

MALAYA'S GRAND LADY OF MEDICINE

THE DEFINITIVE BIOGRAPHY OF
DR SOO KIM LAN

A KEEPSAKE OF HISTORIC ARTICLES & PRIVATE MEMOIRS



JACQUELYN PY SOO, PHD.

Kanyin[®]
PUBLICATIONS



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A FAMILY'S TRIBUTE

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DEDICATED TO THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF DR SOO KIM LAN



Circa 1916-1917. Soo Kim Lan with her second sister,
Choon Lan prior to her medical school days.



Chapter 1

The 1910s (1910-1919)

The setting

Soo Kim Lan turned sixteen at the start of the second decade of the twentieth century. The 1910s elevated the momentum of its first decade, which opened the century with exploits that unfurled one of the most revolutionary times in human history. Change became the natural order of the day as the world got used to soaring the skies (Wilbur and Orville Wright took their first flight in 1903), gliding over land (Henry Ford introduced his first Model-T on October 1, 1908), taking photographs (Kodak introduced the low-priced Brownie camera in 1900), watching silent movies (Thomas Edison produced the first silent movie in 1903), receiving Nobel Prizes (First Nobel Prizes were awarded in December 10, 1901), and exploring a new physics of reality (Max Planck formulated the Quantum Theory in 1900), which paved the way for Einstein's Theory of Relativity in 1905. The world was caught up with a profusion of new inventions and incorporations when it received news that King Edward VII departed in 1910. His funeral was described as "the greatest

assemblage of royalty and rank ever gathered in one place and of its kind, the last” (Tuchman, 1964). Closer to home, the Anglo-Siamese treaty was signed on March 10, 1909 by the United Kingdom and Thailand, dissecting the northern Malay states from Malaya.

Unfortunately, the 1910s came to be dominated by the First World War (WWI), which began in 1914. This war spread to Malaya at the Battle of Penang on October 28, 1914, when German cruiser SMS Emden sank two allied warships in the Strait of Malacca.

The undeterred goal

Set against this backdrop, an orphaned, sixteen-year old school girl living with her maternal grandmother in Taiping, Perak, was contemplating her future. Soo Kim Lan was filled with childhood dreams of becoming a doctor. Her intrinsic yearning was so intense that she would immediately go to the aid of any animal in need. She would soothe and nurse limping stray dogs, injured cats and birds till they were able to walk, run and fly on their own. At the same time, she was a teenager overwhelmed with gratitude for her maternal grandmother who cared for her and her siblings after the loss of their parents.

Well aware of the trials of her times, which made it seem near impossible for a woman to be accepted into Medical College, she proceeded to become a teacher after graduating from high school. While she found some consolation in being able to help reciprocate her

maternal grandmother's kindness, it appeared that fate would not allow her to settle into her job. World War I (July 28, 1914 to November 11, 1918) broke out just before she completed her teachers' training program. The war lasted throughout her years as a teacher from 1915 to 1917. She persevered, doing her best to educate and care for every child under her tutelage. In her own time, Kim Lan immersed herself in her studies, community services, charity and church services. Assessments of her choices during her teenage years demonstrate that she held unwavering faith in the wisdom of a biblical verse that counsels one to be joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer (Romans 12:12).

Hereinafter are five photographs of her teachers' training and teaching days. She was eighteen to twenty-two years of age when these photographs were taken circa 1912 to 1916.



Circa 1912-1914. Soo Kim Lan (far right) at an outdoor session with fellow teacher trainees.



*Circa 1912-1914.
Soo Kim Lan (left)
with much loved
missionary Catherine
Jackson (middle)
and fellow trainee (right).*

*Note:
Ms Catherine Jackson
was the Principal of
The Lady Treacher Girls'
School from 1901 to 1909.*



*Circa 1915-1916. Soo Kim Lan (back row, third from the
right) as a young teacher.*



Circa 1915-1916. Soo Kim Lan (far right) in the teachers' room with friends and fellow teachers.



Circa 1916-1917. Soo Kim Lan (right) with elder sister, Soo Choon Lan before she left for medical college.

*Note:
Choon Lan passed away during Kim Lan's second year at medical college on July 12, 1919.*

The childhood dream

Soo Kim Lan's earnest dedication to pursue her chosen field, Medicine, was so deep-rooted that by 1916, at only twenty-two years of age, she was working beyond her duties as a teacher. She actively served local communities and charitable causes, and gave public sermons at the Middle Road Methodist Church in Singapore. By all accounts, she was a young lady who had dedicated her life to help others, to make a difference by giving with kindness. In due time, she showed that giving does indeed, open the way for receiving. Soo Kim Lan went on to take the medical college entrance exam and upon passing, she received the Tan Jiak Kim Scholarship on May 30, 1917. She embarked on life as a college student at the King Edward VII College of Medicine in September the same year.

The succeeding photographs, manuscripts and news articles are presented in chronological order to provide a more in-depth understanding of Soo Kim Lan's paths in life during the 1910s.



MIDDLE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH.—
 Sunday School 10 a.m.; Communion service
 11 a.m. Rev. E. R. Hibbert; Epworth League
 service 7.30 p.m. Miss Soo Kim Lan;
 Evangelistic service 8 p.m. Mr. Goh Hood
 Keng.

PRINSEP STREET (SABA) CHURCH.—8 a.m.
 Sunday School; 9 a.m. (Malay) Rev. W.
 Murray; 7.45 p.m. (English) Rev. W. Murray.

TANGLIN GARRISON CHURCH.—8 a.m. Parade
 service (Holy Communion).

THE BOUSTRAD INSTITUTE SERVICE.—
 Sunday, at 8.15 p.m. Preacher, The Rev. A. J.
 Amery, B.D.; Soloist, Miss Purdy. All are
 invited.

