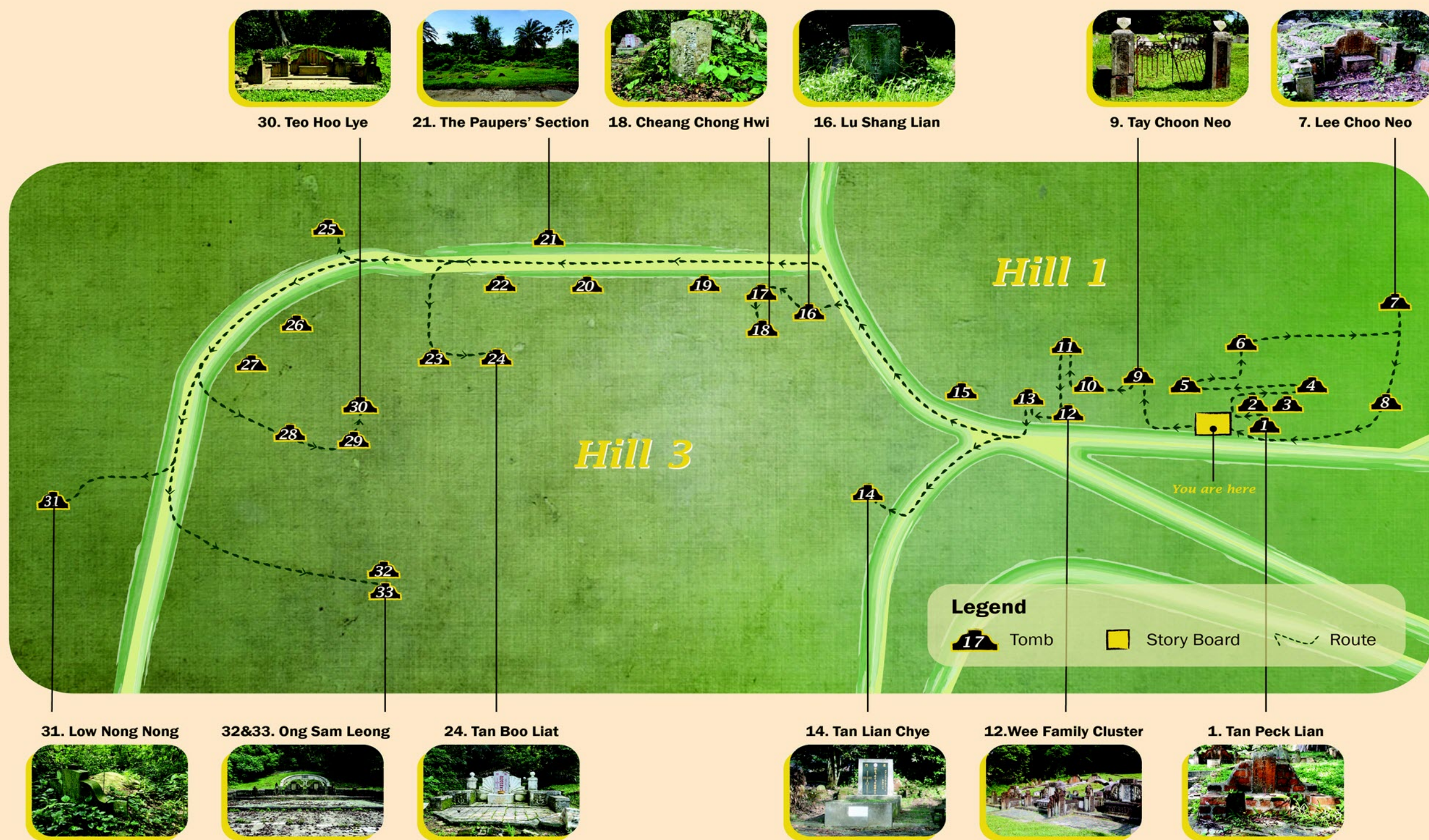


BUKIT BROWN WAYFINDER

Where the past whispers and history stirs—this is how the Bukit Brown Wayfinder begins. Curated as a storied journey into the lives of our pioneers by all things Bukit Brown and designed by Studio Sonder, the Wayfinder invites you to walk among the resting places of influential bankers, educators, healers, as well as the unsung souls who wove their threads into the nation's tapestry.

Over 30 tombs tell stories of the dreams, struggles, and triumphs that shaped Singapore's early years—a mosaic of memory etched in stone and earth. To augment your journey and enhance your experience, QR codes on each tomb unlock more detailed narratives on our website. So step gently, wander with wonder, and may the trail leave its stories upon your heart.



Tomb Signage



Look out for the tomb signages that are located beside the tombs containing information about the tomb.

Route Marker



Look out for the route markers to guide you on the trail. They mark the trail by showing you the distances and directions between tombs.

Navigating the Trail Safely and Responsibly

- To show respect, do avoid stepping on burial mounds and altars.
- Watch for uneven ground, tree roots, and fallen branches.
- Step carefully as grass, stones or bricks may be slippery.
- Protect yourself against mosquitoes with repellent.
- Drink lots of liquids and note that there are no toilet facilities.
- Bin your litter; better still, help pick up litter along the way!

Walking Duration

Tomb 1 to 8:	20 mins
Tomb 9 to 13:	20 mins
Tomb 13 to 15:	10 mins
Tomb 15 to 22:	30 mins
Tomb 22 to 32:	45 mins

Timings are estimated and based on average walking speeds.

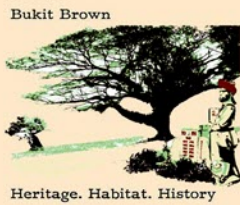


Follow @bukitbrown_wayfinderdirections on Instagram for step-by-step videos to guide your experience.



Follow us on Instagram! @bukitbrownwayfinder

Presented by



Supported by



*The spirits among
the grass welcome us. Their stone
homes are without doors.*

- Gwee Li Sui

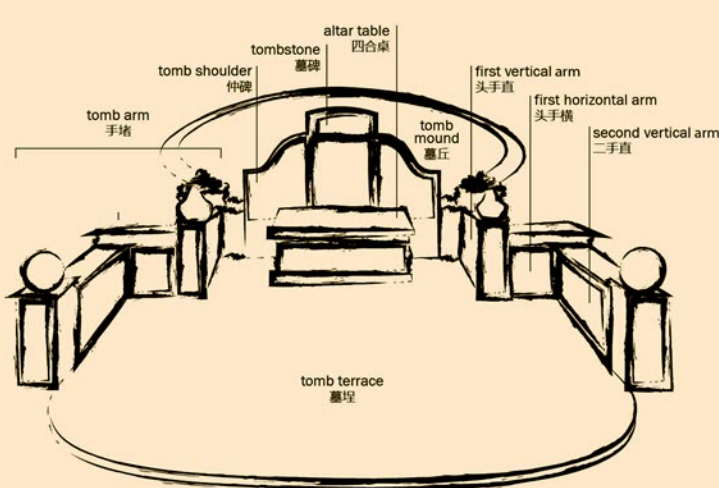


HERITAGE

生原中国籍 葬在外邦域
Born in China, now buried in a foreign land.

