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National Library  
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சிங்கப்பூரில் தமிழ்  
இலக்கிய வளர்ச்சி

**12**

Women and Warfare  
in Malaysia and Singapore, 1941-89

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Chinese Dialect Groups and Their  
Occupations in 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup>  
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Green Matters: The Environment  
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## EDITORIAL/PRODUCTION

### SUPERVISING EDITORS

Veronica Chee  
Wong Siok Muoi

### EDITOR

Ng Loke Koon

### CONTRIBUTORS

Bonny Tan  
Geoff Wade  
Jaclyn Teo  
Joseph Dawes  
Mahani Awang  
Malarvele Ilangovan

Norasyikin Binte Ahmad Ismail  
Panna Kantilal  
Samuel Sng  
Sara Pek  
Tan Chee Lay

### DESIGN AND PRINT PRODUCTION

Orgnix Creatives

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Please direct all correspondence to:  
**National Library Board**  
100 Victoria Street #14-01 National Library Building Singapore 188064  
Tel: +65 6332 3255  
Fax: +65 6332 3611  
Email: ref@nlb.gov.sg  
Website: www.nlb.gov.sg

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# DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

**T**he eagerly awaited exhibition *Rihlah – Arabs in Southeast Asia (Rihlah means journey in Arabic)* was launched at the National Library on 10 April.

To be held till October, the exhibition acknowledges the close ties between Southeast Asia and the Arab community. On display are photographs and artefacts ranging from personal documents to musical instruments many of which are on public display for the first time. Be enthralled by the rich history and culture of the Arabs in Southeast Asia. This exhibition is definitely a visual feast not to be missed.

The “Spotlight” article documents the development of the Tamil literary scene in Singapore which has more than one hundred years of history. Featured in the article are some Tamil literary pioneers who have contributed significantly to the growth of Tamil literature in Singapore. Some major Tamil literary works are also mentioned in the article.

The research findings of two of our Lee Kong Chian Research Fellows, Tan Chee Lay and Mahani Awang, are published in this issue. Tan Chee Lay undertakes a comparative study of film criticism on Singapore films in post-1965 Singapore Chinese and English newspapers and journals. Film criticism plays an important role in contributing to and promoting the local film industry. Mahani Awang looks at the role and involvement of women in warfare in Malaysia and Singapore from 1941 to 1989. Using both historical method and gender as analytical tools, she attempts to find out the role of women vis-à-vis men in various activities connected to war.

The different Chinese dialect groups in Singapore are associated with certain skills and trades. A feature article by Jaclyn Teo, a librarian with the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, looks at the occupational specialisation of Chinese dialect groups in Singapore from 1819 till the 1950s. Highlighted in the article are the dominant trades for Hokkiens, Teochews, Cantonese, Hakkas and Hainanese.

Launched in April 2006, the National Library's Distinguished Readers Initiative aims to honour and pay tribute to prominent

and learned Singaporeans whose leadership and professional success in their respective fields have propelled Singapore as a key player on the global stage, whether in government, business, academia or the arts. The National Library was privileged to have interviewed Dr Andrew Chew, Distinguished Reader and former Chairman of the Public Service Commission. Excerpts of the interview are published in this issue.

Featured in this issue are three collections of the National Library – the Environment and Sustainability Collection, the Asian Children's Collection and the George Hicks Collection. The Environment and Sustainability Collection aims to inform and provide insights and ideas on a broad spectrum of resources on major environmental trends and issues such as climate change, global warming, sustainable development, green business and buildings and clean technology. The Asian Children's Collection is a unique collection of more than 20,000 children's titles with Asian content. It provides a good resource for researchers interested in the origins of Asian-oriented children's books and the influences and attitudes affecting the pattern and stages of their development. The National Library is fortunate to have received a collection of more than 3,000 books from George Lyndon Hicks – economist, author, book-lover, traveller, businessman and long-time Singapore resident. The collection's main areas of focus are the economics, history and culture of China, Japan and Southeast Asia.

Happy reading! We look forward to receiving your comments and feedback.

**Ms Ngian Lek Choh**

Director  
National Library

# சிங்கப்பூரில் தமிழ் இலக்கிய வளர்ச்சி



Edited By  
**Sundari Balasubramaniam**  
Librarian  
Lee Kong Chian Reference Library  
National Library

By **Malarvele Ilangovan**  
Senior Librarian  
Professional Services  
National Library

சுந்தரி **பாலசுப்ரமணியம்**  
நூலக அதிகாரி  
லீ கொங் சியன் மேற்கோள்  
தேசிய நூலக வாரியம்

மலர்விழி **இளங்கோவன்**  
முத்த நூலக அதிகாரி  
லீ கொங் சியன் மேற்கோள்  
தேசிய நூலக வாரியம்

“எங்கள் வாழ்வும் எங்கள் வளமும் மங்காத தமிழென்று சங்கே முழங்கு”, என்ற பாவேந்தர் பாரதிதாசன் கூற்றுப்படி தமிழ் மொழியின் சிறப்பும், செழிப்பும், அதன் பயன்பாடும் தமிழ் மொழியை உலக அரங்கில் தொன்மை மிக்க மொழிகளில் ஒன்றாக நிறுத்தியுள்ளது. அத்துடன் செவ்வியல் மொழிகளின் வரிசையிலும் தமிழ் சேர்க்கப்பட்டு, உலகளவில் தமிழைச் சிறப்புறச் செய்துள்ளது.

சிங்கப்பூர் சின்னஞ் சிறு தீவு நாடாயினும், சுமார் 14 ஆம் நூற்றாண்டிலிருந்தே வரலாற்று ஏடுகளில் குறிப்பிடப்பட்டு வந்துள்ளது. மேலும் தமிழ் நாட்டுடனும் தொடர்பு கொண்டிருக்கலாம் எனவும், கடாரம் கொண்ட சோழ மண்டலத்தின் ஆட்சிக்கு உட்பட்டிருக்கலாம் எனவும் தமிழ் நாட்டின் வரலாற்று குறிப்புகள் தெரிவிப்பதாக ஆய்வாளர்கள் கருதுகின்றனர்.

சுமார் 1880-களின் பிற்பகுதியில் பிழைப்புத் தேடி தமிழ் நாட்டிலிருந்தும், இலங்கையிலிருந்தும் சிங்கப்பூரில் குடியேறிய தமிழ் மக்கள் தங்கள் பண்பாட்டு கலாசாரத்தோடு தமிழ்மொழியையும் இங்கு வேரூன்றினர். கிடைக்கப்பெற்ற ஆவணங்களின் உதவியோடு சிங்கப்பூரின் தமிழ் இலக்கிய வரலாறு ஏறக்குறைய 130 ஆண்டுகள் பழமை வாய்ந்தது என வரலாற்று அறிஞர்கள் கணித்துள்ளனர். அதற்கு முன்பு படைக்கப்பெற்ற ஆவணங்கள் ஏதும் கிடைக்காததால் இதையே அனைவரும் ஏற்றுக்கொண்டனர். இன்று சிங்கப்பூர் அரசும், மக்களும் தமிழ்மொழிக்கும் தமிழ் இலக்கியத்திற்கும் கொடுத்துவரும் சிறப்பு அனைவரும் அறிந்ததே. உலகத்தில் தமிழ்நாட்டிற்கு அடுத்தபடியாக சிங்கையில்தான் தமிழ் ஆட்சிமொழியாக உள்ளது.

