when he resigned in 1911 for family reasons.<sup>9</sup>

He married in 1902 Miss Lo Tsung Kee, the second daughter of Sir Chi-chen Lo Feng Luk, KCVO, at one time Chinese Minister at the Court of St James's. His wife was a very good Chinese scholar and became acquainted with the English language while residing with her father in London. She died on the 21st May 1914, at the age of 33, at 'Dingwall', Pasir Panjang.<sup>10</sup> Her funeral was one of the first among Straits Chinese in the reformed style, quiet, but solemn in its effect upon the large number of Chinese friends who attended to pay their last respects. The coffin was covered with black velvet, with white trimming and lining.

7 For more biographical details of Yow Ngan Pan, see Chapter 12.

8 See 'Chinese Personalities: Mr Tan Soo Bin' *Straits Times*, 8 Dec 1935, at 19.

9 Tan Soo Bin died on 11 Aug 1939 at his home in Pasir Panjang at the age of 57. See 'Death of Mr Tan Soo Bin: Pioneer Chinese Volunteer' *Straits Times*, 12 Aug 1939, at 12.

10 See 'Death' *Straits Times*, 21 May 1914, at 8.



Mr & Mrs Tan Soo Bin

In 1915, when the Chinese Company SVI was reorganised and its strength raised to a double company, Mr Soo Bin once again volunteered his services, and, shortly after, he obtained his commission as 2nd Lieutenant, becoming officer in command of platoon 4. On [369] passing the prescribed examination, he was promoted to a lieutenancy, and did his share of mobilisation duties during the last three years of the Great War.

The management, and later the winding up, of two very large estates – his great-grandfather Tan Kim Seng's and his grandfather Tan Beng Swee's – did not permit of his undertaking public duties, although, after the death of Mr Tan Jiak Kim in 1917, he accepted a seat on the Council of King Edward VII Medical School, and also served on the Board of Film Censors. He is a keen tennis player. He was at one time an enthusiastic sportsman and regularly went after big game shooting. Latterly, he has confined his attention, entirely, to the less strenuous recreation of fishing with net or line in the sea off Pasir Panjang, Tanjong Katong or Pulo Suba. The excellent training under his late father in all public affairs, coupled with a sound and well-reasoned judgment in all matters in which he finds interest, is a valuable preparation for public service which we hope he will undertake in the near future in fuller measure than he has yet done.

In October 1904, the first anniversary of the founding of the Buddhist Mission in Singapore was celebrated in the Mission building which was perched on a shady hill a little beyond the Police Station in Havelock Road. This Mission was begun here by an Irishman, who was stated to be the first white man to enter the Buddhist brotherhood, and who was entitled the Lord Abbot Right Reverend U Dhammaloka. At this time he was quite a familiar figure in the town, attired in a yellow robe, with a clean-shaven head, and walking barefooted. There were about a hundred little Chinese boys attending the school belonging to the Mission.<sup>11</sup>

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11 See 'Buddhist Activity in Singapore' *Straits Times*, 20 Jan 1904, at 3.



At this anniversary function a European, alleged to have been a police officer in Pahang, was ordained into the Holy Brotherhood. The ceremony was preceded by the chanting of a hymn of praise, in English, by the little Chinese boys, led by the Lord Abbot. The candidate entered the assembly hall, knelt down, and [370] bowed his head to the ground three times, in front of the altar on which was placed a small Siamese statue of Buddha. He then prostrated himself before U Dhammaloka, and repeated after him, in Pali, the ordination service. This lasted half an hour, and a yellow robe was then handed to him. He retired into another room to don this garb while the Chinese choir sang another hymn. The candidate now came out in his yellow robe and prostrated himself again before U Dhammaloka, and was given his priestly name and told that he would be sent to Pulo Tikus in Penang to continue his studies under Burmese priests in the monastery there. Among the guests, who at the conclusion of the ceremony partook of light refreshments, there were a few Europeans who felt a thrill of astonishment at witnessing a European bowing down to 'wood and stone'.

Following up the correspondence of the Straits Chinese British Association with Government, on the subject of granting passports to natural-born British subjects of Chinese descent, the Hon Tan Jiak Kim, on the 11th November 1904 in Council, asked the Government to take steps to ensure that Straits-born Chinese provided with passports for travelling in China should have equal protection from consular officials in China with Chinese British subjects registered at the Bangkok Consulate who had resided in Bangkok for three years. The Governor's reply was that, under regulations then recently issued, passports granted here would be recognised by British consuls throughout China.

In December a meeting, attended by about 120 persons - Chinese, Arabs, Jews, Indians and Europeans - was held at the newly opened Oriental Club in Beach Road and unanimously passed the resolution 'That a Ratepayers' Association be formed.' Among the Chinese gentlemen present were the Hon Tan Jiak Kim, Lee Cheng Yan,

Tan Keong Saik, Yow Ngan Pan, Lee Choon Guan and Chee Quee Bong. A Committee [371] representing the various nationalities present was elected.<sup>12</sup> Nothing more was heard of this organisation until the 29<sup>th</sup> December 1915, when a meeting of landowners and ratepayers was held at the Chamber of Commerce, thoroughly representative of all nationalities, with the Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng in the chair. The objects of the proposed association, to protect the interests of landowners and to assist the Municipality in every possible way, having been explained, Mr Lee Choon Guan proposed the resolution 'that in the public interest such an association was desirable', which was seconded by Mr Angullia and carried unanimously. An influential committee to draw up rules, appoint officers, and do all things necessary to start the association was appointed, but once again the matter went no further. Singapore is still in the anomalous position of being a big town without a Ratepayers' Association wherein its members might, if they so wished, study the many complicated problems of municipal government and be trained to become fit nominees of the Governor on the Municipal Board.<sup>13</sup>

The Chinese New Year Sports held on the 11th February 1905, on Hong Lim Green, consisted of numerous events for the natives in the morning, and of members' events in the afternoon. In spite of the rain, HE the Governor and Miss Anderson graced the afternoon's proceedings. Mr Seah Cheng Joo, well known among Rafflesians as a good athlete, won the Championship Cup, while the Chinese volunteers won the Tug-of-war event.<sup>14</sup> The Governor, in a brief speech, said that it afforded him great pleasure to see the Straits Chinese taking to European sports and going in principally for recreation. He hoped they would continue to take an interest in these things: but he added that, in giving their attention to physical recreation, they should not

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12 See 'A Ratepayers' Association' *Straits Times*, 14 Dec 1904, at 5.

13 See 'Landowners and Ratepayers: New Organisation for Singapore Inaugurated' *Singapore Free Press*, 29 Dec 1915, at 12.

14 See 'Chinese New Year Sports' *Straits Times*, 13 Feb 1905, at 5.

lose sight of what he considered a matter of still greater importance, viz. – education.

Mr Seah Cheng Joo was born on the 22nd August 1879, and was the younger son of Seah Chiam Yeow, [372] who was one of the pepper and gambier merchants at North Boat Quay until his death in 1898 at the early age of 51. After leaving Raffles Institution, Seah Cheng Joo had charge of his father's business for a year and then spent sixteen years in a pineapple preserving and exporting establishment. Since 1915 he has been engaged in tin mining at Mersing with Mr Seah Eng Kiat. One of the original members of the Chinese Co SVI, he worked his way up to the post of Colour-Sergeant, and was one of the quartette presented with their commissions by HE Sir Arthur Young at a parade of the Company in January 1916. His business claims at Mersing compelled him to go on the reserve in 1917 and, subsequently, to retire. He was one of the Chinese Volunteers in the Straits Coronation Contingent to London in 1902. Of a vivacious disposition, he was a great favourite in the Chinese Company, and still maintains his popularity with a large circle of friends.<sup>15</sup>

On the 18<sup>th</sup> February the dramatic section of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club gave a successful concert and variety entertainment on Hong Lim Green. A little dramatic piece entitled *Cherry Bounce* was staged with two principal and four minor characters. Mr Tan Boon Guan as the fussy old squire was exceedingly good, and his powerful voice could be distinctly heard in the last row of seats. Mr Seow Poh Leng, as his careful and over-officious servant, was equally good and successful in sustaining the character. The scenery was all painted by Mr Low Kway Soo, a gifted young man, who has since produced several pieces of more ambitious and permanent work. The performance had to be repeated on the 25<sup>th</sup> February for the benefit of a large

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15 Seah passed away at his home at 43 Boundary Road on 9 May 1958, survived by four sons and five daughters and was buried at Bidadari Christian Cemetery. See 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 10 May 1958, at 8.



Seah Chiam Yeow



Seah Cheng Joo

number of members and their friends who were shut out on the first night for want of accommodation.

On the second reading of the Bill for the acquisition of Tanjong Pagar Dock Co Ltd by Government, and for the management of the same, which came before the Legislative Council on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1905, the [373] Hon Mr Napier, in supporting the measure, said he believed that public opinion, outside those who were interested in the Company, was practically unanimous in favour of the Bill.<sup>16</sup> The true ground of expropriation was that which the Governor had stated on the first reading of the Bill, when he, after pointing out that the Company had obtained a practical monopoly of the shipping facilities of the port, opined that it was very undesirable in the interests of the commerce of the place that the whole of the shipping facilities should be under the control of the Company. In the first days of the Company, when the first dock was opened, Mr Thomas Scott, then chairman of the Company, had said that the concern was not the offspring of a grasping spirit of monopoly, and that their motto should be 'Live and let live'. In spite of this declaration, the Company had carried on a policy which produced a contrary effect, for the Company had taken over the Slipway, the Borneo Wharf and Jardine's Wharf and, finally, the New Harbour Dock. He wanted to see the Company as a Government concern with a Board representative of every class of trade in the Colony. There should be a Chinese merchant on the Board who would give his advice and attempt to get back that class of Chinese business which had then practically left the Dock Company.

The Hon Tan Jiak Kim, who also supported the Bill, said that the Dock Company was not popular with the Chinese, and, for some years, the Chinese shipping companies had been trying to avoid sending their steamers to Tanjong Pagar and their cargoes to the wharves, because of the enormous charges there. From careful inquiries he found that the Chinese traders were unanimous in supporting the Government in

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16 See 'Tanjong Pagar Expropriation Bill' *Singapore Free Press*, 4 Mar 1905, at 5.

the acquisition of the Company. The Bill was passed on the 13<sup>th</sup> April, and on the 1<sup>st</sup> July Government took over the management.

A correspondent to the *London and China Express* on the 'Progress of the Straits Settlements' thus writes: [374]

The increasing prosperity of the Straits is due more, perhaps, to the Chinese than to any other cause. In mining, in the opium and spirit farms and in mercantile adventure, many have amassed fortunes. It is, in fact, the Chinese who have 'the money' in the Colony....

They are doubtless good business men, and certainly their industry when working on their own account is most remarkable. The Chinese bootmakers, furniture makers and other petty shop-keepers may be seen at work from six in the morning till ten at night: but the same cannot be said when they are working for others. But, on the whole, considering their educational disadvantages, they by no means compare unfavourably with Europeans in a similar class of life. The freedom Chinese enjoy is exceptional for them. In many countries, aliens when settling down to live and entering into commercial or other rivalry with those to whom the country belongs are subjected to some disabilities – are handicapped, as it were. We must remember the Chinese interest in the Colony is merely to make money out of it. In time of danger or jeopardy could the influential Chinese be relied upon? Their patriotism would be limited to their financial advantage. It is the English upon whom in the hour of peril the defence of the Colony would fall: it is the English who are responsible for its well-being: and these things should be considered in giving aliens equal rights with the governing nationality, although these aliens, while working for themselves, have so much added to its prosperity.<sup>17</sup>

At the fifth annual meeting of the Singapore Rifle Association, held in June 1905, the General's Cup was won by Sergt Tan Soo Bin, who also took the fourth place in the Governor's Cup, with a score of 291 as against the winning score of 307 of Lieut Phillips, SVI. The Manches-

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17 See 'Progress of the Straits Settlements' *Straits Times*, 22 May 1905, at 2.

ter Cup (Handicap) was secured by Pte Song Chin Eng,<sup>18</sup> while Pte Sim Boon Kwang<sup>19</sup> won the first prize in the SVC Handicap event.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> June a meeting of several hundreds of traders was held at the Chinese Hospital in Wayang [375] Street with Dr Lim Boon Keng in the chair. The meeting was in the nature of a protest against the stringency of the Chinese Exclusion Act, and in sympathy with the movement which was started in Shanghai for boycotting American trade. Mr Chan Teow Lam moved a resolution 'That the Chinese traders in Singapore stop all trading in American goods', which was carried unanimously: and the result of the meeting was cabled to the Chinese Government at Peking. Dr Boon Keng laid special stress on the fact that the Chinese were first of all invited to go to the United States as workmen, and it was only after they had been so invited that the Exclusion laws were passed, and so stringently enforced. These

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18 Song Chin Eng was the son of Song Kee Lian and the brother of Song Chin Joo. He had seven step-sisters. He was a good marksman and keen sportsman, serving as Assistant Honorary Secretary of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club (1909) and on the Committee of the Chinese Swimming Club (1910). He married Tan Hup, who died early in 1920 at the age of 37. Song then married Chia Liew Neo, the 6<sup>th</sup> daughter of Chia Peck Siang. In 1908, he began working for the Great Eastern Life Assurance Company, and rose to the position as com-pradore in 1924. In 1934, Song was made bankrupt after being \$12,000 in debt, burdened with 'an ailing wife, while his daughter who was 26 years of age was blind and another daughter, a girl of 25 years was insane' (see '\$12,000 Debt: Offers \$5 A Month' *Singapore Free Press*, 30 Jun 1934, at 3). It is not known when Song died but he was alive in 1960, aged 80 (see, 'Notices' *Straits Times*, 5 Nov 1960, at 15).

19 Little is known of Sim Boon Kwang save that he was a merchant, with his place of business at 977 Upper Serangoon Road (see 'Rubber Estate Case' *Singapore Free Press*, 12 Aug 1915, at 10; and 'A Land Case' *Straits Times* 10 Aug 1915, at 7) and that he was an accomplished photographer and a member of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain (see (35) *The Photographic Journal* at 47) and the Royal Society of Arts (see 'Notices' (1909) 57(2941) *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, at 403). He and his brother, Boon Eng, took the outstanding photographs of the Raffles Museum that were used to illustrate Richard Hanitsch, *Guide to the Zoological Collections of the Raffles Museum, Singapore* (Singapore: Raffles Museum, 1908) (see, 'Raffles Museum' *Straits Times*, 20 Feb 1909, at 7).



A Ward in the Chinese Hospital, Wayang Street



laws do not differentiate between the contract coolie and the man of commerce, the leisured traveller or the student who desires entrance into America in pursuit of his particular avocation.<sup>20</sup> In the course of a few days news came that the Penang Chinese traders had joined the boycott movement. The Singapore Tramways Co had just then commenced to run tramcars between Raffles Hotel and Serangoon, and the Chinese avoided using them under the wrong impression that it was an American concern. In December the boycott movement was still in full swing, so that when the *Acme*, an American full-rigged sailing ship, which had been badly battered on the rocks in the Straits of Sunda, went into dock at Tanjong Pagar to undergo extensive repairs, the Chinese workmen refused to go near the ship, and stated that the leaders of the boycott movement had warned them against having anything to do with repairing the ship.<sup>21</sup> The headmen of the different gangs were sent for, and in the office of Mr JR Nicholson, the General Manager, these headmen and representatives of the workmen were each throwing the blame on the other. In the end, Mr WD Barnes, the Protector of Chinese, had to be appealed to, and after holding an inquiry, he issued an ultimatum to the headmen that if by 1 o'clock in the afternoon they had not got their gangs to work they [376] would be deported to China forthwith. It is stated that these headmen went into town to interview the 'Bad Man' alleged to be at the bottom of the affair, but, although what transpired at the conference with the 'Bad Man' was not disclosed, when the fateful hour struck the workmen were at their respective posts, and one of the biggest jobs which Tanjong Pagar had tackled for a long time past began, and was completed without any further trouble, so far as labour was concerned.

The report of the Cambridge Board of Examiners for 1905 furnished most disappointing reading matter, in respect of the smallness in the number of candidates.

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20 See 'The American Boycott' *Straits Times*, 22 Jun 1905, at 8.

21 See 'Strike at Tanjong Pagar' *Singapore Free Press*, 14 Dec 1905, at 2.

An examination for two Queen's Scholarships, five Government Scholarships and a Cecil C Smith Scholarship was conducted in March last. ... Eight candidates presented themselves: of these, four entered for the Queen's, six for the Government Scholarships and one for the Cecil C Smith Scholarship. Work of good quality was sent up in all the subjects of examination, and we desire especially to commend ER Carlos and F Martens. As the latter, we are informed, is a candidate for the Government Scholarships only, we recommend for election to the Queen's Scholarships (1) ER Carlos and (2) RL Eber.

For the Government Scholarships we recommend (1) F Martens, (2) L Sammy and (3) JR Aeria. We are not prepared to make any further award on the ground of the merit of the candidates. We should, however, acquiesce in the election of Khaw Oo Kek<sup>22</sup> and Kam Chin Poe to the remaining Government Scholarships, and of Lim Kim Seng<sup>23</sup> to the Cecil Smith Scholarship, if it is

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22 See 'Queen's Scholarships' *Straits Times*, 25 May 1907, at 7. Khaw was a student of St Xavier's Institution in Penang. In 1907 he received the Queen's Scholarship to study medicine at University of Edinburgh, graduating with an MBBS in 1913 under the name of Ignatius James Khaw Oo Kek. He then went to Liverpool and Cambridge University where he completed a Diploma in Public Health in 1915. He joined the Indian medical service and served in Europe and the Middle East and India during World War I. After the War, he studied at the Hamburg School of Tropical Medicine before proceeding to Peking as a Lecturer in Parasitology at the then Peiping Union Medical College. During World War II, he served with the Chinese army in Western China, Burma and India, and returned to Peking after the Japanese surrender in 1945. When the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949, Khaw moved the College to Taipei. (See 'He's back in Malaya after break of 51 years' *Straits Times*, 31 Jul 1959, at 5).

23 See 'Queen's Scholarships etc, 1905' *Straits Times*, 5 Jul 1905, at 10. Lim Kim Seng won a senior student prize at Raffles Institution in 1904. In 1914, he was listed, along with Seah Peck Seah and Tan Swi Khi, as a partner in Chin Huat Hin Oil Trading Company (see *Straits Times*, 14 Jul 1914, at 15), and in 1922, as a shareholder of Sze Hai Tong Bank (see 'Sze Hai Tong Bank' *Singapore Free Press*, 28 Mar 1922, at 7). Lim was also a member of the Municipal Commission (see 'Municipal Affairs' *Singapore Free Press*, 17 Jul 1923, at 12). He died on 20 Aug 1967 at his home at 45 Cuppage Road at the age of 83, survived by two wives, four sons (Eng Tiong, Eng Kee, Eng Hock and Eng Kiong), one adopted son, four daughters and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He

thought advisable thus to give them an opportunity of continuing their studies.<sup>24</sup>

This was the last year in which two Queen's Scholarships were awarded. The Government had intimated that only one scholarship would be awarded in 1906, and the discouraging effect of that announcement had [377] already begun to operate among the senior boys in the schools of the Colony.

In September Mr Ching Keng Lee was elected Municipal Commissioner for the Rochore Ward, in place of Mr Choa Giang Thye, [who had] resigned.<sup>25</sup> Mr Ching Keng Lee is a son<sup>26</sup> of Ching Chye Hoon, well known in Malacca as a rice merchant and owner of vessels trading between Malacca, Asahan and Singapore. Born in Malacca in 1859, Mr Keng Lee was educated at the Free School there, and at Raffles Institution, Singapore. He went to Saigon at the age of 17, where he was first employed as a compradore in a rice mill belonging to the Compagnie Francaise de Saigon, and later at the Banque de l'Indo-Chine. Returning to Singapore at the age of 21, he was in the service of the P & O Steam Navigation Co and the Reuter's Telegram Co until 1887, when he acquired an interest in the firm of Hoon Keat & Co. He took an active part in the management of this concern till 1914, when he severed his connection with the firm. As a Municipal Commissioner, he was always accessible to the smallest ratepayers and was therefore very popular with his constituents. He continued on this Board for seven years, being twice elected by the ratepayers and once nominated by the Governor. He was appointed a JP in 1906, and given a seat on the Committee of Management of the Tan Tock Seng Hospital in 1915. In partnership with Messrs Khoo Chong Seng and Yeo Hock Hoe, he started in 1911 the firm of Ching Keng Lee & Co,

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was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery (see 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 21 Aug 1967, at 16).

24 See 'Queen's Scholarships etc, 1905' *Straits Times*, 5 Jul 1905, at 10.

25 Ibid.

26 See 'Mr Ching Keng Lee' *Straits Times*, 3 Sep 1934, at 13.



Ching Keng Lee

Auctioneers, Land Valuers and Estate Agents. He is a man of fine physique and above the height of the average Straits-born, with a shrewd business head, and affable and winsome manners, and continues to take a keen interest in public affairs.

In October the Singapore Rifle Association held the first of a long series of Monthly (Handicap) Shoots, when some fifty members (the majority being from the SVI) competed. The competitors were divided into two classes, and Lance-Corpl Tan Chow Kim won the first prize in Class A, while Pte Tan Piah Eng won the [378] first prize in Class B. Under the rules of the SRA every active volunteer is ipso facto a member, without payment, and fully fifty men of the Chinese Company, from time to time, participated in these monthly competitions.

On the 25th November the Cornwall Minstrels gave a soiree musicale at the old Town Hall to celebrate the first anniversary of their musical society. The room had been tastefully decorated for the occasion and looked very inviting. The young Straits Chinese who composed the Minstrels were in smart fancy costumes, and rendered English comic songs in a very creditable manner, while the orchestra played some pretty selections extremely well. The Hall was filled with an audience largely composed of Straits Chinese, including their womenfolk. Mr Chua Sim Ghi<sup>27</sup> had to respond to a demand for an encore for his rendering of 'A little bit off the top', as also had Mr Chong Poh Kiat, who sang 'My first wife'.<sup>28</sup> This troupe of amateur minstrels was formed in November 1904, the members being young respectable Straits Chinese gentlemen, and their musical instructor also a Straits-born Chinese. Most of the members lived in the neighbourhood of Cornwall Street, hence the name. During 1905 and 1906 the

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27 Chua was a keen tennis player and participated regularly in tournaments organised by the Singapore Chinese Recreation Club. In 1910, he won the mixed doubles title (see 'Straits Chinese Recreation Club' *Straits Times*, 19 Sep 1910, at 7). He passed away on 20 Feb 1953 at the age of 65 at his home at 19 Lim Ah Pin Road, and was survived by his wife, a son (Cheng Whye), a daughter, and four grandchildren and was buried at Bidadari Cemetery (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 21 Feb 1953, at 7).

28 See 'The Town Hall' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 27 Nov 1905, at 2.



The Cornwall Minstrels



The Chinese Philomathic Society (Music Section)

troupe was very much in evidence, appearing as entertainers on numerous occasions at wedding dinners and private residences of members and their friends, and at charitable shows. The Cornwall Minstrels made a very favourable impression at an Amateur Grand Concert at the Seaview Hotel: and they even undertook a trip to Malacca and Kwala Lumpor to entertain Chinese residents in those towns. Messrs Lim Kian Hock,<sup>29</sup> Koh Hoon Teck,<sup>30</sup>

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29 Lim Kian Hock was active in the Cornwall Minstrels and was recorded as having performed at its first anniversary concert at the Town Hall where he 'gave an amusing rendering of the *Mystery of a Handsome Cab* which was loudly applauded' (see 'The Town Hall' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 27 Nov 1905, at 2). He was Chief Salesman of the firm of Caldbeck Macgregor & Co Ltd. He died at his residence - 113 Onan Road, Singapore - on 12 Apr 1933 - aged 54 and was survived by his wife, and two daughters and was buried in Bukit Brown Chinese Cemetery (see 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 13 Apr 1933, at 10).

30 Koh Hoon Teck was the only son of Koh Lian Ghee and Wan Chin Neo, and grandson of Chia Kiow Neo; he had two sisters, Sun Hay and Keng Hay (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 18 Jan 1910, at 6; and Rojak Librarian, 'Searching for the descendant of Wan Chin Newo (Bukit Brown), available at: <<http://my-mindisrojak.blogspot.sg/2013/12/searching-for-descendant-of-wan-chin.html>> (accessed 3 Mar 2015)). He was Secretary of the Cornwall Minstrels who performed at his residence at 105 Chin Swee Road in 1906 (see *Straits Times*, 30 Jan 1906, at 4). A progressive Straits Chinese, he cut his queue in October 1908 and discarded his traditional Chinese attire in favour of full Western dress at the same time. A contemporary report of the occasion reads: 'With the queue Mr Koh also discarded the Chinese costume, for after returning a little while he reappeared in full European costume and received the congratulations of his friends. ... It appears that young Babadom has taken very kindly to the idea of discarding the appendage of servitude, but are withheld by compliance with the wishes of the conservative seniors of their respective families' (see 'Discards Queue' *Singapore Free Press*, 15 Oct 1908, at 5). In 1905, Koh started Koh & Co at 90 Bras Basah Road (Raffles Hotel Buildings) dealing in philately, overseas newspapers, perfumery and commission agents (see Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 731). He also began publishing Baba-language books like *Cherita Abu Nawas* ('Tale of Abu Nawas'), *Cherita Abu Nawas Dan Cherta Rampay Rampay* ('Tale of Abu Nawas and Miscellaneous Tales'), and three volumes of *Pantun Dondang Sayang*. He was also one of the founders of the Gunong Sayang Association (Persatuan Gunong Say-

Ngo Yam Bee<sup>31</sup> and Tan Tiang Seng<sup>32</sup> were the mainstay of this troupe during the all-too-brief period of its existence. The Cornwall Minstrels were the recipients of a number of silver trophies, which are in the custody of Mr Kwek Beng Chiew,<sup>33</sup> the last President.<sup>34</sup> In 1906 the *Straits Chinese Magazine* reported the establishment of a similar organisation, under the name [379] of the Straits Chinese Amateur Musical Society, with a club house in Wallich Street, very handsomely furnished and having a strong membership, and, at a time before the Philharmonic Society gave Chinese children the privilege of attending the Children's Concerts which had already become such a popular event in the life of

ang) (see 'William Gwee Thian Hock, 'Remembering Baba Koh Hoon Teck' (2007) Jul-Sep *The Peranakan* 19–20). In November 1914, Koh purchased Rahim Brothers, a printing press at 563 North Bridge Road and subsumed it under his Koh & Co (see 'Notice' *Singapore Free Press*, 27 Nov 1914, at 2). Koh was not very successful in his various business ventures and was forced to move out of his Raffles Hotel premises when he was three months in arrears of rent. Koh died on 14 Feb 1956 at the age of 75 at his home at 138 Carpmael Road on 14 Feb 1956 and was buried at Bukit Brown. His wife, Lim Guan Neo had died in 1933 and three of his sons were killed during the Japanese Occupation. He was survived by three other sons, Kong Swee, Kong Leong, and Max, and four daughters (see Rojak Librarian, 'Koh Hoon Teck and family (Bukit Brown)', available at: <<http://mymindisrojak.blogspot.sg/2013/02/koh-hoon-teck-and-family-bukit-brown.html>> (accessed 3 Mar 2015)).

- 31 Little is known of Ngo Yam Bee save that he died at the age of 49 on 7 May 1926 at his residence at 70 Emerald Hill Road, and was survived by his wife, two sons (Seng Kiat and Bin Keng), four daughters, and two grandchildren. He was buried at Bukit Brown Chinese Cemetery ('Deaths' *Straits Times*, 10 May 1926, at 7).
- 32 Tan Tiang Seng was a Clerk in the Police Office (see *Blue Book for the Year 1918*, at K209). He died on 21 Nov 1952 at his residence at 2 Everitt Road at the age of 71 and was survived by his wife, three sons (Hock Why, Chwee Hock and Hock Hye), five daughters and ten grandchildren (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 24 Nov 1952, at 6).
- 33 Also spelt Kuek Beng Chiew, see *Straits Times*, 6 Dec 1911, at 6; or Kuek Beng Chew, see 'The Cornwall Minstrels' *Straits Times*, 11 Oct 1909, at 6. Little else is known of Kwek save that he was a Hokkien businessman (see *南洋名人集传* vol 2, at 63).
- 34 See, *Straits Times*, 2 Oct 1905, at 4; and 'The Cornwall Minstrels' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 7 Feb 1906, at 3.



the European and Eurasian boys and girls, that journal made a strong appeal to the Chinese community to encourage the movement for the training and development of the minds of our young people in Western music. But alas! both the organisations above referred to, like the musical section of the Chinese Philomathic Society, were short-lived. It is a regrettable fact that, although men like Mr Choa Giang Teo and Mr Chia Keng Tye have since been instrumental in keeping together a small number of their personal friends who practise orchestral pieces for their own enjoyment and who occasionally assist at Straits Chinese concerts and variety entertainments, no serious attempt has yet been made to gather together and unite the young men with musical gifts into one strong organisation, which will give it a chance of permanency.

That the Chinese were as keen as any other section of the community in looking after the purse of the Colony was exemplified by the strong expression of opinion of their leaders against the action of the Crown Agents in offering tenders for the Harbour Improvement Works only to contractors on the Admiralty list and in prohibiting any sub-contracts to local firms.

Anent the Crown Agents' connection with the railway, Dr Lim Boon Keng, in October 1901, had remarked in the Legislative Council that 'it is scarcely credible that any responsible Government, with an Executive Council such as ours, should have practically sold its right to direct its employees', and the Governor, Sir Frank Swettenham, had said:

In those papers I myself have read that the Government of this Colony made certain proposals as to the [380] system on which the railway was to be constructed, and those proposals were overruled. Therefore, it seems to me that on both questions we are what has been repeatedly called 'flogging a dead horse', and all that you can do is to protect yourself against a similar system on a future occasion, if it is open to you to do so.<sup>35</sup>

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35 Straits Settlements Legislative Council Proceedings, 8 Oct 1901, CO 275/63, at B108.

This future occasion was furnished by the Harbour Improvement scheme. The Chinese view was based on the Colony's experience in the construction of the Singapore and Kranji Railway, through the Crown Agents, which had cost two million dollars against an estimate of half a million dollars.

The Harbour scheme is put down at fifty million dollars. Increase this by 300 per cent, or even 200 per cent, and the Colony will have to find two hundred or one hundred and fifty millions of dollars. These alarming figures justify the agitation that the time has come when Crown Agents may – nay, must – be dispensed with.<sup>36</sup>

Two attempts were made during this year to set fire to the Tanjong Pagar (Hokien) Church.<sup>37</sup> The latter attempt took place in November, when the incendiary was caught red-handed by the watchman of the premises. On being taken to the police station, the offender pretended to be mad, and said that a *hantu* (ghost) had told him to burn the church.<sup>38</sup>

In this year (1905), the Chinese Swimming Club was founded with the object of promoting interest among the Singapore Chinese in the useful art of swimming, life-saving and physical culture generally. It was in 1910, through the kind offices of the late Mr Tan Jiak Kim, exempted from registration under the Societies Ordinance – a privilege now granted to selected clubs only. From a mere handful of young men who loved swimming and styled themselves the 'Tanjong Katong Swimming Party', the Club has now a membership roll of 375 active members, and 18 visiting and absent members.

[381] It is now in a flourishing condition, and is patronised not only by Straits Chinese, but also by Chinese merchants of all clans, who frequent the Club at the week-end and on holidays, either to take

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36 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

37 See 'Chinese Plot in Singapore: Attempt to Burn a Christian Church' *Eastern Daily Mail & Straits Morning Advertiser*, 11 Sep 1905, at 3.

38 See 'Chinese Presbyterian Church: Attempt to Burn the Building' *Straits Times*, 10 Nov 1905, at 5.

part in the activities provided, or to enjoy quiet rest in the Club's lounges. One attractive feature of membership in this Club is the privilege granted to members of bringing their family to the Club premises. That this concession is popular is testified by the number of ladies and children who visit the Club on week-days. The club is now housed in Bungalow 'C', Tanjong Katong.

On the 17th January 1906 the Bill for the Registration of Partnerships was read a second time in the Legislative Council and referred to a Select Committee to consider and report upon the provisions thereof. The Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, one of the minority party who voted against the second reading, said the Chinese were unanimously against the Bill in its then form. If it became law, it would seriously dislocate the general business of the Colony. It would affect not only the large traders who had dealings with the European firms, but also the smallest *kedehs* (shops), and there would be serious inconvenience in securing thorough registration, year by year.

Mr Seah Liang Seah, as 'one in close touch with a large section of the business men of the Chinese community', took part in the discussion in the newspapers, and, while agreeing with the general principle, thought that registration of existing firms would be a dangerous experiment, but he would approve of voluntary registration of such firms, and compulsory registration of all firms coming into existence after the passing of the Ordinance. He believed that registration was not feared by honest merchants, and in particular by those who invested large sums of money with local traders.

In 1888, when a similar measure was introduced into the Legislative Council, the then Attorney-General, Mr Bonser, stated that the Bill was only brought forward 'in consequence of the wishes of the mercantile com-[382]munity' (voiced through the Singapore Chamber of Commerce), 'and not from any decided conviction on the part of Government as to the utility of the measure'. He doubted whether it was within the province of the Legislature to deal with a subject of that kind and to do for the mercantile community

what it could do as well, if not better, for itself. The Governor, Sir Cecil Smith, remarked that –

it is not only necessary that the Chamber of Commerce should have an opportunity of representing their views in Council, but that the Chinese, a very large and important trading community in these Settlements, should be in the same position and be as fully acquainted with the scope and provisions of the Bill, and I have ordered it to be translated into Chinese that they may know what it is the Bill will require them to do.<sup>39</sup>

In 1906 the majority of the Chamber of Commerce was opposed to the Bill. Mr JM Allinson, a former Member of Council, writing from Manchester condemning the measure, drew attention to the fact that –

the traders who trade with Europeans are few in number as compared with the general native trading community. ... The European merchant does nothing to introduce the imports of produce, nor does he have any share in the distribution of the imports of manufactured goods. The work of collecting produce and the distribution of manufactured goods falls on a numerous and illiterate class of traders.

Compulsory registration would necessarily sweep into 'the net' all sorts and conditions of traders, which would include thousands of small traders (more or less illiterate) who have no dealings with Europeans. This class would be harried and harassed by the officials of the department with absolutely no advantage to the general trade of Singapore. It is these small traders that are in touch with the thousand-and-one places from which the trade filters in, and it is this class who distribute much that is imported and re-exported as [383] Straits produce. It would be folly to interfere with these dealers.<sup>40</sup>

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39 'Registration of Firms: Bill Read Second Time' *Straits Times*, 13 Jan 1906, at 4.

40 'Partnership Registration' *Straits Times*, 16 Jan 1906, at 8.

After pointing out that the bulk of the trade was in the hands of the Chinese, Mr Allinson continued:

These traders have until very recently managed to finance their trade without assistance of banks – Chinese or European – and it may be added that ten years ago there were not fifty traders who had bank accounts. The position in this respect is very much changed. It is said that the movement in Penang (in favour of registration) was chiefly instigated by the banks. It may be said (with all due deference) that the banks are not intimately in touch with the Chinese traders themselves, or with their methods of doing business. It can be easily understood that bankers should welcome the introduction of a 'system' that they imagine would give them a better insight into the partnership arrangements of their constituents, but they are not sufficiently informed as to the trade to be good judges as to whether the disadvantages would not more than counterbalance the advantages, especially when the partnership arrangements can be made clear without the assistance of the law.

It has been shown, in the preceding paragraph, that the traders have not, until very recently, had the advantages of banking facilities. Notwithstanding this serious handicap, the Chinese trading community have been notoriously successful, and their success must be considered as attributable to the fact that as a body they have been trusted by the European firms. It is obvious that the Chinese would not have been trusted but for the fact that as a race they have proved themselves trustworthy.<sup>41</sup>

On the 30th November 1906 the report of the Select Committee on this Bill was laid on the table of the Legislative Council. In a rider, the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim stated that he could not agree with some of the proposals of the Committee. The Chinese did not want registration themselves, and the supporters of it were [384] limited to a few European firms doing business with a small section of the Chinese. He did not see how the remedy would prevent the fraud supposed to be so rife. Many of the Chinese carrying on trade here were ignorant of

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41 Ibid.

English, and no amount of proclamation or gazettes would prevail on them to register.

On the 12th December a special general meeting of the Chamber of Commerce by 17 to 4 carried a resolution to the effect that the provisions of the Draft Bill for Registration of Partnerships would be detrimental to the trade of the Colony, as being inconsistent with the freedom of the port, whereby all persons, irrespective of race and nationality, could come and trade here without let or hindrance.

The first inter-association debate was held in the auditorium of the Presbyterian Church on the 18th January 1906, when the Young Men's Society of the Presbyterian Church and the Chinese Christian Association, under the chairmanship of the Rev W Murray, jointly engaged in the discussion of the motion: 'That the Gambling Farms be abolished'. The Rev SS Walker moved the resolution, while the Rev JAB Cook, and Messrs Song Ong Siang and Kiong Chin Eng (representing the Chinese Christian Association) opposed it. The voting was 11 to 2 in favour of the motion.

In January 1906 the adventures of Tan Phek Giok, the head priest of the Telok Ayer Chinese Temple, were related in the police court at the trial of five Chinese on charges of extortion and armed gang-robbery. It appeared that, on the 11th November 1905, a woman went to the temple to worship. When she was leaving she was molested. Tan Phek Giok interfered, and this was given out as the cause of the subsequent troubles. A week later he was called from the temple at night to a house in Japan Street, where he found six persons in an upstairs room. He was told that he was not wanted for any religious ceremony, but to make out and sign a bond for \$1,000 in favour of these six per-[385]sons. A knife was produced, and the trap-door over the staircase was closed down. Under the threat of losing his life, he wrote out at their dictation a document to the effect that he had disgraced himself as a priest and promised to pay them \$1,000 as hush money, in addition to a payment of \$10 each that night for immediate refreshments and \$100 three days later. The promise not having been redeemed, five days later these same men went into the priest's room at the temple,

and by the use of violence tried to search his boxes for money. Tan Phek Giok (陈碧玉) got under a table and called out for help, and five of the intruders were arrested. One of the accused posed as an orthodox pious Buddhist, who had been shocked at the disgraceful behaviour of the priest with the female worshipper. He said that he had moved in the matter purely from religious and conscientious motives, but he confessed that his conscience had been sufficiently elastic to permit him to accept of hush money. All the accused were convicted of extortion and sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

The visit, on the 3rd February, of His Royal Highness Prince Arthur of Connaught, KG, to Singapore en route to Japan on his mission to bestow the Order of Merit on Marshal Oyama, Admiral Togo and Marquis Yamagata, furnished the Chinese community here with another opportunity of showing their appreciation of the benefits of British rule by getting up a monster torchlight procession for the entertainment of the Royal visitor. At the head of the procession were a number of superb lanterns bearing coloured representations of the British Cabinet Ministers. Every other man carried a torch, and with the silken banners, huge writhing dragons and gaily-dressed children carried in cars and on platforms, the effect was both weird and wonderful. The Hylams in particular carried twenty-four State umbrellas of a pattern similar to those presented to deserving officials on retirement. The other four sections of the Chinese community displayed illuminated dragons of great length and lanterns [386] representing all manner of fish, fruit and animals – not omitting the legendary unicorn and phoenix. The procession took more than an hour to pass Government House, being headed by the Town and Volunteer Band and the Straits Chinese British Association, which had received permission to offer to His Royal Highness an address of welcome. The Association was followed by fifteen Straits-born Chinese clubs, the monotony of the march being enlivened with music supplied by the Cornwall Minstrels and the Moonlight and Starlight Minstrels.

On the arrival of the head of the procession at the porch of Government House, Dr Lim Boon Keng, on behalf of the Straits Chinese

British Association, presented an address to His Royal Highness in a silver casket. The Address was as follows:

THE HUMBLE ADDRESS OF THE STRAITS CHINESE BRITISH ASSOCIATION,  
SINGAPORE, SS, PRESENTED TO HRH PRINCE ARTHUR FREDERICK PATRICK  
ALBERT OF CONNAUGHT, KG, GCVO

May it please your Royal Highness,

We, the humble subjects of His Most Gracious Majesty the King-Emperor, desire most respectfully to wish your Royal Highness a most cordial welcome to this part of His Majesty's realm.

As the representatives of the British subjects of Chinese descent in British Malaya, we beseech your Royal Highness to graciously accept this brief expression of our gratification in the selection of your Royal Highness to be the means of further cementing the friendship between Our Empire and that of his Majesty the Emperor of Japan, inasmuch as this gives us the opportunity to express once again to one so closely related to His Majesty, the King, our loyal devotion to the British Throne and our deep sense of gratitude for the liberties and privileges which we enjoy under the aegis of the British Flag.

Moreover, we humbly hope that what His Majesty has accomplished for Europe as a Peacemaker, he may [387] also do for the Far East, where British interests have so long predominated.

We pray that Your Royal Highness will be pleased to convey our humble expression of loyalty to His Majesty the King-Emperor.

In conclusion, we most respectfully wish your Royal Highness a most pleasant voyage.

And we, as in duty bound, will ever pray

(Sd) LIM BOON KENG, MB, CM (EDIN)

*President*

(Sd) SONG ONG SIANG, MA, LL.M (CANTAB)

*Hon Secretary*<sup>42</sup>

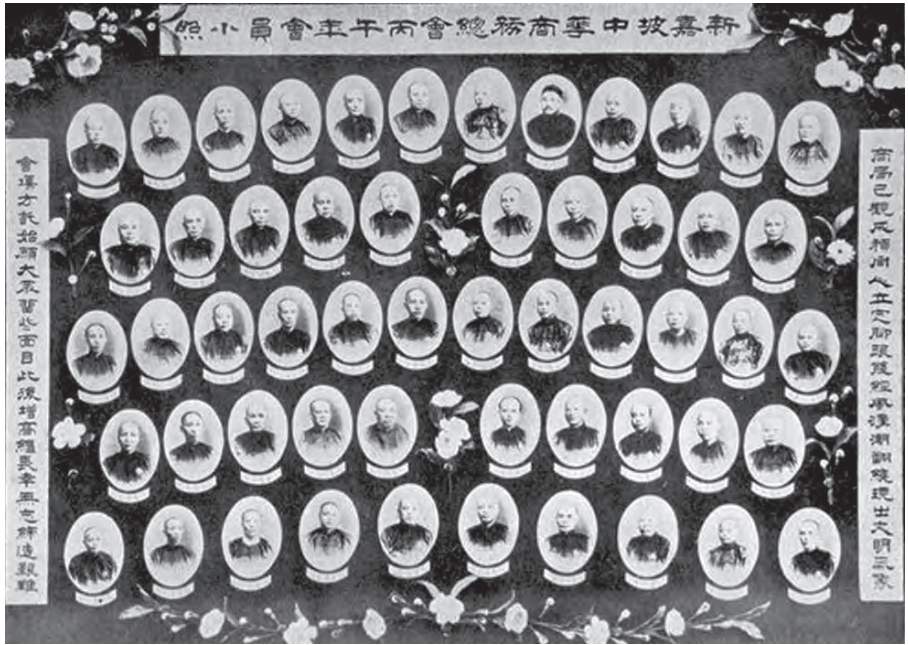
42 See 'Address of the Straits-Born Chinese' *Straits Times* 18 Feb 1907, at 7. In the text, Song took the liberty of substituting the 'sign-off' which reads: '(Signed on behalf of the Straits-born Chinese community)' with his own name and that of Dr Lim Boon Keng.



On the 6th April 1906 the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce was exempted from registration under the Societies Ordinance. The need for such an institution had been felt in the early 'Nineties. Through the energy of Mr Seah Liang Seah, a good deal of preliminary work was done, but, unfortunately, the proposal fell through on account of acute differences of opinion between different sections of the Chinese merchants and traders. The most influential men of the time, such as the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, Tan Yong Siak and Tan Keong Saik, were interested in the scheme.

It was not, however, till 1905 that Mr Thio Tiauww Siat (better known as HE Chang Chin Hsun), the Penang and Deli millionaire, induced Mr Goh Siew Tin to follow the lead given three years before by the Penang Chinese, and establish a Chamber of Commerce for the benefit of Chinese merchants in Singapore. Mr Goh Siew Tin was fortunate in securing the help of Mr Lim Kwee Eng. Through the energy and ability of the latter, ably assisted by Messrs Ong Hwe Ghee and Chan Teow Lam, a good prospectus was drawn up and the merchants were invited to discuss a set of rules and regulations. Mr Thio Tiauww Siat donated \$3,000 as a start to the endowment fund, and the scheme proposed was immediately adopted, and the Chamber successfully launched. Nearly all Chinese trading houses have given it their support. Through the generosity of the members a [388] large fund was collected. Portraits of all benefactors are hung on the walls of the main room upstairs. Mr Lim Kwee Eng laboured for years to make the financial condition so sound that the Chamber would be independent of current subscriptions. It was soon able to purchase the building in Hill Street with a capacious compound, which had formerly been the residence of the late Wee Ah Hood. Before moving into its present premises, the Chamber transacted business in a room lent by the Tung Chai Hospital.

Originally the organisation was managed by a President, Vice-President, ten councillors (*Hiap-li*) and forty members of committee. The rules provided that the President and Vice-President should be a Hokien and Cantonese, alternately, with an annual election. Of the



Members of the Committee,  
The Chinese Chamber of Commerce, 1906  
Singapore, Straits Settlements

councillors, four were to be Hokiens and six to be men of Kwangtung. Further, out of the forty members of committee, sixteen must be Hokiens and twenty-four Cantonese (including Hakkas, Teochews, Hailams and others, besides the Cantonese properly so called). The Secretary was elected from among the members of committee. The first Secretary was Mr Chan Teow Lam, who served three years. He was succeeded by Mr Lim Kwee Eng, who laboured during ten years, and who by his powerful personality has made the Chamber a real success. With a profound knowledge of the character of the merchants, and ever practical and economical, he was par excellence a safe man. Dr Lim Boon Keng states that from his personal knowledge Mr Lim Kwee Eng saved the institution from making many mistakes, and to Mr Lim Kwee Eng must be given the credit of keeping the institution together until its merits became universally admitted. In this he was backed by successive Presidents. Of the Presidents, the first was Mr Goh Siew Tin, a very fine Chinese scholar and a perfect gentleman of the old school. When he died the Chamber lost a very useful leader. Mr Liau Chia Heng was also a president for some years. He was always anxious to promote the interests of the Chamber. [389]

In 1908, owing to the extent of the funds belonging to the Chamber, a Financial Board was established and incorporated. This Board was composed of thirteen members elected by the committee of the Chamber out of their own number. In 1915 there was an amendment of the constitution. Instead of a yearly election, the committee was to remain in office for two years. The councillors were abolished, and in their place were substituted six Extraordinary members, i.e. Honorary members, and the number of members of committee was reduced to thirty.

Nearly all well-known Chinese of Singapore have been members. The most prominent men who have helped to make the institution a success may be mentioned – Tan Jiak Kim, CMG, Loke Yew, CMG, Lim Peng Siang, Wong Ah Fook, Tan Yong Siak, Chua Chu Yong, Dr Lim Boon Keng, Lim Loh, Lim Chwee Chian, Liau Chia Heng, Tan Jiak Ngoh, Tan Sian Cheng and Teo Sian Keng.

The Chamber has successfully acted as arbitrator in trade disputes. It has discharged its duty as a powerful and disinterested intermediary between non-Chinese and Chinese merchants. It has been the means of bringing the views and wishes of the Chinese to the Government. It has assisted the Government in times of emergency to make the Chinese public acquainted with the intentions of Government, and in every charitable endeavour it has taken a very prominent part.

When the Hokien-Teochew riot broke out in 1906, Capt AH Young, the then Colonial Secretary, went to the Chinese Chamber of Commerce to ask the committee for assistance. On the outbreak of disturbances due to the anti-Japanese demonstrations, the Chamber strenuously strove to keep down the ardour of excited Chinese patriots, and was thanked by the leaders of the Japanese community. Plague threatened to become epidemic in 1915. Mr FS James, the Colonial Secretary, appealed to the Chamber, which immediately commenced a propaganda of explanations as to the cause of plague, and the epidemic was stemmed.

[390] It is just as well at this point to make allusion to the opinion of certain Europeans that the Chinese Chamber of Commerce is a Chinese Government bureau. We believe that the fact of it being registered also in Peking is the main reason for this assumption. As a matter of fact, the Chamber is a purely local and commercial body, devoted solely to the promotion of the interests of its members, and to the advancement of commerce. It has no political connection whatever. Owing to the necessity of affording its members every protection while resident in China, it has sought recognition by the Chinese Government and that is all its connection with China's Government. This is well known to all Chinese, especially to the Chinese Consul-General, who has found that the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce has always maintained its absolute independence as a local Chamber established purely in the interests of industry and commerce.

'The King's Chinese' forms the heading of an interesting and informative article in the London *Daily Mail* from the pen of Mr GE

Raine, a former member of the legal firm of Messrs Allen & Gledhill, well known in his day as a brilliant and lucid speaker as well as a fearless writer on subjects of local interest and importance. He first sketches, in a humorous vein, the career of an immigrant Chinese from the *sinkeh* stage, when his only assets are physical strength and brain, to the *towkay* stage, when, as a prosperous merchant, he has a compound villa in Tanglin with huge lions at his gateposts – frequents his Club and drinks much brandy, practically neat, and gambles to his heart's content – takes to gold spectacles and invests in tin and develops a soul for gramophone music: withal, as a rule, keeping an eye on the main thing, the making of money. He then passes on to describe such a towkay's son playing the dude for a while and later on getting into the toils of the *chetty* money-lenders. But –

... the majority of the Chinese in the Straits are very [391] different from the dude I have just described. There are very many good and sound Chinamen and I would as soon accept their word as that of any Britisher I know. They attain to positions of trust and dignity. They may become members of the Chinese Advisory Board, of the Municipal Commission, and the Straits Legislative Assembly. Many of them are the soul of enterprise and thrift and public spirit. The tin mines of the Federated Malay States are largely Chinese-owned, and mines which white men have abandoned are being successfully worked by Chinamen to-day. It is believed that the Straits will be the world's greatest rubber-producing country. It was a Chinaman who was one of the first to launch out into this great industry, and he did so on a scale that did credit at once to his courage and foresight.

The Chinese are passionately loyal to the King and country of their adoption. They obey the laws which they have a voice in making: they have a corps in the Volunteers, and a very smart corps too: they subscribe most generously to every public movement.

The Chinese in the Straits are essential to us, and we are indispensable to them. In the mines, the plantations and the towns, white labour would be impossible. Climate and expense are two grounds for this proposition. Chinese, therefore, provide the labour and produce for us the lion's share of our revenue. We give

them in turn, and for the first time in their history, honest rule and justice before the law. And they vastly appreciate us. Englishmen alone do they call white men (Orang Puteh): our German friends are merely Orang German, and the Dutch are Orang Blanda. The Chinese are assimilating our institutions, too: and some of them are even shearing off their pigtaails. The only tragic features of affairs in the Straits are the destructive invasion of privileged German traders and the ever-growing loss of coast-trading craft to the British flag.<sup>43</sup>

The preliminary inquiry into the 'alleged Chinese bigamy case', in which Chia Yew Siang, a well-known trader,<sup>44</sup> was charged at the instance of his first wife with having contracted a second marriage during her lifetime, [392] occupied the attention of Mr Seth, police magistrate, for four months.<sup>45</sup> For the defence, the alleged second wife and her mother deposed that, although the girl<sup>46</sup> had been decked out in bridal attire, they both knew that she would have to take the place of an 'inferior' wife, mistress or concubine. The case was sent up to

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43 'The King's Chinese' *Singapore Free Press*, 8 May 1906, at 7.

44 At the time of his death, Chia Yew Siang was the Managing Proprietor of Chop Hong Hoe, a rice trading firm (see 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 12 May 1930, at 4). He had also been one of the first directors of the Chinese Commercial Bank when it was established in 1912 (see 'Proposed Hokien Bank for Singapore' *Weekly Sun*, 24 Aug 1912, at 6) and a Committee Member of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce (see 'Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce' *Singapore Free Press*, 5 Mar 1921, at 14). Chia passed away at his home at 416 Pasir Panjang Road on 8 May 1930 aged 64. He was survived by seven sons (Chee Sian, Chee Tiong, Chee Sin, Chee Hong, Chwee Leong, Boon Leong, and Boo Leong), seven daughters and eight grandchildren. He was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery. His son, Chia Boon Leong (b 1925) was the legendary footballer who played for Malaya and China, known as 'Twinkletoes'. Yew Siang Road, off Pasir Panjang, near his family home, was named after him. See Victor R Savage & Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 406.

