Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent: A Biographical Dictionary Volume I
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Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent
A Biographical Dictionary

Volume I

Edited by
Leo Suryadinata

Foreword by
Wang Gungwu
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Foreword

This is a bold project recording the lives of a particular group of Southeast Asians in a distinctive framework. For more than a hundred years, various writers ranging from trade and government officials to journalists and scholars have studied the traders and workers from South China now spread around the world. Most of those adventurous people left China and headed towards neighbouring ports, kingdoms and colonies that are now recognized as a single geographical entity, hence the grouping in this volume of the lives that have contributed in their various ways to the new Nanyang, the strategic region of Southeast Asia.

If the authors of the biographies had to trace their respective subjects back to an earlier past, they would have been confronted by many different names for these merchants and adventurers overseas. For example, Europeans like the Portuguese, Dutch and English followed those in the Malay Archipelago by calling them China or Chinese, while they would normally refer to themselves as Tongyan, Denglang or Tangren. In China, they would be described as MinYueren, people from Fujian and Guangdong and, for a while under the Mongol Yuan dynasty, they were known as Nanren or southerners; later, they were likely to have been referred to as the subjects or chenmin of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Locally, in Southeast Asia, there were also a variety of names, like the Baba or peranakan for Chinese whose first language was Malay; and there were others like the Lukchin, the Sangley and the Hoa among those who lived alongside the Thais, the Filipinos and the Vietnamese. Chinese records rarely recorded the achievements of individuals and were not always polite when referring to those outside China, often purposely emphasizing the illegal status of those who had left their homes in China without official permission.

Most of the people whose biographies are included here have settled down in the ten countries that constitute the region. Each of them has either self-identified as Chinese or is comfortable to be known as someone of Chinese ancestry. There are also those who were born in China or elsewhere who came here to work and do business, including seeking help from others who have ethnic Chinese connections. With the political and economic conditions of the region in a great state of flux for the past two centuries, it is impossible to find consistency in the naming process.
Confucius had stressed that correct names make for the best relationships. In this case, Professor Leo Suryadinata has been pursuing for decades the elusive goal of finding the right name to give to the large numbers of people who have, in one way or another, made their homes in, or made some difference to, Southeast Asia. I believe that, when he and his colleagues selected the biographies to be included here, they have taken a big step towards the rectification of identities for many leading personalities. In so doing, he has done us all a great service.

I notice that he has modestly not included a biography of himself in this volume. Allow me therefore to say a few words about how he meets the criteria for entry into the volume splendidly, and also why I am proud to be associated with his lifework. I had the fortune to meet Professor Suryadinata when he first embarked on his lifelong study of the Chinese in the Malay Archipelago. He has always been in a good position to capture in his writings the ambiguities that surround his subject of research. Born in Indonesia of Chinese parents, speaking and writing Bahasa Indonesia fluently, and fully immersed in the lives of those who have long settled in the country, he was formally educated in a Chinese school. The school was one that originally set out to redefine an identity that would fit in with the strong modern state that the new generation of Chinese leaders was building in China. After World War II, however, the school went through a time of radical transitions. Hard choices, therefore, had to be made. His arrival in Singapore to study at the newly established Nanyang University brought him deep into the heart of one of those transitions. This was a time when Chinese who faced the rise of new nations were asked to differentiate themselves from a revolutionary China that was beginning to sow alarm among its smaller neighbours.

That was more than 40 years ago. From the start, he faced a world of social discontinuity, political uncertainty and cultural transformations. It is no wonder that he was drawn to the study of nation building in Indonesia, to the political awakening of two generations of leaders both civil and military, to a sensitive understanding of the media and the country’s opinion-makers, and to the thinkers and the creative writers and artists who were all struggling to ensure that a great nation would emerge out of the multiple challenges of decolonization, nationalism and Cold War ideological confrontations. At the same time, he could not but be troubled and fascinated by the special position of those of Chinese descent, the millions who were torn three ways by conflicting loyalties: the pull of their ancestral home, the temptation of their Dutch mentors’ refuge, or the nascent patriotism inspired by the new Indonesian nation.

Professor Suryadinata was always interested in the study of literature and history and this interest took him to the subject of prominent people who had made their mark in the transition years from the Dutch East Indies to the Republic of Indonesia. It was therefore not surprising that one of his first published writings was on prominent Indonesian Chinese in the twentieth century (1972). A few years later, he completed his first collection of biographical sketches, a work that has received much deserved attention and one that he has updated and reprinted several times. In short, he has had the subject of personalities on his mind for a long while. For this volume, he has persuaded many others to join him, not only in telling fuller stories about so many lively personalities all over the region, but also to determine more precisely what is remarkable about the variety of Southeast Asians who can be identified by their Chinese descent.