## சிங்கப்பூரின் தமிழ் இலக்கிய வரலாறு

இலக்கியம் என்பது ஒரு நாட்டின் சுயசரிதை போன்றது. ஏனென்றால் இலக்கியம் அந்நாட்டின் சமுதாய ஆவணமாகத் திகழ்கிறது. ஒரு தனி மனிதனையும் சமூகத்தையும் இணைக்கும் கருவியாகவும் காணலாம். மனிதர்களுடைய சமுதாய நம்பிக்கைகள், மக்களின் பழக்கவழக்கங்கள், பண்பாட்டுக்கூறுகள் ஆகியவற்றை இலக்கியம் பிரதிபலிக்கிறது. சிங்கப்பூர்த் தமிழ் இலக்கியம் என்பது சிங்கப்பூரின் பின்னணியில் சிங்கப்பூரர்களால் அல்லது நிரந்தரவாசிகளால் எழுதப்படுகின்ற இலக்கியம் எனலாம். 1870 பிற்பகுதியில்

சிங்கப்பூரில் தமிழ் அச்சகங்கள் நிறுவப்பட்ட நிலையில் பல செய்தித்தாள்கள் உருவாகி இலக்கிய வளர்ச்சிக்கு வித்திட்டன. இப்பின்னணியில் சிங்கப்பூரின் முதல் தமிழ்ப் படைப்பு ஒரு கவிதை நூலாக வெளிவந்தது.

1872 ஆம் ஆண்டு முகம்மது அப்துல் காதிர் அவர்கள் ‘முனாஜாத்து திரட்டு’ என்ற கவிதை நூலை எழுதினார். இது சிங்கப்பூரின் ஆகப் பழமையான நூல் எனச் சிறப்புற்றது. ஐந்தாண்டுகளில் மற்ற கவிதைத் தொகுப்புகளான ‘நகரந்தாதியும்’, ‘சித்திரகவிகளும்’ வெளிவந்தன. அவை சிங்கப்பூர் சுப்பிரமணிய சுவாமி மேல் பாடப்பெற்றவையாகும். நயமிக்க இக்கவிதைகள் ஆழ்ந்த தத்துவக் கருத்துக்களையும் பக்தி உணர்வையும் வெளிப்படுத்தின. இவற்றைச் சிங்கப்பூர் சி. கு. மகுதாம் சாயு அவர்கள் தமக்குச் சொந்தமாகிய ‘தீனோதய இயந்திர சாலையில்’ அச்சிட்டார். இந்துக் கடவுளைப்பற்றிய பற்றிய கவிதைகளை ஓர் இசுலாமியர் வெளியிட்டது பாராட்டத்தக்கவொன்று. அக்காலத்தொட்டே இங்கு மக்கள் சமய நல்லிணக்கமும் இன, மத ஒற்றுமையும் கொண்டிருந்தனர் என்பதை இது காட்டுகிறது.

1888 இல் மகுதாம் சாயு என்பவர் ‘வினோத சம்பாஷணை’ என்ற தலைப்பில் சிங்கப்பூரில் முதன் முதலில் சிறுகதைத் தொகுப்பு நூல் ஒன்று வெளியிட்டார். இதுவே சிங்கப்பூரில் தோன்றிய முதல் தமிழ்ச் சிறுகதையாகும். இச்சிறுகதைத் தொகுப்பு வெளிநாட்டு ஊழியர்களுக்கும் சிங்கப்பூரில் வசிக்கும் நிரந்தர வாசிக்கும் இடையே நடைபெறும் கருத்துப் பரிமாற்றங்கள், உரையாடல்கள் ஆகியவற்றைச் சித்திரிக்கின்றன. அக்காலகட்டத்தில் சிங்கப்பூருக்குப் பிழைப்பைத் தேடி வந்த இந்தியர்களின் மன நிலை, புதிய பழக்கவழக்கங்கள், புதிய மொழிகள் ஆகியவற்றைப் பற்றிய அவர்களின் குழப்பங்கள், பயம், எப்படித் தங்கள் வேலையை தக்க வைத்துக் கொள்ள போகிறோம் என்ற அச்சம் போன்றவைகளை இக்கதைகள் விவரிக்கின்றன.

இக்காலகட்டத்தில் அடுத்தடுத்தாக மேலும் சில நூல்கள் வெளிவந்தன. ந. வ. ரங்கசாமி தாசனின் ‘அதிவினோத குதிரைப் பந்தய லாவணியும்’, க. வேலுப்பிள்ளையின் ‘சிங்கை முருகேசர்பேரில் பதிகமும்’ ஒரே ஆண்டில் (1893) வெளியிடப்பட்டது. ஆரம்ப காலத்தில் சிங்கப்பூர்த் தமிழர்கள் கொண்டிருந்த இலக்கிய ஆர்வத்தை இது காட்டுகிறது. பழமையான சிங்கப்பூரில் எப்படி பிழைப்பைத் தேடி கடல்

கடந்து கப்பலில் சிங்கப்பூருக்கு வந்து தங்கள் வாழ்க்கையை அமைத்துக் கொண்டனர் என்பதைப் பற்றி எளிய மொழி நடையில் பரவலாக அக்கால மக்கள் பயன்படுத்தும் மாற்று மொழிச் சொற்கள் கலந்த நடையில் வெளிவந்த 'அதிவினோத குதிரைப் பந்தய லாஷனி' ஒரு பொது மக்கள் இலக்கியம் எனலாம். இவ்வாறாக புலவர் இலக்கியமாகவும் பொதுமக்கள் இலக்கியமாகவும் பக்தி இலக்கியமாகவும் சிங்கப்பூரில் தமிழ் இலக்கியம் வளர்ந்தது.

