The **Toa Payoh ritual murders** took place in [Singapore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singapore) in 1981. On 25 January, the body of a nine-year-old girl was found in a bag next to the [lift](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elevator) of a block of [flats](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_housing_in_Singapore) in the town of [Toa Payoh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toa_Payoh), and two weeks later, a ten-year-old boy was found dead nearby. The murders were masterminded by Adrian Lim, a self-styled [medium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediumship) (fengshui), who had tricked scores of women into believing that he had supernatural powers. His victims offered money and sexual services in exchange for cures, beauty, and good fortune. Two of the women became his loyal assistants; [Tan Mui Choo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toa_Payoh_ritual_murders#Tan_Mui_Choo) married him, and [Hoe Kah Hong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toa_Payoh_ritual_murders#Hoe_Kah_Hong) became one of his "holy wives". When the police investigated a [rape](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rape) charge filed by one of Lim's targets, he became furious and decided to kill children to derail the investigations. On each occasion, Hoe lured a child to Lim's flat where he or she was drugged and killed by the trio. Lim also sexually assaulted the girl before her death. The trio were arrested after the police found a trail of blood that led to their flat. Although the case name suggested ritualistic murders,[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toa_Payoh_ritual_murders#cite_note-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toa_Payoh_ritual_murders#cite_note-2) the defendants said they did not conduct prayers, burning of [joss sticks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joss_stick), ringing of bells, or any other rituals during the killings.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toa_Payoh_ritual_murders#cite_note-3)

The 41-day trial was the second longest to have been held in the courts of Singapore at the time. None of the defendants denied their guilt. Their appointed counsels tried to spare their clients the death sentence by pleading [diminished responsibility](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diminished_responsibility), arguing that the accused were mentally ill and could not be held entirely responsible for the killings. To support their case they brought in doctors and psychologists, who analysed the defendants and concluded that they had exhibited [schizophrenia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schizophrenia), and depressions of the [psychotic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychotic_depression) and [manic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypomania) order. The prosecution's expert, however, refuted these testimonies and argued that they were in full control of their mental faculties when they planned and carried out the murders. The judges agreed with the prosecution's case and sentenced the trio to death. While on [death row](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_row), the women appealed to the [Privy Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judicial_Committee_of_the_Privy_Council) in London and pleaded for [clemency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pardon) from the President of Singapore to no avail. Lim did not seek any pardons; instead, he accepted his fate and went smiling to the gallows. The three were [hanged](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanging) on 25 November 1988.

The Toa Payoh ritual murders shocked the public in Singapore, who were surprised by such an act taking place in their society. Reports of the trio's deeds and the court proceedings were closely followed and remained prominent in the Singaporean consciousness for several years. Twice, movie companies tried to capitalise on the sensation generated by the murders by producing motion pictures based on the killings; however, critics panned both films for indulging in gratuitous sex and violence, and the movies performed poorly at the box office. The actions and behaviour of the three killers were studied by academics in the criminal psychology field, and the rulings set by the courts became local case studies for diminished responsibility.