When he retired from the National University of Singapore and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and was appointed Director of the Chinese Heritage Centre in 2005, Professor...
Suryadinata saw his chance to achieve the goal he set for himself. By careful selection of the personalities here, he provides a larger picture of men and women whose distinctive lives gave them a place in the history of modern Southeast Asia. That makes his a landmark study. I know no one better positioned than he is to produce this collective volume. And while it gives me great pleasure to commend this pioneering work to the reader, I know that he would see it but as a beginning. He would be the first to say that there are many other personalities who could have been included if only we knew more about their lives. Let me join him in hoping that future volumes will follow when more data and documents become available and more scholars are ready to tell the stories that are not in this dictionary.

Professor Wang Gungwu
National University of Singapore
22 May 2012
This book is a collective effort rather than an individual venture. It would not have been written and published without the cooperation of many scholars, writers and friends. First of all, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the 176 writers of this book for their valuable contributions. I would also like to thank the country editors for their efforts and the panel of international advisers for their comments and advice. I am particularly grateful to Professor Wang Gungwu, chairman of the panel of advisers, who has been very generous in giving me his valuable advice, encouragement, support and writing a Foreword for this book.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Tommy Koh, former chairman of the Chinese Heritage Centre (CHC), for inviting me to be the director of the CHC which gave me the opportunity to further develop my interest and research, and Professor Su Guaning, successor of Professor Koh, for his continuing support. Without the resources of the CHC, this project could have not been undertaken.

My sincere thanks also go to the former and current staff members of the CHC — Lim Boon Hock, Kwan Siu Hing, Ang Cher Kiat, Ho Yi Kai, Goh Yu Mei, Cheong Wai Yin, and Chew Kiat Yin — who helped me in this project. Special thanks also go to Dr Kevin Y.L. Tan and Dr Michael Montesano, who gave me special assistance when it was badly needed.

I want to record my deep appreciation to Mrs Triena Ong, Managing Editor of ISEAS Publishing, for her expert advice and kind assistance in editorial and publication matters. I would also like to thank the Lee Foundation and the Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan for their generous grants for the project.

Lastly, while thanking all the authors for their valuable contributions again, I would like to state that they are responsible for the facts and the interpretations in the entries that they have written.

Leo Suryadinata
August 2012
Introduction to Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent: A Biographical Dictionary

Leo Suryadinata

It is estimated that about 75 per cent of the ethnic Chinese outside China live in Southeast Asia. The Chinese Heritage Centre, established in 1995, is located in Singapore, one of the Southeast Asian states. It is thus understandable that the ethnic Chinese biographical project of the Chinese Heritage Centre started with this region. The biographical dictionary was conceptualized when I was invited to head the Chinese Heritage Centre in 2006. Most of the available publications (see references) at the time were mainly ethnic Chinese biographical dictionaries on a few individual countries, ethnic Chinese historical figures of individual countries, or biographies in a special field. Only three titles — all in the Chinese language — attempted to cover Chinese overseas all over the world (including Southeast Asia).

The first one, *Shijie Huaqiao Huaren Cidian* (世界华侨华人辞典, English title: Dictionary of Overseas Chinese), was edited by Professor Zhou Nanjing and published in 1993 by Peking University. The 1025-page book includes entries of overseas Chinese organizations, names and contents of publications related to Chinese overseas and biographies of leading Chinese overseas. Strictly speaking, it is not a biographical dictionary. The entries of the figures were very brief. Prof Zhou in 2001 edited and published another book, *Huaqiao Huaren Baike Quanshu Renwu juan* (华侨华人百科全书: 人物卷, Encyclopedia of overseas Chinese: biographical volume), focusing on biographies of prominent “overseas Chinese” from all over the world. It was an ambitious and a pioneering publication. The publication is a major improvement of the previous one, but due to difficulty in gathering relevant information in China, the entries were mainly based on secondary sources and the write-ups were still very brief, they are mainly biographical sketches. Some sections on Southeast Asian countries were poorly researched and the information was also dated.

