

The Sanjiangren in Singapore

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Introduction

The Chinese population in Singapore is a migrant community, a part of the large-scale Chinese diaspora in the region set in motion by Western colonialism at the turn of the twentieth century. As with other overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, the large majority of these migrants were from southern China; the Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese constitute three-quarters of the Chinese population in Singapore today.¹ Most studies of the Chinese society in Singapore have hence focused on these dialect groups and to a lesser extent the Hakka and the Hainanese as well. Minority dialect groups such as the Sanjiangren, are in comparison almost negligible in number, and have largely been overlooked in historical writings though Liu Hong and Wong Sin Kiong have described the existence of a “*Sanjiang*” community in Singapore in their work *Singapore Chinese Society in Transition*, and Cheng Lim-Keak mentioned the “*Sanjiangren*” as a community that specialised in furniture and dress-making in *Social Change and the Chinese in Singapore*. The Shaw brothers Tan Sri Runme (邵仁枚) and Sir Run Run (邵逸夫), famed film producers and cinema owners are Sanjiangren.² So are Chiang Yick Ching, founder of his eponymous CYC Shanghai Shirts Company that dressed Singapore’s Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew, and Chou Sing Chu (周星衢) who started the bookstore chain Popular.³ Singaporeans are well acquainted with these enterprises, but few are aware of which dialect group their founders belong to.

“Sanjiangren (三江人)” literally means “people of the *Sanjiang*”, but “Sanjiang” (三江) itself is neither a dialect group, nor a definitive toponym. The meaning of “Sanjiangren” is also complicated by the fact that the term is also often used interchangeably with “Shanghainese” or “*waijiangren*” (外江人, lit. *waijiang* people; people beyond the Yangtze River)⁴. The identity of the Sanjiangren in Singapore is one that combines three elements: the geographical notion of *Sanjiang*, the label of “Shanghainese”, as well as the position of the *waijiangren* in Singapore. More recently, Sanjiangren have also become associated with twenty-first-century Chinese migrants to Singapore, or the *xinyimin* (新移民, lit. new immigrants).⁵ However, “Sanjiang” is a historically-defined identity which does not apply to the *xinyimin* influx. Born out of the movement of peoples out of China in the late nineteenth century and the overseas Chinese landscape that was created in the process, the Sanjiangren’s identity is has been a circumstantial response to the nature of the immigrant society in Singapore. The historical features of international migration lose relevance in modern and increasingly globalised times, and the Sanjiang community in Singapore has embraced new roles and functions to represent and integrate the new wave of Chinese migration,

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¹ Edmund Lee Eu Fah, “Profile of the Singapore Chinese Dialect Groups”, Social Statistics Section, Singapore Department of Statistics, p. 2.

² The Shaw brothers are from Ningbo, Zhejiang. Stephanie Po-Yin Chung, “Moguls of the Chinese Cinema: The Story of the Shaw Brothers in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore, 1924-2002”, *Modern Asian Studies* 41, 4 (2007), p. 668.

³ Chiang was from Ningbo, Zhejiang. Alvin Chua, “CYC Shanghai Shirt Company”, *Infopedia*, 15 June, 2010. Retrieved from http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_1669_2010-06-15.html, 26 March, 2012; Chou was an immigrant from Zhejiang. Alvin Chua, “The Popular Group”, *Infopedia*, 16 June, 2010. Retrieved from http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_1672_2010-06-16.html, 26 March, 2012.

⁴ As waterways in the provinces of Fujian (福建), Guangdong (广东) and Guangxi (广西) were not connected to the Yellow or Yangtze rivers and flowed directly to the South China Sea, overseas Chinese of southern origin labeled other provinces as “*waijiang*” (外江, lit. “outside rivers”), defining them as foreign. 《三江百年文化史》(新加坡: 三江会馆, 2001), p. 118.

⁵ Leong Weng Kam, “Is the end of the clan system in sight?” *The Straits Times*, 24 April, 2010.

reformulating its identity and function in correspondence with the changing diaspora itself.

Defining the “Sanjiangren”

The identity of the Sanjiangren is essentially constituted of three layers — a geographical concept, a colloquial label and a politico-socio-economic position. These are characterised by various names the Sanjiangren are identified by: “Sanjiang”, “Shanghainese”, and the “Sanjiang clan (or *bang* [帮, lit. gang])”. The original concept of “Sanjiang” is geographical in nature, as it is a name that groups together three provinces in central China. However, “Sanjiangren” has also been taken to be “Shanghainese”, which imposes a sometimes misleading association to Shanghai and its cultural traits. The “Sanjiang clan” on the other hand was used to represent all non-southern Chinese peoples, who were severely outnumbered by the southerners in Singapore. “Sanjiang” eventually became a category that conflated these three overlapping but also incongruous layers of description.

Sanjiang: a geographical concept

Unlike the southern Chinese clans like the Hokkien and Teochew, Sanjiang is not defined by a corresponding territory as the name is neither an official toponym nor denotes an administrative unit in China.⁶ “Sanjiang” was a concept first used in reference to the three provinces around the Yangtze River with “*jiang*” in their names: Zhejiang (浙江), Jiangsu (江苏) and Jiangxi (江西).⁷ Most migration out of the three provinces was commercial in nature, as urban merchants networked outwards from the port-city of Shanghai, first within mainland China and then overseas as well. Merchant travellers from the three provinces used the term “Sanjiang” to identify themselves in locality organisations both within and outside of China, and locality-based institutions such that public cemeteries (三江公墓), chambers of commerce (三江商会) and clan associations (三江会馆) bearing the “Sanjiang” name were established.⁸

Sanjiang locality associations were present within China as early as the 1850s, in places like Qingdao (青岛) and Jilin (吉林).⁹ The first reference to “Sanjiang” outside of China was in Japan, recording the movement of Sanjiangren from Nagasaki to Kobe in 1868 with the opening of Hyogo Port.¹⁰ The earliest overseas Sanjiang organisation to be documented is the Sanjiang Office (三江公所) in Kobe, which filed a request to transport a coffin to Shanghai in 1883.¹¹ The Sanjiangren in Japan, part of the commercial network expanding out of central China, had formed a Sanjiang *bang* and Chamber of Commerce (三江商业会) by 1912.¹²

Migrants from the Sanjiang provinces were present in Singapore before the twentieth century. The Sam Kiang Public Cemetery (三江公墓) was established in 1898 at Jalan Rimau, and the Sam Kiang Public Office (三江公所) in 1906 at Jalan Ampas, with the number of arriving Sanjiangren on the rise. The first head of the Public Office was Phoo Chok Yan (傅竺贤)¹³, a laundry proprietor from Ningbo (宁波). His son Phoo

⁶ Hokkiens were from the province of Fujian, while Teochews were from the prefecture of Chaozhou (潮州) and its neighbouring regions. Both “Hokkien” and “Teochew” are dialect pronunciations of their toponyms. There is a Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County (三江侗族自治县) in the province of Guangxi, but is irrelevant to the region that “Sanjiang” here represents.

⁷ 蒋海波, “旅日华商团体的早期历史及其法律地位 – 以神户三江商业会为例的考察”, p. 40; Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Newsletter, Issue 2 (January 2009), p. 1. Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Jiangxi are also alternatively transliterated as Chekiang, Kiangsu and Kiangsi respectively.

⁸ 周乃复, 《纪念三江会馆正式成立 95 年》, 神户三江会馆简史, quoted in Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Newsletter, p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ 蒋海波, “旅日华商团体的早期历史及其法律地位 – 以神户三江商业会为例的考察”, p. 39.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 40-45.

¹³ Name is transliterated from the oral interview with Phoo’s son. 傅竺贤 is “Fu Zhu Xian” in *hanyupinyin*. Oral history recording, Phoo Lee Tong (1981): 000191/1, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

Lee Tong (傅礼堂) recalled that the house was later sold to the Shaw brothers, which suggests that the Shaws' Malay film studio at 8 Jalan Ampas had previously housed the Sanjiang association.¹⁴ The Sam Kiang Public Office was officially renamed Sam Kiang Huay Kwan (三江会馆) in 1927, and became the institutional representative of the Sanjiangren in Singapore.¹⁵ The Sanjiangren were recognised as a significant minority in Chinese society with the Huay Kwan joining the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce (SCCC; 新加坡中华总商会) in 1935, which was the "supreme organisation" that addressed the economic, political and cultural interests of the Chinese in Singapore.¹⁶

"Shanghainese": a colloquial label

Shanghai in the nineteenth century was a burgeoning city and substantially populated by merchants and labourers from its neighbouring regions of Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Jiangxi.¹⁷ Many Sanjiang migrants were thus associated with the urban centre of central China, having been in Shanghai for work or en route leaving China. As such, the Sanjiangren in Singapore were often referred to as being "from Shanghai", or "Shanghairen" (上海人; 上海佬¹⁸, lit. Shanghainese), which became a blanket cultural label for the Sanjiang community.

For Chinese migrants, defining one's "origin" is complicated by the notion of "native place" (籍贯), which emphasises the origin of one's family rather than actual place of birth or residence.¹⁹ The two may not be the same as some had relocated within China before overseas migration.²⁰ This is increasingly common as the Chinese overseas undertake secondary and even tertiary migration, and it has been suggested that the "place of origin" in the study of migratory trends follows the migrant's place of residence prior to leaving China.²¹ In this manner, the people living or working in Shanghai who were not natives can be described as being "from Shanghai". The Shaw brothers for example, who were raised, educated and started their film business in the city, are often described by the popular media as "Shanghainese".²²

In reality however, the association of the Sanjiangren with Shanghai stems more from a lack of understanding of the geography of China than differing interpretations of "place of origin". The Sanjiangren were labelled as "Shanghainese" mainly because British or Straits Chinese custom officials were unfamiliar with non-southern Chinese and hence considered everyone who left China via the port of

¹⁴ Oral history recording, Phoo Lee Tong: 000191/4.

¹⁵ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 119.

¹⁶ Sikko Visscher, *The Business of Politics and Ethnicity: a History of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007), pp. 19; Cheng, *Social Change and the Chinese in Singapore: A Socio-Economic Geography with Special Reference to Bang Structure* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985), pp. 23-24.

¹⁷ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 119.

