

Sun Yat Sen and His Revolutionary Comrades in Singapore

KUA Bak Lim *

Abstract

Prior to the 1911 Revolution, Dr. Sun Yat Sen (1866-1925) visited Singapore on nine occasions. During these visits, he stayed at Wanqingyuan, a luxurious private bungalow where he set up the Singapore branch of the Tong Meng Hui (TMH) to expand his revolutionary movement and plotted several uprisings in China. Wanqingyuan was regarded as one of the important historical venues for Dr. Sun's revolutionary base in Southeast Asia and his residence on his visits to Singapore. This paper examines how the Chinese community reacted to Sun's revolutionary cause during his sojourn in Singapore.

Key words: Sun Yat Sen, 1911 Revolution, Wanqingyuan, Singapore

Introduction

On Friday, 5 December 1911, the P&O *Devanha* from Europe arrived in Johnston's Pier, Singapore, having on board Dr. Sun Yat Sen, his staff and General Homer Lea, the new military adviser to the revolutionaries. A large number of local Chinese, and a few Europeans, were at the wharf to see China's "Man of the Moment" (Song, 1984: 473). That was the day when Sun stopped over at Singapore en route to China to assume the post of Provisional President of the Republic of China.

Sun looked remarkably well and was dressed in a white suit and a cap. On board to greet Sun were some of the local leaders such as Dr. S. C. Yin (1876-1958), Teo Eng Hock (1871-1957), Tan Chor Lam (1884-1971), Khoo Kay Hian (1887-1966) and Lim Nee Soon (1879-1936) (Song, 1984: 473). He came ashore to spend the night at Golden Bell Mansion which was the splendid residence of Tan Boo Liat (1874-1934) in Pender Road, Keppel Harbour. Sun briefly outlined his future plan of the campaign to the local leaders. Owing to rumours that agents of the Chinese imperial government were plotting to assassinate him, special police

* KUA Bak Lim (柯木林) is Adjunct Professor in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature, New Era University College, Malaysia. E-mail: kuabl@yahoo.com

precautions were taken to guard Sun during his short stay on shore (Song, 1984: 473). This was his last trip to Singapore, and he had never returned since then (Wang, 1959).

Prior to the 1911 Revolution, Sun had travelled far and wide to generate support to overthrow the Qing government and had stopped over in Singapore on nine occasions.¹ In four of these occasions he had stayed at Wanqingyuan (Serene Sunset Garden) where he set up the Singapore branch of TMH and plotted several uprisings in China. Wanqingyuan was regarded as one of the important historical venues for Sun's revolutionary activities (Wang, 1959; 欧阳昌大/Ouyang Chang Da, 1972; 柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2007). Located along Tai Gin Road, off Balestier Road, it was a two-storey villa built in 1902. It has since been restored and refurbished several times and now houses the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall.

Between 1900 and 1911, Sun visited Singapore on nine occasions, staying for a few days to several weeks each time. This period of interrupted sojourn in Singapore was one of the most momentous in his life as he established an overseas revolutionary base to plot the overthrow of China's millennia old imperial system. While in Singapore, Sun won over many supporters for his cause among the elite but also a few opponents. His local comrades had become historical figures who occupied a place in Sun's long revolutionary struggle. Their actions and deeds reflected the profound impact of the Chinese revolution on local society. This paper examines how the supporters and opponents in the Singapore Chinese community reacted to Sun's revolutionary cause during his sojourn in Singapore in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The Revolutionary Base moved Southwards

In 1879, Sun left his birthplace Cuiheng Village in Xiangshan County, Guangdong Province, at the age of 13 with his elder brother to Honolulu, and later to Hong Kong to study medicine. Influenced by Western education, he realized that a weak China could only be rejuvenated through regime change. The failure of the Guangzhou Uprising in 1895 saw him fleeing overseas to escape arrest by the Qing authorities. Living in self-exile abroad, he remained committed to the revolution.

In November 1895, Sun visited Kobe, Japan for the first time and founded the "Revive China Society" in Yokohama in the same year. He made 17 more visits to Kobe and would stay at Ijokaku in Kobe.² Kobe was to become the base of his earliest revolutionary activities overseas (陈德仁/Chen De Ren and 安井三吉/Yasui Miyoshi, 2002). Four years before the 1911 Revolution in 1907, Sun inexplicably moved his overseas revolutionary base from Japan to Southeast Asia and turned Singapore into his revolutionary base overseas. The reason of his move was probably political as rumours had it that the Japanese government was pressured by the Qing government to expel him. Another suggestion was that there were voices against Sun at the TMH branch of Tokyo.³

Sun's choice of Singapore as his overseas headquarters for his revolutionary struggles was justified by certain historical considerations. Strategically located at the crossroads of communication between the East and West, Singapore was known as the "premier port of call in the South Seas" during the late Qing Dynasty (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2007). The city had the largest and wealthiest Chinese community in Southeast Asia and was undoubtedly a suitable base to further the cause of the revolutionary movement (颜清湟/Yen Ching-Hwang, 1982: 112-113). Singapore had close relations with China and was where the first overseas consulate of the Qing government was established in 1877 (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2014a). As the leader of the anti-Qing revolutionary movement, Sun harboured hopes that the overseas Chinese would provide financial support for the revolutionary activities in Singapore where he could plan and launch armed uprisings in China.