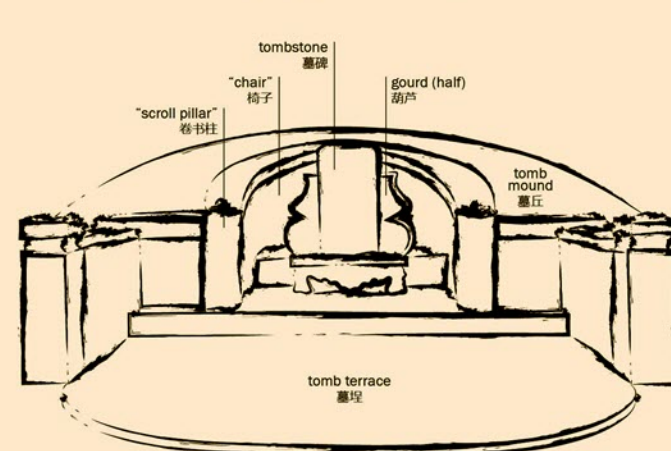
This pair of couplets found on some tombstone pillars speaks of the physical displacement of sojourners to *Nanyang* (the South Seas), and the cultural transition they experienced reflected in tomb architecture, and the rites and rituals conducted in Bukit Brown.

Hokkien Tomb



- Omega shaped
- An oval-shaped wall rims the burial mound.
- The tombstone spreads out symmetrically with "arms" on the sides.

Teochew Tomb



- Resembles an armchair
- The burial mound has no wall around it.
- The "arms" embrace the grave in a curve and the tombstone is flanked on either side by half a gourd.

There are two main styles of Chinese graves in Bukit Brown: Hokkien and Teochew. Both designs have an altar table, a "courtyard" in front for descendants to conduct rituals to pay their respects and an earth deity, protector of the land.

The *Nanyang* style of graves often includes unique features influenced by cross-cultural interactions in the region, such as statues of Sikh guards, carvings of cherubs, and decorative tiles produced in Europe and Japan.

Tombs may also have traditional designs with stone carvings inspired by Chinese legends and historical stories, such as the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the *Eight Immortals*, and the *24 Filial Exemplars*.



Nezha fighting the Dragon Prince. (Photo credit: Liang Yanjie)



Brick collection of a tomb keeper. (Photo credit: Claire Leow)

As for the poor who cannot afford such elaborate decorations, their tombs also embody the *Nanyang* flavour built with bricks bearing the signature of local kilns.



Paying respects to the dead during *Qingming*. (Photo credit: Peter Pak)



Descendants paying respects during *Qingming*. (Photo credit: Peter Pak)

Besides families paying respects to the dead during *Qingming* and Seventh Month periods, religious groups regularly conduct public rituals for the salvation of souls, with all spirits resident in the cemetery invited to the sumptuous feasts and paper offerings laid out for them.

In Bukit Brown, every tomb—grand or humble—tells a story of migration, memory, and the blending of worlds. Whether these pioneers regard Singapore as their home or a foreign land, Bukit Brown is their final resting place as Chinese leader Tan Ean Kiam penned for his grave:

蓋棺論定便是吾廬
Once the coffin lid is shut, this shall be my abode.



Scan to decode the symbols and stories on Bukit Brown's graves that make it uniquely Nanyang.

HABITAT

The Habitat of Bukit Brown

I am cool! My ambient temperature can be as much as 7 degrees cooler than in the city. Spanning 80 hectares, I host lush woodlands interspersed with grassland and scrubland. My ecosystem has 130 species of vascular plants and myriad wildlife including species of 93 birds, 15 reptiles, 56 butterflies and 28 mammals. I am watered by two streams where 12 fish and 12 frog species live. I am unique because a cemetery resides within me.

Croton

(Codiaeum variegatum)

I am a choice evergreen shrub in Bukit Brown planted next to many graves of the dearly departed. My glossy leaves stand out in vivid tie-dye patterns of green, yellow and purplish red. Beware! I am poisonous and if you break any part of me, I bleed a milky sap that can irritate skin and eyes.

