

Waves of Influence across the South Seas: Mutual Support between Protestants in Minnan and Southeast Asia

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Abstract

This article looks at the extensive connections between the Protestant church in Southern Fujian (Minnan) and Southeast Asia. The centuries-old practice of those from Minnan traveling to Southeast Asia formed networks that were also utilized by Chinese Christians. When Protestants from Minnan traveled to Southeast Asia, they did not only rely on natal and ancestral ties, but also relied upon church relations in securing employment and adapting to their new environment. Likewise, churches in Southeast Asia were supported by evangelistic workers trained in Minnan. In return, beginning in the early twentieth century, Minnan churches received financial contributions from Protestant communities throughout Southeast Asia. The biographical vignettes presented in this article paint a picture of mutual support between the Protestant communities in Minnan and Southeast Asia.

In a recent chapter on contemporary return visits of overseas Chinese to ancestral hometowns in Fujian, Kenneth Dean briefly critiques scholars who overemphasize the economic decline of Minnan 閩南, or

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Southern Fujian in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties.¹ Dean acknowledges that during these years, largely due to the restrictions placed on overseas trade and coastal evacuation policies, Minnan's local population and apparent economic prosperity both seemed to wane. However, he argues that such an understanding is not complete, for the analysis is geographically limited to Minnan proper and relies on artificially constructed borders which do not accurately reflect reality. Dean summarizes:

But the boundaries of the Minnan region were flexible, and kept expanding, or floating, with the maritime travels of Minnan sojourners across Southeast Asia. Any account of the historical change of the overall population of the Minnan people should take into consideration their growing numbers overseas, not just the declining numbers at home.²

As Dean's comment hints at, an understanding of any aspect of Minnan culture or history must recognize the vital connections forged between residents in this area of coastal China and overseas Chinese in Nanyang 南洋, or Southeast Asia.³ This article looks at one such aspect of Minnan history—that of the connections formed between Protestants here and in Southeast Asia.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Protestant evangelization efforts in Minnan were held up as a paragon of strategic church construction. Although the total number of converts was not large, the church in Minnan compared favorably with more extensive missionary efforts in other port cities, such as Guangzhou or Shanghai. Just over a decade after first arriving in Xiamen (廈門, also known as Amoy), the principal city of Minnan, in 1842, Protestant missionaries and Chinese church leaders had succeeded in establishing mainland China's first Protestant church building (in 1848) and first independent

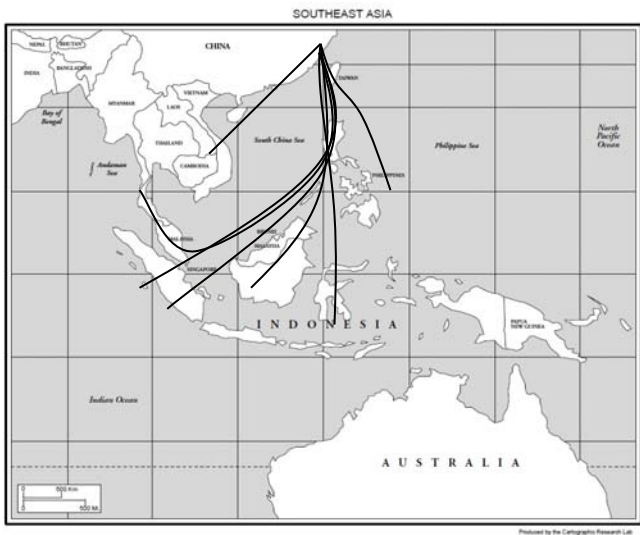
¹ Kenneth Dean, "The Return Visits of Overseas Chinese to Ancestral Villages in Putian, Fujian," in *Faiths on Display: Religion, Tourism and the Chinese State*, ed. Timothy Oaks and Donald Sutton (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 235–263. Hugh Clark offers a related analysis in his explanation of the maritime frontier of Minnan as a "membrane." See Hugh Clark, "The Religious Culture of Southern Fujian, 750–1450: Preliminary Reflections on Contacts across a Maritime Frontier," *Asia Major* 19, no. 1–2 (2006): 211–240.

² Dean, "Return Visits," 237.

³ The term Nanyang or the "South Seas" refers to Southeast Asian countries but is typically used to denote areas where overseas Chinese migrated. Most examples in this paper deal with Protestants in Singapore and Malaysia, but the connections between Minnan churches and those in other Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand and the Philippines, also flourished.

Protestant church structure (in 1856), devolving full ecclesiastical control into the hands of local converts elected to positions of elders and deacons. The next decade witnessed China's first pastors ordained by a native church when Luo Jiayu 羅嘉漁 and Ye Hanzhang 葉漢章 were commissioned to these posts in 1864.⁴ However, from the earliest years and throughout the pre-1949 history of the church in Minnan, there was a connection to Nanyang.

Figure 1. This map shows some of the popular shipping routes between Xiamen, or Minnan in general, and Nanyang that were co-opted by Protestant communities.⁵



This article presents biographical vignettes to show the international connections formed between the Protestant community in Minnan and Chinese churches throughout Nanyang. Although the individuals introduced here were not nationally prominent or major figures in the Chinese church, presenting their stories adds a human face to the extensive interactions between Protestants in Minnan and Nanyang. By tracing these transnational flows of Protestant influence, this research

⁴ For China's "first church," see Chris White, "Harnessing the Church in Today's China: The Case of Xiamen's Xinjie Church," *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2010): 53-64, for more on the construction of an independent Chinese consistory and the election of the first pastors, see David Cheung, *Christianity in Modern China: The Making of the First Native Protestant Church* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

⁵ This map is an altered version of the Southeast Asia map prepared by the University of Alabama, accessed October 18, 2011, http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/contemporary_maps/world/asia/seasia2.pdf.

hopes to illustrate how the Minnan church has been supported by, and in turn reinforced, Protestant groups in Nanyang.⁶

Other scholars have noted the early Protestant interactions between overseas Chinese and coastal southeast China. Chief among these is Joseph Lee, whose research on the overseas connections of the Chaozhou 潮州 or Shantou 汕頭 region of Northern Guangdong is important in highlighting how the networks of early converts were incorporated into the evangelistic plans of mission agencies hoping to gain a foothold in China.⁷ This current article hopes to further Lee's analysis in three ways. First of all, the geographic scope of this study is different. While Lee focused on those with ties to Chaozhou or Shantou, this article will look at Minnan. Secondly, Lee limits his study to the decades before foreign missionaries inhabited the Chaozhou region. He correctly notes the implementation of a mission strategy in which foreign evangelists were preceded by Chinese converts enlisted in Southeast Asia to carry the gospel back to their native homes. However, the maritime interactions between those in China and communities of overseas Chinese did not abate after the missionary penetration of the mainland, but rather increased. The third distinction is that this analysis hopes to emphasize how the relationship between overseas Chinese and the church communities in their native lands was bilateral. While Lee's research shows how overseas Chinese utilized their familial and native networks for evangelistic purposes in China, by expanding the period under review, this study will show that the Protestant communities in China responded by reinforcing the churches in Nanyang.

