

CHINATOWN



Before the arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819, Chinese immigrants had already settled in Singapore cultivating gambier and pepper. The establishment of a free port in Singapore and the lure of the new opportunities here led to a growth in immigrants, especially from China.


In his 1822 Town Plan, Raffles allocated the whole area west of the Singapore River, known as the "Chinese Campong" as he envisaged that the Chinese would form the bulk of the growing number of town settlers and grouped them into ethnic quarters for easy administration.

Hailing from the various provinces in China, the Chinese immigrants started grouping into their dialect groups. The Cantonese occupied Temple Street. The Hokkiens were located in Telok Ayer Street and Hokkien Street, while the Teochews were settled in South Canal Road, Garden Street, and Carpenter Street. Clans were established, temples were built and businesses were formed. From delicacies to death-houses, there were businessmen, traders, craftsmen, hawkers, street peddlers, and even coolies for hire.

Today ... Chinatown is still bustling with activities, albeit minus the gory and illegal stuff, even as large sections of the area have been declared national heritage sites and officially designated for conservation.

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