WESLEY CHURCH, FORT CANNING ROAD.—
 8 a.m. Sunday School; 9 a.m. Mr. G. H.
 Little; 5.30 p.m. Rev. T. C. Maxwell;
 Tuesday, 5.30 p.m. Midweek service.

*November 26, 1916. The Straits Times, p.11.
 Soo Kim Lan served at the Middle Road
 Methodist Church.*

The following Scholarships were awarded:
School Scholarships:—Lee Heng Teik ;
Png Leong Sam, the Wee Kay Liang
Scholarship; Chan Jim Swee, the E Chin
Seng Scholarship; Voon Kim Cheng, 1st
Tan Chay Yan Scholarship; Tan Ah Why,
2nd Tan Chay Yan Scholarship; Miss See
Kim Lan, 4th Tan Jiak Kim Scholarship;
E Ho Swee, 3rd Tan Jiak Kim Scholarship.

*May 30, 1917. The Singapore Free Press
 and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942), p.12.
 Soo Kim Lan officially awarded
 the 4th Tan Jiak Kim Scholarship.*

At a meeting of the Council of the Medical School the report of the Examiners was considered and the following 18 candidates for admission passed as having completed the Medical Preliminary Examination in accordance with the requirements of the General Medical Council of Great Britain. The total entry was 39. The session opens on 1st June.

M J Mathews, (St Xavier's Institution, Penang, London Matriculation) Lee Hong Teik, (St Xavier's Senior Cambridge) W A Bachotchet (St Xavier's Senior Cambridge with Honours) S Kanagalingam, (Victoria Institution, K L, College of Preceptors) Chan Jim Swee, (Raffles Institution, Senior Cambridge and Medical Preliminary) P Thilainathan, (Anglo Chinese School, Senior Cambridge and Medical Preliminary) Peng Leong Sam, (St Andrew's Senior Cambridge and Medical Preliminary) C Marugiah, (Anglo Chinese, Senior Cambridge and Medical Preliminary) K R Ratanam, (St John's Institution, Kuala Lumpur, Senior Cambridge and Medical Preliminary) N Sampantha Nather, (F M S, Senior Cambridge and Medical Preliminary) S Subramanyam, (Trinity College, Kandy, Senior Cambridge and Medical Preliminary) M Vaitalingam, (Central College, Jaffna, Senior Cambridge and Medical Preliminary) J T Fernandez, (Madras Medical Preliminary) P Varatha Rajak, (Jaffna College, Senior Cambridge and Medical Preliminary) S K Ponniah, (Raffles Institution, Singapore, Senior Cambridge and Medical Preliminary) Voon Kim Chong, (Anglo Chinese School, Ipoh, Senior Cambridge and Medical Preliminary) Miss Soo Kim Lan, (Teacher Girls' School, Taiping, Medical Preliminary) Tan Ah Why, (Anglo Chinese School, Singapore, Medical Preliminary)

May 30, 1917. *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (1884-1942), p.12. Soo Kim Lan was amongst thirty-nine candidates to be admitted in accordance with the General Medical Council of Great Britain.

November 17, 1917. *The Straits Times*, p.10. Soo Kim Lan served at the Middle Road Methodist Church.

SOCIAL AND PERSONAL.

Mr. J. E. Kempe, Kuala Koh, is leaving for home to join up.

Dr. Watson is expected back in Kuala Lumpur next month. Mrs. Watson has been on a visit to Canada.

An old and very popular resident of Malacca passed away yesterday in the person of Mr. James Thomas (Jim). The funeral takes place this afternoon.

Mr. G. Flanagan, of Messrs. Fraser and Neave, Ltd., Singapore, has gone to Malacca to replace the company's branch manager, Mr. A. W. Brodie, who shortly leaves for Penang.

The engagement is announced of Mr. A. St. A. Harris, Hattenbach Bros., Singapore, to Beryl, daughter of Mrs. A. J. G. Denney, and step-daughter of Major A. J. Graham Denney, R.E.

The Hon. Mr. F. M. Elliott, R.W. District Grand Master of the Eastern Archipelago, visited Head Lodge on Saturday, and invested Wm. Bro. the Hon. Mr. W. F. Nutt as Deputy District Grand Master.

Mr. M. P. Cremish, office assistant, Chief Secretary's office, Kuala Lumpur, was entertained by the clerical staff of the Secretariat to a farewell dinner at the Cecil Street Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, on Saturday, prior to his departure for Raub to act as State Treasurer.

Miss Soo Kim Lan, late teacher at the Teacher Girls' School, Taiping, who passed the Medical School entrance examination in Singapore and was awarded the 4th Tan Jiak Kim Scholarship, is the niece of Dr. Soo Ah Choy, of Taiping, and youngest sister of Mr. Soo Hoy Choon, of Seremban. Another brother of hers, Mr. Soo Hoy Mun, is at present at St. Stephen's College, Hongkong, preparing for the Hongkong University medical entrance examination.

June 19, 1917. *The Straits Times*, p.6. Soo Kim Lan, niece of Dr Soo Ah Choy of Taiping was awarded the 4th Tan Jiak Kim scholarship.

MIDDLE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH.—
Malay Service 10 a.m. Mr. Goh Hood Keng;
Sunday School 11 a.m.; Epworth League
service 7.30 p.m. Miss Soo Kim Lan; English
service 8 p.m. Rev. C. J. Hall.
PRINSEP STREET (BARA) CHURCH.—8 a.m.
Sunday School and Bible Class; 9 a.m. (Malay)
Rev. W. Murray; 7.45 p.m. (English) Rev.
W. Murray.

The results of the Spring Examinations for King Edward VII Medical School are as follows:—

FIRST PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION.

