

# TAN TECK GUAN BUILDING, COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, SINGAPORE.

Y K Lee

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The Tan Teck Guan Building, College of Medicine, Singapore, was officially opened on 23rd June 1911 by the Acting Governor, the Honourable Mr E. L. Brockman, C.M.G. This ceremony was part of Singapore's celebration for the coronation of King George V. Among those present were Government officials, members of the Council of the Medical School, the School staff, members of the medical fraternity of Singapore, well-wishers and students. Mr Tan Jiak Kim and Mr Tan Chay Yan were not present as they were both in Europe. After declaring the building open, His Excellency presented diplomas and prizes to new graduates and students.

When the College of Medicine (then known as the Straits and Federated Malay States Government Medical School) was founded in 1905, it was located in the old Female Lunatic Asylum at Sepoy Lines. Four existing buildings of the Lunatic Asylum were converted into a rudimentary medical school. In 1907, a new lecture theatre and a laboratory were added. There was no proper reading room or library or place to put pathological specimens.

In 1905, there were 17 medical students and 4 students attending the hospital assistants course. In 1910, there were 90 medical students and 30 trainee hospital assistants.

By 1909, the existing buildings began to prove inadequate. In addition to the increased number of students, many books and apparatus had been purchased and more and more specimens had been collected in the temporary museum (there were already more than 300 specimens). Plans were made for a new building to provide, amongst other things, for a reading room, a museum and a classroom. But there were no funds!

At the beginning of 1910, Mr Tan Jiak Kim undertook to raise \$15,000 to defray the cost of such a building to fulfill the wants of the Medical School. He went to Malacca where he stayed a few days and returned with the news that Mr Tan Chay Yan would donate the whole sum himself and erect the building in memory of his late father, Mr Tan Teck Guan.

The work was undertaken, Mr Draper being the Architect, but the construction proceeded more slowly than anticipated and was not complete at the end of 1910. The building when completed contained a pathology museum, a lecture room, a library and reading room, offices and stores.

Architecturally, the building has been described thus:

"The Building has a Georgian facade with Neoclassic details. The main entrance is embellished with an ornate

archway supported by Doric columns, with Ionic columns on the upper level."

The School Council erected a brass tablet in the building to the memory of the late Tan Teck Guan, Esq. (see below)

THIS TABLET  
IN MEMORY OF THE LATE  
TAN TECK GUAN ESQ  
BORN 5th JUNE 1844  
DIED 22nd OCTOBER 1891  
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE  
AND  
MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER  
OF  
THE TOWN AND FORT OF MALACCA  
CHIEF OF THE TAN CLAN OF THE COLONY  
AND  
THE THIRD SON OF TAN TOCK SENG WHO  
FOUNDED  
THE HOSPITAL FOR THE POOR  
KNOWN BY HIS NAME  
IN  
SINGAPORE  
IS ERECTED BY  
THE COUNCIL OF THE MEDICAL SCHOOL  
OF THE STRAITS SETTLEMENTS AND  
THE FEDERATED MALAY STATES  
IN  
COMMEMORATION OF THE GIFT OF  
\$15,000  
TO THE MEDICAL SCHOOL FUND  
BY HIS ELDEST SON  
TAN CHAY YAN ESQ  
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE AND  
MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER  
MALACCA

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Singapore.

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LL. B. Senior Physician, Clinical Professor and Head.

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The Council also decided that the names, in Chinese characters, of the original subscribers to the Medical School building fund (1904) together with an eulogy be inscribed in two stone tablets and incorporated in the walls of the building.

A transcript of the inscriptions is appended below. The transcript, however, is not in the original Chinese characters as carved in the stone tablets. Some of the Chinese characters are in the simplified form in use in Singapore at the present time.

## 七州府医学堂碑记

从来地方自治，赖贤有司为之倡，亦贵热心公益者合群力以助之，斯政无不举，事无不成矣。新加坡总督缙晏螺申、七州府大人缙挽自莅任以来，声名大振，为黎庶所仰慕，政无钜细、事无大小，凡有益于民者，莫不体好生之德，以臻邗治之麻。於戏盛哉！而凡隶悒悒者，固已讴歌载道。载德如天，所最难忘者，创设医学堂一事，尤善政之见端也。盖生人不能有舒而无惨，故疾病之时，专恃乎名医之诊治，幸而转危为安，必有贤国手为之调护，而后斯人性命获以保全。彼夫操切与庸俗，未经考验，辄出问世，其误人也匪轻。二公知医与人有密切之关系，非创建学堂，无以培植人材以拯生民之疾苦。爰特广为劝谕，鸠集巨资，以成义举。聘高明之教习，精传授于生徒，泊乎学成毕业，类皆青出于蓝，罔不称为回春妙手，而斯人之性命，得赖保全者，岂浅鲜哉！此邦人士好善高风，亦合群筹款，共襄盛事，因乐观厥成之美，将以为后者之功也，故特纪二公之厚泽及人，及善士之仗义，实足以官长之助也。用伐贞珉，以志弗谖云。至诸君题款芳名，另刻诸石，以备查考。