### எழுச்சி பெற்ற காலம்

1935-1945 காலகட்டத்தை சிங்கப்பூரின் தமிழ் இலக்கிய எழுச்சி காலமாகக் கொள்ளலாம். இதனைச் சீர்த்திருந்த காலம் எனவும் கூறுவர். ஈ. வே. இராமசாமிப் பெரியார் அவர்கள் தமிழ்நாட்டில் 1920களின் இறுதியில் கொண்டு வந்த சீர்த்திருத்தச் சிந்தனைகள் இங்குள்ள தமிழர்களுக்குள் எழுச்சியை ஏற்படுத்தின. இதன் விளைவால் சிங்கப்பூரில் தமிழ் இலக்கியத்தின் போக்கு மாறத் தொடங்கியது. பக்தி இலக்கியங்கள் சமுதாயச் சிந்தனையுள்ள இலக்கியங்களுக்கு வழிவிட்டன. 1929 இல் தொடங்கிய 'முன்னேற்றம்' என்ற இதழும் 1935 இல் தமிழர் சீர்த்திருத்தச் சங்கத்தின் குரலாக வெளி வந்த 'தமிழ் முரசு' நாளிதழும் தமிழ் இலக்கியங்கள் சிங்கப்பூரில் வளர்வதற்கு முக்கியக் காரணமாக அமைந்தன. மேலும் இவை சமுதாய உணர்வுகளையும் சமூக சிந்தனைகளையும் தூண்டுவதற்கு நல்லதொரு ஊடகமாக அமைந்தன. நிறைய படைப்புகள், தனி மனிதனின் சிந்தனையை மட்டும் பிரதிபலிக்காமல் அவனைச் சுற்றியிருக்கும் சமூகத்தையும் சுட்டிக் காட்டியது.

இந்த வரிசையில் சிங்கப்பூரில் தமிழ்க் கவிதைகளும் எழுச்சி கண்டன. 'ந. பழநிவேலு', 'சிங்கை முகிலன்' போன்றோரின் கவிதைகள் சீர்த்திருத்த உணர்வையும், துடிப்பையும் வெளிப்படுத்தின. தமிழ் நாட்டில் காலகாலமாக இருந்து வந்த அவல சமுதாயப் பிரச்சனைகள் இங்குள்ள எழுச்சி படைப்பிலும் மிளிரத் தொடங்கின. சாதிமதக் கொடுமை, கிழமணக் கொடுமை மற்றும் ஈழத் தமிழ் அதிகாரிகளின் அதிகாரத்திற்கு உட்பட்ட தென்னிந்தியத் தமிழர்களின் பரிதாப நிலை, மதச்சீர்த்திருத்தம் ஆகியவற்றைக் கருப்பொருளாகக் கொண்டுத் தங்கள் படைப்புகளை உருவாக்கினர்.

இரண்டாம் உலகப் போருக்குப் பிறகு நாளிதழாகத் தொடங்கப்பட்ட 'மலாயா நண்பன்' பல எழுத்தாளர்களையும் பத்திரிக்கையாளர்களையும் உருவாக்கியது. இந்த காலக்கட்டத்தில் தமிழ் முரசும் இதர இதழ்களோடு இலக்கிய வளர்ச்சிக்குப் பலவகையிலும் உறுதுணையாக இருந்தது. போரின் ஆதங்கத்தைப் பறைசாற்றும் வகையில் ந. பழநிவேலுவின் 'தலை வெட்டும் தர்பார்' என்னும் கவிதை ஜப்பானியரின் கொடுங்கோல் ஆட்சி ஏற்படுத்திய வருவை வெளிப்படுத்தியது. இக்காலக்கட்ட இலக்கியங்களில் விடுதலைவேட்கை மிளிர்வதை நாம் காணலாம். தமிழர்கள் ஒற்றுமைக்குப் பெரிதும் பாடுபட்ட தமிழ் முரசின் தலைவரான தமிழவேள் கோ. சாரங்கபாணி அவர்கள்,



திரு ந. பழநிவேலு

சாரங்கபாணி அவர்கள், தமிழர்களுக்காகத் 'தமிழர் திருநாளைத்' தோற்றுவித்துத் தமிழ் மக்களிடையே இன ஒற்றுமையையும், இலக்கிய ஆர்வத்தையும் வளர்த்தார். சிங்கப்பூர் தன்னாட்சி பெற்ற காலத்திலும் பின்பு தனிக் குடியரசு நாடாகிய காலகட்டத்திலும் சிங்கப்பூர்த் தமிழ் இலக்கியத்தை வளர்க்கப் புது எழுத்தாளர்கள் வரத் தொடங்கினர். மேலும் 1960களில் 'மாணவர் மணி மன்றம்', 'மாதவி' இலக்கிய இதழ் ஆகியன தமிழ் இலக்கிய வளர்ச்சிக்கு உறுதுணை புரிந்தன.

சுதந்திரத்துக்குப் பின் வந்த வளர்ச்சி சுதந்திரச் சிங்கையில் கவிதை இலக்கியம் மாற்றம் கண்டது. சிங்கப்பூர் குடியரசான காலகட்டத்தில் தோன்றிய கவிதை இலக்கியங்கள் மரபுக் கவிதைகளாகவும், குழந்தைப் பாடல்களாகவும் மெருகு பெற்றன. மரபுக் கவிதைகள் என்று சொல்லும் போது அது யாப்பு இலக்கணத்திற்கு உட்பட்டு நடக்கக் கூடிய கவிதைகளே ஆகும்.

க.து.மு. இக்பால், முருகதாசன், மு. தங்கராசன், பரணன், முத்துமாணிக்கம் போன்றோர் மரபுக் கவிதைகள் இயற்றினர். இம்மரபுக் கவிதைகள், இறையணர்வு, காதல், சமூகம் ஆகியவற்றிற்குத் தனித்துவம் கொடுத்துப் படைக்கப்பட்டுள்ளன.

### சுதந்திரத்துக்குப் பின் வந்த வளர்ச்சி

சுதந்திரச் சிங்கையில் கவிதை இலக்கியம் மாற்றம் கண்டது. சிங்கப்பூர் குடியரசான காலகட்டத்தில் தோன்றிய கவிதை இலக்கியங்கள் மரபுக் கவிதைகளாகவும், குழந்தைப் பாடல்களாகவும் மெருகு பெற்றன. மரபுக் கவிதைகள் என்று சொல்லும் போது அது யாப்பு இலக்கணத்திற்கு உட்பட்டு நடக்கக் கூடிய கவிதைகளே ஆகும்.

க.து.மு. இக்பால், முருகதாசன், மு. தங்கராசன், பரணன், முத்துமாணிக்கம் போன்றோர் மரபுக் கவிதைகள் இயற்றினர். இம்மரபுக் கவிதைகள், இறையணர்வு, காதல், சமூகம் ஆகியவற்றிற்குத் தனித்துவம் கொடுத்துப் படைக்கப்பட்டுள்ளன.



இக்பால், க. து. மு. 2003. காகித வாசம். சிங்கப்பூர்: வின் பதிப்பகம். All rights reserved, வின் பதிப்பகம், 2003.