45 See 'Alleged Chinese Bigamy' *Straits Times*, 24 Jan 1906, at 8.

46 This young lady was named Swee Ann Niah, see *ibid*.

the May Assizes, but Mr Innes, acting Attorney-General, entered a *nolle prosequi*, and Chia Yew Siang was discharged.

Nine years later (1915) Lim Kim Hai brought a charge of bigamy against her husband, Chew Chiat Thye. The marriage had taken place some twenty years before at Rhio, according to strict Chinese custom; but, owing to differences, the parties had lived apart for ten years, and by an order of the Supreme Court the three elder children had gone to the husband and the three younger to the wife. The allegation made was that early in 1915 Chew Chiat Thye had gone through the first-wife marriage ceremonies with another Chinese woman. The case was tried at the Assizes, before Woodward J, and the Chinese Consul-General, Mr Hoo Wei Yen, gave evidence for the prosecution.<sup>47</sup> The special jury empanelled returned a unanimous verdict of 'Not Guilty'. This was the last occasion on which a Chinese was tried in our Courts on the charge of bigamy. That is not to say that the Chinese people have ceased to enter into second-marriage relations, but it means that our Courts have, notwithstanding expert evidence as to what is the law on the subject in China, held that the Chinese are a polygamous race.

In 1901 the Hon Mr Napier had asked in Council if the Government would introduce legislation to place the law of Chinese marriage and succession to property on a satisfactory basis. He drew attention to the fact that while letters of administration were granted by the Supreme Court to several widows of the deceased Chinese, a case had occurred in that same year in which a Straits-born Chinese had been convicted at the Malacca Assizes on a charge of bigamy. Government replied that the question was one of considerable importance and [393] delicacy, and it was giving the question of legislation on the subject serious consideration.

In July 1903 this subject had again been discussed in a paper read before the Chinese Christian Association on 'Chinese Second Marriages',<sup>48</sup> by Mr Song Ong Siang. He pointed out that -

47 See 'The "Lucky Day" Man' *Singapore Free Press*, 3 Jun 1915, at 10.

48 [Song: *Straits Chinese Magazine*, vol vii, p 73].

... the result of the different decisions of our local Courts on this subject has been to render the position of a number of Chinese women in this Colony anomalous. The Courts continue to grant joint administration of an intestate's estate to his Chinese and Singapore widows on the ground that their rights are the same, and divide the widow's share equally between them. On the other hand, the Courts have held that a Chinese can be convicted of bigamy here if his second marriage is void by reason of its taking place in the lifetime of the first wife: in other words, a Chinese cannot in his lifetime have two wives who enjoy equal rights and can share equally his rank and honours. Does it not appear anomalous that our local Courts should recognize the status of the second wife only after her husband is dead?

Some sort of legislation ought soon to be introduced to determine the proper status of Chinese married women in this Colony.<sup>49</sup>

The character of Chinese marriage appears from a study of the Penal Laws of China, as well as from books and commentaries on Chinese Family Law, to be an intermediate stage between the polygamous and the monogamous: it is a kind of monogamy, existing side by side with permitted polygamy – that is, one wife and several concubines. As such, then, the Chinese first marriage is not as sacred a union as a Christian marriage, which is defined by Lord Penzance in *Hyde v Hyde & Woodmansee*<sup>50</sup> to be a 'voluntary union for life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others'.

The famous 'Six Widows' Case',<sup>51</sup> which lasted from [394] October 1905 to June 1909, propounds the judge-made law which for the time being governs all cases relating to Chinese marriages, succession and legitimacy. Choo Eng Choon was a Straits-born Chinese, who, after having made his fortune in Saigon, returned to Singapore, where he died intestate. During his lifetime, at various dates, he had con-

49 Song Ong Siang, 'Chinese Second Marriages' (1903) 7 *Straits Chinese Magazine* 73.

50 [1866] LR 1 P&D 130.

51 [Song: *Straits Settlements Law Reports*, vol XII, p 120]. See *Re Choo Eng Choon (Deceased)* [1908] 12 *Straits Settlements Law Reports* 120.



tracted unions with both 'first wives' and 'secondary wives', and had had issue by them. One of his 'secondary wives' was married to him after the birth of a son. The case was taken up to the Court of Appeal, which held, by a majority, that the Chinese are polygamous; that, following the well-established practice of the Courts of the Colony in similar cases, these Courts will recognise polygamous unions for purposes of succession and legitimacy among native inhabitants whose religion permits polygamy; that the widows, whether 'principal' or 'inferior', are entitled to divide equally amongst them the one-third share which the Statute of Distributions gives to the 'widow,' and that a child legitimised *per subsequens matrimonium* according to Chinese law is legitimate and entitled to share in the two-thirds share which the Statute of Distributions gives to the 'children'. On motions to vary the Registrar's certificate, Law, Acting CJ, held that the presumption of marriage which is to be drawn from cohabitation will arise even in the case of polygamous unions: and that claims to maintenance founded on Chinese law or customs cannot be regarded by the Court, which is bound to act in conformity with the Statute of Distributions in the case of an intestacy.

Sercombe Smith, J, who dissented from the judgment of the majority of the Court of Appeal, held that the unions contracted by Chinese British-born subjects domiciled within the Straits Settlements are governed by the English Common Law, and a marriage to be valid at Common Law must be celebrated in the presence of a clergyman in holy orders; and that, unless a Chinese British-born subject so domiciled is married [395] according to the Common Law, his marriage is invalid and the issue illegitimate. He held further that the Chinese are polygamous; that the Courts here cannot recognise polygamy; and that polygamous unions are therefore invalid and the issue illegitimate.

But, as Law, Acting CJ, said:

... if we do not recognise Chinese marriages as polygamous, the result, I think, will be that in the eye of the law, here, the women merely declared concubines will have no legal rights at all to maintenance or any provision, that they may be turned adrift to starve,

and that their children may be regarded by the law as bastards. There are, I think, probably a good many persons in the Colony at the present time whom a decision that Chinese marriages cannot be recognised as polygamous will render liable to be affected in the way I have indicated. ... If in this Colony we are going to say that we will not recognise Chinese marriages as polygamous, I think we shall as the result, contrary to what is done in the neighbouring French Colony (of Cochin China), refuse to recognise what are really Chinese customs and usages of polygamy, recognised in China, and inflict on the Chinese community hardships from which, I think, they appear to be free in the French Colony and in China, hardships which, I think, in view of the several passages of the Letters Patent (of 1855) to which I have referred, if on no other grounds, it certainly was never contemplated that they would have to undergo. ... For all the reasons I have given, I think, as I have said, that I must hold that Chinese marriages are polygamous and that this Court will recognise polygamous Chinese marriages.<sup>52</sup>

On the 8<sup>th</sup> June 1906 the Chinese Advisory Board, after conferring with Mr Barnes, the Secretary for Chinese Affairs, issued in Chinese and English the following notice, which was posted all over the town, in reference to the boycott of Sikh employees<sup>53</sup> by Chinese residents in Singapore:

Recently, a Sikh constable was prosecuted for at-[396]tempting to outrage a Chinese woman on St John's Island and was convicted and sentenced to four months' rigorous imprisonment by the police magistrate. The constable, being dissatisfied, appealed to the Supreme Court, and the conviction was quashed by the judge. On this account certain Chinese showed great displeasure and advised people to dismiss all Sikhs in their employ. This is making a mountain out of an ant hill, of which the Board do not approve, and, moreover, to advise the Chinese to do this is really injuring the good name of the Chinese. Why? To put the blame upon the people of a country for the crime of one person, even though that

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52 [Song: *SSLR*, vol xii, p 162]. Ibid, at 162.

53 See *Straits Times*, 6 Jun 1906, at 4.

person be a person of good fame and position, is still undesirable. How much more so, when that person is a member of the lower class of society. The Board has another argument. The number of Chinese dwelling and trading in India is not small. If one or two of them were to commit an offence, and if the whole of the Indians were to put the blame on all the Chinese, let us then ask ourselves, could we submit to such a treatment? Singapore is a British dependency, and not a Chinese possession. Many of the Chinese in this part of the world are foreigners, but the Sikhs are British subjects. Is it right or wise for foreigners to do an injustice to British subjects and expect the Government here to remain passive? We, the Chinese, living under British protection, have all along been enjoying wealth and peace, and if we all of a sudden were to rise in opposition to the Government, we would be ashamed of ourselves. As to the rumour spread by ignorant persons, to the effect that the said constable was allowed by the order of the Governor to be at large, and out of the clutches of the law, it is absolutely false and groundless. The members of the Board are all acquainted with British laws. In British countries, either a judge or a magistrate tries a case according to its facts and circumstances, and a decision is given after duly weighing the strength of evidence. After a case has been entered, the Governor has no power then to interfere in ordering the release of the prisoner. ... Notice is therefore given to the wise and sensible who will wisely go back to the old custom.

[397] All should ponder over this! As to the arrangements at St John's Island, the Board will make application to the Government to cause such improvements as may meet the desire of the Chinese people. Urgent!<sup>54</sup>

The rumour alluded to was really a circular which had been widely distributed, urging every Chinese who employed a Sikh to get rid of him as soon as possible. It appeared immediately after the acquittal of the constable on appeal, and was alleged to have been the work of a Chinese who had come from Australia, and had left Singapore in a hurry. The Sikhs then had no Advisory Board, and between 300 and

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54 See 'Sikh Boycott: Notice by Chinese Advisory Board' *Straits Times*, 12 Jun 1906, at 5.

400 of them repaired to the *Straits Times* office, and a deputation of seven men were permitted to interview the Editor in his sanctum. To the question 'How can the *Straits Times* help you?' came the reply:

By putting our case before our Chinese towkays. They will all read the *Straits Times* and will see how sorry we are at what has taken place, how loyal and trusty we have always been to our Chinese towkays, and they will relent and take us back. No Malays, no Boyanese, no Tamils can be to them as we have been, for years, for twenty years and more. Why should we all suffer if one Sikh does wrong?

But the judge says the constable has done no wrong?

We heard this, but we want to get back to our employment. We warned the constable's friends that we would have nothing to do with him or his. We refused to subscribe for his defence. His brother policemen did that. We will take the oath we did not help him. If we are not taken back, everybody in the world will say we have done wrong, and yet we - watchmen, carters and milkmen - have done nothing but our duty to our towkays and employers. Why do they treat us so? But you will put our case in the paper, and they will read it and relent and take us back.<sup>55</sup>

The Chinese took a sensible view of the affair and [398] reinstated the Sikh employees who had been dismissed or who were under notice to leave.

By the French mail steamer *Armand Behic*, en route for China, there arrived at this port on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1906 the members of the Imperial Chinese Mission who had gone to Europe and America for the purpose of investigating and studying European modes of administration with a view to the introduction of reforms in China. The Mission consisted of His Grace Duke Tsai-tse, HE Shang Chi-hang, and some twenty-five other officials. Many of the Chinese business houses were decorated in honour of the visit and the Dragon flag was very much in evidence. A large number of Chinese assembled in the vicinity of Johnston's Pier to see the visitors, while on the Pier itself was a long

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55 'The Chinese and the Sikhs' *Straits Times*, 7 Jun 1906, at 5.

line of the influential Chinese residents, in their long robes, including Messrs Lee Choon Guan, Lam Wei Fong,<sup>56</sup> Goh Siew Tin, Tan Keng Wah and Tan Yong Siak. A guard of honour was furnished by the 95th Russell's Infantry. As the visitors stepped ashore, a salute was fired from Fort Canning, and the guard of honour gave the 'general salute'. Duke Tsai-tse was wearing a yellow jacket (the royal colour). The distinguished visitors drove off to Government House, escorted by a party of European police on bicycles. The crowds of Chinese looked on stolidly without any cheering or demonstration of any sort, but any cheering would have been foreign to the Chinese idea of the proper respect and decorum due to exalted personages.

The Third Annual Agri-Horticultural Show was held from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> August 1906.<sup>57</sup> The first of these Shows had taken place at Kwala Lumpor in 1904, and the second at Penang in 1905. HE the Governor, Sir John Anderson, performed the opening ceremony at every one of the three Shows. There were six Chinese gentlemen on the General Committee, namely: Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, Dr Lim Boon Keng and Messrs Seah Liang Seah, Choa Kim Keat, Tan Kheam Hock and Yow Ngan Pan, while Mr Choa Kim Keat was the [399] only Chinese appointed on one of the sub-committees, that for Flowers, Fruits and Vegetables. Although the Show was a great success, the local Chinese had made no real effort to take part, either as exhibitors or competitors. The Chinese exhibits were poor. With regard to displays of local industries, out of some sixty exhibitors owning pavilions, sheds or tents, there were only three Chinese: Teo Guan Tye, with a fine ex-

56 Also known as 'Lam Wai Fong' and 'Lim Wai Fong'. Lam Wei Fong came to prominence as the founding Managing Director of the Kwong Yik Bank when it opened on 16 Dec 1903. He died in October 1910 at the age of 48, survived by two wives, four sons, four daughters and two grandsons (see 'Impressive Funeral of the Late Mr Lam Wai Fong' *Weekly Sun* 15 Oct 1910, at 4). See Huei-Ying Kuo, *Networks Beyond Empires: Chinese Business and Nationalism in the Hong Kong-Singapore Corridor, 1914* (Leiden: Brill, 2014) at 59.

57 The dates are erroneous. According to 'The Agri-Horticultural Exhibition' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 9 Jul 1906 at 3, this was held at the Raffles Reclamation Ground from 16 to 18 Aug 1906.

hibit of ornamental carving on sea-shells, ivory and coconut shells; Lu Si U, with a lavish display of Foochow lacquer work, including boxes and tables of artistic shapes and graceful designs; and Soo Pun Ting, a professional painter who had on exhibition excellent crayon drawings of Mr Thomas Scott and the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim. The pupils of the CEZ Mission School sent, as exhibits of their productions, arrowroot, tapioca flour and aromatic oil. In opening this Show the Governor said:

This Show has now come to be regarded as an annual exhibition, and has now been fairly established as such. ... To the general public, these Shows have the interesting feature of being, so to speak, annual stock-taking times when they see and hear of the progress which has been made during the year in the agricultural development of the country, and they can also see what kinds of products they have here, thanks to the kindness and enterprise of the merchants of Singapore and elsewhere.<sup>58</sup>

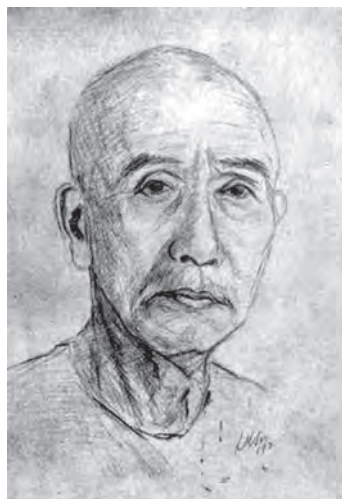
A Variety Entertainment at the headquarters of the Eurasian Co (SVI), in Bras Basah Road, on the 3rd September, gave opportunity to Pte Low Kway Soo<sup>59</sup> of the Chinese Co SVI, to give a clever imitation of Sandow (who had visited here a few months before) in his physical-culture exhibition. He was dressed in tights, with 'faked muscles', and a costume of leopard's skin, with moustache and get-up exactly like the famous strong man. On a curtain being parted, he was revealed standing on a revolving pedestal and exhibiting his wonderful muscles and chest expansion. He also lifted [400] a 'huge weight' and gave an amusing talk on physical culture.

Low Kway Soo is a self-made artist, born in Singapore in 1881. His father, Low Boon Pin, came from China, in the 'Sixties, at the age of 14, and his mother was a daughter of the late Mr Seow Teck Boo, for many years cashier to Messrs Guthrie & Co, who died quite recently

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58 'The Agri-Horticultural Show: Ceremonial Opening' *Singapore Free Press*, 17 Aug 1906, at 6.

59 See 'SVC Orders' *Singapore Free Press*, 26 Oct 1910, at 10.



Low Boon Pin



Low Kway Soo

at the ripe age of 80.<sup>60</sup> His two younger brothers, Kway Koh and Kway Song, are also interested in art. Low Kway Koh is an architect<sup>61</sup> and Low Kway Song is an artist of an entirely different type and taste. When Kway Soo was still a student at Raffles School, he showed a considerable aptitude in drawing pictures. Mr Seow Teck Boo encouraged him by getting him to draw the portraits of Mr Thomas Scott and Mr (now Sir) John Anderson, both of Guthrie & Co, who kindly supplied the young artist with the necessary requisites for the prosecution of his art studies.<sup>62</sup> After leaving school, he set himself steadily to the formidable task of improving his artistic talent without a master, albeit he had to work in an office to earn his livelihood.<sup>63</sup> He was for several years a Volunteer, and was keen in his work on the parade ground, in the field and at the range. In March 1909 he painted the portrait of Capt Colbeck, the SVC Adjutant, which was nicely framed and was presented by the Chinese Company to Capt Colbeck on his departure

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60 See 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 17 Jul 1917, at 6 which reported that Seow died at his residence at 202 Beach Road on 16 Jul 1917 at the age of 81. He was survived by his wife Tan Hong Neo (1860–1926) and three sons (Keng Lin, Pong Liu and Chong Lew).

61 Low Kway Koh is listed as being employed as a draughtsman in the Re-Survey Branch of the Public Works Department (see *Singapore and Straits Directory 1910*, at 50) but resigned from public service in August 1912 (see *Annual Department Reports for the Straits Settlements for the Year 1912*, at 194).

62 See 'Brothers who blazed the trail of art in Malaya' *Straits Times*, 19 Jul 1953, at 4.

63 After leaving school, Low worked as a clerk in both Singapore and Bangkok. In 1910, he got married in Bangkok but decided to return to Singapore where he became honorary Instructor of the Singapore Amateur Drawing Association in 1911. He exhibited his drawings at the Singapore Art Club's exhibition where he received a commendation for his portrait of the father of CM Phillips, Principal of Raffles Institution. He later established Raffles Art Studio along Bras Basah Road. At the first the going was tough and his wife had to pawn her jewellery to help support the family. However, by 1917, his fortunes turned and he made a name for himself, and became the favoured portraitist of the rich and famous throughout Singapore and Malaya. See 'Brothers who blazed the trail of art in Malaya' *Straits Times*, 19 Jul 1953, at 4. Low died on 8 Dec 1982 at the Tan Tock Seng Hospital after being admitted for a fall. He was 94 years old (see 'Artist Low Kway Song dies' *Straits Times*, 9 Dec 1982, at 11).



from the Colony,<sup>64</sup> as a mark of appreciation for his devoted and untiring labour for their welfare and efficiency. Low Kway Soo's services could always be counted upon by the managers of Straits Chinese entertainments for painting scenery and decorating the stage, while his 'Lightning Sketches' of celebrities were ever a popular item in a 'Variety' programme.<sup>65</sup> He was selected to design the border of the piece of silk on which was printed the Colony's Address to His Majesty King George V, on the occasion of His Majesty's Coronation.<sup>66</sup> He is very clever in the production of comic pictures. He expresses regret that he was born in a generation when his conceptions of art cannot be freely and fully [401] displayed, as his customers cannot appreciate them, but he does not blame the present generation for its lack of appreciation of art, since there is no school or any other means of training our people of this generation to be art connoisseurs. Against his will and to please his customers, he has to produce pictures which do not satisfy his artistic soul, but which are marketable. Most of his works consist of portraits of well-known persons. A good example is the life-size portrait of the late Mr Tan Jiak Kim,<sup>67</sup> presented by the Chinese community and hung in the Victoria Memorial Hall. Believing that there is a brighter future for him if he combined Medicine with Art, he has joined the Medical School as a student.<sup>68</sup>

At the SRA Annual Meeting held in September 1906, the Governor's Cup was won by Sapper AET Murray with a score of 311. Out of the twelve who got into the third stage in this competition, Song Ong

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64 See 'Farewell to Capt Colbeck' *Straits Times* 12 Mar 1909, at 7.

65 See 'A Chinese Entertainment' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 4 Mar 1907, at 3.

66 See 'The Public Meeting' *Straits Times*, 22 Jun 1911, at 12.

67 See 'The Late Mr Tan Jiak Kim' *Straits Times*, 24 Oct 1917, at 8.

68 See 'The Medical School' *Straits Times*, 4 Sep 1915, at 9, which lists Low as being among the First Year students. It does not appear that Low carried on with his medical studies as there is no record of his name among the graduates of the Medical College. Low later retired to Bangkok where in 1953 he was said to be aged 71 and living in retirement (see 'Brothers who blazed the trail of art in Malaya' *Straits Times*, 19 Jul 1953, at 4).

Siang, Tan Soo Bin, Teow Keong Hee<sup>69</sup> and Song Chin Eng took the sixth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth places respectively, the first named of the quartette winning the prize for the best aggregate in the first and second stages.

In November news reached Mr Seah Liang Seah that his fourth son, Seah Eng Choe,<sup>70</sup> who had left a few months previously for England, had passed the Matriculation examination at Armstrong College, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Seah Eng Choe was born on the 14th February 1884, and educated at Raffles Institution. After graduating BSc in Civil Engineering in 1910, he served as a pupil to Messrs D Balfour & Son, Consulting Engineers, at Newcastle-on-Tyne (1912-15). He was in charge of the construction of a concrete retaining wall at Sunderland when the German Fleet bombarded West Hartlepool and Scarborough, and when Newcastle and the neighbouring towns were raided by Zeppelins twice in three months. He was a passenger on the *Yasaka Maru* when that liner was torpedoed by a German submarine. He started business in 1916 as a Civil Engineer, Architect and Licensed Surveyor, and in November 1918 was joined [402] by Mr WJC Le Cain, BSc (London), AKC, AMICE (1903 Queen's Scholar) in partnership under the style of Seah & Le Cain.<sup>71</sup> The firm submitted in 1919 its design in open competition for the construction of three blocks of Reinforced Concrete Buildings, on a site in Upper Cross Street, which the Government proposed to erect to relieve the scarcity of living ac-

69 For more on Teow Keong Hee, see Chapter 12.

70 See 'The Late Mr Seah Liang Seah' *Singapore Free Press*, 16 Sep 1925, at 9.

71 See *Straits Times*, 12 Nov 1918, at 3. In 1922, it was announced that the partnership of Seah and Le Cain was dissolved by mutual consent and carried on solely by WJC Le Cain (see 'Seah and Le Cain' *Singapore Free Press*, 14 Mar 1922, at 5). Seah had earlier been declared a bankrupt, a situation resulting from 'his acting as surety on other men's behalf', but was discharged from bankruptcy in February 1923 (see 'Bankruptcy Court' *Singapore Free Press*, 10 Feb 1923, at 16). Seah passed away on 20 Jul 1949 at his home at 708 Serangoon Road and was survived by his wife, four sons (Peng Howe, Peng Liat, Peng Mok and Peng Hoe) and four daughters, and seventeen grandchildren (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 21 Jul 1949, at 12).



Seah Eng Choe

commodation for the poorer classes. The design of Messrs Seah & Le Cain was placed first, and the award carried with it the only premium offered and the employment of their firm to prepare working drawings and to supervise during construction. Mr Seah Eng Choe has been a fine athlete from his schooldays, and until lately was much in evidence on the football ground. He held for a time the post of Captain of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, and has carried off many prizes at the annual meetings of the Chinese New Year Sports.

A serious riot broke out on the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> November, between the Hokiens and Teochews, which lasted four days. It began with a quarrel between the Hokien and Teochew crews of two *twa-kohs* as to the right to a certain berth on the river at Boat Quay, the disputants resorting to blows. In a few minutes several hundreds of Chinese were having a battle-royal with sticks and poles. The police appeared on the scene and made some arrests and dispersed the mob: but this was just a lull in the storm.<sup>72</sup>

In the afternoon large crowds, apparently at the instigation of secret-society headmen, began to collect in various streets in Chinatown. The first encounter took place between the Teochews from Newmarket Road and the Hokiens from Havelock Road, and then news reached the police authorities of disturbances at places as far apart as Tanjong Pagar and River Valley Road. There were lootings of shops, including the Teochew temple in Philip Street, while gangs of Chinese, thirty and forty strong, marched through the town, armed with sticks, assaulting and robbing people in the streets. The disturbances spread towards Kampong Glam, and [403] along Serangoon Road and as far out as Chan Chu Kang Road. A party of Hokien gang robbers made a midnight attack on the house of Kwek Boon Kiang, a clerk in the General Post Office, at Siglap.<sup>73</sup> Mr Boon Kiang succeeded in driving them off by firing at and killing one of the assailants.<sup>74</sup>

72 See 'The Clan Fight' *Singapore Free Press*, 16 Nov 1906, at 5.

73 See 'A Widely-Known and Respected Servant' *Straits Times*, 9 Dec 1926, at 10. Kwek joined the Postal Service in 1896 and retired in 1926.

74 See 'Robber Killed' *Straits Times*, 16 Nov 1906, at 7.

Rickshas were damaged and the pullers, therefore, were afraid to appear on the streets. Vegetable sellers from the country were severely assaulted. The Hokien and Teochew shops in town were closed, and business was at a standstill.

On the first night of the rioting, the Chinese Consul-General went to the Central Police Station and offered to help in restoring order. Wearing his official robes, he went from place to place and addressed the excited crowds. On the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> the Colonial Secretary (Capt AH Young), the Inspector-General of Police, and the Assistant Protector of Chinese, the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim and Dr Lim Boon Keng held a conference with the Committee of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce at the premises of the Chamber. At this meeting it was resolved that placards be posted all through the town advising the combatants to stop fighting and warning them that Government would deal severely with those who should continue rioting. The Government issued the same morning a Proclamation under the Preservation of the Peace Ordinance 1872, and the members of Committee of the Chamber were asked to go out and explain the Proclamation to the headmen of the fighting factions.<sup>75</sup> The Chamber asked for armed soldiers to patrol the disturbed area, but the Colonial Secretary thought that the police were strong enough to cope with the situation. Nevertheless, the Sherwood Foresters, under Lieut-Col Watts, came down from Tanglin and marched through Chinatown. This had a salutary effect, as it encouraged the ricksha pullers to come out and ply for hire, and shopkeepers to open their doors. Spasmodic cases of rioting and looting continued until the 17th November. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce supplied three launches which [404] patrolled the harbour with armed guards on board. The magistrates had about 300 rioters before them and sentenced them to various terms of imprisonment, ranging from two to seven months.

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75 See 'Proclamation of the Preservation of Peace Ordinance' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 17 Nov 1906, at 2.

A wire from China, in November 1906, announced that Chia Keow, well known as a building contractor and head of the firm of Chia Keow & Co, had died in that country, to which he had retired some five years before, owing to a breakdown in health.<sup>76</sup> Mr Chia Keow was acknowledged to be one of the leading contractors here, and his firm has executed some large contracts, including the erection of that magnificent and substantial pile the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, the Adelphi Hotel, Fraser & Neave's Aerated Water Factory and the SCC Pavilion. He left his family in Singapore. One of his sons is Mr Chia Tiong Kim,<sup>77</sup> who for some years carried on business as booksellers in Battery Road under the style of Kim & Co,<sup>78</sup> and is now the popular Secretary of the Garden Club. Another son, Mr Chia Tiong Suan,<sup>79</sup> was for a little time manager of Chuan Moh & Co, Telok Ayer Street; but, showing a marked aptitude for the banking line, he joined the Hongkong Bank, where he gained some experience under the compradore, Mr See Teong Wah. Later he went to the Chinese Commercial Bank, the directors of which, recognising his ability and integrity, appointed him manager. On the opening of the Oversea Chi-

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76 Chia Keow died at the age of 63, survived by his wife and 'quite a number of children and grandchildren' (see 'The Late Mr Chia Keow' *Singapore Free Press*, 5 Jun 1907, at 5). It is known that two of his sons were Tiong Kim and Tiong Suan (see 柯木林, 《新华历史人物列传》 (Singapore: EPB, 1995 at 196-197).

77 Also spelt 'Chia Teong Kim', see 'Sir Arthur Young's Portrait Fund' *Singapore Free Press*, 28 Nov 1919, at 12. Among his other activities, Chia was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School (see 'Chinese Girls' School' *Straits Times*, 30 Oct 1925, at 15).

78 The firm, which carried on business as booksellers, stationers, printers, bookbinders and general commission agents was located at 6B Battery Road and 1 & 2 Armenian Street. In 1906, one of its original partners, Kong Tian Cheng left the partnership and was replaced by Chia Tiong Kim (see 'Notice of Dissolution of Partnership' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 21 Mar 1906, at 3). The following year, the partnership was also dissolved and Chia carried on as sole proprietor (see 'Notice of Dissolution of Partnership' *Straits Times*, 23 Dec 1907, at 5).

79 Also spelt 'Chia Teong Suan' (see 'Our Day Fund' *Straits Times*, 16 Oct 1916, at 10).

nese Bank, he was offered and accepted the post of manager.<sup>80</sup> A man of unassuming ways, kind and courteous to all, either in business or social life, he has earned a popularity without seeking it.<sup>81</sup>

In December 1906 Mr Ong Tek Lim was elected Municipal Commissioner for the Central Ward in the place of Dr Lim Boon Keng, retiring by rotation. In a letter addressed to the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, explaining why he did not desire to be renominated, Dr Lim Boon Keng said:

After the resignation of Mr Lee Choon Guan, I [405] allowed myself to be nominated after much hesitation. I now feel that I have tried to do my best to fill a difficult position, but that I have really done little or nothing for the ratepayers. In justice to the work to be done, and in the interests of the ratepayers themselves, I hope you will be able to find a candidate, better qualified than myself, to succeed me. What the municipality urgently needs is that public expenditure shall be scrupulously scrutinised by business men, who will devote some time to the examination of details. Personally, I regret that I have neither the time nor the aptitude for such work.<sup>82</sup>

In commenting on the candidature of Mr Ong Tek Lim for the vacant seat, the *Straits Times* thought that at a time when the Commission contemplated the execution of improvement schemes involving heavy expenditure, the Chinese community ought to put up men of wider experience and maturer judgment: that unless Mr Ong Tek Lim, then about 25 years of age, had exceptional natural ability he could hardly have acquired a wide enough knowledge of affairs and municipal re-

80 See 'Oversea Chinese Bank' *Singapore Free Press*, 21 Sep 1920, at 12. See also, Tan Ee-Leong, 'The Chinese Banks Incorporated in Singapore and the Federation of Malaya' (1953) 26(1) (161) *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 113-139.

81 Chia passed away on 20 May 1921 at his home at 119 Emerald Hill Road (see 'In the Estate of Chia Tiong Suan, Deceased' *Straits Times*, 27 Nov 1922, at 7). He was survived by his wife Lim Nya Keong and at least one son (Boon Thiam) and two daughters (Neo Cheow and Eng Neo).

82 'Municipal Election' *Straits Times*, 24 Nov 1906, at 7.



Ong Tek Lim



quirements to make him an ideal representative at such a time; and that a seat on the Municipal Commission ought to be coveted by Chinese citizens of maturer age for the opportunity it gave to advance the commonweal. But the political training, even of the *elite* of our Chinese community, had been sadly neglected and no Chinese gentleman of 'wider experience and maturer years and judgment' was willing to come forward to serve the public interest. It was fortunate that Mr Ong Tek Lim was not deterred by newspaper criticism from making his debut as a Municipal Commissioner. He set himself to study the intricacies of municipal administration, and became, before the end of his term of service, a valuable member of the Board. It was a sad blow to his admirers when he declined renomination in 1909.

The death of Mr Chee Quee Bong,<sup>83</sup> at the age of 57, occurred at his residence in Cecil Street on the [406] 25th November. Born in Malacca, he was one of a large number of sons of Chee Yam Chuan,<sup>84</sup> at one time a partner of the firm of Leack, Chin Seng & Co. Yam Chuan was the son of Chee Kim Guan, who was one of the two Chinese merchants elected to serve on the first Committee of the Chamber of Commerce formed in 1837, and whose great-grandfather<sup>85</sup> had come from China and settled down in Malacca. Chee Yam Chuan was a nutmeg planter at Malacca and Singapore and speculated largely in land and buildings. He was so highly respected that, at the age of 21, he was elected head of the Hokien community in Malacca. He died in July 1862, leaving a large estate in both Settlements. Mr Chee Quee

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83 Also spelt 'Chi Quee Bong' and 'Chee Quee Beng'.

84 Also known as 'Chee Yean Chuan'. He was born in Malacca on 24 May 1818 and died there on 28 July 1862, survived by 10 sons (including Jin Siew, Him Bong, Pee Bong, Teck Bong, Hoon Bong, Lim Bong, Hee Bong, Quee Bong and Beck Bong) and two daughters. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 902-906).

85 This was Chee Soo Sum who first settled in Malacca in the 1750s.

Bong was connected with the Straits Opium Farm at the time of his death, besides being a large property owner.<sup>86</sup>

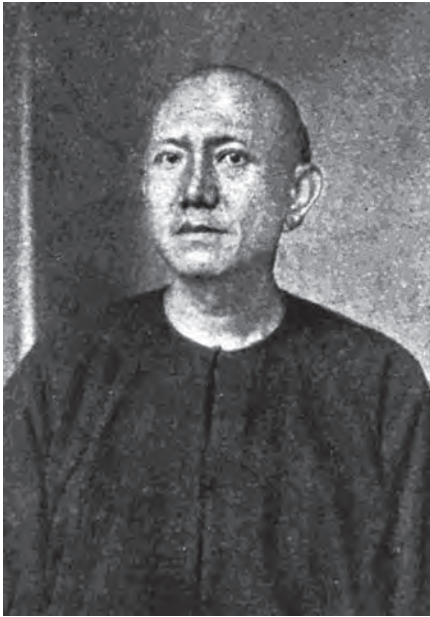
The most prominent among the grandsons of Chee Yam Chuan is Chee Swee Cheng (a son of Chee Hoon Bong), who was born in Malacca in 1866 and educated at the High School there.<sup>87</sup> He came to Singapore when 16 years old, and joined the firm of Lim Tiang Wah & Co, as cashier. Four years afterwards he entered the service of Leack, Chin Seng & Co, and later became manager of Messrs Soon Thye, general merchants. In 1900 he became a partner in the General Spirit and Opium Farm in British North Borneo and was appointed its manager.<sup>88</sup> The Governor of that province, with a view to encouraging planting and the general development of the place, offered Mr Swee Cheng 5,000 acres of land for planting purposes. The offer was accepted, and Mr Swee Cheng started on the estate the cultivation of tapioca, subsequently inter-planting it with rubber. He at the same time established a sawmill. Returning to Singapore, he set up an ice factory here with a view to reducing the high price of that commodity and bringing it within the reach of the pockets of the ricksha puller and the ordinary

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86 When Chee died, an advertisement for the sale of land in his estate listed no less than 14 properties for sale (see 'Estate of Chee Quee Beng Deceased' *Singapore Free Press*, 14 Sep 1918, at 11). See generally Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 902 & 905.

87 Chee Swee Cheng maintain close links to Malacca although he spent most of his working life outside of Malacca. He endowed scholarships in the name of his father and in 1905, he got together with his uncles and built a magnificent family temple at the family's property at 117 Heeren Street in honour of his grandfather. The temple was named Chee Yam Chuan Temple but is more well-known as the Chee Mansion and functions as the family meeting place (see Ronald G Knapp, *Chinese Houses of Southeast Asia: The Eclectic Architecture of Sojourners and Settlers* (Singapore: Tuttle: 2010) at 58–63 ('Chee Mansion').

88 In 1908, Chee was listed as Managing Director of the Labuan & Borneo United Opium Farms (see *The Directory and Chronicle for China, Japan, Corea, Indo-China, Straits Settlements, Malay States, Siam, Netherlands India, Borneo, the Philippines, and etc. 1908* (Hongkong: Hongkong Daily Press Office, 1908) at 1399).



Chee Hoon Bong

coolie.<sup>89</sup> Mr Chee Swee Cheng owns property in Singapore, Malacca, Jesselton<sup>90</sup> and Beaufort, and is [407] a man possessing a keen business intellect and sound commonsense, and is of a charitable disposition<sup>91</sup> and of an enterprising spirit.<sup>92</sup>

On the eve of his retirement from the Municipal Board, Dr Lim Boon Keng moved the resolution: 'That the Commissioners provide a cemetery for Chinese without delay, or in the alternative issue licences for private cemeteries subject to Municipal control.' He referred to a petition for such a cemetery which had been presented some time before. The Commissioners had approved the petition then, but deferred action. Private cemeteries were getting fewer and the public burial grounds were being overcrowded and in a chaotic state. The educated

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89 In 1908, Chee was listed to be the Superintendent of the 'Straits Industrial Syndicate: General Merchants, Steam Saw Mill & Ice Factory, Kallang' (see *The Directory and Chronicle for China, Japan, Corea, Indo-China, Straits Settlements, Malay States, Siam, Netherlands India, Borneo, the Philippines, and etc. 1908* (Hongkong: Hongkong Daily Press Office, 1908) at 1239).

90 Among the companies established by Chee Swee Cheng was the Jesselton Ice and Power Company which he established with James Hatton Hall (1866–1945) in November 1913 (see, AVM Horton, 'James Hatton Hall (1866–1945): Planter, Merchant, Soldier' (1995) 68(1) *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 139–147, at 139).

91 Chee was a great supporter of education and funded several scholarships. For example, in 1916, he gave the Government of Malacca \$2,000 in endowment for annual scholarships (see *Singapore Free Press*, 25 Aug 1917, at 7). He did the same for Labuan (see *Straits Times*, 14 Feb 1923, at 8; and 'Chee Swee Cheng Scholarship', *Straits Times*, 16 Feb 1925, at 8).

92 Chee Swee Cheng was one of the founding directors of Ho Hong Bank (1917) and later became its Chairman. When Ho Hong Bank merged with the Chinese Commercial Bank and the Oversea-Chinese Bank to form the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation in 1932, Chee became OCBC's first Chairman. He held this post till his death in 1938. Although Chee died at his Devonshire Road home in Singapore, his cortege was brought to Malacca for burial at his family's burial ground in Bukit Beruang, near Malacca. He was survived by his second wife, his two sons (Guang Chiang and Kok Chiang), two daughters, 13 grandchildren and several great-grandchildren (see 'Chinese Banker Buried at Malacca' *Singapore Free Press*, 29 Aug 1938, at 7).

people, who no longer believed in burying according to ideas based on geomancy, did not object to burying their dead under Municipal regulations in force at the Christian cemeteries. The Chinese felt very keenly that what the Commissioners had done for others, they were bound to do for the Chinese. Mr Ching Keng Lee, in seconding, felt sure that the need had arisen and that the proposed burial ground would confer a great boon on the middle as well as the poorer classes of the Chinese community. The motion was carried unanimously. The President counselled patience: and the educated Chinese who favour a Municipal cemetery for their dead are still patiently waiting for it, Mr Tan Kheam Hock at the Municipal Board from time to time playing the part of the people's 'remembrancer'.<sup>93</sup>

A very important meeting was held at the Hokien Temple, on the 16<sup>th</sup> December, to consider three questions which had been pressed on the community by the reform party, viz:

- (1) Whether Chinese schools should not be revised and brought up to date.
- (2) Whether the *chingay* procession should be continued.
- (3) Whether the *sembayang hantu* could be modified.

Mr Ong Hwe Ghee was the chief speaker, and in [408] arguing against a continuation of the *chingay* said that:

... the object of the temple is to commemorate the deeds of the departed great ones, to exalt their virtues, and to record appreciation of their services, and not to serve as a place for prayers and the asking for favours. Ignorant people subvert this evident policy with the vulgar notion that worshipping the gods will bring good luck and sacrifices will avert calamities. To make matters worse, busybodies add to the folly of the ignorant by introducing prancing lions and paper dragons – in fact, the *chingay* procession – in order to please the gods. Now, even in China, such processions are prohibited by law, although when the country is enjoying peace and prosperity the Mandarins do not interfere. ... As for respecting the gods, reverence, accompanied with the burning of incense, is

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93 See 'Chinese Cemetery Question Discussed' *Straits Times*, 15 Dec 1906, at 10.

enough. What need is there to belabour the people and waste money in order to compete in the vulgar shows in which unfortunate women are hired, and dressed up in gorgeous style and paraded through the streets to be seen of all nations. This sort of show I consider to be an insult to the gods, and I tell you that if the gods have any sense of honour, you must be thankful if they do not curse you for thinking them capable of enjoying such rubbish.<sup>94</sup>

On the subject of *sembayang hantu* Mr Hwe Ghee said:

According to a Buddhist tract, the 15th of the 7<sup>th</sup> moon was the date on which one, Muh-lian, rescued his mother from the clutches of starving devils. According to the Taoists, the 15th of the 7th moon was the day when the rulers of hades let off hungry ghosts, so that they could get food. The idea was to feed the ghosts of those who had no one to sacrifice to them. In any case, only one day was observed, but we have exceeded both Buddhist and Taoist requirements by wanting thirty days instead of one day. ... If there are such things as hungry ghosts, a few cups of gruel or [409] rice should suffice for their entertainment: but to treat these vagabonds of the other world, you erect elaborate sheds, spread a table full of the choicest viands, give theatrical displays and, above all, come to sacrifice to them in your mandarin robes with buttons and peacock feathers. ...

Now, we Chinese are Confucianists, and yet we do not sacrifice to our parents in the same grand style. How is it that we seem to treat the spirits of our ancestors more niggardly than we do the spirits of the vagabonds? All this is due to blind observance of tradition. Confucius tells us to have as little to do as possible with spirits, good or evil, and I think this advice is applicable to us today.<sup>95</sup>

Dr Lim Boon Keng and Mr Tan Boo Liat supported the first speaker, the latter urging that the funds so saved might be devoted to educational purposes. The meeting under the presidency of Mr Lee Cheng Yan, assisted by Messrs Goh Siew Tin and Lim Ho Puah, unanimous-

94 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

95 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

ly agreed to the resolutions to abolish the *chingay* processions and *sembayang hantu* and to embark on more extensive educational schemes. A week later another large meeting confirmed the resolutions, and the *chingay* processions and *sembayang hantu* became, thenceforth, things of the past.

That the Chinese are ever ready to express their gratitude for and appreciation of services rendered to their community by Government officers with whom they have been brought in contact or associated in the interests of the public weal is shown by the voluntary raising, in November 1906, of the sum of \$6,320 from the leading Chinese in the Straits and the Federated Malay States for the purpose of erecting a Memorial to the late Mr GT Hare, CMG, ISO, and by the Address to Mr WD Barnes, when he was going away on leave in February 1907, read by the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, who headed a deputation consisting of a large body of representative members of the Chinese community. Both these gentlemen had respectively [410] rendered conspicuous service as Secretary for Chinese Affairs, in the capacity, as Mr Barnes put it, 'of a middleman between two friends'.

On the 24th January 1907 a meeting of the Straits-born Chinese was held at the office of Messrs Kim Seng & Co to arrange the part they were to play on the occasion of the forthcoming visit of TRH the Duke and Duchess of Connaught. The Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim explained that it should not be regarded as an SCBA affair, but one expressive of the feelings of the entire Straits Chinese community. The meeting decided on (1) a torchlight procession of the Chinese Co SVI, (2) presentation of two bouquets to the Duchess and Princess Patricia of Connaught and (3) the reading of the Address of the Straits-born Chinese by the Chinese Member of Council.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> February the Royal visitors, en route for Hongkong, remained only a few hours in Singapore, but, on the return visit (18<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> February), during the Chinese New Year season, a lantern procession to Government House was organised by the Chinese community. The procession started from its rendezvous at the Old Gaol site, and, headed by the Chinese Volunteers carrying torches, preceded by a drum

and fife band, the whole under the command of Capt Glennie, wended its way to Government House. Opposite the Grand Stand erected outside the portico for the accommodation of the Royal party and the guests of the evening, the Volunteer detachment fronted and gave a Royal salute by raising their torches aloft, the band playing the National Anthem. A large party of Straits-born Chinese next approached the Royal guests and a loyal Address was read by the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, to which the following gracious reply was given:

It is a source of great satisfaction to me to receive an address of welcome from the British subjects of Chinese descent in this Colony, and to learn how highly you value the nationality which your place of birth has [411] conferred upon you. That your expressions of loyalty are no empty form of words and that you appreciate the fact that citizenship implies duties as well as privileges is sufficiently proved by the presence of the members of the Chinese Volunteer Company. The existence of this Company reflects great credit upon the Straits-born Chinese.

It will be my pleasing duty to inform my brother, His Majesty the King-Emperor, of the sentiments which you have expressed to me and of the loyalty to His Majesty's throne and person which is cherished among you.

I thank you for your good wishes towards Her Royal Highness the Duchess and myself.<sup>96</sup>

Besides several Addresses, the Chinese presented to the Duke three banners with inscriptions in Chinese characters, embossed in gold thread and silk, containing loyal and laudatory legends. The Duke's reply was as follows:

I have received with great pleasure the addresses of welcome which the various sections of the Chinese community of Singapore have presented to me, and I learn with great satisfaction how highly the Chinese value the benefits conferred upon them by British rule. Since the foundation of the Colony, the Government has always placed the utmost confidence in the ability, integrity and good

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96 'Address of the Straits-Born Chinese' *Straits Times*, 18 Feb 1907, at 7.



sense of the Chinese merchants, and has granted to them the same freedom in the conduct of their business and the management of their private affairs as is enjoyed by Englishmen themselves. That this confidence has been well-deserved, the present condition of the Colony and the progress which it has made since my previous visit clearly proves. In the Straits Settlements, the Government and the people have worked together in harmony, and the country consequently flourishes.

I shall inform my brother, His Majesty the King-Emperor, of the sentiments which the Chinese have expressed to me. I learn that the Chinese New Year began three days ago. The Duchess and myself are much gratified that, at a time of general holiday-making and relaxation, the Chinese should have [412] voluntarily undertaken for us the task of organising the procession which accompanied the gentlemen who presented addresses to us. We watched it with great interest.

We wish to the whole Chinese community a happy and prosperous New Year.<sup>97</sup>

Under the caption 'A Chinese Heroine', the *Singapore Free Press* gives the story of an old Chinese woman, Lee Li Koh, who was charged with culpable homicide not amounting to murder under the following circumstances. On the night of the 17th February she was awakened by a great noise outside the door of her shop at Serangoon. A score of robbers forced an entrance and began to ransack her shop. They were armed with knives and sticks and carried torches. When they began to smash the till, the accused fired on them with a pistol which she had under her pillow. One man dropped dead and the rest fled. The husband of the accused had promptly hidden himself. The woman then went alone all the way to Rumah Miskin Police Station and reported the affair. The Coroner having returned a verdict of justifiable homicide at the inquest, when the accused was brought before Mr Green, the magistrate, she was acquitted, Mr Green telling the interpreter to explain to her that she was a very brave woman, and, on her appli-

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97 'Duke's Message to Chinese Community' *Straits Times*, 20 Feb 1907, at 7.

cation, returning to her the pistol – an ancient-looking weapon which had been in her possession for twenty years.<sup>98</sup>

In this year the Imperial Service Medal was presented to Mr Goh Song Tian, who had retired on pension, in November of the previous year, from the post of Storekeeper and Chinese Interpreter, Marine Department, after twenty-six years' service. This appears to have been the first instance of the award of this medal to a Chinese public servant for long, faithful and meritorious service.

The case in which a Chinese woman was sentenced in February 1907 to four months' imprisonment for inhuman treatment of a girl of 16, who had been bought [413] for \$230 by her husband, exemplifies the view still held by some Chinese people here as to the rights possessed by them over 'bought' maidservants. This girl fortunately managed to escape from the savage couple, and found her way to the Protectorate, where she told her pitiful story. Her life was no better than that of the slaves whose escape from the Sultan's harem was mentioned in the *Hikayat Abdullah*. She got up at 5 am and slaved till midnight. When the couple were angry they flogged her, and once she was hung up by her hair. Because she put too much water in the rice, her mistress stuck needles in her face. She had to shampoo her master, and, on one occasion, he kept her up the whole night massaging him, thrashing her whenever she stopped. Her master told her he could kill her without the police interfering. Even assuming that her narrative was much exaggerated, there was more than sufficient evidence, from the terrible sores, scars, rattan weals and ulcers found on her body, of the awful time she must have had under the roof of that pair of cowardly brutes. The husband was a coward in a double sense, for he fled from the Colony and left his wife to face the music alone. And we agree with the press in finding fault with the lenient sentence passed on her, which failed to make an impression sufficiently serious

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98 See 'A Chinese Heroine' *Singapore Free Press*, 22 Feb 1907, at 2; 'A Plucky Woman' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 19 Nov 1907 at 3; 'Daring Gang Robbery' *Singapore Free Press*, 19 Feb 1907, at 8; and 'Justifiable Homicide' *Straits Times*, 21 Feb 1907, at 7.

or deep so as to deter other persons also owning 'slaves' from similar conduct. For one such case undesignedly brought before public attention, there were scores in which the 'bought' girls played the role of household drudge and maid-of-all-work and suffered in silence all manner of ill-treatment from their employers. The Chinese are slow to learn the lesson which the British flag has been inculcating, of the sanctity of human life and the liberty of the individual; while they are reluctant to believe that British laws do not tolerate slavery within British dominions and, Nemesis-like, will protect and avenge the weak and defenceless when oppressed.

In the lower room of Zetland House, in Armenian [414] Street, where the work of the Young Men's Christian Association was then being carried on, a number of Chinese belonging to the various Protestant Churches in this city met, in April 1907, to form a Chinese YMCA affiliated to the local institution. The meeting opened with the singing of the Cantonese version of 'Onward, Christian soldiers' and was addressed by Tay Sek Tin, W Ashdown, Rev JAB Cook and Lim Hong Wee (the resident doctor of the Opium Refuge). Mr Lee King Yan, of Lee Brothers, chairman of the organisation, took the chair. Good work had already been done, it was announced, in the Bible classes and through other agencies. The singing of the first verse of the National Anthem in Chinese closed the proceedings.

On the 3rd November 1909 the new rooms of the Chinese YMCA were officially opened at No 51 Hill Street, the ground floor of which premises was occupied by Mr A Lea for his ornamental tile works. The Rev Tay Sek Tin took the chair and intimated that the Association was to be for all Chinese young men of good character, whether professing the Christian faith or not. Mr Tan Tat Tek was the secretary who had been engaged from China specially to undertake this work.<sup>99</sup>

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99 Tan Tat Tek came from Swatow (Shantou) in Guangdong Province, China, where his father was a 'much-respected pastor in the Baptist Mission'. He was educated in Amoy College and resided in one of the rooms of the Singapore YMCA. See 'Chinese YMCA Secretary' *Straits Times*, 10 Sep 1909, at 7. Tan was proficient in English and 'the dialects of Swatow and Amoy' (see *Straits Times*,

Classes were to be arranged for devotional study, for English, conversational Malay, Chinese characters, singing and physical development.

In 1911, owing to the suppression of bogus Chinese YMCAs in the FMS (which were really organisations of the revolutionary party), an official investigation was made into the constitution and work of the local institution. It was shown satisfactorily that this Chinese YMCA was under the review and control of the General YMCA, that, while any Chinese young man of good character could become an associate, only accredited members of the Church were eligible as members. The office bearers in 1911 were Dr Chen Su Lan, president, Rev Tay Sek Tin, vice-president, and Mr Lee King Yan, hon treasurer. A course of [415] health lectures, illustrated with lantern slides, was delivered this year by Drs SC Yin and Chen Su Lan, to large Chinese audiences, in the Chinese language.

In the SRA annual meeting which took place in April 1907, Sergt Tan Soo Bin secured the best record among SVI competitors by winning the SVI Championship. He also took the prize for the best score in the 1st and 2nd stages of the Governor's Cup (which was won by 2nd Lieut EA Brown of the Chinese Co).

The opening of the Chinese Volunteer Club building on the 4<sup>th</sup> May, by HE Sir John Anderson, was a memorable event. The premises, situated at the end of Beach Road Reclamation, include a central meeting hall, bar and billiard room, and side rooms. HE the Governor was accompanied by Major-Gen Perrott (GOC), and amongst the large gathering were Capt Young (Colonial Secretary), Col Fitton (Royal West Kents), Lieut-Col Broadrick, Major Ellis, Capts Hilton, Colbeck and Phillips, the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim and many prominent Chinese. On arrival, the Governor was received with the general salute, the guard of honour consisting of the entire Chinese Co, being under the

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1 Sep 1909, at 11). Tan returned to Swatow in January 1911 to be a teacher in the English Presbyterian Mission, Anglo-Chinese College (see *Straits Times*, 12 Jan 1911, at 6).



Chinese Volunteer Club



Mural Tablet to Donors,  
Chinese Volunteer Club

command of Capt Glennie and Lieut Brown, and the Cadets' band played the National Anthem.