Furthermore, many Ming loyalists had sought refuge in Singapore and Malaya after the failure of their anti-Manchu resistance in the waning years of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Malacca's second Kapitan Li Wei Jing (1614-1685) was among those who supported the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty and to reinstate the Ming Dynasty.⁴ The She Gong Temple (Five Tigers Shrine) in Lavender Street in Singapore still displays tablets on which the names of martyrs were engraved (李奕志/Lee Yik Chee, 1975). The Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) led by Hong Xiuquan (Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, 1814-1864) was influenced by the book *Good Words to Admonish the Age* written by Liang Yafa (Liang A-fah/梁亚发, 1789-1855), who was a trader in writing brushes and woodblock engravings in Malacca and Singapore. Thus, the seeds of revolution had long been sown in Malaya and the arrival of Sun only served to make them grow. Wanqingyuan was to bear direct witness to this episode of history (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2011a).

Chinese emigrants to Singapore and Malaya were largely from the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian where the inhabitants had long been involved in maritime activities and were open to new ideas and events. Maritime trade had led many to venture overseas to trade and even to settle down. Despite their extended periods of sojourn overseas, these emigrants maintained close cultural bonds with their ancestral villages and wished for a strong motherland to enhance their status overseas. It was not surprising then that Sun's revolutionary agenda resonated with these sentiments (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2011a).

The significance of overseas Chinese on the 1911 Revolution was manifested in the reverse flow of ideas and funds to China. These phenomena had a fundamental impact on the outcome of the revolution and the eventual political fate of China. Singapore and its community of Chinese merchants and intellectuals were to play an integral role in determining the course of modern Chinese history (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2011a). Sun was acutely aware of this fact and readily acknowledged that "Overseas Chinese are the mother of revolution" in a genuine tribute to the contributions of the Chinese overseas to the success of the revolution and creation of a new Chinese nation.

The Power of Mass Media

The revolutionary newspaper, *Thoe Lam Jit Poh*, celebrated the New Year of 1905 with a new tag bearing the inscription: “Tolerate no more the cultural devastation of our nation, and patriots must rise to recover our land!”⁵ Included too were pictures of the bell of liberty, the flag of independence and a slogan that read “Long live our countrymen and citizens”. Sun chanced upon the newspaper in Honolulu and was pleasantly surprised by its revolutionary stance and anti-Qing message and promptly spent US\$20 to get hold of 20 copies (Chen, 1967: 85). Upon making enquiries on this newspaper, he learned from Yiu Lit (You Lie), who was then in Singapore, that the Chinese in Singapore were engaged in revolutionary activities.⁶ This marked the beginning of the enduring connection between Sun and Singapore that lasted until the success of the 1911 Revolution.

When Sun first arrived in Singapore in 1900, the local Chinese community had yet to harbour any idea to overthrow the Qing Government (颜清滢/Yen Ching-Hwang, 1982: 108). It was this year too that Sun was expelled from Singapore and he lost touch with the embryonic revolutionary movement that was fermenting among the Chinese of Singapore. The chance encounter with *Thoe Lam Jit Poh* in Honolulu was to rekindle Sun’s interest in Singapore (张永福/Teo Eng Hock, 1933: 8).

The founders of *Thoe Lam Jit Poh*, Teo Eng Hock and Tan Chor Lam, were from wealthy families that were to form the backbone of Sun’s revolutionary movement in Singapore (颜清滢/Yen Ching-Hwang, 1982: 108-109). Teo was a Straits-born Chinese whose ancestors came from Raoping County in Guangdong Province (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2015b: 750). His grandfather left China for Nanyang and planted gambier and pepper in Johor, and his father, Teo Lee (1833-1899), worked as a cloth peddler and later became a commission agent and investor in real estate (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 1995: 108). By his generation, the family had attained a certain financial standing (余云/Yu Yun, 2013; 柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 1995: 108; 柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2015b: 750).

The forefathers of Tan Chor Lam, Teo’s business partner, hailed from Xiamen in Fujian Province. His father Tan Tye (1839-1898) was a well-known businessman who engaged in the import and export of general provisions and timber (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 1995: 88-89). Teo Eng Hock’s nephew Lim Nee Soon (whose mother Teo Choon Lian was Teo Eng Hock’s elder sister) was also a loyal supporter of Sun. The three men were known as “The Prominent Trio” in Singapore society (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 1995: 118-119 and 2013).

Their wealth and education had introduced Teo and Tan to new ideas. Teo was well-versed in classical poetry⁷ and Tan published political commentaries advocating reforms and renewal in the newspaper *Thien Nam Sin Pao* (《天南新报》) under the pseudonym “Young Simingzhou”. He later co-founded *Thoe Lam Jit Poh* as the mouthpiece of the revolution in Singapore (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 1995: 95). Lim Nee Soon was also Sun’s loyal follower and had distributed the propaganda materials in towns and villages of Guangdong and Fujian on

the eve of the 1911 Revolution. These materials helped to instigate anti-Qing movements including the well-known “Huanggang Uprising” in an area that straddled the border of Fujian and Guangdong. The revolutionary activists in Singapore exemplified the manner in which the reverse flow of ideas and wealth from the overseas Chinese community had made an impact on the political situation in China (Tan, 1970).

Sun’s acquaintance with these progressive individuals laid the foundation for the establishment of the Singapore Branch of Tong Meng Hui. They were quickly won over by Sun’s charisma and ideas, and accepted his leadership. They supported him financially and morally through definite actions. Teo Eng Hock offered his private villa Wanqingyuan as Sun’s anti-Qing revolutionary base (颜清煌/Yen Ching-Hwang, 1982: 109-110; 张永福/Teo Eng Hock, 1933: 9) and, through the extensive social networks of Teo and Tan, Sun befriended many other business and community leaders such as Tan Kah Kee (1874-1961) and Tan Boo Liat (1874-1934). These contacts contributed to the success of the 1911 Revolution and later helped the newly-founded Chinese Nationalist government.