An overseas Chinese organization in Taiwan in 2000 published *Huaqiao Da Cidian* (华侨大辞典, A Large Dictionary of Overseas Chinese) which also attempted to present biographical sketches on the overseas Chinese in the world, but it is a much smaller number of entries than that of Beijing’s publication, and more limited in the countries covered. Worse still, the emphasis tends to be on those who are affiliated with Taiwan. There is hence a need for a more detailed,
informative and up-to-date publication in English on Southeast Asian Chinese personalities such as a biographical dictionary on twentieth-century ethnic Chinese personalities and beyond. Unlike some dictionaries which include only dead figures and the volumes of Who’s Who listing only living individuals, this CHC biographical dictionary includes both the dead and the living. The purpose is obvious: to help the readers understand modern and contemporary Southeast Asia in which personalities of Chinese descent have played significant roles. Hopefully, readers and researchers will be able to get a clearer picture of modern/contemporary Southeast Asia and their personalities of Chinese descent from this biographical dictionary.

To start the project, I began to identify scholars and writers in the relevant fields. Some Southeast Asian countries have more experts than other Southeast Asian countries. Nevertheless, we were able to have a good team to begin with. Many of these experts were invited to come to the CHC for a brainstorming session for a day to construct a basic framework. We also started to appoint country editors but the process was not very smooth as a few invitees were busy and declined to accept. After several attempts, the country editors were appointed. Country editors of Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, and Indonesia were the first to organize their respective committees followed by other country editors. Each country editor and his/her editorial committee came up with a list of contributors to be invited. As the project started moving forward slowly, a panel of international advisors led by Professor Wang Gungwu was also established.

In the brainstorming sessions, we discussed some of the basic concepts and frameworks of the biographical dictionary. However, as these are complex issues we were unable to resolve all. The following are based on my discussions with other scholars beyond the one-day brainstorming sessions. When there were disagreements I made my own decisions. The first major problem we faced was to come to grips with the definition of “ethnic Chinese” or “person of Chinese descent”. How does one define an ethnic Chinese, or a person of Chinese descent? There are no easy answers. One way is to find out whether a person has/had a Chinese name. Those who have/had Chinese names are very likely to be ethnic Chinese. Leaders or members of Chinese organizations/associations are likely to be Chinese. But what about the descendants of those who intermarried with non-Chinese? If the father is Chinese and the mother is non-Chinese, the Chinese identity is usually preserved by their offspring (e.g. among the peranakan Chinese, especially those in Malaysia and Singapore), but if it is the other way around, the descendants are likely to be absorbed into the non-Chinese community.

In the case of those who no longer keep their Chinese names, it is more difficult to tell whether they are ethnic Chinese/persons of Chinese descent. The Chinese have lived in Southeast Asia for centuries and many have been assimilated and absorbed into the so-called “indigenous” communities. However, there are many who are only partially acculturated and still identify themselves as Chinese. Some have assumed a different nationality or nationalities but continue to regard themselves as being of Chinese descent. Therefore, while Southeast Asian Chinese share a common ancestry, they may not share the same culture. To determine whether a person is an ethnic Chinese/of Chinese descent, one often has to rely on self-identity, especially in the case of those who are still alive. If a Southeast Asian person of Chinese descent refuses to identify with the Chinese community, the person is not included in our selection. This is out of respect for the individual who identifies himself/herself completely with the “indigenous” community and no longer wishes to be regarded as ethnic Chinese or of Chinese descent.
It is also important to note here that many Southeast Asians of Chinese origin have been localized and even indigenized, and are reluctant to be called “ethnic Chinese”, let alone “Chinese overseas” or “overseas Chinese”. They claim to be Thai, Filipino/Filipina, Indonesian, Vietnamese, or Burmese/Myanmar, etc. Nevertheless, with the end of the Cold War and the rise of China, many of these Southeast Asians have openly admitted that they are of Chinese descent, e.g. Thai of Chinese descent, Filipino of Chinese descent, Indonesian of Chinese descent etc. In order to include this group of personalities, we use the term “Southeast Asian personalities of Chinese descent” rather than “Ethnic Chinese of Southeast Asia”. In this usage, the former term includes both ethnic Chinese and persons of Chinese descent.