Lieut-Col Broadrick, as Commandant SVC, invited the Governor to open the Club. He said that the Chinese Company had been established now about six years, and it owed its beginning largely to the public spirit of the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, who, on a visit to England, had urged on the Home authorities the advisability of admitting Straits-born Chinese to those duties of citizenship implied by the bearing of arms in defence of the Colony. The Company was formed and the movement grew so that the old Waterloo Street club house became quite inadequate and it was resolved to build a Club. The result of that resolve was the present place. The interest shown by the Chinese as exemplified in the building of that club house indicated [416] that the movement for a Straits Chinese Volunteer unit was no ephemeral one, for there were eighty candidates waiting enrolment, and it looked as if they might have to ask permission to form a second Company. He had done his best to promote intercourse between the various sections of the Volunteers, and as soldiers of the King it was their duty to stand together and learn from each other.

His Excellency, at this stage, formally opened the main door of the building with a silver key, which Capt Glennie, as OC of the Company, asked him to accept as a memento of the occasion. When the party had assembled in the reception hall, Major Ellis, on behalf of the Chinese Company of which he had been OC, thanked all subscribers. Government itself had helped most generously with a donation of \$3,000, had lent the site, and had, besides, given gratuitously the services of the PWD staff to oversee the work. His Excellency had shown great sympathy with the Chinese Volunteers and he thought would continue to do so as long as that sympathy was wanted. The sum subscribed amongst the Chinese themselves totalled \$17,500, and this sum was the more gratifying as much of it had come from Chinese who were non-British subjects. Chinese volunteering was at present in its infancy and he was confident it was capable of much greater things. The subscriptions had ranged from \$1 to \$1,200, and in connection



Chinese Company, SVI, 1905

with the Club, he had to thank, especially, the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim for his untiring work on behalf of the Company.

HE the Governor said that the best proof of Lieut-Col Broadrick's statement that Chinese volunteering had come to stay was seen in this establishment of a permanent Club, and that Club, in honour and for their own interests, the Straits Chinese could never suffer to be tenantless: it was a guarantee of permanence. What had been said about the loyalty and public interest of Straits-born Chinese had been thoroughly justified on many previous occasions. The figures given [417] by Major Ellis showed how popular the movement was, and that the local Chinese were ready to take up the burden of defence of the country. In a place such as Singapore, the Straits-born have a peculiar right which even Europeans there, English, Scotch, Irish, have not, for they can claim the place as their country. The British were all, more or less, birds of passage, but to the Straits-born the Colony is their native land, and thus it came that they recognised their duty and showed their loyalty and citizenship by this movement. If they considered that Government had subscribed only \$3,000 to the public's \$17,500, they would see Government had no special reason to plume itself on its generosity. If in every good cause they could be assured that similar proportions would be maintained, he thought Government would often be prepared to be similarly generous. He had recently had the pleasure, in the recommendation of HE the Officer Commanding and Lieut-Col Broadrick, backed by the sympathy of all the officers, in conferring a commission on one of their members, who was deservedly popular, and had done his duty by volunteering and shown his ability at the rifle butts. He felt that they owed a great debt to his friend the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim. Proofs of his public spirit were always before them. There was no public movement, either Chinese or general, in which he did not display his interest and practical sympathy. In this instance he had not only given generously, but had used his great influence amongst his Chinese friends. He wished the Club prosperity.

While the influential Chinese merchants and firms were again well to the fore in responding to the appeal made on behalf of the



Anglo-Chinese (Methodist) School to provide additional premises to accommodate at least four hundred new boys, the leaders in the cause of female education for Straits Chinese were still like 'the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness'. The Editors of the *Straits Chinese Magazine*<sup>100</sup> took for their text the [418] Report of Mr Elcum as Director of Public Instruction, in which he wrote:

There is no more absolutely ignorant, prejudiced and superstitious class of people in the world than the Straits-born Chinese women. It is about hopeless to expect to be able really satisfactorily to educate the boys while their mothers remain stumbling-blocks to real enlightenment,<sup>101</sup>

and they launched a stirring appeal to the Straits Chinese community to follow at least the lead of the Japanese. 'What the Japanese have done we can do and ought without delay to do – that is, to afford our girls as well as boys the best education that it is possible to give them.' The Straits Chinese community were reminded that there were sufficient men of intelligence to guide and lead, and that they had enough wealth to afford their girls a good and respectable education; and yet they had done very little.

One great principle that we have striven to inculcate among the Straits Chinese is the principle of altruism – earnest consideration and sympathy for the needs, circumstances and social and moral condition of the Straits Chinese community as a whole, outside one's own family circle. Selfishness is the bane of our present society, and, like the Old Man of the Sea in *Sindbad the Sailor*, its arms are clinging tenaciously round the necks of our people. No individual, no community, no nation steeped in selfishness has made or ever will make its influence felt in the world. The education by our rich folks of their own girls is of little avail in the movement to raise the moral, social and intellectual status of Straits Chinese womankind: it is but a drop from the fountain of knowledge in the ocean of ignorance. Our appeal is for general co-operation in

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100 Vol XI, p 41.

101 'Chinese Female Education' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 14 Aug 1907, at 2.

which every Straits Chinese can take part – those who are rich with their money; those who are parents with their children; those who are influential with their influence. In this manner only, can we hope, in time, to remove the stigma that now attaches to Straits Chinese womanhood.<sup>102</sup>

[419] The final competition for the Warren Shield between winning teams took place at Balestier Rifle Range, on the 10th August. The change of venue by the Garrison Sports Committee in 1907 made it possible for the SVC to enter teams from the different units of that Corps. For six or seven years previously the match had been held in Kwala Lumpor and the trophy won by the Malay States Volunteer Rifles. For the only time during the period covered by this History this Shield was won by a unit of the SVC. The Chinese Co SVI secured the trophy by the narrow margin of two points. At the 600 yards range, the light was fading rapidly, and there was great excitement when the last couples from the Chinese Company and from 'B' Company, Malay States Guides, went down to the firing point. Each of the two teams had compiled a score of 635 up to that stage. The steady and careful shooting of 2nd Lieut Song Ong Siang and 2nd Lieut EA Brown (the two subalterns of the Chinese Co) resulted in scores of 30 and 28 being returned as against 28 each of the two men of the MSG.

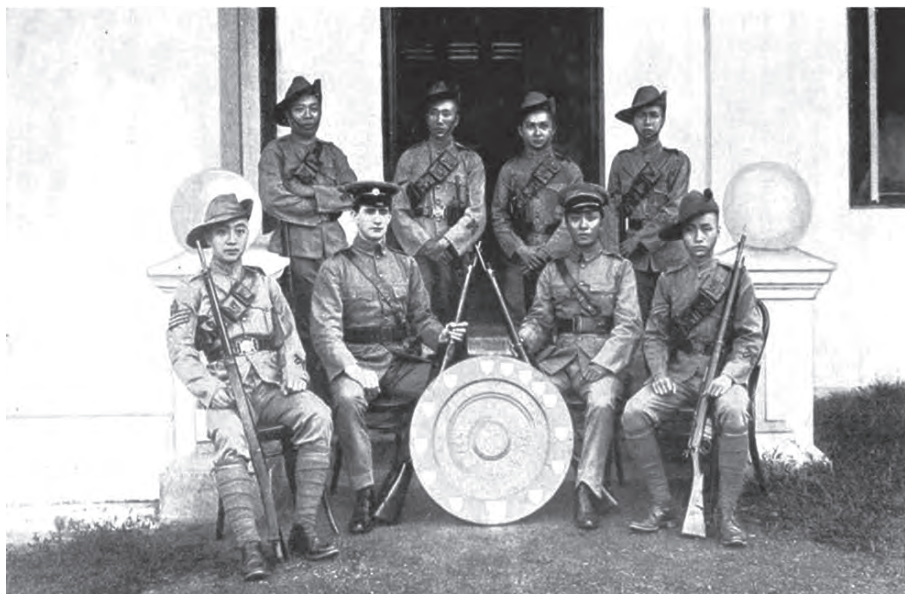
The order of the competing teams after the shoot was as follows:

No 2 Co SVI	693
'B' Co MSG	691
'E' Co and RW Kents	650
'80' Co RGA	639
95 <sup>th</sup> Russell's Infantry	612
HMS <i>Psyche</i>	579

102 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation. However, large chunks of it are quoted verbatim in 'Chinese Female Education' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 14 Aug 1907, at 2.



Bromhead Mathews Shield, Winning Team, 1906 (top)  
Warren Shield (Shooting), Winning Team, 1907 (bottom)



The detailed scores of the Chinese Company are:

	200 yds	500 yds	600 yds	Grand Total
Col-Sergt Tan Soo Bin	34	32	29	95
L-Cpl Tan Piah Eng	31	31	29	91
2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieut Song Ong Siang	27	32	30	89
L-Cpl Chua Lip Kee	28	26	33	87
2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieut EA Brown	27	31	28	86
Sergt Tan Chow Kim	27	32	26	85
Ptc Seow Cheng Liew	27	27	27	81
Cpl Teow Keong Hee	25	30	24	79
Total				693

[420] On the 27th August a weird ceremony was concluded at the ricksha coolie depots in Ophir Road, off Queen Street. A number of cholera cases had occurred in the depots, and to scare away the cholera demons, for ten days successively quaint ceremonies had taken place. The Hockchew, Hockchia and Henghwa coolies and their towkays had raised the sum of \$5,000 for the crusade against the demons. Four ghost ships were made of bamboo and variously coloured paper, in shape like Chinese junks, and between fifteen and twenty feet in length. The paper vessels were filled with paper money, rice, fruit and candles; while the largest one contained also a white pup, a grey kitten, a cock, a duck and a couple of pigeons. About forty ricksha coolies were dressed as demons with grotesquely painted faces and horns fastened on to their heads, and carried spears and spiked clubs. These formed the escort for the fleet. The three larger vessels were placed in the roadway while certain monks began their incantations, being surrounded by the coolie demons in a kneeling posture. After a couple of hours, a fourth (a smaller) boat was brought out. It was pounced upon by the head monk and taken into the depot, in which it was believed the cholera demons were still lingering. The

head monk, after further incantations at the joss-table, exhorted the demons to get on board the vessel and leave the house. Excitement was great when the little boat got as far as the door and then turned back and careered wildly round the front room. After twenty minutes of these antics the boat was coaxed into the road, and the devils represented by black, red, blue, green and yellow effigies were put on board the largest junk. Then the procession, in a wild, mad rush, made its way to a landing-stage on the Rochore River, where crackers were let off, the head monk waved his sword in the direction of the river and exhorted the devils to depart, and the paper vessels were burned.

The removal of graves from the Cantonese burial ground at Kreta Ayer (Tanjong Pagar) took place, [421] in August 1907, in pursuance of a resolution of the Legislative Council, which voted \$10,000 for the purpose of defraying the expenses connected with the digging up of remains of persons buried there, and their reinterment in other burial grounds, in order that the property so acquired might provide filling material for the Telok Ayer Reclamation scheme. The Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim expressed the hope that the Government, in carrying out this removal, would do nothing to offend Chinese customs, and would show due regard for the superstitions and feelings of the people affected.

This cemetery had not been used for forty years. The work of removal was entrusted to the Chinese Advisory Board, who undertook to see that everything was done decently and to the satisfaction of the relatives of the deceased. 'The scene at the burial ground was not altogether void of pathos,' said the *Free Press*, which published the following graphic description:

Some of the graves were opened in the presence of well-dressed male and female relatives, whilst, in other cases, two coolies with a solitary broken *changkol* between them took it in turn to unearth all that remained of the unknown dead. The same contrast was seen in the means of transport of the unearthed remains to their new resting-places. The remains of a bygone merchant were carried under a canopy and covered with fine silk and accompanied by relatives and friends and bands of Chinese musicians: while

the next procession would consist of three coolies, two of whom carried the remains done up in an old 'gunny' bag slung on a carrying pole, and the third coolie preceded the procession, holding in one hand a few sprigs of bamboo with a red rag fastened to one of them and piping away on an old tin-whistle.<sup>103</sup>

The first vote had to be supplemented, in July 1908, by a further vote of \$10,000 in Council for completion of the removal of remains from that burial ground. Mr Barnes, the Secretary for Chinese Affairs, explained that it had been thought that in forty or fifty years a great [422] many of the bones would have disappeared, but it had turned out otherwise.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1907 an anti-opium meeting arranged at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce to hear Mr R Laidlaw, Liberal MP for East Renfrewshire, speak on the opium question brought together several hundreds of Chinese of all clans. Dr SC Yin presided and introduced the speaker, who referred to the resolution passed in 1906 in the House of Commons declaring that the opium trade with China was morally indefensible, and to the consequent proposals made by Mr Morley that if China did her part in carrying out her obligations the shipments of opium from India would be reduced one-tenth each year, and that England would not insist on the treaty obligations with regard to the taking of opium from India. When the famous edict of the Chinese Emperor was issued in 1906, people in England had asked the question: 'Is the Government of China sincere in this matter?' Another question which he had found difficult to answer was: 'Is the Chinese Government able to extinguish the traffic in a period of ten years?' During the preceding few weeks he had travelled in China and he was, after observations and inquiries, in a position to say that the Chinese Government was in earnest in this matter and that the work could be accomplished. At the close of his address Mr Laidlaw received the assurance, in response to his questions, that the meeting

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103 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.



Dr SC Yin (Yin Suat Chuan)

was unanimous in its wish to see the opium habit completely suppressed in the Colony as in Japan.<sup>104</sup>

Dr Suat Chuan Yin was born in Amoy in China in 1877, and was educated at the Anglo-Chinese College, Foochow. At the age of 21 he came to Singapore as interpreter in the police courts. He got to know Mr Lim Loh, who assisted him in 1899 to proceed to the University of Michigan, USA, where he studied medicine for two years, and then he proceeded to Toronto University, in Canada, where he took his MB Degree and was awarded the silver medal. He crossed the [423] Atlantic in 1903 and entered University College, London, and in the following year secured the MRCS and LRCP diplomas. After gaining experience in several of the large London hospitals, he returned to Singapore, and joined Dr Lim Boon Keng in the practice of his profession. Reference has been made to his connection with the Home for the Cure of Opium Habitues. In 1905 he married a daughter of Mr JH Bowyer, of New Cross, London, SE. He took a prominent part in the Anti-Opium Movement and, in 1910, he was chairman of the meeting convened by the Anti-Opium Society jointly with the Christian Churches of Singapore to consider the question of how best to secure the speedy termination of the Indo-Chinese opium traffic. In this year he was appointed a visitor to the Lunatic Asylum. In connection with the outbreak of malaria early in 1911, Dr Yin advocated a wise distribution of quinine to be supplied gratis to the ignorant poor Chinese coolies at the Tung Chay (Wayang Street) and Sian Chay (Victoria Street) dispensaries, by way of experiment. While serving as a Municipal Commissioner, he was indefatigable in his efforts to secure greater amenities for the poorer classes of Chinese. A suggestion which would have proved extremely useful, to paint the name of each street also in Chinese characters, was turned down. He took a great deal of interest in outdoor recreation for the Chinese, and helped to form the Straits Chinese Football Association, which had him as its first president. In 1913 he presented for competition among the Straits Chinese football clubs the Dr Yin Shield.

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104 See 'Anti-Opium Meeting' *Singapore Free Press*, 4 Dec 1907, at 7.



He became a naturalised British subject. On the occasion of the mass meeting held on the fourth anniversary of the war (4th August 1918) Dr Yin seconded the resolution declaring the inflexible determination of the citizens of Singapore to continue the war to a victorious end, and in the course of an able speech, he said:

Japan in co-operation with China may yet prove [424] of great help on the eastern frontier to see that the Germans, when being pushed on the West, do not try to escape by a back door. The longer the war lasted, the greater must be our sacrifices. I feel sure that every effort will be made locally to bear the burden that should be readily borne by every loyal citizen of the Empire.<sup>105</sup>

The Tung Chay (Chinese Hospital) in Wayang Street, which has been more than once referred to, was the outcome of the desire on the part of a section of the Chinese community to provide a hospital and dispensary at which their poor and needy sick countrymen might be looked after in accordance with Chinese ideas. Rev JAB Cook in *Sunny Singapore* says that this hospital was largely endowed by Gan Eng Seng. 'It is a place where patients can come to their own Chinese doctors, and be by them examined and provided with prescriptions, which are made up cost free in certain Chinese dispensaries at the charges of the Tung Chay.' Within recent years the organisation has been largely espoused by the Cantonese merchants and traders, with Mr Ng Sing Phang as President.

Ng Sing Phang, JP, who is a popular and influential member of the Cantonese community, is a self-made man. Coming to Singapore from Nan-pheng, his native place in Canton province, at the age of 21, he went into the sawmill business, and gradually worked his way to the front. Subsequently he established the firm of Sing Guan, of which he is sole proprietor, with large dealings in rubber.<sup>106</sup> On several occasions he has helped in settling industrial disputes and strikes among

105 We are unable to trace the exact source of this quotation.

106 Ng was also a Director of Lee Wah Bank Ltd (see *Singapore Free Press*, 28 Apr 1920, at 4).



Ng Sing Phang

his countrymen. He has served [462] for many years as a member of the Chinese Advisory Board and of the Po Leung Kuk Committee, as a visitor to the Reformatory and the Quarantine Station on St John's Island and on the Board of Trustees of Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital. His interest in education is shown by his holding the post of President of the management committee of Yung-ching School in Club Street and by his being on [425] the Board of Management of the Chinese High School in Niven Road.<sup>107</sup> A smart man of business, he is a much-respected member of committee of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce.<sup>108</sup>

In January 1908 the patrol of the West River in China by British gunboats, to suppress piracy and in the interests of the peaceful conduct of commerce on Chinese waterways, led to the dispatch of telegrams to Peking by Chinese residents of Singapore in sympathy with the threat, addressed by the ex-President of the Chinese Commercial Association at Shanghai to the British Minister at Peking, to boycott British goods. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Singapore, sent a telegram in the following terms to the Board of Foreign Affairs:

Regarding the policing of the West River, as foreigners are allowed to interfere, what necessity is there to appoint officials to the places concerned? Once our sovereign rights are lost, there will be endless trouble in the future. The mind of the Chinese people is not yet dead. We hope that the decision will be quickly withdrawn, so as to ease the mind of the people and to safeguard the interests of the country.<sup>109</sup>

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107 Ng was also the founder of the Cantonese Ng Shu Shi Shet (Book Room) which was established in 1910.

108 Ng was a prominent leader of the Cantonese community and was politically active since the 1910s, being a member of the Tong Ming Hui (see CF Yong & RB McKenna, *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya 1912–1949* (Singapore: NUS Press, 1990) at 28). He was also President of the Singapore Yen Peng Wui Kuan from 1949 to 1952 (see Singapore Yen Peng Wui Kuan website: <<http://www.enpingsingapore.sg/DongShiHui/index.html>> (accessed 3 Mar 2015)).

109 See Editorial, *Straits Times*, 4 Feb 1908, at 30.

In a letter to the *Straits Times*, dated the 24<sup>th</sup> January, Mr Chan Teow Lam, the Secretary of that Chamber, disclaimed any intention on the part of the Chamber to foment any anti-British agitation or to take part in it, and explained that it was a protest against the continuance of a state of affairs which rendered foreign intervention possible. The gun-boats were withdrawn on payment of the indemnity which China had agreed but had failed to pay in 1906 for the murder by pirates of the captain of a British river steamer, and also of a passenger, a medical missionary, who was attending to the injuries inflicted on the captain. It will not be out of place to reproduce here an excerpt from *A Commercial Handbook on Netherlands India* from the pen of Dr Schoppel, the Austrian Consul [426] at Batavia, and quoted by the *Straits Times*, in which he drew a comparison between the British and Dutch methods of colonial government as seen in the Straits Settlements and the Netherlands India respectively:

The laws of the Straits Settlements know of no distinction between Europeans, Asiatics and natives, and make no distinction between British and non-British – the same legislation holds good for all. There are no restrictions on industry as it affects particular sections of the people. The cultivation of the soil and the carrying out of industrial pursuits is free to all. The State limits itself to looking after the public interest generally, and after the administration of justice. The underlying idea is that the modern State should limit its interference to the uttermost in the matter of the rights of individuals.

Instead of the British Colonial policy of unlimited freedom and the equality of all citizens, the Dutch work on the patriarchal idea that the State should and ought to do everything that tends to further the well-being of the people. In the Dutch Colony a great distinction is made between Europeans and natives, in everything. The Europeans stand under European authorities altogether. The natives have their own village, district and provincial authorities, composed exclusively of native officials. The Europeans have their own civil and penal laws, and so have the natives with the additional advantage of their local and religious customs and preju-

dices being minutely reckoned with. The theoretical equality of all citizens, which is the bottom rock of the British statecraft and Colonial policy, has been put aside in Netherlands India for the practical idea that, where there are so many conflicting interests, the same laws cannot hold good for all.

The Chinese section of the population in Netherlands India, for instance, are placed under exceptional regulations, which limit not only their freedom of movement, but also even their social and household relations to one another – their dwelling-places, industries, etc. This restrictive policy stands out prominently when contrasted with the fact that the Straits [427] Government guarantees full freedom to the Chinese, and does not shut them out from public honour and distinction.<sup>110</sup>

In April 1908 Mr Khoo Siew Jin (son of Mr Khoo Hun Yeang) gave a farewell dinner to Mr Wee Swee Teow on the eve of the latter's departure for England to study law. In proposing the toast of the evening, Mr Siew Jin said:

I need not tell you that to-night's merrymaking is on the occasion of Mr Swee Teow's departure for that wonderland of wealth and power to which he is proceeding to acquire some of that knowledge which is the source of that wealth and power. May a most splendid success crown all his efforts there, and may he, when he comes back, be a pillar of strength among our community and a most useful citizen to us.<sup>111</sup>

Mr Wee Swee Teow was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 1880 in Singapore, being the eldest son of Mr Wee Kim Chuan, who was for many years senior dispenser in The Dispensary, and who afterwards started a dispensary of his own in collaboration with the late Dr Moore. Mr Swee Teow was educated first at the Kampong Glam Government Branch School and, later, at Raffles Institution, where he remained till he was twenty years of age. On leaving school, he was in a commercial firm

110 'Colonial Parallel: Netherlands India Compared with the Straits' *Straits Times*, 7 Feb 1908, at 7.

111 'Mr Wee Swee Teow Feted' *Straits Times*, 21 Apr 1908, at 7.



Wee Swee Teow



Khoo Hun Yeang

for a few months, and, at the request of the late Mr RW Hullett, he joined the teaching staff of Raffles School until 1908, when he left and proceeded to England to read for the Bar. He did fairly well in the Bar examinations, obtaining several firsts and seconds in the Intermediate examinations and Second Class Honours in the Final. He was called to the Bar from Gray's Inn in January 1911, and read for a few months in chambers in London. Returning to Singapore, he was admitted into the local Bar in January 1912 and set up in practice in partnership with Mr Chan Sze Jin under the style of Chan & Swee Teow. Since 1913 he has been Vice- [428] President of the Board of Trustees of the Anglo-Chinese Free School in Telok Ayer Street, and in 1915 was appointed Hon Secretary of the Straits Chinese British Association in succession to Mr Kow Soon Kim.<sup>112</sup>

An article on the pineapple preserving industry in Singapore from the pen of Mr E de Kruff appeared in June, in *Teysmannia*, a periodical connected with the Botanical Gardens of Buitenzorg. It was the year when there was a serious depression of the local trade. The writer of that article admitted that, although Singapore took the lion's share of the preserved pineapple export trade, the industry did not find favour with European capitalists, and almost all the preserving factories were in Chinese hands. In 1906 some sixteen factories in Singapore produced 707,943 cases of preserved pineapples, which would represent (calculating 36 tins to a case) an average daily output of 4,500 tins from each factory. Mr de Kruff pointed out that the industry was in a bad way for three chief reasons:

- (1) *The speculation in the article.* Owing to lack of working capital, the packers must sell their product at once, and they cannot wait for a more favourable market. At the auctions in London and Liverpool, speculators manipulate the article with disastrous results to the Chinese preservers, who work with insufficient capital.

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112 For more on Kow Soon Kim, see Chapter 12.

- (2) *The advance system.* The preservers by receiving from the exporters advances in money and in raw material, such as tinplate, are at the mercy of these capitalists.
- (3) *Want of capital.* This prevents the employment of machinery to secure important saving in manual labour.

The old brand prepared by J Bastiani & Co<sup>113</sup> so well known for some twenty years had disappeared by 1905, while the factory at North Bridge Road, in the large and commodious house which had once been the residence of Mr Song Tiang Kay, where Mr W Scaife had turned out his tinned pineapples, had been closed at his death. The late Tan Twa Hee had built up a flourishing business in this line under the chop Tek Watt during his lifetime, and Tek Watt's brands of preserved pineapples were at one time known all over the world. The fruit was obtained from Tanjong Pinggi and Pulo Batam until its cultivation was superseded by rubber.

Not long after Mr Bastiani's pineapple preserving business had been in full swing, Mr Seah Liang Seah, in partnership with some others, under the chop Chin Choon, started a factory at Thomson Road for canning tinned pineapples bearing a 'Lion' label, which found a ready market in Bangkok. This partnership was dissolved and Mr Liang Seah continued the activities of the old firm as sole proprietor under the chop Chin Giap on a large tract of land covering about ninety acres in Serangoon Road. In 1901 his second son, Mr Seah Eng Keong, acquired the concern. Canning operations were for the next few years conducted on an extensive scale and the plant was capable of an output of forty thousand cases of the tinned product in one week, while

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113 This company had been established by Joseph Bastiani (1843–1924), a Corsican who fought in the Franco-Prussian War on the French side. He later joined the firm of Messageries Maritimes as a seaman but left the company after coming to Singapore. He started a factory in High Street to preserve pineapples, being one of the first to do so. He later also started a confectionary. In 1894, he retired from business and returned to France where he settled in Nice where once again he started a fruit preserving company which he ran till his death in November 1924. See 'Death of Mr J Bastiani' *Straits Times*, 5 Jan 1925, at 9.



some 250 men were employed during the busy seasons. The firm's brands, 'Tiger' and 'Defiance', acquired a high reputation for purity and excellence both in Europe and the Far East. Prices were exceedingly good in 1902, but they steadily declined until a case of preserved pineapples, containing 48 tins (weighing 1½ lb each), only fetched \$3, much under the cost of production. Before the outbreak of the War, the pineapple preserving works of Chin Giap & Co were discontinued, and all the pineapple plantations of the firm were converted into rubber estates. Mr Eng Keong once tried the experiment of exporting his preserved fruit in glass bottles, but the shipment of 500 cases to Europe found an unsaleable market. During the War this industry got a fillip from the great demand for tinned pineapples, and Mr Eng Keong confined the business of Chin Giap to exporting the product, which is prepared, canned and packed by other factories.

Mr Eng Keong was born in 1873 in Singapore, and received his English education at Oldham's School and Raffles [430] Institution. Unlike a younger brother, Mr Seah Eng Tong,<sup>114</sup> who is a JP and takes an interest in public affairs, Mr Seah Eng Keong devotes his attention solely to business. In 1909 a hot-water spring was discovered on his property at the thirteenth mile, Thomson Road, and a sample of the thermal water sent to London having been favourably reported on, Mr Eng Keong started the business of bottling the water locally, in aerat-

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114 Seah Eng Tong (1880–1940) was appointed to the Chinese Advisory Board in 1920 and continued to serve on the Board for over a decade. Educated at Raffles Institution, Seah worked as a clerk in the firm of Barker & Company after leaving school. Two years after that, he resigned to manage his father's business but left two years after that to start up his own business (see 'Mainly about Malaysians' *Straits Times*, 14 Jul 1940, at 8). In 1933 he was appointed a member of the Governor's Straits Chinese Consultative Committee and in 1937 became a member of the Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan. He was also a Director of the Eastern United Assurance Corporation and Justice of the Peace. Seah died on 11 Jun 1940 at his home, *Sea Pavilion*, at 156 Pasir Panjang Road at the age of 60. He was survived by his wife, eight sons (Peng Kiang, Peng Hearn, Peng Whye, Peng Kwang, Peng Ann, Peng Chuan, Peng Hai, and Peng Gniap), five daughters and 47 grandchildren (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 13 Jun 1940, at 2).

ed form, under the name of 'Zombun'. Its qualities were favourably commented upon by local medical men, and for some years, under the management of Mr Eng Keong and the Singapore Hot Spring Ltd, incorporated to acquire proprietary rights thereover, Zombun was well known as a safe table water.

Another prominent name in the pineapple canning and packing industry, at this time, was that of Tan Kah Kee. A son of Tan Kee Pek,<sup>115</sup> at one time a well-known merchant among the Hokien community, he was born in China, and on coming to Singapore he utilised his keen business acumen in various enterprises, which have proved successful. By the year 1900 his firm of Jit Sin had secured about 70 per cent of the export trade as pineapple packers, and his 'Sultan' brand of preserved pines was in great demand. He was one of the pioneers in the cultivation of rubber in Singapore and Johore. The firm of Tan Kah Kee & Co owns the largest factory for cleaning and treating rubber and latterly for the manufacture of rubber goods. Mr Tan Kah Kee has been keenly interested in education, and has given large donations to

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115 Also spelt 'Tan Kee Peck'. Tan was born in Chip Bee (Jimei), near Amoy (Xiamen), Fujian Province, China though the date of his birth is unascertained. By the 1870s, Tan had settled in Singapore where he proceeded to establish a string of some 13 companies all of whose names ended with the word 'Ann' (安) (see 'Chinese Enterprise in Singapore' *Singapore Free Press*, 8 Oct 1935, at 6). The most well-known of these companies was Chop Soon Ann, which specialised in the import and distribution of rice. Tan also had a sago factory and a pineapple canning factory and by the 1890s, had a small business empire worth some \$400,000 (about \$4 million in today's currency) as he succeeded in cornering the pineapple produce market. However, by 1903, these companies were deep in debt due to mismanagement. See 柯木林, 《新华历史人物列传》 (Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 79. This led to the winding down of Chop Soon Ann in 1904 and Tan being declared a bankrupt in 1905 (see 'Notices' *Singapore Free Press*, 3 Jul 1911, at 2). In 1906, there was a forced sale of Tan's five shophouses on Boat Quay (Nos 111, 112, 113, 116 and 117) to meet his debts (see 'Mortgagee's Sale' *Straits Times*, 12 Dec 1906, at 8). In a bid to salvage what he could of Tan Kee Pek's business, his son Tan Kah Kee (together with one Tan Ah See) bought over his pineapple preservation plant, Chop Tan Jit Sin (located at 73 Sungei Road) in January 1905 (see 'Notice' *Straits Times*, 9 Jan 1905, at 6). That year, Tan Kee Pek returned to Jimei where he died in 1909.

educational objects like Raffles College and the proposed Methodist College. A few years ago he started a modern school at Amoy with 100 children and it has now close on 2,000 pupils. The school provides classes from kindergarten to a higher normal college, with a technical department (fishery) attached, and this big undertaking is entirely financed by Mr Tan Kah Kee.<sup>116</sup>

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116 Tan Kah Kee was a legend among the overseas Chinese and was, among other things, dubbed the Rubber King and the Henry Ford of Malaya. He was born on 21 Aug 1871 in Jimei (Chip Bee) village in Fujian Province, the eldest son of Tan Kee Peck who had emigrated to Singapore sometime before 1874 with two of his brothers. Tan Kah Kee received a rudimentary Confucian education (1882–1890). In 1890, he joined his father in Singapore as an apprentice. He rose to become manager of his father's rice and pineapple canning firm, Chop Soon Ann. In 1904, he branched out on his own, establishing Khiam Aik, a rice trading firm. In 1906, he ventured into rubber planting and planted over 180,000 rubber seeds at his rubber estate, laying the foundations of his business empire. Tan's venture into rubber paid off and with the advent of automobile (and concomitant demand for rubber for tyres), he became a millionaire by 1911. During the First World War, Tan became a multi-millionaire by going into shipping. Tan reached the peak of his business success in 1925 when he made a profit of \$7.8 million that year alone. Tan's wealth allowed him to generously endow his many educational and philanthropic projects. He founded a host of Chinese schools (Tao Nan, Nanyang Girls' School, Singapore Chinese High School, Nanyang Fishery and Marine School, Nanyang Normal School and Nan Chiao Girls' School) and donated generously to the Anglo-Chinese School and to Raffles College. He also established Amoy University in Fujian, as well as a host of Chip Bee Schools which he funded entirely from his own pocket. Tan was also an important community leader, becoming the President of the Ee Hoe Hean (Millionaires') Club in 1923 and President of the Hokkien Huay Kuan in 1929. When Japan invaded China in 1937, he headed the China Relief Fund to raise money for various relief projects – the Fujian Protection Fund (1912); Shandong Relief Fund (1928–1929); Singapore China Relief Fund (1937–1946); and the South Seas China Relief Fund Union (1938–1949). Initially, Tan was non-partisan, but after 1940, threw in his lot with the Chinese Communist Party. In 1950, he left Singapore for China to help in its reconstruction. By 1934, Tan's business empire had collapsed, after limping along after the great recession of 1929–1930. Even so, his personal prestige was so high that the Chinese community had always considered him its leader. In China, he became a member of the People's Political Consultative Conference (1949–1953) and its Vice-Chairman (1954–1961), as well as an executive member of the

At Whitsuntide the Chinese Co SVI sent a team to Kwala Lumpur to defend the title of the SVC to the [431] Warren Shield. In the preliminary competition at Balestier Range between the various units of the SVC to decide which unit should represent that Corps at Kwala Lumpur, the Chinese Co scored 492, while the SRE (V) compiled 473. Two of the members of the winning team in 1907, Cpl-Sergt Tan Soo Bin and Corpl Seow Cheng Liew,<sup>117</sup> were unable to get away, and their places were filled by Sergt Seah Cheng Joo and Pte Low Kway Soo. Other teams which went from Singapore were the Royal West Kents, the 99<sup>th</sup> Deccans and the RE. The ordinary Bisley conditions were altered to rapid shooting practices at 300 and 500 yards ranges, and a bad breakdown of Pte Low Kway Soo at the 300 yards range and of Sergt Seah Cheng Joo at the 600 yards range spoil the Singapore Volunteers' chance of retaining the coveted laurels by the narrow margin of nine points. The final order of the teams was as follows:

MS Guides	491
SVI	482
99th Deccans	474
MSVR	445
RW Kents	426
RE	330

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People's National Congress (1954–1961). He died on 12 Aug 1961, aged 87, and was honoured by the Chinese Government by a state funeral. This account is summarised from Yong Chin Fatt, 'Tan Kah Kee' in Leo Suryadinata (ed), *Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent* (Singapore: Chinese Heritage Centre & Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012) at 1075–1079).

117 Also spelt 'Seow Cheng Lew' and 'Seow Cheng Liu'. Seow was the son of Seow Teck Boo and Tan Hong Neo and brother of Seow Keng Liu and Seow Pong Liu (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 17 Jul 1917, at 6). He had a partnership with Khoo Kok Oon, carrying on business as Hock Seng & Co at 231 South Bridge Road, but this was dissolved in 1920 (see 'Hock Seng & Co' *Straits Times*, 10 Aug 1920, at 5). In 1922, Seow was listed as one of two Managing Partners (along with Tan Kim Bee) of International Motor Supply Co (see *Singapore Free Press*, 27 May 1922, at 7). He died in March 1975 (see 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 23 Mar 1975, at 19).

The Warren Shield has not since come the way of the Singapore Volunteers. Too often the conditions for the competition reach the SVC headquarters too late for the units to get more than one practice of their probables, or to have a sporting chance.

The Church of St Peter and St Paul in Queen Street having become too small to meet the growing needs of the Cantonese section of the Roman Catholic Chinese, Messrs Low Keok Chiang,<sup>118</sup> Chan Tek Hee<sup>119</sup> and Cheong Quee Thiam<sup>120</sup> donated a site in Tank Road for a

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118 Also spelt 'Low Kiok Chiang' (see 'Death of Mr Low Kiok Chiang', *Straits Times*, 22 Mar 1911, at 9). According to this report, Low 'was born in China and left his native country a very poor man, in a junk, for Singapore and the Straits' but prospered both in Penang and Singapore 'through his innate shrewdness'. In 1879, he went to Bangkok where together with Joseph Chan Teck Hee, he established the firm of Kiam Hoa Heng & Co (his most well-known company) and also Buan Hoe Seng (Bangkok), Yong Hoa Seng (Singapore), Gin Hong Hoa Kee (Bangkok), Kiam Hao Siang (Bangkok), and Kiam Hoa Heng Hua Kee (Petriew). He converted to the Catholic faith at about the age of 20 and was a staunch supporter of the Church and 'it was principally through his efforts that the Church of the Holy Rosary was built'. He died in Bangkok on 12 Mar 1911 at the age of 69, survived by three sons, four daughters, eighteen grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. His remains were brought back to Singapore by Ban Hoe Liong for interment.

119 Also known as 'Joseph Chan Teck Hee' or 'Joseph Chan Tek Yi'. Chan was born in China and came to Singapore some time in the 1880s. He quickly established himself as a successful businessman and was for many years a Director of the Sze Hai Tong Bank and Kian Hoe Heng & Co (Bangkok). He was an active member and supporter of the Catholic Church. In 1897, he purchased the grounds adjoining the Church of St Peter and St Paul and built 11 houses for catechists, widows and the aged. This came to be known as the St Joseph's Houses. Chan also donated generously to the Queen Street Church. He died on 9 Sep 1930 at his home at 48 Waterloo Street at the age of 86, survived by three sons, four daughters, 36 grandchildren and 33 great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren. He was buried at Bidadari Cemetery. See 'Death of Mr J Chan Teck Hee' *Singapore Free Press*, 10 Sep 1930, at 167; and 'Death' *Singapore Free Press*, 5 Sep 1930, at 10.

120 Also spelt 'Chung Kwe Tiam', 'Cheong Kwee Tiam' and 'Chong Quee Thiam'. Cheong died on 23 Dec 1914 at his home at 159 Waterloo Street aged 75. He was buried at Bukit Timah Christian Cemetery (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 23 Dec

new church, to be named the 'Church of the Sacred Heart', for the use of the Cantonese congregation.<sup>121</sup> The formal laying and blessing of the corner stone was performed on Sunday, the 14th June, by the Bishop of Malacca, the Right Rev E Barillon.<sup>122</sup> The building, in the Greek [432] style of architecture, was completed and opened in September 1910, from which date the Church of the Sacred Heart has been the parish church of the Roman Catholic Chinese from Kwangtung province.<sup>123</sup>

Delegates from a number of Chinese social clubs met, by invitation, Mr WD Barnes and representatives of the Po Leung Kuk Committee at the Chinese Protectorate, on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, to discuss the subject of not engaging singing girls, under the age of 16, at any function whatsoever in social clubs. Two months previously the Po Leung Kuk Committee had passed a unanimous resolution:

That the practice of employing girls under the age of 16 years as singing girls, commonly known as *pi-pa-chai*, is the cause of much immorality and the ruin of very many of the girls: that the Chairman request the Government to pass a rule forbidding these young girls to appear in public eating houses: that the Committee invite the officers of all Chinese clubs to attend a meeting at the Chinese Protectorate and request them to assist in this matter by refusing to admit any such young girls to their Clubs: that the Committee appeal through the press for the assistance of the Chinese commu-

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1914, at 6). Cheong was the proprietor of the pawnbroking firm of Chop Eng Whatt at 126 South Bridge Road.

121 See 'New Chinese Church' *Straits Times*, 15 Jun 1908, at 7.

122 This was Bishop Dr Marie-Luc Alphonse-Emile Barillon (1860–1935) who arrived in Malaya in 1885, and who served as Bishop of Malacca from 1904 to 1933.

123 One of the stained glass panels, entitled 'Sacred Heart' was presented by Low Kiok Chiang, while another, 'St Joseph' was presented by Low's company Kiam Hoa Heng. The Central Altar was presented by Chan Teck Hee and the stained glass panel, 'Blessed Virgin Mary' was presented by Chan's firm, Buan Hoa Seng respectively (see 'Silver Jubilees of the Church of the Sacred Heart', *Catholic News*, available at < [http://catholicnews.sg/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=3907:silver-jubilee-of-the-church-of-the-sacred-heart&catid=220:church-of-the-sacred-heart&Itemid=129](http://catholicnews.sg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3907:silver-jubilee-of-the-church-of-the-sacred-heart&catid=220:church-of-the-sacred-heart&Itemid=129) > (accessed 2 Mar 2015).

nity in this matter: and that a sub-committee consisting of Messrs Chong Yong Khay and Leong Man Sau be appointed to assist the Chairman in carrying out the resolution.<sup>124</sup>

At this meeting of the delegates Mr Barnes stated that the Governor had already made a rule prohibiting these young girls from appearing in the singing halls in Kreta Ayer and in public eating houses and other licensed premises, but to make the prohibition effective the co-operation and assistance of the Chinese clubs must be secured. The meeting concluded with a promise of assistance in the direction indicated.

Mr Leong Man Sau was a native of Canton and came to Singapore at the age of 12, his father, Leong Fong Cheong, being engaged here in the business of [433] importing and exporting timber of all kinds, an industry which gives employment to a large number of men. He received his English education at St Andrew's Mission School and at Raffles Institution. He succeeded to his father's business, which he considerably extended, chartering sailing vessels and steamers for the transport of timber and planks. He became a naturalised British subject, and the keen interest he took in public affairs was shown by his serving on the Chinese Advisory Board,<sup>125</sup> the Po Leung Kuk, and as a visitor to the St John's Island quarantine station. He acted as secretary of the Kwong Wai Sui Society,<sup>126</sup> which was formed in 1906 and is a Cantonese institution established, on Mr Barnes's advice, for the purpose of controlling and managing the temples, schools and burial grounds belonging to the clans from Kwong-chau province (Cantonese), Wai-chau province (Hakka) and Sui-hing province (Cantonese), and for carrying out religious functions. Although of a modest and reserved disposition, he was a pleasant personality to all who have

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124 See 'Singing Girls: Efforts to Exclude Them from the Chinese Clubs' *Straits Times*, 24 Jun 1908, at 8.

125 See 'Meeting of the Chinese Advisory Board' *Straits Times*, 12 Apr 1902, at 4.

126 See 'The Cantonese Hospital' *Straits Times*, 31 Jul 1911, at 7.

known him in business or social relations. He died on the 25th September 1916.<sup>127</sup>

During this year Dr Sun Yat Sen, the great Chinese revolutionary leader, who became President of the Provisional Republican Government in China in January 1912, arrived here from Hanoi, from which place the Chinese Government had tried to induce the French Government to expel him: and on his arrival in this Colony the Peking authorities tried on the same game, but failed. Dr Sun had visited these parts on previous occasions, and, in the guise of a spectacled pedlar with knick-knacks in his wallet, he had travelled through the Malay Peninsula and the Straits Settlements, preaching the tenets of his belief that the people of China should 'rebel' in the true sense of the word, and attracting not only the labouring coolies in the plantations but the masters as well, getting the support of the latter in the form of large sums of money to further the campaign he had in hand. Dr Sun passed through [434] Singapore at the end of 1911 en route for Shanghai, after the revolution in China had become *un fait accompli*, and met with an enthusiastic reception from his fellow-countrymen of both sexes resident in Singapore. In 1894 Dr Sun Yat Sen had joined a society in Canton of some eighteen prominent members whose object was the mending or ending of the Manchu monarchical power. Of the eighteen members, seventeen were beheaded shortly after the inception of the idea, and Sun was the only member of the original

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127 See 'Death' *Straits Times*, 26 Sep 1916, at 6. Leong died at his home at 10 Tiverton Lane, off Killiney Road, aged 50. Some time before 1898, Leong started the auctioneering firm of Leong Man Sau & Company. In June 1898, he admitted Yow Hong Teck into the business as a partner, and the firm was known as Leong Man Sau & Co, Chop Hong Kee, and was located at 9 Almeida Street. Up till this time, Yow had also been an auctioneer and estate agent, operating under the style of Hong Tek Chye & Co at 22 Raffles Place. This partnership was dissolved in 1901 when Yow left the partnership and Leong continued the business at 34 North Canal Road and 23 Raffles Place under his own name, Leong Man Sau (see 'Notice' *Singapore Free Press*, 21 May 1901, at 2). In 1913, Leong was appointed a Municipal Commissioner (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 2 Aug 1913, at 8). Leong was buried at Bidadari Cemetery.





Dr Sun Yat Sen's Visit to Singapore, 1905

'conspirators' left to carry on the great upheaval. On the 12<sup>th</sup> February 1912 the Manchu Emperor abdicated and Sun Yat Sen's purpose and life-work was accomplished.<sup>128</sup>

In 1908 the Chinese reformers here were divided into two rival factions - the Kang Yu Wei party, represented by the *Union Times* newspaper, and the Sun Yat Sen party, represented by the *Chong Shing Yat Pao*. These two parties showed their feelings of animosity against each other at a meeting, in July, of the Anti-opium Society, presided over by Dr Lim Boon Keng. The disturbance began when the Editor of the *Union Times* digressed from the opium question and appealed for general co-operation with the Chinese Government in its attempts at reform, which was the attitude of the Kang Yu Wei party; and the meeting broke up in confusion.<sup>129</sup>

At the Prize Distribution of the Methodist Girls' School in Short Street in December 1908, Mr JB Elcum, the Director of Public Instruction, tendered the following advice to Straits-born Chinese. 'This school', he said,

... is the only girls' school doing what some of the Penang and Peninsular schools are doing in educating Asiatic girls in the higher classes. At the last examination, there were three Chinese girls in the Cambridge Junior. I wish I could impress upon the Straits-born Chinese in Singapore that they can [435] never be a well-educated community unless they pay as much attention to the education of their girls as of their boys.<sup>130</sup>

Towards the close of the year Thong Chong Fee, the proprietor of the well-known and oldest Chinese firm of tailors and general outfitters in North Bridge Road, died at the age of 73, and his remains were

128 [Song: Dr Cantlie's *Life of Sun Yat Sen*]. See James Cantlie & C Sheridan Jones, *Sun Yat Sen and the Awakening of China* (London: Fleming H Revell, 1912).

129 See 'The Disturbance at the Anti-Opium Meeting' *Straits Times*, 4 Jul 1908, at 8.

130 'Girls Entertain: Annual Prize Distribution of Short Street School' *Straits Times*, 22 Dec 1908, at 7. Song quotes Elcum in the first person while the report is in the third person.

conveyed from his residence at Balestier Road to the Tanjong Pagar Docks for interment in his native city in Kwangtung province.<sup>131</sup> Mr Chong Fee came to Singapore in the 'Fifties, and the original firm of Chong Fee, Gee Chong & Co in High Street, established in 1860, used to display on its signboard the fact that it had had the distinguished patronage of Sir William Robinson and other Governors of the Colony. The partnership was dissolved, and the business was continued by Mr Chong Fee as sole proprietor under the style of Chong Fee & Co. One of his sons is Mr Thong Siong Lim, who has taken a keen interest in public affairs, being President of the Yin-sin Mandarin School, a member of committee of the Po Leung Kuk,<sup>132</sup> and a visitor to the Quarantine Camp at St John's Island and of the Reformatory. He was made a JP in 1913, and also serves on the Chinese Advisory Board as one of the representatives of the Cantonese community.<sup>133</sup>

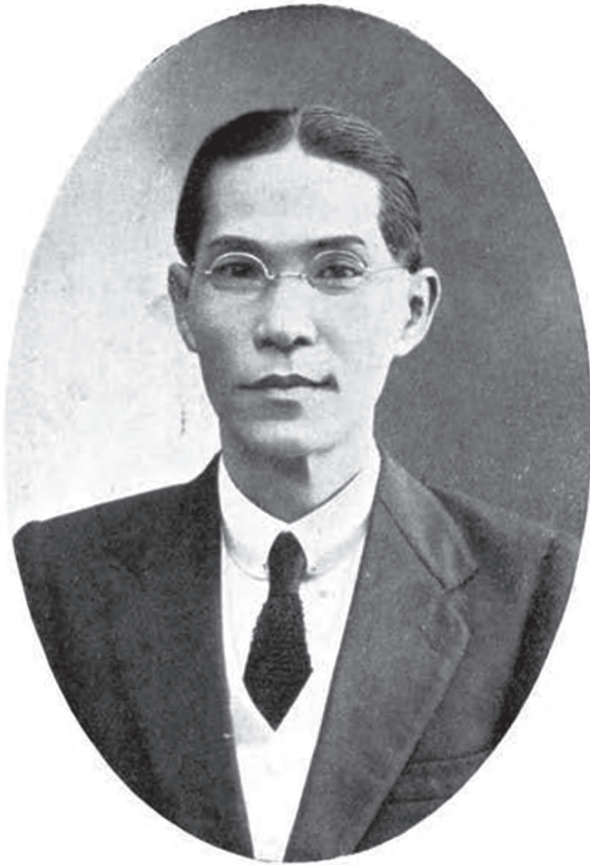
The *Straits Chinese Annual*, published in January 1909 in aid of the Endowment Fund of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School, under the editorship of Mr Song Ong Siang, was the first and only publication of its kind. With the exception of a few copies, the whole edition of 1,500 copies was disposed of, and the Fund benefited to the extent of more than \$700. The *Straits Times* gave the following review:

It is not a diary or book of dates, but a literary production of rare variety and interest. The Editor is to be congratulated on the number and variety of the contributions he has received. There are poems, stories – some of them charmingly illustrative of Chinese [436] thought and home-life – and one or two articles on grave subjects such as that by Dr Lim Boon Keng on 'Race Deterioration in the Tropics'. A word of praise must be given also to the illustrations (eight pages of lithographed sketches) which have been supplied by Mr Low Kway Soo, who has a keen appreciation of the humours that can be got out of black-and-white work. One or two things in the *Annual* deserve the attention of the Government – for

131 See 'The Late Mr Chong Fee' *Straits Times*, 18 Dec 1908, at 7.

132 See 'The Late Mr Chong Fee' *Straits Times*, 18 Dec 1908, at 7.

133 See 'Advisory Boards' *Singapore Free Press*, 17 Mar 1917, at 7.



Thong Siong Lim

instance, the references in that headed 'Nearer Home' to the quarantine arrangements and the inadequacy of provision for the comfort and privacy of the women. The Ancient History of Singapore and Malacca is told by Mr HH Norris and has quite a romantic interest. We hope to see future issues of this excellent magazine.<sup>134</sup>

Although published just ten years ago, one now hardly ever comes across this *Annual*: nevertheless, a fresh perusal of its 100 pages of literary matter, representing the labours of a number of contributors generously and voluntarily undertaken for a laudable purpose, makes one regret that the Straits Chinese community did not give encouragement to the Editor and his willing helpers to produce any more *Annals*.

There is an interesting short article in that magazine by the Rev W Murray on Straits Chinese Clubs. The following passages are quoted:

For those whose conception of life outside the hours of necessary work is entertainment and frivolity, quite a number of clubs exist. People who expect to contribute in any important sense to the progress of humanity and who treat their own future with reasonable respect can only have a limited place for clubs of this character: and no place at all for clubs in which the methods of passing time and spending money demoralise life. ... What is conspicuously wanting among the Straits Chinese is any genuine interest in clubs which aim at moral and intellectual improvement: clubs which might help to create interest in things which affect the community or the colony, or the progress of the world in general: clubs which might pre-[437]pare the Straits Chinese for acquiring that position in the public life of the Colony which properly belongs to those who form the really permanent element in its population, and who are increasing year by year in number.<sup>135</sup>

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134 See 'Straits Chinese Annual' *Straits Times*, 3 Feb 1909, at 7.

135 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

After referring to clubs like the Chinese Christian Association and the Singapore Purity Alliance, which have a serious and lofty aim, he concludes:

Never will the Straits Chinese receive their proper place as an important section of the British Empire and as helpers in human progress until they set a nobler ideal before them than a study of their clubs suggests. And when that time comes – as we hope it soon may – it will be found that those spending time and means for the benefit of their fellows have been doing an imperishable service for the whole community of the Straits Chinese.

In January 1909 was published the Report<sup>136</sup> (consisting of 1,200 printed pages) of the Opium Commission appointed in July 1907 by the Governor, to inquire into:

- (1) The extent to which excessive indulgence in the smoking of opium prevails in our Straits Settlements.
- (2) Whether the smoking of opium (a) in moderation, (b) in excess, has increased in our said Settlements.
- (3) The steps that should be taken by Government to minimise and eventually to eradicate the evils arising from the smoking of opium in our said Settlements.

The Commissioners, six in number, represented all shades of opinion and variety of experience. They were the Hon Mr John Anderson (Chairman), the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, the Hon Dr DJ Galloway, Rev Dr Oldham, Dr WR Middleton and Mr EFH Edlin.

The specific findings were as follows:

- (1) We find that the vast majority of smokers in- [438] dulge to an extent that may properly be called moderate, and that excessive indulgence occurs only in isolated instances.