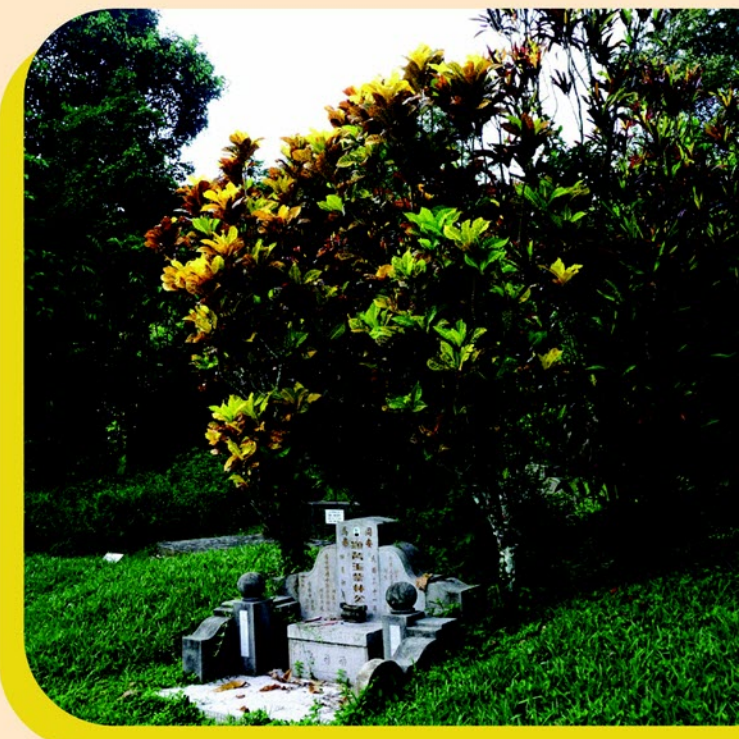


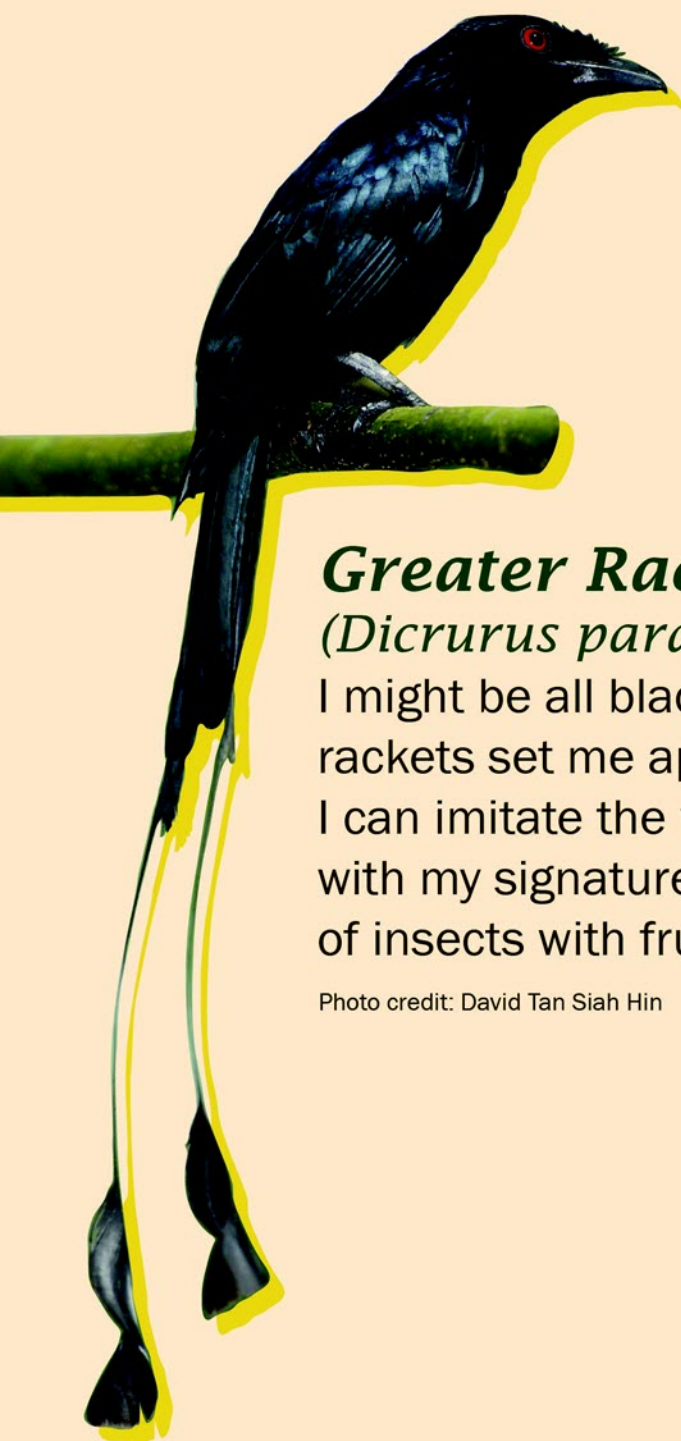
Photo credit: Peter Pak

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo

(Dicrurus paradiseus)

I might be all black, but my tail extensions ending in two rackets set me apart from my fellow birds. As a master mimic, I can imitate the whistles of other birds, accentuating them with my signature metallic undertone. I love a high-protein diet of insects with fruits and nectar on the side.

Photo credit: David Tan Siah Hin



Common Mormon Butterfly

(Papilio polytes romulus)

Male Mormons have just one black-and-white look. We females have two forms dressed in variations of black, white and red. Hence one male with two ‘wives’ recalls the polygamous Mormon sect, giving us our name. Me? I mimic the appearance of the poisonous Common Rose butterfly to protect myself from predators.



Photo credit: Yam Tim Wing

Banyan Tree

(Ficus microcarpa)

I am also known as the Strangling Fig, starting life as a germinating seed on a branch. I grow quickly, sending branches outwards and roots downwards that thicken into pillars. Soon, my pillar roots encircle my host tree, while my leaves might shade it out, slowly strangling my hapless host.



Photo credit: Bianca Polak

Sunda Pangolin

(Manis javanica)

I am called the scaly anteater for my armour of knife-sharp scales. My claws dig easily into ant nests, and my long sticky tongue laps up ants and termites by the dozen. Sadly, my kind is critically endangered as humans covet my scales and flesh, making us the most trafficked animal worldwide.



Photo credit: Frenedi Apen Irawan



Take a walk with a nature lover to experience how nature still thrives and soothes the wandering spirit despite the highway's roar.

HISTORY

Our Migrant Story

Our migrant story rests in Bukit Brown, the outcome of unprecedented waves of migration that date back to the early 19th century known in history as *The Chinese Diaspora*. It was a period when China faced external and internal conflicts, catastrophes of drought and famine, and the political turmoil from vestiges of the Qing Dynasty grappling with the need for reform that came too little, too late.

Sin Chew (星洲)—the island of stars, a sobriquet for Singapore made popular by the poet Khoo Seok Wan (邱菽園), evoked a safe harbour and hope when migrants sailing in at night caught their first glimpse of the island ringed by the lights of other vessels.

From coolies to compradors, Bukit Brown is a story of displacement, a story also of opportunities for fortune, fuelled by the invention of steamships and the opening of the Suez Canal, propelling a new age of maritime trade. Declared a free port in 1819, Singapore became the bustling *Emporium of the East*.

The Chinese migrants who had come to *Sin Chew* were sojourners, holding the promise that one day they would return home in glory, but many did not make it.

For the poet and scholar Khoo Seok Wan*, the turmoil in China was unlike the stability in *Sin Chew*. He prepared his own grave in Bukit Brown and penned a poem for his tomb.

*Khoo's grave was among the 4000 graves exhumed for Lornie Highway.



Ships and boats in the Singapore harbour ca. 1870 - 1900. (Photo credit: Rijksmuseum)

Supported by

陳 延 謙 基 金
TAN EAN KIAM FOUNDATION

海山無地築仙龕

*There is no space in the seas and hills
to build my abode*

埋骨猶能躍劍潭

How can buried bones leap across the sword lake

日下三徵終不起

*Even if you beckon three times,
I can no longer rise*

星洲一臥忍長酣

Lying in Sin Chew enduring a long thirst

飛花恍悟前身蝶

*Flying flowers realised their past lives
as butterflies*

撫碣思停異代驂

*Caressing the epigraph, thoughts stop and future
generations prepare the chariot*

弗信且看墳草叢

If you don't believe, just look at the tomb grass

年年新綠到天南

They come back yearly with new greenness

八八老人菽園

88-old man Seok Wan (writer)

(Khoo was 64 when he composed this poem, 八八 is 8x8, a play on numbers)

(translated by Raymond Goh)



Read how Bukit Brown's heritage, habitat and history became our love story *Tak kenal maka tak cinta*.

1

TAN PECK LIAN

陳柏連

1897–1942

Place of Ancestry: Unknown



Read how
Bukit Brown's
tombstones
reveal shifting
political powers
through time.

Tombstones in Bukit Brown use different calendar systems, each with a unique story.

Tan Peck Lian, who was buried here, died during the Japanese Occupation. That could be why his tomb uses the Showa (昭和) calendar—look at the top right corner to see “Year 17” (十七年), which refers to the 17th Year of Emperor Showa's reign, or 1942. Just like Chinese imperial

calendars, Japanese ones reset with each emperor.

Five different calendar systems have been found in Bukit Brown! Each tells a story of identity, resistance, and change.



Box highlighting the inscription of 昭和十七年 on Tan's tombstone.

2.
*CHIA
WAN NEO*

5m

2

CHIA WAN NEO

謝圓娘

1864–1932

Place of Ancestry: Leong Khay (龍溪)



Read more
about the stories
behind the “Four
Loves”.

Chia Wan Neo was a proud Straits-born matriarch, and the intricate carvings on her tomb reflect her high status. She left a legacy of 34 great-grandchildren, and her wake was attended by three generations of descendants.

Her beautiful tomb features two carvings of the “Four Loves”—ancient poets and their favourite flowers. Each flower represents

a season and tells a story of Chinese culture and values.

Spot the lotus on the left panel (from your view) representing purity as it grows from mud, but stays untainted. See the plum blossom on the right, admired for its resilience in winter. Peonies (symbolising wealth) and chrysanthemums (a carefree life) appear on other tombs—keep a look out for them!

3.
YAP
YAN
NEO

2m

3

YAP YAN NEO

葉焉娘

1889–1925

Place of Ancestry: Tung Ann (同安)



Read more about the wealthy banker who left his wife a permanent love letter.

Yap Yan Neo may rest in a simple tomb, but her husband's grief speaks volumes. Tan Ean Kiam—co-founder of the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation (OCBC)—broke tradition by etching her name and his own on her grave, a rare tribute.