As a matter of fact, in China today, there are three Chinese terms, viz. Huaqiao 华侨, Huaren 华人 and Huayi 华裔, which may be used to refer to different kinds of “Chinese”. “Huaqiao” refers to Chinese citizens who are sojourning overseas. “Huaren” refers to ethnic Chinese who are foreign citizens outside China, while “Huayi” refers to non-Chinese citizens who are of Chinese descent but have lost their Chinese culture. Such usage often does not coincide with the Southeast Asian Chinese usage, however. The Southeast Asian Chinese use “Huaren” to refer to those Chinese who were local born or even foreign-born but have lived and identified themselves with the local Chinese. Southeast Asian Chinese also use Huayi to refer to Chinese who have foreign (read: non-Chinese) citizenships regardless of their cultures. Many do not speak, read and write Chinese and are highly “indigenized”.

Owing to the above reasons, in order to include a wide range of Chinese in Southeast Asia, we have called this biographical dictionary Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent, not “A Biographical Dictionary of Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia”.

The term “Southeast Asian Personalities” rather than “Southeast Asians” is used for the following reasons: The leading figures included in this dictionary are not all Southeast Asians in terms of citizenship/nationality. As the nationality law of China was only introduced in 1909 and many Chinese in Southeast Asia before the second half of the twentieth century were of dual nationality as the law in China claimed all Chinese overseas as nationals of China while the colonial powers claimed local-born Chinese as their subjects. However, after World War II, many ethnic Chinese, especially the local-born, have adopted Southeast Asian citizenship/nationality; others have remained Chinese citizens or held non-Southeast Asian citizenship. Only after 1980, with the promulgation of the 1980 nationality law of the PRC which recognizes only single nationality, that the citizenship issue for the ethnic Chinese was resolved. Therefore “Southeast Asian personalities” here refers to ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, or Southeast Asians of Chinese descent regardless of their citizenships. The personalities that are included in the dictionary have lived in Southeast Asia and made a major impact, including contributions, to Southeast Asian societies or local Chinese communities or both. Foreign nationals of Chinese descent who do not hold Southeast Asian citizenships are also included if they fit into our categories as listed below. Who then are the personalities included in this dictionary?

Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent

Definition of “ethnic Chinese” and “of Chinese descent”: The Southeast Asian personalities included in this dictionary are either “ethnic Chinese” or people who are of Chinese descent.
The term ethnic Chinese here refers to the Chinese who live or have lived in Southeast Asia and consider the region as their permanent or semi-permanent home. Many of them, especially the second generation, were born and brought up in Southeast Asia and hold the citizenship of one Southeast Asian country. Nevertheless, not only are they descendants of the Chinese, more often than not, culturally they still retain some degree of Chinese culture. However, “Southeast Asian personalities of Chinese descent” refer to Chinese people in Southeast Asia or their descendants regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the term “Southeast Asian personalities” here is used to include both ethnic Chinese and those of Chinese descent in this region. These persons of Chinese descent were mainly born, raised, and resided or have been residing in Southeast Asia, and whose achievements in certain arena(s) have made a significant impact in the region from the twentieth century to the present. In other words, a person who was born in, but grew up outside the region, made a name outside Southeast Asia, holds non-Southeast Asian citizenship, and never identifies himself or herself with Southeast Asia will not be included in this dictionary (e.g. Hou Jiachang, a PRC badminton champion who was born in Java and “returned” to the People’s Republic of China when he was 16 years of age and emerged as the top player in China and the world. He represented China and contributed to the development of badminton in China throughout the 1960s and the first half of 1970s. He eventually retired in the United States, not in Indonesia).

**Citizenship:** The current nationality of a selected personality may not necessarily be that of a country in Southeast Asia. For example, the personality may have been born and raised in Southeast Asia, but holds the citizenship of another country outside the region. (For instance: Professor Wang Gungwu, an Australian citizen, was born in Indonesia, grew up in West Malaysia and returned to Singapore and Malaysia to work and have made major contributions in those two countries.) It is particularly difficult in the case of personalities before World War II when the issue of citizenship was unclear and ambiguous. (For instance: Tan Kah Kee was born in China, was both a Chinese citizen and a British subject, and eventually returned and died in the People’s Republic of China.) These two examples show that they have/had non-Southeast Asian citizenship but they made major contributions to and significant impact on this region and are hence included in this dictionary. A Southeast Asian citizen who has made a name and significant impact outside Southeast Asia and continues to identify with a particular Southeast Asian country will be included in the dictionary. (For instance: Michelle Yeoh, a Malaysian who became well known making movies in Hong Kong and Hollywood.)