兹将一千九百零四年倡建七州府医学堂各绅商捐助公款芳名开列于左：  
 议例局绅陈若锦翁捐银壹万贰仟元  
 陆佑翁代雪兰莪酒赌当总偶捐银九仟元  
 颜五美翁捐银伍仟元  
 黄敏公司即丰源号捐银叁仟元  
 黄亚福翁捐银叁仟元  
 刘金榜翁捐银叁仟元  
 陈若銓翁代其父已故陈明岩翁捐银叁仟元  
 已故谢安祥翁之遗产捐银叁仟元  
 邱雁宾翁捐银叁仟元  
 承振和美烟酒总偶捐银叁仟元  
 黄继祥翁捐银叁仟元  
 椒蜜公司捐银叁仟元  
 已故邱正忠翁之子邱得松翁捐银叁仟元  
 西贡余俊生翁捐银叁仟元  
 邱汉阳翁捐银叁仟元  
 邱昭忠翁捐银叁仟元  
 谢君增煜之德配捐银叁仟元  
 中街广计开 罗致生五百伍拾元  
 罗奇生伍佰伍拾元 朱广兰伍佰伍拾元  
 广恒号伍佰伍拾元 朱广元叁佰元  
 朱有兰贰佰元 朱富兰贰佰元  
 普安公司壹佰元 共银叁仟元  
 暹郊公司捐银壹仟伍佰元  
 王有海公司捐银壹仟元  
 吴寿珍翁捐银壹仟元

余连城翁捐银壹仟元  
 李清渊翁捐银壹仟元  
 西逸摩咸勿亚纱莪翁捐银壹仟元  
 林耀煌翁捐银壹仟元  
 胡子春翁捐银壹仟元  
 郑太平翁捐银壹仟元  
 庄清建翁捐银壹仟元  
 吴新科翁捐银伍佰元  
 郑清气翁捐银伍佰元  
 陈群英翁捐银伍佰元  
 何长远翁捐银伍佰元  
 林妈裁翁捐银伍佰元  
 邱有用翁捐银伍佰元  
 吴文庆翁捐银伍佰元  
 谭庆云翁捐银叁佰元  
 陈恭锡翁捐银叁佰元  
 许行云父子即顺美号捐银叁佰元  
 永义成号捐银叁佰元  
 议例局绅那卑亚翁捐银贰佰元  
 新加坡十字光线董事捐银壹佰柒拾柒元零捌占  
 林大斗翁捐银壹佰元  
 张万庆翁捐银壹佰元  
 宋基连翁捐银壹佰元  
 宋基金翁捐银壹佰元  
 蔡仰泰翁捐银壹佰元  
 黄务美翁捐石牌全付

■ 合共捐银捌万柒仟零柒拾柒元零捌占

A loosely rendered English translation is given below. An idiomatic translation would not have done justice to the eulogy in that it would not preserve the elegance of expression and the beauty of the Chinese language, especially the classical style:

## FIRST TABLET

'Seven States Medical School Memorial Tablet. ('Seven States' refers to the 3 states of the Straits Settlements, namely, Singapore, Penang and Malacca, and the 4 states of the Federated Malay States, namely, Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negri Sembilan).

In the realm of local government, reliance on the initiative of able civil servants (officials) together with the wholehearted cooperation of public-spirited citizens ensure that the Government will be progressive and its endeavours successful. The Governor of Singapore, Sir John Anderson, and the Secretary for Chinese Affairs of the Seven States, the Hon'ble Mr. W. D. Barnes, since their assumption of office, have enjoyed great prestige and earned the respect of the common people. Policies, whether major or not, were always implemented benevolently for the benefit of all. What noble acts these were? All the subject people sing praises about their thoughtfulness. Among their widely-acclaimed achievements, the most memorable was the founding of the medical school, 'the visible manifestation of an enlightened administration!.

Human beings cannot always be at ease and be without misery. When illness strikes, they rely solely and hopefully on outstanding and competent doctors to transform danger into well-being. There are reputable experts who can do this and eventually make a patient whole again. But there are others who are indifferent, inefficient and inexperienced, yet they eagerly treat patients and they cause great harm.