¹⁸ Ng Chee Seng (吴志仁) shared that other dialect groups called them "上海佬", but not in a derogative manner. Oral history recording, Ng Chee Seng (1985): 000444/29, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

¹⁹ 葛剑雄, 吴松弟, 曹树基, 《中国移民史》, (福建人民出版社, 1997), p. 24.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

²² Chung, "Moguls of the Chinese Cinema", pp. 668, 674; CNNGo, the Singapore National Library Board's Infopedia website, the Singapore Heritage Board's Heritage Trails website, and even Hong Kong's Chinese language newspaper *Ming Pao* (明报) have all described the Shaws as a "Shanghainese family" or from the "Shanghai bang". Charlene Fang, Michele Klyne, Elaine Ee-Myers, Balvinder Sandhu, Ben Slater, Eddie Tee, Daven Wu, "The power list: 30 people who have shaped Singapore", *CNNGo*, 3 October 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.go.com/singapore/life/power-list-30-people-who-have-shaped-singapore-185437>, 22 March 2012; Nureza Ahmad, "Runme Shaw", *Infopedia*, 3 September, 2004. Retrieved from http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_477_2004-12-24.html, 22 March, 2012; National Heritage Board, "Illustrious Residents: Shaw Brothers", *Heritage Trails*. Retrieved from http://heritagetrails.sg/content/319/Shaw_Brothers.html, 22 March, 2012; 黎佩芬, "上海人在香港: 上海幫第二代的告白", *Ming Pao*, 1 October, 2006. Retrieved from <http://www.zonaeuropa.com/press009.htm>, 22 March, 2012.

Shanghai to be “from Shanghai”.²³ Furthermore, other localities in northern and central China were not commonly heard of in Singapore as most migrants were from the south. *Sanjiang* and *waijiang* peoples were thus conveniently associated with Shanghai, colloquially referred to and misrepresented as “Shanghainese”.

Although the presence of many “Shanghainese” companies in Singapore suggests the existence of a substantial Shanghainese community, there were in fact few native Shanghai people. The largest numbers of Sanjiangren in Singapore were the Wenzhou (温州) and Ningbo people, and majority of these “Shanghainese” businesses, such as furniture and piano companies, were started by them.²⁴ Many woodworkers were from Wenzhou who apprenticed in Shanghai and continued the trade in Singapore.²⁵ They often continued to use the “Shanghainese” label to describe themselves as it carried prestige and recognition, as Shanghainese carpentry was known for its quality and was highly sought after by expatriates, hotels and wealthy families.²⁶ Similarly, while the Shanghai Public Office was the locality association for people from Shanghai, many of its members were from Ningbo, Wenzhou and Jiangxi.²⁷ Phoo Chok Yan for example even became club president, although he was from Ningbo.²⁸ The Club was a gathering of the Sanjiangren of higher social status, more than it was for those of Shanghainese origin.²⁹

As the Sanjiang community has been commonly associated with Shanghai, many Sanjiangren personalities have been incorrectly identified as “Shanghainese”. Choo Cheng Meng (朱承明), the founder of Cheng Meng Furniture (承明木器) for example, was described in a *The Straits Times* feature as “Shanghainese”.³⁰ Like the Shaw brothers, he was in fact from Ningbo. Shaw Sung Ching (邵松青) who started the cabaret theatre Tropicana was only referred to as a “Shanghai-trained architect from the same province as the Shaw brothers”.³¹ It is likely that their Ningbo origins were seldom mentioned because Shanghai was a much more familiar place-name compared to Ningbo. The involvement of the Shaw brothers, Shaw Sung Qing and Choo with the Ningpo Guild (宁波同乡会) indicate their self-identification as Ningbo people rather than Shanghainese, even though they were educated or had apprenticed in Shanghai.³² Choo had expressed his perplexity at being called “Shanghainese” in his early days in Singapore, but nevertheless noted that it was a label that was convenient and stuck with the Sanjiang community, becoming synonymous with “Sanjiangren”.³³ This label lasts to the present day; many Sam Kiang Huay Kwan elders themselves habitually use “*Shanghainese*” when referring to the Sanjiangren.³⁴ As such, the community has also been referred to as the “Shanghai *bang*” or “Shanghai clan”.³⁵

²³ Oral history recording, Ng Chee Seng: 000444/29.

²⁴ The Sanjiangren in Singapore are most prominent in a number of trades including construction, woodwork and furniture, tailoring, laundry and dry-cleaning, piano companies and bookstores. 《三江百年文化史》, p. 122; 区如柏, “上海木器温州子弟”, *Lianhe Zaobao* (联合早报), 10 April, 1988, p. 42;

²⁵ 区如柏, “上海木器温州子弟”; From the Wen Chow Wei Khan’s seventieth anniversary publication, it can be seen that the vast majority of Wenzhounese woodwork or furniture companies carried the “Shanghai” name. 《新加坡温州会馆七十周年纪念特刊》, pp. 206-291; 《三江百年文化史》, p. 77.

²⁶ 区如柏, “上海木器温州子弟”; 《三江百年文化史》, pp. 54-55.

²⁷ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 54.

²⁸ Oral history recording, Phoo Lee Tong: 000191/2.

²⁹ Most of the Club’s members were entrepreneurs in the construction industry, upper-middle class management types and other professionals. 《三江百年文化史》, p. 54.

³⁰ Paul Ong, “The furniture king of Singapore”, *The Straits Times*, 26 May 1985, p. 1.

³¹ Joy Frances, “Goodbye, Mr Tropicana.” *TODAY*, 23 April 2003, p. 4.

³² 《三江百年文化史》, p. 42; The Ningpo Guild’s website still features an image of Runme Shaw at the opening of the Guild’s new premises in 1971. “新加坡宁波同乡会”. Retrieved from <http://www.ningbo.org.sg/>, 2 April, 2012.

³³ Oral history recording, Choo Cheng Meng (1984): 000472/27, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

³⁴ Phoo Lee Tong was the only Sanjiangren interviewed by the Oral History Centre in English, and he referred to the Sanjiang community as “Shanghainese”. Ng Chee Seng, Ching Foo Kun and Hou Sing referred to them as “上海人” (lit. Shanghai people), but differentiated the true Shanghainese from those who were conveniently regarded as Shanghainese in Singapore. Oral history recordings, Phoo Lee Tong: 000191;

According to elders in the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, many Sanjiangren are able to speak the Shanghainese dialect, though they may be from Ningbo, Wenzhou or Suzhou (苏州). It was likely that they would have spent some time in Shanghai before migrating southwards, or because Shanghainese was the *lingua franca* of the Sanjiang community in Singapore, and those who did not speak it eventually learnt the language. The cultural homogeneity that “Shanghainese” label alluded to was thus perhaps valid to some extent.

Although “Shanghainese” is a convenient label, it evidently glosses over the diversity of the Sanjiangren. The heterogeneity within the Sanjiang community has been overlooked as their original cultural identity was obscured by the term. The other dialects used by the Sanjiangren were also sometimes broadly and incorrectly regarded as “Shanghainese”. Although most migrants from Jiangsu and Zhejiang spoke variations of the Wu dialect, these were actually different languages that were related only minimally to the Shanghai dialect. Ng Chee Seng (吴志仁) stated that his native Wuxi (无锡) dialect is “discernibly different from the Shanghainese Wu dialect (吴语)”.³⁶ The dialects of Ningbo and Wenzhou, both in Zhejiang, are markedly distinct from each other, and also from Shanghainese. Additionally, the province of Jiangxi is home to Southern Mandarin and Hakka, rather than Wu dialects.³⁷ “Shanghai” and “Shanghainese” have therefore been cultural descriptions that misleadingly impose a sense of uniformity and tend to obscure distinct traits in the Sanjiang community.

Nonetheless, the consciousness of the diverse peoples of the Sanjiang has not been lost. Most members of the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan are concurrently part of their own locality association for the specific dialect-locality groups. Although the relationship between the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan and some of its member institutions has been close, the long histories of the smaller locality associations and many having separate premises show that they operate and survive quite independently from the Huay Kwan.³⁸ While the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan is inclusive of all migrants from the Sanjiang provinces, the smaller locality associations evince the assertion of local kinship and identity that did not diminish despite the homogenising “Shanghainese” label.

The Sanjiang clan: a politico-socio-economical position of the waijiangren

The concept of *bang*, or clan, is integral in understanding the organisation of the Chinese migrant society in Singapore.³⁹ The *bang* is defined by Cheng Lim-Keak as a politico-socio-economic group principally based on a dialect.⁴⁰ Most of the dialect groups in Singapore have been from southern China, with the Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese and Hakka making up the large majority of the population. Henghua, Hockchia and Kwongsai are also southern Chinese groups in Singapore, albeit in relatively insignificant numbers.⁴¹ Numerically the largest dialect group, the Hokkien belong to the Fujian (福建) *bang*. The Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese, Dabu and Meixian dialect groups formed their own *bang*, and was also collectively known as the Guangdong (广东) *bang*.⁴² With the biggest *bang* and the most number of members, these southern Chinese dominated pan-Chinese associations and Chinese society in general.

Ng Chee Seng: 000444; Ching Foo Kun (1983): 000325; Hou Sing: 000326, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

³⁵ Oral history recording, Ching Foo Kun: 000325/12.

³⁶ Oral history recording, Ng Chee Seng: 000444/29.

³⁷ Yuen Ren Chao, “Languages and Dialects in China”, *The Geographical Journal* 102, 2 (August 1943), pp. 63-65.

³⁸ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Annual General Meetings, 1996-2002; the locality associations under the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan seemed to have functioned quite independently. The Wen Chow Wei Khan in particular has four commemorative publications (for its fortieth, fiftieth, sixtieth and seventieth anniversaries), even more than the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan itself.

³⁹ Visscher, *The Business of Politics and Ethnicity*, p. 12.

⁴⁰ Cheng, *Social Change and the Chinese in Singapore*, p. 23.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴² Both Dabu and Meixian were Hakka *bang*. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

The Sanjiang *bang* stood out from the rest as a minority clan of non-southern origin. The Sanjiangren or “Shanghainese” were the only *waijiang bang* represented in pan-Chinese institutions like the SCCC.⁴³ There were also other *waijiang* people in Singapore other than the Sanjiangren like the northern Chinese, who had established the Nanyang Hwa Pek Thung Hsiang Hoey, as there was a language barrier between them and Sanjiangren.⁴⁴ They were however simply too few in number to form a *bang* or “*pai* (派, lit. faction)” in Singapore.⁴⁵ This prompted the expansion of the concept of “Sanjiang”, and the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan’s constitution was changed sometime in the pre-war period to include other provinces in northern and central China as well.⁴⁶ Henceforth, “Sanjiang” officially took on the meaning of the *waijiang*, and the Sanjiang clan came to represent the position of the non-southern Chinese migrants in Singapore.

