

GENEALOGY OF THE LIMS

Introduction

Chapter 1 : Cosmology/Mythology

Chapter 2 : The Founder and His Ancestors

Chapter 3: Migrations of the Fujian Branch

Chapter 4: The Two Main Southern Branches

Chapter 5: In Fujian (*from Jin An to Ankuay*)

Chapter 6: In Malaysia and Singapore

By LIM HO HUP

21 February 2005

GENEALOGY OF THE LIMS

Introduction

At some point in a man's life, when the ceaseless search for ever greater material success begins to simmer down, the question of roots becomes progressively more interesting and absorbing. Sometimes this is a reactive response i.e. people around you whose opinion matters are interested in the subject. Or it may be that one is genuinely unreconciled to the invasive thought of personal cosmic insignificance. Others are theologically inspired --- as with the Mormons. About whom, more later. I myself confess only to an abiding curiosity and an interest in the scholarship involved.

You would have thought that, being Chinese, this interest comes naturally for the Chinese are known to be inveterate ancestral worshippers. Strangely, my first interest in genealogical studies was aroused by a Dutch friend. He had discovered from his family records that one of his ancestors had gone to Formosa in the 17th century and had stayed on. Would there be any trace of the Dutch settlement in today's Formosa? Since I visited Taiwan often at that time, could I perhaps help to find out more about this? In subsequent visits to Taiwan, I started asking questions and learned about the Dutch occupation of Formosa and how in turn they were evicted by Koxinga, the Ming Dynasty general whose name in Chinese is Zheng Chen Gong. Years later, I saw, in one of the "girlie" restaurants in Taipei a girl whose features were recognizably Eurasian. My guess that she was from Tainan (*where many of the Dutch who stayed behind remained*) was immediately confirmed.

Visiting Utah, USA, in September 1986, I was told during a conducted tour of the Mormon Temple that they had the world's largest collection of genealogical books. Having a Chinaman around did not seem to deter the tour guide and I was of a somewhat incredulous turn of mind.

In Mormonism, everyone born or accepted into the faith will (*together with his forbears*) be anointed saints. This makes it important to know who your ancestors are. Hence the importance of genealogy. It is therefore of some theological relevance to the Church to collect all the existing genealogies in the world in every language. So they have a real basis to their claim about the size of their library. Indeed they stored these precious books in one of the caves in a canyon close to Salt Lake City. This repository is said to be so strong it can withstand a nuclear attack!

A few months later I picked up a magazine in Hong Kong which featured an article on the ancestry of Dr Sun Yet Sen, the most universally admired Chinese

in this century. An earlier biography had stated that he was a Hakka. Evidence was being adduced now that he was Cantonese -- a point of some importance to some Cantonese and some Hakkas. A footnote explained that the researcher did his work in the library of the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City. I was impressed.

Chinese genealogies differ from the western variety in several ways. The Chinese are fond of referring to themselves as the descendents of Huang Di, the Yellow Emperor. Yet even history records that he was merely the final victor in a series of tribal wars. A great unifier, one might say, but there were others around who survived and no doubt also helped to propagate the species!

Be that as it may, nearly every copy of Chinese genealogy ends up claiming the same ancestor i.e. the aforementioned Yellow Emperor who lived some 4700 years ago. On the other hand, in America (*or parts of it*) one is no doubt a member of the social aristocracy if one's ancestry can be traced to the Mayflower, a mere few hundred years ago.

Chinese antiquity (*and continuity*) is truly impressive. A moderately competent Chinese scholar can teach himself to read text written some 2000 years ago. On the other hand, one needs to be a specialist in English to be able to read, say, Chaucer whose writing is only some 600 years old. But I think the lack of antiquity is compensated by a greater level of documentation. My research has exposed me to those genealogies housed in the libraries of Vancouver and Salt Lake City. These American/Canadian genealogies are usually backed by baptism records and announcements in the local newspaper.

The Chinese do not have such traditions. We may have invented paper making. The mass production of paper is a later innovation. In any case, if you are blessed with a new son you would want to avoid incurring the envy of the spirits by giving him such names as Ah Too (*Pig*) or Ah Kow (*Dog*). Instead, Chinese genealogies, at least the formal ones that get published from time to time, are embellished by elaborate essays written by successful scholars and exalted mandarins as acts of paying homage to their illustrious ancestors. Tradition requires that one ascribes success in life to the beneficence and the acquired merits of one's ancestors, if not also the right geomancy.