⁶ This paper focuses on Chinese Protestants and limits the amount of space given to foreign missionaries, who also co-opted the established Chinese networks between Minnan and Southeast Asia.

⁷ Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, "The Overseas Networks and Early Baptist Missionary Movement across the South China Seas," *The Historian* 63, no. 4 (2001): 753–768. Portions of Lee's article were also included in his book on Chaozhou Christian communities in the late nineteenth century. See Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, *The Bible and the Gun: Christianity in South China* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

I. INITIAL CONVERSION OF MINNAN PEOPLE

Considering the ubiquity of overseas Chinese in Nanyang with ties to Minnan, it should come as little surprise that the first Minnan Protestant converts were baptized not in China, but in Southeast Asia. The late Carl Smith, in hoping to recover the oft-overlooked pioneer Chinese Protestant converts, compiled a directory of names of baptized church members from 1813 to 1843.⁸ Smith found nearly 150 Chinese baptized as Protestants during these years, the vast majority occurring in Singapore, Bangkok, Java, or other coastal areas of Southeast Asia. Lee utilized Smith's registry by selecting those baptized by Baptist missionaries in Bangkok that traced their ancestry back to Chaozhou.⁹ The Chaozhou and Minnan regions were the ancestral homes to the vast majority of overseas Chinese throughout Southeast Asia. While Smith's brief descriptions do not list where most of these Protestants were originally from, we can safely assume that at least some of these (and quite possibly many or even most) hailed from Minnan. Below we will introduce one of these early Minnan converts.

Chae Hoo

Chae Hoo¹⁰ is an example of an early Minnan Protestant convert baptized in Southeast Asia.¹¹ Chae was born in Minnan in 1812 and at the age of 15 moved to Singapore, where after first staying with Jacob Tomlin, a British missionary, began to work for David Abeel, an American missionary associated with the Reformed Church of America

⁸ This list can be found at Carl T. Smith, "A Register of Baptized Protestant Chinese, 1813–1842," *Chung Chi Bulletin* 49 (1970): 23–26, and as an appendix in Carl T. Smith, *Chinese Christians: Elites, Middlemen, and the Church in Hong Kong*, new edition (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 212–217.

⁹ See Appendix 1 in Lee, "The Overseas Networks," 767.

¹⁰ This name also appears as Chao Hoo, Choe Hoo, and Chai Koo. Su Jing, *Jidujiao yu xinjiapo huaren, 1819–1846* [基督教与新加坡华人, 1819–1846 Christianity and Singapore Chinese, 1819–1846] (Singapore: Xinjiapo fuyin zhengzhu xiehui, 2011), 246 may be correct in listing this as 齊琥, but unfortunately there is no documentation to support this, so the current article will refer to this individual as Chae Hoo. When possible, *pinyin* names and Chinese characters of individuals are provided here. However, in some cases, such as Chae Hoo, this is not possible and the renderings of names as found in the original sources must be relied upon.

¹¹ Information on Chae Hoo is gleaned from Su, "Jidujiao," 246–249.

(RCA).¹² In later years, Chae credited Abeel with teaching him about the faith. However, Abeel, who would later be the first permanent Protestant missionary in Minnan, left Singapore in 1833 and after this Chae seemed to waver in his attraction to Christianity. His association with some unsavory characters who ended up in prison served as a wake-up call for Chae and when another missionary, Ira Tracy, began holding services in the Minnan dialect in Singapore, Chae decided to apply for baptism. On October 11, 1835, Chae became the first Chinese Christian baptized in Singapore.¹³

After receiving this sacrament, Chae undertook training as a book-binder. Because of restrictions within mainland China, Macao housed movable type printing equipment, but Singapore was becoming the preferred place for woodblock printing of Christian tracts and other missionary publications which Chae was involved with.¹⁴ When the American mission in Singapore chose to transfer their efforts to mainland China in 1842,¹⁵ Chae seems to have joined the London Missionary Society's (LMS) printing endeavors which were expanding in Singapore. In 1845, an LMS missionary reported that Chae, who by that time had assisted in the printing of numerous books, was returning to Minnan for a family visit. We do not know how long Chae's visit lasted, or if he connected with the fledgling church in Xiamen, but we do know that in the next year, 1846, the LMS missionaries also left Singapore. Unfortunately, nothing more is known about this early Minnan Protestant.

While extant sources on Chae Hoo are not ideal, through this short sketch of his life we can gain a sense of how even before Protestant missionaries arrived in Minnan, the evangelization of Minnan people had begun. Numerous other sojourners from Minnan but residing in Singapore, Bangkok, or other cities throughout Nanyang were the earliest targets of the Protestant mission to the Chinese.

¹² Actually, at this time, the RCA did not have an independent foreign mission board, so Abeel was commissioned through the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), but he is nonetheless regarded as the father of the RCA's China mission.

¹³ Su, *Jidujiao*, 246, highlights the significance of this event. After 16 years of evangelistic efforts, the baptism of Chae Hoo dispelled the belief that the conversion of Chinese was impossible. While Chae was not the first Chinese Protestant, he was the first fruit of the American mission to the Chinese (which began with the arrival of E. C. Bridgman in 1830).

¹⁴ ABCFM *Annual Report* (1837), 87.

¹⁵ Smith, "Register," 25 notes that Chae returned to Xiamen "by 1842" but this seems to have been only temporary as he joined the LMS team in Singapore later that year.

II. PREPARING FOR MINNAN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Protestant missions to China is normally dated as beginning with Robert Morrison's arrival in Guangzhou in 1807, but as the above description shows, for the first three and a half decades, much of the focus of evangelizing Chinese did not take place in China at all, but among the overseas Chinese living throughout Nanyang. John Fairbank's apt remark—"Protestant missions began a flank attack on China through the soft underbelly of expatriate overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia"¹⁶—summarizes the strategy of these mission boards that were not yet permitted to enter China proper. While the geographic focus of these mission boards was Southeast Asia, the cultural focus was clearly on China. Missionaries in these areas were, as the title of one book puts it, "Waiting for China."¹⁷

When the first of China's ports was pried open in 1842, the following years witnessed an immediate influx of missionaries who had previously been stationed among Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. Xiamen, as one of the initial treaty ports, was a natural choice for many missionaries who, through their interaction with Chinese in Nanyang, had gained proficiency in the Minnan language. In fact, of the earliest Protestant missionaries to settle in Minnan from 1842 to 1846, at least nine transferred from working with Chinese emigrants in Nanyang.¹⁸

Foreign missionaries were not the only church members to receive training in Southeast Asia before transferring to Minnan; this was also the case for some of the earliest Chinese Protestants to work in the area. Below we will look briefly at a few of these individuals. Though

¹⁶ John King Fairbank, "Introduction," in *Christianity in China: Early Protestant Missionary Writings*, ed. Suzanne Wilson Barnett and John King Fairbank (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 13.

¹⁷ Brian Harrison, *Waiting for China: The Anglo-Chinese College at Malacca, 1818–1843, and Early Nineteenth-Century Missions* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1979).