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136 Opium Commission of the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States, *Proceedings of the Commission to Inquire into Matters Relating to the Use of Opium in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1908).

- (2) We find that there has been no increase in the prevalence of the habit, and in this we include use in moderation and use in excess during the past decade.
- (3) We do not find it proved that the evils arising from the use of opium have in any way increased during the past decade. We consider, however, that the circumstances surrounding the use of opium justify the Government in maintaining a closer and stricter control over it, and we, therefore, recommend that the present system of farming the opium revenue be abolished and that a Government monopoly of the preparation and distribution of chandu be substituted.

We further consider that steps should be taken by the Government to suppress the use of opium in brothels.

We recommend that improvement should be made in the arrangements of existing opium shops, but we consider there is no necessity or justification for the abolition of such shops.

We recommend that the access of all women to licensed opium shops be prohibited, and we further recommend that the sale of chandu to all women and to children under 18 years of age be made an offence.

We consider that the price of chandu at present obtaining in the Straits Settlements is sufficiently prohibitive, but we are of opinion that the price in the Federated Malay States should be gradually raised to the price obtaining in the Colony.<sup>137</sup>

From the Report it will be seen that, within the period covered by the inquiry (1898-1906), the average percentage of revenue derived from opium was 49 per cent of the total revenue of the Colony; fluctuating between 43.3 per cent in 1900 and 59.1 per cent in 1904.

Tracing the origin of the opium-smoking habit, the Report stated that Chinese practitioners frequently recommended it and that the habit was frequently acquired from a commencement of its use in brothels.

The Commissioners were unable to recommend Govern- [439] ment to legislate for the registration of smokers (1) owing to the migratory

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137 'Specific Findings' *Straits Times*, 6 Jan 1909, at 7.

character of the population, the effect of registration tending to check Chinese immigration, which would prejudice the prosperity of the Colony and the Federated Malay States, and (2) owing to the enormous organisation required to carry out the working of a registration scheme effectively, involving undue interference with the liberty of the subject.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE TENTH DECADE (1909-19)

#### FIRST PART

THE evils of *chap-ji-ki* gambling, so attractive to the Nyonyas (Straits-Chinese women), came before public notice in 1909, more particularly through proceedings taken in two police-court cases. In the first case, eleven nyonyas (including the banker) and the occupier were arrested on the top floor of a house which was then under seizure and in charge of the bailiff's watchmen. The Deputy Public Prosecutor mentioned that a complaint had been made to him by a very well-known gentleman that his wife, who had had jewellery valued at \$50,000, had lost it all in *chap-ji-ki* and had had it replaced by paste and cheap imitation. The stakers pleaded guilty and were fined \$25 each, or, in default, two weeks' imprisonment, which the magistrate said would be made 'simple' on the application of their husbands. At the same time he advised the husbands and relatives not to pay the fines, but to let the women undergo imprisonment. The press reports were silent as to whether any of the husbands took the magistrate's advice. The occupier was sent to prison for eight months, while the banker was fined \$1,500.

The other event was known as the 'Wong-tye-sin' case. Wong-tye-sin was a god of fortune which had come into prominence by prescribing medicine during an outbreak of the plague in Canton some fifteen years before. This god had been brought to Singapore and four shrines had been opened, whither a large number of [441] *nyonyas* went for advice as to lottery tickets. Hong Wan Kai, who was in charge of the house in Cheng Cheok Street which had been fitted up for the purpose of giving oracles, was charged with pretending or professing to tell fortunes. For the defence, it was stated that there was a large temple to this god in Canton, and that the ignorant people among the

Chinese here believed in the oracle and consulted it about medicines, births, marriages and deaths, and this was a part of their religious faith which should not be interfered with. The accused was convicted and fined \$50.<sup>1</sup> He appealed with the result that in place of the fine he was sentenced to two months' rigorous imprisonment. Mr Justice Sercombe Smith, who heard the appeal, said that as the appellant had been convicted before for telling fortunes for his own profit, his lordship intended to do something which would put a stop to this kind of masquerading under the garb of religion and of imposing on the poor Chinese of Singapore.<sup>2</sup>

The strife which had been going on for two years between the *Union Times* (the organ of the loyalists) and the *Chong Shing Yat Pao* (the organ of the revolutionists) culminated in several suits in the Supreme Court in which the rival newspapers claimed and counter-claimed large sums of money as damages for libel, but by the good offices of the judge, Sercombe Smith, J, the parties were able to arrive at an amicable settlement.<sup>3</sup>

On the 12th February 1909 the *Union Times* entertained a number of guests at 'Eng Ho House', Cairnhill Road, the residence of the manager, Mr Boey Chuan Poh. Music and singing were provided by the Cornwall Minstrels. During supper, Dr Murray Robertson, on behalf of Mr Boey Chuan Poh, gave a hearty welcome to the guests, and among the several speakers responding was Dr SC Yin, who emphasised the great influence exercised by the Press for good or evil, and declared that the policy of the *Union Times* had always been to uphold the British Government and to create [442] the best possible feeling between the

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1 See 'Unlucky Fortune Teller' *Straits Times*, 29 Dec 1909, at 7.

2 Ibid.

3 See 'Chinese Libel Suit' *Singapore Free Press*, 12 Mar 1909, at 8. In this article, it was reported that Mr Justice Smith had told the parties that 'it would be a very sensible thing for the parties to settle the matter' and that he 'would be happy to see an ending of the case, and asked Counsel and the parties concerned into consultation in his room.'

large mercantile communities of English and Chinese in Singapore, and, by doing so, its influence could produce nothing but good.

The Singapore Social Purity Union held its first annual meeting in March,<sup>4</sup> at which the President, Mr Chew Cheng Yong,<sup>5</sup> spoke of the success of the new institution, the membership having increased from 3 to 75. The Union was sending out literature, constantly, in considerable quantities and had distributed nearly 500 tracts on social purity during the year. The sore point with the officials was that the Government had declined to exempt the Society from registration.

The heavy secretarial work during the ten years of the existence of this Union was undertaken by Mr Goh Hood Keng, who is the first Straits-born Chinese to enter the local ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was born in February 1886, being the eldest son of Mr Goh Kim Swee,<sup>6</sup> a Straits-born Chinese – a staunch Buddhist, who had regular times for prayer every day and brought the young lad up in the midst of a religious atmosphere. Mr Hood Keng says of himself:

At the age of seven I was put in the Anglo-Chinese School for my education, and while I was there I came under Christian influence and teaching. Being of a religious turn of mind, I naturally was anxious to know what this new religion was that the missionaries had come all the way from America to offer to the people here. As I

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4 See 'Social Purity Union' *Singapore Free Press*, 1 Mar 1909, at 5.

5 Chew was a teacher at the Anglo-Chinese School and married another teacher, Tan Siok Kim (eldest daughter of Tan Keong Keng) (see *Straits Times*, 2 Jan 1906 at 5). He was a lay pastor and teacher in the Methodist mission and his son, Dr Benjamin Chew (1907–1994) became a well-known doctor and member of the Methodist community.

6 Goh Kim Swee died at the age of 76 at his home in Serangoon Road on 22 Mar 1921 (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 23 Mar 1921, at 8). He had spent over 50 years working with Robinson & Co and retired at the age of 73 on pension. He was survived by five sons (among whom were Hood Kee, Hood Keng, Hood Seng and Hood Kiat), one daughter and several grandchildren (see 'The Late Mr Goh Kim Swee' *Straits Times*, 28 Mar 1921, at 7).



Reverend Goh Hood Keng

made a study of the New Testament, and listened to the preaching of the gospel at the chapel exercises every morning in the school, I was gradually being convinced of the truth of Christianity. I found that what I needed most was some power outside of myself, that could come into my heart and enable me to live the right kind of life. I was painfully conscious of the fact that I was not the man I might have been, and I yearned to know of a way in which my sins might be blotted out, and I might be able to gain access to some power that was beyond me that [443] would help me to live the life I ought to live. I found that way revealed in Christianity. My parents at first misunderstood my motive in becoming a Christian, and consequently they persecuted me. But after I had lived the Christian life for two years in my home, my mother came up to me one day with tears in her eyes and said: 'Son, I wish you could be a Christian ten times over.' Shortly after my conversion, I felt called of God to tell others of His wondrous love and His power to save from sin. And so, for the last ten years, I have been preaching 'the gospel of the grace of God' and pointing men and women to Him who was the 'Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'. If life is more than meat and raiment, and a man's character is of greater value than his earthly possessions, then God has given me a great work to do, and I ask for none greater.<sup>7</sup>

Mr Hood Keng was ordained Deacon in February 1915, and took the Local Preachers' Course of the ME Church extending over four years, and, on completion of his theological studies, was ordained Elder in February 1919, and the title of Reverend was conferred on him. Since March 1916 he has been granted authority by the Government under the Christian Marriage Ordinance to perform marriage ceremonies.<sup>8</sup>

In aid of the Canton Flood Relief Fund and at the same time to spread the anti-opium movement, a company of wealthy Cantonese

7 See 'Rev Goh Hood Keng Talks About His Conversion' *Singapore Free Press*, 3 May 1935, at 11.

8 Beyond the Church, Goh was also active in the Straits Chinese community. In 1919, he was elected President of the Straits Chinese Literary Association, and in 1922, Vice-President of the Chinese Association (formed by the amalgamation of the Amateur Drawing Association (ADA) and the Straits Chinese Lit-

and Hokien amateurs, which had toured the FMS and Penang, gave two performances in March and at the Smith Street theatre hall to crowded houses. The prices for seats ranged from \$1 to \$15, while fans and refreshments were sold, and bouquets, presented to the leading actors, were auctioned and realised fabulous prices. The story of the play is that of a man in affluent circumstances who gradually squanders all his wealth and, as a result of the effects consequent upon excessive indulgence in the opium habit, reduces his wife and family to penury. The wife is an extremely pious lady who has never failed to pray daily in temples on the hills near her [444] home, and who is one day captured by a brigand and sold to a slave dealer. The hero, a wise and learned philosopher, coming to hear of her troubles, contrives to effect her rescue and sends her to Japan, where she is educated as a doctor. After a time she returns to her native city and chancing to meet her husband begging in the streets takes him home, and there, by means of, her medical knowledge, cures him of his opium habit: and they both live happily ever after.

On the 1st March, owing to the Singapore Opium Farmers being in arrears of payment of the monthly rent due to the revenues of the Colony, Mr Gibson of the Chinese Protectorate called at the Farm offices and formally took charge of the business on behalf of the Government as receiver and manager. This was the climax to a voluminous correspondence between the Farmers and the Government.<sup>9</sup> The po-

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erary Association) (see 'The Chinese Association' *Singapore Free Press*, 29 Aug 1922, at 12). In 1937, he was the first Asian Christian Minister to be appointed a Justice of the Peace (see 'New JPs for the Colony' *Singapore Free Press*, 10 Jun 1937, at 6; and 'First Christian Pastor JP' *Straits Times*, 22 Jun 1937, at 12). He died on 30 Jan 1961 at the Singapore General Hospital after a short illness, aged 72 (see 'Death of the Rev Goh Hood Keng' *Straits Times*, 31 Jan 1961, at 16) and was buried at Bidadari Cemetery (see 'Rev Goh: Big Crowd at Funeral' *Straits Times*, 1 Feb 1961, at 6).

9 See 'Opium and Spirit Farms' *Straits Times*, 2 Mar 1909, at 7.

sition taken up by the Farmers (Khaw Joo Choe,<sup>10</sup> AW Cashin,<sup>11</sup> Chea

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10 Also known as 'Kaw Joo Choe' or 'Khaw Joo Choo'. Khaw was born in Penang in 1869, the second son of Khaw Sim Khim and Lim Kim Teen (daughter of Penang ship owner, Lee Phee Choon). He studied at the Penang Free School and at age 18 entered the employment of the shipping firm, Koe Guan. He later left to work under the Siamese government as his family was well connected with the Siamese court. After eight years, he returned as Manager of Koe Guan where he remained for three years. He later took over Monthon Puket (Siamese Western State) Opium Farm, Chop Ban Huat Bee for two three-year terms. In the latter part of 1904, he came to Singapore and was appointed Director of the Singapore Opium Farm (Chop Sin Chin Ho Bee), a post he held till 1906 when the rights reverted to the Government. He then became Director of Chop Guan Hock Hin, the Singapore Opium and Spirit Farm (see Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 154–156). According to Carl Trocki, Khaw Joo Choe, 'together with a number of his relatives and others in the family network, had put together what appears to have been the largest and most wide-ranging group of opium farms on record' but the crash of 1904 ruined them and by 1908, he had been made a bankrupt (see, Carl A Trocki, 'Boundaries and Transgressions: Chinese Enterprise in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Southeast Asia' in Aihwa Ong & Donald Nonini (eds), *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 61–87, at 79–80. On the rise and fall of the Khaw family, see Jennifer W Cushman, *Family and State: The Formation of Sino-Thai Tin-Mining Dynasty* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991); see also, Wong Yee Tuan, 'Penang's Big Five Families and Southern Siam During the Nineteenth Century' in Michael J Montesano & Patrick Jory (eds), *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008) at 201–213). Khaw died of a heart attack in 1925 in Penang on 28 Sep 1925 (see *Singapore Free Press*, 2 Oct 1925, at 8).

11 Alexander William Cashin (1876–1947). Alexander Cashin's father, Joseph William Cashin (1843–1907) started out as a lawyer's clerk in 1867 and became a major property and plantation owner, as well as a partner in an opium and spirit farm (see, Lee Kip Lin, *The Singapore House 1819–1942* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1998) at 210–211). When the elder Cashin died, Alexander took over his father's estates and increased the family's property holdings, especially in Serangoon and Punggol, and he owned houses in Haig Road, Grange Road, and some 400 shophouses all over Singapore. Cashin also took over his father's interest in the Johore Opium Farm. In 1914, he married Sarah Feldblum, a Romanian Jew whom he met on his travels.

Teow Eang<sup>12</sup> and Choa Giang Thye) was that certain unforeseen causes had operated prejudicially on their income. They claimed that these causes largely arose from the action of the Government, and one of the chief causes in the fall in receipts was stated to be the Government's crusade against sale of opium in Chinese brothels. They alleged that, as soon as the Opium Commission was appointed, the various anti-opium organisations began to be extremely active and a determined campaign was carried on against the use of the drug by the circulation of a mass of anti-opium literature and the broadcast distribution of handbills and pamphlets. While admitting that the brothel sales were technically irregular, they claimed that the Government's action was inequitable in cutting off a valuable source of revenue, after having allowed the law on this matter to fall into desuetude for about twenty years, and they prayed for a substantial reduction in the rent payable by them or to be immediately relieved of the obligations under their contract. The Government reply was to decline to grant any remission [445] of rent or any relief, beyond permission, under certain conditions, to postpone payments in respect of arrears of rent. The result was the climax above referred to. Three days later, Mr Gibson was withdrawn, as arrangements had been made which were mutually satisfactory, and which enabled the farmers to conduct their business in a favourable manner until the end of 1909, when their three years' contract expired.<sup>13</sup>

At the close of the annual Singapore Bisley in April, the prizes were presented at the SRA club-house at Balestier by the Lady Evelyn Young. Sergt Teow Keong Hee won the NRA medal, Sergt Tan Chow

12 Also spelt 'Cheah Teow Eang', 'Chia Teow Eang', and 'Chia Teow Yang'. Chea was born in Penang and was an opium and spirit farmer for three consecutive terms in Chop Chin Hoe Bee, Sin Chin Hoe Bee and Guan Hock Hin. He died on 1 Jan 1923 at his home at 142 Telok Ayer Street aged 66 and was survived by his wife, two sons (one of whom was Cheah Hong Gan) and two daughters; he was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery (see 'Death of Mr Cheah Teow Eang' *Straits Times*, 2 Jan 1923, at 8).

13 See 'Opium Farm Crisis' *Straits Times*, 5 Mar 1909, at 7.



Kim secured fifth place for the Governor's Cup, while the other Chinese prize-winners were Tan Piah Eng, Chee Cheng Hai<sup>14</sup> and Lim Chin Hin.<sup>15</sup> All these were NCOs in the Chinese Company, who were so keenly interested in rifle shooting that they had their own Fulton's rifles, with aperture sights.

Teow Keong Hee was born in 1872 and was educated at Raffles Institution. He entered the service of Messrs Behr & Co in 1889 and has been the chief storekeeper of that firm since that time.<sup>16</sup> He was one of the original members of the Chinese Co SVI, and by hard and consistent work he steadily rose in the ranks, becoming Sergeant-Major in 1916. In August 1917, on a vacancy as Platoon Commander being caused through the resignation of Lieut Seah Cheng Joo, Mr Teow Keong Hee was granted his commission as 2nd Lieutenant, and passed his examination early in 1919.<sup>17</sup> During the mutiny he was Sergeant in charge of the Chinese Guard at Government House, and was detailed, along with ex-Sergeant Chan Ngo Choo, for special duty in the shape of house-to-house search in certain districts for mutineers belonging to the 5th Madras Light Infantry. Mr Teow Keong Hee was an excellent rifle shot, and on several occasions got into the final stage of the Governor's Cup competition at the SRA annual meetings, besides winning a number of prizes in various shooting events.

[446] On the 31st May fire broke out in the Victoria Sawmill, Sumbawa Road, owned by Mr Ngo Bee Chan,<sup>18</sup> sole proprietor of chop

14 See 'Singapore Bisley' *Straits Times*, 26 Apr 1909, at 8.

15 Lim Chin Hin died on 7 Jun 1911 at his home at 40 Queen Street at the age of 51. At the time of his death, he was said to be one of the oldest members of the Chinese Company, Singapore Volunteer Infantry, and held the rank of Quarter Master Sergeant. Lim was given a military funeral and was buried at the Bukit Timah Cemetery (see 'Lim Chin Hin, SVI' *Singapore Free Press*, 9 Jun 1911, at 5).

16 See 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 4 Sep 1917, at 6.

17 See *Singapore Free Press*, 1 Sep 1917, at 7.

18 This refers to Chan Ngo Bee. Chan himself may well have changed the order of his name to western naming convention which puts the family name last as he

Seng Chiang & Co. The early appearance of the re brigade on the scene saved the premises from entire destruction, for the large stock of planks and the huge piles of trimming, only suitable for rewood, would have made one of the hottest res Singapore ever knew.<sup>19</sup> Mr NB Chan is one of the enterprising characters among the Straits Chinese community and still owns a sawmill and ice factory at Lavender Street. He is a Director of the Eastern United Assurance Corporation, Ltd.<sup>20</sup> His grandfather came from China, first settling down in Malacca and marrying there, and then coming on to Singapore, where he did import business under the chop Guan Chiong with China ports, the goods being brought down in a number of junks of which he was owner. Towards the end of his life he returned to China and died there. Mr Chan's father, Chan Joo Geok, was born in Singapore, and as a young man he was in the Chinese military service during the time that the late Mr Chan Kim Boon was a tutor in the Foochow arsenal.

A younger brother of Mr NB Chan deserves a place in these records. Chan Ngo Choo enrolled in the Chinese Company, SVI, in its early days and by steady application and hard work rose to the rank of Sergeant, retiring after more than ten years' service.<sup>21</sup> At the outbreak of the mutiny of the 5th Madras Light Infantry on the 15th February 1915, he offered his services, which were utilised in the dangerous work of visiting houses suspected of harbouring fugitive mutineers. He was fearless in the discharge of this duty, and, sometimes, in the company of Sergt Teow Keong Hee, but oftener all alone, in various disguises and armed with a revolver, he would venture out on this

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is referred to in various newspaper reports as Ngo Bee Chan, rather than Chan Ngo Bee. See for example, the Bankruptcy Notice No 606 of 1931 which refers to the 'Estate of Ngo Bee Chan alias Chan Ngo Bee', see *Singapore Free Press*, 23 Jan 1932, at 2

19 See 'Saw Mill Ablaze' *Straits Times*, 31 May 1909, at 7.

20 Chan was made a bankrupt sometime in 1931 and died soon after (see *Singapore Free Press*, 23 Jan 1932, at 2).

21 In 1909, Chan was listed as a Corporal (see 'SVC Orders' *Straits Times*, 5 Feb 1909, at 8).

quest. Both the Governor and the General recognised the value of such work by making references to it in their public utterances.

The public examination in bankruptcy of Chan Im [447] Neo, the widow of the late Ho Ann Kee, in July 1909, showed how a good business owned by an illiterate and ignorant Chinese lady came to grief in the course of five years.<sup>22</sup> Ho Ann Kee, a Straits-born, after experience gained in the sawmills of Wee Eng Wee, chop Sin Hup Hin, and of chop Koo Tye, launched out on his own account in 1893, and built up an extensive timber mill covering about seven acres of ground, along the Kallang river front. Timber was obtained from Tebing Tinggi on the east coast of Sumatra and conveyed in tongkangs to the firm's wharves. The firm, which was carried on under the style of chop Sin Moh, did a large export trade with Shanghai and Hongkong in uncut woods, in addition to its main business of supplying local building contractors with seriah and poonah planks. Ho Ann Kee died in 1894,<sup>23</sup> leaving an estate worth about \$250,000 dollars.<sup>24</sup> Out of her share, Chan Im Neo acquired the sawmill, which was heavily mortgaged by her brother,<sup>25</sup> who acted as her agent, in order to provide the funds for running the concern.<sup>26</sup> She foolishly lent money to some relatives and became surety to others, was engaged in a lawsuit over her father's life insurance, at the end of three years sold the sawmill to her son-in-law,

22 See 'Notices' *Singapore Free Press*, 9 Jun 1909, at 2; and 'Bankruptcy Court' *Singapore Free Press*, 12 Jun 1909, at 7.

23 Ho died on 10 May 1904 after contracting what appeared to be cholera (see *Singapore Free Press*, 11 May 1904, at 2).

24 See 'The Widow's Mite' *Singapore Free Press*, 3 Jul 1909, at 5; and 'Nonya's Troubles' *Straits Times*, 3 Jul 1909, at 7.

25 Chan's elder brother was Chan Choon Choo, a former storekeeper at Gadoneau & Co who became Chan's business manager upon her husband's death (see, 'Bankruptcy Court' *Singapore Free Press*, 3 Jul 1909, at 5).

26 See 'Bankruptcy Court' *Singapore Free Press*, 3 Jul 1909, at 5; and 'Nonya's Troubles' *Straits Times*, 3 Jul 1909, at 7.

who paid off her debts in exchange for it, and in 1909 found herself so hopelessly involved that she was forced into the Bankruptcy Court.<sup>27</sup>

The Singapore team (which included two Chinese marksmen in the persons of Tan Chow Kim and Tan Soo Bin), by making the record score of 955 on the 29th October 1909, became the first holder of the Interport trophy (a handsome shield procured in 1908 with the joint contributions of the three ports of Hongkong, Shanghai and Singapore). The shield has decorated the entrance hall of Government House every year in which this port has taken the first place in the Interport Rifle match, while miniature replicas of the shield are presented to each member of the winning team.

The departure of Mr WD Barnes, the Secretary for Chinese Affairs, in January 1910, to be British Resi-[448]dent at Negri Sembilan, afforded occasion to the leading Cantonese merchants of Singapore to present him with an address in Chinese characters printed on silk.

The chronic financial straits of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School, owing to the refusal of the wealthy Chinese to give the institution their favour, patronage and support, made it necessary for the Directors to devise various ways and means for getting money by the offer of a *quid pro quo*. Hence in February 1910, during the Chinese New Year season, a variety entertainment was given at the Victoria Theatre and was well supported. The orchestra, under Mr Oswald Richards, contributed largely to the success of the show. The most important item was a comic drama, *Look Before You Leap*, performed by Straits Chinese, the leading part being taken by Mr Low Kway Soo, and 'such dramatic skill as he displayed is something unusual among the non-professional Chinese and deserves the warmest praise'. The closing scene was a tableau representing British troops storming a Boer position, which was enacted by members of the Chinese Co SVI.<sup>28</sup>

The year 1910 was remarkable for the large number of limited companies floated to acquire privately owned rubber plantations situ-

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27 Ibid.

28 See 'Chinese Girls' School Entertainment' *Straits Times*, 24 Feb 1910, at 8.



The Singapore Interport Team in 1909 (top), and 1910 (below)



ate in the various Settlements of the Colony and in the FMS. A number of companies was also formed in London to acquire local rubber estates already incorporated as limited liability companies under the Companies Ordinance, 1889. The Chinese as rubber planters, company promoters, or speculators, came in for a large share of the prosperity that then prevailed over Malaya.

The great boom in the rubber industry naturally produced writers on the subject of the introduction of rubber planting in Malaya. To correct the inaccurate statements made by these writers, Mr HN Ridley, Director of the Botanical Gardens, Singapore, published in the June number of the *Straits and FMS Agriculture Bulletin* an authentic historical account of this industry in Malaya. In 1876, twenty-two seedlings were received at the Botanic Gardens, Singapore, from Kew by Mr Murton, then head of the Gardens, and some were planted in the Economic Gardens, Singapore, while nine were planted at Kuala Kangsar, Telok Anson and Matang when Mr Murton went on a trip to Perak in October 1877. On his arrival here in 1888, Mr Ridley began to interest himself in the rubber block in the Economic Gardens and in the tapping operations. He persistently advocated the planting of para rubber as a crop of commercial value, but found great difficulty in persuading anyone to take up its cultivation. It is said that it was his practice to stuff seeds in the pockets of planters and others, begging them to make a trial: and among planters he earned the sobriquet of 'Mad Ridley', or 'Rubber Ridley'. At length he induced Mr Kindersley to make a trial. Mr Tan Chay Yan of Malacca followed in his wake, and, according to Mr Ridley, Mr Tan Chay Yan was the first practical rubber planter in the Colony, and his rubber grown at Bukit Lintang, Malacca, was exhibited at the Malacca Show in 1898. This marked the first general interest in the product, and it was only then that any large demand for seeds sprang up and rubber cultivation all over Malaya became an accomplished fact.

The annual Singapore Bisley meeting was held in March 1910. The Governor's Cup was won by Corpl Chater with the score of 317, and Messrs Tan Chow Kim, Song Ong Siang, Teow Keong Hee and

Tan Soo Bin, members of the Chinese Company, took 5th, 6th, 10th and 11th places respectively in this competition. Sergt Tan Chow Kim also carried off the NRA medal which entitles its holder to compete for the Prince of Wales Cup at Bisley, and took second place in the Singapore Aggregate.

At the Legislative Council meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> April, the Hon Dr Galloway moved his motion:

That the unof cial members of this Council, having received and taken into consideration a petition from [450] 92 European rms, 140 European bankers, lawyers, professional men, etc, 300 Chinese and Chinese rms including the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and 119 Indian and Mohamedan rms, requesting them to approach Government with a view to action being taken to free the trade of this Colony from the effects of shipping conferences, recommend that a Bill be introduced at an early date to deal with the matter.<sup>29</sup>

The Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim said that the motion had the entire sympathy and the support of the Chinese community. A vigorous defence was put up by the Hon Mr Darbishire, who was the only dissentient on the voting. The Governor, in winding up the debate, said:

The point of view from which Government must consider this question is that of the producer. Before the conference there was competition in freights and the bulk of produce was carried at rates the maximum of which never reached the minimum existing since conference times. It is claimed that the conference provided stability, dispatch and tonnage, but to freight of the character of produce these things are of no practical advantage. The position of our producers has been seriously affected. ... If we had been left alone, with free competition in freights, probably our population would have been still greater than it is now, because the producer would have had greater inducement to produce, and have been able to reap a greater reward. After all, the merchant is but the agent of the producer. Government has to encourage permanent settlement and must do this by making it profitable to engage in ag-

29 See 'The Shipping Ring' *Singapore Free Press*, 12 Apr 1910, at 8.



Singapore Team at Bisley, 1910



riculture. The actual result of the conference methods has been to discourage production and settlement, and to enhance those difficulties of encouraging settlement which already exists. This is one of the main reasons why Government feels itself bound to express sympathy with the resolution.<sup>30</sup>

On the 2nd August the Attorney-General moved the second reading of the Freight and Steamship Bill, [451] which was seconded by Mr Tan Jiak Kim. Once again Mr Darbishire spoke as the champion of the Shipping Conference. The Governor frankly admitted that –

this outrageous Bill was avowedly a weapon of war directed against a combination which had been condemned by both the minority and the majority reports of the Royal Commission, a body consisting of men who occupied the front rank in the commerce and shipping of Great Britain, besides other men who had made a study of economic science and its effects on ordinary business. The Government had put that measure forward because they believed the war a justifiable one, and absolutely necessary in the interests of the Colony. The Government could accept no guarantee except the guarantee of free competition.<sup>31</sup>

The Bill passed its third reading with one dissentient vote, but on the 17th December, at a meeting of Council, the Colonial Secretary moved 'That this Council exempts from the operation of the Freight and Steamship Ordinance, 1910, all the Settlements of the Colony.' The Governor explained that the Ordinance had been sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who had advised its suspension until the Governor's return to England to negotiate with the Conference.

By the *Kitano Maru* on the 4<sup>th</sup> May, three 'Straits Produce' in the persons of Messrs Long, Galistan and Tan Chow Kim, left for England to take part in the NRA meeting at Bisley, the last-named gentleman providing press 'copy' in England. One correspondent was disappointed that no picturesque 'pigtail' adorned Mr Tan Chow Kim's head, and

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30 'His Excellency Replies' *Straits Times*, 3 Sep 1910, at 8.

31 Ibid.

that he did not appear in the flowing varicoloured robes of his native country. The *Daily Mail* representative gave a more personal touch:

A slim, khaki-clad figure lay for hours in the long grass of the Bisley ranges striving hard to understand the vagaries of the English winds. It was Tan Chow Kim, the first Chinaman to shoot at Bisley, and a [452] member of the Singapore team, who have travelled many thousands of miles to take part in the contest for the Empire Cup at the forthcoming meeting, which begins in the first week of July. Though he has been now in England a week, he has only twice left Bisley to visit London and see the sights. 'I must practise, practise', he said in excellent English. 'It is very difficult to shoot in England, so varying are the winds, so peculiar the vision. There is much work to do, and afterwards I shall play.' He promptly followed these remarks by scoring four bull's-eyes. 'Out in Singapore', he said, 'we think of England as a little island with a big heart, and that heart is London. For years I have dreamt of it, wondering about its immensity. Always my thoughts have been too small.'<sup>32</sup>

The Singapore team (of nine men) came fifth in the Empire Cup, and seventh in the Kolapore Cup. The latter match was evidently a close one, as only 56 points separated Singapore from the winning team (England).

The death of His Majesty King Edward VII, on the 6th May, was the occasion for keen and widespread sorrow in this Colony. In common with other communities and public bodies, the Straits Chinese British Association and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce sent telegrams of condolence and sympathy by the Straits Government to the Secretary of State for the Colonies for submission to His Majesty King George V. At the Memorial Service held on the 20th May at the Cathedral, there were present among the great congregation assembled to take part in spirit in the funeral obsequies of His late Majesty in London that day the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, Dr Lim Boon Keng, Messrs

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32 See 'Singapore at Bisley' *Straits Times*, 9 Jul 1910, at 7.

Lee Cheng Yan, Choa Giang Thye, Seah Liang Seah and Ching Keng Lee, and the members of the Chinese Advisory Board.

The seventh annual Agri-Horticultural Show on Raffles reclamation ground, Beach Road, was opened by the Governor, Sir John Anderson, on the 17th August, the fourth, fifth and sixth shows having been held at [453] Kwala Kangsar, Kwala Lumpor and Penang respectively. The Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim and Mr Yow Ngan Pan served on the Finance and General Purposes Committee, while on the various sub-committees were Messrs Choa Giang Thye (Agricultural Produce), Seah Liang Seah (Fruits, Flowers and Vegetables), Tan Boo Liat (Horses and Dogs), Ong Tek Lim, Low Long Teng and Tan Keng Hoon (Native Industries and Manufactures), and Tan Kheam Hock (Agricultural Implements, etc). The Governor had opened every Show since the first in 1904, and remarked that the first three Shows were more or less of an experimental nature. On this occasion, for the first time, the exhibition partook of an almost international character. He spoke at great length on the past history and the future prospects of rubber, and closed his remarks in these words:

We live in a most interesting time and in a most interesting country. There is no country under the British Flag which can show a more splendid record of uninterrupted progress during the time it has been under that protection. That has been largely due to the fact that the Government and the people have worked together, and, if we can but continue that co-operation in the same liberal and sympathetic spirit shown in the past, I am sure we shall transcend even that splendid record which has already been written on the page of history.<sup>33</sup>

The report that a Hylam woman had arrived in Singapore and was lodged in a house in Middle Road was the cause of an extraordinary disturbance on the 16th October. As it is against the Hylam customs to bring a Hylam woman into the Colony, there was great excitement among the Hylam house-boys and shopkeepers over this alleged grave

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33 See 'Agri-Horticultural Show' *Straits Times*, 17 Aug 1910, at 9.

breach of their customs. In the course of an hour some 2,000 of them had assembled in Middle Road, bent on getting hold of their victim. In spite of a denial by the tenant of the house, the crowd stormed the house and entered it only to find [454] that the 'woman in the case' had flown. The police appeared on the scene and with the assistance of some Eurasians and Malays arrested 79 of the storming party, who were later convicted and fined. The accused were told that, if they had a grievance, they ought to have gone to the Protector of Chinese and not to have taken the law into their own hands.

In October Messrs Tan Chow Kim and Song Ong Siang were in the team of ten riflemen representing Singapore in the triangular matches with Ceylon and Calcutta on the one hand and with Perak and Selangor on the other. On the 9th November they were in the Singapore team which made the net score of 968 in the Interport Rifle Match, in which Mr RE de Silva made 104, Sergt Tan Chow Kim 102 and Mr J Long 100.

Mr Tan Chow Kim was one of the original members of the Chinese Co SVI, and was one of the best specimens of the Chinese Volunteer. Born on the 19th September 1883, he was educated at Raffles Institution. Developing early into a crack rifle shot, he was the first Chinese Volunteer selected to shoot in the Singapore team for the Interport and similar matches, and won many prizes at the annual meetings of the Singapore Rifle Association. In 1913 he took second place in the Governor's Cup – the local counterpart of the King's Prize at Bisley. He attained a high standard of efficiency both as an NCO and as a Platoon Officer, and, although his eyes gave him much trouble when the Great War broke out, he stuck to his post and rendered efficient service during the whole period of the War and relinquished his commission only after the signing of the Armistice. He was popular with all ranks, and the Company has lost a capable and fine officer by his resignation.

A public meeting, held at the Memorial Hall on the 6<sup>th</sup> December to consider a proposal to perpetuate the memory of the late King (Edward VII), was attended by about eighty persons, including a fair

sprinkling of Straits Chinese.<sup>34</sup> Mr Seah Liang Seah seconded the [455] preliminary motion proposed by Mr DT Boyd that subscriptions be invited for a memorial. The Hon H Fort was the mover of the principal motion: 'That the memorial take the form of a scheme for extending the usefulness of the Medical School by providing a fund for the endowment of a professorship and lectureships, and, further, for new buildings.' He alluded to the fact that the Medical School had owed its initiation almost entirely to the enthusiasm and generosity of the Chinese community. During the five years of its existence, seven qualified medical practitioners and twenty-one hospital assistants had passed through the school. The permanent staff consisted of the Principal and the physiologist, with courses of lectures on certain subjects of the curriculum undertaken voluntarily by the medical profession, of official and unofficial; but with over 100 students in the school, more supervision and tutorial assistance were required than could then be provided.

The Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, in seconding Mr Fort's motion, emphasised the need of helping the authorities in their great efforts to improve the sanitary conditions under which the lower classes of the community lived. He said that, whenever an opportunity arose of educating the Chinese in matters of sanitation, they should take it. The only chance to give such education was to provide ample numbers of medical practitioners working on Western lines. The proposed memorial would add to the spread of sanitary education amongst the Asiatic population, and he looked to the whole community to respond to the call, heartily and liberally. Almost two years later, on the 23rd November 1912, Mr H Millard, Hon Secretary of the King Edward VII Memorial Fund, handed over to the Council of the school a cheque for the sum of \$124,855.87, to found a King Edward professorship, the holder of which should be appointed by the Council of the school and whose appointment, suspension or removal should not be subject to the approval of the Government.

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34 See 'King Edward Memorial' *Straits Times*, 7 Dec 1910, at 8.

The chairman at the [456] public meeting in 1910 had intimated that to found the professorship, probably \$120,000 would be required, and the representative committee then appointed (including Messrs Tan Jiak Kim, Cheong Quee Thiam, Low Long Teng, Yow Ngan Pan, Seah Liang Seah and Teo Sian Keng) spared no efforts to secure the sum which they had set out to get and were successful.

At a dinner at the Carlton Hotel, London, on the 25th June 1913, Sir John Anderson, who had retired from the governorship of the Colony, was presented with a replica of his portrait the original of which is now in the Victoria Memorial Hall. In replying to Mr Shelford's address, the late Governor made the following remarks on education:

I adopted the policy of encouraging missions which made education one of their principal objects, and I believe I left the Colony with double the number of school places existing when I went there. One of the things I will always look back to with much satisfaction, as having been inaugurated during my term of office, is the establishment of the SS and FMS Medical School. ... One of the most pleasing features connected with the Medical School was the public spirit displayed by our Chinese fellow-subjects. They opened their purses freely, with the result that the school has been from the start most successful. It has supplied a distinct want, a want that will continue to be more and more felt with the increase in the labour population necessitating a constantly increasing demand for the services of properly qualified medical officers.<sup>35</sup>

The year 1911 opened with the minds of the people in the Colony greatly exercised over the Income Tax Bill which had gone through its first reading at the Legislative Council meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 1910. The Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim had asked that the second reading might be put off for a time to afford an opportunity for full consideration.

On the 7th January 1911 the Chinese Chamber of Commerce held a public meeting to discuss the Income [457] Tax Bill, speeches being made by Mr Teo Sian Keng (President of the Chamber) and by Mr Liau

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35 'The Late Governor' *Straits Times*, 19 Jul 1913, at 9.

Chia Heng (Vice-President). The meeting decided to present a petition to the Governor in Council embodying the following requests:

- (a) That the Home Government be requested to forgo or materially reduce the military contribution in order to meet the deficiency occasioned by the shrinkage of the opium revenue which is the immediate result of the policy of the Home Government in gradually suppressing the opium traffic. If HE the Governor is of opinion that this suggestion is not adoptable,
- (b) That the proposed income tax be not proceeded with, and
- (c) That such additional revenue as it may be found necessary to raise should be procured firstly by an increased tax on chandu, secondly on liquors: and if the additional revenue thus obtained is still insufficient, then thirdly by the imposition of such a tax on tobacco, cigars and cigarettes as will produce the amount required.

The Singapore Chamber of Commerce held a special meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> January and unanimously carried a resolution protesting 'against any further taxation of the Colony until an assurance has been given by the Imperial Government that the Colony shall receive compensation equivalent to the loss of revenue which the local Government admit will result from the restrictive action arising from the policy of the Imperial Government regarding opium'. The Chairman quoted from the Report of the Opium Commission, which considered an income tax as an alternative source of revenue and which gave as its opinion that –

an income tax is perhaps the one that appeals at first sight most strongly as a substituted source of revenue, but the general opinion, and one that we desire to endorse, is that without some radical change in the conduct of the Chinese business – and the Chinese have [458] by far the greater share of the local commercial interests – such a tax would be so easily evaded in practice as to negative any prospects of considerable revenue to be derived from it.<sup>36</sup>

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36 'The Income Tax' *Straits Times*, 17 Jan 1911, at 7.

This was followed on the 24<sup>th</sup> January by a record public meeting at the Victoria Theatre, convened by the Singapore Branch of the Straits Settlements Association, and the Chinese, Malay, Indian and Arab communities were well represented, when resolutions expressing the strongest possible opposition were submitted and passed unanimously.

At the second reading of the Income Tax Bill in the Legislative Council on the 27<sup>th</sup> January (which was listened to, as happens on very rare occasions, by many members of the public, including several ladies), the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim placed before the Council the views of the Chinese community on that subject. He said that the Chinese looked upon an income tax as a 'blood-sucking' tax, and disliked and feared its imposition more than almost any form of taxation which could possibly be devised. Not more than 3 per cent of the total Chinese who, from time to time, came to the Straits Settlements settled permanently here, while the remaining 97 per cent formed a fleeting and migratory population. It was to the interest of the Colony and the FMS to attract as many Chinese as possible here as permanent settlers, or, at all events, as workmen and traders who would remain in the Malay Peninsula for a certain number of years and help on its prosperity and development. The Malay Peninsula had hitherto been very popular with China, because the people who came here knew that they had freedom and had no harassing interference from Government officials. The constant and harassing investigation of books entailed by an Income Tax Ordinance would assuredly operate to discourage the Chinese from settling here. There were other new sources of taxation to be exploited, e.g. tobacco and matches. Before 'this [459] unjust, unpopular and pernicious form of taxation is imposed', there should be a most careful inquiry into the fiscal resources of the Colony.

Another instance of Chinese appreciation of Europeans who have wrought for the common weal was shown by the addresses which were presented on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 1911 to the Hon Mr Hugh Fort and to the Hon Mr TS Baker on the eve of their retirement from the Colony. Both illuminated addresses were read by the Hon Mr Tan Jiak



Kim, who headed a deputation of the leading Chinese gentlemen. One part of the address to Mr Baker reads:

You have, in your capacity of legislator, viewed all questions from a standpoint of impartiality and have invariably shown yourself free from racial or social prejudice, dealing with every problem as affecting the well-being of the colony as a whole.

We regard your assumption of the office of chairman of the general committee of the King Edward VII Memorial Fund as a peculiarly fitting and appropriate termination to your public work here, and we would take this opportunity of assuring you that such memorial is an object of much concern and interest to the Chinese in the Colony who support it as evidence of their loyalty and patriotism and their appreciation of the justice and security of British rule.<sup>37</sup>

Mr Baker in reply said:

The Chinese in Singapore, with whom it has been my good fortune to come in contact, whether on public affairs or business affairs, during the five years I have lived amongst them, have proved themselves most honourable men, and I can truly say of them what was said by the late Sir Ewen Cameron, a former manager of our Bank at Shanghai, of the Chinese of that Settlement: 'their word is as good as their bond', and you, Mr Tan Jiak Kim, I consider a most worthy and eminently eligible person to represent that community on the Legislative Council of this Colony, proving [460] yourself always most zealous in their interests, and wise and sound in your opinions. I take this opportunity of congratulating you on having been selected by HE the Governor, to represent the Chinese community of the Straits Settlements at the approaching Coronation of HM King George V, which is one of the highest compliments that could possibly be paid to you and the community you represent.<sup>38</sup>

37 'Mr Fort and Mr Baker: Farewell to Distinguished Citizens' *Straits Times*, 23 Feb 1911, at 7.

38 *Ibid.*

To Mr Fort the Chinese paid this tribute:

We take this course which has not been usually followed because during the lengthy period in which you have lived amongst us we have noticed that your ability and your time have always been placed at the disposal of the public and that you have, often at great personal inconvenience, been unsparing in your efforts to further the interests of the Colony.

We would refer in particular to your work on the Legislative Council, in the future deliberations of which your judicial, dispassionate and impartial mind, your ripe judgment and your wide, varied and lengthy local experience will be very greatly missed. ... We wish to assure you that your personal participation in its debates as an opponent of the proposal to introduce an income tax to this Colony was highly gratifying to the Chinese community of all classes.<sup>39</sup>

Through the indefatigable efforts of Mr Phua Choon Hiang,<sup>40</sup> an enlightened Teochew trader, who had enlisted the sympathies of a number of his fellow-traders, the first Chinese (Chung Hua) Girls' School was opened on the 30<sup>th</sup> March at No 1 Tank Road, being premises owned by Mr Choon Hiang, and occupied free of rent for the purposes of the school. The primary object was to spread the knowledge of the Chinese language among the women and girls of Singapore. Three Chinese ladies were among the speakers at this function. The acting Chinese Consul-General, Mr Thai Seng Yin, presided over the proceedings and headed the list of subscriptions with a donation of \$500.<sup>41</sup> The hours of [461] study at this school were originally from 10 to 12 o'clock. Two years later, the number of pupils had increased to 70, and the school hours were lengthened to five: three hours for Chinese Mandarin lessons, and two hours for English. The management was under a strong and influential committee, including

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39 Ibid.

40 Also spelt 'Phua Choon Yang'. See *Straits Times*, 22 May 1912, at 16.

41 See 'List of Subscriptions for the School for Teaching Chinese (Mandarin) to Chinese Girls' *Weekly Sun*, 1 Apr 1911, at 5.

Messrs Ong Pang Kiat, See Teong Wah and Dr SC Yin. The headmistress was Miss Alice Yin (niece of Dr Yin), and to her energy, enthusiasm and tact the school owed much of its early success. There are now several Chinese Girls' Schools for the teaching of Mandarin Chinese and English, managed either by private individuals or by tribal sections of the Chinese community.

Mr Phua Choon Hiang was born in 1850 in the village of Phua Leng off Swatow. At the age of 16 he made his way to Singapore, after a perilous voyage of two months in a junk. He was not ashamed to own that he began his career as second cook at \$1.50 a month. Fetching twenty big buckets of water from a fountain and pounding paddy before cooking the rice at 5 a.m. formed part of his daily work. By steady and faithful service he later became the head cook in the household where he first got employment. At 21 he went to Pontian Kechil, where he ran a small provision store, but, after a year's working, the shop had to close down, owing to bad debts which he could not collect. For a time after this he led a precarious life. Then, with the loan of \$30

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42 See 'Chung Hua Girls' School' *Singapore Free Press*, 6 Feb 1915, at 10. Ong Pang Kiat (1856–1930) was also known as 'Heng Pang Kiat', 'Heng Peng Kiat', 'Heng Pong Kiat', 'Heng Pung Kiat', 'Heng Quee Ho', 'Hing Quee Ho', 'Heng Quee Hoe', 'Heng Pheow Kee' and 'Heng Chim Hak'. He came to Singapore from China around 1870 and was a prominent member of the Chinese community, serving as President of the Singapore Anti-Opium Society, and on the Committees of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Tuan Mong School, Chun Hua School, and Thong Chai Hospital. He was also a member of the Chinese Advisory Board (see 'Mr Heng Pang Kiat' *Straits Times*, 15 Jul 1930, at 19). He died on 7 May 1930 at his home at 28 Emerald Hill Road at the age of 75, survived by two wives, five sons (Yong Ker, Yong Khiang, Yong Pheow, Hong Pheow, and Chun Pheow), eight daughters and many grand- and great-grandchildren (see 'Domestic Occurrences' *Straits Times*, 9 May 1930, at 6).

43 See 'Chung Hua Girls' School' *Straits Times*, 27 Jan 1913, at 11. Miss Yin, who had been Headmistress since its founding in 1911, left for China in 1913 and one Miss Cook took over her position (see 'Chung Hua Girls' School, *Straits Times*, 24 Jan 1914, at 9). Yin must have been a very young headmistress, given that as of 1909, she was still studying in Form 6 at Raffles Girls' School (see 'Raffles Girls' School' *Straits Times*, 5 Mar 1909, at 8). Today the school is known as Zhonghua Secondary School.

from a friend, he became a pedlar, and was able to save small sums of money which were remitted monthly to his aged mother in China. In 1862 while on a visit to his home, an urgent message was sent to him for his immediate return to this port to re-organise and undertake the management of chop Guan Huat – a firm dealing in tropical products for export to Hongkong, Swatow and Shanghai, which was about to go to ruin in consequence of bad management. The firm secured a new lease of life under the able direction and guidance of Mr Choon Hiang and he [462] prospered with its prosperity. In 1894 he bought out his partners, but the price he had to pay was so large that he found he had only \$500 left for working capital. In this financial strait, Mr Lim Ho Puah gave him valuable assistance by selling him goods on long-term credit: and, owing to this facility, his business prospered to such an extent that he was able in 1897 to open also a chandlery store under the style of 'Guan Huat Seng'. In 1905 the two concerns were amalgamated under the name of Guan Huat Seng, trading principally with Trengganu, Kelantan, Kemaman, etc, in salt fish and with China ports in tropical products. At the age of 50, on medical advice, he joined the 'Chinese Riding Party', the principal members of which were Dr Lim Boon Keng, Tan Boo Liat, Tan Chew Kim, Lee Pek Hoon and Tan Hup Leong: and for about five years rode regularly with the party until one day his horse threw him off and he broke a leg. Dr Lim Boon Keng succeeded in getting him to become greatly interested in education for Chinese girls, and he read and studied assiduously the Chinese translations of foreign books on education. After the Chung Hua Girls' School came into existence, he worked hard to make the institution popular, until he was laid aside through ill-health and died in 1912: and the pupils of that school attended his funeral as a tribute to his work on their behalf.

The efforts of the Cantonese community under the leadership of Mr Wong Ah Fook, to provide a free hospital as well as a place in

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44 See 'Chinese Female Education' *Weekly Sun*, 1 Apr 1911, at 5.

45 Phua died on 8 Feb 1912 (see *Straits Times*, 22 May 1912, at 16).



Lee Pek Hoon



Tham Heng Wan

which the last hours of poor dying Cantonese might be spent in decent surroundings, culminated in the signing of a document between HE the Governor, Sir John Anderson, and Mr Wong Ah Fook, on February the 23rd 1911, whereby the site and buildings of the old Tan Tock Seng Hospital at the junction of Balestier and Serangoon Roads were granted to the Trustees of the Kwong Wai Shiu Free Hospital, for the term of 99 years at an annual quit rent of \$1 on certain conditions as to resumption by Government within the said term. The first Trustees [463] were Wong Ah Fook, Leong Man Sau, Yow Ngan Pan, Tham Heng Wan, Choo Su Meng, Li Sing Nam and Lam Wei Fong. The buildings had been thoroughly repaired and added to at a cost of \$25,000 by means of subscriptions from the Cantonese community. The patients are given the option of treatment by either Chinese or Western methods. No persons requiring surgical aid or suffering from an infectious disease are permitted to remain in that hospital, and the daily inspection by the PCMO or a duly qualified medical officer in the employ of Government, or a duly authorised medical officer of the Municipality, ensures the proper and efficient management of the institution, as regards sanitary conditions, food and treatment and comfort of patients. An excellent example was set by Mr Wong Ah Fook, the president of the Committee, from the very commencement, by a daily visit. He not only went over every part of the institution, but had a kind word for everybody, and thus he was greatly respected by patients and staff alike.

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46 Also known as 'Tham Hee Foon', he was a well-known businessman, trading as a general merchant and importer and exporter of flour, under the style of Chop Hup Hing, at 6 Telok Ayer Street. He traded extensively with the largest houses in Australia and America, and his firm owned a bakery in Upper Circular Road (see Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 710). He was a Justice of the Peace, member of the Chinese Advisory Board and of the Po Leung Kuk Committee. Tham died on 14 Oct 1920 at his home at 11 Duxton Hill and was survived by his wife, five sons, five daughters and five grandchildren (see *Straits Times*, 14 Oct 1920, at 6).

47 See 'The Cantonese Hospital' *Straits Times*, 31 Jul 1911, at 7.

Mr Yow Ngan Pan was born in Singapore in 1863 and educated at the early St Andrew's Mission School (then known as 'Skola Loy Fatt'). His father, Yow Lup Nam, came to Singapore from Canton in 1841 in a British sailing vessel which lost all but half a mast in a severe storm and consequently drifted for about three months before dropping anchor in Singapore harbour. With the assistance of Mr Whampoa, an old friend, Yow Lup Nam opened a shop in Market Street dealing in Chinese sundries, tea, tobacco and silk piece goods, as a branch establishment of chop Loh Ki Seng of Hongkong. Goods imported from China at that time were brought in junks, and on arrival they were delivered and sold at once, so that there was no need for godowns or stores.

Mr Ngan Pan at the age of 17 went to Hongkong, where for a year he was trained at chop Loh Ki Seng's head office, and on his return he became manager of the branch business here until 1906, when he handed over [464] the management to Loh Chuk Poh. This business failed in 1913.<sup>48</sup> Mr Ngan Pan has taken a genuine interest in public affairs, is one of the leaders among the Cantonese community, and for more than twenty years he has served on the Chinese Advisory Board and on the committee of the Po Leung Kuk. He was made a JP in 1912. He has been an official visitor of the Reformatory and of the Quarantine Station on St John's Island since 1907. He has a seat on the Council of King Edward VII Medical School and on Tan Tock Seng Hospital Committee. An energetic worker on behalf of public charities, he has on several occasions received official thanks for his services. He was one of the promoters of the Yong Cheng (Cantonese) School, and has been successively a trustee, vice-president and president of Kwong Wai Shiu Free Hospital.<sup>49</sup> He has been a director of the Straits Steamship

48 See 'Chop Loh Kee Seng' *Straits Times*, 13 Jan 1914, at 8. It appears that Loh Chuk Poh was often in financial trouble and was by 1933, adjudged a bankrupt (see 'Law Notices for the Day' *Singapore Free Press*, 16 Nov 1933, at 2).

