

NOTES

1. Some Theresienstadt survivors saw the camp “as a place to look back with longing; in a perverse, disquieting way”. The book shows why this makes a certain sense. See Mrázek 2020, p. 362.
2. Theresienstadt survivors remembered a play that was cancelled abruptly when key members of the cast were transported east to be killed. See Mrázek 2020, p. 194.
3. Mrázek describes Thomas Najoan, who tried to escape from Boven Digoel three times. The first time, he was caught in the neighbouring forests. The second time, he made it as far as the Thursday Islands, north of Australia, only to be captured by the British authorities. The third time, he disappeared and presumably died. See Mrázek 2020, pp. 324–25.
4. Some of the most stirring passages in this section describe how camp people in one locale dreamed of escaping to another. In the Netherlands, Jewish families discussed escaping to Batavia, just as Sjahrir and his comrades considered escaping to Europe. Children in Theresienstadt made art depicting palm trees and sunshine. “I have no doubt about it”, Mrázek comments, “the warm regions they painted and drew to escape to, in a dream, too, were the Indies, and New Guinea, and Boven Digoel” (p. 355).
5. Mrázek spent the first forty-five years of his life in Prague and remembers some of the Theresienstadt internees as people he knew or heard about during his childhood. When Mrázek was a young man, camp people helped to launch his career. Wim Wertheim, the Jewish Dutch lawyer and historian who pioneered the critical study of Dutch colonialism in the Indies, met with Mrázek in Amsterdam when Mrázek was still living in Prague. On Wertheim’s introduction, Mrázek met Harry Benda, a Jewish Czech historian who had barely escaped the Nazis, and who eased Mrázek’s passage to the United States. Wertheim was a good leftist, Mrázek recalls. There was “a big picture of Che Guevara on the wall” (see Mrázek 2020, p. 339)

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The King’s Chinese: From Barber to Banker, the Story of Yeap Chor Ee and the Straits Chinese. By Daryl Yeap. Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: SIRD, 2019. xxiii+233.

Towards the close of Queen Victoria’s reign (1837–1901), in 1900, a group of Chinese in Singapore founded the Straits Chinese British

Association (SCBA). Prominent among them were Dr Lim Boon Keng (1869–1957) and Song Ong Siang (1871–1941), who had received Queen’s Scholarships to study in Edinburgh and Cambridge, respectively. They were local-born (Peranakan) Babas who later became known as the King’s Chinese, and they were appointed members of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council. While they expressed their loyalty to the British Crown and Empire in various ways, “it is a misconception ... to regard the Straits Chinese as ‘the lackeys of the British’” because they held progressive ideas and advocated social reforms (Rudolph 1998, pp. 112–13). Dr Lim was also instrumental in the establishment of Amoy University in China.

Branches of the SCBA were established in Malacca and Penang. The most prominent member of the Malacca branch was Tan Cheng Lock (1883–1960), who also became a Straits Settlements legislator before World War II, and after the war founded the Malayan Chinese Association. Song Ong Siang was knighted by King George V in 1936, and Tan Cheng Lock by King George VI in 1952. They were literally the King’s Chinese!

Yeap Chor Ee (1868–1952) was not Straits-born. He was a subject of the Ch’ing emperor, a Hokkien from Amoy/Xiamen in Fukien/Fujian province, who migrated to Penang, Straits Settlements, under the jurisdiction of Queen Victoria’s colonial governor, and he lived through her reign and those of her successors, Kings Edward VII, George V, Edward VIII and George VI. As Yeap progressed “from barber to banker”, he was assimilated into the Peranakan culture of Penang, where he built his banking business and purchased a magnificent mansion, “Homestead”.

His great-granddaughter Daryl has written his biography as a voyage of discovery and a labour of love. Drawing on family records, written and oral history sources and personal visits to ancestral homes, she provides interesting vignettes of Yeap’s life in the contexts of southern China and the Nanyang. These are a useful supplement to other historical and biographical studies of the Chinese community in Penang. Two examples of the latter suffice: (a) *Penang and Its Region: The Story of an Asian Entrepot* (Yeoh et al. 2009) and

(b) *Redoubtable Reformer: The Life and Times of Cheah Cheang Lim* (Cooray and Khoo 2015). I have selected them because they are not listed in Daryl Yeap's bibliography, but would have enriched her narrative. The biography of Cheah Cheang Lim (1875–1948) is about a notable 'King's Chinese' from one of the leading *kongsi* in Penang, a Straits Settlements legislator and a contemporary of Yeap Chor Ee, but he is not mentioned at all.

The author does discuss, however, Yeap's links with two other prominent 'King's Chinese'—Dr Lim Boon Keng of Singapore and Tan Cheng Lock of Malacca. Dr Lim's son Walter was "Chor Ee's bright and hardworking bank manager" (p. 183), who was seconded to work for Mamoru Shinozaki after the Japanese conquered Malaya (no mention is made of Walter's tragic death). Despite the book's title, the King's Chinese make their appearance only in the title and a few paragraphs of chapter 11, without careful delineation of the Straits or Malayan branches of the Chinese diaspora. There are also a few paragraphs on Tan Cheng Lock (and a photograph of him) in chapter 16.

While there is rich detail on the bank that Yeap built (Ban Hin Lee Bank), there is insufficient exploration of the network of Chinese banks; although there are, for example, significant studies of Tan Chin Tuan and the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation. Tan was also a close friend of British Commissioner-General Malcolm MacDonald (featured on pp. 200–201) and became a member of the Singapore Governor's Executive Council. MacDonald, as founding Chancellor of the University of Malaya, gratefully received a generous donation from Yeap for the university's endowment fund.

The book suffers from inaccuracies, notably in the "timeline of key events", and also in the text (pp. xv–xvii). The first Opium War began in 1839, not 1840. It ended in 1842 when the Treaty of Nanking opened five ports to foreign trade. The four Malay States came under British protection in the 1870s and 1880s (see pp. xv–xvi). The first Japanese bombs were dropped on Singapore on 8 December 1941, not 1942, and General Percival surrendered Singapore on 15 February 1942, not 16 February (p. 175).

Prominence is rightly given to the Yeap family's business and marriage alliances with Oei Tiong Ham and his family, and Daryl Yeap is currently writing the biography of the latter, whom she refers to as "the Sugar King of Asia", and that of his daughters. I wish her well and hope that the forthcoming book will be edited more carefully.

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Christian Circulations: Global Christianity and the Local Church in Penang and Singapore, 1819–2000. By Jean DeBernardi. Singapore: NUS Press, 2020. xx+430 pp.

In *Christian Circulations*, Jean DeBernardi offers a meticulous take on the "history of the globalization of Christianity and the local church" (p. 358). She does this by paying attention to the Brethren movement in Singapore and Penang, which is remarkable for two reasons. The first is that in Singapore and Malaysia the Brethren, alongside other denominations, is a religion "of heritage for many" (p. 2). And yet scholarship about them has been limited. The second is that her work foregrounds the significant role of the Brethren in the globalization of Christianity, whose contemporary narrative is predisposed to Pentecostalism. In many parts of Asia, Christianity has a much longer tradition.