Beneath the altar, his poetic tribute replicated in his own handwriting reveals their marital

devotion: *“From the time she married and joined me, we shared 20 years of harmony without any shortcomings. She managed the household with great thrift. I now remain without a lifelong companion.”*

Tombs are like QR codes—scan this one to uncover a romance carved in stone.

4.
KOH
HOON
TECK &
WIFE

15m

4

KOH HOON TECK & WIFE

Koh Hoon Teck

許允德

1878–1956

Lim Guan Neo

林源娘

1863–1938

Place of Ancestry: Hai Deng (海澄)



Scan to gain insights into traditional Peranakan culture.

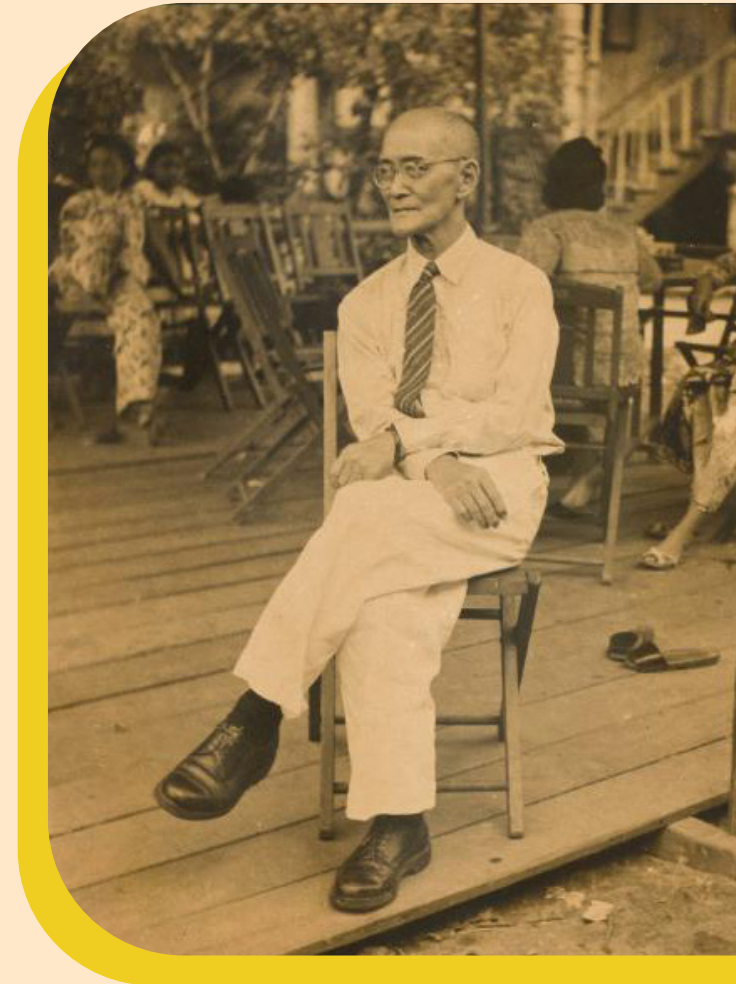
Koh Hoon Teck embraced a life of books, song and music in Baba Malay culture. He is credited with introducing the *bangsawan*, a form of Malay opera originating from Indonesia.

Koh had a flair for drama. Born a Han Chinese, he took part in a queue cutting ceremony as a public renunciation of the Qing Dynasty and further requested to be buried in Ming era robes—

the last Han Chinese dynasty which had been overthrown by the

Manchus in the 17th

century. Yes, he was a Chinese man in more ways than one, but a man who also lived deep into another culture.



Koh Hoon Teck in later life. (Photo credit: National Heritage Board)

5.
CHUA
SIN GHEE
& WIFE

10m

5

CHUA SIN GHEE & WIFE

Chua Sin Ghee

蔡新義

1862–1927

Madam Soh

蘇蟬娘

Unknown–1942

Place of Ancestry: Hai Deng (海澄)



Learn more
about Chua Sin
Ghee, Madam
Soh and their
adventurous life
together.

Epitaphs on tombs tell stories about how new immigrants toiled in Singapore and finally made their pot of gold. Etched on Chua's tombstone is a colourful account of how he came to Singapore and was inspired by the success of his clansman in establishing profitable businesses. In the span of 30 years, Chua, with his frugality and business acumen, grew his family and fortunes by setting

up two machinery factories. With his immense wealth, he gave back to society with philanthropy and also became a prominent community leader of his clan.

His success story is also documented in *Biographies of Prominent Personalities in Nanyang* (南洋名人传) which recorded the stories of 3,045 prominent Chinese of the day in Southeast Asia.

6.
**ANG
SEAH IM
& WIFE**

20m

6

ANG SEAH IM & WIFE

Ang Seah Im
汪聲音

1870–1927

Cheong Chwee Sim
鐘水心

1878–1944

Place of Ancestry: Tung Ann (同安)



Learn more
about Ang Seah
Im's rise, and
fall, and rise
again.

Some places in Singapore are named after people who once owned property in the area. Seah Im Road and the eponymous hawker centre—just opposite Vivocity—was named after Ang Seah Im, who ran businesses in mining, rice, rubber and trading. Some of the houses he built in the area are still standing today. Ang was also a member of the *Poh Leung Kok* (保良局), an organisation set up to protect



Ang's tomb in the past. (Photo credit: Private Collection)

women and girls from vice. Ang passed in 1927 when he was 57, while his wife Cheong Chwee Sim died at age 66 in 1944.

