

Activists on the Fringe: Chinese Intelligentsia in Penang in the Early 20th Century

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Abstract

From the early days when the Chinese immigrants started to arrive in Penang, until as recently as the first part of the 20th century, the Chinese had participated actively in the economic, social and political development of Penang. Among these pioneer immigrants, there was a group which was small and little noticed, compared to the commercially active traders, planters and laborers. Although not much written about, this significant group of individuals who contributed significantly to the educational and cultural development of the Chinese community in Penang was remarkably well captured in the book, *Nanyang yingshu haixia zhimindi zhilue* 南洋英属海峡殖民地志略 (*Gazetteer of the Nanyang British Straits Settlements*), compiled by Song Yunpu 宋蕴璞, a Minguo 民国 (Republican period) merchant, and published around 1930. This article aims to study this particular group of Chinese in Penang by examining their aspirations and actions, to bring about an awareness of their influence and contribution.