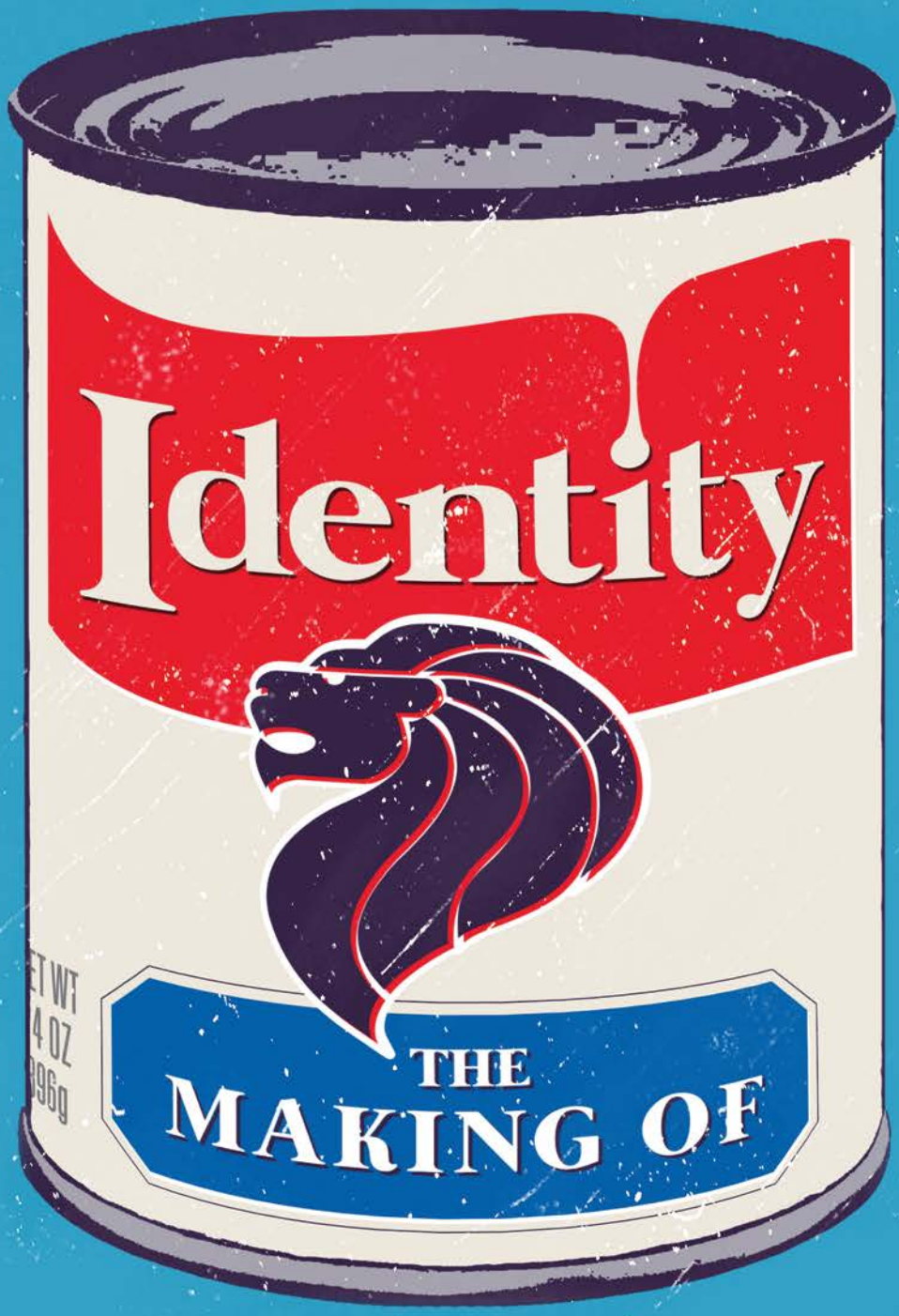
National Library Singapore

biblioasia

Vol. 10 Issue 02 JUL–SEP 2014



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Director's Column

1986. Singapore's 21st birthday and the year the rousing "Count On Me Singapore" was introduced to the public. As darkness shrouded the National Stadium where the National Day Parade was underway, the beats of Chinese, Malay and Indian drums reverberated through the night sky for the performance "Unity in Rhythm". In that magical instant, the parade came alive and a palpable excitement swept like a whirlwind through the 50,000-strong crowd. It's hard not to use a well-worn cliché, but that was the first time I felt a tingle down my spine while watching the parade.

In this vein, the essay "Parades, Flags and Rallies: Celebrating Singapore's National Day" by Lim Tin Seng traces the evolution of the celebrations and the marked shifts in tone from the 1970s' socialist-tinged "rugged society" messages that urged Singaporeans to pull together and work harder, to the parades of the 80s and 90s that were supercharged with pride and emotion.

As we reflect on our identity this National Day, take a minute to ponder on the perennial question by Kishore Mahbubani in "So, What is a Singaporean?" as he considers if our multicultural harmony and identity is a result of careful government planning and policy, or a natural assimilation and acceptance of different cultures over time.

Food is a great leveller in society and the idea of unforced multiculturalism is best expressed in "Of Belacan and Curry Puffs: A Taste of Singapore's Past". Bonny Tan's essay reveals how the humble curry puff is a "product of the ingenious marriage between colonial and colonised taste buds" – the spicy chicken filling from an Indian merchant and the puff pastry, a distinct British influence.

The most powerful articulation of the complexity of identity comes through our literature. Through the works of writers such as Edwin Thumboo, Goh Poh Seng, Hwee Hwee Tan and Boey Kim Cheng, librarian Michelle Heng takes us through Singapore's literary landscape, in "Home and Away: Literary Reflections on Nation and Identity". Identity of a different kind is explored in "Standing Firm: Stories of Ubin". Ang Seow Leng offers a glimpse into the life of the community in yesteryear Pulau Ubin – just minutes away from the mainland and yet imbued with its own distinct social mores and culture.

Perhaps the identity of being Singaporean is far too complex and ephemeral to encapsulate within a few pat catchphrases. While thinking about this issue, I chanced upon a book by Paul Johnson on the life of Socrates in Athens at the height of the Greek civilisation. In examining the flourishing of the city state under its leader Pericles, Johnson described Athenian optimism as a constructive, dynamic and practical force propelled by the belief that Athenians were capable of turning their attention to anything – arts, science, philosophy – and making it better than anyone else could.

Can the fledgling Singaporean identity match the vigour of the Athenian spirit of 5th-century BC? Yes, perhaps, in time to come. In the meantime, we should take heart in the experience of the talented late Singaporean writer Goh Poh Seng. When visiting Singapore in 2007 after a long absence – having emigrated to Canada in 1986 – Goh was asked if he could ever live in Singapore again. Yes he replied almost immediately, to paraphrase his words, "like how a duck takes to water".

Gene Tan
Director, National Library

BiblioAsia is a free quarterly publication produced by the National Library Board. It features articles on the history, culture and heritage of Singapore within the larger Asian context, and has a strong focus on the collections and services of the National Library. *BiblioAsia* is distributed to local and international libraries, academic institutions, government ministries and agencies, as well as members of the public.

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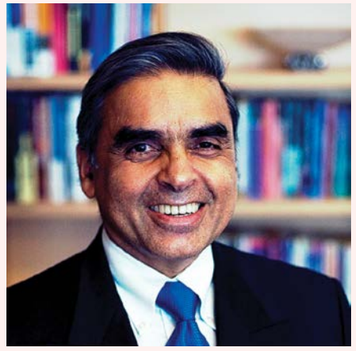
The online edition of BiblioAsia is available at:
http://www.nlb.gov.sg/Browse/BiblioAsia.aspx

On the cover:
Cover illustration by
Oxygen Studio Designs Pte Ltd

ISSN 0219-8126 (print)
ISSN 1793-9968 (online)

SO, WHAT IS A SINGAPOREAN?



Kishore Mahbubani was with the Singapore Foreign Service for 33 years (1971–2004) and was Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Ministry from 1993 to 1998. Currently, he is the Dean and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy of the National University of Singapore. His latest book, *The Great Convergence: Asia, the West, and the Logic of One World*, was selected by the *Financial Times* as one of the best books of 2013 and long listed for the 2014 Lionel Gelber Prize. Most recently, he was selected by *Prospect* magazine as one of the top 50 world thinkers for 2014.

This article was first printed in *The Straits Times* on 8 June, 2013. *The Straits Times* © Singapore Press Holdings Pte Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

Let me begin with a paradox. I know that I am a Singaporean. But I do not know what a Singaporean is.

The best way to explain this paradox is to compare Singapore with other nations.

There are three categories of nations with a clear sense of national identity. The first category is the old nation. Take France as an example. The French have zero doubts about their national identity. It is based on a common language, history, culture, relative ethnic homogeneity and deep attachment to key political concepts, like secularism. A Frenchman can recognise a fellow Frenchman in an instant. The bond is powerful and deep. This is equally true of other old nations, such as Japan and Korea, Russia and China, Spain and Sweden.

The second category is the new nation. The United States exemplifies this category best. It has no distinctive ethnic roots. It is an immigrant nation whose forefathers came from a variety of old nations. Yet somehow, within a generation (and often within less than a generation), their new citizens would lose their old national identities and be absorbed into the American melting pot.

Even though America declared its independence in 1776, it actually faced the danger of splitting into two nation states until the American Civil War of 1860–1865. Hence, the modern unified American nation is only about 150 years old.

The National Day emblem outside City Hall at the 1963 National Day Rally held at the Padang. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Yet, there is absolutely no doubt that an American can recognise a fellow American when he walks the streets of Paris or Tokyo. When the fellow American opens his mouth, he knows that he is talking to a countryman.

A shared history, common historical myths, deep attachment to values like freedom and democracy are some of the elements that define the strong sense of American national identity.

It also helps to belong to the most successful nation in human history. A deep sense of national pride accompanies the sense of national identity.

OLD CULTURES, NEW NATIONS

The third category is the mixed category where national identity is a mixture of new and old. India and Indonesia, and Brazil and Nigeria exemplify this category. Both India and Indonesia have old cultures. But their sense of nationhood is relatively new. The boundaries that they have inherited are the accidental leftovers of European colonisation. For example, in the pre-colonial period, there were no nation states such as India and Pakistan or Indonesia and Malaysia. Their modern borders are a result of colonial divisions. Yet despite all this, both India and Indonesia have managed to develop strong and unique national identities.

(Top) Medical staff at the General Hospital attending to racial riot victims in 1964. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*
(Above) Row of shophouses along Onan Road in 1983. This multiracial neighbourhood in the East Coast was where the author spent his formative years. *From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. All rights reserved. Lee Kip Lin and National Library Board, Singapore 2009.*

Both Indians and Indonesians have no difficulty recruiting people to die for their countries. And they have done this despite the tremendous diversity of their societies. The story of Indian diversity is well known. In the case of Indonesia, it continues to be a source of daily discovery. The late Indonesian foreign minister Ali Alatas, a distinguished diplomat, told me how the Indonesian people were totally riveted by a series of TV programmes in the 1990s which showcased how children worked, studied and played all over the archipelago. Many Indonesians discovered this diversity for the first time.

POOR BUT HAPPY COMMUNITY

Singapore does not belong to any of these three categories. Virtually everyone knows that Singapore is an accidental nation. Yet few seem to be conscious of how difficult it is to create a sense of national identity out of an accidental nation.

Take my personal case as an example. Most children get their sense of national identity from their mother's milk. I did too.

As my mother had a close shave leaving Pakistan in 1947, she instilled a deep sense of Hindu nationalism in me. I learnt Hindi and Sindhi and read about Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

But it did not last. The realities of daily living in Singapore defined our identity.

Fortunately, I grew up in a relatively poor neighbourhood in Onan Road. Because we lived in one-bedroom houses – we actually lived in each other's houses and not only in our own. My mother discovered that she had left her Muslim neighbours in Pakistan to develop very deep and close friendships with our Malay Muslim neighbours on both sides of our house.

We lived together almost as one family. Just beyond them were two Chinese families. One was Peranakan and the other was Mandarin-speaking. Three doors away was a Eurasian family.

Hence, in the space of seven or eight houses, we could see almost the full spectrum of Singapore's ethnic composition living cheek by jowl with each other.

And we lived with deep ethnic harmony. At the height of the racial riots in 1964, even though one of my Malay neighbours returned home badly bruised and bloodied after being beaten by a Chinese mob, the ethnic harmony of our Onan Road community was never shaken. We saw ourselves as belonging to one community despite our ethnic and religious diversity.

NATURAL, ARTIFICIAL HARMONY?

Singapore's continued ethnic harmony, which has survived even bitter race riots, is clearly a key component of our sense of national identity. But one question remains unanswered: Is this ethnic harmony a result of natural evolution (as it was with our Onan Road community) or is it a result of harsh and unforgiving laws which allow no expression of ethnic prejudices? In short, is ethnic harmony in Singapore a natural or artificial development?

The answer to this question will determine Singapore's future. If it is a natural development, Singapore will remain a strong and resilient society that will overcome divisive challenges.

If it is an artificial development, we will remain in a state of continuous fragility. As Singapore continues its mighty metamorphosis, we have to hope and pray that our ethnic harmony is a result of natural development. ♦

Of BELACAN & CURRY PUFFS

A Taste of Singapore's Past

Bonny Tan pores through the rich archives of Malayan newspapers and shows how disparate communities have come together to create a food culture that is truly emblematic of Singapore's multicultural character.

Bonny Tan is a Senior Librarian with the National Library of Singapore. Her passion for Singapore food has increased with her move to Vietnam, where she currently telecommutes from.

Research into Singapore's food heritage often neglects the unusually rich minefield of data found in newspapers. NewspaperSG, the National Library's digital archives of local newspapers dating from 1831, provides easy access to a fascinating wealth of information found in otherwise banal resources such as news articles and columns, recipes, restaurant reviews, and even advertisements.

The history of *belacan*, a local condiment, and curry puff[1], a popular snack, is traced in this article, pieced together from reports taken from digitised English newspapers in Malaya during the interwar period. These newspaper reports unveil the faces and flavours behind these local foods, their evolution through racial adaptations and their colloqualisation into place names and language.

FOOD REPORTING DURING COLONIAL TIMES

World War I saw a spike in marriage rates in Europe and a large number of women entering the workforce, a trend echoed in the expatriate community in Malaya.[2] As more expatriate women, both married as well as working singles, settled in Malaya after World War I,[3] the local culinary scene and, subsequently, newspapers began reflecting the interests and concerns of this new audience.

Where previously, articles on cooking and food in the newspapers mainly referenced the cook employed in the home, by the mid-1930s, regular columns in the English dailies that targeted women and their newfound spending power had started appearing. Thus, *The Straits Times* published "The World of Women"[4] column in January 1935 which evolved into the "Women's Supplement"[5] while *The Malayan Saturday Post* ran a page entitled "A Woman's Viewpoint".

Interestingly, these articles featured fancy dinner parties, fashionable wear, strange sights in Malaya (from the European point of view, of course, of mainly local folks) but precious little on tasting local food and much less cooking it.

Encouraged by the conveniences of tinned food, refrigeration and fresh imports of meat and milk from Australia, the European community remained averse to cooking and eating local foods and flavours. News of the war in the West and its threat to the East saw a "grow more food" campaign, with several newspaper articles urging readers to grow and cook local vegetables,[6] especially since the country had experienced dire food shortages during the interwar years. In August 1941, a broadcast talk entitled "Wartime Cook" was announced in the papers.[7] After the fall of Singapore to the Japanese, the internment of Europeans was possibly the first time many Caucasians in Singapore began regularly eating rice and local ingredients,[8] albeit not by choice.

The *Malaya Tribune*, a newspaper started in 1914 and targeting Asiatic readers, is credited with training local journalists, particularly in the 1930s.[9] Eventually, these journalists went on to anchor the increasingly localised English newspapers in post-war Singapore. Local food columnists of the 1970s and 1980s such as Violet Oon, Lee Geok Boi and Sylvia Toh Paik Choo, reinforced the romanticisation of the iconic dishes of the 1950s and 1960s as they reminisced over the food they grew up with. Thus, the flavours of local cuisine began to take centre stage in food columns, with greater attention paid to its ingredients, preparation methods and consumption.

FLAVOURS OF SINGAPORE

Belacan

Belacan is a condiment peculiar to the region with parallels in Myanmar *(ngape)*, Indonesia *(terasi, petis)*, the Philippines *(bagoong)*, Thailand *(kapi)* and China *(hae ko)*. Though strongly rooted in Southeast Asian culture, it is believed that the colonial Portuguese brought this pungent concoction to the region since dishes associated with a fermented seafood paste similar to *belacan* are found in places such as Goa and Macau where the Portuguese had been colonial masters for centuries.

The pungent *belacan* is manufactured through a crude process of fermenting tiny shrimp *(grago or gerago)* or krill, which includes salting, grinding (or foot-pounding before the advent of modern machinery) and sunning for several weeks, during which time the paste turns from a rosy pink to a deep shade of brown. The resulting cake of *belacan* is thinly sliced, toasted and then used to flavour meats, enhance curries, gravies and stews, and add a distinctive edge to *sambal belacan*, a spicy hand-pounded condiment of *belacan* and fresh chillies brightened with lime juice. Many Malayan dishes rely on *belacan* to give it a unique Malayan flavour.

Belacan may have been indispensable for flavouring local food, but newspapers reveal that its overpowering olfactory presence, particularly in the 19th and early 20th centuries when Singapore had several *belacan* factories by the coast, offended the European population's sense of smell. *Belacan* naturally became one of the few local food items written about in English newspapers, almost always because of its potent stink. An 1891 letter from "one with a sensitive nose" complaining about the nefarious effusions from a government licensed *belacan* factory along Tanjong Rhu, a coastal health getaway in colonial Singapore, described it thus: "The odour of *blachang* [sic] is peculiarly Asiatic, there is nothing in Europe to contend with it; it is ghastly, penetrating and abominable... if a *Belacan* is thought to have been brought to Southeast Asia by the Portuguese.

Stepping on it

In the traditional method of making *belacan*, the semi-dried and salted shrimps are placed into holes dug into the ground. Thereafter, women would trample on these dried shrimps for at least an hour in large wooden tubs – not unlike what Italian women would do to grapes in order to produce wine in the old days – before the drying process began again. English author Isabella Bird described in her 1883 book, *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*, how *belacan* was made with bare feet "trampling a mass of putrefying prawns and shrimps into a paste". In the modern era, this process of mashing is done with machinery. Similarly, *belacan* is no longer pressed into *tampin*, conical containers woven out of *mengkuang* leaves (a variety of pine), like in times past and then sold in the market. Nowadays, *belacan* is pressed into thin rectangular blocks or circular discs prior to being wrapped with paper or plastic and shipped out to supermarkets.

Belacan in traditional packaging.

Belacan naturally became one of the few local food items written about in English newspapers, almost always because of its potent stink.

Belacan is used extensively in Malayan cooking and gives it its distinctive taste.

tired city man happens to land at 'Sandy Point' to reach Tanjong Katong… then a whiff comes from the *blachang* factory that makes his hair stand on end, and fills him with criminal impulses".[10]

However, newspaper reports, one as early as 1874,[11] indicate that a few Europeans had a connoisseur's appreciation for this foul-smelling ingredient as suggested by its nickname – the Malayan caviar[12] or the Malaccan cheese, where its best versions came from.[13] Interest in its flavours was reflected by an enquiry on how to make "*blachan* toast" in the English newspapers in 1901[14] and by the 1920s a greater discernment of its varied use in dishes was seen: "The *balachan* [sic] is decidedly a delicious compound. It can be cooked in various ways, fried simply and mixed with chillies, onions, garlic, and aromatic herbs of different kinds with prawns, fish, crabs… The 'curry' so well known in this part of the world has got to be flavoured with this condiment without which it will lose much of its palatable taste. *Balacan* is equal to or superior (to some tastes) to any European caviarre [sic]… but the taste for it must be acquired. The smell is decidedly objectionable."[15]

Belacan is not only a key ingredient in Chinese, Malay and Eurasian dishes;[16] newspapers reveal that entire communities were named after it or its raw ingredient, *grago* (or *gerago*). The Portuguese-Eurasian fishermen of Malacca who dragged nets to catch these tiny shrimp were themselves referred to as *grago*,[17] which otherwise was a term of contempt used to describe the impoverished segments of the Eurasian community.[18] At the same time *belacan*-making was so strongly associated with the Malays that they themselves were often referred to as *belacan*.[19] A popular local saying among Malays at the time was: "*Kalau tidak makan belacan, bukanlah orang Melayu*" (If you don't eat *belacan*, you are not Malay).[20] The Peranakans too favoured the use of *belacan* in their cookery due to the Malay influence in their dishes. The fact that newspaper articles of the time associate different communities with this condiment is an indication how its production and consumption cut across racial lines even in colonial times. The condiment was so much part of the social fabric that the communists who were holed up in Malayan jungles at the time even purportedly used it for the making of bombs.[21]

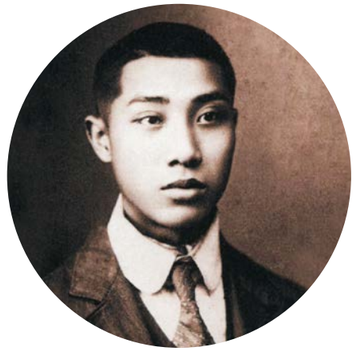
Curry puffs

The curry puff is often considered a local invention unique to Singapore and Malaysia though variants of it can be found in Thailand and the Philippines. The origins of the curry puff are clouded, but it is often attributed to the European colonial influence, its pastry having similarities to the Cornish pie or the Portuguese empanada. The curry puff's spicy meat and potato filling point to an obvious Indian connection.