That *Thoe Lam Jit Poh* played an instrumental role in bringing Sun to Singapore and subsequently enabling him to plot the overthrow of the Qing government attested to the power of the media. This role persisted into the following decade when two major Singapore Chinese newspapers, the *Lat Pau* and *Sin Kok Min Poh* engaged in a polemical battle after the 1911 Revolution. The former represented the conservative camp while the latter was a mouthpiece of the Kuomintang in Malaya. A major issue was on the question of whether the nomination of Sun as the President of the Canton (Guangdong) Government was legal and whether it was advisable for him to accept the nomination (《叻报》/*Lat Pau*, 11 May 1921). *Lat Pau* stated in an editorial that it was unwise for Sun to become the President, which immediately provoked a rebuttal from *Sin Kok Min Poh* and thereupon ignited a war of words. But what transpired was not relevant to the subject of discussion in this study.

Revolutionary Base and the Peripheral Organizations

That Wanqingyuan was associated with the 1911 Revolution and hence the modern history of China was due to fortuitous circumstances. As to why Sun stayed at Wanqingyuan was due to the fact that it was the property of the supporters of the revolution, Teo Eng Hock and his brother, and that it was located in an isolated area where gatherings would not attract too much attention to arouse suspicion. Teo and Tan took care of Sun’s wellbeing and living expenses during his sojourn in Singapore (Tan, 1970).

During Sun’s first visit to Singapore in February 1906, the TMH had only been established in Tokyo for a few months earlier in August 1905 (Wang, 1959; Sun Yat-Sen Research Center, 1981). It only took him a few days after putting up at Wanqingyuan to establish the Singapore branch of the TMH (颜清煌/Yen Ching-Hwang, 1982: 111; 杜南发/Toh Lam Huat, 2011: 10-17; 张永福/Teo Eng Hock, 1933: 10; Tan, 1970). Thus was the birth of the earliest revolutionary organization of the Chinese in Southeast Asia (Tan, 1970).

In the three years that followed, Wanqingyuan became more than a venue where Singapore revolutionaries gathered, it was also the headquarter for Chinese revolutionaries in Southeast Asia. It was here that other prominent individuals such as Hu Han-min, Wang Jingwei (Wang Chin-wei) and Huang Xing congregated to plot the downfall of China's millennia-old feudal autocracy. It was also the place where the constitution of the TMH was drafted, and which later became the model for subsequent branches in Southeast Asia (张永福/Teo Eng Hock, 1933: 12-13). Plans for carrying out several well-known uprisings in Huanggang (May 1907), Zhennanguan (December 1907) and Hekou (April 1908) (Tan, 1970).

Apart from Wanqingyuan, Sun also held meetings at Tan Chor Lam's timber shop at No. 327 and Teo Eng Hock's textile shop at No. 105, both along Beach Road. After December 1908, Sun stayed in the guesthouses at No. 85 Club Street and No. 77 Cecil Street. The former still stands and is now a French restaurant, while the latter was demolished in the 1930s (Wang, 1959: 61 and 64).

The Thong Tek Che Poh Soh Reading Club, originally located at No. 51 Armenian Street before being relocated to Cantonment Road, has a plaque bearing its name that was written by Sun. The plaque now serves as a historical artifact ⁸ and, together with buildings in various places have become Singapore's heritage sites, all bearing witness to an important chapter in the modern history of China.

The formation of the Thong Tek Che Poh Soh had the blessing of Sun who also suggested the English title of "United Chinese Library". The purpose of the Reading Club was to make available cultural and educational reading materials to propagate the cause of the revolutionary movement and to recruit new members. Directly and indirectly, Sun and his revolutionary vision had helped to raise the political consciousness of the Chinese community in Singapore and the Malay States. In the 1930s, it was this heightened sense of patriotism that motivated the local Chinese community to contribute material and financial assistance towards China's war of resistance against Japan (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2015c: 11).

The first such reading club was established as early as 1903. Known as the Sin Chew Reading Club, it was founded by the Rev J.A.B. Cook, a member of the Presbyterian Church, and Tay Sek Tin (1872-1944), and was attached to a church to preach Christianity. Sun adapted this concept to publicize the revolution and to liaise with like-minded activists. He also endorsed the use of the theatre to popularize his revolutionary thoughts and organized public talks at a Cantonese theatre in Kreta Ayer at the end of the opera performance (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2015c: 12).

To reach out to the Chinese community who spoke different dialects, Sun resorted to using Cantonese or Mandarin, but not English. He felt that Chinese characters rather than English words were easier to remember and more effective in conveying his messages (张永福/Teo Eng Hock, 1933: 97). On occasions, translators were used during their meetings in Singapore (林义顺/Lim Nee Soon, 2015).

Revolution and Anti-Revolution Ideologies

At least three forces were present in Singapore that worked against the revolutionary movement. These were the Consul-General of the Qing Dynasty in Singapore, Kang Youwei's (1858-1927) reformist faction, and the Straits Settlements government.⁹ Filed in the Qing government's confidential records on Sun's activities in Singapore is an undated telegram sent by the watchful Chinese Consul in Singapore, Tso Ping-lung (Zuo Binglong, 1850-1924), on the movements of Sun, a copy of which is preserved in Wanqingyuan:

Telegram from the Consul General in Singapore to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
(The fifth day of the first month of the lunar year).