¹⁸ The nine being, Abeel, William James Boone (who later moved to Shanghai, becoming Bishop Boone), Elihu Doty, William J. Pohlman, William Young (who was born in Java and spent considerable years in Southeast Asia), Dr. James Hepburn, and the brothers John and Alexander Stronach, who were accompanied by their sister, Catherine Stronach, an independent missionary. While Doty and Pohlman had not learned the Minnan dialect, their previous Chinese language (Cantonese) study in Borneo was of much use in their acquisition of the Minnan tongue.

none of the three individuals introduced below hailed from Minnan, their stories show the transnational flow of people between Minnan and Nanyang, and more importantly reflect the beginnings of a continual relationship of mutual evangelistic support between the areas.

Eaton Apping

Although little is known about Eaton Apping,¹⁹ including his Chinese name, he seems to be a curious case and his story is worth briefly recounting here. It is not clear where Eaton was originally from,²⁰ but he lived in Singapore or Malaya before being sent to the US as a young teenager. For four years, most of which were spent “under the care of Christian friends,” Eaton studied in Steubenville, Ohio.²¹ We do not know if Eaton was baptized in the US or before arriving, but it seems that the reason for his study in Ohio was to prepare him to join the growing mission to the Chinese in Nanyang. He did this in 1839 when he set off from Boston on the same ship as the Hepburns, missionaries associated with the American Presbyterian Church (AP). Eaton arrived in Singapore in 1840 and began serving as a “native assistant.” Identity issues seemed to have plagued Eaton, as one missionary report notes that he was not fully accepted by Malay or Chinese (which suggests he may have been the product of a mixed relationship).²² The same report notes that he did not fully remember his mother tongue, though as the following snippet of a letter written by Eaton to a mission administrator in the US shows, it is clear that English was not his native language.²³

Now I see here [in Singapore] five six Chinesees man they has become member in the Church of Christ, there are now great many of them inquired the way of salvation, I hope God may send more the gospel of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ, to this poor and wretched heathens. Two weeks since I have been communion with God, I feel myself happy I received a body and blood of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ, I look to him he has suffered and died for my sin, and

¹⁹ Smith, “Register,” 26 lists the name as Eton or Eason, and some missionary letters use Etam, but in signing his own name the individual used “Eaton.”

²⁰ After arriving in Singapore, Eaton wrote to the US that he was “very happy to see my country.” HKBU PCUSA Mission Correspondence and Reports, vol. 1, reel 189, number 126, letter by Eaton Apping dated July 14, 1841.

²¹ AP *Foreign Missions Annual Report* (1840), 13–14.

²² HKBU PCUSA Mission Correspondence and Reports, vol. 1, reel 189, number 148, letter by J. C. Hepburn dated December 8, 1841.

²³ Ibid.

also too all the sins of the whole world, I remember I have done so many sins against God. Now I have hope I may grow more in grace and in the knowledge of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ, day and night I look to him, and hope I may love him more and more.²⁴

Eaton continued to serve with the AP missionaries, though at one point they admit they “do not know what to do with him” since the only occupation they deemed suitable was that of servant. Another letter states that while Eaton’s English pronunciation was not good enough to allow him to serve as a teacher for Chinese boys, he was “nevertheless a useful member of the mission. His amiable and consistent department, and his diligent habits render him a pleasant and profitable companion for the boys [in the mission school].”²⁵

Eaton’s connection to Minnan came in the early 1840s when the AP mission left Singapore and transferred to Xiamen. Eaton accompanied the missionaries in this move, which would have probably made him the first Protestant Chinese to reside in Minnan. However, largely due to the poor health of the earliest missionaries, the AP mission in Minnan fizzled and Eaton stopped working for the organization in 1845.²⁶ We do not know what happened to him after this date or if he remained in Xiamen after the last AP missionaries left.

Chen Licun 陳理存

Originally from Chaozhou in Guangdong Province, Chen Licun moved to Singapore where he found work assisting and teaching different missionaries. In 1840, Chen began teaching John Stronach the Chaozhou dialect (Stronach had already studied the Minnan dialect for two years) and assisting him in translating Christian material for publication. In 1844, Chen accompanied Stronach in leaving Singapore; however, while the latter relocated to the newly opened port of Xiamen, Chen returned to his home in Chaozhou. Two years later, in 1846, Chen rejoined Stronach in Xiamen and continued to assist in translation work. The following year, Stronach left Xiamen to attend the group of missionary scholars in Shanghai tasked with creating a unified translation of the Bible. Chen remained in Xiamen.

²⁴ HKBU PCUSA Mission Correspondence and Reports, vol. 1, 1833–1911, roll 189, number 150, letter from Eaton Apping to Mr. Lowrie dated December 11, 1841.

²⁵ HKBU PCUSA Mission Correspondence and Reports, vol. 1, reel 189, number 138, letter dated September 17, 1841.

²⁶ Smith, “Register,” 26.

Missionaries in Xiamen requested Chen to transfer to Chaozhou for they felt that his poor skills in speaking the Minnan dialect left him nearly useless for the evangelistic endeavors in Minnan. Chen, however, refused this appeal and stayed in Xiamen. His actions must not have too deeply offended the missionaries for in 1849 they hired him to replace a recently deceased convert who sold religious tracts²⁷ and shortly thereafter reported that his linguistic abilities had improved and his preaching had become understandable. Chen participated in evangelistic work in and around Xiamen until 1851 when he returned to Chaozhou. It was here in the following year that he succumbed to sickness and died.²⁸

Yu Dingan 余定安

The most important Chinese Christian in Minnan with ties to Southeast Asia in these early years was Yu Dingan (c.1818–1853). Born and raised in Guangdong, Yu went to Siam (Thailand) at the age of 21 to “seek his fortunes abroad.”²⁹ After becoming interested in Christianity while in Bangkok, Yu was baptized in 1844 and two years later returned to China, venturing to Xiamen. It was here that beginning in early 1847 “Teacher U,” as he is known in missionary sources, was officially employed by RCA missionaries as an evangelist, assisting in conducting weekly Sabbath services and taking part in various evangelistic tours in the surrounding countryside.

Yu was the first and leading Chinese evangelist of the early church in Minnan. In May 1853, he, along with a colporteur referred to as “Lotia,” went to the prefectural city of Zhangzhou 漳州 where Christians in Xiamen had for years hoped to open a permanent preaching point.³⁰ Unfortunately, these plans would be put on hold, for during this visit, Yu was seized by a crowd who wrongly thought he was a member of the Little Knife (or Small Swords, 小刀會) Rebellion. This group, related to the larger Taiping Rebels³¹ who were wreaking havoc throughout southern China, had just captured the walled city of Zhangzhou and immediately beheaded two leading Qing officials. The

²⁷ LMS *Chronicle* (1849), 163.

²⁸ Information on Chen is retrieved from Su, *Jidujiao*, 256–258.

²⁹ ABCFM *Annual Report* (1848), 223.

³⁰ Details of this story are found in various mission publications, but are most accessible in Cheung, *Christianity in Modern China*, 188–189.