சிங்கைக் கவிதை இலக்கிய முன்னோடிகளுள் ஒருவரான சிங்கை முகிலன் சிங்கப்பூரின் அரசாங்கத்தால் அங்கீகரிக்கப்பட்ட எழுத்தாளருமாவார். க.து.மு. இக்பால் தன் இலக்கியப் பணியில் மிளிரத்தொடங்கிப் பல சிறந்த படைப்புகளைச் சிங்கப்பூருக்கு அளித்தார். இதயமலர்கள் (1975), முகவரிகள் (1984), வைரக்கற்கள் (1995), கனவுகள் வேண்டும் (2000) ஆகியன அவர் படைப்புகளில் சில. க.து.மு. இக்பால் சிங்கப்பூர்த் தேசிய புத்தக மேம்பாட்டுக் கழக விருதையும், 'மொண்ட் பிலாங்' (Mont Blanc) விருதையும், 'தமிழவேள்' விருதையும், தென்கிழக்காசிய இலக்கிய விருதையும் பெற்று சிங்கப்பூர்த் தமிழ் இலக்கிய வளர்ச்சிக்குப் பெருமை சேர்த்துள்ளார்.

சிங்கப்பூரில் தொகுப்பு நூல்கள் அவ்வளவாக வெளிவரவில்லை. அதிலும் வரலாற்றுக் கண்ணோட்டத்தின் அடிப்படையில் ஒரு சில படைப்புகளை மட்டுமே காணலாம். தமிழவேள் கோ. சாரங்கபாணியைப் பற்றிக் 'கவிக்குலம் போற்றும் தமிழவேள்' என்னும் தலைப்பில் மு. தங்கராசு வெளியிட்ட தமிழவேளுக்குப் பெருமைச் சேர்த்தார்.

சிங்கப்பூரில் தொகுப்பு நூல்கள் அவ்வளவாக வெளிவரவில்லை. அதிலும் வரலாற்றுக் கண்ணோட்டத்தின் அடிப்படையில் ஒரு சில படைப்புகளை மட்டுமே காணலாம். தமிழவேள் கோ. சாரங்கபாணியைப் பற்றிக் 'கவிக்குலம் போற்றும் தமிழவேள்' என்னும் தலைப்பில் மு. தங்கராசு வெளியிட்ட தமிழவேளுக்குப் பெருமைச் சேர்த்தார்.

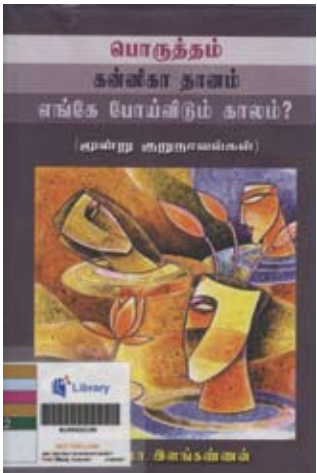
### நாவல்களின் வளர்ச்சி

நாவல்களின் வளர்ச்சி அவ்வளவாகத் தளிரவிடவில்லை. எனினும் ஒரு சில படைப்புகள் வெளிவந்தன. சிங்கப்பூர் இந்தியச் சமூகம்

நோக்கும் பிரச்சினைகள், சீன இந்திய மக்களுக்கிடையே ஏற்பட்ட கலப்புத் திருமணங்கள் ஆகியவற்றைக் குறித்து எழுதும் போக்கு இருந்தது. 'வேள்வி' என்னும் குறுநாவலில் நா. கோவிந்தசாமி தம்முடைய துணிச்சலான பாணியில் ஆலயம் எழுப்புவதில் ஏற்பட்ட பிரச்சினைகளை மையமாக வைத்து எழுதியுள்ளார்.



திரு நா. கோவிந்தசாமி



இளங்கண்ணன், சிங்கை மா. 2006. மூன்று குறுநாவல்கள். சிங்கப்பூர்: National Arts Council. All rights reserved, National Arts Council, 2006.

சிங்கப்பூர்த் தமிழ்ச் சிறுகதைகள். இதற்கு ஓர் உதாரணம் 'சபாரியா' என்னும் இராம. கண்ணபிரானின் கதையில் தமிழ்க் குடும்பத்திற்கும் மலாய் குடும்பத்திற்கும் இடையே ஏற்படும் நட்பைப் பற்றி அற்புதமாக சித்திரிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. இப்படி பல எழுத்தாளர்கள் உருவாகினார்கள். அவர்களுள் சிங்கைமா இளங்கண்ணன், மு. தங்கராசன், சிங்கைத் தமிழ்ச்செல்வம், ஜே. எம். சாலி, சங்கரி ராமானுஜம், ஏ. பி. சண்முகம் ஆகியோர் குறிப்பிடத்தக்கவர்கள்.

### நாடகங்களின் வளர்ச்சி

நாடகத்துறையும் சிங்கப்பூர்த் தமிழ் இலக்கியத்திற்குப் பெரும் பங்கு ஆற்றியது என்று சொன்னால் அது மிகையாகாது. பல நாடகங்கள் வானொலியிலும், மேடையிலும் அரங்கேறின. சில நாடகங்கள் நூல் உருவம் பெற்று வந்திருக்கின்றன என்பது குறிப்பிடத்தக்கது. 'சுவடுகள்' 'சிங்கப்பூரில் மேடை நாடகங்கள்' ஆகிய நூல்கள் சிங்கப்பூரின் நாடகவளர்ச்சிக்கு

### சிறுகதைகளின் வளர்ச்சி

நாவல்களுடன் ஒப்பிடும் போது சிங்கப்பூரில் சிறுகதைகளின் வளர்ச்சி ஓங்கியிருந்தது. மேலும் வாசகர் வட்டத்தில் மிகுந்த பாராட்டையும் செல்வாக்கையும் சிறுகதைகள் பெற்றன. மண்ணின் மணம் கமிழும் சிங்கப்பூரின் பின்னணிச் சூழ்நிலையில் மனித உணர்வுகள், வாழ்க்கை, அல்லல்கள் போன்றவைகளைப் பிரதிபலித்து ஒரு அற்புதப் படைப்பாகச் சிறுகதைகள் வெளிவந்தன.

உதாரணத்திற்கு திரு நா. கோவிந்தசாமியின் 'ஒட்டுண்ணிகள்', திரு இராம. கண்ணபிரானின் 'ஆறுபத்து பதினேழு', திரு பொன் சுந்தரராசுவின் 'என்ன தான் செய்வது?' திரு செங்கோடனின் 'நான் ஒரு சிங்கப்பூரியன்' போன்ற சிறுகதைகள் சிங்கப்பூரின் சமுதாயப் பின்னணியில் எழுத்தப்பட்டவை.