49 Yow retired from the presidency of the Hospital in 1928 (see 'Mr Yow Ngan Pan Honoured' *Straits Times*, 12 Jan 1928, at 11). He died on 27 May 1930 at his home at 1 Yow Ngan Pan Street (off Cantonment Road, but now expunged)



Yow Ngan Pan



Co Ltd since January 1902, and is also a director of Eastern United Assurance Co Ltd, and of Lee Wah Bank. As evidence of his integrity and sound business ability he has been since 1901 entrusted with the general management of Mr Loke Yew's business in Singapore under a power of attorney, and since the death of Mr Loke Yew he has been acting as agent for the trustees of that estate.

In conjunction with Tan Tek Chye, Mr Ngan Pan established in 1896 the first Straits Chinese firm of auctioneers and estate agents under the style of Hong Tek Chye & Co,<sup>50</sup> which only lived for a short time. His honest and straightforward dealings have won for him the respect of business men, and several instances have occurred in which he successfully acted either as arbitrator or as umpire in settling long-standing disputes between Chinese merchants, in bringing debtors to a satisfactory understanding with their creditors, and in effecting an amicable settlement between two partners like Boey Nam Lock and Loh Lam, who had bitterly quarrelled over partnership accounts extending over a long period. When 'Ban Gwan' pawnshop got into difficulties in 1913, with liabilities amounting to a quarter [465] of a million dollars, Mr Yow Ngan Pan was appointed receiver and by astute and sound management he was able to pay all its creditors in full. He is a man of action and his sympathy is of a practical kind. As an instance, Mr Ngan Pan relates how he helped to save a man under sentence of death from the gallows. One, Ho Ah Tye, had been convicted at the Assizes for being concerned in the murder of a well-known merchant, and was sentenced to death. Mr Ngan Pan was one of those who had a doubt as to whether the condemned man was one of the gang, and took steps to petition the Governor for a commutation

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at the age of 66 and was buried at the Cantonese Burial Grounds in Thomson Road (see 'Death' *Singapore Free Press*, 7 Jun 1930, at 10).

50 See 'Pawnbrokers Ordinances 1872 and 1889' *Straits Times*, 2 Dec 1896, at 1. In June 1898, the firm of Hong Chye & Co ceased operations and was subsumed into Leong Man Sau and Co, Chop Hong Kee of 34 North Canal Road. Tan Tek Chye, who was listed as Manager, left the firm (see 'Notice' *Straits Times*, 20 Jun 1898, at 2).

of his sentence. The petition was favourably considered and the sentence was commuted to one of penal servitude for life. A little while after, the real offender was arrested in Hongkong and brought back to Singapore for trial. He confessed his guilt and cleared Ho Ah Tye of complicity in the crime, and Ho Ah Tye was released.<sup>51</sup>

The new building for the Chinese Presbyterian Church at Paya Lebar was dedicated on the 29<sup>th</sup> April. For nearly thirty years the English Presbyterian Chinese Mission had been also working in the country districts. About the year 1903 regular services had been started at Paya Lebar by the Rev Tay Sek Tin in a wood and attap building, and mission work among the Teochew planters in that district had made steady progress. The new church is plain and unpretending, but roomy and lofty.

The *Straits Times* reported that the Chinese produce brokers had forestalled the European merchants by establishing an exchange in April 1911 at No 4 Change Alley. Mr Tan Cheng Tee, of Leack Chin Seng & Co, the first president, in declaring the exchange open, at a little reception at which a number of European merchants were present, said that up to that time Chinese produce dealers had had to content themselves every morning with meeting and consulting each other in the five-foot ways and the by-lanes of the business quarter of the town. That was a thing of the past. [466] Decent accommodation was now available to those engaged in the produce business, for consultation purposes and for comparing notes. A presentation of a silver biscuit box was made to Mr WPW Ker of Messrs Paterson, Simons & Co for his help and encouragement in bringing the institution into existence.

The Straits Chinese Football Association was formed at a meeting held on the 20th May at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, presided over by Dr Chan Sze Pong. The draft rules were adopted at this meeting, and all Chinese clubs which could get up a football team were invited to join. Dr SC Yin was elected President, a number of Chinese

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51 See 'Chinese Murderer Condemned to Death' *Straits Times*, 27 Sep 1912, at 7. The actual murderer, who was apprehended in Hongkong, was one Chan Kam.

and European gentlemen were appointed Vice-Presidents, and Mr Lim Kee Chiok<sup>52</sup> Hon General Secretary. The chief object of the association is to regulate the game of football and constitute an authority to decide questions arising among Chinese football clubs. The Fairy Dale Association of Pagoda Street presented the first cup for competition. The SCFA has fully justified its existence, with Mr Lim Kee Chiok still as its Hon General Secretary, and participates in all local League matches.

The first annual dinner of Old Raffles Boys was held at Raffles Hotel on Founder's Day, the 5<sup>th</sup> June 1911, under the presidency of the Principal, Mr CM Phillips. An earlier effort to bring together past pupils for social purposes through the Raffles Club had after a very few years miserably failed. This annual function, from which so much was expected, has been in abeyance since the outbreak of the War, but the admirable speech of Mr AW Still in responding to the toast of the visitors at that first dinner is well worth quoting. 'In Singapore', he said,

East and West mingled freely, and the ancient philosophy and civilisation of the one became blended with the newer science and civilisation of the other in the formation of types of scholarship and intellect which could not fail to be an advantage to the world at large. Raffles School had reason enough to be proud of its record. It had sent [467] many pupils of Asiatic parentage to the greater seats of learning in the West, where they had proved themselves the equals of the best that the West could produce. He could not profess to know all the reasons why the Queen's Scholarships had been abolished, but as one who knows the impetus given to learning by similar scholarships in his own country, he deeply

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52 Also spelt 'Lim Kee Cheok'. He was born on 29 May 1881 in Singapore, the son of Lim Tiang Soon and studied at the Anglo-Chinese School. He founded the firm of Lim Kee Chiok & Co and was active in both the Straits Chinese British Association and the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Lim was a football enthusiast and co-founded the Straits Chinese Football Association, and it was he who talent-spotted Lim Yong Liang ('Pop Lim'), the legendary football player, coach and administrator. He was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1923 and Municipal Commission in 1927. He died in 1942. See 柯木林, 《新华历史人物列传》 (Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 128–129.

regretted that these rewards no longer existed to stimulate the industry of Straits-born boys, and he hoped they would be restored. The school should ever regard itself collectively as an institution working towards the best intellectual and moral ideals: and though the individual student might feel that his own part was a small one, he could take pride and joy in this great common purpose, and do his best to serve it faithfully.

At the 50th anniversary meeting of the Anti-opium Society (Singapore) held on the 26th June, the large audience listened with evident interest to the speakers, especially to two ladies, Miss Gwee Bee Giok, whose father was a pastor in Foochow and who had received a Western education in Japan, and Miss U Tai Sung (Cantonese). The lady speakers expressed their views very clearly and effectively. It was the beginning of a new order of things Chinese.

On the occasion of the ordination into the Roman Catholic priesthood of the Rev Father Michael Seet, on the 2nd July, the Church of St Peter and St Paul was gaily decorated. Seet Khiam Juay, the second son of Seet Twa Tee, for nearly thirty years a catechist of that church, was born in 1883, and at the age of 16, having decided to take holy orders, he joined the Roman Catholic seminary at Pulo Tikus in Penang. Bishop Barillon officiated at the ordination service, which

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53 We are unable to trace the exact source of this quotation.

54 Seet Twa Tee (also known as Seet Twa Too) arrived in Singapore sometime around 1865 from Swatow (Shantou), Guandong Province. He died on 19 Jul 1925, aged 83, survived by his sons, Father Michael Seet, Seet Kiam Yeow (Chief Clerk at the Municipal Store) and Seet Kiam Koo (Clerk at the Post Office) (see 'Death of Mr Seet Twa Too' *Straits Times*, 23 Jul 1925, at 8; and 'Ordination of a Priest' *Straits Times*, 3 Jul 1911, at 6). In 1914, when the French missionaries returned to Europe to help with the War effort, Seet took charge of three districts, including Province Wellesley and built a church at Mattang-Tinggi. In 1936 he returned to Singapore to serve at the Church of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin in Serangoon Road till his death on 18 Jun 1946 at the age of 63 (see 'Spotlight on Malaya and Malaysians' *Straits Times*, 7 Jul 1946, at 2).

55 Father Michael Seet, also known as 'Seet Khiam Juay' or 'Seet Kiam Juay' was possibly the first Straits-born Chinese to take holy orders in Malaya. He was



Reverend Father Michael Seet

drew a large congregation of the Roman Catholic Chinese community together to welcome the first Straits-born Chinese in Malaya as priest. The Acting Governor, Mr Brockman, and Mrs Brockman, the French Consul and Madame de Bondy and a number of the Roman Catholic clergy were among those who attended the service. [468] In the evening the newly ordained priest officiated in what was his first vespers, after which he was the recipient of a purse from the members of the church choir.

The first tie in the SCFA competition for the Fairy Dale Cup was played at the St Joseph's School playground on the 15th July between teams representing the Mt Wallich Club and the White Star Football Club, resulting in a win for the latter by two goals to nil. Before the game started, Dr Yin, the President of the SCFA, briefly addressed the players, urging them to play the game in a clean and straightforward manner and to show a true sportsmanlike spirit. He then unfurled the SCFA's flag amidst enthusiastic cheering by the members of the affiliated clubs.

Following upon the report by the Special Commission (of which Mr Seah Liang Seah was a member) appointed to investigate into the workings of the Municipalities of the Colony, which was laid on the Legislative Council table on the 23rd September 1910, the first reading of a new Municipal Bill took place at the Council meeting on the 4th August 1911. At the request of the Hon Mr EC Ellis, the second reading was put off for four weeks as a serious question of principle was involved, amounting to not less than the taking away the rights of ratepayers of the whole of the Colony.

During those eventful weeks there was considerable discussion, causing a good many men in Singapore and Penang to think about Municipal affairs, which they had not done before: and great mass meetings were held in both Settlements to protest against the measure.

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ordained on 2 Jul 1911 at the Chinese Church of St Peter and St Paul and was aged 28 at the time. See 'Ordination of a Priest' *Straits Times*, 3 Jul 1911, at 6.

The meeting held at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce on the 1st September was thoroughly representative of all classes of ratepayers, with Mr M Meyer in the chair, and the resolution 'That this meeting strongly protests against the proposed Municipal Bill, which creates a dangerous and revolutionary change in the present system and decides to present to His Excellency the Governor [469] a petition embodying a protest against the proposed Bill by the ratepayers', was unanimously carried.

In pursuance of this resolution, the petition of the ratepayers was signed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September by the members of committee appointed at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce meeting to sign and present it to HE the Governor. A portion of the petition on this important subject reads thus:

... Your Petitioners desire to represent that if the present Bill become law, the ratepayers of the towns which it affects will lose all possibility of control over the expenditure of the funds they supply. The Advisory Board which the Bill introduces will have nothing more than the power of protest and reference to Your Excellency, and while your Petitioners are well aware that a check is imposed on reckless or injudicious expenditure by a reference to Your Excellency, your Petitioners cannot but feel that this may not always be so, and that it is quite conceivable that some successor of Your Excellency may be less inclined than we humbly venture to believe Your Excellency would be to check the financing of large schemes of doubtful soundness to which the general feeling of the business community may be hostile.

Your Petitioners would urge that the proposal to abolish the Commissioners is a retrograde one. The principle of local self-government has been extended in the British Empire of recent years, and your Petitioners humbly and respectfully submit that it is somewhat astonishing that a contrary and reactionary principle should be applied to one of the most important seaport towns in the British Dominions. ...

Your Petitioners venture respectfully to express the opinion that the proposed Advisory Board will be no adequate safeguard for the interests of ratepayers. The Board will have few real pow-

ers, and will be entirely unable to make any effective stand against expenditure of which a consensus of public opinion might strongly disapprove, whereas under [470] the system of Municipal Government which has been for many years past in vogue in Singapore the Commissioners could on emergency exercise the very real powers vested in them. It has been urged that it has not always been easy in the past to obtain the services of citizens of position and influence on the Commission, but surely if this be so it will be still harder to induce the right stamp of man to take a seat on a comparatively obscure body such as the Advisory Board. ... The net result would be, as your Petitioners venture to anticipate, that the Board would be comprised of men of small personal influence, and that such representations as they might make would lack weight.

Your Petitioners suggest that a further element of weakness incident to the proposed Advisory Board is that it will deliberate in private. Your Petitioners conceive that it can scarcely be contended that in public discussions the reports of meetings in the public press and the consequent comments of local newspapers upon the policy and acts of municipal officials have had other than a very salutary effect in the past. ...

Your Petitioners understand that the reason for this proposed radical alteration in the principles of Municipal Government is to be found in the fact that certain evidence was adduced before the recent Commission which showed considerable administrative weakness. But your Petitioners urge that the weakness was entirely on the executive side and on the part of the paid and permanent staff and cannot be traced to the Municipal Commissioners.

Your Petitioners would welcome any change in the law which would clearly define the duties of the Commissioners and of the executive, respectively, and they are of opinion that a great deal of routine work which the Commissioners at present have to get through might with advantage be done by the President and his subordinates and a considerable economy of time thereby effected. If this were arranged, it is, as your Petitioners venture to think, probable that there would be less difficulty in inducing men of business experience and capacity to serve the public as



Commissioners. Your Petitioners are aware that a good deal of re-organisation is desirable, but they submit that no alteration should involve the abolition of the right of ratepayers to elect representatives to control the expenditure of public moneys paid in for the purpose of municipal administration.<sup>57</sup>

The early days of November 1911 saw the Chinese in Singapore in a state of jubilation over the information that Peking was in the hands of a revolutionary party and that the Emperor and Prince Ching were prisoners. The adherents to the creed of Dr Sun Yat Sen were numerically strong in this part of the world. In Singapore alone it was estimated that there were not less than 10,000 avowed revolutionaries, while large sums of money were collected and sent to China to arm and support the revolutionary forces.

One local leader said:

We have done no recruiting here, but at least 200 men have gone from here in the past week or two. That is men we know of: there may have been others who went off without telling us. I understand that 500 or so have left their occupations in Penang and the FMS and gone to the scene of war. Dr Sun has many supporters in the Dutch islands, but we have no information as to what they are doing to help the revolution. In fact, wherever Chinese have established themselves and prospered under free rule, there are powerful revolutionary factions. America is one of our strongholds. Dr Sun is there just now, travelling among the Chinese in the United States. In a letter I received from him some weeks ago, when he was in San Francisco, he stated that he had the support of nearly the whole of the Chinese communities, whereas Kang Yu Wei's party has no followers at all.<sup>58</sup>

The propaganda here was carried on through the medium of leaflets, vernacular newspapers and Chinese [472] theatres, as well as in plac-

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57 See 'Ratepayers Petition Against Measure' *Straits Times*, 7 Sep 1911, at 7.

58 'Chinese Topics in Malaya' *Straits Times*, 13 Oct 1932, at 19.

es like the People's Park and coolie bangsals, where itinerant Chinese orators denounced the tyranny of the Manchus over the Sons of Han.

Even when the reported fall of Peking had not been officially confirmed, the principal streets of the Chinese quarters were scenes of great excitement, animation and rejoicings. Red bunting and new blue and white revolutionary flags were displayed everywhere, and the ceremonious burning of the Imperial Dragon flag took place in front of one of the leading Chinese banks in Kling Street. The debris of crackers lay ankle-deep in Market Street, and covered the long line of North and South Bridge Roads like a carpet. Hundreds of the Chinese residents lost no time in removing their queue without troubling about growing the hair in front of their heads. In some cases enthusiasts went the length of dragging passing Chinese, who wore *towchangs*, into neighbouring shops, where, much against their will, amateur coiffeurs relieved them of their appendage.

Special performances were given in the Chinese theatre in Wayang Street for the purpose of raising funds for the coffers of the revolutionary party, and speeches were made by representatives of the Hokien, Teochew, Kwangtung and Hylam sections as well as by a Chinese lady teacher, Madam Yu Thai Chong. Photos of Li Yuen Hung, the leader of the revolutionary fighting force, and of Dr Sun Yat Sen were offered for sale and fetched fanciful prices.

In December Singapore Chinese entertained Messrs Goh Say Eng, Tan Sin Cheng and others of Penang to a dinner, and gave them

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59 See 'The Local "Rebels"' *Straits Times*, 10 Nov 1911, at 7.

60 Goh Say Eng was born in Penang in 1875. He was informally educated in both English and Chinese and took over Chop See Hock, the company his father Goh Yu Chai established to manufacture flour, rice vermicelli and safety-match. In 1906, when the Tung Meng Hui was established in Penang, he was its first Chairman. He was a strong supporter of Sun Yat Sen and the Revolution and sold most of his family properties to finance Sun and the Revolution, so much so that he was left in dire poverty in old age. He was subsequently elected Southeast Asian Representative to the Tung Meng Hui National Convention in China. He died in 1945. See Shinozaki Kaori, 'Re-positioning "Patriotism": Various Aspects of Financial Support to China in Penang around 1911' in Ho

a hearty send-off to China to represent the revolutionaries of the Straits Settlements, FMS and the Dutch Indies. The cause of the destitute and the homeless in China – an inevitable sequence of the civil war – was not forgotten by the local revolutionaries, who sent about \$200,000 for the relief of the sufferers in the affected provinces. The Chinese ladies did not allow themselves, as in former days, to [473] be left out in the cold. They started their own organisation, appointed their own executive of cers, held meetings among themselves, and, with the assistance of a band of sixty collectors, raised the creditable sum of \$20,000 for the relief of the women and children rendered destitute by the ravages of war.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> December 1911 the P&O *Devanha* from Europe arrived in Singapore, having on board Dr Sun, his staff and General Homer Lea, the new military adviser to the revolutionaries. A large number of local Chinese, and not a few Europeans, were at the wharf to see China's 'Man of the Moment'. The *Straits Times* described him as 'looking remarkably well, and being dressed simply in a white suit and a cap, and the picture of anything but the inspirer of a great world-striking movement'. Some of the local leaders, Dr SC Yin, Teo Eng Hock, Tan Lian Chye,<sup>62</sup> Khoo Kay Hean and Lim Nee Soon, went

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Khai Leong (ed), *Connecting and Distancing: Southeast Asia and China* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009) at 93; see also Khoo Su Nin, *Streets of George Town, Penang*, 4 ed (Penang: Areca Books, 2007) at 27.

61 See 'The Straits and the Revolution' *Straits Times*, 9 Dec 1911, at 9.

62 Tan Lian Chye, also known as Tan Chor Lam (1884–1971) was the younger son of the famous timber merchant and pineapple packer, Tan Tye. He was also a fervent supporter of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's Constitutional Reform Movement in China, and later became the first President of the Tung Meng Hui in Singapore at the young age of 21. To further the revolutionary aims, Tan established two Chinese revolutionary papers – *Thoe Lam Jit Poh* (1904–1905) and *Chong Ching Yit Pao* (1907–1910). He was among the founding members of the Nanyang Girls' High School (see柯木林, *新华历史人物列传》* (Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 95). When he passed away on 22 Sep 1971, he was survived by two wives, one son, ve daughters, 15 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren, and was buried at Bukit Brown (see *Straits Times*, 23 Sep 1971, at 21).

on board to greet Dr Sun, who came ashore to spend the night at 'Golden Bell', the splendid residence of Mr Tan Boo Liat, in Pender Road, Keppel Harbour.<sup>63</sup> Dr Sun briefly outlined his future plan of campaign to the local leaders. Owing to a rumour that agents of the Chinese Imperial Government were compassing his assassination, special police precautions were taken to guard Dr Sun during his short stay on shore.

On the 15th January 1912, for the first time, a seven-a-side match was played between the Singapore Chess Club and the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, represented by Choo Sian Kim, Chee Toon Cheng,<sup>64</sup> Chia Hood Sang,<sup>65</sup> Kiong Chin Eng, Seow Poh Leng, Chua Sim Ghi and Seow Siew Hock,<sup>66</sup> and ended in a draw, each team getting 3½ points.<sup>67</sup> Another match took place between the two clubs in July. This excellent indoor game has not been taken up as it might very well have been by the numerous Straits Chinese clubs in Singapore. Although there is a handsome silver shield for the Chess champion, which is competed for annually at the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, the list of competitors has [474] always been a poor one in comparison with the large membership of that club.

Mr Seow Poh Leng – the second son of the late Seow Chye Watt, for many years cashier to John Little & Co Ltd, which position he resigned to enter into the rice business – was born in 1883. After spend-

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63 See 'Dr Sun Yat Sen' *Straits Times*, 16 Dec 1911, at 9.

64 Also spelt 'Chi Toon Cheng'. Chee was the grandson of Chee Yam Chuan.

65 Chia Hood Sang was born on 10 Oct 1868, the son of Chia Leong Chuan, and brother of Hood Theam and Hood Teck (see <[https://chiafamily.les.wordpress.com/2013/01/img\\_0530.jpg](https://chiafamily.les.wordpress.com/2013/01/img_0530.jpg)> (accessed 15 Mar 2015). He was an active sportsman and worked at the firm of Boustead & Co as cashier till his death in 1925 at his home at 46 Emerald Hill. He was survived by one son (How Ghee) and three daughters.

66 Also known as 'Siow Siew Hock'. Sole proprietor of the ship chandling firm of Kiam Kiat & Co, located at 108 & 109 Market Street (see *Straits Times*, 20 May 1913, at 5). The following year, he left the company and established Tiong Hock & Co at 12 Raffles Quay (see *Singapore Free Press*, 11 Nov 1915, at 5).

67 See 'Chess' *Straits Times*, 17 Jan 1912, at 8.



Mr & Mrs Kiong Chin Eng



Seow Poh Leng

ing two years in a Chinese school, he was sent to the Eastern school and finished his schooling at the Anglo-Chinese School which had absorbed the former institution. He competed for the Queen's Scholarships in 1902, but, although he stood high among the candidates, he failed to win the much-coveted prize, and attributed his failure to the fact that he had to divide his time between his duties as a pupil teacher and preparing for the examination. After a somewhat varied career as a chemist's assistant, a schoolmaster, a law clerk, a stock-broker and insurance agent and company liquidator, he helped to promote the Eastern United Assurance Corporation Ltd, the Chinese Commercial Bank and the Ho Hong Bank, which last-named institution has secured his services as General Manager. The Chinese merchants of Singapore were slow in appreciating and adopting the advantages and protection of limited-liability trading, and the formation of the three above-mentioned companies with paid-up capitals aggregating \$5,000,000 marked a new era in the commercial life of the Singapore Chinese. The Ho Hong Bank is the first Chinese institution to enter the field of world-wide banking, having established connections with London, New York, Hongkong, Shanghai, Batavia and many other widely separated points, in order to facilitate direct trade between the Chinese in Malaya and people in other parts of the world.

In club life Seow Poh Leng is a familiar figure. He served as Hon Secretary to the Straits Chinese Recreation Club in 1905. He was a fine performer on the football field and in club sports, and is still a keen tennis-player and a stiff opponent on the chess-board. He was one of the early members of Tanjong Katong [475] Swimming Party, now developed into the Chinese Swimming Club, of which he holds the office of vice president. During the early years of the Volunteer movement, he served in the ranks and was one of the group frequently seen on the canteen concert platform. He has been connected with the Singapore and South Malaya Boy Scouts Association since its inauguration, holding the position of Hon Secretary and Treasurer, and has done much to interest parents in the movement which is guiding and shaping the character and physical and mental well-being of the future manhood

of the country. His other activities consist in organising charity and social concerts and entertainments. The 'Oberon concerts' he used to hold at his residence brought together a large number of people of both sexes at Chinese New Year season. His contributions to the *Straits Chinese Magazine* dealt with such subjects as Education and Social Reform.

The second annual general meeting of the Amateur Drawing Association was held on the 21st January at its club-room, No 169 Cecil Street. The ADA was formed in September 1909 with about a dozen members who interested themselves in the art of drawing, but without a club-house, and meetings were held at members' houses in rotation. The Society was registered on the 23rd March 1910, with Mr Tan Kok Tiong as its first President.<sup>68</sup> Vigorous recruiting during the first year resulted in the membership being increased to fifty, while the monthly subscription was raised from 10 cents to 50 cents. The ADA rented the ground floor of a house in Amoy Street at \$10 a month, while, in addition to drawing, the members devoted their leisure hours to literary pursuits and physical culture. The club was too poor to keep a servant, but with enthusiastic young fellows as members, the rooms were always kept tidy and clean. It was not an uncommon sight, in those early days of the club's life, to see some of the members tuck up their sleeves, roll up their trousers, and with buckets of water from [476] the roadside stand-pipe wash the floor of their clubhouse.

The first anniversary took the form of a dinner on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1911, presided over by the Rev Bishop Oldham. Troubles then

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68 See 'Amateur Drawing Association' *Straits Times*, 13 Dec 1910, at 7. Tan was the fifth son of Tan Jin Hock and Gan Chin Neo (only granddaughter of Gan Eng Seng) (see *Singapore Free Press*, 6 Nov 1912, at 6). Tan was a talented artist and won many prizes for his work (see for example, 'Amateur Drawing Association' *Singapore Free Press*, 10 Feb 1913, at 7; and *Straits Times*, 24 May 1913, at 8). In the 1920, he joined the *Straits Times* where he rose to the rank of Chief Clerk. In November 1929, he and his brother Kok Sin left the *Straits Times* (see 'Straits Times Press, Limited' *Straits Times*, 30 Nov 1929, at 4) and established Tan Publicity Bureau (see 'Weight-Lifters Association' *Singapore Free Press*, 14 Jan 1937, at 15). It is not known when he died.



Singapore Chinese Boy Scouts



came in the shape of a notice to quit failing agreement to pay a higher rent, and of a reduced membership. Temporary accommodation was found in Cecil Street. With Mr Tan Tiang Yew as the new President and the amalgamation of a small club known as 'Choon Guan Kok' with it in 1912 (which brought in 18 new members and \$100 to the funds), the ADA began to revive and rented a house in Cross Street.

In February 1913 an exhibition of drawings of members was held. A dinner under the auspices of the ADA at the Adelphi Hotel in the same month in honour of HE Wei Chen Tso, ambassador to Holland and the first Minister appointed by the Chinese Republic, and a reception and tiffin at Mr Lee Choon Guan's residence 'Mandalay Villa', Tanjong Katong, in April given by the President and members of the ADA in honour of HE Hoo Wei Teh, China's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to France, Spain and Portugal, helped largely to advertise the activities of this society, so that when it removed into its present premises in Tank Road, in July 1913, it was able to start a new era in its existence with the encouragement of an influential body of patrons and honorary members. With a lecture hall upstairs, a large courtyard at the back for a gymnasium and a library of choice books donated by its President in the name of his father, Mr Tan Ah Hung, together with various indoor games, such as billiards, ping-pong, draughts and chess, the society made a strong bid for the patronage of the young Straits-born Chinese. As its activities extended, sub-committees were appointed to look after the interests of the various sections, e.g. drawing, physical culture, indoor games, literary and social meetings. The majority of the members, however, have [477] taken more interest in the other sections than in drawing, which was the sole object of the Association when founded. Drawing members have become so few that future competitions seem somewhat unlikely.

It does seem a pity that there should be a plethora of small clubs with similar objects which are content to carry on a precarious ex-

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69 See 'New Chinese Minister' *Straits Times*, 28 Feb 1913, at 9.

istence instead of combining themselves into a few strong associations. Such combinations would mean larger membership and give the members greater facilities for mutual improvement and enjoyment and a wider scope of activities. The multiplication of expenditure in high rents, furnishings and general upkeep of a number of small clubs would be saved were these clubs to combine into one institution, while the members would get better returns for their subscriptions. The prospect of the disappearance of the names of the clubs, however, has hitherto been a hindrance to a union of two or more of them having similar objects and situated in close proximity to each other. Prejudice and sentiment will have to be overcome, but the ultimate real advantage that will be certain to accrue in all directions should make it well worth the experiment.

In aid of the funds of the Chinese Red Cross Society in Shanghai, the Straits Chinese Recreation Club arranged a performance at the Victoria Theatre on the 7th March, enthusiastically supported by a crowded house, which paid \$200 for boxes, \$10 for stalls and \$5 for dress circle. The first part of the entertainment was a sketch entitled *After the Battle*, in which Red Cross men were seen at work on the battle field. Mr Low Kway Soo, who had planned the sketch, took the part of an officer and was assisted by members of the Chinese Co SVI, and the Chinese members of the Bearer Section, SVC. The second part consisted of a three-act comedy, *Mustapha*, in the Malay language, the joint production of Miss Lee Choo Neo and Mr Low Kway Soo, who took the leading parts – the other roles being filled by members of the club. The enter-[478]tainment was much appreciated and proved a financial success.

The opening on the 26th March 1911 of the new waterworks, which had taken ten years to construct, necessitated two ceremonial functions, owing to the situation of the two portions, the Kallang<sup>70</sup> reservoir at the 7<sup>th</sup> mile on Thomson Road, and the Woodleigh 1-

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70 This refers to the Kallang Reservoir. See 'Singapore Water Supply' *Singapore Free Press*, 20 Mar 1912, at 12.

ter-beds in Serangoon Road. A beautifully executed silver model of the reservoir in a glass case – the work of a famous Cantonese artist recommended by Mr Seah Liang Seah – was presented to the Governor, Sir John Anderson. In unveiling the inscription stone at Woodleigh lter-beds, which cover seven acres, the Governor said:

We have arrived at the second stage of the new waterworks – the lter-beds and the reservoir for receiving ltered water. ... I see from this pamphlet on these new works that the available water supply is 7,500,000 gallons per day: the Romans supplied Rome with 330,000,000 gallons a day and 160 gallons per man per diem. We should think that extravagant, but then we are not living in the luxurious days of the Romans. ... Before proceeding to unveil this stone, I wish to refer to the fact that the grandfather of a prominent citizen of this town – I mean Mr Tan Jiak Kim – subscribed handsomely towards the first waterworks that were constructed in Singapore. As we know, the Chinese community are always foremost in their interest in good works and they show their interest in a practical way.<sup>71</sup>

One of the most interesting events this year for the Chinese community was the ceremony on the 2nd April in the Legislative Council Chamber, when His Excellency Sir Arthur Young pinned on the jacket of the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, CMG, the insignia of the Order which HM King George had conferred upon him at the New Year. In addition to the members of the Legislative Council, there was a large attendance of members of the Chinese community and representa-[479] tives of the Chinese merchants and traders, of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and of the Malacca Chinese community.

The Governor said:

His Majesty the King has been pleased to confer upon you, Mr Tan Jiak Kim, the Companionship of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George – a well-deserved honour. Your family for many generations have been British subjects, and many of their names are well known in the Colony for the interest which they

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71 See 'Singapore's Water' *Straits Times*, 27 Mar 1912, at 7.

took in all matters pertaining to the Colony and for the assistance which they have rendered by putting their hands into their purses and helping the various institutions. You have followed in the footsteps of your ancestors. You became a Municipal Commissioner when that body was formed, and later on you became an Unofficial member of the Legislative Council, and that position you still hold and have held it now for many years. Both inside and outside of that assembly your great knowledge of the opinions and feelings of the Chinese community have been of very great assistance to the Government. In addition to the value you have rendered by your advice, you have worked hard for the good of the community. It is well known to us that an important institution, the Medical School, has a great deal to thank you for owing to what you have done. There are also other institutions in the Colony, not only to which you have rendered assistance by your advice, but also to which you have generously subscribed. I am sure all here will join with me in expressing the certainty that it has caused very great satisfaction to the Chinese community and also to the whole of the Colony that the King has been pleased to honour you. It is certainly a cause for very great satisfaction and gratification to me that I, as Governor, have the privilege of presenting my friend with this badge, and I have the greatest pleasure in admitting you to be a member of the Order.<sup>72</sup>

The Governor then fastened the insignia on Mr Tan Jiak Kim's tunic by the side of his Coronation medal. **[480]** Mr Tan Jiak Kim, in reply, requested His Excellency to convey to the King his humble and grateful thanks for the honour conferred on him, and said:

I hope, Sir, this decoration will serve as a further inducement to the Asiatic community of this Colony to render valuable services to the Colony. I hope this decoration will not be the last to be conferred by His Majesty on his Asiatic subjects here. I can assure you, Sir, that my humble services will always be at the disposal of the Government and the public.<sup>73</sup>

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72 See 'Mr Jiak Kim Honoured' *Singapore Free Press*, 4 Apr 1912, at 12.

73 Ibid.

The 'Colour Bar' question, which supplied 'copy' for the local press for a few weeks, is mentioned here only because of the part played by the Straits Chinese British Association in getting signatures to a protest against a reply made in the House of Commons by Mr Harcourt, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to questions by Mr McCallum Scott, MP, as to certain new regulations made by the Colonial Office, whereby all British subjects not of pure European descent were excluded from the civil and police services of the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States and Hongkong. The protest runs thus:

We, the undersigned, members of the various non-European communities resident in Singapore, SS, emphatically deny that we dislike or resent the placing over us of officials in the Straits Civil and Police Services who are not of pure European descent on both sides, and say that we have always welcomed and will ever welcome the appointment in the said services of officials not of pure European descent on both sides, and we desire strongly to protest against the statements made by the Secretary of State for the Colonies that 'Malays and Chinese dislike and resent officers of alien origin being placed in authority over them unless those officers are of pure European descent on both sides'.<sup>74</sup>

The only occasion on which the names of the Chinese [481] Queen's scholars, with their academic honours, were paraded in the House of Commons was also in connection with the 'Colour Bar' question, raised by the same Member of Parliament, when the Secretary of State for the Colonies stated:

I would consider the question of admitting British-born Chinese and Malays to the Cadet service if there were any chance of such candidates being successful in the competitive examination, and if there were a local demand for the concession, which at present does not exist.<sup>75</sup>

74 See 'The Colour Bar' *Straits Times*, 31 May 1912, at 6.

75 See 'The Straits in Parliament' *Singapore Free Press*, 2 May 1912, at 284.

The death on the 6th July of Mr Ong Tek Lim at the early age of 36 years removed one of the most promising men among the Straits Chinese. His decision not to offer himself for re-election at the end of 1909, after three years of service as Municipal Commissioner for Central Ward, was regrettable, for he was a conscientious and enthusiastic 'City Father', had made a careful study of the Municipal Ordinance and By-laws, and would have continued to make a capable Municipal Commissioner, if life had been spared him to serve again on the Board. He was a successful business man, and the trade-mark of 'Guan Tong' (Ong Kew Ho & Co) was well known and held a high place for tapioca in the produce market. He was a JP and took a keen interest in the affairs both of the Chinese Co SVI (being an Hon member of the SVC until his death) and of the Straits Chinese British Association. He was for some years the tennis champion of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, and in that role in December 1907 he played a match on the SCRC ground against Mr LE Gaunt, the tennis champion of the Singapore Cricket Club, who beat him by 6-4, 6-0, 6-1. The Ong Tek Lim scholarship founded by him at the Anglo-Chinese School will always serve as an incentive to future generations of alumni of that institution to make similar endowments to their Alma Mater. Small of stature and sparsely built, he was [482] nevertheless full of energy and dogged perseverance, and made many friends through his amiable disposition and his great personal charm. To perpetuate the memory of Mr Ong Tek Lim, his widow, Chia Lim Neo (a half-sister of Mr Chia Hood Theam), in 1913 gave \$3,000 to establish three scholarships bearing his name in the Senior Cambridge and 7th Standard classes at the Anglo-Chinese School, and she also founded an 'Ong Tek Lim' Scholarship at both Raffles and St Joseph's Institutions.<sup>76</sup> We desire to commend her action to our rich Straits Chinese widows.

An unusual number of cases of theft and other offences committed by Hylam servants in the employ of Europeans led to the *Straits*

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76 See 'Local School Benefactions' *Straits Times*, 28 Apr 1913, at 8; and *Straits Times*, 129 Aug 1913, at 8.

*Times* resuscitating the subject of registration of domestic servants. It will be remembered that the Domestic Servants Registration Ordinance (XXIII of 1886) which was brought into force on the 1st January 1888 was repealed on the 26th October of the same year. It was alleged that that Ordinance had failed because of its voluntary character. A poll was taken by the *Straits Times* in July 1912 of 600 of the European employers for or against compulsory legislation, resulting in an almost unanimous vote in favour of a Bill for the compulsory registration of domestic servants employed in European houses. Such a measure was introduced in the Legislative Council early in 1913 and found a place among the statutes of the Colony, but has not yet come into operation.

Whenever any employer of domestic servants in the future agitates for registration, simply on account of his own unhappy experience with his houseboys, let the following passage from the speech of the Governor, Sir A Young, when he reviewed the local troops on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1915, be remembered in favour of the honesty and excellent behaviour of domestic servants in a crisis:

I think it would not be out of place if on behalf [483] of the householders we thanked the boys who looked after their masters' and mistresses' houses while those houses were outside the safe area. I have not heard of a single case of pilfering, and it shows in what high esteem the boys held their masters and mistresses and the good relations which exist between masters and servants.<sup>77</sup>

In June 1912 Mr Lim Han Hoe (a member of the Straits Chinese Literary Association), after studying for two years in the local Medical School, left for London. The second son of Lim Cheng Sah, landowner, he was born in April 1894 and was first educated in Chong Cheng Chinese School, then at St Andrew's Mission School and Raffles Institution. On arriving in London in July 1912 he studied under a private coach, and in the following year joined the University of Edinburgh, and also took the course in the Royal Colleges of Surgeons and Physicians in Edinburgh. He also studied in Heriot Watt College under

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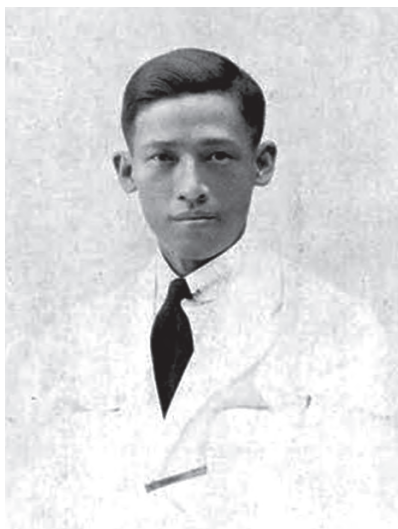
<sup>77</sup> See 'Saturday's Parade' *Singapore Free Press*, 12 Apr 1915, at 12.

Mr JC Newlands, FEIS, and was awarded first medal in the Art of Elocution and Public Speaking in 1915. After taking his degrees of MB and ChB in 1918 he practised for some time in St Andrews, and in 1919 was appointed Resident House Surgeon at North Devon General Hospital, where he was also medical officer in charge of the Military Auxiliary Section. He is now in general practice at the Amoy Dispensary, Singapore.<sup>78</sup>

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78 Lim was very active in community affairs and was chairman of the Straits Chinese British Association (1930–1932), member of the Municipal Commission, Legislative Council and the Chinese Advisory Board. After the Japanese Occupation, Lim was appointed an unofficial member of the Advisory Council (1946–1948) and later senior unofficial member of the Executive Council (1948–1951). Lim was knighted in 1946 for his services to the community. Lim was also instrumental in the establishment of the University of Malaya in Singapore (1949) and from 1952 to 1956 was a member of the Public Service Commission, serving as its chairman in 1956. He died on 22 Mar 1983 aged 88.





Dr Lim Chwee Leong (top) and his younger brother, Dr Lim Han Hoe (below)



His elder brother, Dr Lim Chwee Leong,<sup>79</sup> was also educated at St Andrew's Mission School and Raffles Institution, and in 1908 joined King Edward VII Medical School, where he was appointed Demonstrator in Physiology in 1910, and became LMS in 1913, obtaining the Lim Boon Keng medal in his final year. He joined Government service as assistant surgeon in Penang General Hospital, but resigned after one year, and has since been in private practice in Penang.

The appeal made through the press by 'A Confucianist' for a holiday to be given by local English and Chinese schools to pupils of Chinese nationality on [484] the 27th day of the 8th Chinese moon, being the 2,463<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the birthday of Confucius, the Chinese sage, was received favourably by some of the English schools, among them being the Anglo-Chinese and Outram Road Schools. The matter was later taken up by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce as regards observance of that day by the mercantile community: and to-day the annual event is marked by the closing of all Chinese business houses and shops in Singapore.

In October was introduced the new Municipal Bill, in place of the 1911 Bill withdrawn 'in view of the general opposition to the clauses which altered the constitution of municipalities by providing for the appointment of advisory boards in the place of Municipal Commissioners'. Up to this time, the Municipal Commissioners had been partly elected and partly nominated, but the Bill provided that the Governor was to appoint all Municipal Commissioners (not exceeding fifteen nor less than five), including the President. All meetings of the

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79 Lim Chwee Leong (1890–1957) was the elder brother of Lim Han Hoe. He was educated at St Andrew's School and then at Raffles Institution in Singapore before enrolling in the Medical College in 1908 where he won several scholastic prizes. He returned to Penang in 1913 and began medical practice, opening Su Beng Dispensary in Prangin Road and later became honorary surgeon at the Penang Maternity Hospital (see 'Penang's New Hospital' *Straits Times*, 17 Sep 1915, at 3). In Penang, he became involved in community affairs and served on both the Municipal Council and the Legislative Council. He died in June 1957, and was buried at Batu Gantong Cemetery (see '500 at funeral of Dr Lim' *Straits Times*, 3 Jun 1957, at 5).

Board were to be open to the public unless the Commissioners otherwise decided. Clause 269 provided for the gradual abolition, within three years, of the double-seated ricksha. The Attorney-General in his *Objects and Reasons* explained that:

The reason for abolishing these rickshas is humanitarian. It is considered that the strain caused to a puller drawing a ricksha with two passengers in it is more than he can sustain without injury to his health: and that, therefore, the men who are engaged in this employment ought not to be permitted to pursue this means of earning a livelihood longer than is necessary for the institution on our streets of this class of vehicle to become gradually inexistent.<sup>80</sup>

The *Straits Times*, in an editorial on the subject, viewed ricksha-pulling as 'the deadliest occupation in the East, the most degrading for human beings to pursue, and it is noteworthy that there is hardly any race under the sun except the Chinese which will serve [485] as beasts of burden and cast away life with almost brutal disregard of its dignity and sanctity'.<sup>81</sup> That the Chinese ricksha coolie class did not, however, stand alone in making a living as 'beasts of burden' was incidentally shown when, on the second reading of the Bill, the Governor gave statistics as to the gradually diminishing use of the double ricksha in Japan and informed the Council that in 1911 there were 3,100 double rickshas against 146,200 single ones in that empire. That piece of information meant that at least some 300,000 Japanese coolies were engaged in the occupation of 'beasts of burden'.

Among the Officials who took part in the debate, Mr Tan Jiak Kim did not favour Government interference with the coolie class in an honest, though humiliating, method of earning their livelihood, while Mr Huttenbach agreed with the humanitarian principle and thought that the thanks of the whole community were due to the Gov-

80 'New Municipal Bill' *Singapore Free Press*, 21 Oct 1912, at 7. Song abbreviates 'jinrikisha' to 'ricksha' in his quote.

81 See 'Double Rickshas' *Straits Times*, 28 Oct 1912, at 8.

ernor for having shown such concern for the interest of the natives as he had done in proposing the abolition of the double rickshas.

An amusing incident occurred when this clause 269 reached the committee stage in March 1913. The Attorney-General proposed an amendment by way of a compromise, but this amendment was lost. The Treasurer then proposed a new amendment that after three years from the date of the Ordinance no ricksha the body of which exceeded an inside width of 2 feet 3 inches should be licensed.

'How wide is the present double ricksha?' asked an Hon member. As no one was able to give an authoritative reply, the Clerk of Councils, like the beadle in the story of 'The Bishop and the Caterpillar', was sent out with a foot rule to obtain the correct measurements. On his return, he told the amused Council that seating accommodation of the double ricksha measured 2 feet 3½ inches across and of the single ricksha 1 foot 9 inches. Thereupon the Hon Treasurer altered the figure in his amendment to 2 feet and in that form it was passed [486] by 11 votes to 3, the Governor voting against it. The remedy is, as a matter of fact, worse than the disease. The humanitarian purpose of the clause - to prevent two adults in a ricksha being pulled by a ricksha coolie - has failed: and so long as the law does not make it an offence for two adults to get into a ricksha which measures only 2 feet across, so long will the practice continue for two adults to cram themselves into a seat intended for one individual only.

In a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* (September 1912) Mr Min-Ch'ien TZ Tyau, then a Chinese student in London, drew attention to the employment of the term 'Chinaman' for 'Chinese'. He explained that the name was first applied to the Chinese laundryman on the Pacific coast of the United States, but had since stuck to Chinese wherever they are found, irrespective of birth, status or education.

To be hailed as a 'Chinaman' signifies that the individual spoken to is being placed under the category of laundrymen and coolies, though he may belong to the higher strata of society. Furthermore, the term 'Chinaman' is not grammatical. It violates one of the fun-

damental rules of English grammar. It should be a "Chinese man", or if the noun be dropped out, a 'Chinese'.<sup>82</sup>

Mr Tyau, LLD (London), now editor of the *Peking Leader*, a Chinese daily newspaper in the English language, is the author of *London Through Chinese Eyes*.<sup>83</sup> In this interesting book he relates how, when the Anglo-Chinese play *Mr Wu* was about to be produced in London in 1913, he and two other Chinese students were, at the suggestion of its managers, invited to see the play rehearsed and to peruse the scenario. The students submitted their criticism and emphasised that the ending was un-Chinese. The managers were not prepared to alter their plot and the students tried through the Chinese Minister to get the Lord Chamberlain to revoke his sanction. Their efforts proved abortive. The play was staged and enjoyed an extraordinarily long run. The students had the consolation of getting some of the more [487] grossly repugnant passages excised. They suggested the substitution of a 'Chinese' for the universal but ungrammatical 'Chinaman', but, writes Dr Tyau, 'the forces of tradition and convention were impregnable, and we failed signally'.<sup>84</sup>

The second instance of a Chinese being rewarded with the Imperial Service Medal for long, faithful and meritorious service occurred on the 15th March 1913 when HE Sir Arthur Young, at Government House, presented Mr Charles Pang with the medal,<sup>85</sup> in the presence of Dr Ellis, PCMO, Drs Croucher, Holbrook and McVail and a number of Mr Pang's colleagues. Born in Sarawak, he came to Singapore with his brother George, and after his medical training for a dresser he served in that capacity under the Government Medical Department from 1874 till August 1912, when he retired on pension. For a great many years he was specially detailed to vaccinate children, and

82 'The Mote in My Brother's Eye' *Weekly Sun*, 30 Nov 1912, at 11.

83 Min-Ch'ien TZ Tyau, *London Through Chinese Eyes: My Seven and a Half Years in London* (London; Swarthmore Press, 1920).

84 'The Mote in My Brother's Eye' *Weekly Sun*, 30 Nov 1912, at 11.

85 See 'Reward for Faithful Service' *Straits Times*, 15 Mar 1913, at 8.

there are still a good many grown-up people who retain a vivid recollection of their first experience of a police station where Mr Pang scratched their arms with a pocket knife.<sup>86</sup>

Under the auspices of the Amateur Drawing Association, Dr Lim Boon Keng lectured on the 31st March 1913 to a large audience at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce on 'The Influence of Religion on Art'.<sup>87</sup> Mr Tan Tiang Yew,<sup>88</sup> President of the ADA, took the chair.<sup>89</sup> The lecturer began by dealing with the elements of art and proceeded to emphasise the point that religion and art stood in close relation to one another, because art had assisted religion, and religion had inspired some of the noblest works of artists. He pointed out that religion assisted by enabling a man to know and feel what was truest and best, and illustrated his remark from the historic example of Rome, where the artists found subjects of their art in the gods during the period when the Empire was in its glory, while they took to painting nudes and other uninspiring subjects when the Empire was on the decline. He urged the members of the ADA to practise art from nature and not to attempt [488] copying. Referring to Chinese art, he said that the scenic artists had always drawn upon religious thought for their appreciation of the inner meaning of things, with

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86 Pang had the vocation of Government Vaccinator (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 29 Apr 1912, at 6).

87 See 'Religion and Art' *Straits Times*, 1 Apr 1913, at 9.

88 Tan Tiang Yew was the son of Tan Ah Hung, a well-known Chinese merchant and Justice of the Peace in Johor (see *Singapore Free Press*, 11 Jul 1912, at 2). In 1910, he was elected President of the Amateur Drawing Association, being elected to his post very shortly after completing his Senior Cambridge examination at the Anglo-Chinese School in 1909 (see 'Cambridge Locals' *Straits Times*, 27 Mar 1909, at 7). In 1911, he left for England to study law where he joined the Middle Temple. He was there for between 14 and 16 months but returned to Singapore in 1912 following the death of his father. In 1914, he was charged with abetment in the use of fraudulent documents and sentenced to four years' imprisonment (see 'Sentences in Promissory Note Case' *Straits Times*, 20 Jan 1915, at 7).

89 See 'Amateur Drawing Association' *Straits Times*, 13 Dec 1910, at 7.

the result that they painted with individuality and magnificence of comprehension: and some British authorities had acknowledged that Chinese landscape painting was unsurpassed.

The annual report of Tan Tock Seng Hospital for 1912 laid on the Legislative Council table in April 1913 was of special interest, as it recorded the passing of a resolution by the Committee in recognition of the valuable services rendered by the late Mr CB Buckley during thirty-one years' membership on the Committee, and expressing regret at the loss occasioned by his death, which had taken place on the 23rd May 1912. Mr Liao Chia Heng was elected to fill the vacancy. The Committee also passed a resolution expressing their gratitude for valuable service and advice readily placed at their disposal by Mr Arthur Knight as Secretary over the long period of thirty years. Mr Knight had retired owing to ill-health and old age, and Mr TW Stubbs was appointed to fill his place.

The Presbyterian Church on the 20th April was filled to its utmost capacity on the occasion of the wedding of Mr Song Ong Joo (a younger brother of Mr Song Ong Siang) to Miss Lim Hean Neo, the eldest daughter of Mr Lim Koon Yang.<sup>90</sup> The officiating minister was the Rev W Murray, who was assisted by the Revs W Runciman and JAB Cook. At the wedding reception held at 'Hollandia', Lloyd Road, the toast of the bridal pair was proposed by the Rev JAB Cook, for thirty years a friend of the family. He made reference to the late Mr Song Hoot Kiam (the father of the bridegroom) as a pupil of the late Professor James Legge, who, in the early 'Forties, was in charge of the Anglo-Chinese College in Malacca. That institution, founded by the Rev Robert Morrison, was the beginning of all the educational efforts in this part of the world to benefit the Chinese with Western knowledge and the fruits of Christianity.

90 Also spelt 'Lim Hian Neo' (see 'Local Weddings' *Straits Times*, 22 Apr 1913 at 9; and 'A Straits Chinese Wedding' *Weekly Sun*, 26 Apr 1913, at 6). She died on 28 Jan 1972 (See *Straits Times*, 24 Mar 1978, at 22).



Song Ong Joo



[489] Mr Song Ong Joo was born on the 1st May 1877, and educated at Raffles Institution. He was for many years at Messrs Gil llan, Wood & Co (now Adamson, Gil llan & Co). Subsequently he joined the firm of Handelsveerining, Amsterdam, which had such a high opinion of the excellent and conscientious character of his work as to offer him a more responsible post in their Samarang office. Mr Ong Joo left Singapore in April 1909, but returned in a year's time owing to a bad breakdown in health. During his sojourn at Samarang, he was accorded the privileges enjoyed by Europeans (including Japanese subjects of Chinese descent). He lived in the European quarter, unlike other Straits-born Chinese who at that very time were travelling in the Netherlands East Indies and who had to complain that, although they had adopted anglicised names and the Western style of dress, the British consular authorities would not register their passports, unless they produced a certificate of birth and a certificate of marriage of their parents. The Straits Chinese British Association had already made representations to the local Government on this matter and received in 1907 the reply from the Consul-General for the Netherlands that 'the law applicable to Europeans applies to any British subject of Chinese descent who is entitled to being considered as of British nationality or who for any other reason has a right to being assimilated to Europeans.' The vagueness of the reply formed the subject of further correspondence from the SCBA, and in January 1910 the Consul-General, after reference to the Government of the Netherlands, replied to the Straits Government as follows:

The Government of the Netherlands includes in the category of British subjects entitled to be assimilated to Europeans 'such persons as, by their naturalisation, are equals in every respect of Britons proper', and that all those who are governed by Western law affecting domestic and matrimonial relations and the [490] devolution of property are placed on the same footing in the Netherlands Indies as Europeans.