³¹ Philip W. Pitcher, *In and About Amoy* (Shanghai and Foochow: The Methodist Publishing House, 1912), 26–27.

rebels were preparing expedited trials for other captured mandarins and Yu volunteered to serve as an interpreter, translating the official mandarin language into the dialect of the insurgents (Hakka, Cantonese, or Teochew?). It was in this role that Yu was able to convince the rebels to release some of the officials; however, when local forces recaptured the city, they mistook Yu's service as proof of his complicity with the invading forces and subsequently put him to death, resulting in the first martyrdom in the history of Minnan Protestantism. The report of one missionary explains that Yu "fell a sacrifice to the violence of an aroused and suspicious populace, who were beyond the control of both reason and law."³²

III. PREPARING FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA IN MINNAN

The above stories all dealt with Chinese who were introduced to Protestantism outside of China. However, as the church in Minnan became more and more established, instead of receiving evangelistic assistance from Chinese Protestants transferring from Nanyang, the Minnan church began to produce local evangelists and even pastors to serve abroad. In addition, Xiamen also became a center for training visiting evangelists who planned to work among Minnan peoples in Nanyang.³³ For example, a man from Sumatra traveled to Xiamen to specifically study the Minnan dialect so as to serve as an evangelist back in Sumatra.³⁴ A report in a Boston newspaper in 1905 tells of a Chinese church in the Philippines which supported a member to travel to Xiamen for theological training.³⁵ The stories of the two individuals below show how the Minnan Church, although initially a "child" of mission work in Southeast Asia, gradually became the "mother church," supplying numerous evangelistic workers.

³² Quoted in Philip W. Pitcher, *Fifty Years in Amoy* (New York: Board of Publications of the Reformed Church of America, 1892), 106.

³³ Not only were Chinese trained in Xiamen for work in Nanyang, but many missionaries also stayed in Xiamen for varying lengths of time before transferring out to Taiwan or Singapore or other areas of Southeast Asia.

³⁴ *LMS Chronicle* (1904), 188.

³⁵ *Boston Evening Transcript*, April 20, 1905, page 2, accessed July 7, 2011, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=sArNgO4T4MoC&dat=19050420&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>.

Chen Shiwu 陳時武

Chen Shiwu (1833–1884), often Romanized as Tan Siboo or a variant thereof, was one of the initial converts in the Baishui 白水 “awakening” of 1854.³⁶ This “revival” was the first significant expansion of the church in Minnan outside of the treaty port of Xiamen. The small market town of Baishui was a short boat ride from the city and was an ideal spot for evangelism because it was fairly easy to reach and was a small center for commerce, regularly welcoming residents from many surrounding villages.

After converting to Christianity, Chen, who grew up in a comparatively well-off family and was fairly educated, was disowned by his father. Previously employed in carving “idols” out of wood, Chen’s newfound faith was incompatible with such an occupation and he “was constrained by the love of Christ to sacrifice this mode of gaining a livelihood.”³⁷ In referencing chapter 19 of the Biblical book of Acts, one missionary records that “had Si-boo been of the spirit of Demetrius, he would have opposed and persecuted Mr. [William] Burns [a PCE missionary active in the Baishui region] for bringing his craft into danger.”³⁸ Chen continued to carve, but instead of making idols, he began to produce other artifacts, such as simple wooden beads used for bracelets.³⁹ Chen’s occupation was especially important because it was portable and by taking a few simple tools he could work while going on evangelistic tours throughout the region.⁴⁰

Chen soon began to undergo more formal theological training in Xiamen and in 1856 he volunteered to accept a request from missionaries in Singapore that a Chinese evangelist be sent to minister

³⁶ John Gerardus Fagg, *Forty Years in South China* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and Company, 1894), 161.

³⁷ Donald Matheson, *Narrative of the Mission to China of the English Presbyterian Church* (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1866), 14.

³⁸ Fagg, *Forty Years*, 161. In Acts 19, Paul is opposed in Ephesus by Demetrius, a silversmith who made images of the god Artemis, because the message he was preaching was bad for business—an interesting parallel to Chen’s case and that of many of the early converts mentioned in these two chapters.

³⁹ While a few sources mention that Chen changed to carving beads, they do not suggest that these beads were used for Buddhist bracelets, although one would think this would be the natural market for such beads.

⁴⁰ Fagg, *Forty Years*, 162. It was fairly common for early Protestant adherents in Minnan to willingly give up their occupations in order to join the church. For more on this, see chapter two in Chris White, “Authentically Chinese, Thoroughly Christian: Stories of Minnan Protestants, 1846–1937” (PhD dissertation, Xiamen University, 2011), 78–113.

to the Minnan people there.⁴¹ Matheson records that Chen immediately began evangelizing on the boat ride to Singapore⁴² and shortly after his arrival, we see him having an impact on Chinese in the area.⁴³ Although affiliated with the Presbyterian Church of England (PCE), Chen initially stayed in a house provided by the Anglican Church in Singapore, for these two groups were attempting to work together in their missionary endeavors among the Chinese on the island. Each group of converts was alternately baptized by Anglican and Presbyterian missionaries.⁴⁴ However, the plan did not last and two separate Chinese congregations were formed.⁴⁵ Chen especially did not like the rigid structure found in the Anglican Church and after a year, he refused to work with this group.

Shortly after reaching his new “mission field,” Chen was instrumental in starting the first Chinese church in Singapore, Glory Presbyterian Church at Bukhit Timah.⁴⁶ Chen was connected to foreign missionary workers in Singapore and Malaya, first joining with Thomas Mackenzie Frazer, a newly arrived missionary with the PCE. Frazer departed for Australia at the end of 1860 and Chen was relied on to continue preaching on his own.⁴⁷ When Alexander Grant, another PCE missionary originally stationed in Xiamen relocated to Singapore,

⁴¹ Cheung, *Christianity in Modern China*, 310. Christine Doran, “Bright Celestial: Progress in the Political Thought of Tan Teck Soon,” *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 21, no. 1 (2006): 46-67, and Hwee Hoon Lee, “Tan See Boo,” accessed October 18, 2011, http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_1404_2009-01-05.html (2008), give the date as 1856. Cheung, *Christianity in Modern China*, 220, and Matheson, *Narrative*, 15, give 1857 as the date of arrival in Singapore.

⁴² Incidentally, Chen’s passage to Singapore was free since the captain of the boat refused to charge a “preacher of the doctrine.” See *The Home and Foreign Record of the Free Church of Scotland* (1857), 71.

⁴³ In fact, four of the initial eleven converts Chen influenced in Singapore became fellow evangelists to Chinese. SOAS PCE FMC Series 4 Box 15, *6th Annual Report of the China Mission at Amoy* (1860), 18.

⁴⁴ *The Chinese Recorder* 18 (1887): 79.

⁴⁵ Walter Makepeace, Gilbert E. Brooke, and Rolland S. J. Braddell, *One Hundred Years of Singapore* (London: John Murray, 1921), 264.