**Self-identification:** As noted earlier, this is the primary criterion for inclusion in the Dictionary. The personality has made known the fact that he/she was/is a Chinese or ethnic Chinese, or that he/she is of Chinese descent. (For instance: Thaksin Shinawatra, former Thai Prime Minister who went to Guangdong to trace his Chinese ancestry and openly admits that he is a Thai of Chinese descent: he has a Chinese surname Qiu or Khoo with a given name Daxin.) Those who are alive and refuse to acknowledge their Chinese ancestry are not included in this dictionary:
A few Chinese Indonesians and Sino-Vietnamese who belong to this category as most do not want to be identified as “Indonesian or Vietnamese of Chinese descent”.

Those who are ambiguous in their descendant background such as award-winning Thai movie director Apichatpong Weerasethakul who is a third-generation Sino-Thai but does not know the surname of his Chinese ancestor and identifies himself as Thai; Rany Bun, the First Lady of Cambodia who was noted by some Chinese publications as a woman of Hainanese descent but this was never confirmed by herself.

Those who are known as of Chinese descent but there is a lack of detailed information, e.g. Deputy Premier of Laos, Somsavat Lengsavad, who was identified in Hong Kong’s Yazhou Zoukan as Ling Xuguang.

**Assessment of Influence/Impact and Recognition**

The Southeast Asian personalities of Chinese descent who have been included in this biographical dictionary are selected because they are significant, prominent and have made a major impact, either positive or negative, in Southeast Asia. Because of the Dictionary’s emphasis on personal impact/influence in Southeast Asia, they are not likely to be very young when they made their impact.

Evaluation Criteria: Some arenas have their own systems of meritocracy; others do not. The arts and sports arenas, for example, recognize talents by conferring awards, but in the political arena, dissidents or opposition leaders may not be ceremoniously honoured. Furthermore, the yardsticks for assessing excellence or measuring influence/impact, both positive and negative, vary across countries, or may be variably applied even within the same country, or may not be used at all. Each country editor was asked to draw up the general criteria for selection in accordance with his/her country’s standards, use his/her power of discernment, and present a convincing case for his/her selection. Most importantly, the inclusion of these prominent individuals is subject to the quota of each category. The person may be quite prominent but he/she will not be included as the quota for that category is already full.

**Various Categories and Selection Criteria of the Personalities**

The personalities are evaluated and organized into categories in accordance with the areas of their expertise/occupation that are listed in an index volume.

1. **Community Leaders:** Every community has its leaders. For the ethnic Chinese, the community leaders come from various ethnic organizations/associations. The most common is Chinese clan associations (including federations of clan associations and dialect group associations). As there are many types of dialect groups, the selection of leaders from this category will be based on the eminent positions they held such as founding members, long-serving presidents or leaders that made major impacts on the community. Nevertheless, since the pool of such personalities is large, only 25 are selected for this category. It is well-known that many community leaders
are also successful businessmen; therefore more often than not we are selecting the leading businessmen as well. Nevertheless, they were not necessarily the wealthiest. The personalities in this category are therefore not selected based on wealth and status, but merits and influence/power in the Chinese community within the country and beyond.

2. **Businessmen/Businesswomen**: The ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia are often referred to as a “trading community” or “business community”. They are the entrepreneurs, merchants, bankers, industrialists, real estate leaders, business consultants, etc. Those selected are top leaders in their respective sectors or those who won national or international recognition. Again, the number of entries in this category is limited to 30, and whenever possible, the number is evenly divided among various subgroups. As mentioned in category 1, some of these business leaders are also active in community organizations. But those who are included in the category of business leaders are specially successful and influential in their businesses, not in their community leadership and services. It should also be noted that business leaders who failed or got involved in illegal activities and were in consequence sentenced by the courts are also included.

3. **Politicians**: The ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia are often thought to be apolitical. In fact this notion is incorrect; the reality has a lot to do with the environments in which they live. In some countries where political activities were/are restricted, no Chinese political leaders, or few of them have emerged. But in many Southeast Asian countries there has been a significant number of ethnic Chinese or Southeast Asians of Chinese descent who were/are leading politicians. A total of 25 of them have been selected in this category for each country. They include holders of important positions in major political parties of the countries, e.g. chairmen and secretaries-general in Chinese or Chinese-dominated parties, outstanding cabinet ministers, members of parliament and bureaucrats, revolutionaries and opposition leaders with strong influence, etc.