On the 24th day of the 12th month of the lunar calendar, Sun Wen arrived in Singapore and stayed at the home of Teo Eng Hock, a Teochew. The Governor is aware of this but raises no objection. Agents have been sent to keep watch on his activities. The ignorant are persuaded by him while the rich businessmen are unmoved. Apart from keeping a close surveillance on the man, it would be good to have him deported as soon as possible.
Your humble servant,
Ping-lung

A native of Shenyang, Liaoning Province, Tso Ping-lung was the first Chinese Consul of Singapore, serving on two occasions in 1881-1891 and again in 1907-1910. One of his major assignments was obviously to keep track of and report on every movement of Sun during his sojourn in Malaya, though his efforts did not bring about the deportation of his quarry.

Another hostile force against Sun originated from Kang Youwei and his faction. The collapse of his Hundred Days' Reform saw him and his fellow reformists visiting Singapore in 1900 and on six other occasions to advance their reform and royalist agenda (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2015b: 190). The wealthy businessman Khoo Seok Wan (1874-1941) was Kang's main supporter. He founded the *Thien Nan Shin Pao* in 1898 and became its chief editor. He often penned editorials in support of the reform movement as a solution to China's problems. In 1900, he donated 250,000 Straits dollars in support of the royalists to launch an uprising at Hankou. As Kang had withheld the donation, uprising was postponed several times and eventually ended in failure. The furious Khoo thereupon declared in *Thien Nan Shin Pao* to break off relations with Kang.¹⁰ Despite being subsequently influenced by the democratic revolutionary movement and having established friendship with several revolutionaries, he remained unimpressed by Sun and was critical of him even after the success of the 1911 Revolution (李元謹/Lee Guan Kin, 2001: 224-226). The presence and activities of Sun and Kang had an impact on the local Chinese. Their competing ideologies had a divisive influence on the local Chinese community, while at the same time aroused its awareness of nationalism in China (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2015b: 190).

Support for Kang's reform movement quickly vaporized after China lost the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). Overseas Chinese thus turned their attention to Sun's anti-Qing movement. After the humiliating defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese war (1894), Sun was to pin more hope on launching his revolution from an overseas base. It was in this context that Wanqingyuan came to play a relevant role in China's 1911 revolution (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2014b: 80-82).

Sun's presence in Singapore was also dependent on the attitude of the Straits Settlements government. Its Governor took orders from the Colonial or Foreign Office in London. The Straits Settlements government was relatively tolerant of Sun's presence as it was sympathetic to the Chinese revolutionaries' cause, but found it unacceptable that the Straits Settlements had been used as a base for anti-Qing activities, besides having to be mindful of the possible repercussions on the local Chinese as well as the likelihood of disturbance of peace and stability (李励图/Lee Lai To, 1986). While the Colonial Office and Foreign Office might not have fully agreed with the decisions of the Straits Government with respect to Sun, it also did nothing to contradict those decisions (李励图/Lee Lai To, 1986). Sun's sojourn in Singapore coincided with the governorship of Alexander Swettenham (December 1899 to April 1904) and John Anderson (April 1904 to September 1911). Both had the discretion to act independently but in a way that also reflected the thinking in London (李励图/Lee Lai To, 1986).

Sun's contact with the Straits Government occurred in July 1900 over the detention of his two Japanese friends in Singapore, in an incident that could be traced back to 1898. After the failure of the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898, Kang Yuwei had fled to Hong Kong. In view of Hong Kong's proximity to China, Kang was advised by the British Foreign Office to leave for Singapore, another British colony, where he arrived on 2 February 1900. The Qing government pressed for Kang's expulsion from Singapore, but the request was turned down by Swettenham, the Acting Governor of the Straits Settlements. The Straits Government placed Kang under police protection to prevent his arrest or assassination by the Qing government. The British upheld its tradition of granting asylum to those fleeing persecution, and were also sympathetic towards Kang and his reform movement (李励图/Lee Lai To, 1986).

Kang's presence in Singapore prompted Sun to instruct his Japanese friends Miyazaki Toten (宫崎寅藏), Kiyofuji Koshichiro (清藤幸七郎) and Uchida Ryohei (内田良平) to make a trip there. Miyazaki Toten had proceeded to Hong Kong to help an exiled Kang to gain political refuge in Japan. Sun's intention was to forge a united front with Kang to raise funds in support of a planned uprising in Huizhou to overthrow the Qing government.¹¹

Upon their arrival in Singapore on 29 June 1900, Miyazaki Toten and Kiyofuji Koshichiro sought a meeting with Kang. Kang not only evaded them but also made a report to the British authorities by claiming that they were assassins dispatched by the Empress Dowager Cixi (慈禧太后). A day after the police report was lodged on 5 July, the British Governor ordered an investigation on the two Japanese. The police search recovered two Samurai swords and 27,000 Straits dollars in bank drafts and some cash. Both were then placed under arrest (李励图/Lee Lai To, 1986; Tan, 1970).