It is by this principle that Japanese subjects are assimilated to Europeans, and by that same principle a British subject of Chinese

descent – not included in the category referred to in my above reply to your first inquiry – should be assimilated to Europeans, provided that the family-law by which he is governed be in accordance with the family-law obtaining in Western countries.

It follows from the above that our law does not make any distinction between British subjects of Chinese descent and Japanese subjects of such descent, but that whenever any distinction is made, such distinction is based exclusively upon a difference *de facto* between the nature of the family-law by which the two categories are governed.

A British subject of Chinese descent would not, by reason of his adoption of an anglicised name and of the Western style of dress for the purpose of travelling in Netherlands India, be entitled to the privileges and advantages accorded to Europeans.<sup>91</sup>

At the present time, although Straits-born Chinese travelling in Netherlands India, with British passports, are not so humiliated as they were, as British subjects, in the past, and are accorded certain amenities, still the political status of Straits Chinese has not received full recognition there, and the Straits Chinese British Association must not rest on its oars until the British passport is taken at its full value in Netherlands India, no matter who the owner of it happens to be.

Going back to the subject of our sketch, Mr Ong Joo, taking advantage of the boom in the rubber market, started with his friend, Mr Khoo Boo Gay, a sharebroking business under the style of Joo & Gay, but gave it up after a little time to assist Mr Lee Keng Kee in the management of an extensive rubber estate at Bekoh, near Malacca, until its acquisition by a London company. He then became successively manager of Ulu Pandan Rubber Estate Ltd and of Scudai Rubber [491] Estate before its incorporation.<sup>92</sup> After serving Messrs Katz Brothers Ltd for a year as manager of the sale department at their Ice Works,

91 This quotation appears to be from the Government of Netherlands' reply to the Straits Chinese British Association and is not in the public domain.

92 See 'Ulu Pandan Rubber' *Straits Times*, 7 Jun 1913, at 9, which reported that Song had been appointed Manager in December in the place of WH Machado. Song resigned from Ulu Pandan Rubber Estates Ltd on 31 May 1914, see 'Dollar

he obtained a good appointment in the Eastern Rubber Company Ltd, where the long hours of work as chief of the company's store have prevented him to a certain extent from participating in Straits Chinese social functions, which, in his younger days, counted much on his help.

One of the original members of the Chinese Co SVI, Song Ong Joo rose to the rank of Sergeant, resigning in 1909 on his departure for Samarang. Possessing a melodious voice, and comic songs suiting his temperament, his comic numbers were a popular feature in the variety entertainments and smoking concerts which, in the early days of the Chinese Volunteer Club, contributed materially towards the popularity and the esprit de corps of the Chinese Volunteer Unit. With the valuable assistance of two staunch friends, Messrs W Lowe (since dead) and AV Peralta, at the piano, a group of new singers was formed consisting of Messrs Seah Cheng Joo, Seow Poh Leng, Tan Chow Kim, GB Taye and Teow Keong Hee, all members of the company.<sup>93</sup> Mr Ong Joo is an active member of the Chinese Christian Association, and it was at his suggestion that the Reading Club section was begun in June 1909 as a branch of CCA activities: and this section, which has ever since been carried on by the Rev W Murray and Mr Song Ong Siang as class leaders, has been instrumental in helping many a young Straits Chinese to strive after higher and nobler ideals in life as well as to acquire a wider acquaintance of the English language and literature.

An event which must have made a deep impression on the large body of non-Christian Chinese present was the service of intercession for China held at St Andrew's Cathedral on the morning of Sunday, the 27th April 1913. Besides the Governor and Lady Evelyn Young and many of the leading English residents, the congregation included the Chinese Consul-General and his [492] staff from the Consulate, Mrs Hoo Wei Yen, the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, CMG, the Chinese Volun-

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Rubber Companies' *Straits Times*, 17 Jun 1914, at 10. He died on 26 May 1962 (see *Straits Times*, 24 Mar 1978, at 22).

93 See 'Straits Chinese Recreation Club' *Straits Times*, 8 Mar 1904, at 5.



Straits Chinese Reading Club

teers, representatives of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Su Po Sia, the Chinese Epworth League, the Amateur Drawing Association, as well as many of the leading Chinese of Singapore. The service was of a unique character in that ministers of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches were included in the procession up the nave and took part in the lessons and prayers.

Bishop Ferguson-Davie preached from the text 'Righteousness exalteth a nation' (Proverbs xiv 34). His address was interpreted into Hokien by Mr Tan Pong Guan, at one time a police-court interpreter and now with Messrs Rodyk & Davidson.<sup>94</sup> The Bishop said:

We have met here to-day for a definite purpose. The Chinese Government has asked its Christian subjects to join together and pray for the welfare of the nation. Many of us who are not subjects of the Chinese Republic wish well to China. So we also wish to join with our Chinese fellow-Christians in this act of prayer. ... Why does the Chinese nation ask the Christian Church to pray for it? Because spiritual power is a real help to a nation, and spiritual help can be given by men of all classes and in all states of knowledge and ranks of society if they will bow before God and ask for His aid. So we have come to pray for the Chinese nation. What are we going to ask? What is the greatest blessing for which we can ask? I think our text will give us the clue for our prayers.

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94 Tan spent a total of 27 years in government service; he was for nine years a court clerk in the District Office of Butterworth, seven years as Interpreter of the Police and Supreme Courts in Penang, and finally as Interpreter of the Police Courts (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 10 Mar 1913, at 8). He retired on pension in 1913 and was employed at Rodyk & Davidson (see *Weekly Sun*, 3 May 1913, at 7). By 1918, when his first wife Yeo Swee Kim passed away, he was the Managing Clerk of Rodyk and Davidson and Honorary Secretary of the Ee Hoe Hean Club. He had five sons (KH Tann, Teng Kim, Thean Seang, Thean Bin, and Thean Tek, Robert) and six daughters, see *Straits Times*, 7 Feb 1918, at 6). His second wife, Goon Wing Lean, passed away in 1939 (see 'Domestic Occurrences' *Straits Times*, 1 May 1939, at 2). Tan passed away sometime between 1941 and 1946 (see *Straits Times*, 26 Jul 1946, at 4, where he is referred to as 'the late Mr Tan Pong Guan').

Righteousness exalteth a nation. We must pray that China may always be a righteous nation. ...<sup>95</sup>

The preacher discoursed on the greatness of the Chinese nation in literature, in commerce and in family life, but he reminded his Chinese audience that side by side with these points of virtue, there had been some grave faults. China, he said, was going through a time of change, and such a time was a time of difficulty, for the passing away of many old customs was fraught with [493] danger.

So we have come together to pray that the nation may, by God's help, pass through this time safely. We shall pray that all that is good may be retained, and that all that is weak or unworthy or wrong may be abolished. So it will happen that the nation will be conspicuous for righteousness and will be exalted, for righteousness exalteth a nation. ...<sup>96</sup>

The *Union Times* Press showed its interest in this event by printing the main parts of the service in Chinese characters free of charge, so that the Chinese could sing and pray in their own tongue.

On the 13th May 1913 Mr Kow Soon Kim was, on the motion of the Hon Mr EC Ellis, admitted to practise at the local bar by Mr Justice Sproule. He was born on the 21st October 1879 at Bangkok, being the eldest son of the late Kow Swee Siong, a Straits-born Chinese of Malacca. After finishing his education at Assumption College, Bangkok, and Raffles Institution, Singapore, he served for five years as a clerk in the Chartered Bank at Bangkok and then was appointed Malay and Siamese Interpreter and Marshall of HBM's Court for Siam at Bangkok (1901 to 1905). He was admitted a law student at the Middle Temple, London, in 1906 and was called to the Bar three years later. Returning to the East, he practised from 1909 to 1912 in Bangkok, and then settled down in Singapore, where he has been since in practice by himself. He was appointed Hon Secretary of the SCBA in 1913, which office he held for two years.

95 See 'Chinese Republic' *Straits Times*, 28 Apr 1913, at 9.

96 Ibid.



Kow Soon Kim

On the 24<sup>th</sup> May the Eastern United Assurance Corporation Limited, which had been floated with Chinese capital earlier in the year, was duly registered under the Companies Ordinance, 1889. Over 55,000 shares of \$10 each were issued at a premium of \$2.50 each. Three calls of \$2 each have been made and the whole of the premium has been called up, so that the company has a paid-up capital of nearly \$500,000. The company commenced business in fire and marine risks on the 15th August. Mr Tan Chay Yan was the [494] first chairman and held office until his death in March 1916. Mr Tan Kheam Hock was then appointed to fill the vacancy and is still chairman. Mr JD Keith Sim was the first General Manager and assumed his duties in November 1913. He resigned in February 1915 to take up an appointment with his old company, the Commercial Union, and was succeeded by Mr HJ Fougere. Before the arrival in the Colony of Mr Sim, Mr Tan Yew Chay, who had joined the company as secretary, acted as manager, and later on was appointed successively assistant manager and sub-manager.<sup>97</sup> The company has agencies in India, Java and throughout Malaya. It is in a flourishing condition and in 1917 and 1918 it paid a dividend of 10 per cent to its shareholders.

As the outcome of negotiations between the Peking and the British Governments, the *Hongkong Daily Press* published an official announcement that Chinese emigrants as from the 1st July 1914 would be prohibited from entering into written contracts to labour in the Straits Settlements, the Malay States and British North Borneo, and that all written contracts made prior to that date by Chinese emigrants for labour in these places should by that date lapse. Indentured immigration from India had ceased just at the period of the phenomenal development of rubber cultivation in Malaya, but the steadily increas-

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97 See 'Eastern United Assurance' *Straits Times*, 20 Sep 1915, at 10. At the time of his death on 25 Jul 1933, Tan was with the Java Sea and Fire Insurance Co Ltd. He was survived by his wife, two sons (Chuan Beng and Chuan Hock), six daughters and several grandchildren (see 'Deaths' *Straits Times* 26 Jul 1933, at 10).



ing influx of Chinese indentured labour relieved the planters from anxiety.

A *Government Gazette Extraordinary* dated the 2nd June announced the appointment by the Governor of the first batch of Municipal Commissioners under the new Municipal Ordinance (1913). Among the five Commissioners nominated for Singapore appeared the name of Mr Chia Keng Chin, who had already been on the Board under the repealed Ordinance. A month later, Messrs Ching Keng Lee, Tan Kheam Hock and Leong Man Sau were nominated Commissioners.

The tribute paid to Mr W Peacock, on the eve of his departure on furlough, for strenuous work at the Chinese [495] Protectorate on behalf of the Chinese community, took the form of an address signed by thirty of the leading Chinese residents and was presented on the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1913 at the Protectorate by the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim, CMG, at the head of a deputation which included Messrs Tan Kheam Hock, Ching Keng Lee, Leong Man Sau, Chia Keng Chin and Tan Boo Liat. The address reads:

We, the undersigned, on behalf of the Chinese residents, merchants, traders and shopkeepers of Singapore, take this opportunity, now you are about to leave us on a well-earned leave, to tender you our sincere and grateful thanks for the admirable, patient and courteous manner in which you have carried out your manifold and onerous duty towards the Chinese community both as a police magistrate and as Assistant Protector of Chinese.

We desire especially to express to you our appreciation of the invaluable and indefatigable services rendered to the public generally in the persistent and prolonged efforts made by you as Assistant Protector of Chinese to deal with the criminal element of the population by causing criminals to be tracked, watched, arrested and punished and in a number of cases banished. We believe that in this campaign against the evil-doers you have not spared yourself and that it has cost you many a sleepless night and a good deal of personal discomfort and sacrifice of your valuable time, and we are indeed grateful for such services.

It is our most heartfelt and sincere wish that you will thoroughly enjoy yourself in your homeland, and return to Singapore greatly benefited by the change and rest, and we hereby bid you God-speed.<sup>98</sup>

'A Talk on British Guiana' was the title of an address given under the auspices of the Chinese Christian Association on the 21st August by Mr Samuel Fung (冯福昌),<sup>99</sup> a young Chinese lawyer, born in British Guiana and educated in England. After dwelling on the educational system in that part of the British dominions, he interested [496] the audience with the information that there were a number of Chinese students in Great Britain from British Guiana including four Chinese ladies who were contemplating coming to the East to work for the betterment of the Chinese nation. It is refreshing to know that there are a number of Chinese students in the schools and universities of Great Britain, France and America who hail from all parts of the world, and it is to be earnestly hoped that in the days to come the wealthy Chinese residents of this Colony will realise not only the expediency but the absolute necessity of sending their children to complete their education in Europe. Thus these youngsters will be provided with a more advantageous start in life's race and be better fitted to serve their fellow-men, if they are so inclined. One of the ladies referred to by Mr Fung in his lecture is now in private practice in Singapore in the person of Dr Martha Hoa-hing. She graduated in 1916 and was for a time connected with the St Andrew's Medical Mission, Singapore.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1913 the death took place in Malacca of Mr Ong Kim Wee, a local millionaire, at the age of 63. He was the only son of the late Ong Keng Hoon, and a cousin of the late Ong Tek Lim, who had, until his death the year before, acted as his property and business agent in Singapore. Although handicapped by a poor English

98 'Chinese Protectorate' *Straits Times*, 26 Jul 1913, at 9.

99 Samuel Fung was the eldest son of James Fung Teen Yong of British Guiana. He was called to the Bar of the Straits Settlements on 2 Feb 1914, and then the Bar of the Federated Malay States in May 1916 (see, 'FMS Bar' *Singapore Free Press*, 13 May 1916, at 7).

education, he had served as a Municipal Commissioner. He was for many years a member of committee of the Malacca Chinese Temple. His interest in public affairs in Malacca was intelligent and practical. In 1897 he was made a JP and as a rubber magnate he was well known throughout Malaya. He owned an extensive estate of 6,200 acres at Merlimau, planted with tapioca and interplanted with rubber, which was afterwards acquired by a London company. During his lifetime he gave freely to several charities, including \$10,000 to the Tan Tock Seng Hospital for the Blind, and scholarships to St Francis's School, Malacca, and the Anglo-Chinese School and St Joseph's Institution, [497] Singapore. His gifts, as an outsider, to Singapore institutions may well serve as an incentive and a challenge to our wealthy Chinese residents of this Settlement to do far more than they have yet done.

In honour of the recognition of the Chinese Republic by the Powers and other nations, the Chinese Consul-General and Mrs Hoo held a reception in the forenoon of the 10th October for the Chinese community, and another in the afternoon of the same day for the British residents and the consular bodies. The Governor was represented by his private secretary, Mr Hayes Marriott, while a large number of guests representing many nationalities attended to convey felicitations to the Chinese Consul-General. The whole function, marking a memorable occasion, went off pleasantly.

The educated Straits Chinese, who, unlike the China-born Chinese, hardly ever find their way to Raffles Museum, missed a unique opportunity of viewing the fine collection of Chinese porcelain which Mr Roland Braddell placed in 1913 on loan in the Museum, specimens of which were fully and interestingly described in a catalogue compiled by him. Some of our people, whose families have settled down here or in Malacca or Penang for four or five generations at least, must have in their possession old Chinese vases, teapots, bowls, jars and plates, which would delight the heart of a Chinese antique porcelain collector.

Mr Braddell's collection consisted of blue and white dishes and a straight beaker vase of the late Ming period (before AD 1644), and

numerous specimens of vases, bowls, cups and plates dating back to the early and middle Tsing period. There were also exhibited specimens of Chinese Lowestoft made in China as early as the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries, and decorated in part or in whole in Lowestoft (England) or in China. Other exhibits were instructive, as showing how the Chinese potters suited their trade with Europe, Siam, Malaya and Japan. These were known as 'Trade' or 'Indian' China. It [498] requires a connoisseur or an expert to detect spurious imitations of the real articles, most of which are becoming rare and very valuable. A series of illustrated talks on *Chinese Porcelain* by Mr Roland Braddell on the invitation of the Amateur Drawing Association should be welcomed by English-speaking Chinese.

A very readable and informative article on 'The Life of the Chinese Girl in Singapore' appeared in the London *Queen* (September 1913) from the pen of Miss (now Dr) Lee Choo Neo, then studying at the Straits Medical School. The article was written in reply to the question put to her: 'What do you think of the life which the Chinese girls are leading here?' Only a few excerpts can be given from this article, written at a time when the old order of things was gradually being displaced by the new.

The Chinese girl's life in the Straits Settlements, though freer and less irksome than that of her sister in China, is not an enviable one. Its monotony is intolerable... She is apparently well contented with her lot, for she makes no complaint whatever. So accustomed is she to her surroundings that were she placed in the English girl's shoes, she would feel quite out of her element.

The happiest and merriest period of her life is that spent during her childhood, when no restraint whatever is put upon her actions. She is permitted to associate with boys and romp about the house and streets (there being no nursery) to her heart's content, which accounts for the dirty and unkempt appearance she sometimes presents... Her seclusion dates from the time when she arrives at the age of 13 or 14, and everything considered unladylike is forbidden her. The parents here do not look upon their daughters as be-

ing altogether worthless... . No girl is ever sold into slavery. When unwanted, she is usually given away to be adopted into some family, and is there treated as a daughter of the house.

As soon as she is 13 or 14, she ... has to undergo a course of training in cooking and sewing. These two [499] are essential accomplishments to achieve, without which she has scant hope of securing a good match. Education is not yet considered necessary, but her value would be very much enhanced were she able to read and write a little English. The only books ever perused are printed in Romanised Malay, the mother tongue here being Malay, and the Chinese language practically unknown. Her sewing comprises the embroidery of slippers, pouches, belts, etc, which form features of a Chinese girl's trousseau. ...

The attire of a Chinese girl ... consists of a long dress called a 'kabayah' which extends far below the knees, a 'sarong' and a short jacket. Slippers are worn without any stockings, and the dress, which opens in front, is fastened by means of three brooches or 'kro-sangs' of three different shapes. This costume is almost an exact replica of the Malay woman's, the only difference being the mode of dressing the hair, into which, in the case of the former, are stuck three hairpins. Some of the girls have adopted the Chinese costume on a modified scale, as being more suitable to their nationality.

The life is indeed lonely and dull. ... She is never permitted to venture outside the doors of her abode, unless to pay occasional visits to her closest relations. When she does go out it is in conveyances which are entirely covered up, and either her mother or an aged relative acts as her chaperone. She lives in a sphere of her own, quite out of touch with the society of men. ...

The Chinese girl is seldom provided with an adequate education, the passing of the third and fourth standard being deemed sufficient. Consequently, she possesses but very vague notions concerning English etiquette and customs. ... Parents regard it as a waste of money to educate their daughters, who are supposed to be incapable of maintaining the family in time of need, seeing that, according to Chinese customs, it is indecent and disgraceful for girls to work for their living, which must of necessity entail

their going out incessantly and thus exposing themselves to the public gaze.

The age at which the Chinese girl is married is either 18 or 19, sometimes two or three years earlier, as is common among the wealthier classes. It is the [500] parents who bring about the matches and make all the arrangements. In most cases the marriage takes place between people who are total strangers to one another. The girl is so completely under the control of her parents that her wishes are not consulted at all: in fact, she is entirely ignorant of the proceedings which are being carried out until the matter is quite settled. Even then, she is not informed of the identity, position, age, appearance, etc, of her future husband.

The wedding costume is typically Chinese, and a great deal of jewellery is worn with it, which is of such dreadful weight that no wonder a delicate girl often succumbs in a fainting fit when going through the ceremony of making her obeisance to her parents and other people of importance. The life of the newly made wife would be rendered far happier if there were no mother-in-law, who makes her lead a wretched existence by behaving tyrannically in the house. This tyranny and unjust treatment of the daughter-in-law is a special privilege of the mother-in-law, who exercises it without the least compunction or mercy. The poor wife becomes the drudge of the household, and must be ready to wait on her mother-in-law at all hours. Of course there are exceptions, but these are few indeed.<sup>100</sup>

Miss Lee closes her article by pointing to the silver lining in the dark cloud. She says:

A perceptible change has taken place during the last three or four years, and is steadily increasing. Girls are not kept so much cooped up in their houses, and a free life has been allotted to some of them, for the parents have now recognised the benefits derived from the little liberty and education which they allow their daughters.

Education is now considered necessary. Even the lower classes ... are helping them by a slight relaxation of the antiquated cus-

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100 Lee Chu Meo, 'The Chinese Girl in Singapore' *The Queen, The Lady's Newspaper*, 27 Sep 1913, at 562–563, at 562.

toms of their ancestors. Girls now obtain as equal an education with the boys as their parents' purses can afford.

Let us hope that this beneficial change will continue as the years advance, so that greater scope may be [501] given to the girls for the development of their minds.... Many Chinese young men who return to Singapore after an education at some university make an excuse for constant attendance at their clubs that their wives cannot talk in an interested manner on any but household matters. Let us at least take this excuse away from them, and then things will begin to right themselves.<sup>101</sup>

The death, on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1913, of Mr Sim Kia Jan at the age of 50<sup>102</sup> removed from business circles one whose work was greatly appreciated and whose character highly esteemed. Born in Singapore, he was educated at Raffles Institution, and at the time of his death he had been for some years managing partner of the Chin Huat Hin Oil Trading Company, and was also a director of the Sze Hai Tong Bank and a member of committee of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. He had helped to build up this Oil Trading Company which distributed oil principally over the east coast of Siam, the Federated Malay States and British North Borneo. The firm acted as agents for several brands of oil, as well as the Sperry Flour Company of California, and also traded as general merchants and commission agents. Mr Sim Kia Jan was a man of sound judgment with plenty of tact, and was a popular and influential man among the Chinese community.

A variety entertainment on the 24<sup>th</sup> December was given by the Straits Chinese Literary Association to celebrate its third anniversary. This society came into existence early in 1911, when a handful of young Straits Chinese, the majority of whom were 'old' boys of the

101 Ibid, at 563.

102 Sim died at his home, *Sans Souci*, at 105 River Valley Road (which he purchased in 1908 (see *Straits Times*, 4 Jun 1908, at 6)), survived by his wife Cecilia (see 'Death' *Straits Times*, 12 Dec 1952, at 8), a daughter and a son. He was 50 years old (see 'Death of Well-known Towkay' *Straits Times*, 12 Dec 1913, at 8). He was buried at the Serangoon Road Cemetery (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 18 Dec 1913, at 8).



Straits Chinese Literary Association



Anglo-Chinese School, held several meetings to discuss the advisability of organising a literary association. They worked very hard and their earnest efforts resulted in the formation of the above association, which was registered on the 17th June 1911 with eight members on the roll. It is a gratifying fact that the number of members to-day has passed the figure of 200. Apart from holding regular fortnightly literary [502] meetings which give the young members a fine training ground for public speaking, indoor and outdoor games are also introduced in which the members take a keen interest. Social meetings are held quarterly for the purpose of creating a better understanding and good fellowship among members. Learned and prominent men of this town have been invited from time to time to give lectures on subjects of general interest and importance. The *SCLA Recorder* was first published in January 1919 with the Rev Goh Hood Keng as editor. It is a little bi-monthly publication circulated gratis among members and friends of the society, and its success since has been partly due to men with a literary taste who send in interesting contributions for publication. There has been a steady progress in all its activities right through from the time of its inception, and the association, judging by what it has accomplished, has a bright and useful future yet before it.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE TENTH DECADE (1909–19)

#### SECOND PART

IN February 1914 the *Straits Times* published a special contribution on 'The Straits Chinese, their Character and Tendencies', from which we can only quote portions, but the whole article is worth careful perusal.

The Straits-born Chinaman (sic) is usually regarded as being of mixed breed – half Chinese and half Malay. Except, however, as regards the original progenitors, this is not in accordance with fact, the first ancestress only being a full-blooded Malay: the subsequent generations usually intermarrying among themselves or introducing new Chinese blood, and thus maintaining the dominant racial characteristics in the breed. In the older settlements there are descendants of the 5th, 6th and even more generations but in Singapore the majority are those of the 3rd and 4th in descent from a purely Chinese male progenitor. ... Recently, descendants from purely Chinese parentage on both sides are much in evidence, but these are still too insignificant in number, and too recent, to influence to any appreciable extent the distinguishing features and marked characteristics of the Straits-born Babas. ...

As is well known, Chinese immigration into the Colony has been confined to only the two south-eastern maritime provinces of Kwangtung and Fukien. The latter being the poorer province, successful emigrants therefore do not usually take their families home again with them on their repatriation, thereby leaving their children as well as their vested interests in this Colony.

[504] This accounts for the numerical superiority as well as the prosperity of the local Hokien Babas throughout the settlements. The Kwangtung Babas, i.e. those of Teochew, Hak-ka, Canton and Hainan parentage, readily assimilate and fraternise with those of Hokien: and thus there is formed a compact and homogeneous community with all interests and aspirations in common ...

From the Colony's standpoint, the most important consideration is undoubtedly to ascertain what is the attitude of this important section of the community towards the alien civilisation which surrounds them on all sides as well as towards the authority which governs them. That they are law-abiding, self-restraining and reliable, may safely be attributed to the racial temperament. ... That they are loyal to the authorities and to their foreign employers, comparatively free from criminal taint, and self-respecting, may be due to the ameliorating circumstances of their climatic, educational and economic environment. ... The recent upheavals of the political situation in China did not affect this plodding, matter-of-fact, steady-going community to any appreciable extent. That they sympathised in some measure with the aims and projects of the revolutionists could be easily understood, but that they would ever voluntarily jeopardise their personal security, or cripple and injure their material resources and vested interests, at the call of a host of fanatical and unpractical schemers, could also be readily predicated. ... Contrast this apathetic and indifferent conduct with the enthusiasm and alacrity displayed by the half-informed mining coolie of the Peninsula, who freely offered the earnings of several months and volunteered for service in the cause of the revolutionists, and one is struck with the wide difference in the educational and economic status of the two. ...

In physical endurance the Straits-born Chinese may not be so hardy or so persevering as the China-born community, so that they are not represented in the labouring and skilled artisan or petty-trading classes generally. As interpreters and clerks and as intermediaries they are indispensable in plantations, mining centres and works employing numbers of unskilled [505] Chinese labour. At the wharves and on board ships they are storekeepers, tally-clerks and supercargoes. Watching the calm, composed, yet alert and indefatigable way in which the weighing and tally clerks fulfil their functions at the wharves, checking off the mixed and confusing package marks and serial numbers with unerring precision, one realises the fact that though they may not develop the muscular powers of their race, they yet preserve intact the racial penetrative sensory qualifications. ...

In habit, customs, mental peculiarities and religious beliefs, they are indistinguishable from the China-born Chinese. ... They are cleaner than their neighbours in habitation and dress, more pleasure-loving perhaps and fonder of ostentatious display. In outdoor exercises they enter freely into the spirit of English sports and games. They contribute liberally to all charities and public benefactions. In their cups they may be noisier, more quarrelsome and less sober: their behaviour at the singing salons may be scandalous: they may be ruder or less accommodating to each other: and perhaps more independent in their expressed views. But, underneath all these superficialities, one can easily detect the same democratic spirit of fraternal comradeship, the same respect for seniority and learning, and the same obedience to the calls of duty and to the requirements of the rites and ceremonies of Chinese ancestral worship. ...

As regards the claims of special creeds, the Straits-born Chinese may be considered latitudinarians, lighting candles at the altar of the Holy Virgin as well as at the shrines of some popular renowned dato-kramats. In spite, however, of the great efforts of missionary proselytism, they remain indifferent alike to spiritual persuasions or hell-threats. ... At all events, the number of genuine converts made by the propaganda is exceedingly meagre, the hopes of ultimate success depending entirely upon the special training of the younger generations in the dogmas and creeds of their faith.

In matters of education, however, they have boldly departed from the usual practice of their neighbours. To equip themselves for their present position [506] in life as well as to preserve their accumulated wealth, and to establish a sure basis for ultimate systematic culture, they have preferred to give their children a good sound English education. ... From time to time they agitated for some technical and higher education, but on the whole they remain satisfied with the provision of a sound and practical commercial training. ... But the neglect to provide or to encourage the acquisition of some adequate Chinese learning among the younger generation is very much to be deprecated. ...

But it must not be forgotten that the soul of Chinese morality and piety is inextricably and inseparably identified with the claims

of culture, that this culture is a process of national evolution, and that it represents the nation's efforts to meet man's need of conformity to higher laws than mere personal fancy, caprice or power. ... For a Chinaman, therefore, to be deprived of the invigorating stimulus of his country's literature is indeed to be denationalised. And not only that, but, in the coming years when the schools of Hongkong and China pour forth their hosts of Anglo-Chinese educated office-seekers and workers, the Straits Baba will find himself sadly handicapped by his want of foresight and narrower outlook.<sup>1</sup>

The last Interport Rifle Match before the Great War broke out took place in May 1914, when Singapore won with a score of 942, and the winning team included Tan Chow Kim (93) and Song Ong Siang (91). The novel feature in the match was the inclusion in the Singapore team of a lady, Miss Kerr (the well-known and popular vocalist, then Principal of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School, and now Mrs Thomas). By her coolness and steady shooting at the longer ranges, she finished by taking sixth place with a score of 93.

The last annual SRA meeting of the century under record was held in the following month. The Chinese Company was well represented in the various events. The Governor's Cup was won by Lieut Song Ong Siang.

War between Britain and Germany was declared on the 4th August. Immediately after the news reached [507] Singapore on the 5<sup>th</sup>, fifty Chinese volunteered with two officers, forming part of a detachment of about 200 men of the SVC, marched from the Drill Hall to Johnston's Pier. Thence the Chinese and Malay volunteers proceeded to Fort Canning, where they were stationed as reserves. The Chinese Company was then under strength, numbering just below 100. The other half of the Company was left at the Drill Hall to furnish the Drill Hall Guard and to be ready to assume other duties allotted to them. The Chinese and Malay companies were wholly or partly mobilised during the whole period of the War (1914-18), and the two units

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1 See 'Straits-born Chinese: Character and Tendencies' by a Special Contributor, *Straits Times*, 5 Feb 1914, at 9.

alternated every fortnight in providing Guards at the Pumping Station (McKenzie Road), St James's Wharf, Keppel Harbour and the King's Dock, Thomson Road and Kallang Reservoirs, Blakang Mati and Pulo Brani, Tanjong Katong and Labrador Cable Stations and the Criminal Prison. The Chinese Company throughout the War furnished the Drill Hall Guard.

At the outbreak of the War, the ration allowance was ridiculously inadequate. Rice and vegetables, fuel and oil were drawn from the Stores by our QMS Tan Piah Eng (one of those mobilised for four years), who had to divide his time and attention between his duties at the Bukit Timah Rubber Estate as assistant manager and his duties at the Drill Hall and the outposts as quartermaster. Twenty-seven cents per day formed the balance of the ration allowance. The Chinese community, which was appealed to for financial assistance to supplement the ration allowance, readily responded, and raised about \$3,000. This Fund was exhausted by the end of the War, although the ration allowance had been from time to time increased until it reached to about three times the original figure.

One of the immediate results of the outbreak of the War was a run on the Chinese Commercial Bank, incorporated in 1912, and a financially sound institution with Mr Lim Peng Siang as managing director, Mr Lee Choon Guan as chairman and Dr Lim Boon Keng [508] as vice-chairman of a strong Board of Directors. The Government was approached by the bank for temporary assistance. This was granted – and the following Proclamation was published on the bank premises by order of the Government:

The Government has undertaken to look into the position of the Chinese Commercial Bank with a view to lending it money, but, before doing this, the Government must examine the bank's account, and during this examination the bank will be closed.<sup>2</sup>

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2 See 'Run on Chinese Commercial Bank' *Straits Times*, 7 Aug 1914, at 9.

A fortnight later, a further Proclamation announced that –

the Government has examined thoroughly the accounts of the Chinese Commercial Bank, and finds that its assets exceed the liabilities. The present trouble is due partly to the fact that many traders are hoarding their money instead of paying it into the Bank. ... If the bank is able within a reasonable time to raise cash, the Government will certainly lend it a sum of money equal to the amount so raised. The bank is authorised to collect all debts due to it in the usual way. Further it should be well known to all that in the present time of war, people who have cash should pay it into the various banks in the Colony and thus allow it to circulate freely to help commerce, and should not hoard it. Hoarding not only does no good to those who hoard, but will certainly do harm to the local situation and thus help the enemy.<sup>3</sup>

On the 1st October the bank's doors were opened for the resumption of business. Thanks to the prompt action on the part of the Government, confidence had been restored, so that within the first five minutes there was more money paid in than withdrawn, and as the morning progressed, business proceeded on quite normal lines.

Another of the immediate results of the outbreak of the War was the refusal of Chinese import dealers to settle their outstanding debts. This led to meetings [509] between delegates of the European and Chinese Chambers of Commerce to discuss the critical situation. In addition to the action of the latter institution which called a meeting of Chinese traders and explained to them that they were not absolved from any of their liabilities by the War, the Protector of Chinese, at the instance of the former Chamber, caused a letter over his signature to be published in all the Chinese newspapers, pointing out that the Government Proclamation had been misread by Chinese dealers, and that although the Governor, in a case of emergency, could issue an order postponing the payment of rents and all other debts, yet such necessity had not arisen, and exhorting all traders and inhabitants to pursue their usual avocations and pay their debts and rents as usual.

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3 See 'The Chinese Commercial Bank' *Straits Times*, 27 Aug 1914, at 10.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> October there was a large gathering of the principal residents at the Memorial Hall in order to support the cause of the Prince of Wales's Relief Fund. The Governor, Sir Arthur Young, presided and appealed for liberal subscriptions towards the fund, as well as to a local fund to be applied to the relief of those who were suffering from unemployment caused by the interruption and dislocation of trade and industry or otherwise plunged into poverty and distress in consequence of the War. He announced a Government donation of £10,000 to the Prince of Wales's Relief Fund, and proposed an executive committee, including Mr Tan Jiak Kim, to distribute the money of the local fund, and a general committee to collect subscriptions which included the following Chinese gentlemen: Messrs Seah Liang Seah, Liau Chia Heng, Tan Kheam Hock, Ching Keng Lee, Lim Peng Siang, Yow Ngan Pan, Wee Cheow Keng, Low Long Teng, Thong Siong Lim and Dr Lim Boon Keng. He announced, amid applause, that the Hon Mr Tan Jiak Kim had given \$18,000 to that Fund.

Mr Tan Jiak Kim, in supporting the resolution, said:

A few words from me will, to a certain extent, give [510] the meeting the assurance on behalf of the Chinese that we shall do all we can to support the fund. The only thing left for us to do now is to take care that the proceedings of this meeting will be duly translated into the Chinese papers for the benefit of the Chinese who are not here.

By the 19th June 1915 the subscriptions to the Prince of Wales's Fund had reached \$287,000 and to the Local Relief Fund \$47,000. Of the latter fund, less than \$2,000 had been spent on local relief. Owing to a great deal of controversy in the press as to the allocation of this latter fund, a meeting of subscribers was held on the 13th July 1915 at the Memorial Hall under the presidency of the Hon Mr RJ Wilkinson, CMG, who announced that Government would ask the Legislative Council for a vote of dollar for dollar for all money spent on relief of



victims of the War and of the mutiny. Mr Darbishire moved and Mr Tan Jiak Kim seconded the resolution –

that this meeting of subscribers to the Prince of Wales's Relief Fund hereby authorises the executive committee to apply so much of such funds as are allocated for local relief, not only for relief of distress in Singapore through unemployment caused by the War, but also, at their discretion, for the relief of distress caused by the killing or wounding of residents of Singapore in the war and in the mutiny.<sup>4</sup>

Dr Lim Boon Keng, in supporting the above resolution, said:

As regards the mutiny, I may say that though only two Chinese have been killed by accident, still, the Chinese have suffered very severely as a result of the mutiny one way or another. I am glad to say that the Chinese have not thought it right to hold the Government responsible in the matter (applause). That is a thing we ought sometimes to think of. As a consequence of the mutiny, not only those who have been [511] killed, but all the residents of Singapore have suffered in one way or another. On behalf of the Chinese, I can say that we think the loss and the inconvenience should form part of the results of the war, and we have to put up with such inconvenience or loss as best we can.<sup>5</sup>

The death on the 19th January 1915 of Mr Kung Tian Cheng in Peking, China, drew attention to the fact that a Straits-born Chinese with a good knowledge of the Chinese (Mandarin) language has no trouble in securing a wider sphere of usefulness and service than a small Settlement like Singapore can offer him. Mr Kung Tian Cheng was born in Malacca on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1879 and was educated at the Anglo-Chinese School, Singapore, and later in India. He entered Government service as a junior clerk at Raffles Library in 1895. Five years later he was

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4 See 'Legislative Council' *Straits Times*, 14 Aug 1915, at 10. This report contains this quotation from Darbishire but has no record of the support of Tan Jiak Kim. Song's source may well have been Lim Boon Keng himself, who was present at the sittings.

5 Ibid.



Kung Tian Cheng

chief clerk and interpreter at the Chinese Protectorate, Penang. He came back to Singapore as chief clerk at Raffles Library, and was an active member of the Chinese Christian Association as well as a valuable contributor to the *Straits Chinese Magazine*. Among the articles he wrote was a brief biography of the late Professor F Max Müller, the famous editor of the *Sacred Books of the East*. In 1907 he was appointed guardian and tutor to certain Chinese students whom he took to India to finish their education: and in 1910 he went to China, where he travelled extensively.<sup>6</sup> He became managing editor in 1912 of the *Republican Advocate* published in Shanghai, and a year later editor of the *Peking Daily News*. He also acted as translator to Yuan Shi Kai. In 1914 he was appointed chief librarian to the Presidential Library and a member of the personal staff of Yuan Shi Kai, whose biography he was engaged in writing when death overtook him. He was a prolific writer and counted among his intimate friends Dr Morrison, Professor Giles,

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6 Kung resigned from the Singapore Library and Raffles Museum in 1906 to devote himself to business (see *Eastern Daily Mail*, 16 Mar 1906, at 2).

Wu Ting Fang,<sup>7</sup> WW Yen<sup>8</sup> and Dr Ho Kai.<sup>9</sup> His brother is Mr Kung Tian Siong,<sup>10</sup> who is engaged in business in Singapore.

[512] The eighth annual report of the Sze Hai Tong Bank issued on the 4th February 1915 stated that since the Great War began there had been a large number of new customers. That bank had succeeded

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7 Also known as 'Ng Choy' or 'Ng Ah Choy', he was formerly an interpreter in the Hong Kong Police Courts. He was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1874 and became the first Chinese to become an English Barrister-at-Law. He died on 23 Jun 1922. See Linda Pomerrantz-Zhang, *Wu Tingfang (1842-1922): Reform and Modernization in Modern Chinese History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1992).

8 Also known as 'Yan Huiqing' or 'Yen Wei Ching, Williams' (1877-1950). WW Yen was Editor-in-Chief of *The English and Chinese Standard Dictionary* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1908). He later became Vice-Minister of the Foreign Office in the Chinese Government, and was later appointed Minister at the Hague (1912), and Germany (1913). Yen was the brother of Dr Yen Tseh-Ching, former Director-General of Railroads in China. He died in Shanghai on 24 May 1950, aged 74. See WW Yen, *East-West Kaleidoscope, 1877-1946: An Autobiography* (New York: St John's University Press, 1974).

9 Also known as 'Sir Kai Ho Kai' and 'Dr Ho Nai'. Ho was born on 21 Mar 1859 in Hongkong and educated at Palmer House School, Margate, Aberdeen University, St Thomas's Medical and Surgical College, and at Lincoln's Inn. He had practised as a barrister since 1882 and was a member of the Sanitary Board, the Public Work Committee, the Legislative Council, Po Leung Kuk Committee and numerous other professional organisations. He was knighted by the British Government in 1912 and died on 21 Jul 1914 at the age of 55 (see 'Death of Sir Kai Ho Kai' *Straits Times*, 22 Jul 1914, at 9).

10 Also known as 'Kong Tian Siong' or 'TS Kung', he was born in Malacca in 1876 but came to Singapore for his education, studying at Anglo-Chinese School. Kung was active in business and was Managing Proprietor of the Empire Cinema (junction of South Bridge Road, Tanjong Pagar Road and Neil Road), Manager of Liberty Hall, Managing Director of Harima Hall, and Director of the Pontianak Gold Dredging Concessions, Limited. Kung and his family lived at 37 Emerald Hill, a house which was eventually sold to Dr Lim Boon Keng and which became the first building for the Singapore Chinese Girls' School. Kung passed away in May 1958 and was buried in Bidadari Christian Cemetery. See 'Kung Tian Siong and family (Bukit Brown)', available at <<http://mymindis-rojak.blogspot.sg/2013/04/kung-tian-siong-and-family-bukit-brown.html>> (accessed 10 Mar 2015).

in meeting a run from the enormous cash reserve which the bank had always made it a policy to keep in hand. The report made special reference to the magnanimous act of Mr Low Peng Yam, one of the Directors and the largest individual shareholder, in offering for the bank's use the sum of \$500,000 at the bank's current rate of interest, in order to further stiffen the stability of the bank, which had been from the start a sound institution. As a quid pro quo, the bank had assigned a part of the securities it held as a security for that substantial loan.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> February, at 3 pm, an émeute of the 5<sup>th</sup> Madras Light Infantry, quartered at Alexandra Barracks, broke out. On the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> all Chinese Volunteers doing guard duty had been relieved by the Malay Co for 48 hours so as to keep the Chinese New Year festival, and had reported their return at 7 am on the 15<sup>th</sup>. With the exception of a small squad for the Drill Hall Guard, the rest of the mobilised strength had gone over to resume their duties at Blakang Mati. About half their number, not being on duty, had crossed back to Singapore, and when the alarm was given these off-duty men reported at the Drill Hall. It is satisfactory to be able to record that on that evening and within the next two or three days about thirty of the Chinese ex-Volunteers answered the call to arms and were temporarily taken on the strength. For the next few weeks these ex-Volunteers did their share of additional special duties in rounding up the mutineers, guarding the prisoners, scouring the jungles for abandoned rifles and ammunition and dead bodies, and undertaking house-to-house visitation in certain districts where mutineers were reported to be in hiding.

Early in the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup>, news came that a batch of eighty mutineers at Bukit Timah Police [513] Station had surrendered, and Major Glennie with thirty Chinese and a few Malay and European Volunteers went out to meet them and bring them in to the Drill Hall. These prisoners, who were found to belong to the loyal half of the regiment, were confined on board the SS *Cheang Hock Kian* under a guard of Chinese Volunteers. The same morning Lieut Song Ong Siang with a squad proceeded to the junction of Tanglin and Alexandra Roads to reconnoitre. At that point he found a few armed Euro-



Low Peng Yam

peans – untrained civilians – already on the spot, standing in a row across Alexandra Road and not under cover. They would assuredly have furnished fine targets for any rebel snipers. Firing was going on then on the hills beyond the police station. Our men took cover at the old Chinese cemetery (known as 'Leng-ki-sua'), but the firing became fainter and later on ceased. A search in the shrubbery on this hill, with the assistance of Chinese squatters, disclosed a number of abandoned rifles, bayonets and haversacks holding large quantities of ball ammunition, which were taken back to the Drill Hall.

The mutineers had apparently decided to shoot down only Englishmen (although the casualties on the 15<sup>th</sup> included two Chinese and three Malays), for in the course of the trials of the mutineers, evidence was given of how Mr Joseph Evans motoring out with Mr Scully, along Alexandra Road, was told to go back towards town on giving the reply that he was Irish, and Mr Roland Braddell, counsel for the prosecution, stated that evidence was available that Dutchmen and Frenchmen had been spared. Mr Tan Soo Bin had a similar thrilling experience, as on the afternoon of the 15<sup>th</sup> he drove in his car with his little children along Alexandra Road towards its junction with Tanglin Road and was stopped by some RGA or RE soldiers who were putting up a barricade across the road. Instead of letting him through, they told him to go back along Alexandra Road and make his way to town by Telok Blangah Road. He heard a lot of firing, and, as he passed by [514] Alexandra Barracks, he saw several Indian soldiers crouching behind the culverts and taking cover in the drain. These men brought their rifles to the present, but lowered them as the car drove past. Mr Soo Bin thought that a sham fight was going on, and it was only after he got into town that he learnt the news of the émeute. He and his children were thus not only within the zone of fire, but actually within a few feet from a party of mutineers who might have shot them, if they had been so minded.

Capt Brown, the OC of the Chinese Co, was attached to the relief column under Lieut-Col Brownlow, RGA, which, on receipt of orders, advanced at 5.15 am on the 16<sup>th</sup> to the attack of Alexandra Barracks,

where Lieut-Col Martin, Major and Mrs Cotton, Capt Ball, Capt Hall, 5th LI, and Capt Sydney Smith and 82 men of the MSVR were besieged at the CO's bungalow, and after a fight with the mutineers reached the bungalow and relieved the besieged party. Lieut-Col Brownlow, in his report of the operations, says of Capt Brown, who had charge of the reserve, with Mr Cooke-Yarborough as his lieutenant, that 'this officer showed himself to be an exceptionally capable and valuable officer. He was in command of the untrained troops in a very hot little piece of fighting, and but for his cool and good leading, it is quite possible that his command might have had to retire, thus disorganising and delaying the whole operation.'

In the first official narrative by Mr WG Maxwell of this mutiny, which still haunts like a nightmare anyone who realises the providential escape of the inhabitants of Singapore from what might have been, it was stated that -

the native population was quiet throughout. Chinese, Malays and Tamils pursued their ordinary vocations, as though nothing unusual were occurring. No crowds collected, and so far from there being any panic, there was amongst the Chinese in particular all through the town and country districts an imperturbability which [515] amounted to unconcern. Any feeling that was shown was that of sympathy with the Government. The natives of Northern India showed no sign of any sympathy with the mutineers.

A few days after the outbreak, a section of the Chinese Company under Capt Brown sailed for Kwala Lumpor and brought back German prisoners who were on parole in the FMS for internment in Singapore, and later on in Australia.

Martial law had been proclaimed at 6.30 pm on the 15<sup>th</sup> February, and all private motor cars were commandeered for purposes of transport for about one month. Some of our Straits Chinese were among the civilians who took a keen interest in tracking down, arresting and handing mutineers over to the authorities, and among them were Mr



Lim Nee Soon, in the Seletar district, and Mr Song Ong Toh, assistant manager of Ulu Pandan Rubber Estate.<sup>11</sup>

The crowds that attended the impressive service on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April at Bidadari Cemetery to do honour to the memory of those who had been killed during the mutiny – the crowds that witnessed the reviews on the Esplanade in February, March and April, of the French, Japanese and Russian naval contingents, of the British Naval Landing Party and the Malay States Volunteer Rifles, and lastly of the local garrison, by HE the Governor, who tendered the thanks of the Government for all that they had severally done ‘during the days when such grievous trouble beset the community’ – and the crowds that witnessed the grim spectacle of the public execution, outside the Sepoy Lines Gaol, of the ‘men of the Indian Army who had broken their oath as soldiers of His Majesty the King’, and who, after an open trial, before a court martial, with Mr Claude da Silva assigned to them as counsel for the defence, had been condemned ‘to be shot to death’ – should never forget what a narrow escape they and the rest of the population had had from murder, pillage and [516] other atrocities, if the plot of the mutineers had been carried out as arranged, and should welcome any movement by Government to train its own subjects of all nationalities in the art of self-defence and of being prepared for any emergency. The above émeute is here chronicled – lest we forget.

Mr Lim Nee Soon was born in Singapore on the 12th November 1879 and was educated at St Joseph’s Institution and the Anglo-Chinese School. His father, Lim Pong Nguan, came from Chao-chow-fu in

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11 See ‘Prince of Wales’s Fund’ *Straits Times*, 23 Nov 1914, at 8. Sometime before 1920, Song joined Singapore Cold Storage Co and worked there for more than 10 years as storekeeper, general assistant and cashier. In 1930, he was charged with misappropriating \$1,560 from the company (see ‘Storekeeper Charged’ *Straits Times*, 6 Aug 1930, at 12) and ‘leniently dealt with’ and ordered to ‘furnish a surety of \$2,000 to be of good behaviour for six months’ (see ‘Offending Cashier Dealt with Leniently’ *Straits Times*, 11 Aug 1930, at 12). He was quite possibly the half-brother of Song Ong Siang as Song Hoot Kiam had three wives and five sons with the three named sons being Ong Siang, Ong Boo and Ong Joo.



Lim Nee Soon

China to Singapore, about sixty years ago, in a sailing junk and became a small trader in sundry goods in Beach Road. He died leaving his son Nee Soon, then eight years old, in the care of the maternal grandfather, Teo Lee, a well-known merchant in his day, who took steps to provide the young orphan lad with a sound Chinese and English education. After leaving school, Nee Soon was for a time in the service of Messrs Tan Tye & Co, timber merchants. He then took up rubber planting seriously, and when the United Singapore Rubber Estates Ltd was floated, Mr Nee Soon was appointed acting manager and continued the management until Mr Machado relieved him. On the formation of the Sembawang Rubber Estates Ltd, Mr Nee Soon became its first general manager, and later on was appointed its Consultant, and remained as such for five years. He was already then engaged in business as a rubber factory owner, merchant, contractor and general commission agent. In 1911 he founded the business of Lim Nee Soon & Co, with office at No 5 Beach Road. Since then his success in life has been rapid. He has been greatly interested in the pineapple industry, and has been styled the 'Pineapple King'. During the Great War he presented pineapples to the officers and men of HMS *Malaya* during the ship's visit to Singapore, and for his liberal gifts of pineapples to the local troops he received the thanks of Brigadier-General Ridout.

Mr Lim Nee Soon<sup>12</sup> takes a keen and active interest [517] in public affairs. He is a JP, a member of the Rural Board and a visitor to the Reformatory. He is on the committee of Raffles College and of St Andrew's Medical Mission Hospital, as well as Treasurer of the Chinese High School, which he and Mr Tan Kah Kee founded. For his services in promoting Chinese industries abroad, the Peking Gov-

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12 On Lim Nee Soon, see Lee Chee Hiang, 'Lim Nee Soon' in Leo Suryadinata, *Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent: A Biographical Dictionary* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012) at 649–651. See also Yong Chin Fatt, 'A Preliminary Study of Chinese Leadership in Singapore, 1900–1941' (1968) 9(2) *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 258–285; and Yong Chin Fatt, 'Leadership and Power in the Chinese Community of Singapore during the 1930s' (1977) 8(2) *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 195–209.



Tan Tye

ernment has awarded him the 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Order of Chiaho Decoration (Excellent Crop). He has presented a burial ground for the Chinese community at Seletar in Singapore. He is the owner of large rubber estates both in this island and in Johore. He has travelled extensively in the Far East and has several times visited China. In 1916 he had an audience of President Li Yuen Hung at Tientsin and saw the North China great flood there. In the same year he had an audience of acting President Feng Kuo Chang at Peking and an audience of ex-President Dr Sun Yat Sen at Canton, and he also interviewed the Premier, Tuan Chi Jui. His two elder sons, Lim Chong Kuo<sup>13</sup> and Lim Chong Pang,<sup>14</sup> were educated at St Stephen's College, Hongkong. After completing their education, they have returned to Singapore, where they are assisting Mr Lim Nee Soon in the management of his business.

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13 Lim Chong Kuo (1902–1938) married Tan Lay Ho, second daughter of Tan Kah Kee at the Garden Club, Tanah Merah in September 1923 (see 'Interesting Chinese Wedding' *Singapore Free Press*, 25 Sep 1923, at 7). He died on 23 Feb 1938 (see 柯木林, 《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 128. Chong Kuo Road is named after him.

14 Lim Chong Pang (1904–1956) was born on 6 Jun 1904 in Singapore. In 1920, he joined his father's company and later married Lee Poh Neo, daughter of Lee Chon Guan. In 1927, he ventured into the cinema industry and was Proprietor of South East Asia Film Co. Among the cinemas he owned were Apollo Theatre in Geylang (which he renamed Garrick Theatre), Nee Soon Cinema (formerly Seletar Talkies) and Sultan Cinema. He was also President of the Cinematograph Exhibitions Association of Malaya and President of the Indian Motion Picture Distributors' Association of Singapore and Malaya. Lim was also a well-known race horse owner, and his horses won over 100 races. When the Japanese invaded Singapore, Lim tried escaping the island with the rest of his family but the SS *Kuala*, in which he was travelling was hit by Japanese bombs and Lim and his other family members were rescued by a fisherman, Tay Ah Soey and his brothers. He returned to Singapore and was interned at Changi. He was later released and appointed a Council Member of the Overseas-Chinese Association which was responsible for supporting and raising funds for the Japanese. After the War, Lim was arrested on charges of collaboration but was exonerated. He died on 21 Jul 1956 at the age of 52. See 'Turf Man Dies – His Horses Won 100 Races' *Straits Times*, 22 Jul 1956, at 11.