7.
LEE
CHOO
NEO

20m

7

LEE CHOO NEO

李珠娘

1895–1947

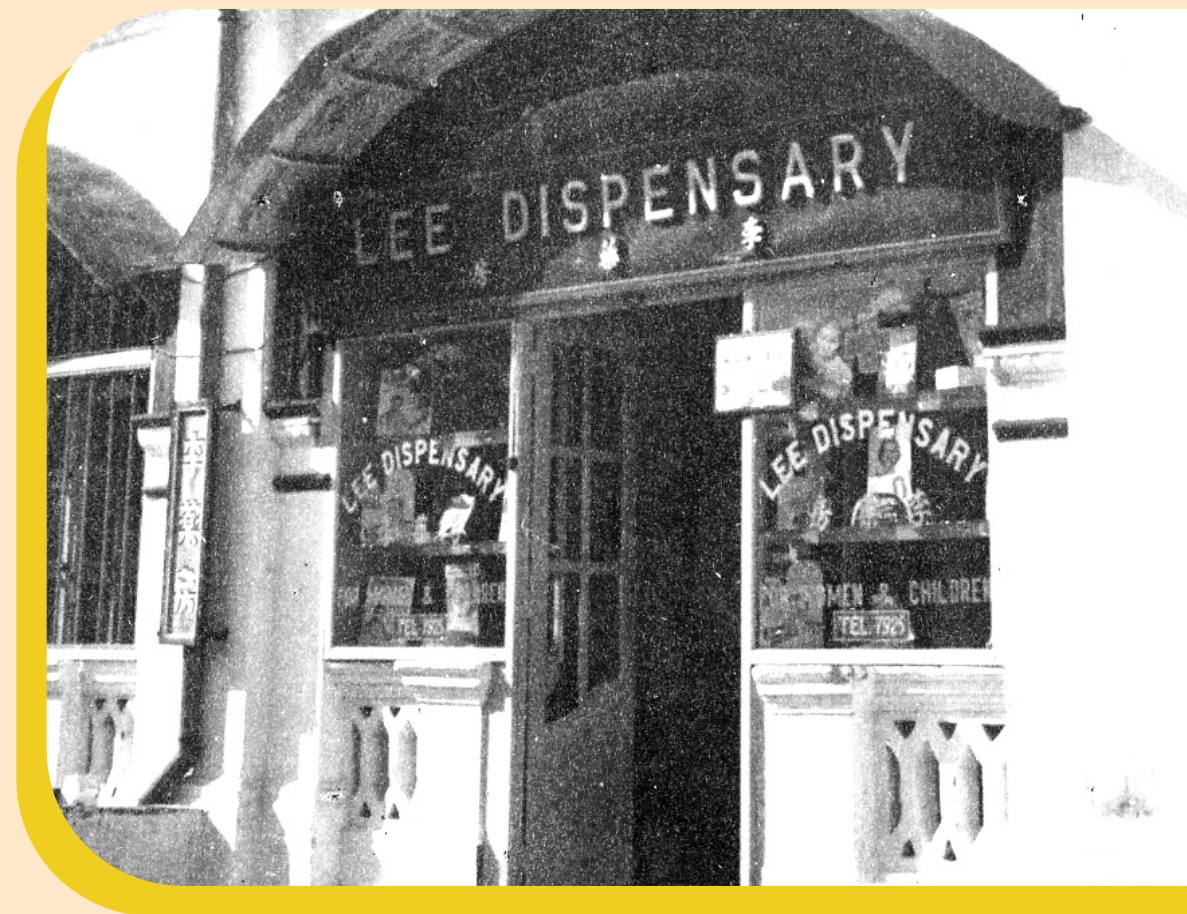
Place of Ancestry: Tung Ann (同安)



Learn more about the extraordinary life of Dr Lee Choo Neo, “The Chinese Girl in Singapore”.

Lee Choo Neo was a woman of many talents. She became our first local-born female doctor after graduating in 1919 from King Edward VII Medical School. She also championed women’s rights by pushing for monogamy laws and was a founding member of the Chinese Women’s Association dedicated to social and charitable causes.

Her family had a brush with fate during World War II as they were



Lee's dispensary and residence (ca 1930s)
(Photo credit: Vera Teo, Lee Choo Neo Family)

spared from war reprisals. Lee was in fact given a special pass that made it easier for her to continue to treat patients during the turbulent era.

8.
**CHIA
HOOD
THEAM
& WIFE**

20m

8

CHIA HOOD THEAM & WIFE

Chia Hood Theam
謝佛添

1863–1938

Yeo Lan Neo
楊麟娘

1865–1926

Place of Ancestry: Tseng Theh (前宅)



Learn more
about Chia Hood
Theam, Yeo
Lan Neo and
“The Family of
Compradors”.

Few girls went to school during colonial times and it took several forward-minded men such as Chia Hood Theam to change that. A prominent Peranakan banker, Chia was among a group of leaders from the Straits Chinese community who set up the Singapore Chinese Girls School (SCGS) in 1889, responding to the growing number of mission and colonial schools. SCGS was secular,



62 members of the Chia Family, taken at the 40th Anniversary of their marriage. (Photo Credit: Noreen Chan)

and girls were free to observe Chinese traditional rites in their roles as daughter and wife. Chia married Yeo Lan Neo, fondly known as *Nonya Tawee*, which hints at her origins. They had seven daughters and four sons.

9.
**TAY
CHOON
NEO**

30m

9

TAY CHOON NEO

鄭春娘

1879–1942

Place of Ancestry: Ho San (禾山)



Learn more about early Singapore's maritime history through Tay Choon Neo and her *twakow* business.

During colonial times, some families made a steady living in maritime trade. Tay Choon Neo was the wife of Koh Seow Seng, a prominent leader of the Chinese Twakow Association. The family ran a *twakow* business at a time when the Singapore River was teeming with such bumboats transporting goods from the port where ships were moored to the warehouses on the riverbanks.



Twakows on the Singapore River. (Photo credit: Private collection)

However, Tay's husband died in the 1920s, leaving her with four young sons and a business to tend to. When she eventually died in 1942, tributes would come from the industry etched in stone. Her grave features a gate that marks the entrance to her final abode.

10.
TAN
AI LAY

12m

10 *TAN AI LAY*

陳愛禮

1912–1926

Place of Ancestry: Tung Ann (同安)



Learn more
about Tan Ai Lay
and her father's
moving lament.

Tan Ai Lay was well loved by her father, who wrote about her life on her tombstone. She was the eldest of three daughters of prominent Chinese leader Tan Ean Kiam, and died at a tender age of just 15. In her short life, she accompanied her father twice to their hometown district in China. She was schooled in both Western and Chinese literature. Her death left her father heartbroken, prompting



Painting of Tan Ai Lay. (Credit: Tan Ean Kiam family.)

him to compose a moving tribute in her memory. It begins with:

有女爱禮死葬於此

*I had a daughter named Ai Lay
who has died and is buried here.*

11.
**GOH
KAY NEO**

12m

11

GOH KAY NEO

吳家娘

1853–1926

Place of Ancestry: Ann Kway (安溪)



Read more on
“Guarding the
Halls of the
Dead”.

Just like the homes of the living, those of the dead have to be protected from negative spiritual forces too. Goh’s final resting place is protected by Door Gods, traditionally found guarding temples and ancestral halls. These generals were inspired by Chinese opera warriors with their tiger-head emblems and commanding flags.

Most tombs in Bukit Brown rely on stone lion guardians and fewer than five tombs here have been found with these extraordinary Door Gods.

12.
WEE
FAMILY
CLUSTER
10m



Door Gods on temple doors.
(Photo credit: 地下高雄, CC BY-SA 4.0)

12

WEE FAMILY CLUSTER

Thng Peah Neo
湯丙娘

1865–1926

Koh Chin Neo
高振娘

1891–1923

Wee Tiam Ghee
阮添字

1888–1934

Place of Ancestry: Lam Ann (南安)



Learn more about the Wee family and their story of “Bricks, Blood and Stones”.

Some tombs are designed with Chinese and Western features. This cluster belonging to the Wee family famous for its brickworks—of mother Thng Peah Neo, her daughter-in-law Koh Chin Neo and son Wee Tiam Ghee—is a good example.

It is beautifully crafted with scalloped boundaries, intricate

carvings depicting classic Chinese folklore, and European decorative tiles paving the “courtyard”.

Note that the grave of the son is raised and positioned on the left due to the Chinese practice of reserving the left for the more powerful males, with females on the right (男左女右).

13.
TAN JOO
KHOON
& WIFE

18m

13

TAN JOO KHOON & WIFE

Tan Joo Khoon

陳臣忠

1882–1926

Ng Joo Tian

黃如珍

1888–1960

Place of Ancestry: Teo Ann (潮安)



Scan to find out
about Teochew
tomb traditions.

The seas formed an important part of Tan Joo Khoon's life.

Tan was in government service in the marine department for 26 years as the chief clerk in the master attendant office, a department responsible for overseeing and regulating maritime activities within a port. Sadly, he died at the age of 44 from a heart attack while holidaying with friends at

Benting Kusa, a Malay coastal *kampong* at Changi.