4. **Professionals**: Many ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia are leading professionals such as lawyers, architects, engineers, physicians, natural scientists (such as physicists, life-scientists, etc.), and social scientists (economists, political scientists, historians, etc.). The selection is from among the holders of important positions in professional organizations especially those with achievements and influence, and also authors of works of influence as well as leaders in professions. In this category, a maximum of 15 personalities are selected. The number is, as far as possible, evenly distributed among the professions/fields.

5. **Artists**: There is also a large number of Southeast Asian artists of Chinese descent. They include painters, playwrights, movie directors, actors and actresses, dancers, choreographers and musicians (conductors, pianists, composers etc.). In this category, artists are selected based on their achievements such as the recipients of awards (international, regional and national); international award winners are given priority over regional and national award winners. If a country has not produced personalities of international recognition, the selection criteria are based on their achievements at the regional or national levels. The maximum number of entries in this category is 12 and when possible, it is distributed evenly among various sub-groups.
6. **Mass Media Leaders:** The achievements of Southeast Asians of Chinese descent are likewise well recognized in the field of mass media/mass communication. This category includes press editors, photographers and journalists, and film producers. The selection is based on the criteria listed for artists. The maximum number of entries in this category is 12.

7. **Writers:** Chinese in Southeast Asia are also well known for their contributions in the literary field. There are many writers who wrote/write in various languages including Chinese, English and some Southeast Asian national languages. The criteria used for this category are similar to those for the Artists. Nevertheless, the impacts of these writers may be confined to the local, rather than the national, community. For example, the impacts of some ethnic Chinese writers (writing in Chinese) are often confined to the local Chinese community, but are included for being equally significant. The maximum number of entries in this category is 15.

8. **Sportsmen/Sportswomen:** Southeast Asians of Chinese descent have been active in sports since the second half of the twentieth century and have made remarkable achievements in the world arena. These sportsmen and sportswomen include badminton players, swimmers, footballers, athletes, martial art experts, bowlers, table tennis players, weight lifters, etc. Again, the selection criteria are similar to those for the 5th category for the Artists. The maximum number of entries in this category is also 15.

9. **Educators/Promoters of Education:** One of the major characteristics of Southeast Asian Chinese is the great attention they place on education. The Chinese are known to value education highly and put a lot of effort into building Chinese schools for their children after migrating to new places. Initially they built Chinese-language schools but as time passed, they also built schools in local languages. In this category, we include personalities such as school principals and influential contributors to education who may not have been educators (e.g. Tan Kah Kee). The selection criteria are based on the national and international recognition of the individuals, the highest positions held/have held in the educational institutions and the extent to which they made/have made a difference. The maximum number of entries in this category is 12.

10. **Religious Leaders/Promoters of Religion:** After migrating to a new land, the Chinese also built temples, as religion became an important part of their daily life. However, they were not confined to worshipping traditional Chinese religions; some of them also took up non-Chinese religions. This category includes the founders of religious groups or religious leaders who made/have made significant contributions to the host country. The maximum number of entries in this category is 12.

11. **Others:** There are many other personalities who may not fall into the above categories. However, they have been included in this dictionary as they played important roles and made an impact on Southeast Asian Chinese communities and national societies. These personalities include philanthropists, social-political activists, public intellectuals, national heroes, military leaders, etc. The criteria for selection of these people include the extent of their recognition by the communities within the country and beyond. Many of them may also be included in other
categories such as businessmen, professionals and education promoters. The maximum number of entries in this category is 15.

Number of Entries

The number of entries in each category (between 12 and 25) is arbitrary. The rationale is that Southeast Asian personalities of Chinese descent who are involved in the first three categories are large and hence have to be given a larger proportion (80 out of 188 entries). Nevertheless, the role of these personalities in eight other fields is equally significant and hence should be recognized (108 out of 188). If a country fulfils the quota mentioned above, it will consist of 188 entries. Initially we had hoped to gather around 800 personalities for the project, but we realized in the process of research and writing that it was impossible to get that number of “top leaders” in many countries, especially in the Indochinese states and Myanmar, where there are insufficient materials and where many personalities have complex identities which preclude them from being classified as personalities of Chinese descent (e.g. the deputy Prime Minister of Laos and the wife of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, who have been mentioned earlier). Besides, due to the different levels of development in Southeast Asian states, in countries such as Indochinese states and Myanmar, certain types of Chinese leaders are either very small in number or cannot be found. Even Bruneians fill only a few categories. Besides this, we also have problems in getting enough entries on Thailand as fewer Thai scholars/writers can write in English. We therefore set a more realistic target of around 600 personalities, the majority of whom are from the original members of the ASEAN states where there is a larger pool of personalities of Chinese descent and the materials relating to them are easier to obtain. On account of these limitations, this is not a comprehensive dictionary. Nevertheless, the editors are satisfied that it includes the major figures on whom rather detailed information is available. In other words, the Chinese figures included in this dictionary are fairly representative. To a large extent, it reflects the situation of their influence and impact in modern/contemporary Southeast Asia.