பல இன மக்களைக் கொண்ட நாட்டில் எப்படி இன நல்லிணக்கம் இருக்கிறது என்பதைப் பிரதிபலித்து காட்டுகின்றன



திரு பி. கிருஷ்ணன்

### குழந்தைகள் இலக்கியம்

சிங்கப்பூரில் குழந்தை இலக்கியம் வளர ஊடகங்கள் துணைபுரிந்தன. தமிழ் முரசில் மாணவர் மணிமன்றம் என்ற தனிப்பகுதி 1952 லிருந்து வெளிவந்து சிறுவர்களின் எழுதும் ஆற்றலை வளர்த்தது. க. து. மு. இக்பால், முருகதாசன்,



மலர்விழி இளங்கோவன். 2003. இதோ வந்தது டைனோ All rights reserved, TamilBookShop.com., 2003.

அம்மா எங்கே?, 'இதோ வந்தது டைனோ' என்ற இரண்டு சிறுவர் கதைப் புத்தகங்களை வெளியிட்டுள்ளார்.

### இலக்கிய வளர்ச்சிக்கு அரசாங்கத்தின் ஊக்குவிப்பு

சிங்கையில் உள்ள இருமொழிக் கொள்கையினால் தமிழ் மொழிக்கு அரசாங்கத்தின் அங்கீகாரம் கிடைத்திருக்கிறது. தமிழ் இலக்கிய வளர்ச்சிக்குச் சிங்கப்பூர் அரசாங்கம் பெரிதும் ஆதரவு அளித்து வருகிறது. மேலும் தமிழ் மொழியின் வளர்ச்சிக்கு ஊடக வளர்ச்சியும் பெறும் பங்காற்றி வருகிறது. சிங்கப்பூரில் தொலைக்காட்சி, வானொலி, செய்தித்தாள் ஆகிய மக்கள் தொடர்புத் தகவல் சாதனங்கள் தமிழ் இலக்கிய வளர்ச்சிக்குப் பெரிதும் உதவி வருகின்றன. மேலும் சிங்கப்பூர் அரசாங்கம் இலக்கிய வளர்ச்சியை ஊக்கப்படுத்தும் வகையில் இலக்கியம், கலை ஆகியவற்றில் சிறந்து விளங்குபவர்களைக் கண்டறிந்து உயரிய 'கலாசார விருது' வழங்கி வருகிறது.

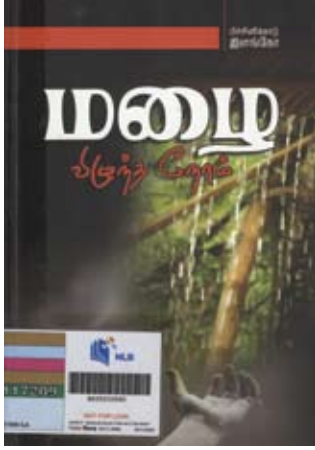
அரசாங்கத்தால் நடத்தப்படும் 'எழுத்தாளர் வாரம்', 'சிங்கப்பூர் கலைவிழா' ஆகிய நிகழ்ச்சிகள் எழுத்தாளர்களின் படைப்பாற்றலுக்கு ஆதரவும் ஊக்கமும் அளிக்கின்றன. அத்துடன் சிங்கப்பூரில் இயங்கும் அமைப்புகளுள் ஒன்றான தேசியப் புத்தக மேம்பாட்டுக் கழகம் சிறந்த படைப்பாளர்களுக்கு விருது வழங்கி கௌரவிக்கிறது.

எடுத்துக்காட்டாய்த் திகழ்கின்றன. மேலும் பி. கிருஷ்ணனின் நாடகப் படைப்புகளான 'மாடி வீட்டு மங்களம்,' 'அடுக்கு வீட்டு அண்ணாசாமி' ஆகியன சிங்கப்பூர்த் தமிழ் இலக்கிய ஆர்வலர்களின் நெஞ்சங்களில் நீங்காத இடம் பிடித்து விட்டன.

தாய்லாந்து அரசாங்கத்தால் வழங்கப்படும் 'தென்கிழக்காசிய இலக்கிய விருது' சிறந்த இலக்கியப் படைப்பிற்கு வழங்கப்படும் உயரிய விருதாகும். தென்கிழக்காசியாவில் ஆசியான் கூட்டமைப்பில் உள்ள நாடுகளின் அதிகாரத்துவ மொழிகளில் படைக்கப்படும் தலைசிறந்த இலக்கியங்களுக்கு இவ்விருது வழங்கப்படுகிறது. இந்தப் பெருமை தமிழ் எழுத்தாளர்களில், சிங்கப்பூர்த் தமிழ்ப் படைப்பாளிகளுக்கு மட்டுமே உரியது. தென்கிழக்காசியாவின் கூட்டணியில் தமிழை ஆட்சிமொழியாகக் கொண்டுள்ள நாடு சிங்கப்பூர் மட்டுமே. இந்த அங்கீகாரம் தமிழ்மொழிக்குக் கிடைத்த ஓர் உயரிய சிறப்பாகும். சிங்கப்பூர்த் தமிழ் இலக்கியம், ஆசியாவின் அரங்கில் இடம்பெறுவது தமிழுக்கு மட்டுமல்ல, சிங்கப்பூருக்கும் பெருமையாகும்.

### சிங்கப்பூர் இலக்கியத்தின் எதிர்காலம்.

சிங்கப்பூர்த் தமிழ் இலக்கியம் ஒரு நூற்றாண்டுக்கு மேல் வளர்ச்சி கண்டிருப்பினும், இன்னும் புதுமையான



இளங்கோ, பிச்சினிக்காடு. 2009. மழை விழுந்த நேரம். தஞ்சை: காடு பதிப்பகம். All rights reserved, காடு பதிப்பகம், 2009.

சிந்தனையுடன் மிளிர்வதற்கு வாய்ப்புகள் உண்டு. சிங்கப்பூர் எழுத்தாளர்கள் படைப்பாற்றல் மிக்கவர்கள் என்பதில் ஐயமில்லை. குடியரசில் வளர்வதற்கும், வாழ்வதற்கும் ஊக்கமூட்ட நமது அரசாங்கம் தயாராக இருக்கிறது. கிடைக்கும் வாய்ப்பை எழுத்தாளர்கள் நன்கு பயன்படுத்திக்கொள்ள வேண்டும்.

பல இன சமுதாயமும், மதங்களும், கலாசாரமும் கொண்ட சிங்கப்பூரில் தமிழ் இலக்கியம் தனித்தன்மை வாய்ந்துப் பொலிவுடன் திகழ்வது சாத்தியம். படைப்பாளர்கள் ஆழ்ந்த

சிந்தனையுடன் சமுதாயத்தை ஒட்டி ஒரு வரையரைக்குள் மட்டுமல்லாது பரவலாகச் சிந்தித்துப் பல கோணங்களில் சமூகத்தைப் பார்வையிட்டுத் தரமான இலக்கியங்களைப் படைக்க வேண்டும். மா. அன்பழகன், பிச்சினிக்காடு இளங்கோ, ஜெயந்தி சங்கர் போன்றவர்கள் சிங்கப்பூர் குழுவில் தங்கள் இலக்கியங்களைப் படைக்கின்றனர். இவர்களைப் போன்று மேலும் பல புதிய எழுத்தாளர்கள் நிறைய எழுத வேண்டும்.