A scan through digitised British newspapers of the early 20th century show that the curry puff and its indubitable partner, the sausage roll, were often served in cafes in England, Australia and India.[22] The filling was often cold curry leftovers which were then "encased in a flakey pastry",[23] sealed into a triangular shape,[24] then baked. One of the earliest references to the curry puff was an article in a local newspaper about the snack being served to underprivileged children during charitable Christmas parties in the 1930s.[25] At these annual parties, the curry puff was packed along with other colonial staples such as an apple, a tin of milk, chocolates and cake and given as gifts during a day out with dodgem car riding at the Great World Amusement Park. The curry puff was not merely poor man's fare as evidenced by the Special Dinner and Dance supper menu served at the Adelphi Hotel in 1932, which included the puff alongside dishes such as Mayonnaise de Saumone, Roast Chicken and Roquefort Cheese.[26]

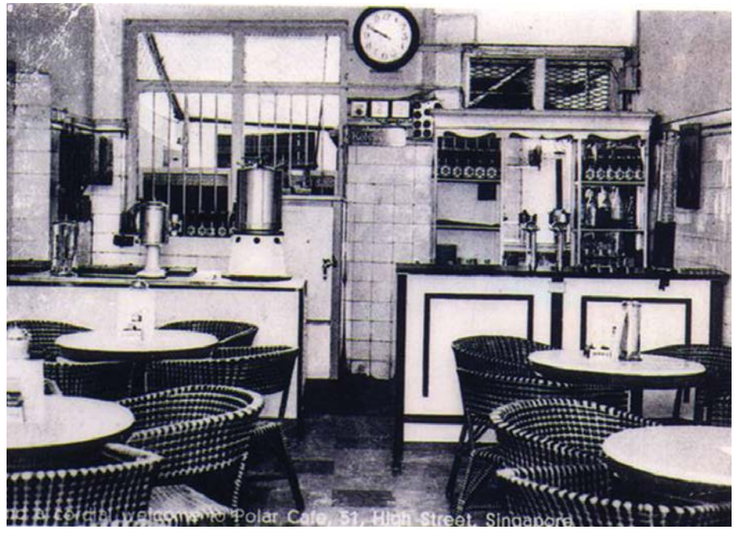
The famous Polar Cafe is believed to have created the first baked curry puff in Singapore. The recipe for the spicy chicken curry filling supposedly came from an Indian merchant while the flaky and buttery puff pastry was a British influence;[27] the resulting Polar curry puff was a product of the ingenious marriage between colonial and colonised taste buds. Founded in the mid-1920s by Hong Konger Chan Hinky, who arrived in Singapore with little money in his pocket, the Western-style café along High Street sold baked goods and ice-cream, which soon became popular with the parliamentarians, lawyers and the rich who worked and stayed around the Supreme Court and Parliament House.

By the 1980s, frozen versions of this baked curry puff were being mass produced for sale, and included exotic variations such as the black pepper chicken puff. These Western curry puffs were shaped and served as pies, with hot meat and potato filling encased in flaky puff pastry and eaten in a restaurant setting. Today, these trademark snacks



Founder of Polar Cafe, Chan Hinky, arrived in Singapore in the early 20th century, with little to his name. *Courtesy of Polar Puffs & Cakes Pte Ltd.*

Established in the 1920s, the flaky polar puff can now be found island-wide in convenience stores and supermarkets. *Courtesy of Polar Puffs & Cakes Pte Ltd.*



The original Polar Cafe was located along High Street in the 1920s and popular with those who frequented the area. *Courtesy of Polar Puffs & Cakes Pte Ltd.*

Established in the 1980s, Old Chang Kee is now a household name and is best known for its curry puffs. *Courtesy of Old Chang Kee Ltd.*

known as "Polar puffs" come with a variety of fillings and are sold everywhere in Singapore, including petrol stations, convenience stores and supermarkets.

Like the *samosa* in India which can be either baked or fried, there are two versions of local curry puffs – a baked version made of puff pastry and offered at Western-style cafes and a fried version encased in shortcrust pastry and sold as streetside fare, especially popular among the Muslim community. *Straits Times* writer Derek Drabble's 1950 caricature of an Indian Muslim *thamby* (meaning "little brother" in Tamil), Adam Ghat, shows him serving curry puffs and other streetside delights such as "gluey *kaya* jam", "*pisang mas*" (fried banana fritters) and "Bengali *roti* buns" (bread rolls) along Finlayson Green to office workers of various races, including Indian, Malay and Chinese.[28] This Malay version of the curry puff – a deep-fried crescent-shaped dough crimped and stuffed with a spicy sardine or potato filling and served with a sweet chilli dipping sauce – is today known as *epok-epok*.

Old Chang Kee probably has redefined and popularised what is today considered a quintessential traditional Singaporean food. Transforming the Malay *epok-epok* into a popular fast-food snack,[29] this Chinese version is chockfull of mildly curried potato and chicken mixture stuffed with one-half of a boiled egg. The pastry is a rich buttery base that is rolled out with an empty beer bottle, cut out into circles and then stuffed with the filling – a secret mix of diced chicken stewed in coconut milk, spices and curry powder. Sealed into a crescent-shape and crimped at the edges, the puff is then deep fried to a golden brown.[30] It was Old Chang Kee's move into modern franchising and distribution regionally in the 1990s, then worldwide soon after, that has made this buttery shortcrust pastry into the trademark Singapore curry puff as we know it today.

Linda Neo's article[31] details how in the 1980s, Old Chang Kee's founder, Chang Swang Boo, had assistants bring his prepared curry puffs from Albert Street around the corner to MacKenzie Lane where they were deep fried on the spot for waiting customers. These curry puffs were thereafter associated with the Rex cinema along MacKenzie Lane, thus earning it its early nickname – Rex curry puff. With two other curry puff competitors coming on board, MacKenzie Lane soon came to be called *Kali Pup* lane – a play on the Chinese mispronunciation of the words curry puff.[32]

Kali pup also became ingrained in the local psyche when Elvis Presley's signature pompadour hairdo of the 1960s became known as the *kali pup* hairstyle,[33] a reference to the turned-up (and heavily greased) fringe that invariably reminded locals of their favourite local snack.

In exploring iconic local dishes, newspaper articles help paint a multi-dimensional picture of local dishes and their consumption over time. In the case of *belacan*, these articles reveal how local flavours influenced dishes across racial boundaries, signaling the blurring of lines between communities. Similarly, the humble curry puff is truly an East meets West success story, drawing influences from both India and Britain before being adopted and then adapted by cooks in Singapore and Malaysia. Food is a canvas upon which cultures and communities are able to create new narratives, drawing together and integrating different peoples and races, and making Singapore a true (and tasty) melting pot in the process. ♦

Workers filling and sealing curry puffs to be baked and sold. *Image from currypuff.com, all rights reserved.*

Notes

1 These items have been selected because of several reasons – their pervasive reference in newspapers spanning the period studied and their localised flavours. Although there are many other dishes such as Hainanese chicken rice, *laksa*, *mee siam* etc, their articulation especially in the English newspapers of the interwar period is not extensive.

2 Butcher, 1979. *The British in Malaya, 1880-1941*, p.142

3 *Ibid*, p. 134

4 This column seemed to have begun on January 10, 1935 with a half page but soon expanded to a full-page.

5 This continued the weekly Thursday column which was expanded into a four-page supplement first released on January 16, 1936.

6 Granted the main targets for the "grow more food" campaigns were local farmers, but there are articles that appeal to the Malayan to venture growing his own food such as vegetables and "Grow More Food" campaign, (12 February 1940), *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, p. 5 *and* "Changkol For Victory", *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, (10 August 1940), p. 4

7 "Broadcast talks on wartime cooking", (15 August 1941), *The Straits Times, p. 12*

8 Peet, 2011, pp. 67-68

9 *Dateline Singapore*, p. 102

10 "The smells of Singapore." (1891, July 21). *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, p. 12

11 "Malacca." (1874, August 1). *The Straits Times*, p. 2

12 Shukor Rahman. (1973, July 9). "Blachan: where it all began." *The Straits Times*, p. 14

13 *Ibid.*

14 "Blachan toast." (1901, July 24). *The Straits Times*, p. 3

15 "Balachan." (1925, August 29). *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, p. 11

16 "The belachan trade." (1924, September 27). *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, p. 12

17 "Distressful Malacca." (1910, May 12), *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, p. 5

18 Twentieth century newspaper articles still refer to the more economically established local Eurasians as "grago" though in a less contemptuous fashion.

19 "A Kelantan Malay on Asiatics." (1950, August 3), *The Straits Times*, p. 6

20 Abdul Ghani Hamid. (2003, July 17). "Belacan dulu, belacan hari ini." *Berita Harian*, p. 9

21 "Red camp where blachan bombs were made." (1971, June 30). *The Straits Times*, p. 19

22 These include searches in the British Newspaper Archive as well as the Australian Trove (http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/home).

23 "House and Home." (1914, May 28), *Hull Daily Mail*, England. Retrieved from the Australian Trove

24 Particularly "The Women's Page" (1917, June 8). *The Land*, pp. 10-11. Retrieved from the Australian Trove.

25 Even into the 1960s, curry puffs seemed to be the norm for Christmas delights in children's parties (300 children go gay. (1960, December 20). *The Singapore Free Press*, p. 8).

26 Advertisement – "Adelphi Hotel – Special dinner and dance." (1932, January 22). *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, p. 1

27 Brazil, David. (1991). pp. 14-15

28 Drabble, Derek. (1950, February 23). "A Tamby takes it easy – with a curry puff", *The Straits Times*, p. 12.

29 "Ms Violet Oon says." (2006, April 17). *The Straits Times*, p. 4.

30 Neo, Linda. (1980, July 12). "Curry puffs from old man Chang in Albert Street." *The Straits Times*, p. 7.

31 *Ibid.*

32 "Stroll down Kali Pup lane." (1982, December 26). *The Straits Times*, p. 16

33 Lim, Richard. (1997, December 7). "The Ah Beng in all of us." *The Straits Times*, p. 2

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Parades, Flags and Rallies

CELEBRATING SINGAPORE'S NATIONAL DAY

National Day parades have been a ubiquitous part of Singapore's National Day celebrations since Independence. **Lim Tin Seng** delves into its history, its significance and its evolution.

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Since becoming a sovereign state on 9 August 1965, the Singapore government has introduced numerous nation-building efforts – with varying degrees of success – to remind Singaporeans of their national identity. But none is more visceral and engaging than the annual National Day Parade (NDP), which draws patriotic flag-waving Singaporeans by the thousands to this colourful outdoor event. Held on 9 August each year, the parade not only commemorates Singapore's Independence, but also serves to remind people of the country's struggles and successes and to celebrate its unique multicultural identity. The main organiser of the NDP is the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and its preparation, from initial blueprint to full dress rehearsal, typically takes more than six months.

Besides the NDP, a series of ancillary National Day events such as community activities in the heartlands and the National Day Rally (the annual address of the Prime Minister of Singapore on the state of the nation) are also organised each August.

NATIONAL DAY PARADES

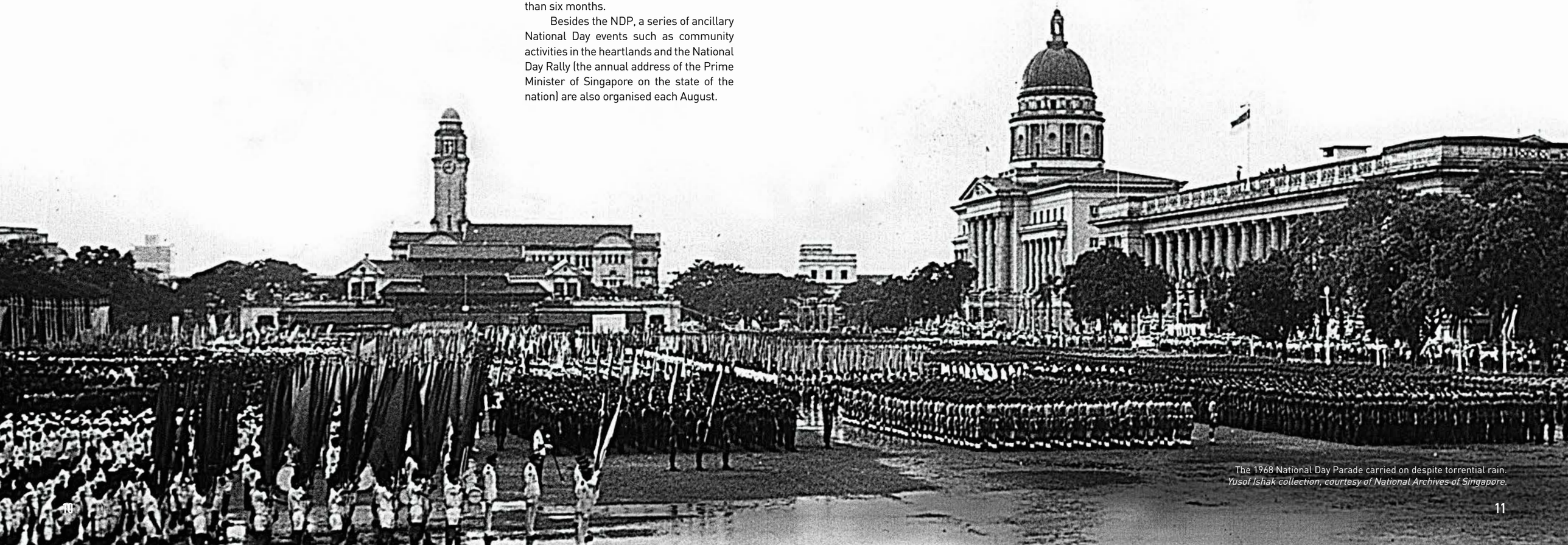
Every NDP is marked by military and civilian processions, mass cultural performances, grand parades of the national colours and spectacular fireworks displays. Singapore has enjoyed a series of majestic visual spectacles of parades since its colonial days where grand receptions were held regularly to celebrate the birthdays and coronations of the British monarchs.[1] However, what sets the parades of both eras apart are their significance: colonial parades were held to celebrate the might of the British Empire; NDPs are orchestrated to highlight the aspirations and ideals of the fledgling nation to the people.

NDPs of the immediate post-independence years aimed to instil a sense of pride and responsibility in the people as citizens of a new nation.[2] To the government, this meant building a "rugged society", or as then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew envisaged, a generation of people who are hardworking, self-sacrificing and willing to live a lean, hard life for the country.[3] In line with this, the NDPs of the 1960s articulated themes such as "Rugged and Vigorous Singapore" (1967), "Rugged Society" (1968), and "Youth and Discipline" (1969).[4] Ironically, the 1968 parade's theme of ruggedness was portrayed literally as it carried on despite a fierce thunderstorm. The experience was so enduring that television broadcasting station, Mediacorp, produced a drama series in 2012 based on the episode.[5] The 1969 parade was equally inspiring as the first mobile column comprising 18 AMX-13 tanks joined the march-past. As Singapore was the first country in the region to acquire such military hardware, it conveyed the message that Singapore was not going to be cowed by its stronger neighbours in the region.[6]

The parades of the 1970s focused on the country's human capital, with themes such as "Work for Security and Prosperity" (1970), "Productivity and Progress" (1972) and "Self-Reliance" (1976). These parades were fitting tributes to Singapore's manpower as they commemorated the contributions and sacrifices made for the economy which, at the time, registered double-digit growth rates.[7] To boost the morale of the workforce and to highlight its importance to the nation, the number of contingents from civilian groups, particularly those from the workforce, were featured more prominently. In 1976, contingents representing the "builders" of post-independence Singapore took part in the march-past. Some of these contingents included workers from the Keppel Shipyard, Intraco, Port of Singapore Authority as well as Jurong Bird Park and Singapore Airlines.[8]

NDPs began taking a more populist approach from the 1980s onwards. Instead of regimented displays of marching and dance routines, the parades morphed into large-scale extravagant cultural events complete with striking visual imagery and dramatic action.[9] For instance, the mass performance portions were marked by fireworks, laser displays and flashcard shows that created complex mosaic patterns and images with patriotic narratives. The military no longer simply displayed moving exhibitions of men and equipment; spectators were now treated to action-packed stunts by the SAF.[10]

One reason for the reorientation of the parades was to make them more engaging so that people from all walks of life could come together to celebrate the country's



The 1968 National Day Parade carried on despite torrential rain.
Yusof Ishak collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

achievements. In fact, the performances, dances and pattern formations in the mass display segments, often led by local celebrities, are designed to draw the public's attention to the nation's ideals and identity.[11] This populist theme in NDPs was further complemented by the introduction of national songs such as *Singapura, Oh Singapura* (1980), *There's a Part for Everyone* (1984), *Stand up for Singapore* (1985), *Count on Me, Singapore* (1986), *We are Singapore* (1987), *We are the People of Singapore* (1989), and *One People, One Nation, One Singapore* (1990). Composed by local contemporary songwriters, these pop songs contain lyrics that help define the Singapore identity through the nation's struggles and success.[12] The Ministry of Communications and Information commented in 1988:

> Singing the songs will bring Singaporeans together, to share our feelings with another. It will bring back shared memories of good times and hard times, of times which remind us of who we are, where we come from, what we did, and where we are going.[13]

Today, the parades continue to be highly anticipated by Singaporeans. In fact, before the e-balloting system to allocate NDP tickets was introduced in 2003, it was not unusual to see people camping overnight at distribution centres for tickets. As the tickets were usually sold out within minutes, there would be a mad scramble the moment the centres opened their doors.[14]

DECENTRALISING THE CELEBRATIONS

Traditionally NDPs were held in two centralised locations, the Padang and the National Stadium. After the National Stadium closed in 2006 to make way for a new stadium, The Float at Marina Bay became another NDP venue.[15] The first ever NDP was held at the Padang, the historic field opposite City Hall. NDP in its early days was a simple march-past involving some 23,000 participants. Starting at nine in the morning with the arrival of President Yusof Ishak, the parade only lasted 90 minutes.[16] The next nine NDPs were held at the Padang until 1975 when the government decided to decentralise the celebration, holding it at different parts of island in the form of "pocket pageants". The aim was to bring the parades "closer to the people" so that they could have "the opportunity of witnessing the pomp and pageantry" at their doorsteps."[17]

In the first decentralised NDP in 1975, 13 venues across Singapore, including Farrer Park, Jalan Besar, Jurong, Paya Lebar, Redhill, Toa Payoh and Queenstown, were chosen to host the smaller scale parades.[18] The programme for each venue included the usual march-past by military and civilian contingents, performances by students and cultural troupes from the different ethnic groups and fireworks displays in the evening.[19] To emphasise the inclusiveness of the parades, the Prime Minister and his cabinet members spread themselves across the various locations to participate in the celebrations and mingle with the people.[20] The decentralised parades were held every alternate year until 1984 when the government decided to return to the concept of having one parade at a single location. This was partly due to the high cost of duplicating the parades, the difficulty of coordination and the challenges the parades posed for live television broadcasting.[21]

In 2010, the decentralised concept was revived when organisers of the NDP 2010 decided to extend the celebrations from the Padang to five suburban locations – Choa Chu Kang, Bishan, Eunos, Sengkang and Woodlands.[22] Dubbed the Heartland Celebrations, the rationale behind the decision was similar to the original concept. It was to bring the parade closer to the people so that they could come together to celebrate the unity of the nation.[23] The Heartland Celebrations were filled with performances, activities, pyrotechnic displays and fireworks. The 200-vehicle strong mobile column also fanned out to the five locations after the Padang drive-past.[24]

Bringing the parades to the people is only one aspect of the decentralised concept. Since the first NDP in 1966, parades have been broadcast live on television so that people can enjoy the celebrations from the comfort of their homes. The earlier broadcasts were in black and white until colour television was introduced in 1974.[25] Since 1994, the parades have been streamed live via the Internet, allowing overseas Singaporeans to be a part of the celebrations.[26] In 2007, the webcast was enhanced to allow viewers to enjoy the parade from multiple camera angles.[27] In 2010, an NDP app was developed. Using Augmented Reality, the app provides users with trivia on the parade and allows them to post their thoughts on its "expression wall".[28]

Roadshows and exhibitions are organised in the heartlands to explain the meaning of the celebration to the people.[29] These NDP roadshows move to different locations in Singapore and showcase exhibits that deepen the people's understanding of Singapore and its identity. In addition, the organisers and participants regularly publish commemorative books or magazines that share their NDP experiences, from planning and rehearsals to the actual performances, among other memories.[30]

In addition to these activities , the use of nationalist images on commemorative T-shirts, badges, stickers and mugs further reinforce the significance of National Day as these objects are used in everyday life.[31] In 1988, the government took a further step by allowing Singaporeans to fly the national flag outside their homes as part of the National Day celebrations, giving the people a tangible way of expressing their loyalty to the country.[32] Since then, it has become a tradition for housing estates to decorate their premises with rows of national flags as National Day approaches. In fact, estates often compete to put up the most creative flag decoration.[33]

The first National Day

Singapore's first National Day was held on 4 June 1960, one year after it achieved self-government. However, the ensuing parade, which was to have included a march-past and mass rally, was cancelled due to heavy rain disappointing the 25,000 participants who had turned up. Fortunately, the National Day celebration was a three-day event and thanks to clear skies the following day, more than 22,000 people, including then Yang di-Pertuan Negara Yusof Ishak, then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and members of the Cabinet crowded into Jalan Besar stadium for a spectacular tattoo that was filled with rhythmic drills, music, singing, dances and displays of military prowess.