The arrest of the Japanese led Sun, accompanied by a few Japanese and a European, to travel to Singapore from Hong Kong under a pseudonym and arrived on 9 July. He contacted his schoolmates Dr. Wu Tsieh-moh and Dr. Huang Kang-chu who sought the help of a Legislative Council member Dr. Lim Boon Keng (1869-1957). The final outcome of the incident was the deportation and a five-year re-entry ban of Miyazaki Toten and his group. The Straits Government was acting on the need to safeguard the personal safety of Kang Yuwei and to prevent any trouble that the activities of the Japanese men might have caused. Furthermore, the government's belief that the revolutionaries might be armed and using Singapore as a base for anti-Qing activities might lead to diplomatic problems between London and Peking (李励图/Lee Lai To, 1986).

Governor Swettenham's view of Sun was that the latter was a well-known Chinese revolutionary. During his brief stay in Singapore under an assumed name, he met the Governor, the police authorities and persons who could help him to release the two Japanese. Swettenham felt that Sun could not do much harm in the Straits Settlements, and he had yet to realize the potential local support to support his revolution (CO 273/357, 26 July 1900; CO 273/267, 23 January 1901).

Sun's visit to Singapore between 1905 and 1911 were common knowledge to the Straits Government (Wang, 1959; 颜清湟/Yen Ching-Hwang, 1982: 118; 张永福/Teo Eng Hock, 1933: 12-13). The monitoring of Sun's activities by the police was not unusual. From 1906 and especially during Sun's fourth visit, he was "invited" to present himself at the Chinese Protectorate. The Government also deployed a team of police to Wanqingyuan to "safeguard" him (张永福/Teo Eng Hock, 1933: 13).

In early 1908 during Sun's eighth visit, the Consul-General of the Qing Government, Tso Ping-lung, had sought the expulsion of Sun from the Straits Settlements (*The Straits Times*, 17 February 1908). Governor Anderson thereupon did request Sun for a "meeting" and made it known that Sun would face expulsion if he were to use Singapore as a base to subvert the Qing Government (CO273/336, 5 March 1908). Anderson was aware that Sun's stay in Singapore was not entirely safe as the Qing Government had offered a reward of 20,000 Straits dollars for his arrest. As Sun faced the possibility of assassination, Anderson saw no reason to expel Sun unless his activities jeopardized the relations between China and Great Britain. The proper course of action by Anderson was for the police to monitor Sun's movement and to avert undesirable incidents (李励图/Lee Lai To, 1986).

The handling of Sun's case by the two Straits Settlements Governors of the day was essentially similar. Sun's presence in Singapore was safeguarded as long as he was not a cause of trouble or diplomatic concern arising from his overt attempts to subvert the Qing Dynasty, or if he did not cause tension between Britain and China. On 1 November 1910, when Sun gave a provocative address in Penang to incite support for his anti-Qing revolution (CO 273/359, 29 December 1910), as reported in the *Penang Sin Poe*, he was indeed asked to leave. On 7

December 1910, assuming the name of Chung Lan, Sun departed as a second class passenger on board a German vessel (CO 273/359, 29 December 1910) .

Three other well-known personalities who were known to Sun and who retained contact with the Kuomintang Government after the success of the 1911 Revolution were Tan Boo Liat, Lim Boon Keng and Tan Kah Kee.

Tan Boo Liat was a member of the Chinese TMH and a good friend of Sun's who advocated the overthrow of the Qing Government.¹² After the success of the 1911 Revolution, Tan Boo Liat was elected pro tem president of the first meeting of the fund raising committee for the Hokkien Protection Fund in November 1911, and Thien Hock Keng Temple then became the headquarter of the Fund. The total sum collected over a ten-month period amounted to 120,000 Straits dollars. On 15 December 1911, Sun stayed at Tan Boo Liat's luxury apartment Golden Bell Mansion while en route to Nanking to assume the post of the Provisional President of the Republic of China. In 1913, among more than a hundred staff of the Singapore Kuomintang, Tan Boo Liat and Lim Nee Soon were elected as vice-ministers.

Lim Boon Keng was concerned about the situation in China and had his plaits cut well before the 1911 Revolution.¹³ He was against foot-binding and opium smoking, both were subjects of intense controversy in the Chinese community. It was through his mediation with the British authority in 1900 that led to the release from detention and later deportation of Miyazaki Torazo, a Japanese friend of Sun's. In February 1906, when Sun set up the Singapore Branch of TMH, Lim was among the first to join as a member. In early 1912, Lim was invited by Sun to Nanking to assume the position of Minister of Health of the Provisional Government and to act as his medical advisor. When Sun resigned from the post of Provisional President, the government was moved to Peking, and Lim Boon Keng returned to Singapore to resume his medical practice and educational pursuits. In July 1921, he became the inaugural President of Amoy University (Xiamen University) and served for 16 years until 1937 after laying the foundation of the university for its future development.

Tan Kah Kee first met Sun at the Wanqingyuan in 1909, and joined the Chinese TMH in 1910 together with his brother Tan Keng Hean.¹⁴ After the 1911 Revolution, Tan Kah Kee held the post of Chairman of the Singapore Hokkien Security Committee, and donated 200,000 Straits dollars to Sun and the Fujian provincial government. From 1910, he served as a committee member of the Singapore Chinese Trade Chamber on two occasions. In 1923, he was the Chairman of the Ee Hoe Hean Club, and established the newspaper *Nanyang Siang Pau*. He committed his resources for the welfare of the people in China, and devoted wholeheartedly to promote education. For a period of 16 years from the founding of Amoy University in 1921 till 1936, he donated about four million Straits dollars to support the university.