⁴⁶ John A. B. Cook, *Sunny Singapore: An Account of the Place and its People with a Sketch of the Results of Missionary Work* (London: Elliot Stock, 1907), 60 and Leung Yuen Sang, “Religion and Revolution: The Response of the Singapore Chinese Christians to the Revolutionary Movement in China,” in *The 1911 Revolution: The Chinese in British and Dutch Southeast Asia*, ed. Lee Lai To (Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1987), 82.

⁴⁷ Chen had offered to accompany Frazer to Australia and open a mission to Chinese there, but his offer was not accepted. Instead, Chen chose to return to Minnan for a time when Frazer departed. See *The Home and Foreign Record of the Free Church of Singapore* (1860), 118.

Chen presented him with five inquirers to be baptized.⁴⁸ Chen continued with his preaching and accounts show that while foreign missionaries handled the baptisms of converts, much of the religious instruction was largely done by Chen.

Although he had transferred to Singapore, Chen was still involved with the church in Minnan. In 1860, he took a three-month leave and returned to Xiamen for a visit and shortly after, sometime in the early 1860s, Chen inquired of the church in Minnan if they would allow him to return to Xiamen in order to pursue medical studies and be ordained. The response was not what Chen was hoping for as RCA missionaries “did not altogether approve of his scheme.”⁴⁹ We do not know why Chen’s request was rejected, but we do know that in 1864, following the lead of the churches in Minnan, Swanson, a PCE missionary in Xiamen visited Singapore and suggested that the Chinese church there be ecclesiastically organized. When this formally occurred, Chen, along with A Tak (a Chinese convert from Penang) were chosen as the first elders.⁵⁰

However, in June 1866, while still in Singapore, Chen left the Presbyterian Church, starting the Hok Im Kuan (福音堂 or Gospel Hall) and becoming associated with the fledgling Brethren movement. Because of the Brethren practice of baptism by immersion (whereas the church in Minnan practiced sprinkled baptism), on May 8, 1867, Chen, along with five other Chinese, was “rebaptized” by John Chapman, a Brethren missionary.⁵¹ It was not only Chinese converts who broke away from the mainline Presbyterian Church, but at least two British missionaries also did so. Alexander Grant and William Jeffrey, both of the PCE, also joined the new Brethren movement.⁵²

⁴⁸ Grant was specifically sent to Singapore by the PCE mission in Xiamen to help Chen in his evangelistic efforts. Originally this was meant to be a temporary transfer, but as mentioned below, Grant changed his beliefs and left the PCE. See *Chinese Recorder*, vol. 18 (1887): 79.

⁴⁹ *RCA Acts and Proceedings, Report on Foreign Missions* (1876), 8–10.

⁵⁰ Robert M. Greer, *A History of the Presbyterian Church in Singapore* (Singapore: Malaya Publishing House, 1956), 55.

⁵¹ Makepeace, Brooke and Braddell, *One Hundred Years*, 275. These were the first baptisms by immersion of Chinese in the Straits Settlement. One report notes that when Chen ceded, he took with them “the whole Chinese congregation” that had previously been part of the PCE mission in Singapore. This may have been a bit of an overstatement because we know that over the following three years, other notable figures in the Chinese Presbyterian church in Singapore also left to join Chen and the new Brethren Church.

⁵² Greer, *A History*, 57. Grant had originally went to Xiamen to prepare for work in Singapore, but eventually left the Presbyterian church and joined with the Chapmans who were involved in missionary work among Chinese in Malaysia.

The Brethren Church, or the Plymouth Brethren, traced their heritage back to Ireland, where it was founded less than 50 years prior to its manifestation in Singapore. Brethren missionary work in the area can be dated to Chapman, a missionary from Britain who arrived in Malaya in 1859.⁵³ The group chafed at the divisions implicit in more mainline denominations, refusing to recognize or ordain pastors and rejecting a formal church hierarchy. Instead, the group promoted an ideology of equality among all members and one wonders if Chen's attraction to this group was in part a reaction to not being supported in his desire to be ordained and study medicine. Likewise, many sources noted that in Chen's earliest years in Singapore, though he was the evangelistic force of the young church, because he was not ordained, all baptisms were performed by foreign clergy. Though this is not explicit in the sources, Chen could have felt slighted in such a relationship. In the Brethren Church, however, baptisms were allowed and encouraged to be performed by any member.

After Chen's "reconversion," he again returned to Minnan where, to the dismay of the missionaries stationed there, he began to spread this new doctrine. According to one RCA report, most of Chen's evangelistic efforts focused on trying to convert converts—that is he would try to persuade members or inquirers of the mainline church to join the new group he was establishing.⁵⁴ In the mid 1870s, Chen again returned to Minnan for a longer visit, this time residing in Xiamen. As before, Chen proceeded to promote Brethren doctrine among the Protestant Christians in Minnan. One such teaching that was especially offensive to the foreign missionaries at work in the field was Chen's belief that Sabbath observance was not essential for converts.

An RCA report claims that although annoying, Chen's activities did not seem to have a lasting effect on the city church:

He did not succeed in gaining any open followers from the Amoy Churches. But the looseness of his doctrines concerning our obligation to keep God's law, rather his positive antinomian tenets, which he zealously and insidiously endeavored to disseminate among the Christians, doubtless had pernicious influence on individuals, leading to looseness of conduct, and increasing the number of cases of church discipline.⁵⁵

⁵³ This article uses "Malaya" when discussing a specific era in which this term was used for the country. However, when talking about this region in general, and when quoting other authors, this article will use "Malaysia."

⁵⁴ *RCA Acts and Proceedings, Report on Foreign Missions* (1876), 8–10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Outside of Xiamen, in Shima 石碼 and other more rural areas, Chen was more successful in convincing church members to join his new group. After hearing Chen explain that pastors were not required for baptism, one inquirer in Shima (who had applied for baptism but had not yet been accepted) baptized another inquirer and opened a rival chapel. However, within a few years, this congregation seemed to have died out, as did the other congregations established in the areas outside of Baishui.⁵⁶

The conflict between Chen and missionaries in Xiamen, as seen in the RCA mission report of 1876, may have been exaggerated, for we know that Chen's son chose to study in a mission high school partly affiliated with the RCA in Xiamen. After his initial arrival in Singapore, Chen married an educated Singaporean Chinese woman, Yeo Geok Neo, who in 1859 gave birth to a son, Tan Teck Soon.⁵⁷ The younger Tan studied at the Raffles Institution in Singapore and after winning the Guthrie Scholarship for Chinese boys (the first Straits Chinese to do so), he decided to continue his high school studies in Xiamen.⁵⁸ This seems to suggest that Chen was not necessarily adamantly opposed to the mainline church in Minnan. It also seems likely that Chen's extended return trip to Xiamen in the early 1870s was related to his son's studies. Overall, this short story of Chen is presented not to show dissension within the church or denominational differences, but rather to reflect the vibrancy of the interactions between Chinese Protestants and church organizations in Xiamen and Nanyang.