The Chinese High School at present located in Niven Road was opened early in 1919 by Mr Tan Kah Kee, its first president, with Mr Lim Nee Soon as treasurer, and Mr Ong Hwe Ghee as secretary. The scheme for such a school had engaged the minds of the leading men of the Chinese community for some years, and subscriptions were raised amounting to nearly half a million dollars, including \$30,000 from Mr Tan Kah Kee and \$10,000 from Mr Lim Nee Soon. Mr KY Doo was appointed the first Principal, and owing to his able organisation, classes began work within a week from the inauguration of the school with about 100 students. The Chinese High School is the only institution in existence in Malaya which provides a higher curriculum of education in the Mandarin tongue than that of any other Chinese school.

[518] On the 4<sup>th</sup> May, at the half-yearly meeting of the Chinese Presbytery of the English Presbyterian Chinese Mission, held at Prinsep Street, the congratulations of the 'bench of bishops' (consisting of the Revs Choa Iok Chi,<sup>15</sup> Tay Sek Tin, JAB Cook and W Murray and the elders of the congregations within the jurisdiction of the Presbytery), were tendered to Mr Liau Thian Iah, who had completed his semi-jubilee as a preacher. His father was a Chinese *siu-tsai* who became Christian and instructed him in a good deal of book-learning, so that he was not less read in Chinese books than many who have passed through the usual colleges. References were made to his faithful work at the various stations at Johore Bahru, Muar, Serangoon, Prinsep Street, Seletar and Bukit Timah, both as a preacher and teacher. Mr Liau is still an active worker in this Mission.

The report of the Protector of Chinese issued in May 1915 stated that in consequence of a large amount of unemployment caused by the outbreak of the War, the local Government had introduced a system of voluntary repatriation, at its expense, of Chinese to their native villag-

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15 Also spelt 'Choa Lok Chi'. Choa was, from 1912 to 1917, Pastor of the Tanjong Pagar and Paya Lebar congregations of the Presbyterian Church. He died in Amoy (Xiamen), China in October 1917 shortly after leaving Singapore on a visit to China (see 'Chinese Christian Presbytery' *Straits Times*, 7 Nov 1917, at 9).



Chinese High School Committee



KY Doo

es, and that up to the end of 1914 the number of persons so repatriated were 9,980 from Singapore, 907 from Penang and 335 from Malacca.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> May the Hon Mr Eu Tong Sen, of Kampar, FMS, in response to the first appeal issued by Mr C Alma Baker, for an Aircraft Fund to provide battle-planes 'to help finish this war', gave 'Malaya No 1' (a scout called the 'Eu Tong Sen' and costing £1,300).<sup>16</sup>

Of the total fleet of 53 battle-planes presented by subscribers in Malaya, 'Malaya No 4' (the 'Wi Cheng Kim') was presented on the 16<sup>th</sup> August by Messrs Tan Wi Yan, Sim Cheng Mia and Tan Kim Wah of chop Hup Liong & Co, merchants, of No 4 Beach Road, Singapore, and 'Malaya No 6' (the 'Choon Guan Peng Siang') was the gift of Messrs Lee Choon Guan and Lim Peng Siang made on the 21<sup>st</sup> August. Both were of the scout type. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1916 Mr [519] Tan Jiak Kim presented a fighter, 'Malaya No 21', costing £2,250. The subscriptions of the rank and file of the Chinese community here helped to provide a few other battle-planes of the fighting type, while the Chinese ladies joined with their sisters of all nationalities throughout Malaya in finding the money for 'Malaya No 27' (styled 'The Women of Malaya').

Mr Tan Kim Wah was born in Singapore in 1875 and was educated at Raffles Institution. During the great Taiping rebellion in China his grandfather, Tan Oh Lee, emigrated with his family and came to this Settlement in a junk. Tan Oh Lee made the acquaintance of the well-known merchant and philanthropist Tan Kim Seng, who gave him the necessary financial help to carry on his practice as a Chinese physician. His son, Tan Chin Seng, the father of Tan Kim Wah, set up business as a contractor and secured the Municipal contract to construct the Impounding Reservoir in Thomson Road and later the Filter Beds on Mount Sophia. Tan Chin Seng married in 1873 Ho Bian Wan's (何绵远) elder daughter, a sister of Ho Ann Kee, and died in 1882 after only a year of tea-planting in Johore. On leaving school, Kim Wah worked for a few years at chop Sim Moh, his uncle's sawmill in Gaylang Road. Being of an adventurous spirit, he went to

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16 See 'Malayan Fighters' *Straits Times*, 4 Jul 1916, at 6.





Malaya No 4



Malaya No 6



Malaya No 21



Tan Kim Wah

Johore to try his fortune at the tin mines. Under prospecting licences, he worked both in Johore and the Siamese States for a number of years, meeting here and there with a small measure of success, and it was not until 1914, just after the commencement of the Great War, that his partner Mr JC Robertson, while tracing a footpath at Ulu Jemluang, Johore, came across some rich tin land in Ulu Jemluang valley. The story of how another miner tried to oust Mr Tan Kim Wah from that rich claim, for which he eventually secured a mining title from the Johore Government, will take too long to tell.<sup>17</sup> Hap Liong Company was formed immediately with Tan Wi Yan, Sim Cheng Mia, JC Robertson and E Fong Seng as his partners, and the Ulu Jemluang tin mines have been worked since with great [520] success. In 1907 Mr Tan Kim Wah subleased a piece of land at the eleventh milestone on Mandai Road, Singapore, and worked the land for tin on tribute. A small deposit of tin which was found turned out to be a pocket and weighed about 15 piculs. There was great excitement here at the time the news was given out that tin had been discovered in Singapore, and many residents visited the place. Subsequent operations only resulted in disappointment, for no more of that metal was found there. This is the only instance in which tin has been worked in this Island.

Military honours were accorded to Pte Ho Siong Tong (a son of the late Mr Ho Yiang Moh) at his funeral on the 14<sup>th</sup> June. He was one of the Guards at Kallang Reservoir and was missed on the 11<sup>th</sup> June. His boots and cap were discovered on the edge of the Reservoir, and two days later the body was found floating. He was buried at Wayang Satu Chinese cemetery at the expense of his sister, Mrs Tan Moeng Tho, and his fellow Volunteers raised a tombstone over his grave. The only other instance of a Chinese Volunteer dying while mobilised during the War was that of Lance-Corpl Cheong Chee Koon, who had an

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17 See 'Ulu Mersing' *Singapore Free Press*, 12 Jan 1916, at 12.

apoplectic seizure at the Chinese Volunteer Club which ended fatally on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 1917.<sup>18</sup>

The annual report of the SVC was presented at a general meeting of the Volunteers on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 1915 by the Commandant, Lieut-Col Derrick. In reviewing the affairs of the Chinese Co the Commandant said:

The Chinese Co had on that date four officers and 108 men, eleven less than at the 31st December 1914, but three over the establishment. It was rather disappointing that the numbers should have fallen since the end of the year, particularly as, on representations being made, the Government had granted an increase of fifty to their establishment. Since the 31st December, the Company had done less than nothing to fill that number.<sup>19</sup>

[521] A bald statement like the above was apt to mislead and give a false impression of the condition of affairs of that Company just at that period. It is interesting to contrast the above remarks with the speech of Major Glennie, the acting Adjutant, made three days earlier, in reply to the farewell address of the same Company – at one time under his command – on the eve of his departure on furlough:

Since the War broke out, you have had hard work allotted to you which has been carried out very well. I am of opinion that it was through that fact that such heavy duties have fallen upon your shoulders that recruiting in the Company has not been so brisk and successful as expected. You must try and impress on your friends the propriety of offering their services in the defence scheme of the Colony as loyal and patriotic subjects of the King.<sup>20</sup>

That just hit the nail on the head. At a time when the 'Chinese and Malay companies had been permanently mobilised since last August, doing guard duties', when employers were beginning to grumble and fret at their clerks being kept away for weeks at a stretch, and when

18 See 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 19 May 1917, at 8.

19 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

20 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

Government was introducing a Bill for conscription of European British subjects, the wonder was that the Chinese Volunteers continued to carry on their monotonous duties faithfully and efficiently. The censure of the Commandant was undeserved, because, although the fiat had gone forth just before the annual meeting to increase the establishment, the new men who did actually come in a few weeks later were then counting the cost. Enrolment at that juncture meant not two years' service, but service 'for the period of the War', and none could foretell how long the great struggle would go on.

'Never before in Singapore has there been such an assembly' as that which filled the Victoria Theatre to overflowing on the 4<sup>th</sup> August, the first anniversary of the Great War, convened by the local branch of the [522] Straits Settlements Association, in order to pass the resolution proposed by the Hon Sir Evelyn Ellis and seconded by Mr Tan Jiak Kim, 'that on the anniversary of the declaration of a righteous war, this meeting of the citizens of Singapore records its inflexible determination to continue to a victorious end the struggle in maintenance of those ideals of Liberty and Justice which are the common and sacred cause of the Allies'. The Hon Mr W Wallace Cook presided, and supporting him on the stage were the Governor, Sir Arthur Young, the Admiral, Sir Martyn Jerram, Brigadier-General Ridout and the members of committee of the Association. After the speeches, the chairman called upon those in favour of the resolution to stand. The huge audience rose to their feet as one man, and the singing of 'Rule Britannia' and the National Anthem closed a memorable scene.

For three successive years thereafter, as the anniversary of the War came round, equally large assemblies of British subjects of all races and creeds came together in the Theatre to reaffirm the resolution to carry on the war to a victorious end, until at last, after many vicissitudes, victory was secured to the Allies. During those four years of the 'most horrible war - horrible because of the cruelty, of the barbarism, of the wanton disregard of law and righteousness, of the fiendish treatment of women and children in all places that the Germans have devastated', the Chinese community in Singapore took a great share

in supporting the Home and Local War Loans, the Aircraft Fund, the 'Our Day' Fund, and all the other ways and means adopted for supplying the mother country with the sinews of war.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> August Dr Lim Boon Keng, after an interval of thirteen years, once again took the oaths as the Chinese Member of Council, and in honour of his appointment the Straits Chinese Recreation Club held a reception on the 21st August, which was largely attended, Mrs Lim Boon Keng and a number of Chinese [523] ladies being among the guests. Mr Tan Soo Bin, as President of the Club, opened the proceedings with a speech in which he said:

You will agree that it is no flattery when I say that the Hon Doctor is undoubtedly the best man to occupy the Chinese seat in Council, and that the Chinese community can safely place in his experienced hands the guardianship of its truest welfare and highest interests. By his appointment, the Government has indicated its expectation of getting efficient and valuable work and assistance out of our honoured guest as a Councillor worthy of its trust and confidence. Let us all fervently hope that, with his usual tact and ripe judgment, with the advantage of a good command of many languages, and with his wide knowledge of men and his keen insight into human affairs, the work of the Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng in the interests of British rule in this Colony will be so thorough and so patriotic that even his critics and detractors will be glad to shake hands with him long before he comes to the end of his tenure of office.<sup>21</sup>

Mr Koh San Hin and Capt Brown also addressed the gathering, the latter drawing special attention to the recruiting campaign and appealing for those eligible to help close the list of applicants. Dr Lim Boon Keng in the course of his reply spoke of the great future for the Straits Chinese community, which depended largely on the men of the present generation. Their forefathers had been the pioneers, and it was with the help of the British Government that they had attained the place they held that day. If they were going to continue to hold it, they

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21 We are unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

must help defend this country as their own. As for him, he would do everything he could as a member of Council to further the welfare of the Chinese. He looked upon his appointment as a humble duty, and he was willing to do anything for his country and, 'if need be, to die for it'.

The Chinese Chamber of Commerce also honoured Dr Lim Boon Keng with a dinner on the 31<sup>st</sup> August. The [524] guests included the Chinese Consul-General, the Chinese Advisory Board, the Chinese Municipal Commissioners and Justices of the Peace and representatives of the different traders' guilds. Speeches were delivered by Mr See Teong Wah, acting President, and Mr Tan Teck Joon,<sup>22</sup> the Vice-President, eulogising the Doctor's many-sided activities, and past work in fostering the commercial and educational interests of the Chinese community, and in promoting the cult of Confucianism in their midst. Mr See Teong Wah said:

Ever since our Chamber was inaugurated, about ten years ago, the Doctor has been a member of it, and I am not exaggerating one iota when I say that the valuable services he has ever readily rendered to our community by his well-reasoned opinions on all matters are as the sands on the sea-shore in number. The success attained by the Chamber from time to time in its efforts to render useful service to the mercantile community has been due in very great measure to the ripe experience, the ardent patriotism, the exalted principles and the sound common sense he has invariably brought to bear on all matters submitted for his consideration.<sup>23</sup>

In a leader headed 'British Citizenship' commenting on a letter to the press written by this writer on the 30<sup>th</sup> August and signed 'Civis Bri-

22 Also known as 'Tan Ah Goh' (see 'A \$2,000,000 new present' *Straits Times*, 30 Dec 1956, at 5). Tan was born in 1859 and was active in banking and the rubber industry. He was the first Chairman and Managing Director of the Sze Hai Tong Banking and Insurance Co Ltd, and a director of Eastern United Assurance Corporation Ltd, and United Malacca Rubber Estates. He died on 24 Mar 1918 at the age of 65 at his home at 38 Circular Road. See 'Death' *Straits Times*, 2 Apr 1918, at 6.

23 We are unable to trace the exact source of this quotation.

tannicus', urging the formation of a local patriotic league among the Asiatic British subjects in the Colony and suggesting the Straits Chinese British Association and the Moslem and Hindu Associations as the nuclei for the movement, the Editor of the *Straits Times* says:

We are proud beyond measure to have a Chinese Company of Volunteers, and anything done to increase such forces is welcomed cordially as the best of all proofs that our Asiatic fellow-subjects understand and appreciate the spirit of British rule, and are proud to share with us the defence of British interests. But we shall never force service of that kind. To be of real [525] value, it must be voluntary, and if the organisation proposed by our correspondent is established, we can promise warm sympathy and support in all its efforts to make Asiatic Britishers comprehend and co-operate with us in a spirit of real harmony and unity.<sup>24</sup>

The SCBA immediately interested itself in the matter, and on the 29th September called a mass meeting of Straits Chinese at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce to pass certain important resolutions. Mr Koh San Hin, the President, took the chair and welcomed the great gathering composed of the intelligent, educated and influential elements of the Straits Chinese community. There were four resolutions submitted, and these were unanimously carried. Mr Tan Jiak Kim moved and Mr Lee Choon Guan seconded the first resolution:

That in view of the serious necessities created by the war, we Chinese British subjects at this meeting resolve to respectfully offer our humble services to His Majesty the King.<sup>25</sup>

In proposing that resolution Mr Tan Jiak Kim quoted the King's words that he relied upon the united efforts of all his subjects. The Straits-born Chinese had given liberally towards various war funds, but these efforts had been limited to a few individuals.

I contend that the time has come for the whole of our people to co-operate with Britain in fighting for a worthy purpose. We may

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24 See 'British Citizenship' *Straits Times*, 31 Aug 1915, at 6.

25 See 'Straits Chinese and the War' *Straits Times*, 27 Sep 1915, at 10.





Chinese Company, SVI, in 1917



Officers, Chinese Company, and Captain Wace, Adjutant, SVC, 1917



Volunteer Section, Chinese Company, from YMFS

not all be able to carry arms in the execution of that purpose, but it is our duty, and we should consider it our great privilege, to offer our services to the Government, and it is for them to decide as to the nature of the services we may perform. ... These be times when we are tested, and we should by all means prove that we are worthy of the confidence of the King as his loyal and willing subjects.<sup>26</sup> [526]

The second resolution:

That in order to have full information as to the number of men in our community available and willing to do their duty, we hereby resolve that the SCBA do organise a registration of all British subjects of Chinese descent in this Colony and take steps to carry into effect the first resolution and communicate with the proper authorities,<sup>27</sup>

was submitted by Dr Lim Boon Keng in an eloquent and lucid speech, in which he pointed to the compulsory registration for European British subjects in this Colony, and said:

Our men will be invited, without the threat of legal prosecution, to register themselves, and to volunteer to put the kind and extent of their services at the disposal of the country and the Empire. ... We, who have understood the intense abhorrence of the Chinese against conscription and any sort of compulsion, fully realise that we must voluntarily offer services to the King. Freedom is a precious possession. We now have it and we must guard it jealously and defend it at all costs. We want the services of a loving, progressive and dutiful community. Organisation will give us life. It will provide the brain to direct and to control the united energies of a loyal people and to concentrate them upon the spot where they will achieve the best results.<sup>28</sup>

He classified the forms of service under (1) Volunteer service, (2) service as Civil Guard, (3) labour in any useful form, e.g. munition facto-

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26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

ry, clerical, etc, (4) financial aid – relief funds of all kinds, aircraft or other similar funds and war loan, and (5) union to foster trade of the Empire. Adverting to the formation of a Civil Guard, the Doctor said:

We form such an important element of the town, with so many women and children, that we cannot possibly shirk this duty. Who can tell what may be in [527] store in the future in a cosmopolitan place like ours? We should be able to muster a strong guard of 200 to 300 men at least. It is unnecessary to indicate what dangers may threaten us. They may have no connection with this War. But accept it from me that training for the duties of self-defence and the defence of the Empire will do much both for your health and for the community.<sup>29</sup>

Mr Thong Siong Lim seconded this resolution.

Mr SJ Chan moved and Mr See Teong Wah seconded the third resolution for the amalgamation of a special committee with the SCBA committee to form a strong body of active workers in connection with the registration scheme.

The last resolution:

That as the SCBA is by its nature and constitution practically a patriotic league for British subjects of Chinese descent, an invitation be now extended to all Chinese who are British subjects to join the association,<sup>30</sup>

was proposed by Mr Song Ong Siang, who said:

If the SCBA had done nothing else to justify its existence as the organ of the community than to get the Imperial Government to sanction the creation of the SVI (Chinese Co), which meant the practical recognition of Chinese British subjects as sons of the British Empire, it was deserving of the support of every Straits-born Chinese. The chief object of the association was to teach our

29 See 'Straits-Born Chinese: Earnest Expression of their Loyalty' *Straits Times*, 30 Sep 1915, at 11.

30 Ibid.

community the great lesson of allegiance to King George, and of loyalty and patriotism to the British Crown.<sup>31</sup>

He then appealed to the educated men to set the example, and said that if our people claimed to be British subjects when there was a right to be claimed or a privilege to be enjoyed, then it was their plain duty to join the association which aimed at banding together all British subjects of Chinese descent so as to join hand [528] in hand and to stand shoulder to shoulder with all other British subjects throughout the length and breadth of the British Empire in the prosecution of the War until decisive victory had been achieved. After Mr Gaw Khék Khiam had seconded this resolution and the audience had unanimously passed it, the proceedings terminated with the hearty singing of the National Anthem.

These resolutions in due course were laid before His Majesty the King by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the SCBA was notified through the Colonial Secretary's Office 'that His Majesty has been graciously pleased to command the Secretary of State to express His Majesty's appreciation of the loyal sentiments to which the resolutions give utterance'.

The Straits Chinese community will never realise how hard the general committee worked upon the registration scheme, nor how laborious was the undertaking of the voluntary enumerators who personally visited every house occupied by Straits Chinese people and helped to fill in the register forms. The result in the end was disappointing, for, in spite of careful explanations by these enumerators, a large number of the people who were visited feared that there were ulterior objects behind the simple registration. Nevertheless, the greater readiness and willingness of our people of both sexes to render personal and financial help towards the various relief and aircraft funds and the war loans during the remaining period of the Great War, and the offer of some of our young men for service in the fighting lines, may be taken as evidences that the work of the SCBA in pursuance of

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31 Ibid.

the resolutions made at the memorable meeting of the 29th September 1915 has not been altogether fruitless.

At his residence in Gaylang Road the death took place on the 25th November of Mr Tan Keong Keng,<sup>32</sup> the eldest son of the late Tan Choon Bock of Malacca – one of the founders of the original Straits Steamship Co. In the early 'Sixties he had the good fortune of travelling [529] in England and the United States, and in the latter country he resided for five or six years. He was one of the earliest among Straits Chinese to imbibe Western ideas, and he not only gave his daughters an English education, but when the Methodist Mission started their educational work among Chinese girls in Malacca, he allowed Mrs Shellabear and Miss Pugh of that Mission to use his house in Heeren Street as a school for those Chinese girls who were too modest to go to a public school. Three of his daughters became the wives of the Rev Goh Hood Keng and Messrs Chew Chong Yong and Goh Leng Inn,<sup>33</sup> three estimable young Christians who, along with several others, are earnestly working for the intellectual, moral and spiritual advancement of the Straits Chinese community.

The transfer, at the end of the year, of the Colonial Secretary, the Hon RJ Wilkinson, CMG, on promotion to the Governorship of Sierra Leone, gave opportunity to the Moslem and Chinese communities to express their gratitude and indebtedness to a distinguished Government official and a 'brilliantly clever man', who, for a period of

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32 Tan Keong Keng (1844–1915) was born in Malacca, the eldest son of Tan Choon Bock and his first wife, Thung Soon Neo; and grandson of Tan Tian Hock and Goh Sin Neo. His brothers included Keong Jeang, Keong Ann, and Keong Thye (see *Straits Times*, 7 Dec 1964, at 19). His father's brother, Tan Choon Sian was the father of Tan Keong Saik. Tan had two sons (Cheng Watt and Cheng Poh) and five daughters (Siok Kim, Swee Choo, Swee Eng, Swee Loo and Swee Tin). Daughter Swee Eng married Goh Leng Inn and their son, Goh Keng Swee became Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister of Singapore (see generally, Tan Siok Sun, *Goh Keng Swee: A Portrait* (Singapore: EDM, 2007).

33 Goh Leng Inn married Tan Swee Eng of Malacca. Their fifth child, Goh Keng Swee (1918–2010) later became Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore. See Tan Siok Sun, *Goh Keng Swee: A Portrait* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2010).

twenty-six years, had worked laboriously for the best interests of the Colony. The Moslem Association entertained him and Mrs Wilkinson to a dinner at the Memorial Hall, at which a large number of the leading Europeans and Chinese were also guests, and then presented him with an address, encased in a mounted silver cylinder. In that address, tribute was paid to Mr Wilkinson's valuable and permanent contributions to the literature relating to the Malay.

You have left your mark in almost all Government departments, from the District Office at Nibong Tebal to the august chambers of the Colonial Secretary's Office at Singapore. Wherever you have been, your work has been distinguished for its upright manliness, for its uniform impartiality and for its unfailing courtesy to all classes. The Malays, the Chinese and the people from the land of Hind have happy recollections of your [530] official work, especially your labours in the magisterial and educational departments.<sup>34</sup>

This function was followed by farewell banquets at the Darul Adab Club and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and Dr Lim Boon Keng's Garden Party at 'Mandalay Villa', the charming residence of Mr Lee Choon Guan at Tanjong Katong, which was attended by a fair sprinkling of Chinese ladies. Here Mrs Wilkinson was presented with a handsome album of Malayan photographs prepared by Lambert & Co and bearing the following inscription:

This album was presented to Mrs Wilkinson as a slight token of the esteem and affection entertained for her husband the Hon RJ Wilkinson, CMG, and as a memento of his successful solution of the great crisis in the history of the Straits Settlements as Deputy Governor in 1914, by his friends and admirers in the Chinese community.<sup>35</sup>

The year 1916 dawned on what may be fittingly described as the second stage in the local Chinese Volunteer movement. The war had not

34 See 'Mr Wilkinson's Departure' *Singapore Free Press*, 16 Dec 1915, at 12.

35 See 'Honouring Mr Wilkinson' *Straits Times*, 24 Dec 1915, at 8.

only led to the enlargement of the Chinese Co SVC, but had called into being in Malacca, through the exertions of the Malacca Branch of the SCBA, a Chinese Company of the MVR, and in Penang (as the result of the efforts of patriotic Chinese, including Messrs Quah Beng Kee,<sup>36</sup> Cheah Choo Yew,<sup>37</sup> Lim Cheng Teik,<sup>38</sup> Khaw Joo Choe, Lim

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36 Quah Beng Kee was born in Penang on 19 Feb 1872, the son of Quah Joo Moye. He was educated at Penang Free School and then at Roberts' College in Calcutta, India. In 1902, he was appointed Municipal Commissioner for Georgetown and held this appointment for 16 years. In 1923, he was conferred the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his services to the community (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times*, 11 Jun 1926, at 8). Quah was also a member of the Legislative Council, Penang Harbour Board, Licensing Board and Chinese Advisory Board, and President of the Penang Branch of the Straits Chinese British Association (see 'Mr Quah Beng Kee Retiring' *Straits Times*, 26 Jun 1929, at 12). In 1893–1894, Quah and his brothers, under the name of Beng Brothers, started the first regular ferry service between Penang Island and the mainland. This partnership was dissolved in 1897 and Quah bought over all the steam launches and operated them under the name of Guan Lee Hin SS Co. Later, the Eastern Shipping Co, under Quah's managing directorship, took over the running of the services and even extended its runs to ports in Malaya, Sumatra, Siam and Burma. This operation was bought by the Straits Steamship Co of Singapore in 1922 and two years later, the Penang Harbour Board took over the running of the ferry services (see EC Aspden, 'Penang's Mainland Link: Past and Present' *Straits Times*, 25 Jan 1950, at 6). He died on 13 Nov 1952.

37 Also spelt 'Chea Choo Yew' or 'Chia Choo Yew'. Cheah was born in 1841 in Penang, the son of Cheah Yam @ Cheah Hun Yam and Ong Sin Neoh. He made his fortune through opium farming in the 1890s. He was one of the Farmers involved in the Opium and Spirit Farms in Singapore and Johore between 1895 and 1987 (see 'Ban Chen Bee' *Singapore Free Press*, 12 Feb 1898, at 4). In 1906, he partnered Lim Ah Siang and tendered \$183,000 and \$52,000 for the opium and spirit farms respectively in the Straits Settlements (see 'Opium Farm Tenders' *Straits Times*, 2 Aug 1906, at 4). In 1917, Cheah was appointed a member of the Chinese Advisory Board in Penang (see 'Social and Personal' *Straits Times* 1 Dec 1917, at 8). In June 1928, Cheah received a Certificate of Honour from the British Government for his 'loyal and valuable services' (see 'Certificates of Honour' *Straits Times*, 5 Jun 1928, at 8). He died on 9 Feb 1931 at the age of 90 in Penang (see *Straits Times*, 10 Feb 1931, at 10).

38 Lim Cheng Teik was the eldest son of Lim Choo Chuan (better known as Phuah Hin Long), one of the wealthiest Chinese in Penang at the time of his death,





Lim Cheng Teik (left); and Khaw Joo Choe



Khoo Sian Tan (left); and Lim Seng Hooi

Seng Hooi<sup>39</sup> and Khoo Sian Tan<sup>40</sup>) a Chinese Company of the PVC, and in Perak a composite platoon of Straits-born and FMS-born Chinese.

On the 8th January a parade of the Chinese Co SVC, under Capt Brown, accompanied by General Ridout and Col Derrick, Commandant, was held before the Governor, Sir Arthur Young. It was a memorable event in the history of the Company, and a large attendance of the Chinese community, which included Hon Dr Lim Boon [531] Keng, and Messrs Tan Jiak Kim and Seah Liang Seah, showed much interest in the proceedings.

Before presenting their commissions to 2nd Lieutenants Seah Cheng Joo, Tan Chow Kim, Tan Soo Bin and Tan Kwee Wah, recently promoted Platoon Officers under the new company organisation, HE

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and the brother of Lim Cheang Ean (1889–1982), whose two sons (Kean Chye and Kean Siew) and daughter (Phaik Gan or PG) were well-known lawyers, politicians and diplomats; and Lim Cheng Law. Lim Cheng Teik succeeded the management of his father's Khie Heng Bee Rice and Oil Mills, assisted by younger brother Cheng Law. Lim Cheng Teik was married to Khoo Guat Lee Neoh, the granddaughter of Koh Seang Tat (then the richest and most influential Straits Chinese in Penang). When she died in 1927, Lim married Tan Siew Chin. When he died on 11 Nov 1978, Lim was said to be aged 100 and the founder of the Elceetee Group of companies ('Elceetee' being 'LCT', which stands for Lim Cheng Teik).

- 39 Lim Seng Hooi was the son of Lim Hua Chiam, a native of China and founder of the Criterion Press. The elder Lim founded the Press in 1883 as a commercial lithographic press. He left much of the operations of the Press to his son Seng Hooi and it prospered. In 1902, the Criterion Press was transformed into a limited company with Lim Seng Hooi as Managing Director. The following year, the English language newspaper *Straits Echo* was launched by the Criterion Press. See Arnold Wright & HA Cartwright (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), at 259.
- 40 Khoo Sian Tan was a prominent businessman. He was born in 1872 in Penang, the son of Khoo Hong Swee. He studied at the Penang Free School and later joined the Government Service. In 1904, he was listed as being the General Director of the Singapore Opium and Spirit Farms (see *Straits Times*, 14 Nov 1904, at 5). In 1907, he acquired an oil mining concession in Borneo and was in the following year, appointed Director of the Great Eastern Life Assurance Co Ltd (see *Singapore Free Press*, 12 Sep 1908, at 1).

the Governor referred to the valuable work carried out in posts and guards by that Company during the previous seventeen months, and expressed his pleasure that notwithstanding their heavy duties the men had found time to continue their training and to keep up their good standard in musketry. During the days of the mutiny their reliability and courage were tested. Courage was expressly mentioned, for it required courage beyond the average to enter houses where the mutineers were reported to be, and volunteering for such work by men of that Company was a noticeable feature. The Chinese Company was a visible sign of the deep loyalty and patriotism which had been expressed by Dr Lim Boon Keng in September last in the Legislative Council, and reiterated by Straits Chinese leaders shortly afterwards at a mass meeting at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The establishment, which had been increased by fifty men recently, was complete, and the Government, on the recommendation of the GOC, had approved of a double company of 250 men.

Tan Kwee Wah was born in 1880 and educated at the Anglo-Chinese School until the 'Isaiah controversy' arose, when he was removed to the Anglo-Chinese Free School for a year and then to Raffles Institution. He joined the firm of Kim Ching & Co, and assisted in the management of the estate of the late Tan Kim Ching deceased. Later, he and Mr Tan Kwee Swee took out probate of the will of the said deceased and acted as trustees until the estate was finally wound up. Mr Tan Kwee Wah was one of the original members of the Chinese Co SVI, and was one of the Chinese representatives in the Coronation Contingent to London in 1902. A breakdown in health compelled him to resign [532] from the Chinese Company at the end of 1907, but he continued to take a warm interest in the Chinese Volunteer movement, and in 1915, when a double company organisation was sanctioned, he enrolled again and was appointed a 2nd Lieutenant in January 1916, taking command of Platoon 3. He passed his examination and received promotion to 1st Lieutenant. He served zealously during the remainder of the Great War and took his share in mobilisation duties. He was at one time a well-known patron of horse-racing and

is an old member of the Singapore Sporting Club. In the 1903 Horse and Dog Show held at the Race-course, he was one of the few Straits-born Chinese who competed, with his horse 'Jessie', in the section for Single-harness Horses. He was for many years an enthusiastic tennis player on the grounds of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, of which he was sometime President. He has also served on the Committee of the SCBA, and is still a member of the Board of Management of Tan Tock Seng Hospital. A careful and shrewd man of business, his investments in landed property have always proved profitable. Latterly he has become interested in the rubber planting industry, and owns several small rubber plantations in Singapore. He has maintained a keen interest in educational movements among the Chinese community, and has supported liberally charitable institutions and objects.

The committee of the SCBA appointed Mr Tan Jiak Kim, CMG, the Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng, and Mr Song Ong Siang to prepare a textbook to supply those then about to carry out the scheme of voluntary registration initiated by the Association with some information concerning the duties of citizenship and relating to other subjects connected with the Empire and the War. The result was a little handbook entitled *Duty to the British Empire — Being An Elementary Guide for Straits Chinese during the Great War*, produced at the expense of the Association and distributed gratis to workers and others. Of the 21 articles, Dr [533] Lim Boon Keng contributed 10, Mr Song Ong Siang 6, Mr SJ Chan 2, Dr QS Keat 2 and Mr Lee Chim Quan<sup>41</sup> 1.<sup>42</sup>

The *Straits Times*, reviewing this pamphlet, said:

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41 Lee Chim Quan was active in Chinese business circles, being a Director of the Ulu Pandan Rubber Estates Ltd (see 'Ulu Pandan Rubber' *Straits Times*, 30 Apr 1910, at 7) and of Cycle & Carriage Co (1926) Ltd (see 'Cycle and Carriage Co' *Singapore Free Press*, 20 Jan 1927, at 5). He was also active in community affairs, being on the committees of the Chinese Swimming Club, the Straits Chinese Literary Association, the Amateur Drawing Association, and the Straits Chinese British Association. He died 17 Jul 1976 (see 'In Memoriam' *Straits Times*, 17 Jul 1977, at 26).

42 See *Singapore Free Press*, 13 Jan 1916, at 6.

The work has been most ably done. No better short summary of the circumstances leading up to the war has appeared anywhere than that prepared by Dr Lim Boon Keng. Just the same may be said of 'Voluntaryism and Conscription' by Mr Song Ong Siang. These in their way are little masterpieces, revealing a perfect grasp of all the principles at issue, and stated with convincing lucidity. Indeed, throughout the little book the tone is high, and we are proud to see our Chinese fellow-subjects coming forward to reveal their loyalty. Our view about the Straits Chinese has always been that, with a wider diffusion of education, they will become a model community in the sense of the interest they take in civic and Imperial affairs, and we hope that the time will come when a highly capable electorate will choose Municipal and Legislative Councillors on the broad basis of public duty which this little handbook of the Straits Chinese British Association sets out.<sup>43</sup>

Combining pleasure to themselves and profit to the British Red Cross Funds, a party of 80 members of the Penang Chinese Recreation Club and the Penang Amateur Dramatic Company arrived here on the 21st February and were met by the local entertainment committee and accommodated at Mr Khoo Hun Yeang's residence. The visitors put up three tennis pairs against representatives of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, and were beaten. Teams from the Penang Chinese Recreation Club and the SCFA met on the Esplanade, and an interesting game was played before a large concourse of spectators, including the Governor and Lady Evelyn Young, and the acting Colonial Secretary. When time was called, the score was one all. The Penang ADC gave two Chinese dramatic performances at the Victoria Theatre in aid [534] of the Red Cross Funds, these being extremely well patronised with substantial financial results.

Early this year Mrs Noel Walker, of Kwala Lumpor, started to collect from ladies for a 'Women of Malaya' Fighter, and at her request, Mrs Song Ong Siang secured over \$1,000 from Singapore Chinese ladies. Progress, however, was slow, as the public were being canvassed

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43 See 'The Straits Chinese British Association' *Straits Times*, 14 Jan 1916, at 8.



Singapore Chinese Ladies' Association

to support the appeal for other Fighters. On the 5th June the *Straits Times* was asked to co-operate with Mrs Walker, and issued printed appeals to a large number of ladies of all nationalities in Malaya. In little more than a month, sufficient money had been collected to pay for Malaya No 27 'Women of Malaya' (Fighter). The Chinese ladies who undertook the work of canvassing from the Singapore Chinese women for contributions towards this Fighter worked zealously and made their husbands work too, thereby raising about \$6,000. As a tribute to the part, small though it be, they played in helping the British Empire and her allies to win the war, the names of the Singapore Chinese lady collectors are here given. These were Mesdames Song Ong Siang, Lim Boon Keng, Lee Choon Guan, Koh Hoon Teck, Song Ong Joo, Seow Poh Leng,<sup>44</sup> Chia Tek Chye,<sup>45</sup> Wee Mah Cheow, Seah Liang Seah,<sup>46</sup> Tan Moeng Tho, Low Keok Choy, Wee Kay Hin,<sup>47</sup> Lim Tay Yam, Choa

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44 Mrs Seow Poh Leng's maiden name was Polly Tan Poh Li. She married Seow Poh Leng on 16 January 1920 after his first wife, Lilian Tan Luck Neo, died in 1918 (see *Malaya Tribune*, 16 Jan 1920, at 4).

45 Mrs Chia Tek Chye was the third daughter of Tan Jiak Chuan who married Chia Teck Chye on 7 Dec 1905 (see 'A Chinese Wedding' *Eastern Daily Mail*, 13 Dec 1905, at 3).

46 Mrs Seah Liang Seah's maiden name was Koh Gium Luan Neo. She married Seah in 1865 and they had seven sons and six daughters. She died on 31 Jan 1919 at her home at 14 North Boat Quay aged 65 (see 'Death of Mrs Seah Liang Seah' *Straits Times*, 31 Jan 1919, at 8).

47 Mrs Wee Kay Hin's maiden name was Tan Hong Neo or Tan Fong Neo. She was born in 1878, the daughter of Tan Keong Saik and among her brothers were Cheng Kee, Cheng Soon, Cheng Wah and Cheng Tit and her sisters included Teck Neo and Tin Neo. She died on 13 Aug 1947 and was survived by two sons (Huck Su and Huck Lay) and was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery.

Joon Hean,<sup>48</sup> Teo Teow Peng, Ho Siak Kuan,<sup>49</sup> Tan Boon Chin,<sup>50</sup> Seow Siew Kim, Oh Ghee Choo,<sup>51</sup> Ong Hood Hin,<sup>52</sup> Tan Eng Wah, Lee Soon Hee,<sup>53</sup> Lee Tit Soo, Lye Kee Fook, Kiong Chin Eng, Tan Kwee Wah,<sup>54</sup>

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- 48 Mrs Choa Joon Hean's maiden name was Cheong Swat Leh. She died on 19 Sep 1929 and was survived by her husband, two sons and two daughters, and was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery (see 'Deaths' *Singapore Free Press*, 20 Sep 1929, at 8).
- 49 Mrs Ho Siak Kuan died on 25 Aug 1967 and was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery (see *Straits Times*, 26 Aug 1967).
- 50 Mrs Tan Boon Chin's maiden name was Song Lak Neo (see *Straits Times*, 27 Sep 1926, at 8). She died in September 1926 at the age of 70 survived by her husband and four sons (Teck Heng, Teck Guan, Teack Eam and Teck Seen), seven daughters and 24 grandchildren (see 'Late Mrs Tan Boon Chin' *Straits Times*, 28 Sep 1926, at 11). Her brother was Song Ong Siang.
- 51 Mrs Oh Ghee Choo's maiden name was Chong Kim Lian. She died on 10 Nov 1954 at her home, Charis, at 62 St Patrick's Road, survived by her husband, two sons (Thiam Hock and Thiam Tee), seven daughters (Mrs L Oorloff, Mrs Tan Koon Chuan, Mrs Wee Thiam Hock, Mrs B Chew, Mrs Wee Thiam Siew, Mrs Lim Chee Poe and Mrs N Lau) and 13 grandchildren (see 'Deaths' *Singapore Free Press*, 11 Nov 1954, at 16).
- 52 Mrs Ong Hood Hin's maiden name was Tan Suat Neo (1883–1909), eldest daughter of Tan Jiak Kim. She passed away in her father's residence, Panglima Prang, in River Valley Road, aged 26, after contracting malaria (see *Straits Times*, 5 Apr 1909).
- 53 Mrs Lee Soon Hee's maiden name was Soh Siok Lian (see *Straits Times*, 16 Sep 1927, at 7).
- 54 Mrs Tan Kwee Wah's maiden name was Chew Gek Neo, eldest daughter of Chew Boon Lay and Ong Cheng Neo. She was born on 16 Mar 1884 and died on 6 Oct 1964 at the age of 80 and was buried at Bukit Brown Cemetery. She was the first wife of Tan Kwee Wah; his second wife was Wong Yin Leong. See <<https://www.geni.com/people/CHEW-Gek-Neo/6000000024894044190>> (accessed 1 Mar 2016).



Lee Pek Hoon,<sup>55</sup> Gan Hock Chuan, See Teong Wah,<sup>56</sup> Lim Tek Chye,<sup>57</sup> Yap Tai Chong, Wee Cheng Soon,<sup>58</sup> Wee Swee Teow,<sup>59</sup> SQ Wong, Wee Soon Chuan,<sup>60</sup> Lim Seow Kiew, Lee Chim Hay, Lee Pek Hock, Yeo Hock Hoe,<sup>61</sup> Lim Tek Siong, Chew Swi Keat, Poh Cheng Tee, Miss Lee Choo Neo and Miss Lee Kum Yin.

Early in 1916 the Garden Syndicate Ltd was registered with the object of purchasing a property for a Club to promote social intercourse among the Chinese. The first property bought was situated in

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- 55 Mrs Lee Pek Hoon's maiden name was Yeo Kim Neo (1876–1927) (see 'Deaths' *Singapore Free Press*, 28 Jan 1927, at 8). She had two sons (Yan Boon and Wee Sit) and one daughter (see 'Death of Mr Yeo Hock Hoe' *Straits Times*, 5 May 1924, at 9).
- 56 Mrs See Teong Wah's maiden name was Khoo Heng Neo, one of the daughters of millionaire Khoo Cheng Teong. She married See Teong Wah in 1904 (see 'Chinese Wedding' *Straits Times*, 25 Apr 1904, at 5).
- 57 Mrs Lim Tek Chye's maiden name was Koh Bian Eng Neo, daughter of Koh Teng Kay and Lee Hong Neo. She had two sons (Wee Toh and Toh Nee), one daughter (Wee Neo) and one adopted son (Kim Bock) (see <<http://wc.roots-web.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=lawrencetan&id=I10605>> (accessed 3 Mar 2015)).
- 58 Mrs Wee Cheng Soon's maiden name was Regina Tan Mui Liam. She was born in Singapore in 1879 and in 1901 married David Wee Cheng Soon (1875–1944) at the Church of St Peter and Paul's. She died on 30 Sep 1941 at her home in Pasir Panjang at the age of 62 and was survived by her husband, a son, four daughters and several grandchildren; she was buried at Bidadari Cemetery (see 'Funeral of Mrs Wee Cheng Soon' *Singapore Free Press*, 6 Oct 1941, at 5).
- 59 Mrs Wee Swee Teow's maiden name was Tan Kim Neo, daughter of Tan Jin Cheng and Wee Yan Neo, and great granddaughter of Tan Oo Long, older brother of Tan Tock Seng. She passed away on 7 Feb 1961 (see 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 8 Feb 1961, at 20).
- 60 Mrs Wee Soon Chuan's maiden name was Teo Cheng Neo, the daughter of Teo Guan Seng and Lim Kit Neo. She died on 11 Jan 1984 at the age of 91, survived by three sons (Bee Lee, Thian Lee and Swee Lee), four daughters (Molly Yeoh, Gek Kee, Gek Heok and Gek Hua) (see *Straits Times* 13 Jan 1984, at 43).
- 61 Mrs Yeo Hock Hoe's maiden name was Khoo Kwak Neo, daughter of Khoo Chong Seng and sister of Khoo Sin Kiat (see 'Deaths' *Straits Times*, 23 Jun 1925, at 8).

Cairnhill Road and the Garden Club came into existence in June [535] 1916. The first President was Dr Lim Boon Keng, and the membership, limited to Chinese only, was about fifty. Tennis and garden parties were held at which Chinese ladies were invited to be present. After a time it was decided that a town branch be opened for the convenience of members who have business in town. Eventually the whole of the front portion on the top floor of Raffles Chambers, which was formerly occupied by Messrs Katz Bros Ltd, was leased as the Club's town premises. In February 1919 the Club had 410 ordinary members (310 residential and 100 out-station). Eminent persons of all nationalities have been enrolled as honorary members. The Garden Club, which is furnished on up-to-date lines, is now considered as the leading Chinese Club in Singapore and plays a prominent part in the social affairs of the Settlement.

The Chinese community since the War began had shared with Europeans and other large sections of the population here in the desire to do their best to provide 'silver bullets' for the Imperial Treasury, but when, at a meeting of the Legislative Council on the 16<sup>th</sup> June, the Hon Mr Elliot said that he believed that if Government saw their way to introduce an income tax into this Colony there would be no opposition on the part of the public, but a welcome, and when the other unofficial members, including Dr Lim Boon Keng, strongly supported the suggestion, the Chinese people became greatly concerned. The Penang Chinese as well as the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce held meetings and passed resolutions against such an imposition, favouring either fresh or increased taxation on luxuries or a more liberal contribution to the War funds.

On the 30th August the SCBA convened a meeting of the Straits Chinese, at which the President, Mr Koh San Hin, proposed the resolution as amended at the eleventh hour, 'That this association favours the introduction by Government of a war levy based on profits, for the prosecution of the war, provided that no inquisitorial methods be adopted.' This motion was [536] seconded by Mr Seow Poh Leng, following upon which there was considerable discussion as to the merits

of the alternative phrases 'war levy' and 'income tax', and as to the elimination of the proviso. The majority of those present had come to support the original motion in favour of an income tax, pure and simple, and declined to have anything to do with the amended resolution, which was carried by a majority of 15 to 1, representing a small proportion of the audience.

In December the Governor appointed a committee consisting of twenty-two persons, including the following Chinese gentlemen: Messrs Koh San Hin, Lim Peng Siang, Seah Liang Seah, See Teong Wah, Quah Beng Kee (Penang) and Tan Cheng Lock<sup>62</sup> (Malacca) to inquire and report whether a better method of raising an appropriate contribution by this Colony towards the prosecution of the War can be devised than by means of an income tax. This committee published its report in which a number of other forms of taxation were recommended to be tried by Government as alternatives to an income tax.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1917 a deputation of fourteen gentlemen, representing all communities in Singapore except the European community, headed by Mr Tan Jiak Kim, called at Government House and

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62 Tan Cheng Lock (1883–1960) was the third son of Tan Keong Ann and the grandson of Tan Choon Bok. Born in Malacca, he was first educated at the Malacca High School and then at Raffles Institution in Singapore. He started working life as a teacher at Raffles Institution (1902–1908) but later left to work as an assistant manager of the Nyalas Rubber Estate in Malacca. Later, he established three rubber companies and became a very successful businessman. Active in public service, Tan served variously as a member of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council, and also as a member of the Straits Settlements Executive Council. In 1915, he revived the dormant Straits Chinese British Association. In 1949, he founded the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) with Leong Yew Koh and Lee Hau Shik. Although Tan was the MCA's first President, he held no government posts after the Alliance (a coalition comprising the United Malays Nationalist Organisation (UMNO), the MCA and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC)) won the 1955 general election. Tan died of a heart attack on 16 Dec 1960 and his son, Tan Siew Sin became the third President of the MCA. See Alice Scott-Ross, *Tun Dato Sir Cheng Lock Tan: A Personal Profile by his Daughter* (Singapore: A Scott-Ross, 1990); and Ch'ng Kim See, 'Tan Cheng Lock' in Leo Suryadinata (ed), *Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent: A Biographical Dictionary* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012) at 1055–1058.

presented a petition signed by 1,200 persons belonging to the same communities, praying for a war-tax based on income. The Chinese members of that deputation were (besides Mr Tan Jiak Kim) Messrs Seah Liang Seah, Lee Choon Guan, Kan Yin Poh, Lim Nee Soon, Koh San Hin, SJ Chan, Tan Cheng Siong and Yow Ngan Pan. This petition was read, at the Council meeting on the 8th January, at which the Attorney-General introduced the first reading of a Bill 'to increase certain duties and to impose new duties for the purpose of providing a further contribution to the Imperial Government towards war expenditure'. The Hon Mr Elliot in his speech asked Government to withdraw that Bill in favour of a Bill to levy a tax on income. Dr Lim Boon [537] Keng, among other unofficials, supported the request to withdraw the Bill, and this was done by consent. On the same day the first reading of an earlier Income Tax Bill, laid on the Council table in September 1916, was, with the schedule alterations suggested by Mr Elliot, taken, and in due course the War Tax Bill became law, and has been re-enacted yearly since then.

The 'Our Day' Fund, in October 1916, managed by a representative general committee under the chairmanship of the Colonial Secretary (Hon Mr F Seton James), found an enthusiastic response from all nationalities in Malaya. An explanatory letter which appeared in the press from General Ridout (President of the local St John's Ambulance Association) as to the great work in aid of wounded soldiers and sailors done by the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John of Jerusalem - amalgamated into one organisation which makes a special annual appeal in October entitled 'Our Day' Fund - helped the Asiatic public to understand its objects and operations. The Straits Chinese British Association took a prominent part in raising money for the Fund by means of a Children's Fete, a three days' auction of a fine selection of curios, and a Variety Entertainment. The Children's Fete on Raffles Reclamation Ground brought together a host of Chinese ladies and gentlemen as managers and helpers at the various stalls, fishponds, *café chantant*, waxworks and refreshment kiosks. The 'Our Day' Auction was well patronised by the rich folks. A variety of gifts

from the public had been collected by Messrs Powell & Co, Ching Keng Lee & Co and the Commercial Rubber Co Ltd. The auction was opened by the Colonial Secretary, who was presented with a little silver auctioneer's hammer and who started the proceedings by calling for bids for the hammer. After a spirited bidding between Messrs Tan Kah Kee, Lim Chwee Chian<sup>63</sup> and Lim Seow Kiew,<sup>64</sup> the hammer was knocked down to Mr Lim Seow Kiew (on behalf of his father, Mr Lim Peng Siang) for \$5,000.

[538] Fifty cases of pineapples presented by Mr Tan Kah Kee were bought in by him and presented to the crew of a British warship, then in port. Relics from the *Emden*, which had received her quietus on Cocos Keeling Islands, realised good prices. Tickets for Boxes A and B for the Variety Entertainment at the Victoria Theatre presented by Mr Tan Cheng Siong were offered for sale and were bought by Messrs Tan Kah Kee and Wee Teck Seng for \$1,300 and \$1,000 respectively. A picture of Old Singapore, the gift of the Rev JAB Cook, found many bidders and was eventually secured by Mr Darbishire for \$700.

63 Lim Chwee Chian was born in Haiteng, China in 1868 (see 柯木林, 《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 134). He was a 'well-known towkay in mining, planting, shipping, commercial and banking circles, and at the time of his death was president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Kiew Long Tong (Seh Lim) Kongsee, Ai Tong School, Chinese High School and Ee Ho Hean Club'. Lim was also a committee member of the Po Leung Kuk. When he died on 12 Feb 1923 at his home in Ann Siang Hill, he was survived by two wives, four sons (Mah Tay, Mah Poh, Mah Hong and Mah Seng), two daughters and several grandchildren (see 'Death of Towkay Lim Chwee Chian' *Straits Times*, 13 Feb 1923, at 8).

64 Also spelt 'Lim Seow Kwee'. Lim was born in Singapore in 1894 and studied at Raffles Institution from which he graduated in 1910. In 1921, he was among the fortunate survivors of the ill-fated SS *Hong Moh* which was wrecked when it crashed into White Rocks, south of the Lamock Light, near Shantou, China (see 'The Hong Moh Disaster' *Singapore Free Press*, 7 May 1921, at 7). That year, his wife, Tay Sek Boey died at her parents' home at 14 Chin Swee Road (see 'Domestic Occurrences' *Singapore Free Press*, 18 Jul 1921, at 6). In 1923, he went to China to establish branches of the Ho Hong Company. (See 柯木林, 《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 129-130).

The Chinese Variety Entertainment was held at the Victoria Theatre. Little girls from the Singapore Chinese Girls' School contributed an action song, 'Our Flag', and performed a wand drill using many-coloured ribbons in place of wands with striking effect. Little boys from Gan Eng Seng's School gave an exhibition of bar-bell exercises. Other items consisted of a comic sketch by Mr Chua Keh Hai's party, a large minstrel troupe by the Young Men's Friendly Society, and Low Kway Soo's comical waxworks, while Mr Lim Eng Teck and Mr Choo Beng Lim sang patriotic songs. The Chinese boy scouts acted a camp scene, while two of them gave a good Scottish sword dance, using their signalling flags in place of swords. At the close Mr Koh San Hin announced that, as the result of the great efforts in the directions already described, the SCBA would be able to hand over \$40,000 to the 'Our Day' Fund. The cheque paid into the credit of that Fund was \$42,419.22.

The fire at Kampong Martin, which occurred shortly after 10 o'clock on the morning of the 30<sup>th</sup> October, proved to be not only serious, but covered a wider area than any previous fire had done.<sup>65</sup> The origin of the fire remains unknown. The Kampong was inhabited by hundreds of poor artisans and fisher folk in about 100 attap houses built on piles close together, with very narrow plankways between them, between Martin [539] Road and Outram Road, in a backwater of the Singapore River. Fortunately the fire took place in broad daylight, resulting in the loss of one life. Had it broken out at night, there might have been a terrible holocaust. In spite of the whole fire brigade turning out promptly, and of the assistance of a detachment of the Shropshire Regiment, the whole kampong was burnt to the ground with such rapidity that the poor villagers lost all their belongings. The fire also destroyed three or four godowns owned by Kim Seng Land Co Ltd, containing copra and other produce. Although it was high tide, the flames, fanned by a strong breeze, got across the river and burnt several tongkangs in course of construction.