The impact of Sun's revolutionary activities in Singapore had further divided the Chinese community into opposing "Revolutionary" and "Royalists" factions, in addition to the

then existing “Pro-China” and “Pro-Britain” factions. In the early twentieth century, the *Union Times* and *Chong Shing Yit Pao* were often engaged in polemical debates in support of the revolutionary movement or royalist cause in a reflection of the vigour of the ideological positions of different sections of Chinese society (Chen, 1967: 86-110).

On the other hand, the influence of Sun also stimulated interest in the reading culture. Several reading clubs to promote the revolution such as the Thong Tek Che Poh Soh were set up by the Teochew community, the Kaiming Reading Club by the Cantonese, and Tong Wen Reading Club by the Hainanese (张永福/Teo Eng Hock, 1933: 92). The overall effect was to raise the political awareness of the Chinese, and subsequently to spur the Chinese of Singapore and the Malay States to resist against Japanese aggression in 1930s and early the 1940s.

The Wanqingyuan Heritage

Wanqingyuan is a villa with a T-shaped floor plan and was built in the Palladian style that was popular in Europe and prevalent in Singapore during the period. The building design and layout featured architectural elements from both the East and West (橡胶历史文物研究小组/Sub-Committee on the Historical Artefacts of the Rubber Industry, 1971: 21; John Harris, 1982: 11). Its beauty and character lie in its symmetry, wide corridors and large windows designed for tropical living, which offer good ventilation and protection from the elements. This architectural design was in vogue then as it catered to the aesthetic taste of many wealthy families who built their houses in this manner (Beamish and Ferguson, 1955: 19 and 117).

Teo Eng Hock sold Wanqingyuan on 4 August 1910, a year before the Wuchang Uprising of 1911 that brought down the Qing Dynasty. The villa thereafter fell into neglect and lost much of its former grandeur. It was not until 1937 that six Chinese businessmen including Lee Kong Chian and Tan Ean Kiam collectively acquired the villa from an Indian merchant owner (陈丁辉/Tan Teng Phee, 2013). Extensive renovations were carried out to restore the building to become a memorial hall dedicated to the memory of Sun who had passed away in 1925. When Singapore fell to the Japanese in 1941, the villa was turned into a Japanese communications base. The surrender of the Japanese in 1946 led to another renovation to render the villa into the office of the Kuomintang in Singapore until 1951. It faded from public memory again until 1966 when the directors of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce commissioned a fourth round of rebuilding to commemorate the centenary of Sun’s birth (橡胶历史文物研究小组/Sub-Committee on the Historical Artefacts of the Rubber Industry, 1971: 23-25).

In view of the historical significance of Wanqingyuan, it was gazetted as a national monument by the Preservation of Monuments Board (now the Preservation of Sites and Monuments) in 1994. Two years later, it was officially renamed “Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall”. Restoration and expansion works in 1997-1999 turned the villa into a two-storey structure in order to accommodate exhibitions and audio-visual displays (莫美颜/Mok Mei Yan, 1997). The final round of extension works in 2009 by the National Heritage

Board of Singapore to enlarge both the building floor and exhibition areas has changed the appearance of the building (《联合早报》/Lianhe Zaobao, 30 September 2011).¹⁵

The reopening of the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall in 2011 coincided with the centenary of the 1911 Revolution. The Memorial Hall now puts on display rare artefacts, holds special exhibitions, and encourages educational and outreach initiatives to promote understanding and appreciation of Singapore's role in the 1911 Revolution.

The history of Wanqingyuan constitutes an important episode of the history of Singapore. Research efforts on Sun conducted by China and Taiwan scholars cannot ignore the role of Singapore because of its unique position vis-à-vis the 1911 Revolution. Recent efforts by the Memorial Hall to collect and compile literature and documents have enriched the collection of exhibits.¹⁶ The reprinting of relevant research writings relating to Wanqingyuan has helped to turn it into an overseas research centre on the studies of Sun Yat Sen and the 1911 Revolution. It has also contributed to the special subject of "Nanyang Studies" (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2011b).

The 1911 Revolution was a mass movement led by Chinese intellectuals in their search for a political system that suited the prevalent conditions of China. It was a tortuous and painful path to take. The failure of the reformation movement initiated by a section of Qing officials reinforced the idea that a revolution was the only alternative to replace the then political morbidity of China. The success of the 1911 Revolution was a defining moment in the search of an "appropriate political system for China". The Communist Revolution that followed was a social revolution aimed at restructuring society. In the 30 years of hardships, trial and error between 1949 and 1978, China has eventually forged a unique path of nation building through "reform and opening up". The latest episode that began 40 years ago has enabled China to develop and modernize its economy in a process that was sparked off by the 1911 Revolution. It has also left a legacy of historical enlightenment for the Chinese people (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 2011a).

Glossary of Chinese Names, Events and Places

1911 Revolution	辛亥革命
<i>Chong Shing Yit Pao</i>	《中兴日报》
Chung Lan	钟蓝
Cuiheng Village	翠亨村
Ee Hoe Hean Club	怡和轩俱乐部
Empress Dowager Cixi	慈禧太后
Golden Bell Mansion	金钟大厦
Hekou	河口
Hong Xiuquan (Hung Hsiu-ch'uan)	洪秀全
Honolulu	檀香山