Their Excellencies understood the intimate relationship between doctor and patient, and appreciated the need to found a medical school to develop expertise to relieve human suffering. They helped in raising funds by appealing for donations to this worthy cause ('to donate large sums is a public-spirited act').

The School will engage eminent teachers for the sole purpose of teaching the students who will study until graduation. The pupils may excel the masters and be known as physicians who can heal! And the people will be confident that their lives will be in good hands. Is this insignificant?

The gentlemen of these States have become famous by spontaneously and generously contributing to this great cause.

Because we admire their altruism, and also as an example to future generations, we specially record the very great favours of Their Excellencies to the people, the noble deeds of good men, and the help of officials. In our determination not to forget the donors, we also specially carve a stone tablet inscribing their names ('fragrant names') and the amount of their donations, for all to see.

## SECOND TABLET

In 1904, when the Seven States Medical School was about to be founded, many of the 'gentry and merchants' subscribed to the building fund, their 'fragrant names' are inscribed below ('on the left', because on the stone tablet, the Chinese characters were inscribed from top down starting on the right side):

The Hon'ble Tan Jiak Kim	\$12,000.00
The Selangor General Farm, by Loke Yew, Esq.	9,000.00
Gan Ngoh Bee, Esq.	5,000.00
Messers Wee Bin & Co.	3,000.00
Wong Ah Fook, Esq.	3,000.00
Low Kim Pong, Esq.	3,000.00
Late Mr Tan Beng Gum, by his son Mr Tan Jiak Chuan	3,000.00
Late Mr Chia Ann Siang's Estate	3,000.00
Yow Ngan Pan, Esq.	3,000.00
Seng Chin Ho Bee (Opium and Spirit Farm)	3,000.00
Wee Kay Siang, Esq.	3,000.00
Gambier and Pepper Society	3,000.00
Khoo Teck Siong, Esq., son of late Khoo Cheng Tiong, Esq.	3,000.00
E. Chin Seng, Esq. (of Saigon)	3,000.00
Khoo Hun Yeang, Esq.	3,000.00
Khoo Cheow Tiong, Esq.	3,000.00
Mrs. Chea Chen Eok	3,000.00
The Market Street Cantonese Merchants' Scholarship:	
Chop Loh Kee Seng	\$550.00
Chop Choo Kong Lan	550.00
Chop Kwong Hang	550.00
Chop Loh Chee Seng	550.00
Chop Choo Kong Yuen	300.00
Chop Choo U Lan	200.00
Chop Choo Foo Lan	200.00
Po On Insurance Co.	100.00
Siam Rice Guild	1,500.00
Messrs Ong Ewe Hai & Co.	1,000.00

Goh Siew Tin, Esq	1,000.00
Seah Liang Seah, Esq.	1,000.00
Lee Cheng Yan, Esq	1,000.00
Syed Mohamed Alsagoff	1,000.00
Lim Eow Hong, Esq.	1,000.00
Foo Choo Choon, Esq.	1,000.00
Chung Thye Phin, Esq.	1,000.00
Choong Cheng Kean, Esq.	1,000.00
Goh Sin Koh, Esq.	500.00
Tay Cheng Kee, Esq.	500.00
Tan Koon Eng, Esq.	500.00
Hoe Tiang Wan, Esq.	500.00
Lim Mah Chye, Esq.	500.00
Khoo Yew Yong, Esq.	500.00
Goh Boon Keng, Esq.	500.00
Tam Keng Hong, Esq.	300.00
Tan Kiong Saik, Esq	300.00
Koh Eng Hoon & Sons (Chop Soon Bee)	300.00
Chop Eng Ghee Seng	300.00
The Hon'ble W. J. Napier	200.00
Singapore Rontgent Rays Committee	177.08
Lim Tuah Tau, Esq.	100.00
Chop Teo Ban Keng	100.00
Song Kee Lian, Esq.	100.00
Song Kee Chuan, Esq.	100.00
Choa Giang Tye, Esq.	100.00
Ng Boo Bee, Esq. paid for the stone tablets.	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$87,077.08</b>

When the new College of Medicine Building was occupied in 1926, the Tan Teck Guan Building was given to the Anatomy Department. It remained part of the Anatomy Department till May 1983 when the Department moved to the new Faculty of Medicine Buildings at Kent Ridge.

The main College of Medicine building and the Tan Teck Guan Building have been renovated and are to be preserved as historical buildings. The Tan Teck Guan Building since 1st July 1987 has housed the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Health.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### REFERENCES

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