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65 See 'Kampong Martin Fire' *Straits Times*, 8 Nov 1916, at 8.

A curious and noticeable feature in connection with this fire was the fact that a tiny Chinese temple, standing in the very midst of the involved area, escaped intact. The local Government and the Chinese public responded quickly and generously to an appeal from the committee of the Kampong Martin Relief Fund, and in the course of one month, the committee, under the chairmanship of Dr Lim Boon Keng, was able to report to the subscribers that the sum of \$10,348.50 had been collected and \$7,730 had been distributed among the sufferers, after careful investigation. It was decided that the balance of \$2,618.50 should be invested in the purchase of War Loan bonds and ear-marked as a fund for the relief of destitute people or for any emergency. The Municipality took this opportunity of applying its improvement scheme to the burnt-out area, and decided against the erection of new huts on the site except under the provisions of the Municipal Ordinance.

On the 4th January 1917 Sir Charles Elliot, KCMG, Vice-Chancellor of Hongkong University, invested Mr Loke Yew, CMG, in the latter's house, with the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) of that university.<sup>66</sup> 'This was the first presentation of an honorary degree to an inhabitant of British Malaya,' said Sir Edward Brockman, when presenting Mr Loke [540] Yew to the Vice-Chancellor as a fit and proper person to receive that degree. On investing Mr Loke Yew with the cerise gown, green hood and black cap of the degree, Sir Charles Elliot said:

The brilliant nature of your career in the Federated Malay States has abundantly demonstrated your intellectual capacity, and the wealth you have acquired you have largely devoted to educational and philanthropic objects. The University feels it a great honour to enrol you among its members, and, on your side, we hope it will not be distasteful to be enrolled among the honorary graduates of Hongkong University, among whom we aim to include those most

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66 See 'Towkay Loke Yew, CMG, LLD' *Straits Times*, 5 Jan 1917, at 9.



Loke Yew



distinguished in the pursuit of learning themselves or in encouraging it in others.<sup>67</sup>

Mr Loke Yew, however, did not live long to wear this last honour, for a month later (24th February) came news of his death, at the age of 70.<sup>68</sup> Like many other pioneers, he came from South China to Singapore, at the age of 11, in 1858, a poor lad, to seek his fortune. After four years' hard work here, he had saved \$99, and with this opened a shop under the style of chop Heng Loong, thus laying the foundation of that firm now well known throughout Malaya. He found his way to Matang, Larut, where he engaged in profitable mining ventures. Fifteen years later he lost \$140,000: but nothing daunted, he was associated in every promising venture and steadily amassed a huge fortune. He settled down in Kwala Lumpur and rendered great service to the FMS Government in opening up the more remote districts of the Peninsula, and to the public by his liberal benefactions. He did not forget Singapore, for he gave a donation of \$50,000 to Government which was applied towards the building of the present Tan Tock Seng Hospital. He owned a large amount of valuable landed property in Singapore, and it is to be hoped that Loke Yew Street (off Hill Street) will long remain as such on the list of Singapore street names.<sup>69</sup>

[541] The annual general meeting of the Chinese Ladies' Association was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> March at Magenta Cottage, Killiney Road, placed at the disposal of the members, together with the use of a piano, by Mrs Lee Choon Guan, its first President. The purpose of this society is the general improvement of young Chinese ladies, and it has been a great success. Classes are conducted in sewing, pastry-making, music, embroidery and cooking, and many have derived great bene-

67 See 'Loke Yew CMG, LLD' *Straits Times*, 6 Jan 1917, at 9.

68 See 'Towkay Loke Yew Dead' *Straits Times*, 24 Feb 1917, at 9.

69 On Loke Yew generally, see Lee Kam Hing, 'Loke Yew' in Leo Suryadinata, *Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent: A Biographical Dictionary* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012) at 697-700; and Victor R Savage & Brenda SA Yeoh, *Singapore Street Names: A Study of Toponymics* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2013) at 230.



Mrs Lee Choon Guan, MBE

fit from the opportunities it affords for social intercourse and mutual helpfulness. The report for the year's work stated that Mrs SQ Wong was Vice-President, Mrs Lim Boon Keng Treasurer and Miss Mabel Yin Secretary.<sup>70</sup> Mrs Sanderson, Mrs Thompson and Mrs Reeder were successively Wardens and rendered invaluable assistance to the young association. Its members took a prominent part in making the Children's Fete for the 'Our Day' Fund the success that it was. The society still maintains a vigorous existence.

Mrs Lee Choon Guan<sup>71</sup> is a daughter of the late Mr Tan Keong Saik, whose practical interest in female education was seen in his getting his daughters educated in English by Miss Blackmore of the Methodist Mission. Mrs Lee Choon Guan has kept up her studies and is able to converse in English fluently and intelligently on all matters of interest, and is also a great lover of Western music. She was married in 1900 to Mr Lee Choon Guan, and both have since taken the deepest interest in all educational movements.

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70 Mabel Yin was the niece of Dr SC Yin and sister of Alice Yin. In 1920, she married Ng Hong Guan, eldest son of Dr and Mrs Ng Sam Teck (see 'Announcement' *Straits Times*, 6 Aug 1920, at 8). Yin 'retired' from her work in the Chinese Ladies Association in 1917 and was replaced by Muriel Cheang (see 'Chinese Ladies Association' *Straits Times*, 3 Apr 1917, at 8).

71 Mrs Lee Choon Guan's maiden name was Tan Teck Neo. She was born on 18 Dec 1877, the daughter of Tan Keong Saik. Her brothers included Cheng Kee, Cheng Soon, Cheng Wah and Chent Tit, and her sisters were Hong Neo and Tin Neo. She was educated at the Methodist Mission. In 1900, she married Malacca tycoon Lee Choon Guan (son of Lee Cheng Yan) shortly after his first wife died. She and her husband were active in community affairs and were great philanthropists. In 1918, she was conferred the Membership of the British Empire (MBE), the first Chinese woman to hold that distinction. Lee Choon Guan passed away in August 1924 (see 'Mr Lee Choon Guan' *Singapore Free Press*, 29 Aug 1924, at 7) and she never remarried. For the remainder of her life, Mrs Lee Choon Guan held court at the family residence, Mandalay Villa, at Tanjong Katong and was a regular patron of numerous charities. She died on 27 Feb 1978, aged 100 (see 'Grand Old Lady of Singapore died at 100', *Straits Times*, 28 Feb 1978, at 17).

A few years ago when the lack of qualified Chinese midwives for work among the coolie classes came up for public discussion, Mrs Lee Choon Guan was among the first to give scholarships for the training of such midwives, and those so assisted have not only been enabled to earn a livelihood, but have been benefactors to their sex, hundreds of lives having been saved by their modern treatment. Medical missions for Chinese children and women have always had ready support from her purse. Her keen interest in the Singapore [542] Chinese Girls' School is evidenced by the fact that numerous prizes have been yearly awarded in her name from the income of her endowment fund. Profiting by her own experience, she has given her children the best education possible. One son, who was very intelligent but a confirmed invalid, died in 1919. The other has recently returned to Singapore after several years' residence in England, where he was educated under the care of Archdeacon Sharp, formerly of Singapore. Her only daughter, Miss Lee Poh Neo, was educated at Raffles Girls' School, and continued her studies under private tuition. She acts as secretary to her mother, whom she has greatly helped in her various social duties and correspondence. Mrs Lee Choon Guan has accompanied her husband and Mr Lee Chim Tuan, as the latter's secretary and companion, on extensive travels, in the course of which China, Japan, Java, Siam, the United States, Canada and various countries in Europe have been visited.

In 1918 the honour of Membership of the British Empire was conferred on Mrs Lee Choon Guan by His Majesty the King, and we believe she is the only Chinese lady who holds that distinction. It was a reward she well merited for the very active interest she had taken during the War in various charitable enterprises. During her last trip to Europe she was presented at Court by Lady Tudor. She was commanded to attend a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, and, though the gathering was huge, she had the honour of a personal conversation with Their Majesties the King and Queen. The King expressed the pleasure it gave him to see Mrs Lee Choon Guan in Chinese attire, which he much admired.

The Hon Eu Tong Sen, Member of the Federal Council, who was the first person in Malaya to present a battle-plane for the front, was again first in giving £6,000 for the cost of a Tank – one of those wonderful fighting machines which helped the Allies in winning the War. Dr Addison, the Minister of Munitions, caused [543] Mr Eu Tong Sen's gift to be painted, and the painting was presented to him. The tank was specially distinguished by its two eyes, thus giving effect to the Chinese idea of having their boats and junks painted with two eyes<sup>72</sup> because –

No got eyes, how can see?

No can see, how can savee?

No can savee, how can chop chop?

On the 27<sup>th</sup> April the news came of the death in action in France of Major Harold Millard,<sup>73</sup> a partner in the legal firm of Messrs Donaldson & Burkinshaw, to which he came out in 1903. With previous service in the 1st Volunteer Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment, in 1905 he was gazetted 2nd Lieut, in the Chinese Co SVI, and during his connection with that Company his quiet disposition and gentlemanly qualities made him a great favourite with the Chinese Volunteers. Although then forty years of age, he was one of the first to respond to the call for officers made out here. Before he left, when standing on the verandah of the Singapore Cricket Club, and talking to a friend about German brutalities, he said, 'God help England if the brutes get there. I cannot stay here while it is possible.' Of a number of young Englishmen who were playing tennis and practising at the nets, he said, 'I don't think they understand. They could not be so light-hearted if they did.' He left Singapore in November 1914, and at the time when he made the great sacrifice he held the rank of Major in the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment. The old members of the Chinese Company who knew him on the parade ground as well as at weekend camps and on

72 See 'The Malayan Tank' *Straits Times*, 23 Aug 1917, at 7.

73 See *Singapore Free Press*, 1 May 1917, at 5; and 'The Singapore: Chief Justice's Tribute to Fallen Members' *Straits Times*, 30 Apr 1917, at 10.

field days will ever remember with pride that one of those noble men who gave his life for King and Country had once been a popular officer in their Company.

At the Municipal Board meeting held on the 25th May Mr Sims referred to the intention of the Government [544] to close the Cross Street Medical Mission, and asked the President whether, in the interests of public health, any special measures were necessary to deal with the situation.<sup>74</sup> The President (Mr FJ Hallifax) stated that the question was one that hardly concerned the Municipality. The Mission had applied to the Commissioners for land to put up new premises where its work could be continued, but the only land they could offer was at Kampong Kapur, which was at the wrong portion of the town altogether and therefore was of no use. The vacant buildings of the Government School in Cross Street had been lent to the Mission, which had carried on an excellent work among the poorest class of women and children of all nationalities, principally Chinese, and which had treated many thousands of cases yearly. The site was valuable, and as Government had other plans in view, the Medical Mission had to go elsewhere. A shophouse was rented by the Mission in New Bridge Road, where only out-patients could be treated, and a few totally blind children were accommodated upstairs. These blind children, some thirteen or fourteen of them, are now housed in River Valley Road. The Mission also carries on its charitable work in a shophouse in Bencoolen Street. Mrs Ferguson-Davie is the general superintendent of this Mission (now known as St Andrew's Medical Mission), and the sum of \$100,000 is being collected for the purpose of erecting a proper hospital.

The housing problem had at this time reached such an acute stage and house rents had steadily increased to such an abnormal extent that representations were made to Government for some measure of protection of the poorer classes of tenants. One result of the War had been the higher cost of living which affected everybody. Then the ter-

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74 See 'Municipal Commission' *Straits Times*, 26 May 1917, at 10.

rible state of overcrowding in parts of the town inhabited by Chinese labouring classes was revealed incidentally through a disastrous fire that broke out on the 6th June at No 16 Trengganu Street, a four-storied shophouse, whereby at least ten persons occupy- [545] ing the third and fourth floors perished, their only means of escape having been cut off by the burning of the staircase. The *Free Press* drew attention to the fact 'that in these tenement houses sometimes live as many as seventy people, and a fire which attacks the wooden staircase cuts off the majority of them from aid'.

In August the Increase of Rent (War Restriction) Bill was introduced. Dr Lim Boon Keng in supporting the measure remarked that 'it seemed only right that after the Government had introduced this more or less arbitrary measure, it should take steps immediately to provide the means of erecting sufficient houses for the future'. He agreed with Mr Darbishire that there were two sides to the question, because while there were landlords who had increased their rents improperly, there were others who had reduced their rents since the outbreak of the War.

There is distress, and something has to be done. At the same time I wish to put on record that there are interests below those which will be affected which deserve the consideration of Government and the Municipality. I refer to such as the ricksha pullers, who are housed under horrible conditions. I think a commission should be appointed to consider the question of relief in this matter. It is a crime to allow, in the midst of prosperity, human beings who are the best assets of a Colony like ours, where they depend so much on labour, to suffer during their best period of work through bad housing and sanitation.<sup>75</sup>

In September the above Bill was passed, and a Rent Assessment Board, of which Mr Gaw Khok Khiam was the first Chinese member, was appointed with jurisdiction over all houses with a rental of \$60 a month and under. Opinions are divided as to whether this measure, which

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<sup>75</sup> See 'Legislative Council' *Straits Times*, 28 Aug 1917, at 7; and 'Legislative Council' *Singapore Free Press*, 28 Aug 1917, at 10.

is still in force, has effected the purpose for which it was enacted: but when all is said and done, the fact remains that a great number of clerks and the poorer [546] people of all nationalities have been relieved of their worry as to a roof to shelter under.

Two War measures which affected the freedom of action of the China-born Chinese in common with other aliens may here be mentioned. The first was the Rubber Lands (Restriction) Ordinance which prohibited any person or corporation, other than a British subject or a subject of a Malay State, under British protection, from acquiring any rubber land exceeding fifty acres in extent during the period of the Ordinance. The measure did not apply to transactions in rubber lands between people of the same nationality. Thus a Dutchman could sell to another Dutchman, and a Chinese to another Chinese. This restriction has now been removed.

The second measure was an Amending Ordinance (VI of 1917) to the Winding-up of Enemy's Property Ordinance (XXIX of 1914) whereby no alien enemy and no alien *ami* (except with the sanction of the Governor) was allowed to purchase or take a mortgage of enemy properties which were then being sold by the Custodian of Enemy Property. Now that a state of war has ceased to exist, it is to be hoped that the restrictions against Chinese and other alien *amis* will be withdrawn with as little delay as possible.

The report of great excitement among the Hylam domestic servants in Malacca, caused by the arrival of a Hylam woman in the company of her husband, and the attack made by the irate servants on the house of Mr Leong Tow Toon, their headman who happened then to be in Singapore, recalls to mind a similar incident which had happened some ten years before in Singapore when the Hylam 'boys' attacked the house of Mr Wee Cheow Keng, their headman, in Beach Road, and tore down his chop (or signboard) hanging over the front door and damaged his furniture. Mr Wee Cheow Keng is a self-made man. In his early days he had been greatly helped by the late Mr Foo Teng Quee and his business as a general merchant prospered, and after [547] the death of Mr Foo Teng Quee he was recognised by the



Hylam community as their leader. As such, he is a member of the Chinese Advisory Board, and at one time one of his sons, born in Singapore, was a volunteer in the Chinese Company. He is an astute business man and has for some years been a Director of the Sze Hai Tong Bank.<sup>76</sup>

The ceremony of unveiling a tablet to the memory of all those who had lost their lives during the 1915 Mutiny was performed in the Victoria Memorial Hall on the 28th September by the Governor, Sir A Young, in the presence of a large number of military and volunteer officers, three officers of the Johore Forces and some of the relatives of those who were commemorated in the tablet. Mr Frank Adam, representing the Committee, referred to the memorial as –

a memorable milestone in the history of the Colony and of Malaya – cemented by the blood of our fellow citizens, a milestone which will for ever stand in our midst as a reminder of what German frightfulness has done and what it is still capable of doing .... Owing to the fact that the fallen were of Asiatic as well as of European nationality, and also because they belonged to so many races and creeds, it was felt that the placing of a memorial to them in any place of worship would be inappropriate. It was therefore decided that our City Fathers, the Singapore Municipality, should be asked

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76 Wee Cheow Keng was born in 1860 in Qionghai District, Guangdong Province, China. A Hainanese, he came to Singapore in 1874. With a small start-up capital of \$200, he went into the manufacture of cloth umbrellas (德裕布扇店). Later, he opened provision shops in Johor and Indonesia and imported leather to manufacture shoes. Wee later went into rubber planting and properties and owned many properties in the Katong area, including the largest house in the Joo Chiat area. He named Cheow Keng Street (off East Coast Road) after himself. In 1926 he was founding President of the Wang's Ancestral Association (琼崖王氏祠). He was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and of the Chinese High School. (See 柯木林, 《新华历史人物列传》(Singapore: EPB, 1995), at 6–7). He died on 18 Mar 1939 aged 79. See 'Funeral Announcement' *Straits Times*, 12 Apr 1939, at 2. When Wee died in 1939, he was survived by five sons (Tin See, Tin Nam, Tin Thong, Tin Buck and Tin Tuck), two daughters (Su Neo and Ah Chee), 12 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

to take the memorial into their keeping, and that its resting-place should be within the precincts of our City Hall.<sup>77</sup>

The brass tablet imposed on a plain marble mould contains the names of the forty people who were killed, including those of Sim Soh and Lim Eng Wee (Hokien Chinese).<sup>78</sup>

In contributing to the debate on the Supply Bill in the Legislative Council on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, the Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng thanked the Finance Committee for their recommendation to Government that the time [549] had come for Government to reconsider the re-establishment of the Queen's Scholarships. He said that at the time of their abolition there was a very strong current of feeling that education was doing no good to the natives of the Malay Peninsula. The effect of education in India was frequently pointed to, people talking of sedition in India whenever education was mentioned. They might as well blame the knife for murder. That, because there was sedition in India, education in the Eastern colonies was to be stifled was one of the greatest fallacies this great War would have killed. 'The speech of Mr Fisher quoted by Mr Darbshire,' said Dr Lim Boon Keng,

is an indication of the direction education must take. We have to train citizens. We have men in tens of thousands growing up here, not surely to have a mere existence as machines, but to live the life of British subjects ready to fight and die for their King and Country. We cannot make such men out of the stuff that we have without bringing them under the best influences. They have men like the Chinese and Indians brought here with great traditions and great aspirations. Nothing in this world will satisfy them unless they are taught that the Government under which they live is prepared to care for them not only financially and industrially, but as men. That is their greatest belief as Asiatics, and I think they are not wrong. One of the greatest aspirations taught by the war is freedom. Surely, if Britain is fighting for the freedom of other

77 See 'The Singapore Mutiny: Unveiling of Memorial' *Singapore Free Press*, 29 Sep 1917, at 12.

78 See 'The Singapore Mutiny' *Straits Times*, 29 Sep 1917, at 10.

nationalities, men brought up under the flag and taught the aspirations and ideals of Englishmen have the right to expect to become men and not mere machines always under domination.<sup>79</sup>

He proceeded to say that in his view the time had arrived when the Government ought to think whether the representation of the Asiatic people living here could not be extended. In this growing population, could it be expected that one man like him and his predecessors was capable of expressing the feelings of the heterogeneous mass of people living here? The Penang Chinese had been complaining. It seemed to him, in connection with education, that, as a result of the war, Government should do something to make the people of the Colony feel that their whole interest was with the Empire.

The Governor, in the course of his reply, disagreed with the Colonial Secretary, who had said that he, personally, was in favour of the revival of the Queen's Scholarships. He traced the history of the abolition at length, and said that the revival of these scholarships was not a thing that they should do lightly. If the majority of the Unofficials thought that the scholarships should be renewed (just as such a majority formerly considered that they should be abolished), he considered that they should follow the opinion of that majority and re-establish the scholarships.

At the annual general meeting of the SCBA held at the Garden Club on the 13<sup>th</sup> December, a very interesting report of the year's work was submitted. The committee had on the 27<sup>th</sup> September passed a resolution 'that in their opinion the time has now arrived when the Government should promote higher education by endowing scholarships or preferably by starting a technical school'. Such resolution had been forwarded to Government through the Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng, and a reply had been received 'that it is the intention of Government,

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79 'Legislative Council' *Straits Times*, 23 Oct 1917, at 7.

as soon as conditions admit, to inaugurate a system of higher education in the Colony'.<sup>80</sup>

The Government had been addressed on the subject of dispensing with the onerous procedure, before the issue of passports to Straits Chinese, whereby an applicant had to be identified and the fact of his birth on British soil had to be declared by witnesses before the Protector of Chinese, and requesting the Government to recognise the SC-BA's certificate that the applicant was a bona fide British subject. The reply from Government gave special reasons why for the time being the existing regulations could not be revised.

[550] The 'Our Day' Fund for 1917 was a greater success than that of 1916 when £50,000 was remitted to England. The report of Mr Rodesse, Hon Secretary, showed that more than £110,000 had been raised from the Straits Settlements, Johore and the Unfederated Malay States. 'The generosity of the Chinese portion of the population has been magnificent, and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce assisted greatly to this effect.' It may be mentioned in this connection that, at a meeting of the influential Chinese representing all sections of the community at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce on the 21st September 1917, which was addressed by special request by the Hon Mr FS James, as chairman of the local committee, the sum of \$25,000 was subscribed among the twenty-four gentlemen present, including generous contributions of \$5,500 each from Messrs Lim Peng Siang and Lee Choon Guan and \$3,700 from Mr Tan Kah Kee. This served as a very practical and conclusive rejoinder to the unkind insinuation made by some Europeans that the Chinese community would only give their subscriptions to the 'Our Day' Fund if they could gamble in a lottery. The Chinese community strongly resented such baseless talk. About one-seventh of the £110,000 represented the contribution from the Singapore War Loan lottery, which, contrary to the past attitude of the Government against all forms of gambling, the Singapore

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80 'Straits Chinese: Annual Report of the British Association' *Straits Times*, 11 Dec 1917, at 8.

Sporting Club was allowed to run. The morality of such a method for raising money even in a worthy cause – and justification for it – many Chinese residents failed to see, and the arguments *pro* and *con* furnished the local press with plenty of 'copy'. Towards the end of the year a strong Chinese committee was working hard in aid of the Tientsin Flood Relief Fund. Nevertheless when news came of the Halifax disaster, a large meeting of Chinese residents met at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, under the chairmanship of the Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng, to collect subscriptions in aid of the victims and to appoint a committee to co-operate with the committee of the [551] Tientsin Flood Relief Fund in organising a Fete. In February 1918 a Children's Fete was held on Raffles Reclamation and proved a great success. Two attractive features were the parade of 900 boys from Chinese schools, and *Le Cabaret a la Singapore*, where twenty-five young Chinese ladies entertained. In April the Colonial Secretary acknowledged the receipt from the Singapore Chinese community, through the Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng, of the splendid donation of \$17, 368.38 to the Halifax Disaster Relief Fund.

In response to the appeal made in March 1918 for YMCA ('Red Triangle') Huts for providing some slight measure of comfort to the fighting forces, Singapore gave a number of Huts costing \$5,200 each. Once again Messrs Lee Choon Guan and Lim Peng Siang coupled their names together in the gift of a Hut. Among many enthusiastic workers, mention should be made of Mr See Teong Wah, who persuaded Mr Ong Boon Tat to part with a cheque for \$5,200 for a Hut in memory of his father, the late Mr Ong Sam Leong, who had died just a few weeks before. The Singapore Chinese and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce each gave a Hut, while the Chinese Volunteers raised among them \$1,000 towards the cost of the SVC Hut No 2.

The mysterious disappearance of Mr Wee Kay Chiang, the owner of a rubber estate at Sedenak, Johore, and of his son-in-law, Tan Bee Jong, while on a visit to that estate on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1917, with

money to pay the coolies,<sup>81</sup> was referred to by Mr Wee Swee Teow, who, on behalf of the widows and dependents of the two missing men, applied to the Chief Justice, Sir John Bucknill, for a grant of administration of the two estates, on the presumption of their deaths. This the Court was not prepared to do, until more convincing proof of death was forthcoming, and in the meantime Mr Wee Kay Hin, a brother of Mr Wee Kay Chiang, was appointed receiver of both estates, and empowered to pay \$400 monthly to his sister-in-law and to make quarterly returns to the Court until further notice.<sup>82</sup> The [552] mystery has not yet been cleared up, although it is commonly believed that the two people were foully murdered by some of the coolies and their bodies destroyed or buried.

The Cheng Kee Hean Association celebrated its silver jubilee in June with the taking of a group photograph and a 'thanksgiving' ceremony at the house of Mr Chua Kim Teng<sup>83</sup> (Vice-President) in Kampong Java Road, and a dinner at Mr Lee Hak Heng's bungalow. The President, Mr Kow Eng Bok, gave a résumé of the history of the Society from its foundation in 1893, pointing out that very few Chinese clubs and associations in Singapore could look back to a continuous existence of twenty-five years. An appeal by the Secretary, Mr Tan Che Hiong, for subscriptions towards the Facial Wounded Soldiers' Fund was well received, and a handsome sum was promptly raised.<sup>84</sup>

The voluminous and exhaustive report of the Housing Commission appointed by Government in October 1917 was published in August 1918 and should be carefully studied by every intelligent citizen

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81 See 'Johore Disappearance Case' *Singapore Free Press*, 20 Dec 1917, at 394; 'The Missing Towkays' *Straits Times*, 17 Dec 1917, at 8.

82 See 'The Missing Towkays' *Straits Times*, 12 Dec 1917, at 8.

83 Chua Kim Teng was born in 1865 and was the proprietor of East Coast Market and grew wealthy through hard work and frugal living. He married thrice, his third wife being Neo Ah Soon, maternal grandmother of Lee Kuan Yew. He died in 1944 during the Japanese Occupation.

84 See 'War Fund' *Straits Times*, 20 Jul 1918, at 10.

of this Settlement. Only a few excerpts can be made from the eleven chapters of the Report.

On congested areas, we read:

The congested areas are two in number. ... They are occupied solely by the Asiatic community. Rich, middle class and poor live there. The northern area (often known as the Malay quarter) comprises 305 acres: and the southern one (generally known as Chinatown) comprises 189 acres. As a rule, there are wide roads and two-storeyed houses in the northern congested area, and narrow roads and houses of three or four storeys in the southern congested area. Much of the overcrowding in the southern congested area is due to the house space in this locality being cramped by the Bukit Pasoh and Kim Cheng estates, which have been tied up by the wills of former proprietors and which still remain undeveloped.

The reason for the tendency to crowd into the con- [553] gested areas is attributed to several causes. To a certain extent, there is a tendency for trades to collect in specific streets. Thus, the pottery-dealers are in one street, and the coffin makers nearly fill one street. This is partly due to trade conservatism, of which examples may be seen in Macao Street, where coffin makers and tombstone makers still occupy houses in an expensive locality. They do so now presumably because the trade has always been there, and because every individual maker fears that, if he betook himself elsewhere, he would find but little custom... . Men of the shop-keeping class live as a rule with their families and shop assistants in their shops, for they cannot afford to keep two houses. Men of the artisan and labouring classes live as close as they can to their work, which as a rule is near the river, the harbour or the wharves. The food-hawkers seek the areas where the class of person that purchases their wares is most densely thronged. They are practically compelled to live in the area in which they ply their trade. The various places of amusement, theatres, cinematographs, restaurants, etc, are also attracted there. The pleasure-seekers follow them and collect there in the evenings. ... It is amongst the poorest class that the struggle for existence is keenest. This class is therefore impelled towards the facilities afforded by the congested areas. They have to put up with what they can get in the way of a room, or a

share of a room, for the only choice is between accepting and giving up the struggle. When therefore we were told that the Asiatic 'cares nothing for sanitation, ventilation or even bare comfort', we cannot but feel that the position rather is that the persons of the classes which herd in the congested areas are so situated that they must live there, if they are to live at all, and that that being so they continue to live there and to endure all the miseries that are entailed thereby. We are of opinion that the only way of relieving the pressure upon these areas is (1) by a shift elsewhere of the facilities or amenities in which the localities at present excel other localities, and (2) by improvements in the traffic facilities, whereby people would be able to live further away from their work. If, for instance, new wharfage [554] or lighterage facilities were afforded in some other part of the city, it would relieve the pressure of the lightering trade of the Singapore River because the people who now live in that southern congested area on account of that trade would move to the place where the new facilities had been afforded. And not only would the labourers and artisans move thither, but with them would go a number of hawkers, shopkeepers and others.<sup>85</sup>

#### On popular education in hygiene, the Commissioners

strongly urge the Municipal Commissioners to give their most careful attention to the desirability – the necessity even – of educating the people in the elementary principles of hygiene. The Hon Dr Lim Boon Keng drew our attention to the excellent results of some 10,000 leaflets prepared by Dr Glennie, translated into Chinese by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and issued by it, at its own expense, in connection with the recent outbreak of plague. He informed us that the Chinese read the leaflet with interest, mastered its contents, with the result that they probably knew more about plague than the average European in Singapore knows, and were anxious to be inoculated with the vaccine. We understand that the attitude of the coolie class towards the activities of the Health Department in this outbreak of plague has been far better than it has been in any former epidemic of any kind: and it is not too much to ascribe that fact to the public-spirited action

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85 See 'Singapore Housing' *Straits Times*, 23 Aug 1918, at 9.



of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. We believe that much can be done by educational methods, if used with intelligence, tact and discretion.<sup>86</sup>

Dealing with Chinese Burial Grounds, the report says:

In this matter of life and death, as this housing question is shown in the opening paragraphs of this report to be, the claims of the living must prevail over those of the dead. We are confident that the good sense of the Chinese community, guided by the Chinese Advisory Committee on the one side, and by the [555] Improvement Commissioners on the other, will realise the urgent necessity of putting an end to an intolerable state of affairs. Reference to Legislative Council proceedings of 1907 will show what was done when, in connection with the Telok Ayer Reclamation Scheme, it was necessary to remove a part of Mount Wallich, on which there was a Chinese burial ground. It will be seen that the Colonial Secretary expressed the thanks of the Government to the Chinese community for the assistance rendered by them in the matter. We think that the Government need not anticipate objection to any operation in connection with a Housing Scheme.<sup>87</sup>

In the chapter headed 'A Building Programme' we read:

It is manifest that provision for accommodation of persons dishoused must precede dishousing. Otherwise a dishousing programme only means intensified overcrowding. If neither private enterprise nor philanthropy will rehouse, then provision must be made from public funds. Everyone knows that if closing orders were carried out against houses in the congested areas, there would be no place to which the tenants could go. It would only be a case of making very bad still worse. ...

Of private enterprise we have no hope. Philanthropy may, however, help. We have received from the District Officer, Kinta, FMS, a most interesting account, illustrated by photographs, of rows of houses erected at Gopeng by two Chinese philanthropists, Towkays Cheng On and Chan Kok Choon, in order to provide ac-

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86 Ibid.

87 See 'Singapore Housing' *Straits Times*, 24 Aug 1918, at 9.

commodation for a number of poor people who were dishoused by fire. We believe that there may be in Singapore some rich Chinese gentleman who may show his solicitude for the welfare of his fellow-countrymen by co-operating with the public authorities to put up permanent houses for the poorer classes. ... The Tan Tock Seng of the present generation has not yet appeared. But the Government cannot wait, and must act at once in providing temporary accommodation.<sup>88</sup>

In August the Straits Athletic Physical Culturists [556] entertained their friends on the occasion of the hoisting of the Club's flag at their premises No 87 Kampong Bahru Road. Gymnastic exercises had for some time formed a side attraction at the Amateur Drawing Association, but the SAPC and one or two other clubs have come into being within the last few years, having for their main object the physical development of the members. The captain of the SAPC, who, at the function above recorded, was awarded a medal for physical culture, is Mr Chua Seng Chye, a dapper little man, but with developed muscles and biceps acquired by regular exercise provided at his club. He was in constant demand during the 'Our Day' entertainments by Straits Chinese as the local 'Sandow'.<sup>89</sup>

On Sunday the 22nd September 1918, before a large congregation at St Andrew's Cathedral, three deacons were ordained to the priesthood, two of whom were Rev Chan Wing Tsuen, a Cantonese, and Rev Dong Bing Seng, a Foochow.<sup>90</sup> The two Chinese deacons had

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88 Ibid.

89 See 'Straits Athletic Culturists' *Straits Times*, 13 Aug 1918, at 7. Eugen Sandow (1867–1925) was a Prussian-born strongman. Born Frederick Muller, he was considered to have a 'perfect physique' and was popular for demonstrating his enormous strength in contests and exhibitions. He visited and performed in Singapore in 1905. See 'Sandow in Singapore' *Straits Times*, 23 Jun 1905, at 5; 'Eugen Sandow' *Singapore Free Press*, 12 Jul 1905, at 2; and 'Sandow's Exhibition' *Straits Times*, 11 Jul 1905, at 8.

90 See 'St Andrew's Cathedral' *Singapore Free Press*, 24 Sep 1918, at 5; and CE Ferguson-Davie (ed), *In Rubber Lands: An Account of the Work of the Church in Malaya* (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts,

been for several years under training and had passed with great credit their priest's examination, which was conducted on the same lines as in England. All the clergy present joined the Bishop in the laying-on of hands. These two gentlemen are the first Chinese priests to be ordained in the Church of England in the diocese of Singapore, and the Cantonese and Foochow congregations are now ministered to by clergymen of their own nationalities.

Just before the War was brought to a successful end, the abnormally high cost of living became intolerable. A Food Control Committee had been appointed, but it lacked initiative. In spite of regulations published in the *Government Gazette* fixing the maximum retail prices of various articles of food, e.g. condensed milk, ordinary local varieties of fish, eggs, fresh beef and vegetables, there were numerous cases reported and complained of, in which shopkeepers and stores snapped their fingers at these controlled prices and profited mercilessly. During the War the Colony had prospered. Trade, as [557] represented by exports and imports, had, until July 1918, shown increases: the cost of materials and labour had steadily risen, and a good many merchants, traders, painters, landowners, brokers and others had grown richer than they had been before the outbreak of the War: but there was also much poverty in the thickly populated slums – poverty of an unobtrusive character, and therefore not generally realised by or even known to the ordinary resident.

Sickness, poverty and death are the three last stages of many of the laboring classes. Even the healthy among them suffer, for they, until their turn comes, have to support the sick and the dependents of the dead.<sup>91</sup>

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1921), at 42. Dong died on 20 Jul 1961 at the age of 90, at his home in Upper Serangoon Road, survived by one son (Dong Chui Sing, retired Principal of St Andrew's Middle School), five daughters, 29 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren (see 'S'pore's First Chinese Priest Dies Aged 90' *Singapore Free Press*, 20 Jul 1961, at 3).

91 'Singapore Housing' *Straits Times*, 23 Aug 1918, at 9.

The news of the Armistice reached Singapore at 8 pm on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, and the following day was given up to rejoicings. The flags of the Allies and neutrals were flown from buildings throughout the town: every car and ricksha flew a flag: men and women of all nationalities congratulated one another on the good news and Singapore generally expressed its sense of satisfaction and relief. The public proclamation of the Armistice was made on the Esplanade in the afternoon before a mass of citizens of all nationalities, and after His Excellency the Governor had read out the terms of the Armistice, the gist was translated into Malay, Chinese, Hindustani, Punjabi, Tamil, Arabic and Singhalese. Three cheers for His Majesty the King were lustily given from thousands of throats. It was a memorable incident of a memorable event.

The minds of the Government and the public had been for some time exercised over the fact that Singapore was soon to reach the first hundredth year of its foundation as a British Settlement, and, on the 1<sup>st</sup> August, the committee, which included Dr Lim Boon Keng and Messrs Seah Liang Seah and See Teong Wah (for the Chinese community), and which had been appointed to consider and report on a scheme to commemorate the centenary of Singapore, had published its report, in which it was stated that out of nine suggestions received [558] from the public and duly considered, the committee were unanimously of opinion -

that the most suitable memorial is a scheme providing for the advancement of the education of the Colony with a view to laying securely the foundations upon which a University may in course of time be established, consisting of three stages, (1) the establishment of Technical and Higher Grade Schools, (2) the provision of Science and Arts University Colleges and (3), in the fullness of time, a University - residential, teaching and examining - with power to confer degrees in Sciences and Arts.<sup>92</sup>

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92 'Centenary of Singapore: Report on Commemoration Scheme' *Straits Times*, 16 Oct 1918, at 12.

Towards the end of the year, for the purpose of making arrangements for the fitting celebration of the centenary of Singapore on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1919, a representative committee was appointed by the Governor, including Dr Lim Boon Keng and Mr Lee Choon Guan for the Chinese community.

Towards the close of 1918 the food position in India became so acute that the Indian Government found itself unable to allow any rice to come here for re-export, and could only guarantee to give the Straits Settlements and the FMS the rice actually required for local consumption on the strict condition that no re-export was allowed. The Rangoon and the Siam rice importers had frequent interviews with Mr James, first as Colonial Secretary and later as Food Controller. The seriousness of the rice problem was quickly realised by the traders, but the Government was not quite so sympathetic as it might have been to the early queries from those traders on the subject.

The Government assurance in November 1918 was that there was no chance of a shortage of rice for consumption in Malaya and that all steps were being taken to keep the price at a reasonable figure. The price of Siam rice, which was the kind of rice that the Chinese had been accustomed to eat, had been steadily increasing from \$6 to \$15 a picul. [559] The Food Controller in January 1919 issued the following communiqué to be circulated for public information:

There is a world shortage of food-stuffs, which are very scarce and expensive. Most of the world is on rations and parts of it are starving. Malaya cannot hope to entirely escape. ... Malaya is now obtaining her normal supply of Rangoon rice, whereas other countries that usually import from Rangoon are now entirely cut off from this source of supply, and have been buying Siam and Saigon rice at any price to carry their people over at any rate till their own crops (which are very late this year) come in, and as a result the price of these rices has been forced up to a level which makes it almost impossible for the poorer classes to eat them... Every possible effort has been made to secure Malaya an adequate supply of Siam rice at a reasonable rate, and ample freight is available. Government has considered the question of buying on Government

account, but to reduce even the wholesale price of Siam rice for a single month to 60 cents per gantang or \$10 a picul would cost, at present rates, nearly 2½ million dollars per month, and scarcely relieves the situation as regards the retail consumer.<sup>93</sup>

The subsequent history of the rice crisis, of the terrible experience of the Asiatic communities during the rice-control regime and of the enormous drain on the Colony's assets, in order to relieve partly the critical situation, does not come within the scope of this work.

During the Taipusam holidays in January 1919 the Straits Chinese Football Association sent a team to Malacca to play against the Malacca Club, and also against a picked team from the Chinese and Eurasian footballers there. The visitors won the first match by four goals to nil, and secured the only goal of the second fixture. The Chinese Malacca Club looked after the comforts of the visitors, while Mr Tan Cheng Lock expressed the thanks of the Malacca Chinese to the Singapore team for having at considerable trouble [560] responded to their invitation and given them such a good exhibition of the game.

The last event left to be recorded in this work was of a unique character. The 6th February 1919 was the Centenary of Singapore. The ceremony of unveiling the memorial tablet at the base of the statue of Sir Stamford Raffles – the illustrious founder of this Settlement – re-erected in front of the Victoria Memorial Hall, in the early morning, was favoured with glorious weather. Singapore had seldom before seen such a vast assembly of her cosmopolitan population, intermingled with representatives from the other Settlements and the Federated and Unfederated Malay States. The scene that was witnessed at the ceremony was an impressive one, and it has been vividly reproduced on canvas by our local artist, Mr Low Kway Soo, who has very kindly furnished us with a photographic miniature of his painting as a fitting subject for our last illustration.

At the invitation of Mr W Peel, the Municipal President, who, on behalf of the Committee, presented the Governor with a small med-

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93 'Malaya's Rice Supply' *Singapore Free Press*, 23 Jan 1919, at 51.



Portrait of Mr Loke Yew, CMG, by Low Kway Soo

al struck in commemoration of the historic occasion, His Excellency Sir Arthur Young made an appropriate speech which concluded with these words: 'The older the world becomes, the greater will be the place assigned in history to Sir Stamford Raffles.' His Excellency then unveiled the memorial tablet, amidst great applause: and then proceeded to receive addresses from various public bodies, including three from the Chinese communities of Singapore and Penang. The ceremony was brought to an end by the depositing of wreaths from a number of public institutions and organisations, among them being Raffles Institution, Raffles Girls' School, the SCBA, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Chinese Advisory Board and the Po Leung Kuk Committee. Messrs See Teong Wah and Tan Sian Cheng<sup>94</sup> presented an address from the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce, which was worded as follows:

[561] TO HIS EXCELLENCY SIR ARTHUR HENDERSON YOUNG, KC, MG, KBE, GOVERNOR AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE STRAITS SETTLEMENTS.

May it please Your Excellency,

On the occasion of the celebration of the Centenary of this important outpost of the British Empire, which has been so aptly described as 'the Key of the East', we, the representatives of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, on behalf of the Chinese community of Singapore, desire to express our admiration of the sterling qualities, foresight and fortitude of that great Empire-builder,

94 Tan Sian Cheng was active in Chinese commercial circles, being a Director in the Chinese Commercial Bank (1912), President of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce (1917), and Chairman of Po Chiak Keng (1926) (see, 柯木林, 《新华历史人物列传》 (Singapore: EPB, 1995) at 73). Tan was also a member of the Chinese Advisory Board and a Justice of the Peace (see 'Advisory Boards' *Singapore Free Press*, 17 Mar 1917, at 7), Honorary President of Chong Cheng School (see *Straits Times*, 23 Mar 1920, at 10). The exact date of his death is unknown although it was recorded that in 1937, Tan Ean Kiam had been nominated to take Tan Sian Cheng's place on the Po Leung Kuk Committee on account of the latter's demise (see 'Po Leung Kuk Committee' *Straits Times*, 30 Oct 1937, at 10).



Sir Stamford Raffles, whose memory we have gathered here this morning to honour.

It is known to you, Sir, as it is to all of us, that it was owing to the good judgment and prescience of Sir Stamford Raffles that Singapore was added to the jewels of the British Crown, and that it is to-day not only one of the most important trading centres, but is, as Sir Stamford Raffles prophesied it would be, 'in the East what Malta is in the West'. And as the records of this acquisition prove, he clung steadfastly to his intentions and convictions despite strong opposition in high quarters and obstacles placed in his way by jealous rivals.

He founded this Settlement in no narrow-minded spirit, making the port a free one and throwing open its portals to every nationality, granting equal rights and equal opportunities to all.

We, the descendants of a great and ancient people, in consequence of his broad-minded policy and remarkable foresight, have been enabled to seek our fortunes and obtain a livelihood here in peace and security. Having regard to Singapore as we know it to be to-day – a wealthy and progressive port through which the ships of all nations pass in ever-increasing numbers and tonnage – we are proud to realise that the energy, business acumen and enterprise of our countrymen have contributed in no insignificant way to bring that great pioneer's work to the fruition he so keenly desired and confidently expected: a vast emporium of trade and a guarantee for all time for an open door for commerce between the Eastern and Western hemispheres. Let us hope that our descendants, a hundred years hence, [562] will have equal cause with us to-day for congratulation upon the great progress which marks the passing of our first Centenary.

We have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servants

For the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce,

Tan Jiak Ngoh, *President*

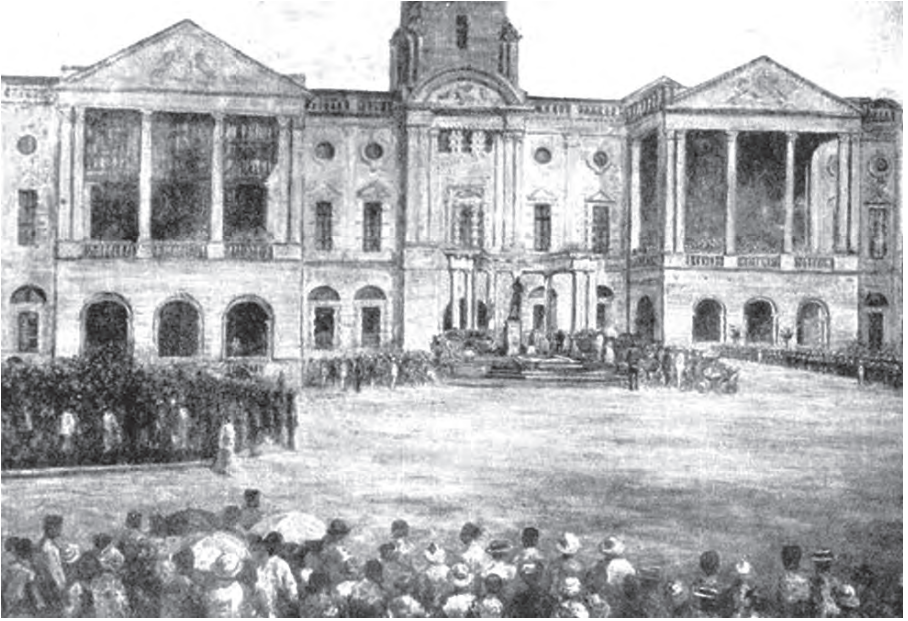
Tan Sian Cheng, *Vice-President*

Lim Teck Chye, *Secretary*

Singapore, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 1919.<sup>95</sup>

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95 'Singapore Centenary' *Singapore Free Press*, 7 Feb 1919, at 5.



Centenary Celebrations  
HE Sir Arthur Young receiving addresses  
From a painting by Low Kway Soo

The Governor in his reply said:

It is a great pleasure to receive the address of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, which expresses in appropriate words their profound admiration for the founder of Singapore. Before it was too late, there was given to Great Britain a man who saw that it was incumbent that we must have a permanent hold on our sea routes to China and the Far East. The result was the founding of this Settlement. All know that the subjects of that great and ancient Empire, China, have contributed their full share in making Singapore a prosperous and important portion of the British Empire. I thank you for this striking casket.<sup>96</sup>

The next address was presented by Messrs Koh San Hin, Tan Kheam Hock and Wee Swee Teow, who, attired in his barrister's gown, read out the text as follows:

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

We, the representatives of the Straits Chinese British Association, a body composed of Straits Chinese British subjects, have the honour to present our humble address and offer our congratulations to Your Excellency on the auspicious occasion of the Centenary of the founding of this very important Settlement of which Your Excellency is the present head.

In doing so, we venture on behalf of the Straits Chinese community of Singapore to express our heart-[563]felt thanks for the sincere admiration of the remarkable foresight and business acumen of that great Empire-builder, Sir Stamford Raffles, who, in spite of strong opposition and many obstacles, had the courage of his own convictions and founded this Settlement.

The progress made by this Settlement as an important outpost of the British Empire, and as a trading centre, has more than justified the remarkable foresight of the great founder. Moreover, we may be allowed to state that we Straits Chinese owe a deep debt of gratitude to the memory of Sir Stamford Raffles, inasmuch as his founding of this Settlement and his policy of making it a free port for all nations to reside and trade therein, which policy has been adhered and is still being adhered to, have enabled our ancestors

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96 Ibid.

and ourselves to seek our fortunes here and earn a livelihood in peace and security.

Singapore is now one of the great emporiums in the world, and as we Straits Chinese have contributed our mite in making it so, to the mutual advantage of ourselves and all concerned, we deem it our duty and privilege, in common with other communities here, to do honour to the memory of one of the greatest Empire-builders the world has ever seen.

Consequently, we beg Your Excellency to accept this humble address of ours and fervently hope that Singapore will be as prosperous as ever, and that for all time we and our descendants may have cause to be grateful to the memory of Sir Stamford Raffles for having been the means of turning Singapore into such a desirable outpost of the British Empire, and to the British Government, of which Your Excellency is the worthy representative, for its consistently benign rule.

For the SCBA,

Koh San Hin, *President*

Song Ong Siang, *Vice-President*

Wee Swee Teow, *Hon Secretary*<sup>97</sup>

The Governor replied:

When acknowledging the address from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, I referred to the share the Chinese [564] have taken in making Singapore the prosperous place it is. On the arrival here of Sir Stamford 100 years ago, there was no Chinese community – now, in this port of 300,000 inhabitants, there are over 200,000 Chinese. Soon after I came here, over twelve years ago, I learnt to admire the Chinese for their energy and independence, and for their invariable kindness and readiness in coming to the assistance of their poorer brethren. In addition to Sir Stamford's exceptional gifts to which you refer, he was a devoted and loving son and a good brother to his three sisters: that trait in Sir Stamford's character is a trait strongly possessed by the Chinese. I am glad to receive this address. The casket in which it is contained is indeed a handsome one.<sup>98</sup>

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97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

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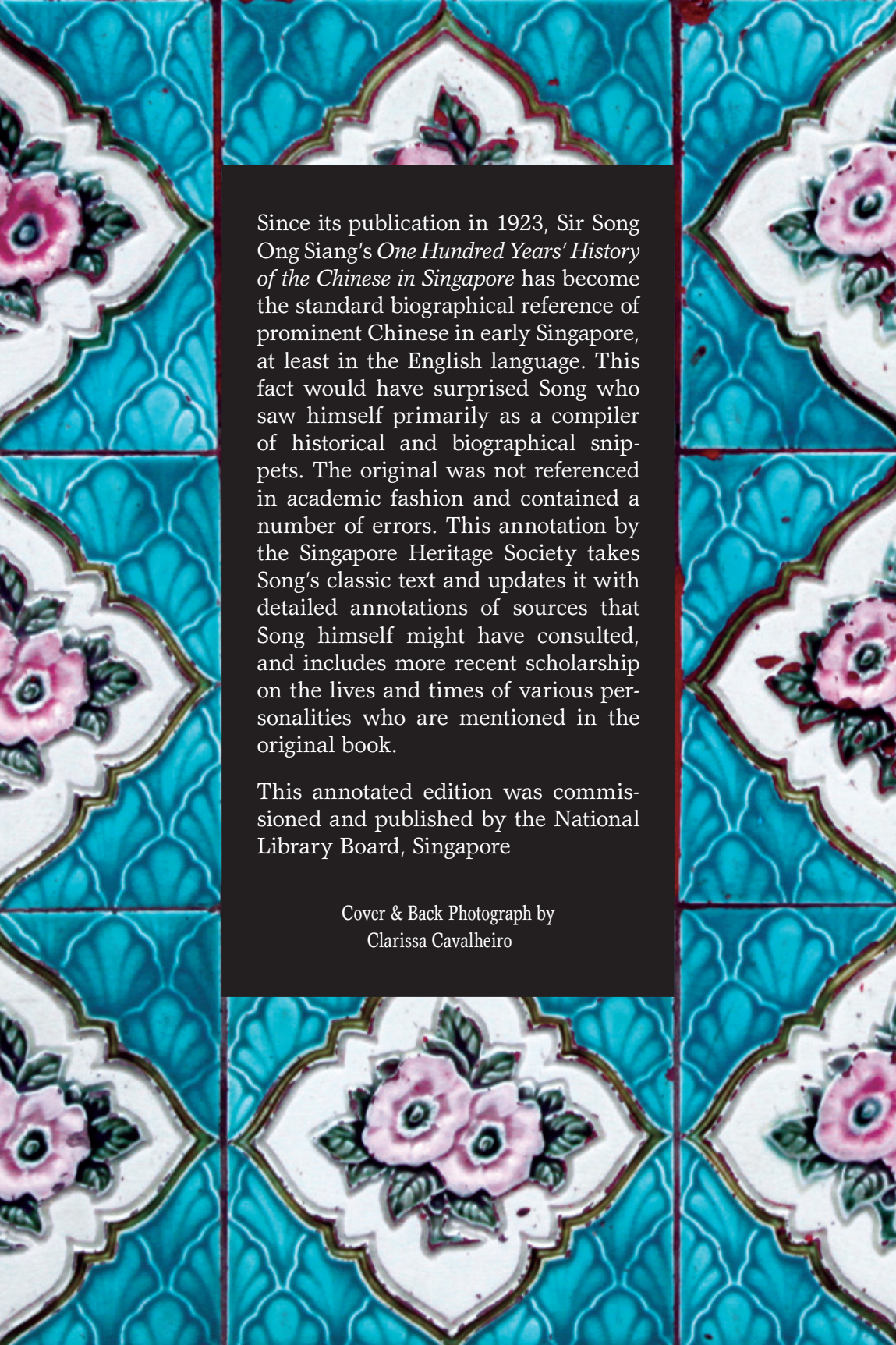
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Since its publication in 1923, Sir Song Ong Siang's *One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore* has become the standard biographical reference of prominent Chinese in early Singapore, at least in the English language. This fact would have surprised Song who saw himself primarily as a compiler of historical and biographical snippets. The original was not referenced in academic fashion and contained a number of errors. This annotation by the Singapore Heritage Society takes Song's classic text and updates it with detailed annotations of sources that Song himself might have consulted, and includes more recent scholarship on the lives and times of various personalities who are mentioned in the original book.

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