National Day celebration in 2012. National Day celebrations in Singapore have evolved over the years and have become a grand visual spectacle. *Image by Jordan Tan.*

THE NATIONAL DAY RALLY

A key component of the NDP celebrations is the National Day Rally speech, Singapore's equivalent of the US President's State of the Union address. The speech is delivered by the prime minister in the four national languages and has been an annual event since the first NDP celebrations in 1966.

Initially, the speech was made behind closed doors. In 1971 the decision was made to telecast it live over the radio, television and, more recently, the Internet.[34] The rally speech has been described as a motivational and agenda-setting exercise conducted at the national level. In fact, since the first rally speech, the prime ministers of Singapore have been using it as a platform to review the country's status and set the direction for the nation.[35] The speech usually begins with the prime minister taking stock of the country's achievements. He then highlights the various challenges facing the country before laying out policy changes to counter them. Singaporeans are usually reminded to set their differences aside and unite as Singaporeans, determined, industrious and self-sacrificing, to help their nation to advance along the lines of national values and principles such as meritocracy, multiculturalism and pragmatism.[36]

To date, the prime ministers who have delivered the rally speeches since Independence are Lee Kuan Yew (1966–1989), Goh Chok Tong (1990–2004) and Lee Hsien Loong (2005–present). Each uses different rhetorical devices such as metaphors, inspiring diction and vivid real-life examples to get their messages across.[37] For instance, Lee Kuan Yew was known for openly speaking his mind, frankly assessing issues affecting Singapore while using "simple and masterful" language. He often warned the people that the country faced uncertainties ahead and that they should not become complacent.[38] For instance, in his 1975 rally Lee said:

> The past decade was probably the most spectacular of all the 10 years of Singapore's history. There has never been such rapid transformation in any 10 years... [But] the last 10 years have been almost too fast in its speed of change. And in a way, I sometimes regret that we did not get a harder knock in 1974 ... I am not saying that it is a good thing. But I am saying that it is good for the soul. And employers, when they start looking for workers, like to have workers who know what hardship means. And if you can't have real hardship, then you have got to inculcate the right attitudes and values.[39]

Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew addressing the 3,500-strong audience during the 1971 National Day concert and rally held at the National Theatre. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Goh Chok Tong's and Lee Hsien Loong's rally speeches were more open, consultative and gentle compared to Lee Kuan Yew's. In fact, Goh regularly used humorous colloquial dialect expressions to lighten up his speeches.[40] For example, while commenting on the pragmatism of some graduates in choosing to become hawkers in a tough job market, Goh said in his 2003 rally:

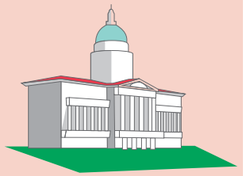
> This is good. We must be practical – as practical as Teochew fishermen. They would say: *"Kah tak hoi, chew liak her. Hoi zao, her liu, aiyah, bor her hay ah hor"* (Catch crabs with your feet and fish with your hands. But if the crabs run away and the fish slip through your hands, prawns will do just fine). Some graduates have also taken to roasting *gao luk* or chestnuts, for a living. Others are running their own porridge stall. I commend their attitude. They did not sit around and moan and groan. They went out and made a living for themselves. To Singaporeans who say this is a loss of face, I offer this Hokkien advice: *"Lao quee buay xi, bo quee jia eh xi"* (Loss of face will not kill you. You will only die if you lose your breath).[41]

Current prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong, makes a distinct effort to name ordinary Singaporeans as role models in his speeches.[42] For example, in the 2013 rally, he shared the story of Dr Yeo Sze Ling who overcame her visual disability to become a research scientist at A*STAR. He said:

> ...I thought I should tell you about her. Dr Yeo Sze Ling became blind at the age of four. She studied at the Singapore School for the Visually Handicapped. She did not go to a brand name school. She went to Bedok South Secondary School, Serangoon JC. She had an interest in mathematics, she was good at it, she read mathematics in NUS and she graduated with three degrees, including a PhD in Math... She topped the Faculty of Science in her year, now she is a research scientist at A*STAR and an Adjunct Assistant Professor at NTU... But she is not just a successful professional, she is volunteering at the Society for the Physically Disabled, helping others to overcome their disabilities, which is why she richly deserved to win the Singapore Youth Award last year where I met her... Sze Ling proves that you can do well if you work hard. It does not matter what your circumstances are... [43]

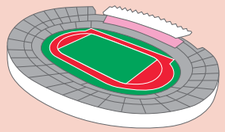
Despite a change in the political climate and the subsequent tone of today's rally speeches, they continue to serve as part of the larger National Day celebrations and as a platform for Singaporeans to reflect on their identity.

NDP Trivia: Venues and Themes



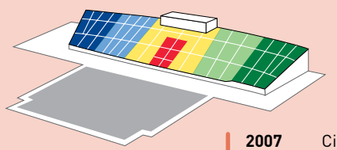
Padang

1966	National pride and confidence
1967	Rugged and vigorous Singapore
1968	Youth and ruggedness
1969	Youth and discipline
1970	Work for security and prosperity
1971	Multiple messages including technology, industrialisation and the Garden City
1972	Productivity and progress
1973	Multiple messages including youth, water conservation and extra-curriculum activities
1974	Multiple messages including ruggedness, energy conservation and multiculturalism
1978	Unity and harmony
1982	Peace and prosperity and thrift
1984	25 Years of Nation Building
1987	Together...Excellence for Singapore
1990	One People, One Nation, One Singapore
1993	Nation on Parade
1995	My Singapore, My Home
2000	Together We Make The Difference
2005	The Future is Ours to Make
2010	Live Our Dreams, Fly Our Flag



National Stadium

1976	Self-reliance
1980	Multiple themes including strength and grace in harmony, vigour of the youth, progress and harmony and vanishing trades
1985	Building a Better Tomorrow
1986	Together...Excellence for Singapore
1988	Excellence Together...Singapore Forever
1989	Excellence Together...Singapore Forever
1991	My Singapore
1992	My Singapore
1994	My Singapore, My Home
1996	My Singapore, My Home
1997	Our Singapore, Our Future
1998	Our Singapore, Our Future
1999	Our People
2001	Building Bridges, Forging Futures
2002	A Caring Nation
2003	A Cohesive Society
2004	A Progressive Society
2006	Our Global City, Our Home



The Float at Marina Bay

2007	City of Possibilities
2008	Celebrating the Singapore Spirit
2009	Come Together – Reaching Out, Reaching Up
2011	*Majulah!* The Singapore Spirit
2012	Loving Singapore, Our Home
2013	Many Stories...One Singapore

Multiple venues

1975	No theme
1977	No theme
1979	No theme
1981	No theme
1983	No theme

NDP 2015: THE BIG BANG

In 2015, Singapore will celebrate its 50th year as an independent nation. To mark this important milestone, an SG50 committee was announced in August 2013 to coordinate the country's Golden Jubilee celebrations. The celebrations will not focus solely on the parades but rather a whole year of activities and events. To this end, a seed fund that provides up to S$50,000 was set up to help those interested in organising their own projects to celebrate their love for the nation. In addition, the SG50 committee has been collecting ideas from the public on how the anniversary celebrations should take shape.

Due to this ground-up approach, it is likely that the celebrations in 2015, including the NDP, may be different from previous years. However, it is certain that the impressive visual spectacle associated with past NDPs will take centre stage. Rest assured, whether in the form of parades, flags or rallies, the celebration will serve to remind Singaporeans of their national identity and obligations as well as provide an opportunity to reflect on how far Singapore has come. ♦

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Home and Away

Literary Reflections on Nation and Identity

Michelle Heng meanders through Singapore's post-Independence literary landscape and discovers diasporic works that display a quiet strength even as they explore refreshingly dissonant views on nation and one's identity.

Singapore's stunning skyline is a much-photographed sight. While the soaring steel-and-glass buildings are a powerful symbol of the city's triumphant nation-building efforts, it's also a reminder of lost heritage and lives that have been displaced in the unrelenting pursuit of commercial success. As the poet Goh Poh Seng so succinctly described in his poem "Singapore", it is a "city that does not even permit the memory of the sky".

In the aftermath of a devastating World War II, budding writers in Malaya honed their craft by publishing works that appeared in varsity literature, empowered as they were by a fiery desire to forge a common literary voice in English. With the establishment of the University of Malaya in 1949, the students were likely moved to wield their pens by the 1948 Carr-Saunders Commission Report which articulated that "The University of Malaya will provide for the first time a common centre where varieties of race, religion and economic interest could mingle in a joint endeavour…For a University of Malaya must inevitably realise that it is a university for Malaya."

Eager to partake in the moulding of a bright future in what was to become the new Malayan nation to-be, young student writers took on the mantle of establishing a Malayan literature for their countrymen who came from disparate communities that would, as part of a wide swathe of the Malayan cultural fabric, give Malayans a common national identity to aid their herculean endeavours in nation-building.[1]

Young and fledgling writers of the time such as Goh Sin Tub, Beda Lim, James Puthucheary, Lim Thean Soo, Hedwig Aroozoo, Wang Gungwu, James Loh and Edwin Thumboo published their works in the university's main literary magazine, *The New Cauldron*, which was the successor to *The Cauldron*, an effort by the students of the former King Edward VII School of Medicine.[2]

The other reputable literary publications of this period included *The Malayan Undergrad* and *Write* from the late 1940s through to the 1950s, as well as magazines such as *Focus* and *Monsoon* in the 1960s. The first anthology of Malayan poetry, *Litmus One* (1958), and the first anthology of short stories, *The Compact* (1959), were also produced at this time.[3] While the students remained hopeful of the prospects for a common Malayan literary voice in English, this proved elusive with the unfolding of major political developments in Malaya. Chief of this was Singapore's acrimonious separation from Malaya in 1965, its northern neighbour promptly renaming itself Malaysia in the aftermath.

In the post-1965 era, Singapore set forth on a programme of industrialisation, boosted by the government's ideology of economic pragmatism, legitimised by the fact that Singapore was previously thought to be untenable as an independent nation in terms of defence, economics and politics.[4] Amid the trauma and troubling anxiety that arose from Singapore's newly independent status as a city-state, there was an urgent need on the part of the government to cement the twin ideologies of nation-building and modernisation.

The main pursuits of nation-building included the advocacy of a multi-ethnic policy and the promotion of a bilingual proficiency with English as the *lingua franca* as well as a "mother tongue" of either Malay, Mandarin or Tamil. The push for modernisation called for a switch from traditional social practices to traits that were more compliant with the economic goals of industrialisation. Urban renewal projects eradicated agrarian practices to make way for industrial projects, housing development policies encouraged ethnic integration where previously close-knit ethnic communities had existed in enclaves, and mandatory military service was introduced for all males in an effort to forge a common national identity.[5]

PUBLIC VERSES, PERSONAL THOUGHTS: EDWIN THUMBOO

Foremost among the architects of a nation-building literature was Edwin Thumboo, whose most significant work took root when he merged poetry and public concerns with the publication of *Gods Can Die* in 1977 and *Ulysses by the Merlion* in 1979. These two collections made clear his nationalist impulses and firmly established his belief that Singaporean writers should work to shape and expound on their nation's identity.[6]

Said to command "a strong Virgilian proximity to power that no other Singaporean writer, past or present, has been known to enjoy", Thumboo is recognised for the public role he has assumed through his verses that serve both as social commentary and national exhortation, his oeuvre *par excellence* being "Ulysses by the Merlion" – a paean to the Republic's unexpected success as a well-run city-state following its enforced separation from Malaya.

Another example of a post-1956 poem by Thumboo that expounds the need for nation-building is seen in "Catering for the People" in which the poet declares, "There is little choice–/ We must make a people".[7] Indeed, he has publicly voiced his opinion of the writer's responsibility thus:

> I will always write about nation because it is part of my perception. / I will always see public issues. It was in the air I breathed; it was in / the sounds I heard. So I cannot help it.[8]

Thumboo actively sought to raise the literary consciousness and standards both at home and in Malaysia by putting together major anthologies. His first important collection was *The Flowering Tree*, published in 1970. *Seven Poets* appeared three years later and featured Wong Phui Nam, Goh Poh Seng, Wong May, Mohammad Haji Salleh, Lee

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Tzu Pheng, and Thumboo himself as strong regional voices. In 1979, Thumboo produced *The Second Tongue*, which carried his seminal introduction to a range of emerging poets in Singapore and Malaysia. The next decade saw Thumboo assume general editorship of two colossal multi-language anthologies: *The Poetry of Singapore*, published in 1985, and *The Fiction of Singapore*, published in 1990.

Thumboo was the first Singaporean to be conferred the prestigious S.E.A. Write Award in 1979 and Singapore's Cultural Medallion for Literature in 1980. For his various contributions to nation-building, Thumboo was awarded a Bintang Bakti Masyarakat (Public Service Star) in 1981, with an additional Bar in 1991, in recognition of his role as a major influence on Singapore's body of literature on nation-building.

Today, Thumboo remains highly prolific; one of his recent poems, "Bukit Panjang: Hill, Village, Town" (2012), is a sensitive portrayal of how Singapore's evolving urban-renewed identity underpins the social, political and economic values that frame the Republic's rapid growth during its post-Independence years. This four-part poem personifies the familiar landmark as a "Time-traveller; master of winds..." in its imposing geology, Bukit Panjang's cultural significance as a village in the chaotic period during the Japanese Occupation before it finally settles comfortably into the role of an "established" new town as it gradually becomes "plump with amenities". Set against the dramatic backdrop of the restive pre- and post-Colonial periods, and later during the "super charged" nation-building years, the poem is one of Thumboo's more recent efforts at blending his public voice and personal thoughts.

Edwin Thumboo is considered as one of Singapore's foremost literary pioneers and continues to write today. *Courtesy of Tribute.sg, an initiative by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay and Edwin Nadason Thumboo.*

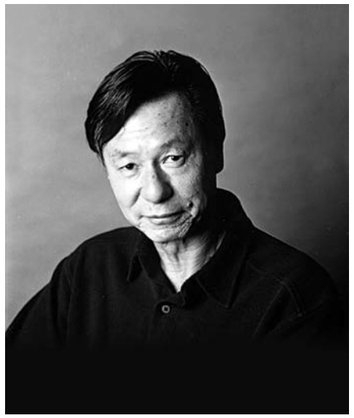
PRIVATE VERSES, PUBLIC THOUGHTS: GOH POH SENG

It is here that another literary pioneer in Singapore must be given equal mention for his significant role as poet-playwright-novelist and as a tireless advocate of the nascent arts scene during Singapore's nation-building years. Offering an interesting counterpoint to Thumboo's purpose-filled poetry of a newly independent and industrious nation, the late Goh Poh Seng was one of the first Singapore writers who attempted to define post-Independence Singapore literature.

His first novel, *If We Dream Too Long* (1972), is widely recognised as the first true Singaporean novel. It was awarded the National Book Development Council of Singapore Book Prize in 1976 and has been translated into Russian, Tagalog and Japanese. In the novel, Goh explores the theme of searching for self and meaning against the dreary backdrop of rapid urbanisation and an increasingly materialistic society set in 1960s Singapore.

As the eldest son in a lower-middle-class family, the protagonist, Kwang Meng, is bound both by filial duty and his meagre circumstances in a dead-end job as a clerk to fulfil his role as sole breadwinner. In a futile attempt to escape the anxiety and insecurity of his situation, Kwang Meng tries to brush away the shroud-like pall of ennui that hangs over him by frequenting nightspots, bars and brothels and retreating into the familiar comfort of the cinema or beach to fantasise and daydream.[9] The restless anxiety and struggle to come to terms with one's existence in a meritocratic and driven society that has no place for the weak and timid is a recurring motif in Goh's later novels, *Dance of Moths* (1995) and *Dance with White Clouds: A Fable for Grown-ups* (2001).

Apart from his award-winning literary pursuits, Goh worked as a medical practitioner and held many honorary positions in the Singapore arts scene. As chairman of the National Theatre Trust Board between 1967 and 1972, he was responsible for the development of the arts and cultural policies of post-Independence Singapore, as well as the development of cultural institutions such as the Singapore National Symphony, the Chinese Orchestra and the Singapore Dance Company.



Goh Poh Seng was deeply involved in the development of Singapore's arts and culture scene. *Courtesy of Tribute.sg, an initiative by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay and the Goh family.*

Goh's interests were not confined to just the highbrowed and cerebral. As a visionary cultural entrepreneur, Goh led the Boat Quay Conservation Scheme in the 1980s and crafted a blueprint for the development of Boat Quay into a vibrant lifestyle and entertainment area while preserving the historical buildings along the Singapore River. He also established Bistro Toulouse-Lautrec, a fashionable poetry-and-jazz café, and trendy Rainbow Lounge, Singapore's first live disco and music venue.

Goh received the Cultural Medallion Award for Literature in 1982. In 1986, Goh and his family emigrated to Canada. While the reason for his abrupt departure from Singapore is well documented in newsprint – an alleged risqué remark made by a member of the house band at Rainbow Lounge led to the shutdown of the popular nightspot and heavy financial losses followed[10] – the private strain of uprooting oneself from a much-beloved home and starting over in new country became apparent in several poignant stanzas of his later poetry.

A more intimate portrait of the poet is seen in a blog entry written by architect-poet Goh Kasan, the eldest son of the late Goh Poh Seng.[11] Goh Kasan revealed in his blog how his father's businesses had failed in the 1980s, forcing their family to move overseas. More importantly, Goh Kasan described how the decision to leave Singapore changed their lives irrevocably. This critical move also raised questions in Goh Kasan's younger self about the meaning of "home" and riddled his mind about the concept of a place he considers to be his home.

In a similar lament for "home", some of Goh Poh Seng's earlier poems, penned years before his move to Canada, chip away at the gleaming façade of this island nation to reveal the rusty framework of a "city that does not permit even a memory of the sky". In his poem "Singapore", we witness the relentless tide of changes that have swept through this country during its nation-building years; the poet laments the tainting of a simpler way of life, now threatened by the allure of commerce:

> Towards the sea's fresh salt
> the river bears pollution
> whose source was simple hills
>
> Whose migration was tainted
> when man
> decided to dip his hand
>
> Nourishing his wants
> a commercial waterway
> greased with waste

In the latter phase of Goh's writing career, readers can detect an unmistakeable transcendence in his works. A previously claustrophobic urban despondence seen in the troubled milieu of his earlier protagonists – the disillusioned office worker Kwang Meng in *If We Dream Too Long* and the intense but ineffectual advertising executive Ong Kian Teck in *A Dance of Moths* – thaws amid the peaceful acceptance of the flawed ways of the human condition, as seen through the travails of the unnamed elderly protagonist in *Dance with White Clouds*.

Where Goh's travels had previously served as a catalyst for artistic change and as a means of breaking free from stubborn cognitive and behavioural habits,[12] his permanent move overseas afforded him the luxury of renewing his commitment as a writer who was free to explore his new environs while continuing to search for his place in the larger scheme of things.[13]

More importantly, the suffocating and restless anxiety looming over his earlier protagonists in *If We Dream Too Long* and *Dance of Moths* gives way to a tranquil optimism in *Dance with White Clouds*, as seen through the unnamed wealthy but ageing protagonist's sense of equilibrium and equanimity during a moment of spiritual epiphany – a departure from the somewhat pessimistic plots of his earlier novels:[14]

> Then, during one night of night-long rain, alone in his room, listening to the monotonous drumming, to the anxious wind flapping the blind against the window sill, he found what he was looking for. He suddenly understood that there indeed was nothing to understand, that this was what all the wise men and sages of all the ages, what all the poets from time immemorial railed against, lamented – that there was nothing to understand, that it was impossible to know the unknowable...In extension, he had been wrong to feel that he had squandered his life, that it had been badly lived, that he had failed. Indeed, he had tried to love the whole world, and it was all right to live a life burdened with the love of family, children, friends, strangers. That night, he lost his fear, his anguish.

The Singapore River after the removal of river craft such as *tongkangs* in 1984. Goh Poh Seng was involved in the redevelopment of Boat Quay in the 1980s. Today, the gentrified Boat Quay is a hub of bars, restaurants and cafés. *Ronni Pinsler collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

In a 2007 news article about Goh's visit to Singapore for the first time in 21 years following his move to Canada, he was quoted as saying that he would have taken like a "duck to water" when asked if he could ever live in Singapore again.[15] This was as fitting a denouement as one could expect for a diasporic homegrown writer who has left an indelible imprint on the nation's works-in-progress mapping of its literary and cultural boundaries.