Passed in all subjects. V Vythilingam, S Subramanyam, M Vythilingam, C Murugiah, K R Rutnam, N Sampantha Nather, Gopal Haridas, P Nadarsaja (not in order of merit); Passed in Physics, Voon Kin Cheong, W A Balhetchet, Husin bin M Ibrahim; Passed in Chemistry (Theoretical and Practical), P Varath Raja, Voon Kin Cheong, Chan Jim Swee, Ang Swee Hian, Miss G McIntyre and J T Fernandez; Passed in Practical Chemistry, M J Mathews, S K Punniah, P Thillainathan, Png Leong San, W A Balhetchet, S Kanagalingam, Miss Hannah Tar, Miss Soo Kim Lan, and Sawdagar Singh; Passed in Biology, Miss G McIntyre, Tan Ah Why, Miss Hannah Tan. Passed in Osteology, M J Mathews, Miss Soo Kim Lan, Geog Oorloff, Husin bin M Ibrahim, P Varatha Rajah, and P Thillainathan.

April 1, 1918.
The Straits Times, p.11.
Soo Kim Lan passed the King Edward VII Medical School Exam (Spring session).

Note: Medical College exams were held twice a year (Spring and Autumn) for certain years including 1918, 1921 and 1923.

September 2, 1918.
The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942), p.8. Soo Kim Lan passed the Medical School Exam (Autumn).

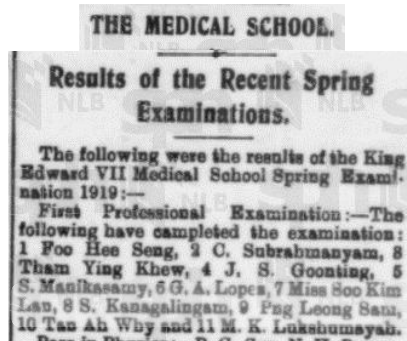
Passed in Chemistry (Theoretical and Practical):—S Kanagalingam, Tan Ah Why and Miss Soo Kim Lan.

Passed in Osteology:—Png Leong San.
Pass Lists in the Examinations for the L M S Diploma, August 1918, Pass, Licentiates, 1. R Letchmameamy, 2. M A Gabriel, 3. S Perampalam, 4. Lee Kek Soon, 5. Lau Peck Hiong.

MIDDLE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
8 a.m. Malay Service, Mr. O. L. Chai
9 a.m. Sunday School. 7.30 p.m. English
Service, Mrs. Soo Kim Lan; 8 p.m.
English Service, Rev. Udu Loda Sang.

October 26, 1918.
The Straits Times, p.12.
Soo Kim Lan served at the Middle Road Methodist Church.

April 1, 1919.
The Straits Times, p.7.
 Soo Kim Lan completed
 the King Edward VII
 Medical College exam
 (Spring).



Dr Soo Kim Lan's devotion to spend her life in service of the welfare of her community from the onset of her early twenties, is evinced from the preceding articles. These news articles further reveal a profound testimony: as individuals, we are each capable of rising above personal troubles to help lighten the burden of others, regardless of our circumstances. All through the loss of her parents, uncertainties of the first world war, untold trials and trauma heightened by the deaths of her elder sister and maternal grandmother, she revealed a lesson in times of suffering: One may choose to grow bitter, or better and stronger with courage and compassion.

To this day, Dr Soo Kim Lan's passage across the 1910s, persist in bringing to the fore, the message that anyone can triumph over personal challenges, apparent failures and discouragement, through personal choice and courage.

We can always choose to see that challenges are not meant to destroy or deprive us in any way, but to spur and strengthen us to achieve ever greater feats for the greater good of everyone in our lives.



The 1910s at a glance

- 1912 ---- Attended teacher's training college after high school
- 1915 ---- First year as a teacher during World War I
- 1916 ---- Actively involved in Charity and Church services
- 1917 ---- a. Passed medical college entrance exam
b. Awarded scholarship
c. Embarked on life as a medical college student
- 1919 ---- Second elder sister, Soo Choon Lan passed away



Chapter 2

The 1920s (1920-1929)

The setting

Soo Kim Lan was in the prime of her youth at the start of the 1920s. She had completed two years of medical college and was fully fledged to conclude her third year at The King Edward VII Medical College with unmitigated success. The new decade was vibrant with reform and restoration. People were celebrating the end of World War I. The 1920s opened with the Summer Olympics with an emphasis on reconciliation. Women won the right to vote in the U.S. and the world's first commercial radio broadcast aired to give news and entertainment to the masses. The decade's roll of historic events includes the declaration of the Irish Free State in 1921, when China's Communist Party was established, the first Malaysia Cup was held, and Soo Kim Lan was discovered by famous American journalist, broadcaster and film producer, Lowell Thomas.

Insulin was discovered. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) established, and Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned for peaceful resistance in 1922. Hitler

was jailed, talking movies invented, Time magazine founded, Prince Albert (later King George VI) and Lady Elizabeth Rows-Lyon got married, and Soo Kim Lan graduated on August 27, 1923 as the first woman to break the male monopoly of medics in Malaya.

The first Winter Olympics was held in France. India conferred citizenship on Americans born to Indian citizens in the United States, the first flight around the world took place, and The Malaya Command (Garrison to defend British Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Taiping, Seremban and Singapore) was formed in 1924. The first television transmitter was invented, and *The Great Gatsby* and Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* were published in 1925. Harry Houdini died, Agatha Christie went missing, Winnie the Pooh published, and the first liquid fuel rocket was fired in 1926. Lindbergh became the first man to take a solo transatlantic flight, The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was founded, and Soo Kim Lan moved to Kuala Lumpur as Malaya's first woman doctor in 1927.