தமிழ்மொழியில் நன்கு தேர்ச்சி பெற்றவர்கள் தமிழ் இலக்கிய வளர்ச்சிக்குப் பங்காற்றினால் சிங்கப்பூரில் தமிழ் வாழும், தமிழ் வாழும் வரை தமிழ் இலக்கியங்களும் வாழும். சிங்கப்பூரில் தமிழ் இலக்கியம் மேன்மேலும் தனித் தன்மையுடனும் புதுப் பொலிவுடனும் மிளிர்வது திண்ணம்.

### TAMIL LITERARY DEVELOPMENT IN SINGAPORE

Singapore's Tamil literary development has more than a hundred years of history. Tamil-speaking Indians arrived in this region in the 18th and 19th centuries and brought with them the Tamil language. Over the years, the Tamil community became a clearly distinguishable ethnic group within the Singapore Indian community. Tamil language attained a high status in the lives of the early settlers. The Tamil diaspora has developed an aspiration to nurture Tamil as a vital language that links them to their culture.

The recognition of Tamil as one of four national languages in Singapore gave the Tamils an intrinsic satisfaction. The Tamils developed the language's literary status in Singapore over a span of hundred years in several aspects of Tamil literature -- poetry, novels, short stories and drama. The Tamil literary scene in Singapore is more than literature. It began as a movement in the early days with the renaissance of the Tamil language in Singapore. Prolific Tamil writers contributed to the development and status of Tamil literature in Singapore. There is certainly much potential for new and emerging writers to contribute to the Tamil literary development in Singapore. ■

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# A Comparative Study of Film Criticism

on Singapore Films in Post-1965 Singapore Chinese and English Newspapers and Journals



by **Tan Chee Lay**  
Lee Kong Chian  
Research Fellow  
National Library

## INTRODUCTION

Film criticism plays a role in contributing to the growth of the film industry, as well as to the cultural, educational and even social fields. Film criticism in different languages and contexts, be it journalistic criticism that appears regularly in newspapers or magazines, or scholarly criticism in academic journals, can in fact serve as important and sometimes indispensable platforms to evaluate, promote and even influence films and film productions.

The aim of this bilingual study is to comparatively investigate both the macro and micro aspects of film criticism published in English and Chinese newspapers and journals. The research concentrates on the critical essays and reviews on Singapore films that were published after 1965. Various aspects of film criticism in both English and Chinese languages will be examined, as well as their content. In addition to promoting interaction between English and Chinese films and critical writing communities as well as international English and Chinese readers, this bilingual study also hopes to reach out to international performing arts in both the East and West. The bilingual aspect of the study also further enhances the distinctive culture identity of the multicultural and multilingual Singapore society, and thus plays a role in laying the foundation for progress towards a more artistically dynamic nation.

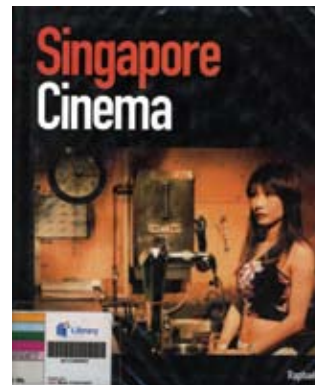
## A BRIEF HISTORY OF SINGAPORE'S FILM INDUSTRY

Singapore's cinema industry can be traced back to the mid-1920s and mid-1930s, when multi-ethnic and multicultural influences began to take root in film-making. The peak years of Singapore film industry, in terms of production, spanned from 1947 to 1972. The industry flourished and was dominated by two major film studios – Shaw and Cathay-Keris studios. Both studios had their own facilities such as film sets, studios and editing rooms. Shaw's Malay Films Productions churned out almost 160 films from its Singapore studio from 1947 until its closure in 1967.

Furthermore, many local individuals and organisations started venturing into film production during the late 1950s to 1970s. This led to a surge in the number of local film studios and companies. This phenomenon was partly due to the strong

nationalistic sentiments that developed just before Singapore's independence. People began to talk about films made by Singaporeans for Singapore.

However, the film industry declined significantly after Singapore's independence in 1965. Rapid modernisation and the popularisation of television and foreign movies in Singapore brought about great changes to public tastes and lifestyles. Furthermore, lack of governmental support, closure of studios, and stricter censorship laws contributed to the halt of local film production at the end of 1978.<sup>1</sup>



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Didier Millet Pte Ltd, 2006.

Revival of the Singapore film industry came gradually, with Singapore's government recognising the need to revitalise the film industry during the late eighties. After the long hiatus, the first Singapore feature film was produced in 1991; it was *Medium Rare*, which unfortunately was not very well received, partially due to the director being British and the lead actors being American. The industry started picking up only in 1995, with the release of Eric Khoo's *Mee Pok Man*. Since 1995, there has been a constant production of local films. The revived Singapore cinema from the 1990s was characterised by short and feature films, shot predominantly in Chinese and occasionally in English. These films are deeply rooted in reflecting the urban lifestyle, with a strong focus on life in public housing.<sup>2</sup> Names such as Eric Khoo, Jack Neo and Royston Tan became synonymous with Singapore films. From Table 1, it is clear that the Singapore film industry has seen a significant revival.

The rise in local film production took a dip before making a gradual increase. A strong upward trend took place from 1994/1995 onwards. Notably, 1998 saw another surge in the number of local films produced. This could be attributed to the box office success of Jack Neo's *Money No Enough*, which could be considered to be a great confidence booster for local filmmakers.