Chapter 1: The Beginning (Cosmology/Mythology)

Quoting from one of the better known texts youngsters used to have to struggle to memorise (*The Qian Zi Jing-The Thousand Character Essay*) may be the easiest way to start on the subject of Chinese early cosmology:

“In the beginning (*the universe*) was chaos. Then Heaven and Earth began to settle down. The lighter material floated up and became Heaven (*sky*) whilst the heavier stuff settled down to become Earth -----”

Still, Heaven and Earth were presumably too close together and required the great Pan Gu to pry them apart. The sky was viewed as a firmament along the pre-Copernican model of the West. Moreover, this sky was leaky and required Nu Wo, China’s first Superwoman, to patch it up using very specially concocted rocks.

Now these were no ordinary rocks. In the book *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, generally considered the greatest novel in the Chinese language, Cao Xue Qin explained that they were refined and smelted by Nu Wo herself. In all, she smelted 36501 pieces but in the process of sky patching only 36500 of these were used. The odd one was abandoned. Having acquired human and spiritual qualities, this odd chappie was disgruntled about being left out of the noble role of sky patching like his peers. His (*its*) frustration was finally assuaged by a wise monk who agreed to engrave on the stone a whole story about a couple of very talented maidens and the rise and fall of a noble family. Cao, regarded by many as China’s Shakespeare modestly said that he merely copied the story from the inscription. The great book’s original name was *The Story of the Stone*.

Then, of course, in the beginning of Time, there were 9 suns. This, as we know, was eight too many for the human kind who were in serious danger of dying from dehydration. The super archer Hou Yi came along. With his bow and arrow, he shot down eight of the suns and rescued humanity from the inferno caused by those extra solar bodies. Of course, in his time, he did not have to struggle, as would a modern day physicist, with the notion that the Sun’s temperature is millions of degrees with grievous consequences for the arrows made by any earthlings. But the point simply was that Hou Yi was no ordinary earthling.

Each major advance in social evolution was recorded anecdotally and individuals (*names available*) were given credit for inventing fire (*Sui Ren*), building houses (*You Chao*), etc...

Civilisation presumably began with Fu Xi the versatile genius who invented cooking, established tribal government, promulgated marriage codes, taught

fishing and domesticated animals.¹ Then we have Shen Nung, the Divine Farmer, who invented agriculture. He was also a great herbalist and pharmacologist. Above all, he must have a strong stomach because he ate and tasted each and every known plant (*many of which were poisons for common mortals*) and proceeded to inform his people about the nutritional and medicinal properties of these plants. His body was the great laboratory upon which the ancient Chinese pharmacopeia was based.

Myths are the only literary form available to primitive people to pass down what (little?) they knew of the past. That little which has been passed down, however, are in a primordial sense, the essence of the “identity” some people seek. Others, more romantically disposed, would call it the soul of a people.

¹ See *Bo Yang: Jung Guo Ren Si Gang 1-60*

By this time, the tribes have moved from hunting to herding and gathering, and thence to settled agriculture.

Chapter 2: The Founder and His Ancestors

Legendary Period

The cradle of Chinese civilization is in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. Until the early 20th century, western historians would regard anything earlier than the Zhou Dynasty (1122 BC to 221 BC) as mythical or legendary, which is to say its existence had no firm basis. After the major archaeological finds in and around Anyang in the province of Henan at the turn of the century, it has been established that the Chinese record of the Shang Dynasty (BC 1766 to BC 1122) is basically correct (*Creel: 'The Birth of China'*).

Xia Dynasty

In recent years, archaeologists have gone further. The existence of the Xia Dynasty (2205 BC to 1766 BC), which according to traditional Chinese historical records immediately preceded the Shangs but whose existence had been similarly doubted, has been supported by archaeological finds. Beyond the Xias was the Legendary Period in Chinese history which began with Huang Di, the Yellow Emperor who lived around 2700 BC and a few other notable figures before him mentioned elsewhere in this narrative and ending with the Xia Dynasty.

I have commented on Huang Di in the Introduction. The founder of the Xia Dynasty was Xia Yu, a well-known and respected legendary figure famed for his achievement in taming the floods of the Yellow River. Indeed, he was made the ruler in recognition of this achievement. This great flood in China occurred around 2200 BC so it would be interesting to compare this date with that in the Old Testament relating to the Great Deluge and Noah.

A seventh generation descendent of Huang Di by the name of Qi achieved great merit when he assisted Xia Yu in his monumental anti-flood undertaking. For that, he was rewarded with the surname **Zi** (*as in the word Er Zi meaning 'son'*) and given a fiefdom in an area known as Shang (*in modern Henan which is south of Beijing*).

Shang Dynasty

Thirteen generations later, a descendent of Qi by the name of Tian Yi overthrew the Xia Dynasty and founded the Shang Dynasty. (*Reference: Preface to the Lim Genealogy written by Wen Yen Bo, a minister in the Central Ministry during the Tang Dynasty vide p253 of S'pore Hainan Lim Assn 42nd Anniversary publication*).