Chiang Kai-Shek became China's leader, the first Oxford English Dictionary published, Penicillin discovered, Bubble gum and Mickey Mouse introduced, the first Australian Grand Prix held, and Amelia Earhart became the first woman (Passenger) to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. Vatican City became an independent state and the first Academy Awards were held in 1929. After years of indulgence and excess in all areas from entertainment, fashion, cars and art to innovations in

entertainment, fashion, cars and art to innovations in electrical goods, the stock market crashed on October 24, 1929 and triggered what is today known as the Great Depression.

The unassuming exemplar

Young, vibrant and full of life, Kim Lan greeted the 1920s and its epic developments as a studious college student who busied herself in her studies, charity works and church services. Even while she kept her nose to the grindstone, authorities in the field were already recognising her potential as a heartening leader. Upon her graduation from medical college, the news media started taking serious notice of her rise within her chosen field of occupation.

Hereinafter are four photographs of Soo Kim Lan as a young medical college student circa 1920 to 1923.



*Circa 1920.
Kim Lan in between
classes during
her early days at the
King Edward VII Medical
College in Singapore.*



*Circa 1921.
A photo of Kim Lan
by renowned journalist
Lowell Thomas as
recorded in his entry (6)
on Malaya titled,
Soo Kim Lan, M.D.
holding red flower.*

*Re: Lowell Thomas
Papers
(1892-1981), Malaya.*



*1921.
A photo of Kim Lan
by Lowell Thomas as
recorded in his entry (7)
on Malaya titled,
Soo Kim Lan, M.D.
holding notebook.*

*Circa 1922-1923.
Soo Kim Lan (left)
with close friend
and college mate,
Hannah Tan.*

*The two were of
three women in a
class of forty
students. The third
was Ms G. McIntyre
(The Straits Times,
1 April 1918, p.11).*



The spur to be of service

Soo Kim Lan passed her mid-year exams on April 4, 1923 with distinctions in Medicine and Midwifery (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942), 5 April 1923, p.12). Later the same year, she passed her final exam on 27 August 1923 to graduate from The King Edward VII College of Medicine. She commenced her medical career soon after, at the Singapore General Hospital where she worked and trained under Dr J.S. English, in Gynaecology and Midwifery. About a year into her career, Dr Soo Kim Lan was requested to assist Singapore's Orchard Road Police Department through supplying medical evidence for a case connected with a fatal shootout. Her credibility

as a medical doctor grew rapidly from thereon. She became known as the *go-to* medical expert for court case inquiries requiring medical evidence. All through her career at the Singapore General Hospital, Dr Soo Kim Lan served charitable causes and gave sermons. Adding to her busy schedules, she actively served her alma mater. In appreciation of her unsparing efforts, she became the first woman medic to be honoured by members of the Medical Union in Singapore (The Straits Times, 5 September 1923, p.11). As she received greater media acclaim, her honest, forthright opinions began to reflect her central priorities, firmly laid in public healthcare and social wellbeing.

The succeeding news clippings are presented in chronological order to review and explore greater insights into Kim Lan's journey in the 1920s from a young college woman and missionary to a reputable expert in the medical field and the first Malayan Chinese woman doctor who faced all conventions in her stride and refined them in the interest of the public healthcare and wellbeing.



Sunday, June 20.

St. Andrew's Cathedral.
 7 a.m. Holy Communion, (Annual Corporate Communion of the G.F.S.)
 7.45 a.m. Holy Communion (Choral).
 9.15 a.m. Matins followed by Holy Communion.
 4 p.m. Sunday School and Bible Classes.
 5.30 p.m. Evensong and Sermon.

Presbyterian Church, Orchard Road.
 8 a.m. Public Worship.
 9 a.m. Sunday School and Minister's Bible Class.
 5.30 p.m. Public Worship.
 Preacher: Rev. J. Horace Johnston, B.A.
 Thursday.
 8.45 p.m. Choir will meet for practice.

Middle Road Church.
 9 a.m. Sunday School.
 10 a.m. Malay Service. Mr. Goh Chena Lim.
 7.30 p.m. Epworth League Service, Miss Soo Kim Lan.
 8 p.m. English Service, Dr. Chen Chang Lek.

*June 19, 1920.
 The Straits Times, p.11.
 Soo Kim Lan served the
 Epworth League Service at
 the Middle Road
 Methodist Church.*

THE MEDICAL SCHOOL.

Results of Examination In August

The results of the Autumn examination held at King Edward VII Medical School are as follows:

First Professional Examination:—The following have completed the examination: E. Burke, S. Vinayamurthy, S. Sanmugam, S. A. Hunt, Lee Keng Chin, A. R. Muttiah, Chia Teck Yam, Lum Kim Seng and J. T. Amarasingam. Pass in Biology:—S. Sinnadorai, Mohd. Jaffar and N. K. Sharma. Pass in Physics:—H. C. Stubbs. Pass in Chemistry:—H. C. Stubbs and A. W. Rasiah.

Second Professional Examination.—R. Apparajoo, J. U. Karunaratne, S. Kanagalingam, Tay Soo Woon, V. K. Thambypillay, Makhan Singh, A. Sivakolunthu, Tan Joo Cheng, Tham Ying Khow, Tan Soo Hock, J. S. Goonting, M. K. Lukshumayah, Png Leong San and Miss Soo Kim Lan. Pass in Anatomy:—Wce Thiam Hock and V. D. Seevaratnam.

*August 31, 1920.
 The Straits Times, p.9.
 Soo Kim Lan passed the
 Medical College Exams.*

Lowell Thomas Papers

Malaya

| Box 1276 | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|--------------|-----------------|--|------|---------------|
| Item | Format | Index Number | Negative Number | Title | Date | Size (inches) |
| 6 | | 6-753 | | Soo Kim Lan, M.D. holding red flower | 1921 | 4.5x6.5 |
| 7 | | 6-753A | | Soo Kim Lan, M.D. holding notebook | 1921 | 4.5x6.5 |

Circa 1921.
Records of entries
in Lowell Thomas' Papers.

