



The Little Red Cliff: 1946-1963

Yeo Hong Eng

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The Little Red Cliff portrays life in the 1950s and 1960s in Tanah Merah Kechil (Little Red Cliff) in a corner of Bedok District along the eastern coast of Singapore. Author Yeo Hong Eng chronicles the story of his family, the Yeo family, as they struggled to make a living during the lean years after the Japanese Occupation. He describes in detail how his parents developed the land for farming and exploited other available resources, such as sand mining during rainy seasons, until they were forced to leave the land in 1963. He also explains how they processed coconuts into cooking oil and bamboo into food, materials for building trellises, farming accessories, and basic toys. Whether they were working in animal husbandry or in vegetable cultivation, his grandmother and parents used the age-old methods passed down from their parents and grandparents to work with the land and their animals. What's more, they made sure to take time from their work to celebrate important festivals, entertainment, and the joys and sorrows of everyday life. They attended wayangs (street plays), flew kites, and made their own playthings-shuttles, spinners, sling shots, and musical instruments-with whatever raw materials they had on hand. In *The Little Red Cliff*, Yeo Hong Eng shares a description of family life in Singapore in the mid-twentieth century-its lows and highs, its struggles and joys.

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