Zheng Pinting 鄭聘廷

Zheng Pinting (1872–1944) was originally from Shanyao 山腰 in Huian 惠安 County in northern Minnan.⁵⁹ He studied at the elementary

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Tan's first wife died in 1863 and he remarried Ang Choo Neo, the adopted daughter of a Dutch captain. See Lee, "Tan See Boo."

⁵⁸ Actually, the high school was located on the small island of Gulangyu, just across a narrow strait from the city of Xiamen. After graduating from this college, Teck Soon returned to Singapore where he became an influential Chinese political thinker and scholar. Information regarding Tan Teck Soon can be found in Doran, "Bright Celestial," 46-67. Doran claims that the younger Tan attended the Anglo-Chinese College on Gulangyu, but this school was not established until two decades after Tan would have been a high school student. I have not been able to track down exactly where Teck Soon would have studied.

⁵⁹ Luo Shixin, ed., *Huian jidujiao liren jiaomu ren yuan jianlue* [惠安基督教历任教牧人员简略, A Sketch of Current and Past Church Leaders in Huian] (Huian: Huian

school started by the small Yiban Church 驛阪堂 and then moved to Shihua 時化 Middle School which was associated with the main church in Huian City. Upon finishing, he went on to study theology for two years at Shengdao 聖道 School on the small island of Gulangyu 鼓浪嶼, near Xiamen. After graduating, he began serving at the LMS-connected Taishan Church 泰山堂 as a preacher and teacher in the school affiliated with this church. In 1892, Minnan churches connected with the LMS embarked on a new venture of evangelizing the Hakka districts of Tingzhou 汀州 in Western Fujian. This new mission was significant for it was completely financed and managed by the Chinese churches (without foreign assistance) and because it was considered a “cross-cultural” mission. The Hakka residents in the Tingzhou area spoke a different language and practiced customs distinct from Minnan evangelists. The mission was spearheaded by Zhou Zhide 周之德, a pastor originally from Huian but serving in Xiamen. Zhou selected 10 evangelists to accompany him in opening this new district and Zheng volunteered. However, after a few years of evangelistic activity in this new area, Zheng, because of health issues, was forced to return to Minnan. In 1897, Zheng left for the warmer climate of Southeast Asia, arriving in Penang, Malaya, where he was ordained by the Methodist Church.



Figure 2. Picture of Zheng Pinting after moving to Singapore and ministering a major church there.⁶⁰

jidujiao lianghui, 2005), 59, reports that Zheng hailed from Xiadun 下墩 village in Tuling 涂岭 Township, but it seems that this is a slight since other sources show that Xiadun is located across the border in Shanyao Township. In English, Zheng is known as Tay Sek Tin or Tay Peng Ting.

⁶⁰ This picture was originally published in Song Ong Siang, *One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore* (London: John Murray, 1923), 362.

Shortly after arriving in Penang, Zheng, who is referred to by Yen Ching Hwang as a “Chinese Christian missionary,” was invited by A. Lamont, a PCE missionary who Zheng had previously got to know in Xiamen to serve as a teacher in Singapore at the Eastern School.⁶¹ In 1898, Zheng was ordained as the first Chinese Presbyterian pastor in Singapore. In addition to his education work, Zheng also started a YMCA in the city,⁶² created a refuge to help cure opium addiction, and expressed his interest in the political affairs of his home nation through his involvement in the Singapore Reading Club 星洲書報社. Soon after its establishment, the Club was moved to the church where Zheng served as pastor⁶³ and it was here that he liaised with revolutionaries such as Chen Chunan 陳楚楠 (who was from Xiamen) and Zhang Yongfu 張永福.⁶⁴ When Sun Yatsen visited Singapore in 1906, he immediately recognized the importance of the Club and recruited the members to join his new revolutionary party, the *Tongmenghui* 同盟會, with Chen Chunan serving as the first head of the Singapore branch. Zheng began introducing the new society to fellow Chinese Christians in Singapore, who began attending the speeches held at the Club. Despite complaints from foreign missionaries that the Club was meant to be a Christian publishing house, the revolutionary speeches and planning continued to be headquartered here. The Singapore Reading Club and the city’s branch of the *Tongmenghui* were important organizations in planning and supporting the various revolutionary activities that eventually led to the Xinhai Revolution of 1911. It was at the end of this year that Zheng, again citing health reasons, retired from his pastorship. Cai Yuzhi, a fellow Minnanese took over as pastor, but Zheng continued to serve as a volunteer pastor for nearly a decade longer.⁶⁵ Despite not receiving a salary from the Presbytery, Zheng

⁶¹ He Yousan, Mu Lezhen, Xiang Yuehan, eds., *Jidujiao xingma zhanglao dahui shejiao jiushi zhounian chengli dahui qishi zhounian jiniankan* [基督教星馬長老大會設教九十周年成立大會七十周年紀念刊 Commemorative Volume Celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the Founding of the Presbyterian Church and the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Presbytery in Singapore and Malaysia] (Singapore: Jidujiao xingma zhanglaohui, 1971), 118.

⁶² Yen Ching-hwang, *The Overseas Chinese and the 1911 Revolution* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1976), 111.

⁶³ Leung, “Religion and Revolution,” 79.

⁶⁴ Chen is also known as Tan Chor Nam and Zhang as Teo Eng Hock. It seems that Zhang was also a Christian, though I cannot confirm this.

⁶⁵ After this second retirement, another Minnan immigrant, Tay Leng Tian 陳令典, assumed the role of pastor. John Roxborough, “The Presbyterian Church in Malaysia,” *Christianity in Malaysia: A Denominational History*, ed. Robert Hunt, Lee Kam Hing, and John Roxborough (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk, 1992), 82.

remained closely connected to the church and was involved in numerous Christian philanthropic endeavors. For example, his business ventures enabled him to donate funds to support theological students from Minnan—he asked Zhou Zhide to administer these scholarships.⁶⁶ He returned to Huian in 1917 and visited the churches throughout the area. In his later life, Zheng was honored as one of the founding leaders of the Singaporean church and served as chair of various committees and annual meetings.⁶⁷

One author, in writing about the history of the Protestant church in Malaysia, notes that in the Late Qing there was “a pattern which was to last until after the Communist revolution, whereby the Chinese Presbyterian Church in Malaysia looked to the Church in China to supply its ordained ministry.”⁶⁸ Minnan was the main repository for such recruits, and not only was this true for Malaysia, but also for Singapore and other areas of Southeast Asia with Chinese Protestant communities. A recent publication from the church in Huian County provides information on over 40 people from the county who immigrated to Nanyang and served as pastors or preachers to church communities there.⁶⁹

Although the church in Minnan was more developed than Chinese churches in Southeast Asia, in that a system to train church workers had been implemented and there was a greater number of Chinese converts, the loss of preachers and pastors still presented great challenges. In 1920, the churches throughout Minnan had only 46 ordained Chinese pastors in total.⁷⁰ Among the churches and church institutions in the region, there was a perpetual sense of understaffing and the transfer of workers to Nanyang was bittersweet for the Minnan

⁶⁶ He, Mu, and Xiang, *Jidujiao xingma zhanglao dahui*, 118.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 117–119.