The Sam Kiang Huay Kwan became an amalgam of individuals, companies and small locality associations of the minority *waijiangren* in Singapore, and collectively represented their interests.⁴⁷ The Singapore Liang Hu Hui Kuan (两湖会馆), the Nanyang Hupei Tienmen Association (南洋湖北天门会馆) the Nanyang Hwa Pek Thung Hsiang Hoey (南洋华北同乡会, lit. Northern China clan association) are all regarded as part of the Sanjiang clan although these groups are not from the *Sanjiang* provinces.⁴⁸ By being part of the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, the non-southern Chinese peoples and their smaller associations gained an official stake in Singapore’s Chinese society. Each member institution was allocated up to three seats on the Huay Kwan’s board of directors; twenty-odd directors were chosen directly from the Huay Kwan itself (many of whom were involved with the other associations).⁴⁹ The Sam Kiang leaders in turn represented the entire Sanjiang clan as members in the *bang*-structured Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI) and ran for office in its management committee.⁵⁰ Shaw Vee Meng, Shaw Sung Ching and Chwee Meng Chong (水铭漳), for example, were elected into the committee in 1983.⁵¹ Although the Hokkien clan dominated the Chamber and often had influence over Sam Kiang directors, the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan nonetheless existed as an institutional voice for the non-southern Chinese in the migrant community.⁵² This continued in the Singapore

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁴ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 58.

⁴⁵ Oral history recording, Ng Chee Seng: 000444/29.

⁴⁶ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 119.

⁴⁷ In the 1970s, the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan’s membership totalled over eight hundred “basic” and “sponsor” members. Both included individuals and companies. Shanghai Bookstore (上海书局) was a “basic member (基本会员)” while CYC Shanghai Shirts, Shaw Brothers and Cheng Meng Furniture were all “sponsor members (赞助会员)”. Shaw Foundation, the Ningpo Guild and Nanyang Hwa Pek Thung Hsiang Hoey were listed as “honorary members (荣誉会员)”. Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Membership Lists, 1977-1985.

⁴⁸ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 119; Romanised names are found from each association’s personalised note papers, these were found in Sam Kiang Huay Kwan’s committee election documents. The member groups under the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan are: Ningpo Guild (宁波同乡会), Wen Chow Wei Khan (温州会馆), Kiangsi Association (江西会馆), Shanghai Club (上海工会), Nanyang Hupei Tienmen Association (南洋湖北天门会馆), Singapore Liang Hu Hui Kuan (Association) (两湖会馆), Nanyang Hwa Pek Thung Hsiang Hoey (南洋华北同乡会), Shanghai European Ladies Dress Makers Association (上海西式女服工会) and Singapore Chinese Dry-cleaning Owners’ Association (星州华侨干洗工会).

⁴⁹ In the election records of 2002, the list of directors shows three and two seats reserved for the Kiangsi Association and the Hwa Pek Thung Hsiang Hoey respectively, which suggest declining membership or activity in these associations, or waning relations with the parent Huay Kwan. The Liang Hu Hui Kuan however, was not represented on the board in 2002. Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Election Records, 1977-2003.

⁵⁰ The SCCC added “Industry” to its name in 1978. Visscher, *The Business of Politics and Ethnicity*, p. 320; Oral history recording, Ng Chee Seng: 000444/29.

⁵¹ Shaw Vee Meng has been chairman of the Shaw Organisation since 1983. “The Joy of Giving”, *NUS Office of Alumni Relations*. Retrieved from https://www.alumnet.nus.edu.sg/ContentImages/Contributions/shaw_vee_meng.pdf, 23 March, 2012; “Six unopposed”, *The Straits Times*, 21 January, 1983, p. 23. That same year, Shaw Vee Meng was also appointed as the honorary chairman of the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan in July. “闻人邵维铭和何阿清任三江会馆名誉会长”, *Lianhe Wanbao*, 17 July, 1983, p. 8.

⁵² Oral history recording, Ng Chee Seng: 000444/29.

Federation of Chinese Clan Associations (SFCCA; 新加坡宗乡会馆联合总会), which took over the SCCC's cultural roles in 1986.⁵³ With a similar dialect-group *bang* structure that had existed in the Chamber, the SFCCA had the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan as its sole non-southern founding clan association.⁵⁴ Although its member associations eventually joined the SFCCA, the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan's involvement since the SFCCA's inception demonstrates how the Sanjiang clan was given the responsibility to represent all *waijiangren* in the Chinese society.⁵⁵

Sanjiangren: incongruous, situational meanings

The label "Shanghainese" has been applied to the Sanjiang clan as a whole since the Sanjiangren have assumed the socio-political and economic position of the *waijiangren*, and the conflation of the incongruous layers of identity has resulted in a peculiar and sometimes confusing answer to what "Sanjiang" means. The Singapore census for example lists "Shanghainese" as a dialect group, but it is unclear if this referred only to Shanghai and its environs, or a residual category for non-southern dialect groups as Evangelos Afendras and Eddie Kuo suggest.⁵⁶ The cultural differences of the *waijiangren* had been historically obscured in Singapore where they were a negligible minority, and "Shanghainese" became a way of representing the non-Sanjiangren as dialect groups as well.

As a result and reflection of their experience as a minority group in the Chinese migrant society in Singapore, the Sanjiangren have accepted the combination of all three elements as part of their identity but the different aspects of their identity are expressed in different situations. To people unfamiliar with sub-Chinese groups, they are "Shanghainese" to avoid the lengthy explanation of "*Sanjiang*" which also allows them to have a sense of unity. On the other hand, the distinctions between the various dialect and locale groups are clear within the Sanjiang community itself. Above all, any person not from the southern Chinese dialect groups can belong to "Sanjiang" in Singapore. This aspect of the Sanjiangren's identity has found most relevance in recent years with the tide of new immigration.

Straddling the old and the new

The recent decades have seen a new wave of migration into Singapore, evidenced by the dramatic increase of citizen and permanent resident populations since the late 1990s.⁵⁷ These foreign-born migrants are termed *xinyimin* (新移民, lit. new immigrants), and the number of new China-born immigrants has been estimated to be between 50,000 and 60,000, making up ten to twelve per cent of Singapore's population.⁵⁸ This segment of society has presented the Sanjiang clan with an opportunity for renewal, as the new wave of migration from China is no longer dominated by the southern Chinese

⁵³ Visscher, *The Business of Politics and Ethnicity*, pp. 286-287.

⁵⁴ The SFCCA was established with seven founding clan associations: the Singapore Hokien Huay Kuan, the Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan, the Singapore Kwang Tung Hui Kuan (Cantonese), the Nanyang Khek Community (Hakka), the Singapore Kiung Chow Hwee Kuan (Hainanese), the Singapore Foochow Association and the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan. *Ibid.*, p. 287.

⁵⁵ The Wen Chow Wei Khan is also a member of the SFCCA, and has its own webpage on the SFCCA site separate from the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan's webpage. "新加坡温州会馆--温润南洋兰 州培瓯江橘", SFCCA. Retrieved from <http://www.sfcca.sg/index.php?uid-30>, 23 March, 2012.

⁵⁶ Cheng, *Social Change and the Chinese in Singapore*, p. 22; Evangelos A. Afendras and Eddie C. Y. Kuo, *Language and Society in Singapore* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1980), p. 41.

⁵⁷ The resident population of Singapore grew by more than one million during the period of 1990-2010, with the Permanent Resident population increasing close to five-fold to 541,000. Singapore Department of Statistics, "Key Demographic Indicators, 1970-2010", *Population Trends 2010*, p. v.

⁵⁸ 谢美华, "近 20 年新加坡的中国新移民及其数量估算", *Overseas Chinese History Studies* 3, (September 2010), pp. 57-58.

but the *waijiangren*.⁵⁹ The Sam Kiang Huay Kwan has registered *xinyimin* members since 1997, totalling forty-six members and four directors in 2006.⁶⁰

The *xinyimin* however, often do not fit into the Sanjiangren identity defined in the past century, as the historical conditions it was born out of no longer obtain. As public understanding of Chinese geography and culture grows, the association with “Shanghai” or “Shanghainese” is not easily applied to someone who is expressly not. More importantly, since the late 1950s the *hukou* (户口; household registration) system in China has administratively bound individuals to location, regardless of internal migration and is inherited through generations.⁶¹ The conception of place and origin has thus become clearly defined for China’s emigrants, and the conflation of “Sanjiang”, “Shanghainese” and “*waijiangren*” is not easily understood by the *xinyimin*. One native Shanghainese *xinyimin* staff member in the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan for example, initially could not comprehend why Sanjiangren were collectively referred to as “Shanghainese” in Singapore.

The Sanjiang clan has also shed its role of championing *waijiangren* interests, as Chinese society in Singapore has long ceased to be organised along *bang* lines and dialect differences have been downplayed. The SCCCI abolished its clan-based election system in 2010.⁶² Unlike previously, there are few interests that the *waijiangren* in Singapore require the Sanjiang clan to represent on their behalf. Furthermore, the *xinyimin* generally use Mandarin as the language of communication, making dialect-based cultural categorisations somewhat redundant. The fact that the Huay Kwan has only attracted forty-six members after nine years shows that the association did not particularly appeal to the *xinyimin*. The Singapore Tianfu Club (新加坡天府会), an association for *xinyimin* from Sichuan however boasts of about 2000 members — a manifestation of how *xinyimin* choose not to incorporate themselves into the Sanjiang community but rather have their own organisations.⁶³ Nevertheless, the *xinyimin* involved in such associations still account for only a small fraction of the new resident population. The new wave of migration appears to be much more individualistic and independent of “migration grooves” of the earlier period, where clan and locality associations were essential in facilitating the migratory process by providing the fundamental social, cultural and economic networks for settlement.⁶⁴ The Sanjiangren identity that encompasses the geographical concept of *Sanjiang*, the colloquial label of “Shanghainese” and the politico-socio-economical position of the *waijiangren*, is of little relevance to new Chinese immigrants.