April 4, 1921. *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (1884-1942), p.6. Soo Kim Lan passed her Spring exams.

Third Professional Examination (Materia Medica)--Miss Soo Kim Lan, C. Subrahmanyam, Ang Swee Hian, G. A. Lopez, Foo Hoe Seng, Tham Ying Khaw, A Sivakulundu, G. H. Oorloff, Tay Soo Woon, S. Manikassamy, P. C. Sen, V. K. Tambypillai, Png Leong Sam, Husin bin Md. Ibrahim, M. K. Lukshumayah, Tan Soo Hock, J. T. Fernandez, P. Thillainatheu, Tan Joo Cheng, J. S. Goonting, J. U. Karunaratne, S. K. Ponniah.

First year--S. N. Evans, silver medal, E. S. R. Alfred, bronze medal.
1921.
Fifth year--Lee Keng Soon, silver medal and Lim Boon Keng medal for medicine and materia medica, Choo Teck Guan, bronze medal.
Fourth year--M. E. Tiruchelvam silver medal, A. Somasundram, bronze medal.
Third year--Miss Soo Kim Lan, silver medal, C. Subrahmanyam, bronze medal.
Second year--E. S. R. Alfred, silver medal, S. N. Evans, bronze medal.

July 6, 1921.
The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942), p.7.
Soo Kim Lan awarded prize during her third year at Medical College.

CHINESE MEDICAL STUDENTS.**Union's Dinner to Dr. Wu Lien Teh.**

The Chinese Medical Students Union held a dinner in honour of Dr. Wu Lien Teh, M.A., M.D., LL.D., the distinguished plague specialist at the Garden Club on Thursday. His Excellency the Chinese Consul-General Mr. Lo Chong presided, and among those present were:—Mrs. Lo Chong, Dr. A. E. Horne (Director of Medical and Sanitary Services S.S. and F.M.S.), Dr. A. L. Hoops (Principal Civil Medical Officer S.S.), Dr. J. R. Kay-Mouah (acting principal, Medical College), Dr. Loh Poon Lip, Dr. Chia Keng Hoe, Dr. Lim Chwee Leong (of Penang), Dr. Chee Peck Lian, Dr. Chen Su Lan, Dr. Choo Teck Guan, Dr. Tham Ying Khen, Dr. Lee Keng Soon, Dr. Lee Kek Soon, Dr. Chia Boon Leong, Dr. Lim Han Hoe, Mr. T. S. Kung, Dr. Ou Kok Bu, Mr. Khoo Sian Tan (of Penang), Miss Soo Kim Lan and Miss Hannah Tan.

At the conclusion of the dinner the toasts to the King and the Republic of China were drunk after which the Consul-General rose to pay a well worded and deserving tribute to the honoured guest, remarking that Dr. Wu was the only physician in China of note since the days of Hua To, a distinguished surgeon who flourished in the second century of the Chinese era, and that the services rendered by Dr. Wu to his country were worthy of record not only in the Encyclopaedia Britannica but also in the glorious pages of the history of the human race.

*April 3, 1922.
The Straits Times, p.9.
Soo Kim Lan and peers
at The Chinese Medical
Students' Union hosted
a dinner in honour of
specialist Dr Wu Lien Teh,
whose services were
described as "worthy of
record not only in the
Encyclopaedia Britannica
but also in the glorious
pages of the history of the
human race."*

**STRAITS CHINESE METHODIST CHURCH.
(A. C. S. CHAPEL.)**

10 a.m. Morning Service, Mr. Goh Hood Kiat.

Subject: "Others."

7.30 p.m. Epworth League Service, Miss Soo Kim Lan.

Subject: Attempting great Things for God.

8 p.m. Evening Service, Rev. Goh Hood Keng.

Tuesday, 8 p.m. Prayer Meeting, Rev. Goh Hood Keng.

*September 16, 1922.
The Singapore Free Press
and Mercantile Advertiser
(1884-1942), p.4.
Soo Kim Lan served at
Straits Chinese Methodist
Church.*

The following are exempted from further examination in the Subjects specified:—

Surgery:—Miss MacIntyre, S. Subramanyam, Husin bin Md Ibrahim, Chan Jim Swee.

Medicine:—G. A. Lopez, Miss Soo Kim Lan.

Midwifery:—G. A. Lopez, Miss Soo Kim Lan.

Hygiene:—J. S. Amarasingam, S. Sinnadurai.

Pathology:—Lum Kim Seng.

*April 5, 1923. The Straits Times, p.10.
Soo Kim Lan passed the Medical College
Exams in Medicine and Midwifery.*

**Autumn Professional Examination
Pass List.**

Final Examination for the Diploma of L.M.S.—G. H. Oorloff, Ang Swee Hian, A Sivakolunthu, R. Apparajoo, Makan Singh, Miss G. Macintyre, S. Subramanyam, Chan Jim Swee, G. H. Lopez, Miss Soo Kim Lan.

Pass in Midwifery only: K. Markandu, Husin Bin Md. Ibrahim.

Pass in Surgery only: P. Nadarajah.

Fourth Professional Examination.—Tar Singh H.F., T. Arumugam H.F., A. W. R. Ssiah H., Miss Hannah Tan, A. Thurai Lee Ee Kham, S. W. Ponnappa, A. R. Muttiah, N. H. Perera, N. K. Sharma, Lum Kim Seng, S. Sinnadurai.

Pass in Forensic Medicine only: T. Joo Cheng.

August 28, 1923. The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942), p.7. Soo Kim Lan passed the final examination at the King Edward VII Medical College to graduate.

CHINESE STUDENTS HONOURED.

Successful Candidates in Medical Union.