His wife Ng Joo Tian is buried beside him and a second wife, Lee Kah Lan, is also listed on the tomb.

This is a typical example of a Teochew-style tomb which does not have a wall behind the tombstone. Its front looks like an armchair with curved “arms”.



14.
**TAN
LIAN
CHYE**
65m

14

TAN LIAN CHYE

陳連材/陳楚楠

1884–1971

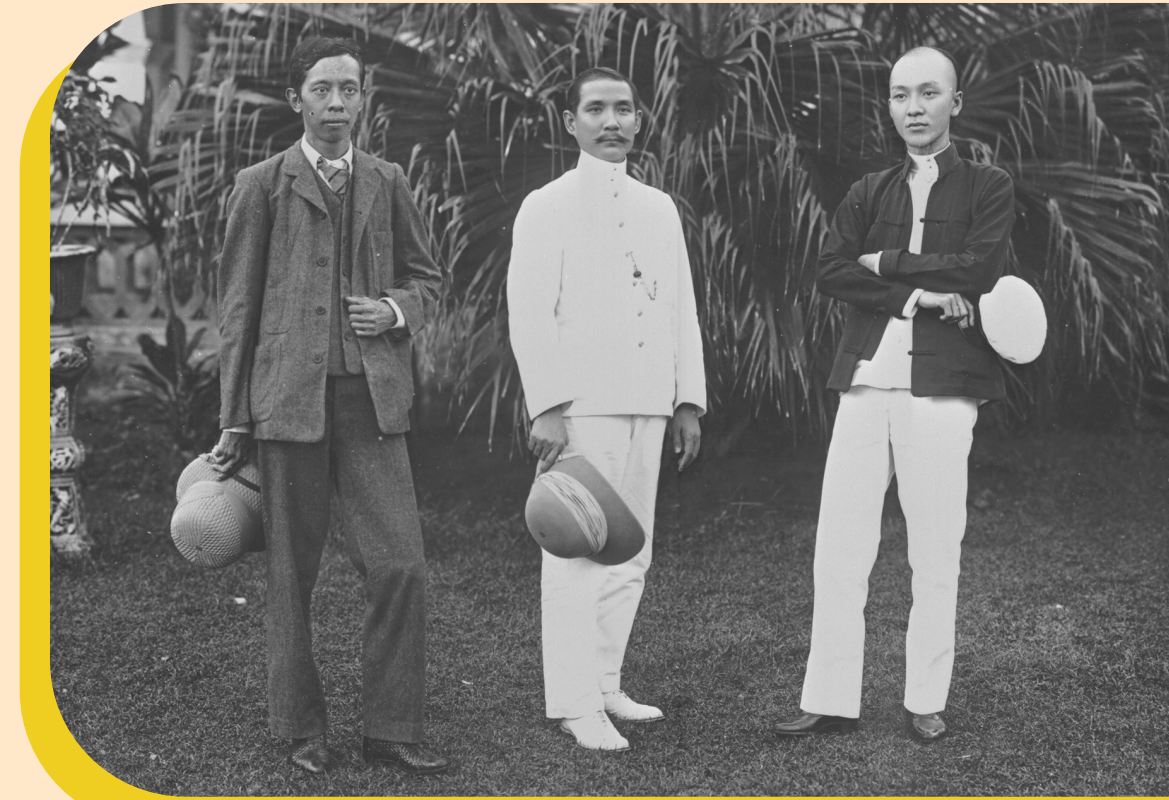
Place of Ancestry: Amoy (廈門)



Learn more about the activities of the Tong Meng Hui in supporting revolution in China.

Tan Lian Chye, also known as Tan Chor Nam, has a modern-style tomb that reflects his forward-thinking views and social ideologies.

Even though Tan was born into a wealthy family, he was devoted to social causes. In 1906, Tan, at just 22, led the local Tong Meng Hui (同盟会), a group supporting Dr Sun Yat-sen's efforts to overthrow the Qing Dynasty.



From left to right: Teo Eng Hock, Dr Sun Yat-sen and Tan Lian Chye.
(Photo courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.)

Tan also believed in women's education and was one of the founders who set up Nanyang Girls' School, two years before The Chinese High School for boys was established.

15.
**LIM
KENG
CHIEW**

25m

15 *LIM KENG CHIEW*

林鏡秋

1891–1942

Place of Ancestry: Ho Shan (禾山)



Find out what influenced Lim Keng Chiew to commit to the revolutionary cause.

Do you know Dr Sun Yat-sen had a speech writer in Singapore? Lim Keng Chiew was a loyal supporter of Sun and was his Hokkien speech writer. Sun, a native of Guangdong, was only fluent in Cantonese. Lim's stirring speeches in Hokkien delivered by Sun helped galvanise support and raise funds among the Hokkien community for the uprisings in China to overthrow the Qing government.

Lim also donated generous amounts of money to the cause. But in the end, the family's shoe-making business failed and he died poor.

16.
LU
SHANG
LIAN

140m



Lim and his wife, taken circa 1913-1916.
(Photo credit: 1911 Revolution: Singapore
Pioneers in Bukit Brown, 2013)

16 *LU SHANG LIAN*

吕上憐

Unknown–1856

Place of Ancestry: Eng Chuan (颍川)



Read about
Singapore's
lesser-known
secret society
connections.

Lu Shang Lian's tomb inscription describes her as the 38th (三十八世) descendant of the Tan family line (her husband's surname was Tan).

Lu's son Tan Keng Chin (陈庆真) led a rather eventful life. Singapore once had secret societies with tight links to China. The Little Dagger Society (小刀会) was one.

Tan Keng Chin was famous for leading a rebellion for the Little Dagger Society in 1851 to try to overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming (反清复明), the last regime of the Han (汉) Chinese.

Tan died in captivity soon after, but his successor did make significant inroads occupying Nanking for a period of time.

17.
**CHEANG
FAMILY
CLUSTER**

10m

17

CHEANG FAMILY CLUSTER

Cheang Jim Song
章壬松

Unknown–1918

Yeo Kum Neo
楊甘娘

Unknown–1921

Seow Siok Neo
蕭椒娘

Unknown–1931

Khoo Beng Choo
邱明珠

1884–1926

Place of Ancestry: Tio Thua (長泰)



Scan to learn how Cheang Hong Lim was able to grow the family's fortunes.

Due to land redevelopment, the graves of Cheang Hong Lim's huge family could not escape the fate of being relocated from their private plots in the Alexander area. As a result of the re-burials, the Cheangs have several family clusters within Bukit Brown. Three of Cheang's many wives are known to be located in different plots in Bukit Brown.