Bi Gan ---- The Founder's Illustrious Father

The last Shang King had the name Zi Shou Xing but he is better known in history by his formal name Zou. He is the infamous cruel King Shang Zou vilified by generations of Confucian scholars. He was notorious for his lechery and cruelty. Relevantly, his notoriety gave prominence to the martyrdom of his paternal uncle Zi Bi Gan. (*The latter is normally referred to simply as Bi Gan. That he was surnamed Zi is often not realized and a constant source of confusion*). Bi Gan was killed by his own nephew King Shang Zou because the latter could not stand his “direct and fearless criticism.” The method of execution is never left out of the narrative: they opened up his chest and removed his heart.

In due course, the Shangs were overthrown by the Zhou's who were considered slightly less civilised as they had come from the west (modern day Shensi), some distance away from what would then constitute China Proper where the Shangs, verily the ‘true’ or ‘proto’ Chinese, had reigned. The Shangs had invented and/or inherited a culture which still characterize the Chinese until today. The writing which they invented, preserved in the thousands of “oracular bones” found around Anyang, are clearly the forerunners of modern Chinese writing. The Zhou's, like the Manchus 2000 years later, decided they would be more Shang than the Shangs or more Chinese than the Chinese. One evidence of this was that the founder of the Zhou Dynasty (*Zhou Wu Wang*), upon his ascension to the throne, immediately sent for the posthumous son of the martyred Bi Gan and conferred on him the surname Lin (*Lim*) -- a very Chinese act. He also gave the young infant a fiefdom in a place call Bo Lin, also in Henan.

There can, of course, be a political twist to all this. The new Zhou rulers may well have perceived that the legitimacy of their government (*Heavenly Mandate as it were*) rested very much with the benevolent act of removal of a tyrant. Honouring the most renowned victim of that tyranny would be an effective way of advertising that fact.

And so we have at this point arrived at the founding of the Lim clan – right at the start of the Zhou Dynasty in 1122 BC. **To repeat, the surname Lim was conferred on the infant son of the martyred minister of the last Shang King by the founder of the Zhou Dynasty.**

Here it is useful to note that the original ancestral place is west of a river called Qi. For this reason, the Lims usually display a board above the main door of their houses containing the characters “Xi He” (*or Sai Ho in Hokkien*) meaning West River. The sign in fact proclaims (*though this is nearly forgotten*) that they are from the west of the river. This river, named Qi, is a small tributary of

Huang He and not the great Huang He itself. There is a district by the name of Qi in modern day Henan so presumably the river or the area has retained its ancient name.

These ancestral signboards are still fairly common in Penang today. There was one such sign over the main door in 46 Station Road in Tapah before the War (WWII). Xi He has become an alternative name for the clan. Other clans have similar practice. For examples, the Lees would be “Long Xi”, the Tans “Yin Chuan” and the Chias “Bao Shu”, etc. All these are listed in the common Almanac (*called the Thoang Seng by the Cantonese*). The Almanac contains all kinds of information, including the auspicious dates for various functions and many other data besides. And knowledge is power. So the book is sometimes hung over doors to ward off malignant occult forces.

Chapter 3: Migration and Arrival in Fujian

There is a commemorative tablet at the entrance to the Jiu Long Tang in Singapore^{2*}. The inscription thereon gives the most concise history of the Lim clan from the time of founding to their arrival in Fujian. It aptly ends just before the further migration to Hainan and Guangdong, thus ensuring that the Hokkiens, Teochews, Hainanese and most of the Hakkas and Cantonese who are surnamed Lim, would share this same Ancestral Hall. To retain the flavour of the original, the following translation of the relevant part of the inscription is as verbatim as is practical. Words in brackets are added to clarify the meaning:-

“We Lims were originally surnamed Zi, descendents of Huang Di (*The Yellow Emperor*). At the time of the Yin (*Shang*)³, (Zi) Bi Gan martyred himself for advice given directly and fearlessly to a tyrannous king (*who was his nephew*). His wife Chen was three months into her pregnancy. She sought refuge in a stone room (*cave?*) in (*a place called*) Chang Lin (*the Long Forest*). In due course, Quan was born.

Zhou Wu Wang received the mandate (*of Heaven*)⁴, and became the first King of the Zhou Dynasty). He sought the son born (*to Bi Gan*) and conferred the surname Lim (*Lin*, from *Changlin* -- the birthplace). Quan’s name was also changed to Jian. He was appointed Duke of Qing He and given the fiefdom of Bo Ling.

For generations, the Lim were high officials. From then on, they multiplied and they moved ---- to Jinan (*in Shantung*) to Xia Pei (*in Jiangsu*), to Jin An (*in Fujian*) and thence (*they divided*) into two branches, namely Que Xia and Jiu Mu⁵.

There was no lack of outstanding individuals in every generation.....”