To cater to this new immigrant segment of society, Sanjiang has reoriented itself and taken on another layer of identity, aiming to integrate the *xinyimin* into Singapore society. The Sam Kiang Huay Kwan has hosted a variety of seminars and meetings to promote interaction and mutual understanding between old and new immigrants. “Journey of multi-traditional cultures (多元传统文化之旅)”, an excursion showcasing Peranakan culture was organised in 2005 to “help new immigrants get to know Singapore as well as furthering cultural and historical understanding for local children”.⁶⁵ In 2006, the Sam Kiang Youth Group (三江青年团) based its annual meeting on the theme of understanding and integrating new immigrants, and also

⁵⁹ Hetty Musfirah Abdul Khamid, “Clan associations can help new immigrants with English: MM”, *Channel NewsAsia*, 18 January, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/1105500/1/.html>, 25 March, 2012.

⁶⁰ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Meetings, 8 April, 2007.

⁶¹ Cindy Fan, *China on the Move: Migration, the State, and the Household* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 40-42.

⁶² Leong Weng Kam, “SCCCI gets 12 new faces in its council”, *The Straits Times*, 21 December, 2010.

⁶³ Leong Weng Kam, “Young Dragons: Many are well-educated, speak competent English”, *AsiaOne*, 24 November, 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.asiaone.com/Just%2BWoman/Story/A1Story20081124-102899.html>, 1 October, 2012.

⁶⁴ Adam McKeown, “Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842-1949”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, 2 (May 1999), pp. 317-322.

⁶⁵ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Meetings, 3 April, 2005.

conducted a related book launch for Chinese culture and literature website *Sgwritings* (随笔南洋).⁶⁶ A “New Year’s meeting for new and old immigrant interaction (新老移民新春交流会)” was held in March 2007, in conjunction with the Tianfu Club; an “Old and new immigrants activity fund” with endowment from the SFCCA for future activities was subsequently established.⁶⁷

The *xinyimin* force in the organisation is also reflected in the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan’s endeavours to preserve the Sanjiang community’s history in Singapore. Its commemorative publication *Sanjiang Bainian Wenhushi* (《三江百年文化史》, lit. “Hundred Years’ Cultural History of the Sanjiang People”), an extensive and comprehensive documentation of the Sanjiangren’s history for the Huay Kwan’s centenary in 2001, was written and edited largely by Li Guosheng (李国生) and Li Wei (李纬), both new immigrants who are also Huay Kwan directors.⁶⁸ Likewise, the documentary film *Centennial Sam Kiang* (《新加坡三江百年文化史纪录片: 世纪三江》) was produced by a team of *xinyimin* for the Huay Kwan in 2006.⁶⁹ From these publications, particularly the *Sanjiang Bainian Wenhushi* which featured both the long history of the Sanjiang clan as well as new immigrant personalities like popular television host Guo Liang (郭亮) and former professional and national table tennis player Jing Junhong (井浚泓), it can be seen that the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan aims to straddle both the old and new segments of Chinese society in Singapore.

As a part of the global Chinese diaspora

Adam McKeown’s view of the Chinese diaspora as a transnational network in itself is illustrated by how the Sanjiangren community in Singapore is but one node in the web of Sanjiangren around the world.⁷⁰ Chain migration and Chinese nationalism no longer bind the diasporic Chinese together, but culture and business are viable channels through which they can establish relationships. Although clan associations have lost its importance in linking the migrant and the homeland as “circuits” of social and economic support, the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan continues to be an institution that connects different points of the Sanjiangren diaspora that fosters exchange and dialogue.

The Sam Kiang Huay Kwan has traditionally had close ties with Sanjiang associations in the Malay states, as Singapore and the Malay Peninsula were historically thought of as one entity. The Malaysian Sanjiang organisations were featured prominently in *Sanjiang Bainian Wenhushi*.⁷¹ The formation of the Malaysian Federated San Kiang Association (马来西亚三江总会; Persatuan San Kiang Association In Malaysia), a union of Sanjiang associations in five states, was in fact initiated by Singaporeans in 1964 when the island-state was part of the new Malaysia.⁷² Wang Fo Wen (王宓文), father of the academic Wang Gungwu, was the Peninsula’s representative in discussion with the Huay Kwan about creating a joint Sanjiang organisation but plans were cut short by the Separation in 1965.⁷³ The Singapore and Malaysian associations still remain close, continually making monetary

⁶⁶ Ibid., 8 April, 2007.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 30 March, 2008.

⁶⁸ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 4; 田晓容, “保存百年移民史: 新加坡三江会馆拍摄移民记录片”, *Chinaqw.com* (中国侨网), 19 June, 2006. Retrieved from <http://www.chinaqw.com/news/2006/0619/68/33049.shtml>, 25 March, 2012.

⁶⁹ 田晓容, “保存百年移民史: 新加坡三江会馆拍摄移民记录片”.

⁷⁰ McKeown, “Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842-1949”, pp. 317-322.

⁷¹ The Malaysian Sanjiang associations featured were Persatuan San Kiang Pulau Pinang (檳城三江公会), Persatuan San Kiang Selangor (雪兰莪三江公会), Perak San Jiang Association (霹靂三江公会), Sabah San Chiang Association (沙巴三江公会), Sarawak Kiang Si Association (砂拉越江西会馆). 《三江百年文化史》, pp. 60-67.

⁷² Joining the Sanjiang associations from Selangor, Perak, Penang and Sabah was the Persatuan San Chiang Sarawak (砂拉越三江公会). Ibid., p. 60.

⁷³ The Malaysia states formed the Persatuan San Kiang Association In Malaysia alliance in 1975. Ibid., p. 60

contributions and sending representatives to each other's commemorative events.⁷⁴ Similarly, the Wen Chow Wei Khan invited and received sponsorship from overseas Wenzhou people for their seventieth anniversary function.⁷⁵ These continued links based on common ancestry exemplify the transnational diasporic networks identified by McKeown.

The Sam Kiang Huay Kwan has also poised itself to be a point of cultural and economic exchange between Singapore and China, in view of China's rising global prominence in the twenty-first century. Coinciding with the growing interest in Shanghai as a city of prospect, the Huay Kwan-run tuition centre Sam Kiang School began offering Shanghainese language and culture classes in 2004.⁷⁶ The Huay Kwan conducted a "China Investment Seminar (中国商业投资说明会)" in 2006, and assisted the Ningbo municipal government in organising "Singapore Ningbo Week" in November 2008.⁷⁷ Additionally, it has ties with several overseas-Chinese offices in China, aiming to facilitating cultural and economic exchange.⁷⁸ The Ningbo Overseas-Chinese Office (宁波侨办) even invited Sam Kiang directors and their children to visit the 2010 Shanghai Expo.⁷⁹ More recently, the Huay Kwan conducted a Shanghai University alumni reunion at the Huay Kwan's premises, and also engaged the Shanghai University Alumni in Singapore in sharing sessions with opportunities for future cooperation in mind.⁸⁰

Returning to the example of the Shaw brothers however, we see that it is perhaps inevitable that diasporic peoples are unable to escape the "hegemony of nation-states".⁸¹ Runme Shaw, as a former chairman of the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board, is associated with the island-state.⁸² Run Run Shaw is almost always spoken of in the context of Hong Kong, where he helmed the television giant Television Broadcasts Limited, more commonly known as TVB.⁸³ Their family's history however epitomises the vast transnational networks in Asia that the Chinese diaspora has created and cannot be understood as bound to a single place.⁸⁴ In the same way, the Sanjiangren validate their existence and relevance in Singapore by pinning its history to the narrative of the country's national history. The Sam Kiang Huay Kwan is

⁷⁴ In 1997 for example, Sam Kiang Huay Kwan directors were invited to celebrations of the Selangor Sam Kiang association's hundredth year of founding and the opening of its new premises. The Huay Kwan and its member institutions donated \$28,000. Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Annual General Meetings, 29 January, 1998.

⁷⁵ Overseas Wenzhou people were from China, France, the Netherlands and Malaysia. 《新加坡温州会馆七十周年纪念特刊》, pp. 57-62.

⁷⁶ The Sam Kiang School was formerly the Sam Kiang Public School that ceased operation in 1971 and was re-established as a tuition centre in 2004. The Shanghainese classes are offered in conjunction with the Shanghai Institute of Chinese (上海中文学院), founded by Chen Jian (陈建) who is now a director of the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan. Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Annual General Meetings, 4 April, 2004; 《三江百年文化史》, p. 132.

⁷⁷ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Newsletter, p. 3; The "China Investment Seminar" was conducted together with the Ningpo Guild and Rongsheng Business Consultancy (嵘升投资咨询上海有限公司) from Shanghai. Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Annual General Meetings, 8 April, 2007.

⁷⁸ This includes the Zhejiang Oversea-Chinese Office (浙江侨办), Shanghai Chinese Overseas Friendship Association (上海海外联谊会) and Ningbo Oversea-Chinese Office (宁波侨办). Ibid., 30 March, 2008.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 4 April, 2010.

⁸⁰ "上海大学新加坡校友会拜访三江会馆", SHUAAS [Shanghai University Alumni Association (Singapore)], 17 January, 2011. Retrieved from <http://blog.lehu.shu.edu.cn/SHUAAS/A283431.html>, 25 March, 2012; "新加坡校友会代表参加 2011 三江会馆新春团拜纪实", SHUAAS, 6 February, 2012. Retrieved from <http://blog.lehu.shu.edu.cn/SHUAAS/A288844.html>, 25 March, 2012;

"三江会馆与上大校友会联合举办上海大学校友聚会暨与校领导共话座谈活动", 新加坡三江会馆, 6 June, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.sfcca.sg/?uid-64-action-view-space-itemid-1669>, 25 March, 2012.

⁸¹ McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842-1949", p. 312.

⁸² "Runme Shaw", *Infopedia*, 3 September, 2010. Retrieved from http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_477_2004-12-24.html, 22 March, 2012.

⁸³ Vivian Wai-yin Kwok, "Who Will Run Shaw Brothers After Run Run?", *Forbes.com*, 15 September, 2007. Retrieved from http://www.forbes.com/2007/09/15/run-run-shaw-face-cx_vk_0914autofacescan01.html, 2 April, 2012.