The cluster you see here comprises one of his wives

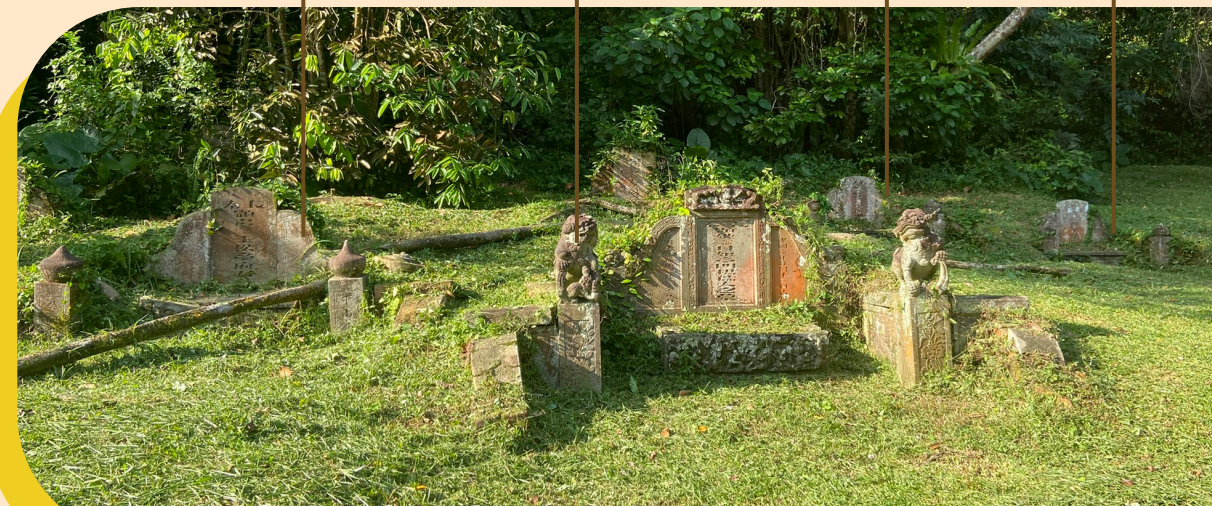
Madam Yeo whose name is prefixed with the honorific *ruren* (孺人), his 6th (out of 13) son Jim Song, and two daughters-in-law Madams Khoo and Seow.

Tomb of Yeo Kum Neo

Tomb of Khoo Beng Choo

Tomb of Cheang Jim Song

Tomb of Seow Siok Neo



10m

18.
CHEANG
CHONG
HWI

18

CHEANG CHONG HWI

章滄輝

Unknown–1911

Place of Ancestry: Tio Thua (長泰)



Scan to
understand
why traditional
Chinese families
chose adoption.

This tomb features a calendar and numeral system reflecting its era. The right side of Cheang Chong Hwi's tomb states that he died in the Confucian year (孔子) of 2462, which is 1911 (2462 minus 551 BCE when Confucius was born). 2462 is written in Suzhou numerals—a compact way of writing big numbers invented by the Chinese. 1911 is also known as the

Xinhai year, with the last uprising in China that overthrew the Manchus named after it.

Cheang Chong Hwi's tomb is the only one in the relocated Cheang family cluster using Suzhou numerals, used for accounts of large businesses. Could this have reflected his role in the fortunes of the family business?

19.
LIM TECK
GHEE &
MOTHER

15m

19

LIM TECK GHEE & MOTHER

Lim Teck Ghee

林德義

1830s–1891

Yeo Im Neo

杨淑懿

1810s–1887

Place of Ancestry: Gim Lee (錦里)



Read about
when Ipoh was
once the tin
mining capital of
the world.

Lim Teck Ghee built his fortunes in the lucrative tin mines of the Klang Valley. When the Selangor Civil War broke out in 1867, his financial support to the Selangor royal family earned him British favour, and he was eventually appointed as financial administrator. He also raised funds for the Qing dynasty, earning him the title

“fifth-ranking Qing official” (皇清
誥贈奉政大夫), which is inscribed
on his tomb.

Lim and his mother Yeo Im
Neo interred beside him were
originally buried in his Toa Payoh
plantation, but “moved” here in
the 1930s when the land was
acquired for urban development.

20.
TEO
HONG &
WIFE

50m

20 *TEO HONG & WIFE*

Teo Hong
趙芳

1847–1945

Ang Cheok Neo
洪足娘

1877–1936

Place of Ancestry: Lam Ann (南安)



Scan to track
Teo Hong's
fortunes from
carpenter to big
time contractor.

Here rests a man after whom Teo Hong Road—a short street adjoining Bukit Pasoh—was named. Teo was a successful government contractor at the turn of the 20th century. Projects handled by his firm include the Fullerton Building, Raffles Institution and the National Museum. His rags-to-riches story mirrored that of other Chinese who made it as big-time contractors from humble beginnings as coolies or skilled workmen. His story has been shared in an Australian reality show *Who Do You Think You Are?*

21.
THE
PAUPERS'
SECTION

20m
across the road



Teo Hong Road. (Photo credit: Raymond Goh)

21

THE PAUPERS' SECTION

1922 – 1973



Read more how
Bukit Brown
sheltered the
poor in death.

The Paupers' Section reminds us of sojourners who came to Singapore to seek a better life, only to end their last days with little money. In this section, people could bury their kin in plots that were free-of-charge.

In the spirit of a municipal cemetery, Bukit Brown was open to all Chinese, unlike the *exclusive* cemeteries before,

where burials were limited to similar surnames, dialect groups or place of origin in China.

Besides paid plots, Bukit Brown also had free plots, though they were located in low-lying areas prone to water retention which led to faster decomposition, and that did not bode well for the geomancy practice of ensuring fortune for future generations.

22.
CHEW
GEOK
LEONG

10m
across the road

22 *CHEW GEOK LEONG*

周玉龍

1870–1940

Place of Ancestry: Ann Kway (安溪)



What's a "live" tomb? Scan to find out!

Various tombs at Bukit Brown are protected by imposing Sikh guard statues. The most iconic pair belongs to Chew Geok Leong as the two Sikh guards, which he commissioned from Shanghai, are coated with vibrant colours. A former Qing official who fled China for political reasons, Chew settled in Singapore and started a Chinese medical practice. He planned his tomb meticulously and the standout pair are ranked



Chew relaxing at his residence. (Photo credit: Chew Family Archives)

naik and have names reflecting their duties: Home Guard (守府)—“patrolling the home”, and City Guard (巡城)—“patrolling the city”. If one goes missing you should know where he went.

23.
**PANG
FAMILY
CLUSTER**



20m

23

PANG FAMILY CLUSTER

Kang Cheong Neo
江昌娘

1863–1941

Ancestry: Chaw An (詔安)

Choo Peck Lian
朱白蓮

1890–1967

Ancestry: Gek Kang (玉江)

Pang Cheang Yean
馮清緣

1890–1967

Ancestry: Leong Khay (龍溪)

Koh Toh Neo
許陶娘

1889–1951

Ancestry: Leong Khay (龍溪)



Read the story
behind Mdm
Koh's unusual
burial and where
exactly their in-
laws hid the
money!

The Pangs who were prominent bankers were lucky enough to survive World War II and even recovered their fortunes quickly after the war because of a large sum of British pounds they had stashed away. They didn't hide the money themselves as they would have been the natural targets of Japanese reprisals for their strong support of the China Relief Fund—a fundraising programme by overseas Chinese to support China during the Sino-

Japanese wars in the 1930s. They instead approach their in-laws from the Tan Kheam Hock family. The hiding place for the money was a stroke of genius, in full sight.

At the centre is the double tomb of Pang and wife Choo. On their left is Choo's mother Mdm Kang and on the right is Pang's mother Mdm Koh—buried in a sitting position.

24.
TAN
BOO LIAT

10m

24

TAN BOO LIAT

陳武烈

1875–1934

Place of Ancestry: Chiang Chew, Hai Deng (漳澄)



Read about the house Tan Boo Liat built to honour his grandfather, which has preservation status.