⁶⁸ Roxborough, “The Presbyterian Church in Malaysia,” 82.

⁶⁹ Luo, *Huian jidujiao*, 54–63. Actually, this publication lists more names, but some of these were not born in Minnan but are considered “Minnanese” because their family is originally from the area.

⁷⁰ Milton Stauffer, *The Christian Occupation of China: A General Survey of the Numerical Strength and Geographical Distribution of the Christian Forces in China* (Shanghai: China Continuation Committee, 1922), 1973. It should be pointed out that most church workers who left Minnan for Southeast Asia were not pastors, but preachers in Minnan. While the number of preachers was much greater than the number of pastors, the loss of these figures to churches in Southeast Asia was likewise burdensome.

church.

To be sure, the choice to immigrate did not necessarily emanate from a self-sacrificing desire for “missionary” work, but could often be attributed to more primordial sentiments. One American missionary, writing in 1916, noted that preachers and pastors in Minnan faced “strong temptations” to go to Southeast Asia because of the higher salaries they could receive.⁷¹ While a few of these Minnan church workers, like Chen Shiwu, departed Minnan in response to specific requests from Protestant communities in Nanyang, most went as a personal decision. Regardless, the skills and experiences of such church workers in Minnan allowed them to fill a need for Chinese church leaders in Southeast Asia.

⁷¹ H. P. DePree, “Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America” (Dutch), *The China Mission Year Book*, vol. 7, ed. E. C. Lobenstine (Shanghai: The Christian Literature Society for China, 1916), 138. Not all Minnan church workers who went to Southeast Asia did so for church work.

IV. MINNAN LAY PROTESTANTS GOING TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

While the transfer of church workers from Minnan to Nanyang reflected a sense of integration between the Protestant communities in these areas, the movement of lay believers was even more important in galvanizing the relationship. Minnan church workers were not only sent to evangelize the non-Christian Chinese population in Southeast Asia, but also to provide leadership for Christian immigrants from Minnan. One author records that “by 1900, over 600 Christian immigrants had made their way here [Singapore] and joined up with the local Presbyterian churches.”⁷² Most of these individuals were temporary migrants participating in the centuries-old practice of venturing to Southeast Asia in search of riches.

Protestant communities in Nanyang supported the churches in Minnan in two important ways. First of all, these communities provided assistance and spiritual support for temporary Minnan migrants, most of who returned to Minnan after a few years in Southeast Asia. Both the secular and religious experiences of Protestant migrants in Nanyang impacted individuals and consequently upon their return home, church communities in Minnan. Two brief accounts may help illustrate how the churches in Nanyang influenced Protestant communities in Minnan.

Cai Yuzhi 蔡育之

At fifteen years of age I entered the Training Institute for the study of Scripture [in Xiamen]. My opportunity was good. Alas, I did not know how to take full advantage of it! There was temptation in the vanities of Amoy and the attractions of worldly reputation and money-making; so before long I excused myself on the ground of ill-health, and left the Institute. . . I went to Hong-kong, Singapore, and Penang, in order to make money. Without knowing what would befall me, I went as a stranger to Penang. I sought out the church

⁷² Bobby Sng, *In His Good Time: the Story of the Church in Singapore* (Singapore: Graduate Christian Fellowship, 1980), 103. Not all of these had come from Minnan, but some traced their roots to Chaozhou/Shantou or Taiwan. However, a fair proportion (if not most) would have hailed from Minnan.

there to find some friends.⁷³

This abbreviated account of Cai Yuzhi's teenage years, translated by James Sadler, a Minnan missionary, reveals the motivation most Minnan residents had for going to Nanyang as well as how these figures employed church ties in integrating into their new place of residence.

Cai, who grew up in a Christian family, was baptized as a child, and first received communion at the age of thirteen, further describes how he was nurtured by the church in Penang. During his time in Malaya, Cai was convicted by seeing missionaries who could have "made twice or thrice a missionary's income" in secular affairs, but had chosen to "eagerly [speak] of Christian things." Cai decided to return to Xiamen and once again entered the Training Institute at the age of 20, finishing his schooling three years later. He was then appointed as a preacher at various churches before being ordained and accepting a call to serve as the pastor of the church in Guankou 灌口 in 1888. He remained in this position until 1908 when he retired and again left for Nanyang, moving to Singapore. Cai took over the pastorship of the Jubilee Church from Zheng Pinting in 1912. He returned to Xiamen in 1917 and passed away shortly thereafter.⁷⁴

Sheng Jiuchang 盛九昌

Born in Burma in 1880, Sheng Jiuchang's family was originally from Quanzhou 泉州 and as a youth, Sheng returned here. At the age of 14, he traveled to Singapore, where he became associated with the church there and its pastor, Zheng Pinting. While in Singapore, in the early 1900s, Sheng was introduced to the *Tongmenghui*, by a fellow Protestant, and became more involved in political affairs, helping the church organize speeches on revolution and moral lectures on such topics as opium or gambling. Sheng recalled how he used to play the accordion on the street as fellow Protestants handed out leaflets to attract listeners to these talks held at the church. Around 1907, Sheng returned to Quanzhou where he continued to be involved in both evangelism and the promotion of the *Tongmenghui*, eventually

⁷³ James Sadler, *True Celestials, or Leaves from a Chinese Sketch Book* (London: S. W. Partridge and Co., 1891), 74–77.

⁷⁴ He Yousan and Kang Shidun, eds., *The Presbyterian Church in Singapore 1881–1981, 100th Anniversary Commemoration Volume* (Singapore: Singapore Presbyterian Church, 1981), 36.

becoming the Vice Chair of a branch of the organization in the city.⁷⁵

What we see in both the stories of Cai Yuzhi and Sheng Jiuchang is the employment of Protestant networks, both in Southeast Asia and in Minnan. As with other Minnan residents, in traveling to Nanyang, most Protestants relied on well established kinship ties and native place networks. However, what is interesting is that many of these figures also constructed and utilized church ties, both during their time in Southeast Asia and after returning to Minnan. Upon leaving Minnan for Nanyang, church members were provided with papers to present to Protestant communities at their destination. An example of such a form is found below in Figure 3.

Figure 3. A general form given to members transferring to new districts, or more commonly, to those going abroad. The form would be filled in with the name/place of the church, the member's name, the date, and the signature or stamp of the church officials (such as pastor).⁷⁶

The second way Nanyang Protestants influenced churches in Minnan was through financial contributions. While Chinese Protestant communities in Southeast Asia looked to Minnan for leadership, the Minnan churches in turn periodically called on

⁷⁵ Information on Sheng comes from Sheng Jiuchang, “*Wode huiyi*” [我的回忆 My Recollections], *Quanzhou wenshi ziliao* [泉州文史资料 Local Historical Sources on Quanzhou], vol. 1–10 (Quanzhou: Fujiansheng quanzhoushi lichengqu difangzhi bianji weiyuanhui, 1994), 3, and “Xinhai guangfu quanzhou geming xianbei zhuanlüe” [辛亥光复泉州革命先辈传略 Biographical Sketches of Elders in the Xinhai Revolution in Quanzhou], *Quanzhou wenshi ziliao*, vol. 1–10, 52.