A dinner was held at the Garden Club, on Saturday, by the members of the Union in honour of the successful candidates, Miss Soo Kim Lan, Mr. Eng Swee Hian, and Mr. Chan Jim Swee. Dr. G. H. Macalister, Principal of the Medical College, presided. Among those present were: The Hon. Dr. A. L. Hoops and Mrs. Hoops, Mrs. G. H. Macalister, Dr. Wu Lien Teh, Dr. Liang Ba Chiang (Chinese delegates to the F.E.A.T.M.) Prof. K. Black, the Hon. Mr. Lee Choon Guan, Prof. J. R. Kay-Mouat, Dr. J. W. Scharff, Dr. and Mrs. J. S. Sloper, H. E. Mr. and Mrs. Lo Chong, Dr. and Mrs. R. B. Macgregor, Dr. and Mrs. Chen Su Lan, Dr. and Mrs. E. R. Stone, Dr. and Mrs. P. S. Hunter, Dr. Lee Keng Soon, Dr. Choo Teck Guan, Dr. Chia Boon Leong, Miss Hannah Tan, Mr. Hoisington and Mrs. Goh.

After the usual loyal toast, Mr. Goh Kok Kee proposed the health of the new licentiates, and regretted the unavoidable absence among them of Dr. Ang Swee Hian. He wished them all a bright and happy future.

Dr. Chan Jim Swee suitably responded, after which Dr. Soo Kim Lan thanked the Principal, lecturers and members of the Union for their kindness to her and hoped she would apply usefully the knowledge she had gained.

September 5, 1923.
The Straits Times, p.11.

Soo Kim Lan headed
list of successful candidates
to be honoured by the
Medical Union.

January 26, 1924.
The Straits Times, p.12.
Dr Soo Kim Lan served at
Straits Chinese Methodist
Church.

Note: Full article revealed
services provided in the
National language.

| STRAITS CHINESE METHODIST CHURCH (A. C. S. CHAPEL) | |
|---|--|
| 9 a.m. | Sunday School |
| 10 a.m. | Communion Service Rev. Goh Hood Keng. |
| 7.30 p.m. | Epworth League Service Dr. Soo Kim Lan. Subject: The Victorious Christ. |
| 8 p.m. | Evening Service Bishop G. H. Bickley. |
| 5 p.m. | Pava Lebar Service Rev. R. D. Swift. |
| Tuesday 8 p.m. | Prayer Meeting Mr. Chew Hock Leone. |
| TAMIL METHODIST CHURCH (A. C. S. CHAPEL) | |
| 9 a.m. | Sunday School |
| 10 a.m. | Divine Service Rev. M. R. Doraiam |
| 7.45 p.m. | Epworth League |

Graphic Details of a Constable's Crime.

Mr. F. G. Bourne held his enquiry yesterday into the circumstances attending the death of a Malay police constable, who was shot in the Orchard Police Station shortly after midnight on the 15th instant by a Pathan constable, named Nobi Hassan. On the table in Mr. Bourne's court were gruesome exhibits in the shape of a blood-stained charge book and pen holder, as well as the rifle and cartridge with which the shooting was done.

Insp. Joanson conducted the enquiry and after medical evidence was given by Dr. Soo Kim San of the General Hospital he examined Insp. Uphill, second Inspector stationed at Orchard Road police station, who said that about 9.45 p.m. on the 15th instant he went to the charge room and saw police constable 703 standing there with his coat undone. Witness asked him what was the matter, and on making enquiries found that when P.C. 869 (deceased) called 703 to go on

May 24, 1924.
The Straits Times,
 p.10.
 Dr Soo Kim Lan
 provided medical
 evidence to
 Orchard Road
 Police for inquiry
 proceedings at the
 General Hospital.

STRAITS CHINESE METHODIST CHURCH (A. C. S. CHAPEL.)

9 a.m. Sunday School.
 10 a.m. Morning Service Mr. Khoo Cheong Bee.
 7.30 p.m. Paya Lebar Service Lantern Lecture
 Rev. F. H. Sullivan.
 7.30 p.m. Epworth League Service Dr. Soo Kim Lan.
 Subject: Christ's Obedience.
 8.15 p.m. Evening Service Mr. G. Humphries.
 Tuesday 8 p.m. Prayer Meeting Mr. Khoo Cheong Bee.

July 12, 1924.
The Straits Times,
 p.12.
 Dr Soo Kim Lan
 served at the Straits
 Chinese
 Methodist Church.

The Assizes.

Murder Charge Against Pathan Policeman.

The trial of Naji Hassan, a Pathan policeman who is alleged to have murdered another policeman at Orchard Road police station was commenced at the Singapore Assizes, this morning, before Mr. Justice Barrett-Lennard. The accused was represented by Mr. Richard Page. Relating the circumstances, Mr. N. H. P. Whitley, D.P.P., said that the offence took place on May 15 at Orchard Road police station, where the deceased and the accused, both of whom were police-constables, were stationed. On the day in question deceased was on duty as an orderly, and at 9.30 p.m. he went upstairs to call the constables who were due for duty. Among these constables was the accused, who apparently had an idea that he was not yet due for duty because he protested, and a quarrel ensued between the accused and the deceased. It appeared that the deceased man struck the accused in the face, and made his nose bleed, and the accused retaliated by throwing a clog at the deceased. Downstairs Inspector Uphill noticed that the accused's nose was bleeding, and, after learning what had happened, told the accused that he would be reported for disobedience. At 10 p.m.

the accused went on duty as sentry in front of the police station, and, in accordance with routine, he took over ten rounds of ammunition from the constable who had preceded him. Nothing happened until 12.25, when the accused was seen to come into the charge-room, point his rifle at the deceased, fire a shot, and walk out. The deceased was stooping over a book at the time, and the bullet penetrated his jaw, neck, lung and spine. The deceased fell down and died almost immediately. When the two inspectors arrived accused was at his post outside the station. Inspector Johnston told him to come in, but he held the rifle at the ready, and refused to come. Inspector Uphill then got a rifle and covered the accused, and Inspector Johnson persuaded him to lay down his rifle, and arrested him.