⁸⁴ Chung, "Moguls of the Chinese Cinema", p. 679.

currently embarking on a project to document the Sanjiang community's history, expressed through the marks it has made on Singapore society and its role in nation building. Undeniably, the place is integral to determining the identity and history of diasporic peoples. Each localised entity is defined, recognised and empowered by its role and achievement in at its location. They never truly escape the boundaries of place even though the diaspora is fundamentally a set of globalised networks and processes. Diasporic identities are always negotiations between the local and the transnational.

Conclusion

The Sanjiangren in Singapore is a prime illustration of how migration creates a world in itself that shapes the way diasporic communities identify themselves and function. The Sanjiangren have assumed various layers of identity that often misconstrue and misrepresent their origins, but they reflect the conditions of the Chinese migrant society in which the Sanjiangren functioned. As the nature of Singapore society and Chinese migration change however, these historical features of the Sanjiangren's identity lose relevance. In accordance with the changing nature of the Chinese diaspora in the globalised world, the Sanjiang community reformulates its identity to represent and integrate the *xinyimin*, redefining itself for the Sanjiangren of the new century. The Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, as an avenue for social and cultural exchange, continues to be the connexion for Sanjiangren entities within and outside of China. As such, the Sanjiangren in Singapore remains defined by and exists as part of global Chinese transnationalism, with its identity, role and function based inherently upon the mobility and dispersion of Chinese people around the world.

Appendix : The Sanjiang community in Singapore

The six-acre Sam Kiang Public Cemetery (三江公墓) at Jalan Rimau was established in 1898.⁸⁵ As the number of migrants increased, the Sam Kiang Public Office (三江公所) was set up at Jalan Ampas, led by laundry proprietor Phoo Chok Yan (傅竺贤)⁸⁶ from Ningbo.⁸⁷ The Sam Kiang Public Office was officially renamed Sam Kiang Huay Kwan (三江会馆) in 1927, and became the institutional representative of the Sanjiangren in Singapore.⁸⁸

Phoo Chok Yan arrived in Singapore in 1881 at age twenty-eight. He passed away in 1947, a year after returning to Ningbo. (Sam Kiang Huay Kwan)



Phoo Chok Yan had been awarded a title by the Qing court (rank unknown). (Sam Kiang Huay Kwan)

⁸⁵ 《三江百年文化史》(新加坡:三江会馆, 2001), p. 119.

⁸⁶ Name is transliterated from the oral interview with Phoo's son. 傅竺贤 is "Fu Zhu Xian" in *hanyupinyin*. Oral history recording, Phoo Lee Tong (1981): 000191/1, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

⁸⁷ Oral history recording, Phoo Lee Tong: 000191/4.

⁸⁸ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 119.

As most Sanjiangren worked and lived in the Tanglin and Orchard area, the Huay Kwan's premises moved to 2 Cuppage Road in the 1930s. After suspending its activities during the Japanese Occupation, the Huay Kwan resumed operation in 1945 and relocated to 23 St Thomas Walk the year after. During this time, the Huay Kwan had changed its constitution to include non-southern, *waijiang* provinces in China.⁸⁹ The Huay Kwan's new office at St Thomas Walk was opened on January 1, 1949.⁹⁰ In order to raise funds for the purchase of the property and the relocation, benefit performances of Chinese opera were held at the New World amusement park owned by the Shaw Organisation, which waived venue fees for the occasion.⁹¹ Run Run Shaw (邵逸夫) was on the fundraising committee which was also responsible for seeking funds for the renovation of the Sam Kiang cemetery.⁹²

In 1996, the Huay Kwan moved to 41 Wilkie Road. A twenty-storey condominium Sam Kiang Mansions (三江大厦) was erected at the St Thomas Walk site in 1999, after eleven years of planning.⁹³ All but twelve units were sold to repay loans made for the construction of the building. Three of the twelve units in the Huay Kwan's possession are double-storey apartments, and seven per cent of rent collected from these apartments is used to subsidise the Huay Kwan's expenses.⁹⁴



Sam Kiang Mansions (Sam Kiang Huay Kwan)

Constituent groups

"Sanjiangren" has become an umbrella term that groups together a variety of minority Chinese migrant groups in Singapore from different localities in China. Nine associations of both Sanjiang and *waijiang* origin were under the Huay Kwan: Ningpo Guild (宁波同乡会), Wen Chow Wei Khan (温州会馆), Kiangsi Association (江西会馆), Shanghai Club (上海工会), Nanyang Hupei Tienmen Association (南洋湖北天门会馆), Singapore Liang Hu Hui Kuan (Association) (两湖会馆), Nanyang Hwa Pek Thung Hsiang Hoey (南洋华北同乡会), Shanghai European Ladies Dress Makers Association (上海西式女服工会) and Singapore Chinese Dry-cleaning Owners' Association (星洲华侨干洗工会).⁹⁵ Although small in number compared to the other dialect groups, its members served on the boards of the Singapore Chinese Chamber Commerce and Industry (SCCCI; 新加坡中华总商会), Thong Chai Medical Institution (同济医院) and Ee Hoe Hean Club (怡和轩), among the most important and influential pan-Chinese institutions in Singapore.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 120.

⁹⁰ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Minutes of Mutual Help Committee Meetings 1956 – 1970: NA061, National Archives of Singapore.

⁹¹ 《三江百年文化史》，p. 120; Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Minutes of Mutual Help Committee Meetings 1956 – 1970.

⁹² Ibid., p. 120; Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Minutes of Mutual Help Committee Meetings 1956 – 1970.

⁹³ 《三江百年文化史》，pp. 124-128.

⁹⁴ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Annual General Meetings, 7 April 2002.

⁹⁵ 《三江百年文化史》，p. 119; Romanised names are from each association's personalised note papers, these were found in Sam Kiang Huay Kwan's committee election documents.

⁹⁶ Several Sam Kiang leaders have held positions at the various Chinese organisations, including Chwee Meng Chong, Chen Lai Chang and Shaw Vee Meng.

Ningbo (宁波)

The Ningbo people are known for its strong business communities; with entrepreneurs and commercial enterprises in many parts of China as well as overseas.⁹⁷ The Ningbo faction is the most prominent amongst the Sanjiangren, the most well-known being the Shaw brothers and family. Almost all of the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan's past chairmen have been of Ningbo origin.

The formation of the Ningpo Guild was decided on at a Shaw banquet in 1937, with increasing numbers of migrants from Ningbo in Singapore in the 1930s.⁹⁸ The Guild's office was at 23 Upper Cross Street with Run Run Shaw as its first chairman.⁹⁹ It moved to 228 River Valley Road in 1939. Activities were suspended during the Japanese Occupation, only resuming in 1968 with the establishment of a board of directors. Its current office is at 43 Wilkie Road, next to the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan.¹⁰⁰ Runme Shaw (邵仁枚) officially opened the office in 1971 and remained honorary chairman until his death in 1985, while Run Run Shaw and his son Shaw Vee Meng (邵维铭) continue to be part of the Guild.¹⁰¹

According to founding member Tae Nan Cheong (戴南昌), the Guild was set up with the intention of providing social welfare for Ningbo people, especially seamen. As such, it hosted few recreational or leisure activities.¹⁰² Unlike other Chinese dialect groups, Sanjiangren did not have organisations to handle deaths and funeral affairs in the pre-war period. The Guild's initial aim was thus to help seamen who died in Singapore to have a proper burial, "a place to rest in peace". The Guild was informed about deaths at the Singapore General Hospital by the government, and sent representatives to collect the cadavers and provide funeral arrangements. The Guild also helped seamen to avoid the Japanese terror during the war, and to find employment and accommodation. The Guild extended its welfare support to all seamen from the Sanjiang provinces, most of whom were from Ningbo. It also helped seamen secure jobs in the furniture and laundry trades, which were labour-intensive and mostly run by fellow Sanjiangren.¹⁰³

Many outstanding Sanjiangren and community leaders like Wang Xiang Xian (王相贤), Chwee Meng Chong (水铭漳), Choo Cheng Meng (朱承明) and Shaw Sung Ching (邵松青) were part of the Ningpo Guild.

Wenzhou (温州)

Migrants from Wenzhou have been in Singapore as early as 1912, numbering ten odd by the mid-1910s. The Wen Chow Wei Khan was established in 1923 by Jin Tian Fang (金天放) and Chen Yue Shu (陈岳书), among others.¹⁰⁴ The Wei Khan had its office at 150 Jalan Besar, later moving to Sam Leong Road and finally Geylang Lorong 37. It aimed to facilitate the settling in process for Wenzhou migrants in Singapore, and provide social welfare and education.¹⁰⁵ Jin, the first chairman of the Wei Khan, was invited to teach at Tao Nan School (道南学校) in Singapore where he later became principal.¹⁰⁶ He also became the first principal of Hua Lian Public School (华联公校) in 1937, the largest Chinese school in Perak.¹⁰⁷ The Wei Khan established Oujiang Public School (欧江公学) in 1927 but it was short-lived, closing with the start of the war.

⁹⁷ 金普森, 孙善根 (主编), 《宁波帮大辞典》(宁波: 宁波出版社, 2000), pp. 5-28.

⁹⁸ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 42.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.; Ningpo Guild Newsletter, p. 2.

¹⁰² Oral history recording, Tae Nan Cheong (1992): 001350/3, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ 《新加坡温州会馆七十周年纪念特刊》(新加坡: 温州会馆, 1993), p. 29.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.; 《三江百年文化史》, p. 47.

¹⁰⁶ 《新加坡温州会馆七十周年纪念特刊》, p. 29.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Qiaonan Public School (侨南公学) was established in 1947 within the Sam Leong Road premises, ceasing operation in 1973.¹⁰⁸

There were possibly ten thousand people of Wenzhou origin in Singapore by the 1990s, but the Wei Khan however only had about 700 members, being unable to attract youths and professionals.¹⁰⁹ The distinctiveness of the Wenzhou language from other *Sanjiang* dialects can be seen through the difference in transliterated names: the surname Shao (邵) is commonly expressed as “Shaw” for the Shanghai and Ningbo people, but as “Yeow” or “Yueh” for those from Wenzhou.¹¹⁰

Wen Chow Wei Khan commemorating its thirtieth anniversary at the Qiaonan Public School in 1950. (Sam Kiang Huay Kwan)

Jiangxi (江西)

The Kiangsi Association (江西会馆) was established in 1935 at 249 Jalan Besar, moving to 277 Jalan Besar in 1941 where it continues to be today. The Kiangsi Association has three seats on the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan’s board of directors.