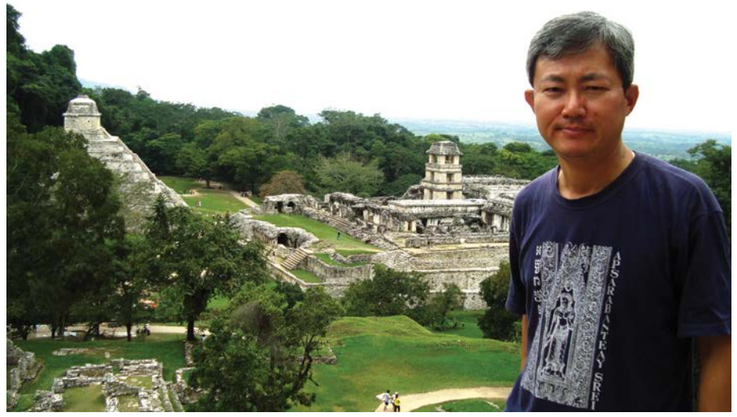
IDENTITY IN A GLOBAL WORLD

Following the throes of nation-building in the post-Independence years, Singapore's push to become a global city is seen to be the next logical step in its continuing re-invention. In 2000, the Renaissance City Report which elaborated on the idealised vision of Singapore as a global city for the arts and creative industries was published. Aiming to provide "cultural ballast" to the Republic's initiatives at strengthening its national identity, the report articulated a plan to forge an environment that was "conducive to innovations, new discoveries and the creation of new knowledge" as part of a holistic plan for long-term sustained growth.[16]

To fulfil this vision, the state provided resources to fund arts and cultural infrastructure and education such as the performing arts venue *Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay*, with a view to providing a platform for crowd-pulling international acts. While these laudable state-sponsored initiatives have been greeted with enthusiasm from various sectors, the juxtaposition of artistic endeavours alongside perceived commercial viability has also been a point of contention for many. The well-meaning administration's tireless efforts are seen to be short-circuiting its own attempt to nurture the Singapore artistic milieu by its preference for fast and visible shows of action and its emphasis on institutional "impact value".[17] The sad fact is that even arts administrators have to maximise returns for every dollar spent.

And to what extent does state policy affect the "Renaissance Singaporean" – called to be a model "active international citizen" who is expected to exhibit urbane sophistication yet simultaneously displaying the "Made in Singapore" label in the age of globalisation? The result is a curious hybrid citizen who feels at ease negotiating and finding his or her place in an increasingly borderless world – and simultaneously ill at ease as the individual grapples with issues of identity formation within a globalised paradigm.[18]

The main character in Hwee Hwee Tan's novel *Mammon Inc.*, Chiah Deng Gan, is a fresh graduate from Oxford who is caught between the comforting offer of a research assistant position and the prospect of a lucrative job as an Adapter – a person who assists high-flyers from the world over adapt to different cultures in order to excel at their professions – at the sinister transnational set-up Mammon CorpS, a subsidiary of Mammon Inc, a larger global corporation with tentacles that reach every corner of the world. But Chiah has to succeed at three tests in order to be recruited; the first of which is to become accepted as a member of the uber-chic Gen Vex in New York, the second is to transform her British boyfriend Steve so that he can pass off as a Singlish-speaking



Award-winning writer Boey Kim Cheng in Palenque, Mexico. His latest works include *Between Stations* (2009) and *Clear Brightness* (2012). *Courtesy of Boey Kim Cheng.*

Hwee Hwee Tan is the author of *Foreign Bodies* (1997) and *Mammon Inc.* (2001).

Singaporean, and the last task is to help her dyed-in-the-wool Singaporean sibling Chiah Chen gain acceptance into the Oxford milieu.

As Chiah Deng navigates her way in a transnational paradigm and mingles with the cosmopolitan Gen-Vexers who identify themselves with the latest fashion and gadgets, she finds herself drawn siren-like into the embrace of a formless consumerist entity. At the end of the story, Chiah Deng chooses to be a member of the diabolical global corporation, thus sealing her Faustian pact in a modern morality play. Chiah Deng's choice plays up the difficult dilemma of how to become an effective citizen of the globalised world and yet retain ties to one's homeland.[19] It is no coincidence that *Mammon*'s Singapore-born author Hwee Hwee Tan was educated in both the United Kingdom and the United States; hence her oeuvre can be read as a reflection of her personal experiences outside Singapore.[20]

Another voice of conscience is Singapore-born poet Boey Kim Cheng who emigrated to Australia in 1997. Hailed as the "best post-1965 English language poet in the Republic",[21] Boey's poetry veers between a private, introspective world of almost spiritual contemplation and public engagement with his immediate surroundings. The poet's voice echoes his dislocation in a nation that is dedicated to economic growth, success and efficiency, and one of the ways he can resist the state's invasive reach is to travel overseas.[22]

But even while the poet's journeys abroad bring welcome relief, he experiences a profound sense of loss as the city-state vigorously pursues urban renewal at the expense of familiar landmarks. In the poem, *Change Alley*, Boey expresses a deep desolation at the transformation of the iconic commercial site by describing how the "streets lost their names/ the river lost its source" and the alley has "followed the route to exile". The poet arrives at a rather poignant conclusion as he connects his isolation from the nation's aspirations with these bittersweet words, "I am not at home, anywhere."[23]

In his later works written after emigrating to Australia, Boey makes the proverbial journey back to Singapore in search of his childhood memories, journeying in particular to find the lost father figure of his youth. He finds a somewhat happy closure in the poem, *Plum Blossom or Quong Tart at the QVB*, as he draws a parallel between the famous Chinese migrant Quong Tart, featured in an exhibition on Australian multiculturalism, and his own father who shares the same family name. The poet sees a striking similarity in Quong Tart's visage and that of his father's, and goes a step further to speculate that the migrant might have been related to his ancestors:

> Perhaps great-grandfather sallied forth
> / with Quong Tart on the same junk,
> / and disembarked in Malaya, while
> Quong Tart / continued south. Perhaps
> they were brothers.

The imaginary narrative gives the poet a sense of belonging and binds the diasporic trajectories of the Boey's ancestor and Quong Tart, enabling the poet to project their divergent yet similar personal histories onto a single tapestry. Emigration entails bidding farewell to one's homeland and all three men share the same "family history" but the poet is comforted that his daughter's tracing of the pictograms in her Chinese name reconnects an earlier diasporic tale and makes meaning of the present.

In conclusion, while poets articulated their views in purpose-driven public or personal verses in the period immediately after Independence and during the nation-building years, alternative voices of the Singapore diaspora spoke with a measured calm, contemplating the imprints made by national policies and initiatives. Their refreshing perspectives continue to push the creative boundaries as the Republic finds its footing in this era of globalisation and transnationalism. ♦

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Chinese migrants in Singapore as depicted by E. Schlitter in 1858. *Courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.*

Chinese Clan Associations in Singapore

THEN AND NOW

Chinese clan associations in Singapore date back to the time of Stamford Raffles. **Lee Meiyu** shows us how the functions of clan associations have changed over the years according to the needs of the local Chinese community as well as changes in state policy.

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Chinese clan associations have had a long and chequered history in Singapore. The first ever clan association established on the island was said to be Cho Kah Koon (Cao Jia Guan曹家馆), started by an immigrant called Chow Ah Chey (Cao Yazhi曹亚志) in 1819. Chow was a carpenter on board the same ship as Stamford Raffles, founder of modern Singapore, when he spotted Temasek (old Singapore) for the first time. Chow volunteered to go on shore to explore the island and in reward of his bravery, Raffles granted him a piece of land upon which the first Chinese clan association was built.

The building served as a rest stop for Chow's kin, the Chow clansmen from Taishan district in Guangdong Province (Guangdong Taishan Ji Cao Shi 广东台山籍曹氏). In 1849, the East India Company officially granted the land it occupied at No. 1 Lavender Street to the association.[1] Today, the association is known as Sing Chow Chiu Kwok Thong Cho Kah Koon (Xingzhou Qiaoguo Tang Cao Jia Guan 星洲谯国堂曹家馆) and has since relocated to No. 107-B Joo Chiat Road.[2]

Although historians have questioned the accuracy of the origins of Cho Kah Koon,[3] it nevertheless reflects the *raison d'être* for establishing clan associations in Singapore: to offer a place of safety and help to fellow kin from China. From the 19th to early 20th century, thousands of immigrants, including the Chinese, came to Singapore in search of job and trading opportunities. The colonial government welcomed these much needed traders and menial labourers, adopting the "divide and rule" method of governance. However, this hands-off approach did not help create a cohesive society and discouraged integration, and the building of a much needed social system was left to each individual ethnic community.[4]

The Chinese community responded by transplanting their revered centuries-old social structures, in the form of clan associations, into Singapore. To the Chinese, their elaborate family and clan systems had always been the biological, economic and social units that formed the basis of traditional society. These structures also provided social support as family or clan members had an obligation to help one another. In a fledgling Singapore where integration was not encouraged and a state-led support system was absent, the Chinese community turned to their clan organisations for leadership and assistance.

RISE OF RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS AND SECRET SOCIETIES (1819–1889)

Interestingly, clan associations were not the default go-to for the Chinese in the early years: instead the newly arrived migrants turned to religious associations and secret societies. The Chinese community at the time comprised small-time businessmen, craftsmen and labourers who had come to Singapore alone, hence there were not enough clan members to form an association. However, religious rites and processions were often organised for the migrants who prayed for protection and asked for blessings from the deities. Such activities became a central part of an Overseas Chinese's social life and eventually gave rise to religious associations.

Temples soon became key organisations providing the Chinese with much needed guidance and entertainment in a society where back-breaking work and loneliness was the order of the day. These temple associations also offered help in settling burial matters, finding jobs and served as meeting places. The board members were usually influential leaders in the Chinese community who presented the concerns of their members to the colonial government or settled disputes between members and associations.[5]

While religious associations flourished due to the Chinese community's need for spiritual fulfillment, secret societies grew out of the colonial government's need to control and organise the Chinese community without hampering the economic progress of Singapore. The British were more preoccupied with economic activities and turning Singapore into a successful entrepôt in the early years, leaving them with scant time and resources to develop a state governance system. The only governance systems available were the existing Kapitan China and Kangchu systems, which were adopted from the Malay rulers or earlier colonial powers in the region.

Many Chinese migrants came to Singapore to seek work to support their families in China. Artist unknown, wood engraving, published in *The Graphic*, 4 November 1876. *Courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.*

Tattoo on a secret society member. Secret societies have existed in Singapore since the 1800s. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Both systems involved appointing an influential Chinese to oversee all issues related to the Chinese community, including maintaining law and order in the Chinese quarter. This person, known as the Kapitan or Kangchu, served as the liaison between the colonial government and the Chinese, and enjoyed privileges such as market monopoly and tax collection rights. Eventually, the Kapitan and Kangchu became a very rich and powerful group. As leaders of the Chinese community, the Kapitan and Kangchu played an active role in both the religious associations and secret societies, since these were the two most powerful Chinese organisations at the time. Many of their members might also have held memberships in both organisations.[6]

RISE OF CLAN ASSOCIATIONS (1890–1941)[7]

Secret societies were at their peak in the late 19th century. The Chinese who came to Singapore were from different parts of China and spoke dialects that were unintelligible to each other, making it impossible to communicate outside their own dialect groups. This communication barrier facilitated the formation of secret societies that were divided by dialect. Over time, the secret societies grew powerful and started to actively protect their own group interests at the expense of others. They established their own territories and other dialect groups were not allowed to cross the invisible boundaries; if they did, fights would break out.

The increasing conflict and fights between dialect groups soon drew the attention of the colonial government as great

financial losses were incurred in terms of property damage and social disruption. The colonial government started clamping down on secret societies with a series of legislations starting from 1869.[8] This included the 1889 Society Ordinance which effectively outlawed secret societies by requiring all organisations to register themselves with the colonial government before they could be recognised as legal bodies.[9]

With intervention by the colonial government, the control of secret societies over the Chinese community started to weaken.[11] A leadership void within the Chinese community opened, which the clan associations gladly filled. In reality, clan associations had always been around, co-existing with secret societies and religious associations, but had been relegated to the periphery of the Chinese community because of their small membership base.

However, as more Chinese migrants arrived, clan associations grew bigger and stronger, particularly when kinship-sponsored schemes brought more people of the same lineage in. Later, when clan associations were recognised as legal bodies by the colonial government, they became more attractive than secret societies.[12]

There were two types of clan associations: (a) locality-based, where members came from the same geographical area, but might not be blood related; and (b) lineage-based, where members had the same surname but were not necessarily from the same geographical area.[13] Both associations generally provided services related to welfare and religious activities such as:

(a) worship of Protector Gods;
(b) ancestral worship;[14]
(c) observance of seasonal festivals,
(d) helping destitute members by recommending jobs, financing education or burial matters and others; and
(e) arbitration of disputes.[15]

Looking at the functions that early clan associations fulfilled, it is clear that their primary aim was to help newly arrived kin to settle down in Singapore. This became especially important when migrants arrived alone and clan associations were the only places they could turn to for help. It became vital to join clan associations for one's success, or even survival.

In the early 1900s, the clan associations became more directly involved with the political situation in China. The Chinese revolutionaries who came to Southeast Asia seeking financial support from the Overseas Chinese for their activities in China found favour with the Chinese community in Singapore. Most Overseas Chinese viewed Singapore as a temporary stop for work and trade, hoping to return to China one day with their riches. Their emotional and political allegiance was to China where their families were. Historical events such as the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 and the Sino-Japanese War in the 1930s led to the realisation that China had to become stronger in order to protect her own interests. To this end, the Overseas Chinese were willing to contribute money to the motherland or even volunteer to fight in her wars.

Fund raising and mobilisation of support required organisation and by this time, there were already several established clan associations led by respected Chinese leaders, many of whom were successful businessmen in the Chinese community.[16] These leaders were politically well connected and their wealth and networks made them the best people to organise such activities.

Dialect Group	Total numbers				
	Year 1881	Year 1901	Year 1911	Year 1921	Year 1931
Hokkien	24, 981	59,117	59,549	136,823	180,108
Cantonese	14,853	30,729	48,739	78,959	94,742
Teochew	22,644	27,564	37,507	53,428	82,405
Hainanese	8,319	9,451	10,775	14,547	19,896
Hakka	6,170	8,514	12,487	14,293	19,317

Table 1: Distribution of Chinese population by the five major dialect groups in Singapore.[10]

Members of Kiung Chow Hwee Kuan helping out with registration of Singapore citizenship at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, one of six registration centres in 1957. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

DECLINE OF CLAN ASSOCIATIONS (1942–1985)

During the Japanese Occupation (1942–1945) of Singapore, the active involvement of clan associations' leaders and their members in anti-Japanese activities made them targets. Many of these leaders and members either fled Singapore or risked being captured and executed by the Japanese. Clan associations went into hibernation as their leaders and members disappeared and the Chinese community lived in fear of their new Japanese masters.[17]

After the war, the British continued their governance amid a growing sense of nationalism among the masses. Clan activities were revived, especially the re-establishment of Chinese vernacular schools that were disrupted during the war.[18] By the 1950s, the push for self-governance and rise of young local politicians eventually culminated in the independence of Singapore in 1965.

In its first 10 years of Independence, the Singapore government faced an uphill

The 1984 seminar which re-examined the roles of Chinese clan associations in modern-day Singapore. It led to the formation of the umbrella body, Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, in 1986. *Courtesy of Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations.*

It became vital to join clan associations for one's success, or even survival.

Launch of the campaign to use Mandarin in 1986. The use of dialects began to decline as the population was encouraged to speak more Mandarin. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

task in unifying a population of migrants comprising different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. For the Chinese community, this shift in political allegiance from China to Singapore started when the Chinese government outlawed dual citizenship in 1955, forcing many local Chinese to take up Singapore citizenship in order to stay on. As nation building efforts progressed, state policies and centralised state systems catering for welfare, education and housing were created. These policies and systems in turn replaced the functions traditionally offered by clan associations to the Chinese community during the colonial days.[19]

In post-Independent Singapore, the character of the Chinese population went through a process of change. To create a common identity, the Singapore government adopted the concept of a multi-racial society. The population of Singapore was neatly divided into four ethnic categories: Chinese, Malays, Indians, and Others (CMIO). While this made it easier for the government to formulate and push out policies at the national level, it also began to erode Chinese dialect identities, which had been the fundamental basis of all clan associations.

The government also started taking steps to remove elements of society that were viewed as engendering ethnic chauvinism. From the 1970s to 80s, a series of campaigns and policies – such as the Speak Mandarin Campaign, banning the use of dialects in mass media and the shutting down of vernacular Chinese schools created younger generations of Chinese Singaporeans who communicated ably in Mandarin but could barely speak their own dialects. The dialect identities of the Chinese community, which had once created social strife and division in the colonial years, were slowly eroded. In addition, Singapore-born Chinese felt little attachment to China, and thus had little use for the services and kinship previously provided by the clan associations. The clan associations suddenly found themselves struggling with dwindling and ageing memberships, branded by the younger generations as "old-fashioned" and "traditional".[20]

Voices pushing for transformation began to surface in the 1970s. On 2 December 1984, a seminar focusing on the new roles of clan associations in the modern era was held. Attended by 185 clan associations, the opening speech given by then Second Deputy Prime Minister Ong Teng Cheong outlined five directions of future development for the associations:

(a) open their membership to all Singaporeans, irrespective of race and dialect;
(b) groom a younger leadership for renewal;
(c) intensify cultural and educational activities such as organising large-scale cultural and recreational activities to promote arts and festivals, publishing books and magazines, and collecting, preserving and exhibiting cultural heritage of associations;
(d) set up homes for the aged, crèches, and care-centres for different age-groups; and
(e) co-ordinate with other community organisations for community development.[21]

The seminar concluded that regardless how the political environment might have changed, it was still important to retain one's cultural roots. In an increasingly Westernised Singapore society, the task of preserving and promoting Chinese culture and language took

Year	English	Mandarin	Dialects	Others
1980	128,208	167,292	1,331,511	1,308
2005	687,849	1,130,420	571,776	7,330
2010	824,616	1,206,556	485,765	10,625

Table 2: Language most frequently spoken at home by resident Chinese population aged five years and over.[23]

on an urgent note as younger Singaporeans were becoming increasingly detached from their own heritage. From the 1980s onwards, both the government and clan associations agreed that the associations should take an active role in promoting Chinese culture to all.[22]

REVITALISATION OF CLAN ASSOCIATIONS (1986–2000s)

On 27 January 1986, the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations (SFCCA),[24] an umbrella authority for all Chinese clan associations, was established. This bold move was to unite the various clan associations under one common purpose and direction: that of promoting Chinese culture and language to all, regardless of their dialect, ethnicity and nationality. Major cultural events (for instance River Hongbao, which celebrates Chinese New Year), exhibitions and publications related to Chinese culture and language are held or produced with support from the Singapore government. The SFCCA also publishes a magazine, *Yuan* (《源》), that serves as the publicity channel introducing members' activities and articles about Chinese culture.[25]

Existing clan associations under the leadership of the SFCCA generally provide the following:

(a) social welfare such as scholarships or funds for the needy;
(b) ancestral worship services;
(c) youth activity groups to attract younger generations;
(d) Chinese cultural centres where classes and seminars are held to promote Chinese culture;
(e) publishing or sponsoring publications and events related to Chinese culture; and
(f) (for the bigger clan associations) working closely with similar organisations in other countries to organise international conferences and overseas social or business trips for their members.[26]

These services reflect the strong intention of SFCCA and its members to reinvent themselves to suit the needs of the modern Singaporean Chinese. In addition, the clans are also aware of the importance of attracting new migrants, given the renewed wave of Chinese migrations from China under Singapore's open-door population policy.

The efforts of the SFCCA and its members have paid off as there has been an increase in media publicity and in the scale and number of activities organised for members. Some associations have also been successful in attracting younger members.

What is interesting, however, is that in the Singapore context, this renewal process has been achieved at the expense of blurring dialect identities, while on the international level, proponents of Chinese race and culture continue to tap on their strong dialect networks to act as bridges between Singaporeans and other Chinese societies. The identity dilemma of Chinese clan associations in Singapore will, perhaps, always exist.

The role of Chinese clan associations in Singapore, from the colonial years to modern times, have been strongly influenced, or even dictated at times, by the policies of the colonial and Singapore governments. The absence and presence of state policies influenced not only the growth and direction of the clan associations but also the composition and character of the Chinese community in Singapore, the main consumers of the services provided by the associations. Clan associations have been able to survive due to their ability to adapt to the changing needs of the Chinese community in Singapore as well as that of the government's. The appearance of new associations formed by the latest wave of Chinese migrants adds another layer of diversity and complexity to Chinese organisations in Singapore. It remains to be seen how these old and new organisations will work together for the future development of the country.[27] ♦

Modern-day Chinese clan associations organise events and activities that promote awareness and understanding of the Chinese culture in an effort to reach out to younger Chinese and remind them of their identity. *Image by Hung Chung Chih.*

Notes

1 Wu Hua. (1975). *Xin jia po hua zu hui guan zhi* (Records of Chinese associations in Singapore), Vol. 2. Singapore: South Seas Society, pp. 1–3.

2 Sing Chow Chu Kwok Thong Cho Kah Koon. (1985). *Sing Chow Chiu Kwok Thong Cho Kah Koon 165th anniversary souvenir magazine*. Singapore: Sing Chow Chu Kwok Thong Cho Kah Koon, p. 142.

3 According to oral history, Cho Kah Koon was founded in 1819. However, there has been no documentation supporting this yet. There have also been debates that the real name of Chow Ah Chey could be Chow Ah Chi. For more details, refer to volume two of *Xin jia po hua zu hui guan zhi* (Records of Chinese associations in Singapore) by Wu Hua.

4 Zhuang Guotu. (2010). *The changes of ethnic Chinese associations in East Asia since last 30 years*. Xiamen: Xiamen University Press, p. 32.

