

founded The Oversea-Chinese Bank Ltd. Lim was also involved in tin, shipping and other businesses and was a key founder of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce in 1906.

Last Years 1937-1957

Lim Boon Keng returned to Singapore in 1937 after resigning from Amoy University. Back in Singapore, Lim founded and chaired the Straits Chinese China Relief Fund Committee of Singapore, to support China in her war efforts against the Japanese. In late February 1942, when the Japanese invaded Singapore, they appointed Lim as president of the Overseas Chinese Association, which was assigned to raise a \$50 million 'gift' for the Japanese. The Japanese also appointed Lim Chinese consul general in Singapore and Chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

Lim pretended to support the Japanese Military Administration but actually resorted to passive resistance. He hardly took part in the activities of the Overseas Chinese Association, and was drunk or pretended to be drunk most of the time. After the war, he was exonerated from all blame by the British authorities.

Lim Boon Keng died on 1 January 1957. He was survived by his second wife, Grace Yin Pek Ha. His first marriage had been to Margaret Wong Tuan Keng, daughter of Wong Nai Siong and they



had four sons: Robert, Francis, Walter and John. His second marriage produced two children: daughter Ena and son Peng Han. Another extra-marital liaison produced Lim Peng Thiam who also became a doctor.

Acknowledgements

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林文庆博士基金

Settlement of
Dr Lim Boon Keng

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Lim Boon Keng: A Life to Remember

[1869 - 1957]

Photo source: Teh Guat Kheng
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Exhibition Venue

Level 9 Promenade, National Library

Date:

Wed 24 Jan - Sun 18 Mar 2007,
10 am to 9 pm daily

Guided Tours

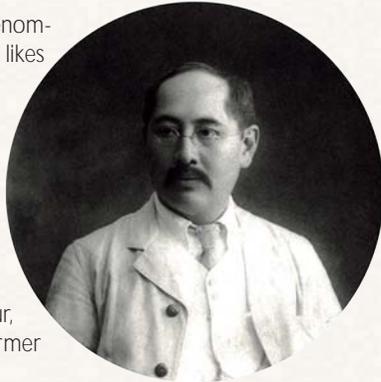
From Thur 25 Jan 2007
at 11 am and 2 pm daily

Closed on Public Holidays
Free Admission

Lim Boon Keng: A Life to Remember

Introduction

Dr Lim Boon Keng was a phenomenon. He was a polymath the likes of which Singapore has never seen and is unlikely to see again. A brilliant scholar, Lim won a Queen's Scholarship to study medicine at Edinburgh University. During his long and eventful life, Lim was medical doctor, legislator, scholar, educator, entrepreneur, community leader, social reformer and philanthropist.



This exhibition is held in conjunction with the launch of the reprint of Dr Lim's seminal work, *The Chinese Crisis from Within* to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Dr Lim's death in January 1907.

Early Life & Education

Lim Boon Keng was born the third son of Lim Thean Geow on 18 October 1869 in Singapore. His mother died when he was three and by aged 12, he was orphaned. Lim was educated at the Cross Street Government School and then at Raffles Institution where he proved himself an exceptional scholar. In 1887, Lim became the first Chinese to win the Queen's Scholarship and proceeded to Scotland to study medicine at the University of Edinburgh. Lim graduated with first class honours in August 1892, winning the Atholl Medal for his stellar performance.

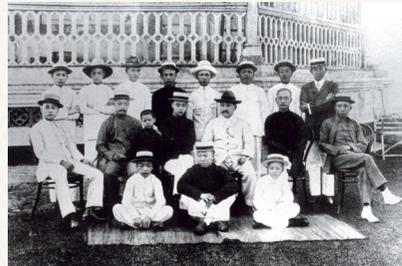
Medical Practice (1893–1921)

When Lim returned to Singapore in May 1893, he established his medical practice in a small shop-house in Telok Ayer Street. In his leisure hours, he learnt Mandarin and Cantonese and read Chinese literature. Lim soon established a reputation as a first-rate physician and in 1897, he went into partnership with

Dr T Murray Robertson and opened 'The Dispensary' at Raffles Place. Lim continued to practice there for about 10 years. In 1911, Lim was appointed Inspector-General of the hospitals in Peking (Beijing) and in the following year, became confidential secretary and personal physician to Dr Sun Yat-sen, first President of the Chinese Republic.

Public Service

Lim Boon Keng dedicated his life to public service, juggling between his role as legislator and promoter of causes important to him. He was particularly conscious of his Chinese identity and this manifested itself in his championing of the learning of the Chinese language and Chinese modernization. In 1895, Lim was appointed a member of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council at the tender age of 26. He was reappointed to the Council in 1898, 1901, 1915 and 1918 and made Justice of the Peace in 1897. In 1901, when the Chinese Company of the Singapore Volunteer Infantry was established, Lim enlisted as a private. He served for 4 years.



Lim campaigned tirelessly for educational reforms and led the fight against opium smoking. Together with Dr SC Yin, Lim founded the Anti-Opium Society in 1906

and opened an opium refuge centre offering free treatment for opium addicts. He was concerned about the social condition of the Chinese and crusaded against archaic practices such as the wearing of the queue or 'pigtail'. He also initiated a movement against gambling.

In 1897, he founded the Chinese Philomathic Society, a Baba association devoted to the study of English literature, Western music and the Chinese language. Three years later, he co-founded the Straits Chinese British Association to promote interest in the British Empire and loyalty to the Queen.

With his friend Song Ong Siang, Lim founded the Singapore Chinese Girls' School, the first English school for Chinese girls. In 1905, he and Tan Jiak Kim raised funds to establish the Straits and Federated States Medical College (later renamed King Edward VII College of Medicine). Lim lectured in pharmacology and therapeutics at the school from 1907 to 1910. He also became President of Amoy University in 1921, and held that post till 1937.

Lim was an accomplished linguist, speaking English, Hokkien, Malay, Japanese, French, German, Latin, Greek, Mandarin, Cantonese and Teochew. In 1898, he started weekly Mandarin classes for Straits Chinese, held on Sundays, at his home. He also visited Java in 1906 and opened five schools for the teaching of Mandarin.

Between 1894 and 1919, Lim spearheaded the Confucian revival in Malaya, actively promoted Confucian ethics through speeches and his writings in the Straits Chinese Magazine. His concern with modernization in China also saw him assume the leadership of the anti-Manchu Tongmeng Hui or Revolutionary League (founded 1906) and in 1913, he became president of the Singapore branch of the Kuomintang.

Commercial Activities

Lim Boon Keng was also a pioneering entrepreneur. In 1896, he encouraged his friend Tan Chay Yan to start rubber planting in Malacca, and two years later, they teamed up with Lee Choon Guan and others to form the Sembawang Rubber Plantations Limited.

In September 1912, together with Lim Peng Siang, Lee Choon Guan and others, Lim established The Chinese Commercial Bank Ltd, and became its Vice-Chairman. Seven years later, he teamed up with Tan Ean Kiam, Lim Nee Soon, Khoo Kok Wah, he