As stated, we have more than 11 categories and not every category has been able to reach the maximum number of entries. This is due to the fact that Southeast Asian countries are at different stages of development. The more developed the country, the more categories can be found in the country. It is not surprising that some countries have more entries in certain categories and fewer or even none in other categories. As such, the representation of the personalities across the countries is bound to be uneven. Nevertheless, we believe that this work is a fairly accurate reflection of the Chinese community in the respective countries. It is hoped that in providing some detailed information on Southeast Asian personalities of Chinese descent, this work will also be a useful reference for future research.

Country Editors and Actual Number of Entries

The following table shows the names of country editors and total number of entries of personalities in each country/region. The original members of ASEAN tend to have more “Chinese personalities” for obvious reasons: they have relatively larger Chinese populations and they have undergone longer stages of economic development which has brought about
more notable personalities especially in the economic, professional, sports, arts and other arenas. Nevertheless, we have encountered various difficulties as there are not many specialists who studied Southeast Asian personalities of Chinese descent; it is especially difficult to find scholars/writers on Indochinese states and Burma/Myanmar. In the existing biographical publications on the Chinese in the above countries, entries on Laos and Cambodia are especially difficult to come by. Some dictionaries have only one on Laos and a few on Cambodia. We had foreseen some of the problems but had not been fully aware of the amount of work demanded for the completion of the project. We are fortunate that at various stages, we were able to bring in scholars in residence to write some of the entries. Lim Boon Hock, Grace Chew, Daw Win, and Goh Yu Mei deserve to be mentioned as they contributed tremendously towards the completion of this dictionary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries/Region</th>
<th>Number of Entries</th>
<th>Country Editor(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Singapore</td>
<td>§ 161</td>
<td>Ho Khai Leong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Indonesia</td>
<td>§ 107</td>
<td>Leo Suryadinata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Malaysia</td>
<td>§ 105</td>
<td>Ho Khai Leong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Philippines</td>
<td>§ 92</td>
<td>Teresita Ang-See</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Vietnam</td>
<td>§ 40</td>
<td>David Koh &amp; Grace Chew Chye Lay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Thailand</td>
<td>§ 33</td>
<td>Michael Montesano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Brunei</td>
<td>§ 31</td>
<td>Niew Shong Tong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Myanmar</td>
<td>§ 20</td>
<td>Daw Win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) Cambodia</td>
<td>§ 10</td>
<td>Lim Boon Hock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) Laos</td>
<td>§ 6</td>
<td>Lim Boon Hock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>§ 605</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contents of the Entries

Each entry is between 1,000 and 1,500 words in length. The country editor assesses the suitability of the length in relation to the impact/achievements/importance of the personality, but a maximum of 2,000 words is adhered to. A few entries from the Indochinese countries and Myanmar barely make up 1,000 words as the writers had difficulties in obtaining more information. It is hoped that readers and researchers will build on the information provided in this dictionary in their ongoing research on those personalities.

Each entry includes the following:

• Formal names (local names, Chinese names and Chinese characters, if available)
• Year of birth and death
• Importance/Significance of the personality
• Country (of residence, not necessarily citizenship)where the impact/contribution was made
• Profile
• References (in general, maximum of six items)
The Structure of this Biographical Dictionary

The entries in this dictionary are arranged in alphabetical order of names of personalities, not countries. The names are often local names (official names), others are Chinese names rendered in local spellings. A personality is entered by his/her local name, not Chinese name, except for a few who have been well known by their Chinese names before they changed their names (e.g. All England champion Tan Joe Hok, not Hendra Kartanegara.) Readers who only know the persons’ Chinese names (in local spelling or Hanyu Pinyin) should use the volume on Glossary and Index, which are listed in Volume II. The Glossary and Indexes are useful: not only do they give the definitions of some common terms used in the dictionary but they also provide lists of indexes, for instance, of names in Chinese and non-Chinese, of countries, and of occupations. Without these indexes, readers may find it difficult to use the dictionary effectively.

