



ONE HUNDRED YEARS'  
HISTORY OF THE  
CHINESE  
IN SINGAPORE

THE ANNOTATED EDITION

SONG ONG SIANG

Tchan Yow Chuen	曾耀全	Yeo Hong Tye	杨丰泰/杨逢泰
Teo Bah Tan	张峇党/张峇丹/张华丹	Yeo Hoot Hin	杨佛兴/杨佛印
Teo Eng Hock	张永福	Yeo Hoot King	杨佛敬/杨佛经
Teo Kit	张乞	Yeo Hoot Seng	杨佛生/杨佛成
Teo Lee	张理/张礼	Yeo Kim Swee	杨金水
Toh Nya Chik	杜惹吉/杜惹舌	Yeo Koon Ho	杨坤和
Tschu, John; The Reverend John Tschu	褚约翰	Yeo Poon Seng	杨本盛
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		

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 gambler 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

<sup>21</sup> See *Singapore Free Press*, 27 Jul 1848, at 3.

<sup>22</sup> 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.

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

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.

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



Lim Nee Soon

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.