Some of the Lims soon moved and established themselves in Jinan in Shantung. By the time of Confucius (551-479 BC), there was this famous ancestor Lin Fang. Pointing to him, the great sage was to say to his disciples: *This is a man to whom you can address your questions (and truly be rewarded).*

The next recorded move took place in the Eastern Jin era (*circa 300 AD*) when Lin Li moved to Xia Pei which is in the northern part of Jiangsu. The older of

² See Chapter 4 for more details

³ The Shang Dynasty is also known as Yin or Yin Shang

⁴ Conferment of legitimacy to a ruler

⁵ See Chapter 4 for more details

Lin Li's grandson (*Lin Mao*) became the governor of Xia Pei in the era of the Eastern Jin.

LIN LU (To Fujian)

The younger grandson Lin Lu accompanied the Jin emperor in crossing the Yangzi River (*fleeing from the Barbarians?*) and was rewarded with a sort of viceroyship in the relative wilderness of Fujian. His tombstone bears the inscription: "Jin An Jun Wang" meaning the "Viceroy of Jin An territory". This has been restored in recent times and can be seen from the curb of the main trunk road from Xiamen to Fuzhou --- just before leaving the modern district of Hui An.

Lin Lu is the Founder of the southern branch of the Lims which comprises the various dialect groups found in Fujian, Hainan and Guangdong. The chart (5a) at the back of this narrative will show that our generation is 52 generations removed from Lin Lu (*the Fujian Founder*) and 115 generations from the original founder Lin Jian.

Lin Lu had arrived in Fujian in 326 AD and the original founder (*Lin Jian*) was born 1120 BC. So we have the following:

The Lims have been around for some 3110 years (1120+1990) and we have been in Fujian for 1670 years.

Chapter 4: The Two Main (Southern) Branches

The Cantonment Road in Singapore is a fairly short road and so you can easily locate the Jiu Lung Tang as you walk towards the Port Authority from the City. Its name means the Hall of the Nine Dragons. The name is derived from the burial ground of the founder of the Fujian branch of the Lim clan. His grave is situated on a mound called Ju Long Gang in the district of Hui-Ann in Fujian. The Teochews and the Hainanese of the Lim clan were migrants from Fujian as were most (*if not all*) Cantonese and Hakkas of this surname. Lin Lu (*Lim Lok*), the founder, came to Fujian in the year 326 AD during the Eastern Jin Dynasty.

Eighteen generations later, during the Tang Dynasty (*8th century AD*), nine brothers of a single family all became governors (*Jiu Mu*). Their descendents all identified themselves as members of The Family of Nine Governors (*Jiu Mu Zi Jia* or *Jiu Mu Pai*). Most Hainanese and Teochews of the clan belong to this branch.

During the 19th generation, there was a Lin Zan (*whose father was a first cousin of the 9 governors*). Zan was noted for his filial piety. Indeed, his devotion and expression of grief that during the funeral of his father so moved heaven that an albino crow appeared and the morning dew tasted sweet -- very auspicious signs.⁶ Consequently, Emperor De Jong decreed that two “Que’s” (*pronounced “chueh”*) be built for the family. [*A Que is a gate of imperial design with a watchtower above and presumably may only be built with royal Assent.*] This episode was recorded by the famous Confucian scholar Zhu Xi of the Sung Dynasty in his preface to one edition of the genealogical records (*See p19 “Fujian Lin -- 1000 years*).

So Zan became the founder of another branch of the Clan known as Que Xia Lin Jia -- the Lim family of the Imperial Gates. The Lims of Chia Nia belongs to this branch.

LIN MO GU (TIAN HOU NIANG)

I should perhaps end this chapter by mentioning a much more famous, and certainly much more revered, member of the clan. She was of the 23rd generation from Lin Lu. Her name was Lin Mo Gu. She is much better known variously as Tian Hou Niang Niang, Ma Kor or Ma Jor, all of which are honorific titles, some conferred posthumously by later Emperors. Probably, the most popular deity in southern China, especially in Fujian and Taiwan, she is the protector of all sailors and fishermen and is invariably the first deity to be honoured by seafaring groups. The oldest Chinese temple in Singapore, namely the Tian Fu Gung in Teluk Ayer Street, is dedicated to her. Besides her main

⁶ See p334 Singapore Hainanese publication.

statue in that temple, one can see her two disciples, Qian Li Yen (*Thousand Mile Eye*) and Shun Feng Er (*Wing-following Ear*), who helped her to be the incomparable meteorologist. This power of weather forecasting enabled her to help all sailors in distress.

Actually, these two disciples are characters in a fiction Feng Shen Bang written many years after her ‘canonisation’ or deification but one does not suppose there could be too much protection from the uncertainties of weather when travelling on the high seas. So a little bit of anachronism should be harmless.