Huang Kang-chu	黄康衢
Huanggang	黄冈
Huanggang Uprising	黄冈起义
Huang Xing	黄兴
Hu Han-min	胡汉民
Hundred Days' Reform	戊戌政变
Ijokaku	移情阁
Kaiming Reading Club	开明书报社
Kang Yuwei	康有为
Khoo Kay Hian	邱继显
Khoo Seok Wan	邱菽园
Kiyofuji Koshichiro	清藤幸七郎
<i>Lat Pau</i>	《叻报》
Lee Kong Chian	李光前
<i>Lianhe Zaobao</i>	《联合早报》
Liang Yafa (Liang A-fah)	梁亚发
Lim Boon Keng	林文庆
Lim Nee Soon	林义顺
Miyazaki Toten	宫崎寅藏
<i>Nanyang Siang Pau</i>	《南洋商报》
<i>Penang Sin Poe</i>	《檳城新报》
Raoping County, Guangdong Province	广东省饶平县
Revive China Society	兴中会
Reformist faction	维新派
<i>Sin Kuo Min Poh</i>	《新国民报》
Sun Yat Sen	孙中山
Tan Boo Liat	陈武烈
Tan Chor Lam	陈楚楠
Tan Ean Kiam	陈延谦
Tan Kah Kee	陈嘉庚
Tan Keng Hean	陈敬贤
Tan Tye	陈泰
Tay Sek Tin	郑聘廷
Teo Choon Lian	张春莲
Teo Eng Hock	张永福
Teo Lee	张礼
Thong Tek Che Poh Soh Reading Club	同德书报社
Tong Meng Hui	中国同盟会
Tong Wen Reading Club	同文书报社

<i>Thien Nam Sin Pao</i>	《天南新报》
<i>Thien Nan Jit Pao</i>	《天南日报》
<i>Thoe Lam Jit Poh</i>	《图南日报》
Tso Ping-lung (Zuo Binglong)	左秉隆
Uchida Ryohei	内田良平
<i>Union Times</i>	《总汇报》
Wang Jingwei (Wang Chin-wei)	汪精卫
Wanqingyuan	晚晴园
Wu Tsieh-moh	吴杰模
Xiangshan County	香山县
Yin, S. C.	殷雪村
Yiu Lit (You Lie)	尤列
Young Simingzhou	思明洲少年
Zhennanguan	镇南关

Notes

- For research into eight of Dr. Sun Yat Sen's visits to Singapore, see Wang Gungwu, Sun Yat-sen and Singapore, *Journal of the South Seas Society*, XV, Pt 2 (December 1959): 55-68. However, according to Toh Lam Huat's research which is backed by historical evidence, in the autumn/winter (October/November) of 1905, Dr. Sun stopped over in Singapore en route to Europe from Japan. He stayed for nearly two weeks on this previously undocumented visit. Therefore, he should have visited Singapore nine times. These occasions were:
1st visit: 9 to 12 July 1900, Dr. Sun stayed four days at the Raffles Hotel;
2nd visit: Early July 1905, Dr. Sun stopped over for one day and spent the night on board of his ship;
3rd visit: October/November 1905, Dr. Sun stayed at Wanqingyuan for about two weeks (based on new information obtained);
4th visit: 16 February 1906, Dr. Sun stayed at Wanqingyuan for two weeks;
5th visit: Early July 1906, Dr. Sun stopped over for half a month at Wanqingyuan;
6th visit: Late March 1907, Dr. Sun stayed for a few days at No. 111 Orchard Road in Tanglin;
7th visit: March 1908 to May 1909, Dr. Sun stayed in Singapore for ten and a half months, during which he travelled north to places such as Penang and Bangkok to conduct his revolutionary activities. In December 1908, Dr. Sun moved out of Wanqingyuan and lodged at two hotels for the rest of his stay in Singapore. One was at No. 85 Club Street and the other at No. 77 Cecil Street;
8th visit: 11 July 1910, Dr. Sun stopped over for a week and stayed at No. 77 Cecil Street;
9th visit: 15 December 1911, Dr. Sun stopped over for one day and resided at Tan Boo Liat's Golden Bell Mansion.
(compiled from 张永福/Teo Eng Hock, 1933; Wang, 1959; Tan, 1970; 杜南发/Toh Lam Huat, 2011; 橡胶历史文物研究小组/Sub-Committee on the Historical Artefacts of the Rubber Industry, 1971).
- Ijokaku, located in Hyogo Prefecture in Kobe, is the only museum in Japan that is dedicated to the commemoration of Dr. Sun Yat Sen. It was originally owned by Wu Jin Tang (1855-1926), a Chinese merchant active in Kobe, who named it "Shokai Villa". In early 1915, a Chinese-style octagonal and three storey building was built on the east side of Shokai Villa and named "Ijokaku". However, as the

building appears to be hexagonal, it has been generally called the “Rokkaku-do (hexagonal building) in Maiko” by the locals. On 14 March 1913, when Dr. Sun Yat Sen visited Kobe, prominent local Chinese businessmen living in Kobe held a luncheon at Shokai Villa to welcome him. In November 1983, the Kobe Overseas Chinese Association, which had been managing “Ijokaku”, donated it to the Hyogo Prefecture. The local government started to renovate the building and it was opened to the public as the Sun Yat Sen Memorial Hall on 12 November 1984, the anniversary of Dr. Sun’s birthday. In December 1993, its architecture was registered by Hyogo Prefecture as a prefectural important tangible cultural property. In March 1994, due to the construction of Akashi Kaikyo Bridge, the building was taken apart and rebuilt at its present location, 200 metres southeast of where it originally stood. On 31 October 2015, the author presented a seminar at Ijokaku.