In the footsteps of his illustrious forebears Tan Tock Seng and Tan Kim Ching, Tan Boo Liat helmed the powerful Hokkien Clan Association and Thian Hock Keng Temple. He campaigned against opium, supported education for girls by founding a school, and as a staunch supporter of a Republican China, sheltered Dr. Sun Yat-sen in Singapore before his return to Nanking to assume the presidency.

The Siamese titles on his altar table speaks of deep ties to the royal family. The bells are part of the family insignia but missing the latin inscription *Confide recte agens*—“the confidence to do what is right”. Tan did exemplify that, in his contributions to society and country.

He had one personal passion: horse racing. In 1898, his horse *Vanitas* was the first horse from Malaya to win the Viceroy Cup in Calcutta.

55m

25.
**LIM
KING
CHUAN**

25

LIM KING CHUAN

林金璋

1893–1937

Place of Ancestry: Heng Hwa (興化)



Read more on why cemented graves are able to guard against time and erosion.

There are good reasons why some tombs in Bukit Brown have cemented mounds. A standout is the grave of Lim King Chuan in the paupers' section.

After Lim's passing in 1937 at just 44, his sons settled in Malaysia. Cementing the ground where he was laid was a pragmatic decision by the family to prevent erosion. Another reason for a cemented mound is



Descendants paying respects. (Photo credit: Peter Pak)

related to *feng shui*—principles and geomancy practices that govern burial customs.

26.
OH SIAN
GUAN &
WIFE

35m

26 OH SIAN GUAN & WIFE

Oh Sian Guan

胡先願/胡善甫

1874 – 1943

Place of Ancestry: Tung Ann (同安)

Yap Suan Neo

葉璇娘

1876 – 1950

Place of Ancestry: Amoy (廈門)



Read about
where the *Crazy
Rich Asians*
began!

This majestic tomb is well connected to show business and high finance. Oh Sian Guan was a prominent businessman and community leader involved in various businesses—banking, trading of commodities, such as betel nuts and coffee, and property. He is also the great grandfather of Kevin Kwan,

author of *Crazy Rich Asians*, and related to the late Dr Richard Hu, Singapore’s former and longest-serving finance minister.

Look at the panels carefully, and you can see the “original” of the blockbuster *Nehza* on the extreme right and the legendary Madam White Snake on the left.

**27.
TAN
EAN
KIAM**

20m

27

TAN EAN KIAM

陳延謙

1881–1943

Place of Ancestry: Tung Ann (同安)



Read about
the myriad of
social causes
supported by
Tan Ean Kiam.

When Tan Ean Kiam first arrived on our shores, he worked as a labourer carting water from public taps to premises in the central business district for a fee. He later made his fortune in rubber and banking as an astute businessman who observed Western business practices in managing financial capital.

During the Great Depression, he seized the opportunity to consolidate local banks. The

result was Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation (OCBC). He became its managing director.

One of the most prominent Chinese leaders in the 20th century, Tan was also a supporter of social causes, a patriot who gave generously to humanitarian relief, a revolutionary, and a poet who wrote his own epitaph. Read the couplets on his tomb to understand how he saw Singapore as home.

28.
*CHNG
TEOW
KIAN*

50m

28 *CHNG TEOU KIAN*

莊朝乾

1880–1944

Place of Ancestry: Yin Tung (銀同)



Want to know more about the small businesses in the thriving Rochor area where Chng's company was?

Chng had a gunny sacks and tin cans business, which was still operating when he passed away. He picked a sector that was lucrative during his time when you consider that the gunny sack was the de facto packaging used for different types of commodities from grain to spices, and tin was a way of marketing processed foods.

That he came from a place from China called Yin Tung (銀同), so named because the shape of the county looked like a silver ingot, may have boded well for when he left home to make his fortune in Singapore. “Yin Tung” means “like silver” and is an older name for what is widely known in Hokkien as Tung Ann (同安). In Singapore, his business was located in the thriving Rochor Road area.

29.
*TAN EAN
TECK*

8m

29

TAN EAN TECK

陳延德

1881–1944

Place of Ancestry: Tung Ann (同安)



Read about how the OCA was confronted with hard choices in negotiating with the Japanese.

Tan Ean Teck and his elder brother Tan Ean Kiam were members of the Overseas Chinese Association (OCA), which had to negotiate with the Japanese to govern the Chinese under occupation and stop the Sook Ching massacre.

Tasked with setting up a self-sustaining settlement in Johore when food was short in

Singapore, he was eventually killed by the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) in an ambush. It didn't help that the entourage was flying Japanese flags.

He is a World War II hero in Bukit Brown, but his role to work with the Japanese then was not without controversy.

30.
TEO
HOO LYE

8m

30 *TEO HOO LYE*

張扶來

1853–1933

Place of Ancestry: Tung Ann (同安)



Read how Teo Hoo Lye started humble, and stayed humble after becoming a tycoon.

Arriving in Singapore at 18, Teo Hoo Lye started out as a labourer earning \$2 a month. But through grit and vision, he managed to build a business empire.

From a humble Rochor Road grocery shop, he later owned sago factories, steamships that exported copra, sago and rubber, and prime properties. His opulent mansion was located at where The Cathay stands today.



House of Teo Hoo Lye. (Photo courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.)

Teo was also a champion for education and co-founded a school. When he died, his funeral procession was one of the longest ever recorded, marking the end of an epic journey—from toil to tycoon.

31.
**LOW
NONG
NONG**

170m

31

LOW NONG NONG

劉亦嫩

Unknown–1938

Place of Ancestry: Diong Lok (長樂)



Find out how
3,000 poor
men honoured
a hero's
sacrifice.

Low Nong Nong died during a clash in 1938 between the police and rickshaw pullers, who were striking for lower rents for their rickshaws from the owners. While trying to rescue an arrested rickshaw puller, Low was seriously injured and passed away soon after.

Low died penniless and without family, but 3,000 rickshaw

pullers pooled funds to give him an honorable send-off. His bloody death hardened his comrades' resolve to pressure owners to agree to their terms.

The inscription on his tomb reads 為大眾而犧牲 其死重于泰山 - *He died for the public, his death is as heavy as Mount Tai.*

115m

32.
ONG SAM
LEONG &
WIFE

32

ONG SAM LEONG & WIFE

Ong Sam Leong

王三龍

1857–1918

Yeo Yean Neo

楊賢娘

1852–1935

Place of Ancestry: Kinmen (金門)



Read about the
“Grand Repose”
of Ong Sam
Leong and his
family.

Ong was a prominent Peranakan who made his fortune supplying labourers to mine phosphate on Christmas Island. Ong and wife Yeo Hean Neo are buried in the central double-tomb. The Ongs were so influential that the Sultan of Johore lent his State Band to play at Yeo’s funeral.

Ong Boon Tat and Ong Peng Hock are buried in two graves flanking their parents’.



Ong on Christmas Island. (Photo credit: John Hunt)

They opened the New World Amusement Park in 1923, the first large-scale entertainment facility that attracted thousands each night in its heyday.

*This is the
last tomb
of the
Wayfinder.*

33 ONG FAMILY COMPLEX

The Ong Sam Leong family complex is the largest in Bukit Brown, spanning 600 square metres. It sprawls across the highest point of the Greater Bukit Brown area—a mark of Ong Sam Leong's wealth and influence. The Ong family burial grounds are designed based on *feng shui* principles to bring blessings upon future generations.

Starting
point

550m

Map of Ong Family Complex