⁷⁶ This form, produced during the reign of Guangxu (光緒, 1875–1908), comes from page 35 of *Zhangquan zonghui tiaogui* 漳泉總會條規 [Regulations for the Minnan Synod] housed at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary Library. This form was for the churches of the Minnan Synod (that is those affiliated with the PCE and RCA missions). However, those of the Congregational Union (another group of churches in Minnan associated with the LMS) also had similar forms that were used for Protestant immigrants leaving Minnan. See *LMS Chronicle* (1903), 117.

Protestants in Nanyang for monetary assistance. Such fiscal reinforcement was provided by temporary migrants sending funds back to their home churches. For instance, one mission publication mentions how a convert (named Kai) from the Zhangpu 漳浦 region in Southern Minnan was disappointed to find that there was no church in the area of Ceylon where he had migrated. However, this man, in writing to his home church, reassured them that he continued to observe the Sabbath. In addition, he included two dollars of his earnings as a remittance for the church.⁷⁷ The church in the prefectural town of Tingzhou is another example. This church was the only “self-supporting” church in this region of West Fujian, but a considerable portion of the expenses was gathered “through the help of Chinese friends in Singapore and other places.”⁷⁸

While individual funds were important for providing some monetary assistance and in nurturing relational ties between Protestant communities in Minnan and Nanyang, substantially greater funds were raised through concentrated “contribution tours.” Representatives from Minnan churches would periodically travel throughout overseas Chinese communities appealing for funds for specific church-related projects. For example, in the early 1900s, a Chinese pastor from Minnan traveled to Manila and secured \$10,000 (Mexican) “in cash and promises” for various church schools.⁷⁹ Such collections were especially important during the earliest years after the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. Xu Chuncao 許春草, an influential figure both within the Minnan church and society at large, traveled throughout Nanyang in the late 1930s as a church representative to raise funds for church initiatives.⁸⁰ Likewise, as one mission publication reports, foreign missionaries also tapped the resources of overseas Chinese in the name of the church. “Mr. Slater [a PCE missionary] paid a visit to the Straits Settlements and collected a large sum for the building of a new boys’ school [in Quanzhou]. . . . During

⁷⁷ PCE *Church Synod Minutes* 1 (1877): 31.

⁷⁸ Kate Hutley, *Ordeal in Tingchow* (London: The Livingston Press, 1938), 8. This church was still considered to be “self-supporting,” largely because it did not rely on the mission (that is Western) funds. Although the topic is outside the scope of this paper, this incident raises the interesting question of what constituted “self-support.” It seems that this often meant a Chinese church did not use Western funds, but as this case suggests, money from Chinese overseas were not considered “foreign” funds.

⁷⁹ Pitcher, *In and About Amoy*, 243.

⁸⁰ Xiamenshi Dang’anguan, *Xiamen kangri zhanzheng dang’an ziliao* [厦门抗日战争档案资料 *Xiamen Archives on the Anti-Japanese War*] (Xiamen: Xiamen University Press, 1997), 212–213 and Xie Chunchi, “Xiamen kangri wangshi” [厦门抗日往事 *Recounting Xiamen’s Anti-Japanese War*], *Xiamen wenxue* [厦门文学 *Xiamen Literature*] 7 (2007): 12.

the same year, Miss Reynolds, on her way back from furlough, paid a similar visit and raised another large sum of money, which, with other funds available, will provide a new building for the girls' school."⁸¹

With the onset of the Pacific War in 1941, communities in Nanyang were in no position to provide support for churches in Minnan. However, the connections between churches in the areas were nevertheless strengthened through the influx of Minnan residents, including many preachers and church workers fleeing from the Japanese. At the end of the Second World War, the financial support again reemerged, but only for a few years as the church in Minnan experienced great changes after the establishment of the People's Republic. In the past three decades, it is in this fiscal arena that the relationship between Protestants in Minnan and Nanyang has been restored. The overseas connections, once a bane for Minnan churches under the PRC, have once again been embraced as Protestant communities follow the success of neighboring temples in attracting funds from Chinese throughout Southeast Asia. Numerous multi-storied church buildings dot the landscape of rural Minnan, many financed in part through donations from Protestants in Nanyang.⁸² Protestant communities in Southeast Asia have also provided training opportunities for Minnan church leaders (both with registered and non-registered churches) as well as evangelistic support. Notwithstanding this involvement, it is in the financial assistance that the continued relationship is most apparent.

V. CONCLUSION

A large proportion of the Chinese Diaspora scattered throughout Southeast Asia trace their ancestral heritage back to Minnan. Centuries of sojourners and immigrants have firmly established cultural, social, and economic ties between villages and cities in Minnan and coastal areas of Southeast Asia. With such a rich historical connection, it should not be surprising that Chinese Protestants appropriated the travel networks to connect churches in Minnan with those in Nanyang.

⁸¹ SOAS CWML L169, Report by Mr. F. H. Hawkins on his visit to China (1928), 70–71.

⁸² Such structures refer to official, registered churches, but funding from overseas Chinese is also provided to various unregistered or “house” church groups throughout Minnan.

In fact, such transnational reciprocal exchanges show how integrated Minnan Protestants were in their local communities. Minnan Protestants did not only travel to Southeast Asia. For instance, one PCE report mentions Protestants from Minnan appearing at church services held by a missionary in Honduras with their church papers in hand.⁸³ Likewise, another report claims that on one shipload of workers from Minnan/Chaozhou to Demerara (today's Guyana), 70 of the 515 Chinese on board were church members.⁸⁴ However, it is the connections between Protestant communities in Minnan and Nanyang that have proven to be the most longstanding and mutually supportive.

The Protestant communities scattered throughout Southeast Asia were not organizationally attached to churches in Minnan; instead, they were ecclesiastically independent. However, as this research shows, the relational webs of Protestants in Minnan and Nanyang were often interlaced. This article has provided an overview of the varying types of such exchanges between these regions, from Chinese introduced to the faith in Nanyang and then traveling to Minnan, to Minnan lay Protestants and church workers venturing to Southeast Asia and joining church communities there. One PCE publication on the church in East Asia notes that “when mention is made of pastors and preachers it is always stated that ‘he came from Swatow’ or ‘Amoy’ . . . That they can come from China and take their place in the Church in Malaya strengthens the feeling of fellowship between the Churches.”⁸⁵ Indeed, because of the reciprocal nature of the exchanges, a strong sense of attachment between many churches in Nanyang and those in Minnan has been cultivated.

⁸³ PCE *Children's Record* (1869), 175–176.

⁸⁴ See “The Arrival of Chinese” in *The Guyana Story*, accessed July 10, 2011, http://www.guyana.org/features/guyanastory/guyana_story.html.

⁸⁵ Mary V. D. Paton, *It Becomes a Tree: The Story of Our Missions in the Far East* (London: Foreign Missions and Welfare of Youth Committees of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1944), 63.