Concluding Remarks

This is a big project and is the first book of its kind. There are bound to be inadequacies. Despite obvious limitations as mentioned in the earlier sections of this introduction, I would argue that this dictionary which consists of 605 entries with more than 620 personalities has presented a generally correct picture of Southeast Asian personalities of Chinese descent. It has shown that the Southeast Asian Chinese are not a homogeneous, but a heterogeneous group.

The Southeast Asian Chinese do not fit into the old perception that all Chinese are traders who are only concerned with their own community and never change but remain “Chinese” forever. In fact they are not confined to one or two fields but many. They are not a group which resists change but many groups which have changed and are changing. They are not isolated but part and parcel of Southeast Asian history and society. They are Southeast Asian personalities of Chinese descent.

Readers and researchers who would like to use this dictionary and analyse the issues and problems relating to Southeast Asian personalities of Chinese descent will find Volume II Glossary and Indexes useful.

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**Thai:**


**Viet:**


Dictionary User’s Guide

1. The dictionary is arranged in alphabetical order.
2. The entry usually starts with the surname of the individual. For a Chinese name, it is easy as the first word is the surname (e.g. Goh Keng Swee; Lie Kim Hok), but for a non-Chinese name it follows the customary usage.
3. For Vietnamese-Chinese names/Vietnamese names, the first name is the surname and the entry is listed in accordance with the first name: Đặng Văn Thành; Ngô Đầu Hiệp.
4. For Chinese Indonesian names, usually the Indonesian “surname” is often used in the entry, for instance, Salim, Soedono rather than Soedono Salim; Wanandi, Jusuf rather than Jusuf Wanandi.
5. The Indonesian Chinese name used in the entry is the original old spelling, unless the person himself changed it to a new spelling; For examples, Liem Koen Hian, not Liem Kun Hian; but Ciputra, not Tjiputra.
6. For Chinese Thai names, usually the first word of the Thai name is used, not the surname. For instance, Bunchu Rotchanasathian, not Rotchanasathian, Bunchu; Chuan Likphai, not Likphai Chuan.
7. Transliteration of Thai names and terms in this volume follows a modified version of the Thai Royal Institute/United States Library of Congress guidelines.
8. For Chinese Filipino names, usually the surname is used. For instance, Go-Belmonte, Betty; Ty, George S. K.; SyCip, Washington.
9. For Chinese-Burmese names, usually there is no surname; therefore the entry uses the first word as the entry name: Hoke Sein; Kyee Paw.
10. In general, the name used in the dictionary is the original name in the local spelling (e.g. Lee Dai Soh), the name can be Chinese (e.g. Kwik Kian Gie) or non-Chinese name (Silalahi, Harry Tjan), if it is not a Chinese name, it is followed by Chinese full name (if available) and followed by characters (if available), name in hanyu pinyin, year or birth and death, and category, and country where the contribution/impact was made. For instance:
Lee Dai Soh  
(Li Dasha, 1913–89)  
*Cantonese story-teller, broadcaster, Singapore*

Another example:  
**Bunchu Rotchanasathian**  
(Ui Bun Bo, 黃聞波, Huang Wenbo, 1922–2007)  
*Leading businessman, politician, Thailand*

11. If the personality is well-known by his/her other name rather than original name, especially for writer or artist, the other name (or pseudonym) is adopted as the entry name. For instance, Marga T. rather than Tjoa Liang Tjoe, Botan rather than Supha Sirisingha, Wu An rather than Qiu Liji, Tan Joe Hok rather than Hendra Kartanegara.

12. As noted, some individuals are known to have a few names, for instance, Rudy Hartono Kurniawan, a badminton champion from Indonesia, is listed under Kurniawan, Rudy Hartono. But many may only know his name as Rudy Hartono or Rudy Nio or Nio Hap Liang or Liang Hailiang, these names are listed in the accompanying Volume II: *Glossary and Index*.

13. It is therefore important for the reader to also refer to the accompanying Volume II which consists of glossary, indexes of list of various names, indexes by gender, by author, by country and by category.

14. Each entry contains basic information about the person. The length of each entry is between 1,000–1,500 words, except a few major leaders such as prime minister or president or a towering figures or two figures combined.

15. At the end of each entry, references are included. With the exception of a few entries, almost all have listed only six items due to space limitation.

16. Chinese or local languages in the text of the entry are translated into English; in the references section, Chinese and foreign languages are not translated as they are meant for researchers.
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