And, having assistants who could see things one thousand *Li’s* away and hear the merest wisp of wind must compensate for a radar-less and computer-less world.

She is also by far the most worshipped deity among the local population in Taiwan. During my visit to Fujou in April 1991, I counted in the airport at least four pilgrim groups each reverently carrying an image of this grand lady. These images have been specially “blessed”/consecrated at the birthplace of the Tian Hou Niang Niang which is some two hours from the airport by car.

The day of the Winter Solstice is a major festive occasion for the Hokkiens. It is called the Tang Che (*in good Penang Hokkien*) meaning the arrival/festival of Winter. Interestingly, it is one of the few festivals that goes by the Solar Calendar (*21 of December*). It is a major occasion for we were always told, very concisely, “Tang tua kue Ni” meaning the Tang Che festival is a more significant event than even the New Year.

More relevantly for the purpose of this narrative, Tang Che (*or Dung Zi in Mandarin*) is also time for ancestral worship. There is a feast (*complete with raw carcasses of pigs and sheep, a must for this occasion*) at Jiu Long Tang. This is also the time for ancestral tabloids to be officially admitted into the Hall i.e. the Jiu Long Tang. Filial children bearing the ancestral tablets of their departed parent(s) would kneel to the clan chief for permission for the tablet to be anointed and placed in the Hall. Then, there is usually a recurring discussion as to who should take precedence: The Founder (*Lin Jian*), his more illustrious father (*Bi Gan*) or his even more revered 87th generation descendant who is now a deity? I was consulted. I pronounced that we are now in the ancestral hall and generational ranking must decide the hierarchy. The revered Tien Hou Niang would have pride of place in the numerous temples dedicated to her. She should be last in the Ancestral Hall to receive homage and she would understand.

Chapter 5: In Fujian (from Jin-An to Ankuay)

At this point, it is necessary to backtrack a little. The two Branches described in the previous chapter began with the 18th and 19th generations (*from Lin Lu -- Fujian Founder*). What happened in the intervening years?

Fujian history records that eight clans^{7*} moved into the relatively unexplored Fujian in the early 4th century AD when the Jin Dynasty was in its dying throes. Earlier on in this essay, I have suggested that our respected ancestor, when he crossed the Yangzi River in the company of the Jin emperor, may have been part of the royal entourage that was fleeing from the invading barbarians. But “fleeing” is not a term that conjures up a sense of decorum. It would be disrespectful to say this of one’s venerable ancestor. Worst still in the present context, it could be *lese majestie*, a punishable offence against royalty. So all along the chroniclers have assiduously avoided elaborating on this event.

Less charitable souls have labeled the Eastern Jin as an extremely incompetent regime in exile. But the regime dragged on for a few more decades. Part of the reason for this was that China at this time was a very fragmented country. And the end of the Jin Dynasty was followed by the Epoch of the North-South division in China which was not resolved until the unification with the establishment of the Sui Dynasty in 581 AD, some 250 years later.

This means ten generations of chaos. And so it was not until 10th generations later that Lin Mao became an assistant Prime Minister (*You Jai*) during the Sui Dynasty (583 AD). What is important for the genealogical record is that Lin Mao moved his residence from Jin An (*around present day Quanzhou where Lin Lu resided and was buried*) to Putien. All the Lims from Teochew and from Hainan claim that their ancestors came from Putien and this is correct as we shall see later.

Although there was at least one successful mandarin in each of the generations from the 11th to the 14th, there was none that was genealogically (*or intrinsically*) significant until it came to Lin Wan Chong of the 15th generation. This is because all the Lims in southern China are now traced to him. The famous Nine Governors were his grandsons, children of his second son. The founder of the Que Xia Branch (*Lin Zan*) was the grandson of his oldest son Tao (*See chapter 4*). I am inclined to think that the star in this period is his second son Lin Pi, who fathered the renowned nine governors. At the age of 15, Lin Pi reportedly copied all the then existent classics (*over a thousand volumes*) and later became successful in the imperial exam. Crucially, he eventually became Mentor to the prince who was Heir Apparent. Presumably, the Heir went on to

⁷ The 8 clans are: Lim, Ng, Tan, Tay, Chiam, Khoo, Ho and Oh.

become Emperor. And the fact of having nine governors in the same family would suggest the connections with royalty had been properly maintained.

So Lin Wan Chong's children went forth and multiplied. They are now in Fujian, Guangdong [*Teochew*], Hainan and Taiwan. From there, they spread over the whole of South East Asia. As is well known, the Teochews and the Hainanese are much closer to the Hokkiens linguistically than to the Cantonese. Furthermore, assuming the Lims to be typical, they [*Teochews & Hainanese*] are indeed of the same stock. However, we will discuss this separately. For now, we should be resuming the trail to Ankuay.