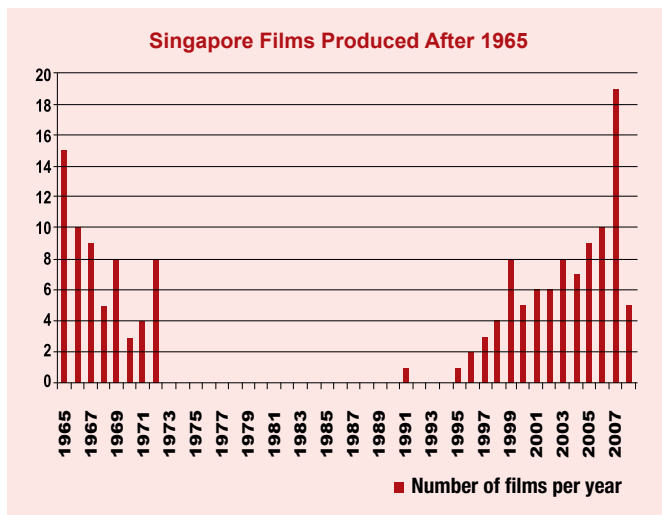


Table 1

### DEFINITION OF A SINGAPORE FILM

Defining a Singapore film has always been a tricky issue. One would expect Singapore cinema to be locally rooted, to reflect the various ethnicities and languages of Singapore and capture the different themes of local lifestyles. However, since the birth of Singapore's film industry, a key characteristic of the film industry is the use of talents from different countries and cultural backgrounds. Both Shaw and Cathay-Keris' early films featured casts and crews of talents recruited from China and India. Recent films have once again proved that "home-grown" or local films might not necessarily be filmed, produced or performed by locals. This is a situation that is fast becoming the norm in a rapidly globalised world. "Made-by-Singapore"<sup>3</sup> films are defined as "made with Singapore talent, financing and expertise but not necessarily entirely made in Singapore or made for the Singapore audience only"<sup>4</sup>. Though it was commented that "none of these films, however, contributed to having a Singapore identity on screen"<sup>5</sup>, these co-productions have allowed Singapore to be placed on the global stage of the cinematic industry. Moreover, such international co-productions which involve several countries are increasing worldwide, and it has become increasingly difficult to draw a clear line as to which country a film should be credited. Film historiographers are "witnessing a weakening, if not the demise, of the traditional concept of 'national cinema', defined by territory, language and a homogenous culture."<sup>6</sup>

While it may not even occur to most local audiences that the films they are watching are "Made-by-Singapore" films, such films are imperative for Singapore to move towards gaining international exposure and recognition. Besides, Singapore companies learn and benefit through their experiences of working with established overseas film production companies. Thus, this study will include film criticism on films that were produced locally, and "Made-by-Singapore" films. As 1991 marks the revival of Singapore's film industry (refer to Table 1), it comes as no surprise that film criticisms and articles have increased significantly since then, and which are reflected in the data collected below.

### DATA COLLECTION

This analysis is based on various local film reviews collected mainly from both local English and Chinese newspapers, and to a lesser degree, local journals.

This study comprises a comprehensive list of Singapore feature films. Short, non-commercial films with limited or no release, digital films or other non-theatrical films are excluded, as well as the various reviews in Chinese and English on feature films. However, there are some limitations in this collection.

First, not all films have both Chinese and English commentaries, thus it is impossible to perform an exact film-to-film comparison. Second, during the period of data collection, two new newspapers – *My Paper and Today* – have surfaced, and their form of writing and critique are very different in style compared with the traditional ones found in *Lianhe Zaobao* or *The Straits Times*, hence affecting the comparability of data collected. Third, I have chosen to implement a general trend analysis instead of a film-by-film analysis for this report. This is because a general trend analysis will allow us to identify the evolving trends and mitigate the fact that different films have different numbers of reviews, or may lack either Chinese or English reviews. Fourth, although a number of newspapers/journals rate films, I have chosen not to take these ratings into consideration when comparing the reviews. This is because these ratings are based on varying grading scales. In addition, there are many newspapers that do not carry any ratings. Lastly, there are a larger number of English reviews than Chinese reviews, simply because there are more English newspapers and journals than Chinese ones.

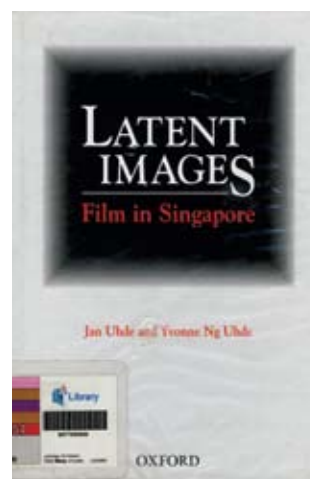
In total, this report focuses on the data of 89 feature films starting from 1991 to 2008. Correspondingly, there are a total of 237 reviews collected and researched; of these, 69 are Chinese films reviews and 168 are English reviews.

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### *English Film Reviews Appear to be More Encouraging than Chinese Film Reviews*

In general, both Chinese and English reviewers have, over the years and especially after the 1990s, given Singapore films

rather negative reviews. However, English film reviewers appear to be relatively more encouraging than Chinese films reviewers. Interestingly, many of the Chinese film reviews before 1965, in comparison, were more encouraging in nature as they sympathised with local filmmakers while acknowledging the difficult film-making circumstances.<sup>7</sup> This may explain why some readers may still hold the perception that Chinese film criticism is more forgiving or positive.



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An example is the film *The Leap Years*. Two *Lianhe Zaobao* reviewers on the film unanimously gave it bad reviews.<sup>8</sup> The review published in the *Today* newspaper, however, was not good but still encouraging. It ended off with “Nice effort, hope to see more good - if not better - work in the future”.<sup>9</sup> The effort in producing the film has been clearly acknowledged, although the results may speak otherwise.

One explanation for such a difference in treatment by English and Chinese reviewers may be the difference in cultures between the West and the East, or correspondingly, the English-speaking and Chinese-speaking communities in Singapore. In the West, failure or occasional mistakes seem to be more acceptable and thus people are more encouraging towards failures. However, in the East, mistake or failure is more often frowned upon.

### **Chinese Film Reviews Include Both Entertainment and Artistic Indexes**

In many of the Chinese Film Reviews by *Lianhe Zaobao*, there are both entertainment and artistic ratings for the films. This is a more balanced and comprehensive form of reviewing films. First, English film reviewers generally give only a singular overall film review, which may not do justice to the film. Audiences frequently simply judge a film on the overall film rating, regardless of what the rating is based on. For example, a commercial film might not have a high artistic value, but is still very entertaining for the mainstream audience. By separating the artistic factor and entertainment factor of the film, audiences are better able to judge if a local film would suit their viewing susceptibilities.

One prominent example is the review of Jack Neo's *I Not Stupid Too* in the *Business Times*. The overall review was highly negative, save for one sentence that acknowledged that it would have its target mainstream entertainment audience. However, with the film getting an overall rating of C-, it is possible that readers would not pick up this line but merely glance at the overall rating before moving on to the next movie rating. On the other hand, although the *Lianhe Zaobao* reviewer commented that the movie was overtly “preachy” and awarded it a mere two stars for its artistic factor, it still rightly gave it three stars for its entertainment factor<sup>10</sup>. Hence audiences are better informed, and those who weigh entertainment over artistry would still consider watching the film. In this scenario, it is certain that the *Lianhe Zaobao*'s star ratings would stand out more than the *Business Times*'s one-liner that praised the film's entertaining factor.