5 Pan Mingzhi (Ed.). (1996). *Hua ren she hui yu zong xiang hui guan* (The Chinese society and clan associations). Singapore: Ling zi da zhong chuan bo zhong xin, pp. 419–420.

6 Pan, pp. 424–426.

7 The history of Chinese clan associations in Singapore have been divided into different eras by academics. For more details, refer to *Hua ren she hui yu zong xiang hui guan* (The Chinese society and clan associations) edited by Pan Mingzhi, p. 466.

8 Pan, pp. 431–432.

9 Lee, Edwin. (1991). *The British as rulers governing multiracial Singapore 1867 –1914*. Singapore: Singapore University Press, pp. 140–150.

10 Information adapted from Liu Hong and Wong Sin-Kiong's *Singapore Chinese society in transition: business, politics, and social-economic change, 1945–1965*.

11 Apart from legislation, the colonial government also started gradually replacing existing governance systems with other forms of systems such as the appointment of W. A. Pickering as the Protector of Chinese in 1877 and the establishment of the Chinese Advisory Board in 1889.

12 Pan, pp. 466.

13 Yen Ching-hwang. (1995). *Community and politics: the Chinese in colonial Singapore and Malaysia*. Singapore: Times Academic Press, p. 35.

14 In Singapore, ancestral worship activities organised by Chinese clan associations typically take place during Spring and Autumn, that is, March to May and August to October. These rites are separately known as "Spring Sacrifice" (*chunji* 春季) and "Autumn Sacrifice" (*qiuji* 秋季).

15 Yen, pp. 44–52.

16 Pan, p. 447.

17 Pan, p. 449.

18 *Zong hui 20 nian* (Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations: the twentieth year). (2005). Singapore: Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, p. 12.

19 Pan, p. 468.

20 Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce, & Hu-Dehart Evelyn (Eds.).(2006). *Voluntary organizations in the Chinese Diaspora*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 58–62.

21 *Zonghui 20 nian*(Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations: the twentieth year), p. 20.

22 Pan, pp. 456–457.

23 Information adapted from *Census of population 1980 Singapore: languages spoken at home*, *General household survey 2005: socio-demographic and economic characteristics* and *Census of population 2010: demographic characteristics, education, language and religion*.

24 Before the formation of the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce acted as overall coordinator.

25 Khun & Hu-Dehart, pp. 63–65. For more details on SFCCA's activities, refer to their periodical *Yuan* or their anniversary publications.

26 Khun & Hu-Dehart, pp. 67–71.

27 To read more about the interactions between existing clan associations and the new associations set up by the latest wave of Chinese migrants, refer to Zhuang Guotu's *The changes of ethnic Chinese associations in East Asia since last 30 years*.

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Zhuang, G., Qing, S., Pan, H. (2010). *Jin 30 nian dong ya hua ren she tuan de xin bian hua*. [The changes of ethnic Chinese associations in East Asia since last 30 years]. Xiamen: Xiamen University Press. Call No.: RSING Chinese 305.895106 CHA

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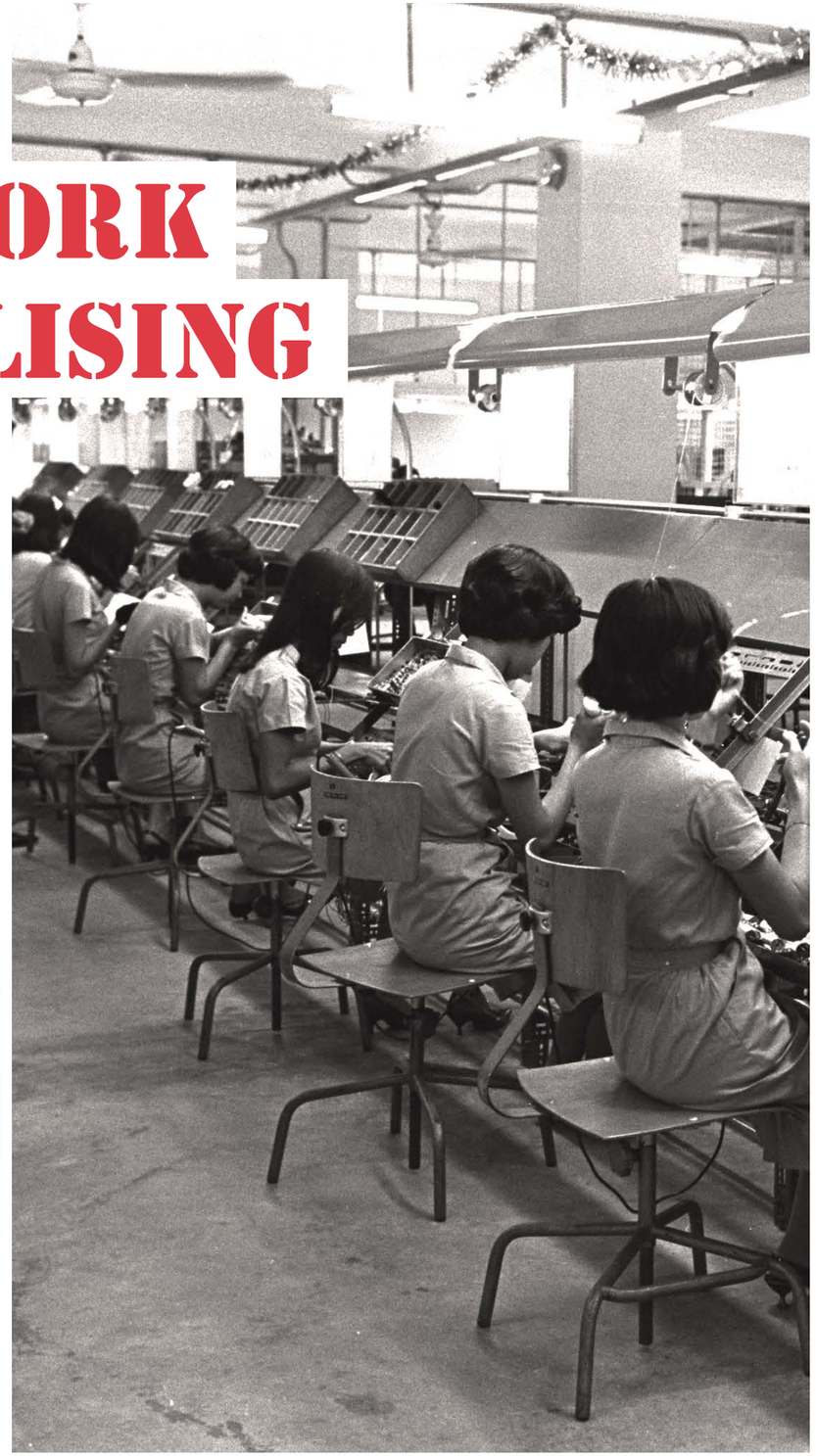
The Fujian Association at Telok Ayer Street still stands today, looking little different from when it was first built in 1913.

A Quiet Revolution

WOMEN AND WORK IN INDUSTRIALISING SINGAPORE

The role of women in Singapore's nation-building efforts in the post-Independence years is sometimes overlooked. **Janice Loo** examines the impact that women have had on the nation's development.



Women washing clothes at the *kampong's* standpipe in the 1960s. Before Independence, women were mostly engaged in domestic activities. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

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It was 3 July 1959. Chooi Yong was working at the lathe machine when voices and footsteps along the corridor signaled their approach. She hurriedly smoothed her hair and straightened her apron just as the men entered the cabinet-making room. Incidentally, the first Cabinet of Singapore had been sworn in just a month earlier after the People's Action Party (PAP) swept the 1959 general election. The newly minted Deputy Prime Minister Toh Chin Chye and the Minister for Education Yong Nyuk Lin were inspecting the Singapore Polytechnic, where first-year student Tan Chooi Yong was the only girl in the Engineering Department.

The next day, the *Singapore Free Press* reported the visit with an accompanying photograph of the education minister speaking to an intently listening Chooi Yong. "The new Singapore Government wants girls to put away their needlework, put on overalls and dungarees, and come forward to do practical work alongside the men,"[1] urged the article's opening line. The appeal for women to "end their worn-out role as 'namby-pamby'[2] people and join the workers"[3] continued to resound in the years ahead as the island state, which catapulted to independence on 9 August 1965, struggled to find its economic footing.

Singapore's founding fathers take pride of place in the canonical narrative of the country's success. However, Singapore's industrial takeoff in the late 1960s would not have been as brisk if not for its working mothers, wives and daughters, whose labour proved instrumental.[4]

AT HOME WITH WORK

In 1957, on the eve of self-government, the female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) stood at a mere 21.6 percent, which meant that less than a quarter of the total female population aged 15 years and over was economically active.[5] To put it plainly, just 1 out of every 5 women in that age group held a job or was unemployed and on the active lookout for work.

Nearly half of the female workforce was concentrated in the community, social and personal services sector, where most engaged in paid domestic work.[6] Requiring little expense and minimal instruction or skills, working in the informal sector allowed women to earn extra income while managing their family responsibilities, as Chua Hui Neo revealed in an oral history interview about her life in the 1950s. "Women cannot go outside [to] work. What work can we do? No one will employ you. [My mother] had to do work for neighbours, do washing [...] people sewed clothes, [and] she put the buttons."[7]

Women working in the factory of Roxy Electric Company Ltd in 1966. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

For the majority who were economically inactive, life revolved around the home and family in conformance with the prevailing sex/gender division of labour. Recalling her adolescence spent in domestic drudgery, Chua summed up the situation: "All the time we had to stay at home, do the [housework]. The men go and work. Girls never worked."[8] It is important to note that being "economically inactive" did not necessarily mean that women idled; rather, the unpaid tasks performed, then as now, by women for the family – cooking, cleaning, child-minding and so on – was not treated as "real" work and thus consigned to invisibility. Certainly the nature of housework was more varied and laborious back then without modern conveniences such as running water and electricity, gas fires and home appliances.[9]

The situation soon changed. Between 1970 and 1980, the FLFPR rose impressively from 29.5 percent to 44.3 percent.[10] By 1990, the figure had reached 53 percent, meaning that 1 out of every 2 women was in the labour force.[11] Singapore's "working woman" had emerged in the span of one generation amid rapid economic development and tremendous social change. With education and employment, she had created a "quiet revolution"[12] that challenged the gender order.

WOMEN, GET *RIGHT* TO WORK!

The story begins when the PAP, in its 1959 election manifesto, committed to the cause of women's rights by pledging to encourage the participation of women in politics and administration; expand job opportunities for women and provide a context conducive to their employment; and grant equal rights to women in marriage and the family.[13] This was an astute move to woo the female electorate, bearing in mind the implementation of compulsory voting and the growing momentum of the local women's movement.[14]

Voted into power, the party soon fulfilled its election promise in 1961 with the enactment of the Women's Charter by the Legislative Assembly, a watershed in the use of legislation to safeguard the status of women in matrimonial life.

The Women's Charter was intended as a springboard for the eventual achievement of sex/gender equality on a societal level by first addressing the subjugated position of women in the patriarchal institutions of marriage and the family.[15] Legal reform adopted this focus in response to the vigorous campaign mounted by the Singapore Council of Women to eliminate polygamy.[16]

Accordingly, the Charter included provisions for monogamy, legal equality and shared familial responsibilities of husband and wife for divorce, custody and maintenance, as well as the protection of women in cases of domestic abuse and sexual offences.[17] More pertinently, the Charter enunciated, among other things, the rights of married women to hold and dispose of property, and engage in any trade or profession.[18]

The years 1959 to 1965 have thus been described as the period of establishing conditions – "lifting legal barriers"[19] – for the greater social and economic participation of women. It was not until after Independence that the number of women in the labour force began to rise steadily with increased job opportunities brought by state-led industrialisation. However, as will be made evident later in this essay, the employment of women in Singapore was primarily a practical response to exigencies of the national and household economy, rather than a matter of their fundamental right to work.

OUT OF THE KITCHEN – INTO THE PRODUCTION LINE

"Now that the victories on the political front have been won, our activities and pioneer spirit have somewhat faded into significance and we have become complacent,"[20] lamented Singapore's first female Member of Parliament Chan Choy Siong in March 1968. A firm campaigner for women's rights and a PAP member, Chan had played a critical role in pushing for the Women's Charter. Their position in the home secured, it was time for women, according to Chan, to "come out of [their] domestic shells and stand shoulder to shoulder with the men in the field of economic reconstruction."[21]

Separation from Malaysia in 1965 pitched Singapore into an economic quandary. Cut off from the anticipated Malaysian Common Market, the young republic was compelled to seek an alternative development strategy as its small domestic market and lack of natural resources precluded the import-substitution mode of industrialisation.[22] Singapore thus embarked on an ambitious programme of industrialisation through labour-intensive, export-oriented manufacturing. Fortunately, the government's efforts to create a positive environment for foreign investment coincided with favourable conditions in the world economy, acting as a catalyst for the country's industrial takeoff in the early decades of nationhood.[23]

Workers at the factory of Tancho Corporation Limited at Little Road in 1967. Tancho was a sticky pomade that men used to style their hair. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Singapore's first phase of industrialisation, spanning the years 1966 to 1978, triggered a period of steep increase in female labour force participation that extended into the 1980s. Women powered the employment and output growth in manufacturing which, barring the recession years of 1974–75 and 1982–83, was the fastest-growing sector of the economy.[24] Between 1970 and 1980, the number of working women had more than doubled from 153,612 to 370,573.[25] Manufacturing absorbed 46.9 percent of this increase and became the single largest sector for female employment.[26]

The entry of women into the workforce on such an unprecedented scale was attributed to factors shaping demand and supply in the labour market. Rapid economic growth, especially in the labour-intensive manufacturing sector, not only mopped up the problem of high unemployment but also generated more job opportunities for women.

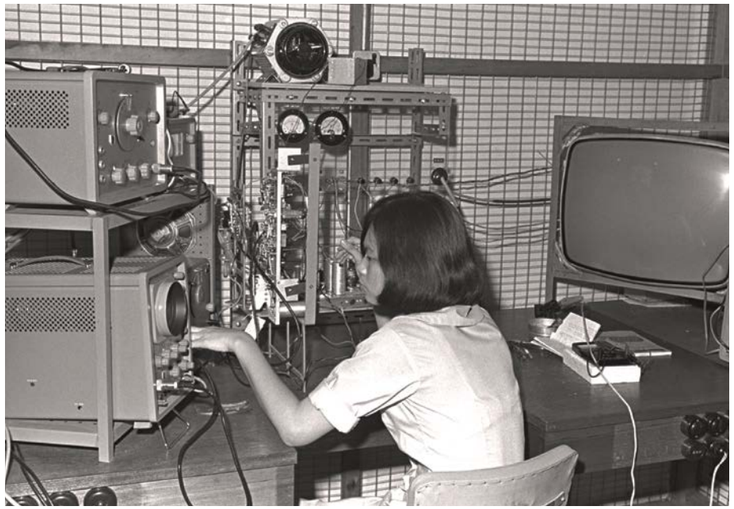
Conversely, government policies on education, housing and family planning, coupled with official encouragement of women's employment, spurred female labour participation in both intended and inadvertent ways. Age, marital status, educational attainment, and socioeconomic background determined the extent to which women have contributed and benefitted from economic development.

SINGAPORE NEEDS (WO)MANPOWER

Qualities such as docility, diligence, attention to detail and patience for long hours of monotonous work have long been regarded as stereotypically "feminine" qualities that have made female labour the preferred choice in the electronics, textiles and garment industries.[27] In addition, women were considered to be better suited than men for work in these industries owing to their physical traits – small hands and nimble fingers – coupled with experience with delicate manual tasks gained from sewing at home.[28]

Demand for female labour consequently accelerated as industrialisation proceeded apace. However, it should be noted that older, married women were at a disadvantage in light of the typical employers' preference for young, single workers who were more easily trained and less encumbered by family commitments that could threaten productivity.[29]

The severe labour shortage prompted the government not only to relax regulations on the employment of temporary foreign workers, but also to mobilise the economically inactive female population.[30] In general, single



A female worker at Setron Limited – which manufactured television sets – at Tanglin Halt in 1966. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

People's Association Child Care Centre at Queen's Street in 1985. Child care was and is a pressing concern of many working mothers. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

women in their early twenties had the highest rate of economic activity; this decreased with advancing age as many pulled out of work after marriage and childbirth to focus on family responsibilities.[31] Only 1 in 7 married women, as compared with 1 in 3 single women, were economically active in 1970.[32]

For a country that prizes human capital as its sole asset, the high proportion of economically inactive women represented a critically under-utilised resource. As such, housewives and young unmarried women who stayed home to help with domestic chores were identified by the state in 1971 as "the largest source for potential increase of the labour force."[33] Official measures taken to attract and retain women in the workforce included providing additional public childcare facilities, locating light-manufacturing industries within housing estates, and urging employers to offer part-time work arrangements.[34]

Improvements in female educational attainment have given women access to more career options.[35] The official view on the purpose of female education is best encapsulated in the words of then Minister for Law and National Development E. W. Barker, who in July 1968 said, "In providing girls the same educational opportunities as the boys, we [the government] expect the girls to be equally capable of contributing to the economic growth of our nation."[36] The impact that education had on transforming the pattern of female employment is expressed by Chua Hui Neo in an interview in 1995:

> If you got education, you can work. Before, if you have no education, what can you work? Like my mother she washed clothes for people. But now where got people want to wash clothes for others. Now no one. What for I work housework, how many... hundred. I might as well go and work in a factory. Morning I go, I wear nice clothes. I come back happy, one month I got how much and CPF [Central Provident Fund], everything. Now it is different. Now where to find a maid? Before, you get so many girls [...] Now everyone, 15/16 years old they can go to the factory and work.[37]

With education, women have been able to seize employment opportunities that offered regular hours, fringe benefits and better working conditions in the formal sector. Yet despite the near equal female to male ratio in the student population, the lack of technical training among women meant that they typically entered the manufacturing sector as low-pay, unskilled or semiskilled production workers with limited prospects and occupational mobility.[38]

At the same time, those who could not obtain employment in the industrial and commercial sectors due to age, education or family responsibilities had little alternative recourse.[39]

CHANGES ON THE HOME FRONT

The costs of urban, high-rise living have rendered women's employment a matter of financial necessity. In 1964, four years after the state public housing programme was launched, the *New Lives in New Homes* survey by the Persatuan Wanita Singapura found that respondents were of the unanimous opinion that life was costlier in Housing & Development Board (HDB) flats than in *kampongs* and pre-war tenements in the city centre.[40] The additional expenditure was chiefly met by increased income through the wife's efforts, for example, through making cakes for sale and taking in sewing jobs, or increases in the husband's income as well as more careful budgeting and by working in small factories in the estate.[41] At the time, about 20 percent of the population lived in HDB flats.[42] By 1980, the figure had risen to 67.8 percent.[43]

A studio photograph of a family of eight taken in 1940. Families were later encouraged to have a maximum of two children. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Mass resettlement and home ownership propelled more women into the workforce to help cover daily expenses such as food and utilities, and the purchase of home appliances, furnishings, consumer goods and other trappings of the new lifestyle.[44] When interviewed in the mid-1970s on her reasons for working, Ah Geok, who worked in an electronics assembly, replied, "Prices and inflation are so high nowadays that I have to work."[45] Faced with rising cash needs, the gainful employment of women became increasingly essential for the maintenance and improvement of family living standards.

In the meantime, the National Productivity Board, in its recommendations for increasing female participation in the labour force, mentioned that "domestic workload could be lightened considerably through the increased usage of domestic and other household appliances [...] thus providing housewives with more time for leisure and work."[46] In fact, many of these appliances, including rice-cookers, refrigerators, electric irons and washing machines, were manufactured in Singapore for both export and domestic consumption.[47] Women were in all likelihood the consumers of the products assembled by their very hands. This provides an added dimension to the understanding of women's economic contributions; it was not by their labour alone that the industrial growth of Singapore was achieved.

The adoption of the two-child family norm, brought about by an intensive national family planning campaign in 1972, reduced the time and effort required for childbearing, nursing and housework, thus facilitating the employment of women.[48] Even so, the problem of childcare has been a major obstacle to the participation of women in the labour force after marriage.[49]

By and large, working mothers relied on familial support for childcare and housework. For example, Sim Koo Kee left her two sons in the respective care of her mother and aunt while she put in a full day at work, and returned to fetch the children home each evening.[50] Assistance from immediate family or relatives was regarded as a more reliable and affordable solution compared to hiring a domestic worker or using a childcare facility. Women were likely to sacrifice employment in the absence of childcare help, especially if it was better for a woman to be a full-time housewife than to work for low pay.[51] Otherwise, working the night shift in the factory perhaps offered the only means of combining employment and motherhood for those who had trouble making substitute childcare arrangements.[52] Women on the night shift would start work in the evening or late at night, after most child-minding and housework tasks were over, with intermittent rest during the day.[53]

On the whole, community networks proved to be the critical resource that facilitated women's entry into the work force at a time when government social services for working mothers was in its nascence.[54]

A WOMAN'S WORK IS NEVER DONE

"Only a good woman can create a good family [...] only a group of good families can make a good nation."[55] That was the role of women in nation-building as enunciated by Puan Noor Aishah, the wife of then Yang di-Pertuan Negara (Head of State), Inche Yusof Ishak, in 1962. Her words hark back to a time when a woman's place was in the home. However, as Singapore rapidly industrialised after Independence, it was imperative that women "become not just good housewives but economic assets as well."[56] More than a creature of legal reform and state policies, the "working woman" of Singapore came into being by dint of financial circumstance, initiative on the part of the individual woman, familial support and aspirations for upward social mobility.