I have asserted earlier that the Chia Nia people (*all Lims*) are from the Que Xia Branch. This is not as straightforward as it seems.

On the way to Chia Nia from Xiamen [*Amoy*], we passed a village called Leng Mng [*Long Men/Dragon Gate*], a village of Lims. If we label the Lims from Chia Nia, a Sub-branch, then Leng Mng would be another one and they would be our most closely related sub-branch. This is because the founders of these two sub-branches were brothers -- 15 generations ahead of the Lims from Tapah. Indeed, the Leng Mng and our Chia Nia branch share the same poem which provides the 'generational name' (*Jee Oon Mia*). Like Chia Nia, therefore, the Lims in Leng Mng belong to the Que Xia branch.

I write at length here about Leng Mng because a respected member of the Leng Mng village whom I know got himself elected as president of the Association of the Family of the Nine Governors believing himself to be one of them.

Now, the ancestor who established the Que Xia branch lived in Putien. To recall, his name was Zan and was of the 18th generation (*from Lin Lu*) and lived around 800 AD during the Tang Dynasty. 12 generations after the Que Xia founder, Lin Fa Wang (of the 29th generation) moved his family westwards and settled down in a village called Chikuay (*Zi Xi*) in the district called Da Tien. Chikuay is north of Ankuay but separated by the district of Eng Choon. A lot of the records for this period were destroyed by fire but the record suggests that this move took place around 1160 AD during the Southern Song Dynasty.

Peh Hio (Bo Ye)

Founder: Lim Siong Choon (32nd generation)

We are now almost "home", though not quite. Lim Siong Choon was the grandson of the aforesaid Fa Wang. He arrived in Ankuay around 1250 AD at the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty when the anaemic Southern Song was finally gobbled up by the Mongols. (*In this essay, we mark the arrival in*

Ankuay by adopting the old fashion translation of names to give them the right flavour.) He was a geographer/geomancer (*you couldn't be one without being the other in those ancient days*) and his calculations had told him that he was not going to prosper if he stayed put in Zi Xi. So Siong Choon moved from Zi Xi southwards to Peh Hio in Ankuay. Peh means Cypress and Hio means leaves. So the name means Cypress Leaves. He was even told by the local deity, who appeared in his dream, that here he would prosper. Yet he was not quite convinced. To be doubly sure, he planted a cypress shoot which grew into a healthy tree a year later. Now satisfied, he decided this was the place where he would bring up his family. Lm Siong Choon alias Lim Kh(n)ee became the founding father of the Peh Hio branch.

THE FAMILIAL POEM

It would appear that around this time the custom was being established under which each family would select or compose a poem. Members of each generation would take, in proper sequence, a word in the poem for his formal name so that his ranking in the generational table would be known from his formal name. Such a (*forty character*) poem was selected by Siong Choon. You can tell that the Lims from 48 Station Road belong to the 22nd because our generational “name” is Gan which is the 22nd character in the afore-mentioned poem. A copy of this poem is at Appendix 2.

Seven generations later (*circa 1440 AD*), two brothers moved out of Peh Hio. The older brother went to Leng Mng which was mentioned earlier. The younger one came to Chia Nia. Both these branches share the same familial poem.

To CHIA NIA

The founder of Chia Nia was Lim Hock Choon. His “Official” name is Pek Siong (*Pek being the generational name and from its position in the poem one can tell he was from the 7th generation in the Peh Hio Branch*).

Chia (*Chi*) means red or barren. Nia (*Ling*) means mountain. Chia Nia means the Red (*or Barren*) Mountain. The present denuded state of these mountains would suggest barrenness but historically it was probably not so. The village is flanked on one side by a hill and is next to a river. It could be quite idyllic were it not so poor and overcrowded. It is almost exactly 100km from Xiamen and takes about three hours’ driving. It is about 25km from the District capital called Hong Sia where facilities are somewhat better than that obtaining in the village.

About Pangs, the smallest sub-sub-branch

Hock Choon had five sons. Each of the sons eventually form a sub-branch called a Pang (*literally this means a room*). Those of us from 48 Station Road, Tapah belong to the 4th Pang as does Tau Ko, the expert craftsman who runs the bicycle shop in Tapah as we have the same great grandfather. Belonging to the 4th Pang mans having descended from the 4th son of the founding father. Cheng Soo, Cheng Sang, Keng Kay, Keng Yaik & families come from the 3rd Pang. They have the same great grandfather as Swee Cheong and Swee Hin, sons of the gentleman we called Uncle Thuan. The other members of the Lim clan in Tapah (Li Kor, Gim Tay) are also from the 3rd Pang.

Our address in Chia Nia is: Beside the Ancestral Temple, Toa Chao Por in (*the village of*) Chia Nia in (*the district of*) Ankuay. The 3rd Pang people we know in Tapah all come from the Toa Lor Kuay area in the same village. Currently, the village is estimated to have a population of 2000 people.

