

TUN TAN CHENG LOCK - A life serving his country and people

(1883 – 1960)

For nearly 40 years, Tun Tan Cheng Lock, more than any other Chinese of his time, took on active part in public affairs and fought for politics, education and welfare of the Chinese in Malaya, and contributed significantly to the foundation of present-day Malaysia.

Cheng Lock was born on April 5, 1883 at Jalan Heeran, Malacca and died on Dec 13, 1960. He received his education in **Malacca High School** but as he was unable to win an overseas scholarship to pursue law in the United Kingdom, he took up teaching at the Raffles Institution from 1902 to 1908; Raffles imbued in him a Westerner's sense of civic consciousness that laid the foundation for public office in the colony.

He returned from Singapore to take charge of the family's rubber business. Cheng Lock was the assistant manager of the Bukit Kajang Rubber Estates from 1908 to 1910. He later floated the Malacca Pinda Rubber Estates, Ayer Molek Rubber Company and the United Malacca Rubber Estates.

In August 1912 he was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Malacca and a few months later, he was Commissioner for the Municipality of the Town and Fort of Malacca, from 1912 to 1922.

In 1913, Cheng Lock married Yeo Yeok Neo, the daughter of a rich Hokkien community leader in Malacca. They had five children, son Tan Siew Sin and four daughters. During his term as Unofficial Member of the Straits Settlement Executive Council, he championed social causes such as the Chinese marriage laws, Chinese vernacular education and immigration issues, and against opium smoking.

On February 27, 1949, Cheng Lock founded the Malayan Chinese association (MCA) with other leaders such as Leong Yew Koh and H.S. Lee. Cheng Lock was elected as the first President and served until 1958.

On Aug 23, 1953, Cheng Lock brought MCA into the National Convention sponsored by Umno; the formation of the Alliance with Umno, MCA and MIC quickened the process of independence when the Alliance won 51 out of 52 seats in the Federal elections in 1955

Cheng Lock's son, Siew Sin, later led the MCA and served as Finance Minister under Prime Ministers Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Abdul Razak.

Tun Tan Cheng Lock passed away on 13th. December 1960 at the age of 77.