The sex/gender division of labour has been breached but is by no means overturned as housework and childcare remain for the most part in female hands.[57] Women continue to juggle career and motherhood today. The quiet revolution is arguably still underway. ♦

Notes

1 Girls told: 'Work beside men'. (1959, July 4). *The Singapore Free Press*, p. 7.

2 A derogatory term to describe someone who is weak or indecisive, lacking in character, directness, or moral or emotional strength, or weakly sentimental.

3 Girls told: 'Work beside men'. (1959, July 4). *The Singapore Free Press*, p. 7.

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8 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

9 Purushotam, N. (2003). Silent witnesses: The 'woman' in the photograph (pp. 39-41). In Chan, K. B. & Tong, C. K. (Eds.). *Past times: A social history of Singapore*. Singapore: Times Editions.

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11 *Ibid.*

12 Lee, J., Campbell, K. & Chia, A. (1999). *The 3 paradoxes: working women in Singapore* (p. 3.) Singapore: Association of Women for Action and Research.

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15 Lee, Campbell & Chia (1999), p. 39.

16 Lyons, L. (2004). *A state of ambivalence: the feminist movement in Singapore* (p. 27). Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV.

17 Wong, A. K. and Leong, W. K. (Eds.). (1993). *Singapore women: three decades of change* (pp. 256-257). Singapore: Times Academic Press.

18 *Ibid.*

19 Lee, Campbell & Chia (1999), p. 13.

20 'Come out of your domestic shells' call to women. (1968, March 14). *The Straits Times*, p. 5.

21 *Ibid.*

22 Lim, L. & Pang, E. F. (1986). *Trade, employment and industrialisation in Singapore* (p. 17). Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organisation.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

25 Khoo, C. K. (1981). *Census of population 1980 Singapore. Release No. 4: Economic characteristics* (p. 13). Singapore: Department of Statistics.

26 Lim (1982), p. 6.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 10-12; Wong, A. K. (1980, June). *Economic development and women's place in Singapore* (p. 10). London: Change International Reports.

28 Lim (1982), pp. 10-12.

29 Wong, A. K. (1981). Planned development, social stratification, and the sexual division of labour in Singapore. *Signs, 7 (2),* 441.

30 Toh, T. S. (1971). *Increasing Singapore's effective supply of labour* (p. iii). Singapore: National Productivity Centre.

31 Saw (2012), p. 278.

32 Arumainathan (1970), p. 165.

33 Toh (1971), pp. iii, 5.

34 Wong, A. K. (1975). *Women in modern Singapore* (p. 33). Singapore: University Education Press.

35 Khoo (1980), p. 2.

36 Girls urged to work as hard as boys. (1968, July 27). *The Straits Times*, p. 4.

37 *Oral history interview with Chua Hui Neo*, p. 66.

38 Prevailing gender segregation in education where young females tended to pass up technical training, which was a stream dominated by males, in favour of academic or commercial studies. See Wong (1981), p.445.

39 Wong (1981), p. 442

40 Seow, P. L. (1965, February). *Report on new life in new homes* (p. 42). Singapore: Persatuan Wanita Singapura.

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

43 Singapore. Department of Statistics. (2014). *Households & housing (table) key demographic indicators, 1970-2013.* Retrieved from http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/browse_by_theme/population.html

44 Salaff, J. (1988). *State and family in Singapore: restructuring an industrial society* (p. 30). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

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46 Toh (1971), p. 16.

47 Wong, L. W. (1972, October 29). Quiet revolution in modern homes. *The Straits Times*, p. 22; Electrical goods find ready markets abroad. (1977, November 20). *The Straits Times*, p. 12.

48 Lim (1982), p. 5.

49 Wong, A. K. (1979). Women's status and changing family values (pp. 44-45). In Kuo, E. & Wong, A. (Eds.). *The contemporary family in Singapore.* Singapore: Singapore University Press.; Singapore. (1984). *Report on national survey on married women, their role in the family and society* (p. 138). Singapore: Ministry of Social Affairs.

50 Salaff & Wong (1984), pp. 202-203.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 200, 209, 213.

52 Men and women share the same views on night work. (1980, May 5). *The Straits Times*, p. 8.

53 Ong, K. B. (1972, June 6). Housewife by day, worker by night. *The Straits Times*, p. 14; Wee, C. (1980, May 25). Why housewives are opting for part-time work. *The Straits Times*, p. 5.

54 Salaff & Wong (1984), p. 213.

55 Women here have important role, says Puan Aishah. (1962, April 27). *The Straits Times*, p. 4.

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57 Purushotam, N. (2004). Women and knowledge/power: notes on the Singaporean dilemma, p. 329. In Ban, K. C., Pakir, A. & Tong, C. K. (Eds.). *Imagining Singapore.* Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.

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Sunset at Pulau Ubin jetty. *Courtesy of Ria Tan, www.wildsingapore.com*

Standing Firm
Stories of Ubin

Apart from being an escape from the hubbub of city life, Pulau Ubin is home to a small but dwindling number of Singaporeans. **Ang Seow Leng** sheds some light on life on the island.

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Offshore islands such as Pulau Ubin have been largely spared the development that has taken place on mainland Singapore. However, recent land use plans have impacted Pulau Ubin's landscape, its islanders and their rustic way of life.

Pulau Ubin is located northeast of Singapore, a mere 10-minute boat ride from Changi. The Malays once referred to the island as Pulau Batu Jubin, meaning "granite stone island". At one time, the granite mined in Ubin was used to make floor tiles known as *jubin*, later shortened to *ubin*.[1] The Chinese called the island *chieo suar* (石山), meaning "stone hill".[2] Originally, the 1,020-hectare island comprised a cluster of five smaller islands separated by tidal rivers, but over the years bunds erected for prawn farming unified the tiny isles into a single curved island that resembles a boomerang.[3] Today, Pulau Ubin is Singapore's second largest offshore island.[4]

Pulau Ubin was first visited by the Second Resident, John Crawfurd, on 4 August 1825 when he made his way around Singapore on his ship, the *Malabar*, to take formal possession of Singapore. The Union Jack was hoisted, followed by the firing of a 21-gun salute.[5] Later, James Richardson Logan, who was responsible for the first scientific scholarly journal in Singapore – the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* – published a book on a study of the rocks and geological features of the island during his visit to Pulau Ubin in the early 19th century.

In the 1840s, Chinese stone cutters, and later convicts were deployed to quarry the granite in Pulau Ubin, which was later transported to Pedra Branca to build the Horsburgh Lighthouse in 1851.[6] Granite from Pulau Ubin was also used to build the Raffles Lighthouse in 1855[7] and the Causeway in 1923.[8,9] Pearl's Hill Reservoir, Fort Canning, Fort Canning Reservoir, the expansion of Fort Fullerton and the Singapore Harbour were also built using granite from Ubin.[10] A block of granite was even reportedly sent to build the extension of Portsmouth Cathedral in the south of England.[11]

THE PEOPLE OF UBIN

The earliest inhabitants on Pulau Ubin were the Orang Laut and indigenous Malay of Bugis and Javanese origins. Subsequently, Chinese quarry workers settled on the island – mostly Hakkas, followed by the Hokkiens and later Teochews.[12] In the 1880s, large numbers of inhabitants from the Kallang River area moved to Pulau Ubin. Migration spiked again prior to the Japanese invasion in 1942 when the mainland residents fled to Pulau Ubin for its perceived safety.[13] Apart from quarrying granite, the main industry from the 1800s to 1999,[14] other economic activities in the early days included rearing poultry and the cultivation of rubber and cash crops such as coffee, nutmeg, pineapple, coconut, durian and tobacco, as well as prawn farming and fishing.[15]

The 1970 Singapore population census indicated that there were 2,028 residents living on Pulau Ubin at the time.[16] This number was halved by 1987 due to resettlement and the closure of the granite quarries. Even then, Ubin was the most populous island compared with Pulau Sakeng's 250 residents, St John's Island's 10 residents and Kusu Island's solitary temple keeper.[17] By 2002, however, the number of residents on Ubin was down to just 100;[18] today, fewer than 100 people live on the island.[19] During a speech made on 15 March 2014, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong highlighted Pulau Ubin as one of the last two *kampongs* left in Singapore, the other being Kampong Buangkok.[20]

The rapid urbanisation of mainland Singapore has impacted Pulau Ubin in more ways than one. In the late 1960s and early 70s, Singapore embarked on a labour-intensive industrial programme, setting up factories and hiring as many workers as possible. At the same time, a public housing scheme was launched, which proved so effective that by 1985, some 80 percent of Singapore's resident population was living in subsidised public flats.[21] These flats on the mainland came with facilities that were sorely lacking in Pulau Ubin, such as piped water and electricity. Not surprisingly, Ubin's more educated younger residents started moving to the mainland to seek jobs and a better life.

One prominent island resident was the late Lim Chye Joo, a Teochew migrant who was instrumental in the development of Pulau Ubin. He arrived in Singapore from China in 1936[22] and lived on Ubin all his life.[23] Lim was the headman of the island for more than 30 years and was also the former chairman of the Pulau Ubin Community Centre. He helped set up Bin Kiang School on the island and was often involved in fund-raising activities,[24] simultaneously rearing pigs and chickens, and running a provision shop. Until he was 90, Lim was still very active, walking at least 4 kilometres everyday to check on his vegetable and prawn farms.[25] He passed away at the age of 101 in 2006.[26]

HOUSING, LAND USE AND CHANGES

Resettlement from Pulau Ubin to mainland Singapore began in the 1970s and picked up pace in the 1990s. The 1991 Concept Plan by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) proposed that while Pulau Ubin would be marked for leisure and recreation for as long as possible, once the population on the mainland exceeded 4 million, a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and a major road would be constructed to link the mainland to Ubin. In addition, plans were unveiled for high density housing and industrial development on Ubin.[31] Chek Jawa (at the southeastern tip) was also earmarked for land reclamation in 1992.

However, the proposed development did not take place and reclamation works on Chek Jawa were halted. In 1997, the URA proposed that Pulau Ubin would remain as a place for sports and recreation. Half of the land area would be set aside as a reserve site while a third of the land area would remain as open space. Two sites were proposed for the development of a holiday and outdoor recreation activity centre, in addition to the existing National Police Cadet Corps campsite and the Outward Bound School.[32]

AN ISLAND IN TRANSITION

The island has seen a sharp decline in population within just four generations, with many residents moving to the mainland in pursuit of better opportunities or to be with family. The closure of the last granite quarry in 1999 spelt the end of that means of livelihood for most of the islanders. Most jobs these days are geared towards meeting the needs of tourists who visit on the weekends. When provision shop owner Madam Tan was interviewed in 2000, she commented that there were five provision shops on the island vying for business from a small number of residents.[33] In 2013, a resident observed that, "after a while, you see the same person pacing the town centre. It's most likely the same villager you saw in the morning, rather than a fresh face from the mainland."[34]

The island's only primary school, Bin Kiang School, closed in 1985,[35] the only clinic closed in 1987,[36] and the Pulau Ubin Community Centre closed in 2003,[37] all victims of the dwindling population. Places of worship, instrumental in binding the community together, have also moved to the mainland, leaving mostly the old and the retired behind. Furthermore, with the government acquiring the land in Pulau Ubin, residents now have to pay rent for the land they occupy. [38] One villager said, "Those who don't live here think

Ubin's Flora and Fauna

In his book, *Pulau Ubin: Ours to Treasure* (2000), wildlife enthusiast Dr Chua Ee Kiam wrote about the natural areas in Pulau Ubin that were "a little wild, relatively undisturbed and support a large variety of indigenous flora and fauna".[27] He recorded a total of 179 species of birds, 382 species of vascular plants and 19 animal species on the island despite the fact that Ubin's original rainforest was destroyed during the1950s and early 1960s when entire hills were blasted for the extraction of granite.[28] Ubin is still home to a relatively large number of rare animals, birds and plants. A National Parks Board (NParks) website on Ubin provides detailed records on the flora and fauna of the island.[29] As of January 2014, the island is home to 603 species of plants, 207 species of birds, 153 species of butterflies and 39 species of reptiles.[30]

(Top Left) The oriental whip snake is also known as the green vine snake and can grow up to 2 metres long.
(Left) The nipah palm can be found in the mangrove swamps of Pulau Ubin. The leaves can be used as thatch for roofs and its sap, when fermented, is drunk as an alcoholic drink called "toddy".
Images courtesy of Ria Tan, www.wildsingapore.com

A crowd watching a Chinese opera performance on Pulau Ubin in 1992. The *wayang* (opera) stage still stands on the island. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

we have a relaxed time. Try it, and you'll see how difficult it can be"; another shared that they had been surviving on the compensation given by the government after their fruit plantation had been acquired and were worried about how long they could survive without proper work.[39]

Making the move to the mainland has not been easy. A newspaper report in 2001 tells of Fadila Noor, aged 39, who packed up her belongings, left her cats behind, and moved into a one-room flat in Singapore, describing her flat as "barely larger than the kitchen in her house on the island".[40] Another, Madam Hamidah, shared that life in Ubin was "more peaceful, more calm... In Singapore, the moment you step out of your lift, you spend money. When you wake up and open your eyes, the first thing you think of is how to earn more money."[41]

COMMUNAL SPACES IN PULAU UBIN

There are some significant buildings in Pulau Ubin that bring people together and stand as markers of the island's history. Bin Kiang School was the first and only primary school on the island. Set up in 1952, it had over 400 students at its peak until it closed in 1985 and was demolished in 2000.[42]

Pulau Ubin Community Centre was once a hive of activity and a key landmark on the island as Singapore's only waterfront community centre. Built in 1961, the building was originally a community hall that was converted into a community centre in 1966.[43] In the 1970s and 1980s, the centre offered residents a wide array of activities, from soccer and *sepak takraw* to dragon boat racing and traditional Malay sports such as miniature sailboats *(jong)* races and spinning tops *(gasing)* competitions.[44] The community centre also followed the fate of the school, closing down in 2003.

In Chinese folklore, the Goddess of the Sea, or Mazu (妈祖), is an important celestial guardian who ensures the safe passage of fishermen and seafarers in rough seas. Worshipping Mazu is a practice that is mostly prevalent among Southeast Asian Chinese, and temples dedicated to Mazu are often situated along coastal areas. The Ma Zu Temple at Pulau Ubin was originally sea-facing but when the land it sat on was acquired to make way for the Outward Bound School Camp 2 site in 2001, the temple was moved to Sengkang on the mainland.[45]

However, not all of Ubin's buildings face closure or demolition. The Pulau Ubin Fo Shan Teng Tua Pek Kong Temple pre-dates 1869 according to the date inscribed on the temple's renovation stele. The temple is located near the jetty and is one of the rare Chinese temples in Singapore that has a permanent stage for Chinese opera (*wayang*).[46] The temple and its stage come alive twice a year, during the fourth and seventh months of the Chinese lunar calendar. Chinese operas and contemporary *getai* performances are staged in honour of Tua Pek Kong and to mark the Hungry Ghost Festival. This is a far cry from the 1950s when weekly *wayang* shows were put up to entertain the villagers.[47]

House No.1, situated at the eastern end of the island near Chek Jawa, was built in the 1930s by the British Chief Surveyor, Landon Williams, as a holiday or weekend retreat.[48] It is a significant landmark with commanding views of Changi Point and the Straits of Singapore. The structure is believed to be Singapore's only remaining authentic Tudor-style house with a fireplace.[49] A *Lianhe Zaobao* article reported that the building used to house the managers of the island's rubber plantations.[50] Rubber tapping activities ceased during the 1980s due to increasing costs of production.[51] The house gradually fell into neglect but was given a new lease of life when it was restored and turned into the Chek Jawa visitor centre, and was given conservation status by the URA in 2007.[52]

People and places tell the story of the island, and unless there is a new "wave" of migration from the mainland, Pulau Ubin may become a fragment of a distant past that will slowly be replaced by new memories from transient visitors. In the meantime, there are plenty of enthusiasts in Singapore who try and keep Ubin alive and relevant. The island is thronged by mountain biking enthusiasts and nature buffs every weekend and the blog Pulau Ubin Stories was started in 1995 to collect news and stories about the island. In May 2014, a dedicated Facebook page provided another avenue for enthusiasts to share information and photos on Ubin.

Author Dr Chua Ee Kiam located a similar rock that resembles the one captured in a striking painting done more than 150 years ago by John Turnbull Thomson – *Grooved Stones at Pulo Ubin near Singapore*. Hopefully, in spite of the island's evolution and the encroachments made by man, that rock will still be around for another 100 years. ♦

(Left) Painting of Pulau Ubin by John Turnbull Thomson. *"Grooved stones on Pulo Ubin near Singapore, 1850". Used with permission from the Hall-Jones family.*
(Right) Rock facade similar to that in the 1850 painting by John Turnbull Thomson photographed by Dr Chua Ee Kiam. *Courtesy of Dr Chua Ee Kiam.*

Saving Chek Jawa

Kampong Chek Jawa, on the southeastern tip of Pulau Ubin, was probably named after the Javanese who first settled there. The villagers who used to live there were mostly fishermen and rubber tappers.[53] Chek Jawa has six different ecosystems within its 1 sq km area: mangroves, coastal hill forest, sandy ecosystems, rocky shore, seagrass lagoon and coral rubble.[54] This rich diversity makes it a veritable haven for scientific studies and nature lovers.

In December 2000, Nature Society (Singapore) members made an accidental discovery of the rich marine life thriving at Chek Jawa.[55] A newspaper article two years later reported that a biodiversity survey made at Pulau Ubin discovered several rare coastal plants, many of which were recorded for the first time in Singapore.[56]

News of Chek Jawa's land reclamation and the imminent destruction of its ecosystem sparked off a deluge of visitors to the area. Numerous letters were sent to the press to appeal to the authorities to halt the land reclamation plans.[57]

On 14 January 2002, the Ministry of National Development announced that land reclamation work at Chek Jawa would be postponed indefinitely. In addition, NParks formed a committee with representatives from the Nature Society, Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research and other experts to study how Chek Jawa's unique and fragile ecosystem could be maintained.[58]

High tide at the Chek Jawa boardwalk.
Courtesy of Ria Tan, www.wildsingapore.com

Painting of prawn ponds on Ubin by Cultural Medallion winner Ong Kim Seng. Ong spent eight months painting on the island and his paintings were showcased in 2001 at "Charms of Ubin", an exhibition held at the People's Association headquarters, organised by the Outward Bound School to raise funds to develop an adventure park for children. Ong's time on Ubin reminded him of his *kampong* days. *Courtesy of Ong Kim Seng.*

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CURATOR'S SELECTION

Remembering John Turnbull Thomson

Timothy Pwee is a Senior Reference Librarian with the National Library of Singapore. Visual materials from paintings and photographs to maps and scale models have always fascinated him.

One naturally tends to gravitate towards political and economic figures when thinking about Singapore's pioneers. Yet the physical environment of Singapore has been indelibly shaped by another class of men: the engineers.

In Stamford Raffles' day, engineering was a trade learnt through apprenticeship. A mathematics graduate of Aberdeen University by the name of John Turnbull Thomson (1821–1884) did an engineering apprenticeship in Newcastle upon Tyne before venturing out to Penang in 1838 as a surveyor. Thomson was subsequently appointed as Government Surveyor of Singapore in 1841, and became Superintendent of Public Works in 1844, taking over from George D. Coleman, Singapore's most prominent colonial architect, after the latter returned home.

Thomson's Singapore story was researched and told by a New Zealand relative in *An Early Surveyor in Singapore* (1979). Author John Hall-Jones filled the book with Thomson's watercolour paintings and ink drawings depicting many scenes of life in early Singapore. In 1983, the second volume, *The Thomson Paintings*, was published in colour.

Thomson also wrote two books, *Some Glimpses into Life in the Far East* (1864) and *Sequel to Some Glimpses into Life in the Far East* (1865). Written as a series of short vignettes, Thomson's interesting stories of early colonial Singapore

John Turnbull Thomson's 1846 *Plan of Singapore Town and Adjoining Districts From Actual Survey* donated to the National Library by Koh Seow Chuan.

are filled with witty and wry observations about bureaucratic tangles and bold deeds. He also spent time translating parts of Munshi Abdullah's autobiography as *Translations from Hakayit Abdulla* (1874). While the original editions have been preserved in the National Library's rare collection, microfilm copies, reprints and digitised ebooks are available for public use.

Some surviving *mukim* (district) property maps by Thomson can be found in the National Archives. However, his most well-known map must be the 1846 *Plan of Singapore Town* (copies can be viewed at the National Library's Lee Kong Chian Reference Library on the 11th floor).