Lim Hock Choon (1406-1479, Ming Dynasty)

Hock Choon is actually his posthumous (or taboo) name. His original name was Phok Ong and his formal name, which is linked to the Poem, was Pek Siong. He was a man of some charisma and great moral courage. According to the Annals of the District of Ankuay [*Anxi Xian Zhi*], when his elder brother was wrongfully detained, he appealed all the way to the Capital City (*Ming, presumably Nanjing*) which, in those car-less days, would take weeks of walking. I have not read anywhere that any of our Hokkien ancestors had distinguished themselves as equestrians. That, plus the cultural and linguistic gulf that existed between the mandarin in the metropolitan area and a country gentleman, must make the process of appeal a highly hazardous undertaking. Against these odds, he succeeded. Later he helped to resettle some 300 refugees who were involved in an uprising in the neighbouring province of Jiangxi. When their properties were later confiscated by the authorities, Hock Choon interceded successfully on their behalf. No doubt his earlier experience in the capital and the consequent prestige helped but we see here a man prepared to take risk or an unpopular cause. A willingness to side with the underdog for the sake of justice is leadership quality and provides cohesion for the community. It confers moral authority. He is an ancestor worthy of admiration. In 1458 AD, there was a famine. Hock Choon donated 800 **Tous** of corn to help the starving thousands. He was conferred the Imperial Honour of the 7th Rank.

Hock Choon's descendants are still largely in the area around Chia Nia except for the 5th Pang all of whose members migrated to Wenzhou in southern Zhejiang. Contact is still being maintained. A few years ago, members of this Pang compiled their genealogy in which they clearly recorded that their

ancestors came from Chia Nia. A copy of this was sent to Chia Nia when I was visiting the place. I took the opportunity to Xerox and retain a copy.

TOA CHAO POR

Most of the materials in the second half of this chapter are derived from a handwritten copy of a genealogy of the Residents of Sai Thia Chu (*Western Hall House*) in Toa Chao Por and the Annals of Ankuay District. The Annals were compiled, I believe, during the time of Emperor Quan Lung (1711? to 1796 AD). They record two more achievers. One was Lim Chey Yeoh who made it to the magistracy in Zhaozhou in Guangdong in the mid 16th century (*Jia Jing era of Ming*).

The second relative was more colourful and interesting. He was Lim Cheong. He was “*uninstructed in the books and of dirty bodily habits*”. But he was smart. I would describe him as a military strategist and armourer. This self-taught relative (*ancestor*) put these skills to good use.

The end of the Ming Dynasty was plagued, among other things, by frequent raids by Japanese pirates along the coasts of China. Surprisingly, they did what their better-equipped progenies did not do in the 20th century -- they penetrated all the way from the coastal area to Ankuay. (*In WWII, the Japanese invaders occupied Xiamen but not Ankuay*). The Annals says that people used to have to escape to the hills to avoid these marauding Japanese pirates. Lim Cheong designed and built a walled village where the women, children and the elderly would live in the inner sanctum and the able-bodied would stay in the outer parts. He equipped his men with bows and arrows and explosives. In one encounter, he killed more than forty enemies at the cost of one person injured by the enemy's arrow. He died at a great age (*90 plus*) and “*entered the Temple of the Loyal and the Just*”.

A 5th generation descendant of Hock Choon (*Chi Nia founder*) moved into Toa Chao Por. His name was Chong Beng (*circa mid 17th century*).

Chong Beng begot I Ki. I Ki (*6th generation*) begot Chong Boon (*7th*). Chong Boon begot ??.....(*8th*). 9th generation ancestor was Chun Kok and he begot three sons, one of whom was Khuan Kow. Khuan Kow begot Kee Hong (*11th*) who begot two sons Chwee Teck and Teck Geok. One of these two begot Lim Khi who is of the 13th generation.

Lim Khi is our great grandfather. He had five sons, the youngest of whom was Hock Joo (*alias Li Ho according to the name engraved on the tombstone*). Grandfather came to Teluk Anson and died there. His ashes were taken back to

Chia Nia for re-burial by his oldest grandson i.e. Lim Peng Hor, our eldest brother.

Lim Peng Hor's widow, his two sons and their children and grandchildren (*nearly twenty in all*) are now occupying the ancestral home, which they share with their three three-times-removed cousins. (*See below*).