Shanghai (上海)

In Singapore, the terms “Shanghai” and “Sanjiang” effectively became interchangeable, as British officials categorised all Sanjiangren who arrived from the port of Shanghai as “Shanghainese”.¹¹¹ In reality, those from Shanghai are only a small fraction of the Sanjiangren population.

The Shanghai Club was set up in 1899 or 1900, and is as old as the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan itself.¹¹² Its clubhouse was at 44-C Upper Nanking Street in the post-war period, moving to Tanjong Pagar Road when the government acquired the Nanking Road house.¹¹³ Since 1922, the Club has been sharing the Ningpo Guild’s premises as it could not afford the rent for the Tanjong Pagar clubhouse. Today it exists largely in name, with few active members.¹¹⁴

Many members of the Shanghai Club were from neighbouring Ningbo and Wenzhou.¹¹⁵ Phoo Chok Yan for example, was remembered as having spent a great deal of time playing mah-jong at the Shanghai

Club.¹¹⁶ Many of the Shanghai migrants to Singapore —whether truly from Shanghai or not—were in industries that serviced British troops in Shanghai, such as tailoring and laundry. When the British troops were relocated to Singapore, many businesses also followed southward.¹¹⁷ Shanghainese tailor Xu Jin Sheng (徐金生) was invited by the wife of a British Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank manager to continue dressing her when her husband moved to Singapore.¹¹⁸

Tienmen (天门)

The Nanyang Hupei Tienmen Association was established in 1964 to promote ties between Tianmen clansmen though they were few in number and dispersed all across the Malay Peninsula. The Association currently has its office at 324F Changi Road, and has two representatives on the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan’s board.¹¹⁹

¹⁰⁸ 莫美颜 “本地温州人庆祝鲁班诞辰”, *Zaobao* (早报), 9 May, 1999.

¹⁰⁹ 《新加坡温州会馆七十周年纪念特刊》, p. 61.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 182

¹¹¹ Oral history recording, Ng Chee Seng (1985): 000444/29, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

¹¹² 《三江百年文化史》, p. 54.

¹¹³ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Election Records, 1977-1978; 《三江百年文化史》, 54.

¹¹⁴ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 55.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹¹⁶ Oral history recording, Phoo Lee Tong: 000191/2.

¹¹⁷ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 55.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹¹⁹ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Election Records, 2002-2003.

Hunan, Hubei (湖南, 湖北)

The 'two Hu's' (*Lianghu*, 两湖) of the Liang Hu Hui Kuan refers to Hunan and Hubei, both provinces in central China. The Singapore Liang Hu Hui Kuan (Association) was set up in 1947.¹²⁰ In 1982, the Hui Kuan was still in existence and had its office at 444-C Geylang Road.¹²¹ By the twenty-first century, it was no longer represented on the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan's board of directors.¹²²

Northern China

Huabei (华北) refers to the regions north of the Yangtze River in China. The northern Chinese started migrating to Singapore in the 1930s. Though the Sanjiang community included these migrants, the language barrier was significant and prompted the establishment of the Nanyang Hwa Pek Thung Hsiang Hoey in 1935.¹²³ Most of its members are people from Shandong (山东).¹²⁴ It set up office at Upper Cross Street in 1937.¹²⁵

Communal Institutions

Ancestor worship

The Sam Kiang Public Cemetery was the first communal Sanjiang institution in Singapore. Established at Jalan Rimau in 1898, it included Fude Ancestral Temple (福德祠) that housed ancestral tablets and the Land Buddha (土地菩薩), and the Jingshan Pavilion (静山亭).¹²⁶ Worship of the Land Buddha is a custom unique to the Zhejiang region, and Run Run Shaw visited the Jingshan Pavilion during its construction in 1949.¹²⁷ A couplet that hung at the pavilion evinced a strong overseas Chinese connection to the homeland.¹²⁸ Annual spring and autumn ancestor worship festivals (春秋祭) were held at the Jingshan Pavilion.¹²⁹

The six-acre land at Jalan Rimau was acquired by the government in 1982, and the Sam Kiang Ancestral Hall (三江公祠), a double storey Chinese-style temple was constructed at 96 Depot Road in 1984.¹³⁰ The deity altar and ancestral tablets are housed on the first floor; ashes are housed on the second. The Huay Kwan's Annual General Meetings are usually also conducted at the Ancestral Hall's premises, in conjunction with spring festival gatherings.¹³¹

Welfare

The earliest charitable institutions of the Sanjiang community were the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan's Unemployment Office (失业公所) and Benevolent Section (三江会馆慈善互助部). The Unemployment Office was set up at Killiney Road in the 1950s, to help

¹²⁰ The Liang Hu Hui Kuan published 《新加坡两湖会馆庆祝二十周年纪念暨筹募新会所基金游艺大会特刊》 for its twentieth anniversary in 1967.

¹²¹ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Election Records, 1982-1983.

¹²² Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Election Records, 2002-2003.

¹²³ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 58.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.

¹²⁸ The couplet reads “三江土地照同人志壮心坚名扬蛮方，四明子弟异立帮义重身勇财汇祖家” (lit. “The land of the Sanjiang looks after its people, with perseverance to spread their name; sons of ‘Siming’ starting new communities, with responsibility to bring wealth back to the homeland”). This was written in 1908, most likely by a migrant from Ningbo as ‘Siming’ is the name of a mountain in eastern Zhejiang. From 《三江百年文化史》, p. 137.

¹²⁹ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 137.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹³¹ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Annual General Meetings, 1996-2009.

unemployed clansmen to make ends meet.¹³² It relocated to the Huay Kwan's old premises at Cuppage Road subsequently, but closed in the 1970s.¹³³ The Benevolent Section was set up in 1956, to provide aid to the disabled and terminally ill, and also financial relief for the family of their members upon their death.¹³⁴ It was registered under the Societies Act in 1960, and is a registered Mutual Benefit Organisation with the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.¹³⁵ The Benevolent Section is open to all Sanjiang clansmen who are residents of Singapore, and pays out a sum of \$800 to \$1300 to bereaved families.¹³⁶

In 1979, the Sam Kiang Elderly Home (三江安乐园) for those without kin was established on Sam Kiang Cemetery's premises next to its staff quarters. It was built by Chwee Meng Chong and ran on donations from Sam Kiang clansmen.¹³⁷ When state acquisition of the Jalan Rimau cemetery land was initiated in 1980, the Huay Kwan requested permission to retain the Home (along with Fude Temple) but this was rejected on grounds that the area was low-lying and prone to flooding.¹³⁸ It then tried to relocate the Home to the new Ancestral Hall's premises at Depot Road, but the site was not authorised for usage as a home for the elderly.¹³⁹ Only the establishment of an elderly activity centre was permitted after Chwee's negotiation with the Housing and Development Board, and the elderly under the Home's care were allocated to two homes in Redhill and Ang Mo Kio.¹⁴⁰

The establishment of the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Charity Clinic (三江会馆慈善诊疗所) was initiated in 1975 by Chwee, who became chairman of the Huay Kwan in 1974. Chwee and his vice-chairman Yang Zi Ben (杨子本) visited the Kiangsu and Chekiang Residents (Hong Kong) Association (苏浙旅港同乡会)¹⁴¹ to observe the operation of their charity clinic.¹⁴² Sam Kiang Huay Kwan's honorary premier Runme Shaw started the clinic fund and pledged annual donations which has been continued by the Shaw Foundation.¹⁴³ The clinic was formally opened in March 1977 by Runme Shaw at the Huay Kwan's premises at St Thomas Walk; it also relocated to Wilkie Road in 1996. The clinic is open to the public, collects a token fee and runs solely on Shaw Foundation's annual contribution to the clinic fund each year (between \$30,000 to \$50,000) and private donations.

Education

There is no traceable date for the founding of the Sam Kiang Public School (三江公学), but it was Chen Lai Chang (陈来昌), the second head of the Huay Kwan, who first suggested opening a primary school.¹⁴⁴ Chen explained that his motivation was the fact that while Westerners signed their way in and out of customs checkpoints, the Chinese

¹³² 《三江百年文化史》，p. 120; Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Minutes of Mutual Help Committee Meetings 1956-1970.

¹³³ "About Sam Kiang Huay Kwan", *Singapore Sam Kiang Huay Kwan*. Retrieved on 15 March, 2012, <http://www.samkiang.org/indexEng.htm>.

¹³⁴ "三江会馆慈善互助部", *Singapore Sam Kiang Huay Kwan*. Retrieved on 15 March, 2012, <http://www.samkiang.org/fuzhubu.htm>.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*; "List of Mutual Benefit Organisations, Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports. Retrieved on 15 March,

<http://app1.mcys.gov.sg/Policies/CaringandActiveCommunity/PromotingCommunityInvolvement/MutualBenefitOrganisationsMBOs/ListofMutualBenefitOrganisations.aspx>

¹³⁶ Rules of the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Benevolent Section, pp. 1-3, from "三江会馆慈善互助部", *Singapore Sam Kiang Huay Kwan*. Retrieved on 15 March, 2012, <http://www.samkiang.org/fuzhubu.htm>.

¹³⁷ 《三江百年文化史》，p. 138.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁴¹ Bion T. Hung (孔东), A Study of Kiangsu and Chekiang Residents (Hong Kong) Association [苏浙旅港同乡会之研究] (台湾: 台湾学生书局, 1994). Run Run Shaw was honorary chairman at the Association.

¹⁴² 《三江百年文化史》，p. 134.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*; Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Annual General Meetings, 1996-2009.