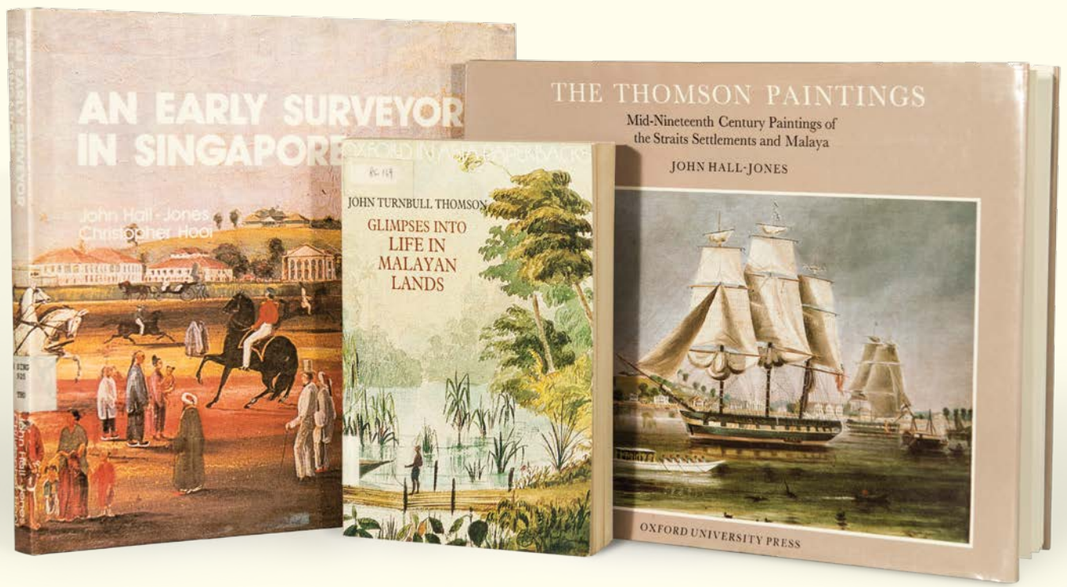
Between settling property disputes with his surveying work and mapping the seaboard of eastern Peninsula Malaysia, Thomson found time to contribute articles to James Richardson Logan's *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*. Published from 1847 to 1859, it was Singapore's first scientific journal. Over several articles, Thomson covered the physical geography of the region from Rhio (today's Tanjung Pinang and Pulau Penyengat) to the eastern coast of Malaysia (including the holiday islands of Pulau Aur and Pulau Tioman). The raids of the dreaded Illanun (Iranun) pirates, who took slaves, are also mentioned frequently. Although the National Library's treasured collection of Logan's journals is now too fragile to be handled, the microfilm reels of the complete run are available.

From 1844 onwards, Thomson took charge of many public works in Singapore, including the road that now bears his name, Thomson Road. Interestingly, a district of Singapore is believed to refer to him: Ang Mo Kio (红毛桥, today renamed 宏茂桥) or Red-haired Bridge (red hair being a colloquial reference to Caucasians in Hokkien). The bridge in question appears to have been built where Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park meets Lower Pierce Reservoir along Upper Thomson Road with the village of Ang Mo Kio located just south of it until its removal in the 1970s.

The pinnacle of Thomson's career was the construction of Horsburgh Lighthouse (1849–1851) on Pedra Branca. He described its construction in the July and August 1852 issue of *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* (vol. VI, pp. 376–498). Thomson's meticulous account is accompanied not just by engineering diagrams but also copious notes about his dealings with the workmen and their foremen, as well as explanations of his actions.

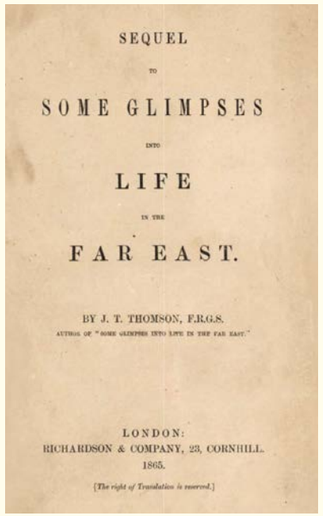
Much remains to be researched about Thomson and the works mentioned in this article are just a few highlights of the material about him in the National Library's collection. Thomson's legacy lives on today, not only through his works but also, interestingly, on a wine label. Surveyor Thomson Wines in Central Otago, South New Zealand, was named in honour and memory of Thomson by his great-great-grandson David Hall-Jones. ♦

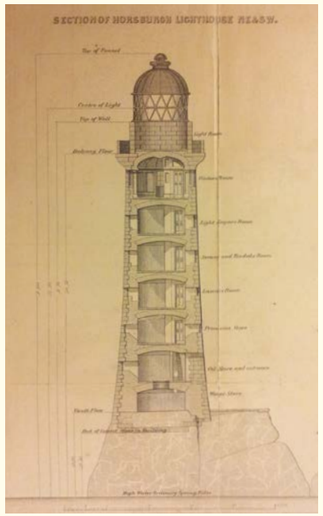
John Turnbull Thomson was a noted surveyor, architect and painter. Some of his works were featured in *An Early Surveyor in Singapore* as well as *The Thomson Paintings* by his great grandson, John Hall-Jones. *Glimpses into Life in Malayan Lands* was published in 1984 and is an Oxford University Press reprint of Thomson's 1864 *Glimpses into Life in the Far East*. All these books are available for either loan or reference at the National Library and its branches.



"View of Singapore from Government Hill, 1846" by John Turnbull Thomson. In this scene, then Governor of the Straits Settlements, Lt-Col William J. Butterworth, depicted in the foreground with his family, has just presented the ceremonial state sword to Daing Ibrahim, the Temenggong of Johor on 31 August 1846 for the latter's efforts in helping to curb piracy in the area. Thomson painted the scene from the verandah of Government House, the residence built for Stamford Raffles in 1822 on Government Hill (present-day Fort Canning).
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.

Portrait of John Turnbull Thomson when he was 26 years old. Used with permission from the Hall-Jones family.





(Left) Title page of Thomson's 1865 *Sequel to Some Glimpses into Life in the Far East* published in London by Richardson.
(Right) Plan of Horsburgh Lighthouse from Thomson's 1852 article about its construction in the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* (vol. VI, pp. 376–498).

"The Esplanade from Scandal Point, 1851" by John Turnbull Thomson. Scandal Point – a popular meeting place for evening gossip among the European community – was the name given to the small knoll above the shoreline which originally came up to the edge of the Padang (where the present Connaught Drive stands). This was where Lt. Henry Ralfe built the Saluting Battery, a bastion of earth and sand in February 1819, and later mounted the first fixed defence battery with 12 pounder guns to protect the settlement. The painting illustrates the typical social and sporting activities that took place at the Padang during this period. In the background are buildings, several of which were designed by the colony's foremost architect G.D. Coleman. On the far right is St Andrew's Church (later demolished to build St Andrew's Cathedral) and adjacent is the Armenian Church of St Gregory the Illuminator, followed by a series of private residences (including Coleman's house). Rising behind is Government Hill (present-day Fort Canning). It is believed that the European man in the white suit, top hat and cane on the right of the foreground is Thomson himself with possibly Munshi Abdullah, his Malay teacher. *Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.*

邱菽园与晚清政府四位福建籍高官的交往

——三读邱氏后人王清建先生所藏历史文献

张人凤，1940年生，曾长期从事继续教育工作，现为上海市文史研究馆馆员；著有《张元济年谱长编》、《智民之师张元济》、《张元济研究文集》，编有十卷本《张元济全集》。

Professor Zhang Renfeng is a member of the Shanghai Research Institute of Culture and History. He has been involved in the study of Zhang Yuanji, renowned educationist, bibliographer and founder of China's modern publishing business. He compiled the 10-volume *Works of Zhang Yuanji*; his own works include the *Collection of Research Papers on Zhang Yuanji; Zhang Yuanji, an Enlightener of the People;* and *Chronicle of Life of Zhang Yuanji*.

In this article, Professor Zhang Renfeng examines the letters left by literary scholar and poet Khoo Seok Wan. Through his research on the letters sent to Khoo by four Chinese officials from Fujian, Professor Zhang tries to establish the relationship between these officials and Khoo, piecing together the historical events at the time. These letters reflect the lives of Fujian people then and reveal how the Overseas Chinese were eager to lend a helping hand to those in their homeland in times of trouble. These letters were shared with Professor Zhang, courtesy of Khoo Seok Wan's descendent, Mr Ong Cheng Kian.

在王清建先生所藏邱菽园留存的历史文献中，除康有为之外，还有不少名人致邱菽园的信札，其中笔者见到晚清政府四位福建籍高官的信件。他们是陈宝琛、曾宗彦、叶大绰和陈璧。本文试图对这几件书信做一点初步解读，介绍给读者，更希望与读者一起对之作进一步的研究。

一、陈宝琛、曾宗彦致邱菽园信

这是一封很简短的信，全文如下：

菽园仁兄大人、老弟足下：月之初九，以福州大水，灾情甚重，渺函奉布，并恳招呼赈捐，以賙穷黎，未审何日得达左右。唯小民望拯甚急，几有迫不及待之势。兹特公挽王小樵广文元穉携带捐册，驰赴南洋劝募。唯人地生疏，非仗足下登高一呼，诚恐缓不济急。务乞鼎力格外提倡，造福桑梓，实无限量。小樵博学能文，性尤乐善，足下一见而知也。舟行在即，未及多赘，匆匆渺此奉恳，顺请善安，唯照不尽。

弟陈宝琛
兄曾宗彦 同顿首

六月二十一日

信中所述是1900年夏，福州城里遭遇水灾，损失惨重。陈宝琛、曾宗彦等曾发信给邱菽园求助，尚未得复，又公推王元穉直接到南洋，向当地侨界募捐。此信显然由王随身带去。据王元穉之子王祖毅在《哀启》中记述：“庚子夏，省垣（按，省城，即福州）疫症盛行，复被水灾，罹灾疫者数万人。经陈弢庵（按，陈宝琛）太傅函邀先严赴南洋各岛募赈……在新加坡各地募得十余万金，悉汇回，由陈太傅转付散赈，救活者数万家。”这段记述可与此信相互印证。信中还有几处可加以说明：旧时，称呼亲友或长者，都只能称呼对方或他人的字或号，决不可直呼其名讳。这里“小樵”是王元穉的字，下面“广文”是王的身份，在明清时期指儒学教官。因为王在1884年曾任台湾道儒学训导。其次，此信书法极佳，行书走笔流畅、潇洒，极具书法艺术之美感。笔者在上海图书馆见过陈宝琛的手迹，与此不同，推断当为曾宗彦所缮。再次，曾宗彦年龄小陈宝琛四岁，曾自称兄，署名在后，说明曾与邱菽园有特殊的交谊；而陈自称弟，称呼邱为“仁兄大人”，说明两人只是一般关系。

曾宗彦（1850-1912），字成焘，又字君玉，号幼沧，福建福州人，祖居在今福州市仓山区，生于北京，为世代书香之家。曾祖曾晖春、祖父曾元炳、父曾兆鳌及曾宗彦本人，为四代直系相承的进士。他的高祖母陈帖是林则徐的姨母，因此家庭素受爱国思想的熏陶。曾宗彦1883年得中光绪九年癸未科进士，授翰林院庶吉士。翰林院散馆（按，科举时代，在京城举行最高级别的考试称为会试，三年为一科，每科取进士300名左右，又在其中选前面近百名由皇上钦点授翰林院庶吉士，入翰林院研修二年，修完经考试后毕业，称为“散馆”，再由朝廷分派官职。）后出任厦门、台湾等地讲席。在厦门期间，很可能做过邱菽园的老师。本信信末署名自称“兄”，决非简单取决于年龄之长幼，应视为非一般关系。曾宗彦是维新派，与戊戌六君子之一的林旭在北京的福建会馆成立“闽学会”是一个提倡维新思想的组织。后来他担任江南道监察御史，在戊戌维新期间，上光绪皇帝《时艰孔迫，宜用洋操克期练陆军折》，此后光绪试图改革兵制，是受到了曾的影响。他还上奏“急宜振兴农工二务”和“急宜于各省学堂精选学生赴欧美精习矿业，并南北宜设立矿务学堂”等。变法失败后，曾即告假还乡，在福州出任凤池书院第十三任山长，即院长，主持学务，从事教育。慈禧死后，他短期出任过贵州思南知府，但他毕竟是维新改良派人物，在官场受到排挤，便返回故乡，颐养天年。

相比曾宗彦，陈宝琛的声望更高。陈宝琛（1846-1935），字伯潜，号弢庵、陶庵，福建闽县（今福州市）螺洲人，书香世家，为榕城望族。明清两朝，陈家共有进士21名，举人110名。仅他兄弟6人，就有3进士、3举人，人称“兄弟六科甲”。他13岁中秀才，18岁中举人，21岁中同治戊辰（1868年）科进士，授翰林院庶吉士。散馆后任翰林院编修、翰林院侍讲，内阁学士兼礼部侍郎等职。溥仪在《我的前半生》一书中曾说：“陈……入阁后，以敢于上谏太后出名，与张之洞等有清流党之称。他后来不像张之洞那样会随风转舵，光绪十七年被借口南洋事务没有办好，降了五级，从此回家赋闲，一连二十年没出来。”实际上他在家耽了25年。

在福州赋闲期间，他做了两件有关桑梓的大事。一是办教育：1899年任鳌峰书院山长，1907年创办福建优等师范学堂，这是现今福建师范大学的前身。他还支持夫人王眉寿创办福建女子职业学堂，后改称福建女子师范学校，可称中国女子教育之先行者。二是筹办铁路：当时一批有识之士认识到发展经济、兴办铁路是强国富民的必由之路，铁路在振兴经济中的作用巨大，亟宜设法建造。他们成立了福建铁路公司，陈为总经理。陈宝琛深知资金筹措最为困难，便把目光投向海外华侨。他与新加坡华侨黄乃裳私交很深，通过黄先行宣传，然后于1906年亲赴南洋募股。次年回国时，已在华侨中募得股款170余万元，遂开始建设漳厦铁路，开福建铁路建设之先河。

慈禧死后，陈宝琛出任过山西巡抚，后任毓庆宫侍读，即宣统皇帝溥仪的帝师。溥仪登基后，他首先发为戊戌六君子昭雪之议，奏请降旨褒扬。他反对溥仪在日本纵容下去东北建立伪满洲国，后又不顾风烛残年，冒死赴长春劝谏，差一点被日本关东军扣押囚禁。不久郁郁返回天津，在寓所病逝。

二、叶大绰、陈宝琛 、陈璧致邱菽园信

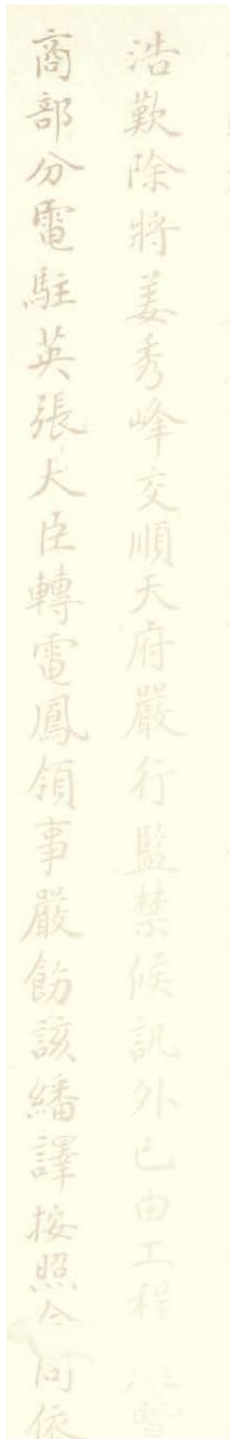
是信与第一信同为应对福建灾荒，筹款救济之事。但未署书写年月。陈璧在1896至1899年间，丁母忧返回家乡（按，旧时，父母之丧称为“丁忧”或“丁艰”，不做官，不婚嫁，为官者必须辞官在家服丧三年。）因此此信当书于这三年之内。全信采用工整的楷书，字迹清秀，和以下陈璧致邱菽园四信字迹相仿，应出自陈璧之手。这封信内容单一，是说福建上年歉收，当年春季青黄不接，请求邱菽园等福建籍华侨予以资助。从“海天南望，眉宇未亲”一句看，这三位德高望重的前辈与邱并没有见过面，只是“神驰”而已。书信全文如下：

菽园仁兄大人阁下：海天南望，眉宇未亲，分麈柄之余尘，挹骚坛之流韵，未尝不神驰左右也。辰维动定春融，无任跂颂。弟等浮湛闾里，祠禄虚糜，抚时事之多艰，愧杞忧之无补。兹有恳者：会垣产米本少，去冬又复歉收，虽亦招商贩运，而沪、浙各口遏糴者多。大府以南洋各埠辈航鳞萃，又稔知吾乡流寓、绅商类皆急公好义，情笃维桑。特为周荔生大令为乞糴之举。海程迂滞，转眼即交青黄不接之时，万户待哺之情，有如望岁。弟等夙仰执事高风伟抱，饥溺为怀，敢求邀集同志，董劝招徕，俾早集事，庶汎舟远。至庚癸无呼，尸祝之私，岂有既极。肃溯奉恳，祇颂春祺。翘望还云，诸希惠照，不尽所言。

年愚弟 陈宝琛
愚弟期 叶大绰 顿首
愚 弟 陈 璧

写信人叶大绰（1840-1900），字迪恭，号恂予，福建闽县人。清同治七年（1868年）戊辰科进士，翰林院庶吉士、编修，先后在湖北、湖南担任科举考试的主考官。1885年他在广东学政任上，因惠州考场发生舞弊受到牵连而被革职，遂返回原籍，主讲福州的凤池书院和正谊书院。

陈璧（1852-1928），字玉苍、雨仓，福建侯官（今闽侯县）人。光绪三年（1877年）丁丑科进士，先后任内阁中书、湖北主考官、礼部铸印司员外郎等职。光绪二十一年出任湖广道监察御史，曾奏请保护华侨，惩处任意敲诈勒索华侨的官吏。他也曾主张暂时把台湾租借给西方列强，俾免落入日本之手。光绪二十二年六月，回福建奔丧。三年服丧期间，他在福州看到福建船政业不景气，提出多项改革办法，先后被政府采纳，对促进福建船政局向现代资本主义经营方式发展起到了重要作用。期间，他主讲凤池书院，增设时务、论策等讲习新内容，使闽中学风更能适应形势的变化与发展。他还创建了苍霞精舍，开设英文、算学等新课程。这是福建创办近代学校之先声。1899年销假返京，正值义和拳运动兴起，他明确表示反对。次年，慈禧利用愚民盲目排外，招致八国联军入侵北京，慈禧、光绪出逃西安，他留守北京，主持总理公所。1901年以后，他主持修建皇陵、修复北京正阳门等工



程，同时创办五城中学堂。1905年，任户部右侍郎、度支部右侍郎，主管财政，参与开办天津造币厂和大清银行，查处各地铸币厂贪污、废弛等腐败情形，制定有力措施，并为全国币制统一奠定了基础。他先后任职新设立的商部、邮传部，管理全国工商、邮电、铁路、航运等新兴产业。现今史学界于陈璧研究颇多进展，特别在评价他的经济思想与实践方面，认为他反对守旧，力主革新，兴利除弊，尤擅长处理复杂的经济问题，如办银行、理财政等。

三、陈璧致邱菽园四信

陈璧致邱菽园信共四件，按内容，可分为两 组。第一组一件，第两组三件。现分别介绍如下：

第一组一件，无书写年月日，红色信笺，楷书。内容说正阳门工程和创办五城中学堂两项。

正阳门，即明清北京城内城城墙的正门。明初，成祖朱棣迁都北京，于明永乐十七年(1419年)将元大都城垣南移800米，原北京城墙正中的丽正门迁至现今正阳门位置，仍称丽正门。明正统元年（1436年），更名正阳门，正统四年又在城门外添建箭楼，以加强防御能力。城楼与箭楼之间形成一座大瓮城。1900年，箭楼在义和团拳民焚烧前门大栅栏时被飞溅的火星引燃烧毁，城楼在当年冬天被在城楼住宿的英军印度士兵生火取暖时烧毁。陈璧在1901年慈禧、光绪返回北京后任顺天府尹，相当于今日北京市长，主持正阳门修复工程。该工程自1903年至1906年，历4年而成。现存的北京正阳门（俗称前门）即为修复后的遗存。城楼有两层，高27.3米，连城台的整体高度为42米，城楼采用朱红梁柱，上饰金花彩云；箭楼有4层，连城台通高38米。两座建筑十分宏伟壮观。

五城中学堂是陈璧主持创办的中国第一所公办近代中等学堂。早在戊戌变法时期，京师大学堂成立，成为中国近现代高等学校之嚆矢，为了保证其生源，清政府也已考虑到新式中等学堂的设立。由于变法失败，八国联军入侵等一系列变故，遂被搁置。1901年，陈璧出任五城御史，立即着手在北京琉璃厂一片废瓦砾堆上建设新校舍，1902年正式开办，陈璧亲任该校总督办。该校是中国近代教育史上首家使用“中学”这个近代教育名称的学校。1950年代，改名北京师范大学附中，至今仍沿用原来校址。

此信全文如下：

菽园仁兄大人阁下：前捧朵云，如获异宝，遂肃复函，谅尘青鉴。恭维起居□吉，潭第多欣，□挹芝晖，□□□颂。正阳门工程批定木植曾据厂商将合同一份、木样一方呈送前来，详加披阅。价廉材美，仰费仁神，得臻妥协，铭渤良深。第此项工程期限甚迫，所有各项物料现将购齐，必俟严柴运到，方能竖柱，次第成做，且万寿期近，总以夏间上梁，赶紧工作，方足以昭慎重。务祈鼎言转嘱木行，从速交付，俾木植早到一日，工程即可早一日告竣。弟亦藉轻责任，则尤拜赐于靡□□。敝部设立伊始，粗有端绪。兹将新订各章附呈台阅，尚希有以进我盼□。弟所办五城中学堂，规模大备，地周二百亩，藏书万卷，御赐《图书集成》尤为诸生所荣幸。惟经费支绌，急需设法筹措，以图扩充。查从前户部奏准筹款章程，内有“报效库平足银二万两，赏给举人”一条。吾闽经商星家坡者甚多，其次则惟粤商，均称殷富，见义勇为。阁下声望隆重，夙为众商钦服，若得大力劝导，多方招徕，俾令报效学堂经费，准为照章请奖举人，以昭激劝。阁下眷怀时局，热心教育，弟所深佩。伏乞注意赞成，庶下以广商人子弟登进之途，而上以副朝廷作育之至意。将来人材辈出，共济时艰，实于自强大计裨益匪浅，□高明定有同心也。临颖神驰，无任盼祷之至。肃此。敬请升安，并祈惠鉴，顺申谢悃。