Medical evidence was given by Dr. Soo Kim Nam, a Chinese lady doctor, employed at the General Hospital.

July 21, 1924.

The Straits Times, p.9.

Dr Soo Kim Lan gave medical evidence to aid inquiry.

CHURCH SERVICES.

ST. ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

TAMIL METHODIST CHURCH,
Short Street.

9 a.m. Sunday School.

10 a.m. Divine Service.

11 a.m. The Official Board Meeting.

7.45 p.m. Epworth League Service.

Subject: "The Ministry of Healing."

Speaker: Miss Soo Kim Lan.

6.30 p.m. Wednesday, Cottage Prayer Meeting

at Mr. Dudley's house, 107, East Coast Rd.

3.45 p.m. Thursday Ladies' Aid Society and Junior Epworth League.

September 13, 1924. *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (1884-1942), p.7. *Dr Soo Kim Lan served at Tamil Methodist Church, Short Street.*

At the annual general meeting of the Chinese Medical Students Union held in the lecture hall of the King Edward VII College of Medicine on June 24, the following office-bearers were elected for the ensuing year:—President, Dr. Tan Bin Chiang; vice-president, Miss .H. Tan; hon. secretary, Mr. Khoo Peng Sjang; treasurer, Mr. Lim Eng Chiang; committee, Dr. Chen Su Lan, Dr. Soo Kim Lan and Mr. Chua Chow Teck.

June 29, 1925.
The Straits Times, p.8.
Dr Soo Kim Lan
elected Office Bearer
of King Edward VII
College of Medicine.

Sunday, September 6, 1925.

[Under this heading we publish each week brief details of the services to be held at those Singapore Churches whose authorities supply us with the necessary information. To ensure insertion, these notices must reach us by Friday afternoon.]

Straits Chinese Methodist Church (A.C.S. Chapel).—9 a.m. Sunday School; 10 a.m. Morning Malay Service, Mr. Chew Hock Leong; Paya Lebar English School; 5 p.m. Malay Service, Mr. Choo Beng Lim; Middle Road Church, 7.30 p.m. Epworth League Service, Dr. Soo Kim Lan. Subject: The Curse of Shong Drink; 8.15 p.m. Evening English Service, Mr. A. MacNab; Tuesday, 8 p.m.

September 5 (6), 1925.
The Straits Times, p.12.
Dr Soo Kim Lan served
at the Middle Road
Methodist Church.

The Curse of Strong Drink.

Dr. (Miss) Soo Kim Lan spoke on the above subject on Sunday evening at the Epworth League of the Straits Chinese Methodist Church, Middle Road, and was assisted by Messrs. C. C. Tan, Chua Quee Leong, Tan Cheng Lock and others. She said that a drunkard invariably did not know that he was a drunkard, as an insane person did not know that he was insane. She asked them not to be deceived or mocked by wine, or be induced by others, though they might be the best of friends, to drink on any occasion, for drink would bring them to the grave or have some serious consequences. She then instanced a story in which a drunkard had induced one of his friends to drink. Subsequently his friend found out that the drink was destructive, and he could not induce his friend to give it up. The drink had taken a strong grip on his friend and would not let him go, and he had to stand by and see him, with great remorse and regret.

September 9, 1925.
*The Singapore Free
Press and Mercantile
Advertiser* (1884-1942),
p.16. Dr Soo Kim Lan
on staying true to one's
self and overcoming
unhealthy peer pressure.

July 5, 1926.
*The Singapore Free Press
 and Mercantile Advertiser*
 (1884-1942), p.8.
 Dr Soo Kim Lan
 elected Office Bearer of
 King Edward VII College
 of Medicine at the
 9th annual meeting of the
 Medical Students' Union.

The ninth annual meeting of the Chinese Medical Students Union was held in the lecture theatre of the King Edward VII College of Medicine on Monday with Dr. Loh Seng Tak in the chair. The following gentlemen were elected office-bearers for the academical year (1926-1927). President: Dr. Loh Seng Tak, Vice-President: Mr. Khoo Peng Seng, Hon. Secretary: Mr. Lim Eng Cheang, Hon. Treasurer: Mr. Chua Chow Teik, Committee Members: Dr. Chen Su Lan, Dr. Soo Kim Lan, Mr. Chong Siong Joor

WESLEY CHURCH, Fort Canning Road.
 7.30 p.m. Epworth League Service: Dr. Soo Kim Lan.
 Subject: The Causes and Evils of Poverty.
 8.15 p.m. Evening English Service: Rev. Goh Hood Keng.
 Tuesday 8 p.m. Prayer Meeting: Mr. Chew Hock Hin.

"BETHESDA."
 (Bras Basah Road).
 2 p.m. Breaking of Bread.
 4 p.m. Bible Classes and Sunday School.
 8 p.m. Gospel Service.
 Speaker: Mr. L. J. Donaldson.
 Monday 5.30 p.m. Prayer Meeting.
 Tuesday 8 p.m. Bible Reading.
 Thursday 4.30 p.m. Ladies' Meeting.
 Friday 5.30 p.m. Address to Christians.

CHINESE GOSPEL HALL.
 (North Bridge Road.)
 10.15 a.m. Breaking of Bread.
 8 p.m. Address to Christians.
 Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 8 p.m.

August 14, 1926.
*The Singapore Free Press and
 Mercantile Advertiser*
 (1884-1942), p.12.
 Dr Soo Kim Lan on prevailing
 over the causes of poverty for
 the Epworth League Service
 at Wesley Church.

December 7, 1926.
The Straits Times, p.8.
 Dr Soo Kim Lan attended
 farewell party hosted by the
 Chinese Medical Students'
 Union prior to leaving the
 colony for Kuala Lumpur.

