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✓ THE HISTORY OF THE KAU LUEN TONG SZE-TO CLAN GUILD
AND SZE-TO CLAN MUTUAL HELP ASSOCIATION
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The mid 19th century saw the establishment of Singapore as a bustling entrepot. It also saw an ever increasing influx of immigrants from the southern 2 province of China - an influx of people who, together with local Malay and Indian immigrants, gave Singapore much of its working dynamism. While Singapore witnessed its own transition from a quiet fishing village to what was to be described as "the most important station in the East ... of much higher value than whole continents", the immigrant Chinese population saw the establishment of clan consciousness which were to look after the needs of the Singapore Chinese population in the years to come. It was during this time of flux that the Singapore Szeto Clan Association was planted - originally called 司徒家塾 (Szeto Family School), it was set up by Situ Zhong, an immigrant from Kai Ping County in the Canton Province.

A pious, honest and hardworking man, Situ Zhong was much respected by fellow immigrants who had come from his own county and village. Having survived the turmoil of settling in a totally new and alien environment apart from family and home, Situ Zhong recognised and anticipated the problems which would be faced by an increasing population of Singapore Szetos. With this in mind, he rallied the help of several like minded friends, and together they established the 司徒家塾 along Chin Lai Street in the early 1860s. At that time, the association busied itself in helping new Szeto immigrants find jobs, as well as in handling matters of family bereavement. Throught the years Situ Zhong's descendents have remained active in the activities of the clan.

The world economic depression of early 1930s triggered the collapse of many local business establishments - the Szeto Clan was not freed from the suffering. With the closure of several Tanjong Pagar dockyards, many Szetos were found jobless. The sudden overwhelming crises brought the association's acitivities to a temporary standstill. In the 1936, the association was "resurrected" under the leadership of Situ Xi Yu and Situ Jun Wei. A rallying call at that time gathered a membership of over a hundred local Szetos. The association's general secretary at that time was Situ Da Ming.

In 1938, a legislation was passed by the colonial government where all clan association had to be registered with the local authorities. However, in view of its long history, the Szeto Clan Association 司徒家塾 was quickly accepted as a recognised establishment without having to go through the intricacies of bureaucracy.

1940 saw the replacement of Da Ming by Situ Yi Jun as the association's new general secretary. Yi Jun was a new immigrant from China who had difficulty finding a job. Recognising his plight, the association allowed him to start a private school within its compound at Chun Lai Street, at a nominal rental fee. Thus while allowing Yi Jun to acquire a source of income, the association was also able to expand its own activities.