愚弟陈璧顿首

考订这封信书写年份，关键依据在于信中“敝部设立伊始，粗有端绪”一句。所指系光绪二十九年七月，清政府新设商部，陈璧为右侍郎。“兹将新印各章附呈台阅”。指陈璧参与制定的该部官制、商律，并制定兴商会、保侨民等章程。因此此信书于1903年无疑。

陈璧致邱菽园第二组信共三件，内容前后相贯，亦采用大红信笺，正楷书写。此中第一封信信纸已破损严重，无法卒读，但可以看到其大体内容：正阳门工程采办木料曾托邱菽园帮助照料，现由于承接惠陵工程，派商人焦建勋赴新加坡采办，再请邱在当地多多予以关照。此信仅2页，十分重要的一点是信末署书写日期“闰五月二十日”，很容易考定这是1903年7月14日。随后两信，则分别书于1903年7月31日和1903年9月18日。此时陈璧与礼部侍郎溥善、直隶总督袁世凯一同办理“惠陵要工”。“惠陵要工”即同治皇帝惠陵修缮工程。同治年轻早逝，生前未开建陵墓，逝后于光绪元年（1875年）动工营建，历4年竣工，名惠陵。但当时国库力拙，所用材料不佳，工期又短，故20年后主殿棱恩殿出现木结构构件开裂、折损、腐朽等情形，不得不拆除重建。重建工程于1899年开工，中经八国联军入侵而停顿，拖延至1906年方始完竣。

陈璧在1903年7月31日的信中述说他原来制定的木材采购办法遇到障碍：以前皇家工程一律官办，效率低下，难免发生有人趁机营私舞弊、侵吞公款等事。陈璧设想改为商办，提高效率，不想发生驻新加坡总领馆翻译欺骗、敲诈营造商事件。他费尽周折，总算初步得以解决。信中“驻英张大臣”为清政府出使英国、义国（按，即意大利）、比国大臣张德彝。张德彝，满洲人，是中国最早习外语的毕业生，曾任光绪英文教习。“凤领事”系清政府驻新加坡总领事，名凤仪，任期为1902年5月至1906年1月。1877年清政府在新加坡设立领事，兼管海峡殖民地等处交涉事务，为清政府首次在海外设置的领事。因新加坡当时为英国属地，驻新加坡总领事受驻英大臣节制，所以陈璧还得通过张德彝来协调处理这些麻烦事。

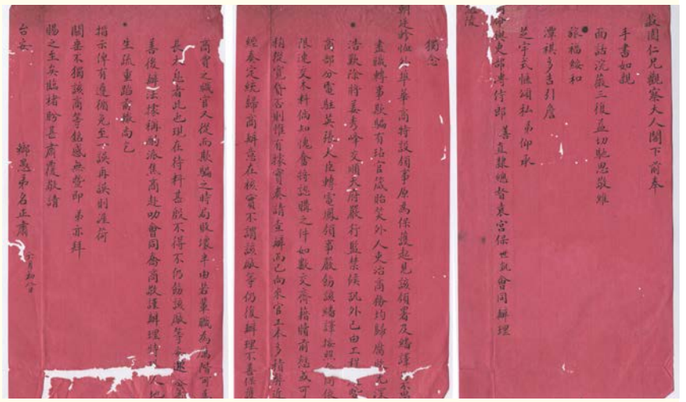
信件原文如下：

菽园仁兄观察大人阁下：前奉手书，如亲面话。浣薇三复，益切驰思。敬维旅福绥和，潭祺多吉，引詹芝宇，式惬颂私。弟仰承朝命，与吏部溥侍郎善、直隶总督袁宫保世凯会同办理惠陵。独念朝廷轸恤外埠华商，特设领事，原为保护起见。该领署及繙译乃不思尽职，转事欺骗，有玷官箴，贻笑外人。吏治商务，均归腐败，尤深浩叹。除将姜秀峰交顺天府严行监禁候讯外，已由工程处暨商部分电驻英张大臣转电凤领事，严饬该繙译按照合同依限，速交木料。倘知愧奋，将认购之件如数交齐，藉赎前愆，或可稍从宽贷，否则惟有据实奏请查办而已。向来官工本多积弊，近经奏定统归商办，意在核实。不谓该厂等仍复办理不善。保护商贾之职官，又从而欺骗之。时局败坏，半由若辈。职为厉阶，可为长太息者，此也。现在待料甚殷，不得不仍饬该厂等妥速公筹善后办法。据称酌派焦商赴叻会同乔商敬谨办理，特恐人地生疏，重蹈前辙，尚乞指示，俾有遵循，免至一误再误，则渥荷关垂，不独该商等铭感无暨，即弟亦拜赐之至矣。临楮盼甚。肃复。敬请台安。

乡愚弟 名正肃　六月初八日

信末署“名正肃”，是因内容秘密等原因，写信人不愿意具真名实姓时的代称。另有一种写法为“名心叩”。此信内容与上信相贯，笔迹也相同，故可以断定系陈璧所写。

最后一信缮于一个半月以后，陈璧告诉邱菽园，通过驻英张大臣施加影响，邱菽园在新对采购木材的乔姓商人予以关照和指导，事情已经取得付款、交货等具体解决办法。此信很长，限于篇幅，本文不再引用。



陈璧致邱菽园的第二组信件。*Courtesy of Ong Family, descendents of Khoo Seok Wan.*

以上四位清末福建籍高官致邱菽园的信件，保存了许多重要的历史信息。除曾宗彦外，三人与邱未曾谋面，但他们书信往来，所议皆为大事、要事，可见“乡谊”在当时社会上层中是何等重要。旧时，知识阶层或社会上层，社会关系中讲究戚谊、年谊和乡谊。戚谊指亲戚关系；年谊指科举科次（得中科举的年份，有如如今同一届毕业校友）；乡谊指同乡，可以是同县籍，广义指同省籍。外出为官、办事，如遇同乡人，便容易沟通和得到帮助。本文所涉几封信件，所言皆事关桑梓，直接关系到民众生计和疾苦，或者皇家重大工程、公立近代学堂等。这些大事，都希望得到华侨的支持。虽然笔者未见邱菽园的回信，在这几项具体事件中邱和南洋华侨曾否给予帮助，尚不得而知，但在百年历史过程中，华侨对故乡建设、民生攸关之事，无不给于关心和支援，所作的贡献是众所周知的，这几封信是这段历史的又一佐证。

引文说明：本文全文引用四封清末高官致邱菽园信均为王清建先生所藏原件一作者。♦

Dr Carl Schoonover on Being S.U.R.E

Dr Carl Schoonover, a neuroscience post-doctoral fellow at the Axel Laboratory at Columbia University, was a keynote speaker at S.U.R.E. Day held on 14 November 2013 at the National Library as part of its National Information Literacy Programme (NILP). The NILP seeks to simplify and promote information literacy, emphasising the importance of evaluation and discernment of information sources.

In essence, S.U.R.E represents four simple steps to assess information: Source, Understand, Research and Evaluate. S.U.R.E encourages people to check if their sources are reliable, delve deeper into available alternative sources and materials, and evaluate the information based on their findings.

In this exclusive interview, Dr Schoonover shares how the brain processes information and the importance of Information Literacy and the S.U.R.E. ways in the corroboration of information and data.

You have a background in philosophy and then decided to pursue a PhD in neuroscience. That seems like a remarkable shift where you moved from a general and abstract study of the mind and knowledge to a very specific, scientific study of the nervous system. Why or what inspired you to pursue a doctorate in neuroscience?

Philosophy, of course, is interested in many other things than just the mind, but that was perhaps the most interesting thing to me as an undergraduate in college. I felt eventually, as I got to know the field a little bit better, that we were asking a lot of questions in philosophy that needed answers from science. And I grew increasingly dissatisfied with the inadequacy that philosophy, as a study, presented. Philosophy was unable to offer empirical answers to explain the processes that define our consciousness and we can theorise about the state of the mind, the nature of consciousness, and how we decide, but what was lacking were facts about the machinery, about the process, and how these things happen in the nervous system. And so I grew frustrated with certain aspects of philosophy and decided to literally get my hands dirty and become an experimental research scientist.

Now, that is not to say that philosophy does not have anything to offer about how we look at the brain and how we look at the mind. And, certainly, I think the philosophers who are making the most progress today are the ones who are using information from neuroscience research and then drawing conclusions about philosophy or in philosophy from that information.

But for me personally, it felt more exciting, at this moment, at the beginning of the 21st century, to jump into what is ultimately a very young field, which is neuroscience, something that has only been around for a century – which in science, is nothing.

Information literacy is defined as the ability to know when there is a need for information and the ability to access, evaluate, use and create information in an effective and responsible manner. How do you see the process and application of information literacy as relevant to how the brain processes information?

The brain's function, basically, everything that it does, is to process information. The brain is an extraordinarily complex structure where information overload is really the starting point. As neuroscientists, we are beginning to have a grasp on what exactly is going on when information is processed by our nervous system in everyday life.

The brain is the ultimate arbiter of our perceptions, our interpretations and our decisions, our moment-to-moment evaluation of the world around us. The brain, then, is in the business of processing information coming in and producing what it deems to be the right response to this information. And so one way of thinking about the brain, is that it is a structure in which information is constantly flowing, and this is very similar to the process and application of information literacy.

Our problem in life is to take information in from the world, make sense of it, and then behave in the best way possible given that information. And often, that information is very fuzzy and dirty; we are not getting the full picture and we need to make decisions based on very incomplete data.

And so the brain really, is designed – from the standpoint of evolution – to make sense of very fuzzy data sets and to try to understand the world as best as possible, and when things are missing, it will sometimes even fill them in for you. A simple example is optical illusions. When we see an illusion, we think something is there that is not actually there and that is the brain getting tricked into doing what it does. Normally, we are trying to extract meaning all the time from what is being presented to us. We can take this metaphor more broadly to how we access information. Very often, we are only getting a very limited perspective because there is only so much time to present it. So we create stories, about how to make sense of all this in our heads.

The process and application of information literacy is contiguous to what the brain does to help us evaluate and mediate information as best it can. The world is so uncertain, and there's so much information coming in, some of it good and some of it bad, it has to solve this problem for us all the time.

NLB's S.U.R.E. campaign is about bringing information literacy awareness to the man in the street, where we condense the information-searching process into four steps – Source, Understand, Research and Evaluate. How would you explain the information searching behaviour and processes to the man in the street?

First of all, I think this campaign is very important and it is very exciting that it is happening because these are critical skills, especially today, where there is so much information coming from so many places: traditional media, the Internet and exploring the streets. It is very difficult to extract what is important, what is meaningful and what we are going to use to make decisions. Information literacy is a skill that in this current era ought to be promoted and I think it is very exciting that the S.U.R.E campaign is doing that today.

We need to Source, Understand, Research and Evaluate. These are all principles that scientists have also had to master in order to make sense of the complex objects that they study.

In scientific research, as in life, the information searching behaviour and processes are very similar. We should consider sources of our information, understand the data, research other avenues, obtain as many perspectives as we can and finally bring all of that information onto the table and try to make the best sense of it. And today as the world grows more and more complex, I think it is critical to improve our ability to deal with this growth of information that we encounter daily.

We are always concerned about whether the results of an experiment, which is the source of our information, are reliable. We need to understand what the context of that experiment is; what its strengths are and what its limitations are. Because we cannot see everything, our vision is always limited.

Scientific data is by its very nature a selective viewpoint and so to deal with this, we research other ways of looking into the same object and other experiments that will show other sides, other perspectives, other dimensions of the same problem. In order to see whether our perceptions match up, we need to evaluate the results. And this is the hardest part of experiments. To synthesise something, sometimes diverging results, contradictory findings, and make the best sense of our data.

I can speak about my own experience as a scientist, where basically we need to apply information literacy principles to our information searching behaviour and processes. We apply those same principles when we are looking at data and when we are looking at data from other laboratories. We always need to know where we are sourcing it from. We need to interpret the data and evaluate it. We need to place it in its broader context, understand what the biases are, and ultimately, try to make sense of it and synthesise all of these in our heads.

So, these are skills that translate back and forth between regular life on the street, life in the laboratory, life in the library and these are really critical skills that we need to develop. I think it's very exciting that NLB has launched this initiative. And for me personally, also as a scientist, the approaches of S.U.R.E are important ways of making sense of an increasingly complicated world, both in life and science.

Would you say that the way that the brain processes information is similar to how we would apply the S.U.R.E. steps?

I would say that in some cases yes and some cases no. The brain takes shortcuts and the reason it takes shortcuts is because we cannot process everything. So, the nervous system, even at the very early levels – that of the purely sensory levels – is constantly filtering what is coming in and extracting the general shape of things without giving you all of the information. In some cases, this is very useful because this

means we can react quickly to different situations, we can make decisions very quickly; but of course that leads us to errors sometimes.

With very few exceptions, the most elegant – and fruitful – neuroscience methods share a common principle: faced with the task of sorting out the daunting tangle of neurons and their incessant chattering, successful techniques tend to selectively restrict the vision of the scientist, rather than record everything under the sun. At any given moment we are aware of only a fraction of the details in our visual field: The brain excels at focusing on and extracting only the most meaningful signals flowing into the eye, providing us with only the information we need in order to react nimbly to events unfolding in the world around us.

And so, I would see something like what S.U.R.E. is doing as complementary because often the brain is right but sometimes it is wrong. When it goes wrong, it is when it fails to see different perspectives of the same things, fails to understand the sources and fails to understand biases of the information coming in. So I would say that by and large, the brain does a good job and then, every now and then, you really do need to go the extra step and fully analyse and source the situation that you are in.

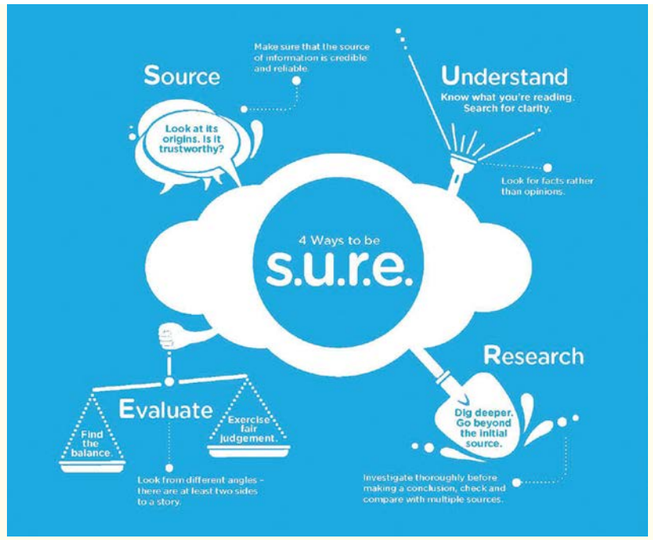
Can you share with us more on how the brain functions – specifically how it controls our decision-making process?

We only know the very tip of the iceberg on this kind of problem and as I have already mentioned, neuroscience is still a very young field and we are just only going into these kinds of questions.

But it seems that decision-making happens at different levels: there are certain things that are purely instinctual, where you do not even think about what you are doing. Something comes in and you react to it automatically. For example, the simplest would be when you hear a loud bang and you immediately take cover or crouch. This is a decision – you are deciding to do that but you are not fully conscious of it.

And then there is an entire range of different levels of decision-making, things that can take anywhere from between 10 seconds to 10 hours and these are involving very different areas of the brain. And as it gets more and more complex, it is less and less understood. But what is clear is that all of these are happening at a physical level and we are beginning to see the correlation of these events.

Information relating to these kinds of decisions is encoded in the brain, essentially using electrical spikes of voltage. The basic idea is that all of these information, sensory and all that, ultimately gets represented physically and electrically in the brain. And as the brain filters all these information, there are different levels of decisions that can be made and there are very clear physical correlations of that as it is happening.



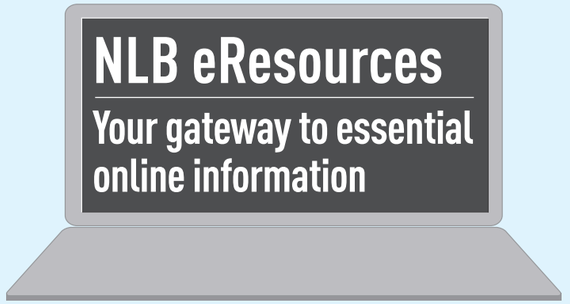
The National Information Literacy Programme promotes four simple steps – Source, Understand, Research and Evaluate – to assess information.

Conveniently, our brain automatically filters some information out, preventing confusion and helping you to solve the more pressing problem of saving your skin. Less information is far more useful, so long as it is good information. In one way or another, many of the most successful neuroscience techniques perform an analogous filtering. They enable the researcher to zero in on very specific features in nervous tissue, cutting out most of the overwhelming mess and preventing it from distracting you from focusing on the question you seek to answer. By imparting such a selective restriction of vision, the most ingenious methods have time and time again opened up formerly unsuspected universes.

The brain's innate propensity to filter out information actually works to our advantage, cutting through the clutter of this age of information overload. ♦

Currently an established neuroscience postdoctoral fellow in the Axel Laboratory at Columbia University, Dr Carl Schoonover is also the acclaimed author of Portraits of the Mind: Visualizing the Brain from Antiquity to the 21st Century *(Abrams, November 2010), a book that chronicles the fascinating exploration of the brain through images. Watch his illuminating TED Presentation on this subject at: http://www.ted.com/talks/carl_schoonover_how_to_look_inside_the_brain.html*

To view a full video of the exclusive interview with Dr Carl Schoonover, as well as highlights of S.U.R.E. Day, please visit: http://nlb.gov.sg/SURE



Pattarin Kusolpalin is a Librarian with the National Library of Singapore. She helped to develop the online platform for accessing Singapore and International Standards information. She is also part of the National Information Literacy Programme team and trains participants in proper research skills and techniques.

While there is no lack of online sources that provide information, authoritative and well-researched specialist knowledge found in scholarly journals, business market reports and other such dependable resources might not be so easy to locate.

Through its eResources service (http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg), the National Library Board connects its customers to over 70 databases that cover a comprehensive range of subjects from the arts to finance to health.

In this issue of *BiblioAsia*, we focus on business information. To be able to use the right tools for business information research, it is important to first establish the scope of your research and determine the following:

1. **TYPE OF INFORMATION REQUIRED, FOR EXAMPLE:**
   - Company information
   - Company executives
   - Market intelligence
   - Industry intelligence
   - Qualitative data
   - Statistics
   - Expert analysis
2. **TIME PERIOD, FOR EXAMPLE:**
   - Historical data
   - Current figures
   - Future trends
3. **MARKET, FOR EXAMPLE:**
   - Geographical coverage by country, region etc.
4. **OTHER RELATED DETAILS**

Here are some useful reference tools for those interested in business research.

BUSINESS MONITOR

Business Monitor provides comprehensive industry information covering a wide range of countries with weekly, monthly and annual reports on the latest available data, forecasts and analysis on political risk; economic performance and outlook; and the business environment in the finance and leading industry sectors. Its strengths are country risks and forecasts covering more than 175 international markets, as well as company intelligence profiling over 500 multinational companies and their subsidiaries. Business Monitor also provides strong industry analysis comprising quarterly market research and independent five-year industry forecasts for 16 different sectors across 60 country markets worldwide. Users are able to easily compare and export data as well as build reference charts.

Available at all libraries and from home. Full version of the database is available at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library only.

KOMPASS

Kompass provides company profiles, including their sizes, products and services. It contains information on over 19,500 Singapore companies' (including selected unlisted companies) and 1.8 million companies in over 75 countries. More than 3.6 million executives are easily searchable. The database also allows users to cross-reference other businesses thanks to its detailed classification system.

Limited to two concurrent access. Available at all libraries and from home.

HOW TO ACCESS NLB eRESOURCES

NLB eResources is free for all Singaporeans, permanent residents and foreigners with an NLB library membership. For information on library membership, please visit http://www.nlb.gov.sg/VisitUs/Membership.aspx

ACCESSING eRESOURCES FROM HOME

Go to http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg
Login using your NRIC no., name and birth date
Use the Browse List to locate the database
Click on the database

ACCESSING eRESOURCES IN THE LIBRARY

From your laptop, select Wireless@SG from the list of wireless networks
Login to your Wireless@SG account
Go to http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg
Use the Browse List to locate the database
Click on the database

NEED HELP?

If you need help with eResources, contact us at 6332 3255 or email ref@library.nlb.gov.sg

The National Library of Singapore presents

HISTORY**SG**

Ever wondered what Singapore was like before Raffles arrived in 1819?

HistorySG, NLB's new online resource guide, provides an informative first-stop portal of recommended resources and further readings to guide users in their discovery and exploration of Singapore's history from 1299 to the present.

To find out more, please visit
eResources.nlb.gov.sg/history