- 3 When the Japanese cabinet was reshuffled in 1907, pressure from the Qing government led to Sun’s eventual deportation from Japan. There were also voices against Sun from the Tokyo Branch of the Chinese Alliance. Subsequently, Sun conducted his revolutionary activities in Southeast Asia especially in Singapore where its strategic location and the attitude of Straits Settlements government offered more congenial conditions for the pursuit of his political agenda.
- 4 Li Wei Ching @ Li Tsun Chang was a native Jiaheli (now Xiamen) in Fujian Province, and lived in the late Ming to early Qing period. To escape Manchu rule, he migrated to Malacca and became a successful businessman. After his appointment as the Chinese Kapitan by the Dutch colonial government, he purchased Bukit Cina as a burial ground for the Chinese. He was buried at Bukit Cina where a tombstone erected in 1685, the 24th year of Emperor Kangxi’s reign, displayed a plaque to commemorate his deeds.
- 5 This inscription originated from a poem by the Taiping Rebellion general Shi Da Kai (1831-1863). Teo Eng Hock amended it to serve as a catchphrase of *Thoe Lam Jit Poh* to publicize the revolution.
- 6 Sun Yat Sen’s contact in Singapore was Yiu Lit (You Lie or Yau Lit, 1866-1936), who was one of “The Four Desperadoes”. When Sun was studying medicine in Hong Kong in 1887, he spent much of his time after school advocating a revolution in China. Yau Lit had fled to Singapore in early 1901 after the abortive Huizhou Uprising in October 1900. He then founded the Chung Wo Tong Society to continue his anti-Qing activities and had raised the “Blue Sky, White Sun” flag used by the Huizhou revolutionary troops as a symbol of his movement. Yau was then a rather well-known physician practising medicine at Upper Pickering Street and specialized in the treatment of venereal diseases and other chronic ailments. He regularly mailed copies of *Thoe Lam Jit Poh* to Dr. Sun.
- 7 Teo Eng Hock’s *Nanyang and the Founding of the Republic* (《南洋与创立民国》) contains many of his poems.
- 8 According to Cham Seng Yin, the then President of the United Chinese Library (Thong Tek Che Poh Soh), staff members risked their lives during the Japanese Occupation to hide the plaque that bore Dr. Sun Yat Sen’s inscription to preserve it for posterity.
- 9 Singapore, Penang and Malacca were administered as the Straits Settlements from 1826 to 1946.
- 10 Khoo Seok Wan openly declared his loyalty to the Qing Government in *Thien Nan Shin Pao* on 22 October 1901 to signal a formal breakup with the Reformist.
- 11 After the failure of the Guangzhou Uprising in 1895, the Xing Zhong Hui (Revive China Society) planned a new anti-Qing uprising in Huizhou on a relatively large scale. On 8 October 1900, Xing Zhong Hui member Zheng Shi Liang was tasked by Dr. Sun to lead more than 600 people in revolt at Sanzhoutian in Huizhou. As Dr. Sun was refused permission to land in Taiwan by the Japanese Governor-General and Zheng’s men were running out of ammunition, the uprising ended in failure and Zheng led some of his followers to seek refuge in Hong Kong.

- 12 Originally from Haiden County, Zhangzhou in Fujian Province, Tan Boo Liat was one of the Directors (from 1897 to 1916) of Thien Hock Keng Temple, the supreme organization of the Chinese community in Singapore. His election to lead the Thien Hock Keng Temple was hailed by the local Chinese press which described him as an “excellent youth” and an “outstanding talent”. Little was heard of him after 1916 when he retired from Thien Hock Keng Temple. He returned to China in 1932 and became a member of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee. Passed away two years later at the age of 60, his remains were brought back to Singapore for burial (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 1995: 83 and 2012: 71-72).
- 13 A native of Xiamen in Fujian Province, Lim Boon Keng studied medicine in Great Britain under the Queen’s Scholarship. He practised medicine in Singapore, and was active in social activities. He was a scholar cum educationist and sat in the Singapore Legislative Assembly as a Chinese Counselor, member of the City Council, advisory board of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and served as the Vice-President of Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce. He was also involved in the early rubber industry and actively promoted social custom reforms as well as social welfare programmes. He received the award of Justice of Peace and lived a colourful life that was intricately linked to the history of Singapore Chinese, the 1911 Revolution and Xiamen University for which he was the inaugural President. Despite his Victorian education and spending half of his life in a colonial milieu, his achievements in a diverse field of intellectual, social and political endeavours are nothing short of remarkable (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 1995: 119-120 and 2015b: 745).
- 14 Tan Kah Kee was a prominent entrepreneur, educationist, philanthropist, and a social activist. Born in Tongan County of Fujian Province, he came to Singapore to assist his father in running his rice trade. He started his own business in 1904 and built up an enterprise with a capital of 12 million Straits dollars by 1925 and was known as the “Rubber King” of Malaya. Bankruptcy in 1936 did not deter him from his concern for the future of China. During the war of resistance against the Japanese, he led the Nanyang Federation of China Relief Fund in fundraising and shipped large quantities of military supplies and daily necessities to China. He organized a team of 3,200 mechanics from Malaya in logistic backup along the Burma Road during World War Two. He settled down in China in 1950, was appointed to various posts in the new People’s Republic of China, and passed away in Beijing on 12 August 1961 (柯木林/Kua Bak Lim, 1995: 96 and 2012: 91-92).
- 15 The area of Wanqingyuan was extended by 360 square metres with the purchase of an adjacent piece of land by the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to bring the total area to 3,119.62 square metres.
- 16 Thanks to the foresight of the Singapore revolutionaries, large quantities of documents had been preserved to prevent this episode of history from fading into oblivion.

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