¹⁴⁴ 《三江百年文化史》，p. 131.

were made to give at handprints because they were assumed to be uneducated.¹⁴⁵ From Phoo Lee Tong's (傅礼堂) memory, his father also helped to found the school, which operated out of the Huay Kwan's premises at Jalan Ampas. Yang Xing Hua (杨惺华) purchased a house at 4 Cuppage Road as school compounds in 1937.¹⁴⁶ The school resumed operation in 1951 after the Japanese Occupation, with an enrolment of over 200 students in the early 1950s.¹⁴⁷ In 1956 the school had 345 students and nine school staff, and boasted three school buses by 1964.¹⁴⁸ Chen's eldest daughter Chen Ling Tai (陈菱苔) replaced an elderly Huang Jing (黄憬) in 1958 as principal.¹⁴⁹ Enrolment was not restricted although it was officially a Sam Kiang school; only 10% of students in 1969 were Sanjiangren.¹⁵⁰ Sam Kiang Public School ceased operation in 1971 with declining enrolment. The Sam Kiang School (三江学校) was re-established in 2004 as a private tuition school, offering English and Mandarin language, writing, calligraphy and arithmetic classes.¹⁵¹ In conjunction with the Shanghai Institute of Chinese (上海中文学院), Chen Jian (陈建) was invited to run the school and offer classes on Shanghaiese language and culture.¹⁵² The school also recently launched classes for the elderly.¹⁵³

Apart from the Sam Kiang School, the Huay Kwan has had several informal educational initiatives. It regularly hosts seminars on Chinese culture, book launches and talks on education and lifestyle.¹⁵⁴ The Huay Kwan also aims to organise immersion trips to China for secondary school students.¹⁵⁵

The Sam Kiang Huay Kwan has an education fund that hands out student bursaries annually. The fund is supported by donations from senior Huay Kwan members and the Huay Kwan's member institutions.¹⁵⁶

Occupations and Trades

Sanjiangren in Singapore are most prominent in construction, woodwork and furniture, tailoring, laundry and dry-cleaning, piano companies and also bookstores. This list is not exhaustive, but a selection based on the availability of sources.

Construction

There are several leading Sanjiangren personalities in the construction industry. Shaw Sung Ching, chairman of the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan from 1978-1981, built and owned the Tropicana (碧雅) which housed Singapore's first cabaret featuring topless performances at 9 Scotts Road.¹⁵⁷ Chwee Meng Chong, the Huay Kwan's longest serving chairman, founded S.A. Shee & Co (聚建筑) which constructed Maybank

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 131; Yang was the third head of the Huay Kwan, 1945-1952. 《三江百年文化史》, p. 156.

¹⁴⁷ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan meetings 1950-55, from Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Minutes of Mutual Help Committee Meetings 1956-1970.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.; 《三江百年文化史》, p. 132.

¹⁴⁹ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 132

¹⁵⁰ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan meetings 1969, from Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Minutes of Mutual Help Committee Meetings 1956-1970. Lawyer Lee Bon Leong (李文龙), a Justice of the Peace, was a non-Sanjiangren educated at the Sam Kiang Public School.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵¹ "Our Courses 课程", *Sam Kiang School Singapore*. Retrieved on 15 March, 2012, http://www.sks.edu.sg/course_cff.html; Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Newsletter, Issue 2 (January 2009), p. 7.

¹⁵² Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Annual General Meetings, 4 April, 2004.

¹⁵³ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Blog on Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations (SFCCA) website. Retrieved on 15 March, 2012, <http://www.sfcca.sg/?uid-64-action-spacelist-type-blog>.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Annual General Meetings, 30 March, 2008.

¹⁵⁶ Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Newsletter, Issue 2 (January 2009), p. 6; Sam Kiang Huay Kwan, Minutes of Annual General Meetings 1996-2009.

¹⁵⁷ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 81; Tropicana was open from 1968-1989. Joy Frances, "Goodbye, Mr Tropicana." *TODAY*, 23 April 2003, p. 4.

branches throughout Malaysia, as well as Peninsula Plaza (百龄大厦) in Singapore.¹⁵⁸ Other prominent Sam Kiang construction companies included Shanghai Youlian Construction (上海友联建筑), Da Nanyang Construction Company (大南洋建筑公司, founded by Yang Xing Hua in 1928), Luhongji Construction Company (陆鸿记建筑公司, by Sanjiang pioneer Lu Jin Fa [陆进发]) and The Central Construction Company (中央营造公司).¹⁵⁹

Woodwork and furniture

The community also dominated the woodwork and furniture industry. One of the earliest in the trade was Chen Lai Chang's (陈来昌) Wan Xing Furniture (万兴木器).¹⁶⁰ Chen had also established Wan Xing Chinese Goods (万兴国货公司) at Shui Xian Men (水仙门; around High Street and Hill Street).¹⁶¹ Choo Cheng Meng, dubbed by *The Straits Times* as the "furniture king of Singapore", first worked in Wan Xing Furniture before starting his own Cheng Meng Furniture (承明木器) in 1941.¹⁶² Many immigrants of Wenzhou origin are also in the trade. The Wen Chow Wei Khan estimated in 1953 that 90% of its members were in the woodwork or furniture business, although it had fallen to 40-50% in the 1980s.¹⁶³ Sanjiang woodwork companies have been commonly known as 'Shanghai furniture companies' (上海木器), but the large majority of these were owned by Sanjiangren from Wenzhou and Ningbo who had learnt the trade with woodwork masters in Shanghai.¹⁶⁴ There were also wood carvers in the community, although they seemed to be a minority. According to Kwa Cheng Choon (葛清春), whose father was a wood carver from Zhejiang, there were less than ten Sanjiangren carving businesses in the 1920s, mostly family businesses that worked with temples.¹⁶⁵ While the Hokkiens carved temple idols, Sanjiangren usually carved Buddha statues, and there were distinct stylistic differences in the work of the two groups.¹⁶⁶ The carvers were concentrated in Xiao Po (小坡; area north of the Singapore River)¹⁶⁷ and the New World amusement park.¹⁶⁸ Sanjiangren in the woodwork industry, the Wen Chow Wei Khan in particular, celebrate the birthday of Lu Pan (鲁班), the patron god of woodworkers on 13th day of sixth lunar month.¹⁶⁹

¹⁵⁸ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 75; Mohd Sainudin v. Consolidated Hotels Ltd in Court of Appeal, Singapore 30 December 1990. Retrieved on 15 March, 2012, [www.ipsofactoj.com/archive/1990/Part08/arc1990\(8\)-013.htm](http://www.ipsofactoj.com/archive/1990/Part08/arc1990(8)-013.htm); Chwee was chairman of the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan from 1974-2002, except during 1978-1981 when Shaw Sung Ching headed the organisation.

¹⁵⁹ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 75.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁶¹ "Shui Xian Men" (水仙门) is a traditional Chinese place-name that refers the area encompassing Hill Street, High Street, North Bridge Road (along the sea), Funan Street and Chin Nan Street. 吴庆辉, "新加坡通俗华文街名(6) - 大坡小坡水仙门", *新加坡文史达人*. Retrieved on 15 March, 2012, <http://blog.omy.sg/sgstory/archives/132>.

¹⁶² 金普森, 孙善根 (主编), 《宁波帮大辞典》, p. 103; Paul Ong, "The furniture king of Singapore", *The Straits Times*, 26 May 1985, p. 1.

¹⁶³ 《三江百年文化史》, pp. 78-79; 《新加坡温州会馆六十周年纪念特刊》.

¹⁶⁴ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 77.

¹⁶⁵ Oral history recording, Kwa Cheng Choon (1990): 001131/1, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ "Xiao Po" (小坡) refers to the area north of the Singapore River. This included Bras Basah Road, Beach Road and the seven roads parallel to it: North Bridge Road, Victoria Street, Queen Street, Waterloo Street, Bencoolen Street, Prinsep Street and Selegie Road. The centre of Xiao Po is Middle Road. 吴庆辉, "新加坡通俗华文街名(6) - 大坡小坡水仙门".

¹⁶⁸ Oral history recording, Kwa Cheng Choon: 001131/1.

¹⁶⁹ Oral history recording, Choo Cheng Meng (1984): 000472/30, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore; 《新加坡温州会馆七十周年纪念特刊》, p. 61.

Tailors

The Shanghainese in Singapore have arguably been most famous for tailoring and dress-making. Xu Jin Sheng was the earliest Shanghainese tailor to arrive in Singapore in 1923.¹⁷⁰ He was the first chairman of the Shanghai European Ladies Dress Makers Association, which he started alongside Ng Chee Seng (吳志仁) and Ng's father Wu Zai Qin (吳再勤).¹⁷¹ The aim of the Association was to help the Shanghainese tailors, few in number, to gather on special occasions and keep in touch.¹⁷² The Association had its office at Tank Road near Fort Canning Hill, moving to Lloyd Road in 1945 and then 67 Devonshire Road in 1976.¹⁷³ There was a Xuanyuan Western Dress-maker Association (軒轅西洋服商會) for the Cantonese, Hokkien and Hakka tailors but it did not have much to do with the Association. Unlike tailors from other dialect groups, Shanghainese tailors only made ladieswear.¹⁷⁴ At its peak, the Association had over 400 members, but the number dwindled as Shanghainese tailors were unable to find apprentices or successors to continue the business.¹⁷⁵ While the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan's 2001 publication named Ching Foo Kun (金富庚) as the president of the Association, there have been no record of the Association's participation in the Huay Kwan's election records in the past decade.¹⁷⁶

Most of the Shanghainese tailors were concentrated in the Orchard Road area, but there were also some that worked in Indian shops on High Street.¹⁷⁷ Ching, who ran Gold Rose Ladieswear (金玫瑰女服)¹⁷⁸ recalled that most business in the pre-war period came from foreigners. There was also a post-war boom with prisoners-of-war passing through Singapore who needed new garments. Some tailors serviced the Japanese during the Occupation, although they faced bullying and boycotts from anti-Japanese people as a result.¹⁷⁹ Ching noted in the 1980s that there were more tailors from Wenzhou than Shanghai in the market.¹⁸⁰ Shanghainese tailors worship the Xuanyuan Emperor (軒轅黃帝) on the 18th day of the sixth lunar month.¹⁸¹

Laundry and dry-cleaning

In the pre-war era, the Sanjiang community dominated the laundry and dry-cleaning trade. One of the earliest proprietors was Yu Bin (于斌) who set up shop in Orchard Road, which also offered dyeing and mending.¹⁸² Phoo Chok Yan's laundry was in Tanglin, where he serviced colonial officials and expatriates.¹⁸³ Other laundry companies included "Victoria" (維多利亞) and "Big Shanghai" (大上海).¹⁸⁴ Like the dress-making industry, the prime of laundry and dry-cleaning was during the colonial era where most Europeans in Singapore, including British soldiers and hotels, outsourced their laundry to 'Shanghainese' companies.¹⁸⁵ One proprietor Xu Lin Sen (徐林森) was invited by British troops relocating from Shanghai to Singapore to set up shop on the island. Xu brought thirty-two staff to Singapore in 1936, and also followed

¹⁷⁰ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 68; Oral history recording, Ching Foo Kun (1983): 000325/13, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

¹⁷¹ Oral history recording, Ching Foo Kun: 000325/12.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*; Oral history recording, Ng Chee Seng (1985): 000444/28.