Chapter 6: In Malaysia and Singapore

This is the story of the Lim family, an entire generation of whom was born in the town of Tapah (*to wit: #48, Station Road therein with perhaps one exception*) in the State of Perak in Malaysia (*then known as the Federated Malay States*) from the 1920's to the 1940's. Father was Lim Boon Seong born in the year 1890 in the village of Chia-Nia in the district of Ankuay in the Fujian (*Hokkien*) province in China. He came initially to the town of Teluk Anson (*now known as Teluk Intan*) at the age of fourteen. I presume he had gone there to join his father who had gone there before him. There he stayed until around 1919-1920 when he moved to Tapah some 33 miles to the North East. In 1921, he married mother, Khoo Saw Eng, who was from a Penang family but at that time was staying with a relative in Tapah. Eleven children were born of whom eight survived. They are:

Chin Hong	(s)	
	(d)	decd
Siew Huat	(d)	
Hoe Peng	(s)	
Ho Hup	(s)	[author]
Ho Yee	(s)	
Siew Poh	(d)	
Gueh	(d)	decd
Ho Inn	(s)	
Ho Kooi	(s)	decd
Ho Kee	(s)	

Chin Hong and Ho Yee are settled in KL whilst the rest of us are in Singapore.

Other members of the immediate family are:

Eldest brother Peng Hor (*Bing Huo in pinyin*). He was born in Ankuay (*circa 1916*) but came to Tapah where he stayed for several years before returning to the ancestral village in 1931/2 at the time of the Great Depression. He died young leaving behind his widow and two sons. It is his family who are now occupying the ancestral home -- sharing that none too commodious abode with another branch of the family who are the nephews of our cousin Tow Ko who still lives in Tapah. Peng Hor's two sons were born in the years 1932 and 1934.

Second older brother Chin Teck (*later changed to Eng Hua*), also born in China but came to Tapah in the mid 30's. The younger ones among us will know him as Beng Choo's father. He died in 1950/1. His oldest daughter is Beng Choo. Only son Lian Tiong went back to China in the late 50's or early 60's and died there in the 1970's. Younger daughter Beng Hooi is now resident in Holland.

On the distaff side: Mother was born in the year of the Rabbit (1903) in Penang. I recall being told she spent her younger days in the Kampong of Relau in Penang. At the turn of the century, Penang must have been a very matriarchal family. My own experience living with some of our relatives in Penang shortly after World War II tends to confirm this view. Then, three families lived in No. 8, Kinta Lane. They were the families of two sisters and the married (with family) daughter of a third sister. So the males were referred to as so and so's husband or brother-in-law or something. The reference point was always the female member. The reason for this, I surmise, was that as a port Penang served as collection and dispersion point for the immigrants from China. Many of them then dispersed from there to Peninsular Malaya, Sumatra and Burma. In modern parlance, there then existed many single-parent families and children knew their mothers much better than their fathers. Another feature of this matriarchal trend is the higher incidence of the custom of "Jin Juay" which refers to the marriage custom where the male would stay with the wife's family after marriage and where there would be an agreement about what surname the (*male*) children would assume. Usually they would have either double surnames or a certain number of the male offspring would take the mother's surname. I have schoolmates in Penang whose brother(s) had different surname whilst others have double-barreled surname. In the Malaysian states, this practice seems to be observed only in Penang.

Mother came to Tapah during the World War I years (1914-1918) to stay with her then rich aunt who was the half sister of her mother whom we accordingly addressed as Ang Ee Po ("*Po*" signifies that she was of grandmother's generation). Also staying with Ang Ee Po was another half sister of

grandmother whom we called Lak Ee Po. The latter and mother, having grown up together remained close throughout. So, apart from the families of Mother's older brother (*vide infra*) and her younger sister's, Lak Ee Po's family is the one we know best on the distaff side.

A footnote: Lak Ee Po married Mr Ong Chan Seng of the family who built No. 46, Station Road, Tapah. Both the Ong family and the family of Ang Ee Po (*Mrs Tan*) were well-to-do people in Tapah in those days but evidence suggests that they were casualties of the post WWI recession. And as the fortunes of the Ongs and the Tans declined, the Lims who bought over the aforementioned house and have lived there ever since came to be among the leading families in Tapah. I believe the patriarch of this family Mr Lim Siok Tan (*Cheng Sang's father and Keng Kay and Keng Yaik's grandfather*) made his first fortune supplying food to the people who build the road to Cameron Highlands.

Uncle Khoo Ang Moh, mother's older brother was born in Penang and had a Standard 4 education, which put him among the better educated by the standards of those days. Indeed, our father either because he was such an admirer of Uncle or, not quite convinced of the merits of education, often cited this to prove his point that one does not need more than a few years in school to be able to earn a good living.

Auntie Be Ee, mother's younger sister and much the more articulate of the two, told me of some members of her (*Khoo*) family who had migrated to Burma. Medan, in North Sumatra, is even today a twin of Penang. Indeed, Uncle Khoo Ang Moh, mother's older brother, got married there and the older among our cousins in KL (*Khay Hock and the late Khay Siew*) spent their early childhood there.