The Chinese Medical Students Union entertained Dr. (Miss) Soo Kim Lan of the General Hospital to a tea-party at the residence of Dr. S. L. Chen, prior to her leaving the colony for Kuala Lumpur where she will join her brother, Dr. H. M. Soo, in private practice. Among those present were:—Dr. Loh Seng Tak (president), Dr. and Mrs. S. L. Chen, Dr. and Mrs. Lim Han Hee, Dr. (Miss) Hannah Tan, Dr. (Miss) Soo Kim Lan, Dr. Oon Sim Kong, Mr. Hoisington and Miss Eva Nelson.

H. E. Sir Laurence Guillemard has given \$500 to the Perak Flood Relief Fund.

Dr. and Mrs. C. J. Tull, and Col. Pickering, of Singapore, arrived in Penang from Singapore on Thursday.

The Managing Director of the Fresh Food and Refrigerating Company, Ltd, Mr. A. R. Watson Butcher, is proceeding to England and the Continent on 18th inst. by the Aeneas in connection with the installation of machinery and the completion of agency arrangements for this new Company.

Dr. (Miss) Soo Kim Lan, a niece of Dr. Saw Ah Choy, J.P., Taiping, has just arrived in Kuala Lumpur, where she intends taking up medical practice with her brother, Dr. H. M. Soo. After her graduation, she was for three years attached to the maternity section of the General Hospital, Singapore, as assistant to Dr. J. S. English. She is the first Chinese lady qualified doctor to practice in this town.—M. M.

January 11, 1927.

The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942), p.8.

Dr Soo Kim Lan arrived in Kuala Lumpur as first qualified Chinese lady doctor.



While some might argue that she fought or defied conventions from the start of her career, the preceding collated manuscripts of her journey over the 1920s show that Kim Lan demonstrated great respect for the conventions of her time. She worked hard to refine them to the extent that proper precedence was given to public healthcare and social welfare, both themes of which, she devoted her lifetime to serve, not only as a doctor and an unfailing philanthropist, but also through her contributions to the missionary society. Given that the 1920s was a decade when very few women pursued their chosen field of profession, Kim Lan showed by

example, as a young Asian woman, that each individual possesses the oft neglected choice to step out of one's personal boundaries and beyond expected social roles to realise one's own, unique dreams.

One of the most profound perspectives she held tenaciously as a young woman in her twenties was that we can all choose to view our mistakes as gifts, and be grateful for them as lessons that we can use as opportunities for wisdom and growth.



The 1920s at a glance

- 1921 ----- a. Discovered by journalist Lowell Thomas
b. Excelled in medical college exams
c. Awarded silver medal for academic achievements
- 1922 ----- Hosted dinner for world-renowned plague specialist
Dr Wu Lien Teh under Medical Students' Union
- 1923 ----- a. Passed final exams for Medicine and Midwifery
b. Passed final examination to successfully graduate
c. Honoured by Medical Union
- 1924 ----- a. Joined Singapore's General Hospital as a
gynaecologist and midwife under Dr J.S. English
b. Provided medical evidence in aid of court inquiry
- 1925-26 ----- Elected Office Bearer of King Edward VII
College of Medicine
- 1926 ----- Honoured by Chinese Medical Students' Union
- 1927 ----- Arrived in Kuala Lumpur as first qualified Malayan
Chinese lady doctor



Chapter 9

The family's tribute

Memoirs of an unconventional matriarch

This chapter comprises an anthology of unrevealed stories and vignettes about the only woman we know as Malaya's Grand Lady of Medicine. It is dedicated towards drawing inspiration from a deeper understanding about Dr Soo Kim Lan's life and times. Each private memoir rekindles forgotten impressions for those who shared similar memories, and invites others to bask in a treasury of historical highlights, bequeathed to us by the respective individuals' reminiscences.

We all have a childhood dream, a special niche we envisioned for ourselves as children, a unique place that only we can fill, something we were, or may still be inspired to do, which no one else can do. For Kim Lan, this was to become a physician, and the best that she could be. She pursued every opportunity to fulfil what she believed was her true calling in life. Despite countless obstacles that came with times when young women did not leave home without a chaperon, let

alone participate in public life, she forged ahead to embrace her childhood dream. Once realised, she steadily demonstrated genuine humility that expressed honour and privilege for her chosen vocation in life. She never once, took the realization of her childhood dream for granted, but from the moment she entered into practice, she entrusted her life to adhering to the physician's pledge.

Today, it is in this pledge that we found her exuberant devotion towards public health and wellbeing, which continues to shine, for the greater good of humanity.

Physician's Pledge.

(Adapted from the Declaration of Geneva, 1948).

I make these promises solemnly, freely and upon my honour:

- I pledge to consecrate my life in service of humanity;
- I give my teachers, respect and gratitude, which is their due;
- I will practice my profession with conscience and dignity, and give utmost priority to my patients' health;
- I will do my best to honour the noble traditions of the medical profession and treat my peers, as my brothers and sisters;
- I will not allow prejudice, including considerations of religion, nationality, race, party politics, and social standing, to intervene between my duty and my patient;

- I will maintain utmost respect for human life, and will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity, even under threat.

While every effort was made to retain the distinct voice of the ensuing narratives, unclear expressions were re-scripted for coherence and clarity. These personal accounts represent two generations' worth of insights on Dr Soo Kim Lan's notable, yet largely overlooked private life. She accomplished so much in her lifetime that it is intriguing to find little or no prior study on the life and times of a local legend who lived through World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945). This observation adds to the value of this work, to help fill a gap in knowledge, and strengthen it with true accounts of those who were closest to her. As you explore each narrative, it is hoped that you meld them with the chronicles of central media events put forward in the preceding chapters.