¹⁷³ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 59.

¹⁷⁴ Oral history recording, Ching Foo Kun: 000325/12.

¹⁷⁵ Oral history recording, Ching Foo Kun: 000325/14.

¹⁷⁶ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 59; Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Election Records, 2002-2009.

¹⁷⁷ Oral history recording, Ching Foo Kun: 000325/13; Oral history recording, Ng Chee Seng: 000444/23.

¹⁷⁸ Elected candidates had their details recorded, found in Sam Kiang Huay Kwan Election Records, 1974-75.

¹⁷⁹ Oral history recording, Ching Foo Kun: 000325/13.

¹⁸⁰ Oral history recording, Ching Foo Kun: 000325/14.

¹⁸¹ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 59.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁸³ Oral history recording, Phoo Lee Tong: 000191/1.

¹⁸⁴ Oral history recording, Ching Foo Kun: 000325/13.

¹⁸⁵ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 57.

the same troops to Kedah in 1941.¹⁸⁶ Prior to the war, most laundrymen were hired on a private basis, whereby one or two workers lived with the family or factory that contracted their services. This sometimes included military barracks and government offices.¹⁸⁷ Laundry companies only proliferated in the 1950s, particularly in residential areas like Geylang and Katong.¹⁸⁸ Smaller scale businesses were usually family-run, while bigger businesses also employed non-Sanjiang people after the 1960s.¹⁸⁹

The Singapore Chinese Dry-cleaning Owners' Association was established in 1946¹⁹⁰ by Shi Jin Cai (石金才), with Phoo Chok Yan and Wang Xiang Xian as honorary chairmen.¹⁹¹ The primary goal was to standardise prices as well as to keep the hundred odd members of the trade, in Singapore and Johore, in touch with each other.¹⁹² Unlike the Dress Makers Association, this union was restricted to industry employers; employees did not join or start their own union.¹⁹³ The Association had its office at Rangoon Road, then Geylang, before moving into the Sam Kiang Huay Kwan's premises at Cuppage Road. The Association then moved together with the Huay Kwan, to St Thomas Walk and later Wilkie Road.¹⁹⁴ In the 1960s, the Association also had its own Mutual Benefit Section (慈善互助部) that ceased operations in 1982.¹⁹⁵ With the retirement of older members and the lack of successors continuing in the trade, the Association has declined in numbers since the 1980s and exist for social purposes rather than as a trade union.¹⁹⁶

Piano companies

The piano business in Singapore has been dominated by Sanjiangren of Ningbo origin, as piano-makers in China were traditionally Ningbo people.¹⁹⁷ They first entered the trade through the English piano company Moutrie in Shanghai in the late nineteenth century, and began establishing their own companies and expanding out of China.¹⁹⁸ Ningbo piano merchants spread to Malaya, Hong Kong and Taiwan, where they were known as "Shanghai" piano companies (上海琴行). In the pre-war era, most pianos in Singapore were imported from Shanghai.¹⁹⁹ While British piano companies like Moutrie were also established in Singapore, the piano industry was generally dominated by the Shanghai-Ningbo people.²⁰⁰

The Ningbo piano companies are mostly family firms; prominent surnames in the business are Wang (王), Chiu (邱), Ho (贺) and Liew (刘). The earliest piano company Nan Heng Piano (南兴钢琴) was started by Wang Xiang Xian's father Wang Ah Ming (王阿明) in 1924. In 1930, Chiu Seck Joo (邱锡铸) and Wang started Keller Piano together, later run by Chiu's son Qiu Nan Yang (邱南洋). Another of Chiu's sons Robert Chiu (邱耀南) started Robert Piano (罗拨钢琴) in 1966.²⁰¹ Chiu Seck Joo's nephew Chiu Yeo Ding (邱耀庭) established Singapore Piano (新加坡钢琴) in 1953,

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁸⁷ Oral history recording, Chin Sew Moh (1983): 000338/2, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

¹⁸⁸ Oral history recording, Chin Sew Moh (1983): 000338/2, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ According to Chin Sew Moh, the Association was started in 1949.

¹⁹¹ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 56.

¹⁹² Oral history recording, Chin Sew Moh: 000338/2.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ 《三江百年文化史》, p. 56.

¹⁹⁵ Oral history recording, Chin Sew Moh: 000338/2; 《三江百年文化史》, p. 56.

¹⁹⁶ Oral history recording, Chin Sew Moh: 000338/2.

¹⁹⁷ 林园宁, 杨建森, 《宁波钢琴百年》(杭州: 摄影出版社, 2005), p. 14.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 22-25.

¹⁹⁹ Oral history recording, Chiu Yeo Ding (1998): 002059/1, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

²⁰⁰ Oral history recording, Chiu Yeo Ding: 002059/4.

²⁰¹ 林园宁, 杨建森 《宁波钢琴百年》, p. 26.

and his younger brother Chiu Yeo Teck (邱耀德) Chiu Piano (邱氏钢琴) in 1980.²⁰² Chiu Yeut Jin (邱樾臣), another cousin to Robert and Yeo Ding, established Eagle Piano (弦歌钢琴) in 1940. Eagle Piano Company was located along Serangoon Road, and used as the command centre for the rescue operation on the first day of the New World Hotel collapse in 1986.²⁰³ The Ho family includes He Xiang Yu (贺祥裕) who started Eastern Piano (东方琴行) in 1934. He Yun Qin (贺云卿) started Renner Piano (联艺琴行) in 1959. He Xiang Yu's son-in-law Liu Lin Quan (刘林泉) established L. J. Liew Piano (刘林泉钢琴) in 1940, which was succeeded by his son Liew Nam Mong (刘南猛).²⁰⁴ Although Eagle Piano had assembled some thousand pianos under their own "Aristocrat" brand after the war, most of these piano companies were involved in dealership and piano tuning and repair.²⁰⁵

Bookstores

The four biggest Chinese bookstores in Singapore—Chung Hwa Book Company (中华书局), The Commercial Press (商务印书馆), World Book Company (世界书局) and Shanghai Book Company (上海书局)—were founded by Sanjiangren.²⁰⁶

Chung Hwa and The Commercial Press, both headquartered in Shanghai, opened branches in Singapore in 1913 and 1916 respectively in Da Po (大坡; area south of the Singapore River).²⁰⁷ Shanghai Book Company was started by Wenzhou immigrants Chen Yue Shu and his brother-in-law Wang Shu Yang (王叔阳) in Shui Xian Men in 1925.²⁰⁸ Although founded in Singapore, the company was named after the city renowned as the publishing centre of China's New Cultural Movement, where most of its imports were from.²⁰⁹ Shanghai Book Co.'s Chinese editorial and press offices were established in Hong Kong in 1947.²¹⁰ World Book Company was founded by Chou Sing Chu (周星衢) from Zhejiang, as the Cheng Hing Company (正兴公司) in 1924.²¹¹ Chou also established Popular Bookstore (大众书局) on North Bridge Road in 1936.²¹² These bookstores carried various books and magazines from mainland China, and also published original textbooks for local schools.²¹³ The Chinese companies networked through a book sellers association (书业职工联合会), which was chaired by the manager of Shanghai Book Company Wen Ping (温平).²¹⁴

A great number of principals and teachers in local Chinese schools such as The Chinese High School (华侨中学) and Nanyang Girls' High School (南洋女中) were Sanjiangren, as they were familiar with new intellectual ideas from China.²¹⁵ Many Sanjiangren were also involved with Chinese newspapers like the Nanyang Siang Pau (南洋商报) and Sin Chew Jit Poh (星洲日报).²¹⁶ The Chinese bookstores were places

²⁰² Ibid., pp. 25-26.

²⁰³ Joan Hon, *Hotel New World collapse* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1987), pp. 21-22.

²⁰⁴ 林园宁, 杨建森《宁波钢琴百年》, pp. 25-26.

²⁰⁵ Oral history recording, Chiu Yeut Jin 001367/2, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore.

²⁰⁶ “《华惹》风云之妇运领袖陈蒙鹤”, 《〈华惹〉风云与后李光耀时代》, 张泰永 (主编) (Kuala Lumpur: 21 世纪出版社, 2010), p. 16.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 14; “Da Po” (大坡) refers to the area south of the Singapore River. This included South Bridge Road and New Bridge Road. The centre of Da Po is Cross Street and Upper Cross Street. 吴庆辉, “新加坡通俗华文街名 (6) - 大坡小坡水仙门”.

²⁰⁸ 陈蒙志, “与上海书局有关的点点滴滴”, 《〈华惹〉风云与后李光耀时代》, p. 47.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 53-54.

²¹¹ Alvin Chua, “The Popular Group”, *Infopedia*. Retrieved from http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_1672_2010-06-16.html, 1 October, 2012; “《华惹》风云之妇运领袖陈蒙鹤”, p. 16.

²¹² Alvin Chua, “The Popular Group”.

²¹³ “《华惹》风云之妇运领袖陈蒙鹤”, p. 16; 陈蒙志, “与上海书局有关的点点滴滴”, p. 51.

²¹⁴ Oral history recording, Pao Shih Tsun (1992): 001353/2, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore; Wen Ping was Chen Yue Shu's son-in-law. 陈蒙志, “与上海书局有关的点点滴滴”, p. 51.

²¹⁵ “《华惹》风云之妇运领袖陈蒙鹤”, p. 17; Oral history recording, Pao Shih Tsun: 001353/2.

²¹⁶ Oral history recording, Pao Shih Tsun: 001353/2.

for intellectuals to congregate and network, thus becoming important points in the exchange of cultural and political ideas, as well as the employment network.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Ibid., “《华惹》风云之妇运领袖陈蒙鹤”, p. 17.