Having a two-tier rating system would project a more balanced view of the film production, and further offer review readers an alternative perception of the different emphases undertaken by local films. Of course, it is not to say that artistic and entertainment factors are mutually exclusive, but there are certainly different emphases as exemplified in many local productions, such as the abovementioned Jack Neo's film. Furthermore, it should not come as a surprise that top box office performers, such as *I Not Stupid*, are high in entertainment value but low in the artistic department; this co-relationship is

apparently more palpable with the introduction of an entertainment classification system. In addition, the two-tier rating, in a way, also balances the comparatively more negative criticism of Chinese reviews as mentioned in the preceding section.

### **MORAL VALUES**

Chinese film reviewers tend to stress more on moral-related themes brought up by the films in their reviews compared with to English film reviewers. This is likely because Chinese culture places more emphasis on advocating moral values and their various manifestations, including how they are portrayed in films. The emphasis on moral values in Singapore's Chinese film reviews has been prevalent since the emergence of Chinese films. Much evidence can be found in Singapore Chinese newspapers during the 1950s to 1970s with the beginning of the popularity of local Chinese film productions.

A recent example of such an emphasis can be seen in the differing Chinese and English film criticism and reviews on Royston Tan's *15*. The English reviewers for this film focused on character development, Tan's filming techniques and effort.<sup>11</sup> However, the Chinese critics for this film went a step further to discuss the injustice in our society in general. One article even commented on how society needed to improve its treatment of marginalised teenagers and how the education system could improve to cater to these teens,<sup>12</sup> turning the review into an educational doctrine and a social commentary as well as a film criticism.

The above example illustrates the trend of Chinese film reviews focusing more on moral values than English film reviews, a phenomenon that runs parallel to the Chinese tradition of *wen yi zai dao* (the text is the carrier of the Way, or the moral values).

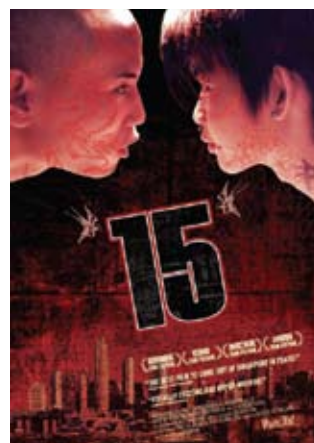
### **CONCLUSION**

With the current revival of Singapore-made-films, it is important that a study is conducted to analyse the trends of what local film reviewers are writing about our local films.

First, it would be useful for film-makers to understand and even utilise these trends as film-making is never only about filming the film itself; it is a comprehensive project. Producers of Singapore films could make use of the identified trends to target varying segments of the population and appeal to different language-speaking audiences. With this inclusion, the film would also resonate with its target Singaporean community.

Second, the average film-goer may wish to understand contemporary local film trends and biases in making an informed choice in choosing a film to view.

Third, for scholars who are doing in-depth research



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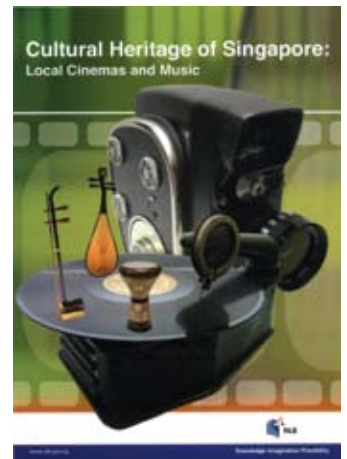
papers on Singapore films, this study may highlight to them certain trends and even biases, which should be taken into consideration in researches on local films.

Another interesting trend to note, which is outside the scope of this paper, would be the economic trends and the number of movies made. The years 1997/1998 were the height of the Asian economic crisis. However, this period also marked a sharp increase in the number of films produced. This possibly shows a trend of films as a voice of the people or, at the very least, the use of films as an outlet for frustration. Future researchers may wish to probe further into this area.

It is hoped that this study has successfully highlighted the various characteristics of English and Chinese film reviews. With this success, we would achieve the aim of better understanding the concerns of various local film critics and the trends of local film criticism. Equipped with a stronger understanding, we would be able to read between the lines when perusing film reviews of both languages, taking in consideration the fact that the standpoints behind varying film reviews differ from time to time. Only in understanding these varying stands and backgrounds would we be able to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the film itself. In addition, different standpoints help us interpret the films in different ways. Understanding and highlighting the special characteristics and merits of

Singapore film criticism will also act as cultural ballast in our nation-building efforts, which hopefully has been shown in this research, as a true appreciation of our literary heritage would strengthen Singaporeans' sense of national identity and belonging.

Critical essays and reviews of Singapore films examine both art and commercial films, and the researches of these writings are crucial and essential in promoting Singapore films. It is also one of the ways to show appreciation and give recognition to films producers, directors, individual critics, etc., whose works have greatly inspired the lives of Singaporean and international audiences, writers and readers. It is the hope that this report will not only highlight the special characteristics and merits of Singapore films and film criticism, but will also aid in recognising film and film criticism as an important make-up of our cultural identity and literary heritage. ■



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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Millet, R. (2006). *Singapore Cinema*. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet Pte Ltd, p115.

<sup>2</sup> Millet, R. (2006). *Singapore Cinema*. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet Pte Ltd, p114.

<sup>3</sup> One of the thrusts of Media 21, as set by Singapore's Media Development Authority with the aim of turning Singapore into a global media hub, is to increase the export of Made-by-Singapore products.

<sup>4</sup> Lee, S. (2003, August 4). Stepping Out. *The Straits Times*.

<sup>5</sup> Millet, R. (2006). *Singapore Cinema*. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet Pte Ltd, p95.

<sup>6</sup> Uhde, J. & Uhde Y.N. (2000) *Latent Images: Films in Singapore*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, p2.

<sup>7</sup> 易水:《马来亚华语电影问题》,新加坡:南洋印刷社,1959,p123。

<sup>8</sup> 李亦筠:〈影艺新电团推介〉,《联合早报》,2008年3月1日;洪铭铨:〈影艺人生如戏戏不如人生?〉,《联合早报》,2008年3月7日。

<sup>9</sup> Toh, C. (2008, February 27). A Big Leap of Faith: Intriguing Promise about Two Lovers Who Meet Every Four Years. *Today*, <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/moviesreviews/view/331355/1.html>.

<sup>10</sup> 洪铭铨:〈《小孩不笨2》摆明是教育片〉,《联合早报》,2006年1月28日,p15。

<sup>11</sup> Ong, S.F. (2003, October 22). Short Cuts. *The Straits Times*.

<sup>12</sup> 林十五:〈《十五》少了一巴掌〉,《联合早报》,2003年5月13日。

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6. 洪铭铨:〈《小孩不笨2》摆明是教育片〉,《联合早报》,2006年1月28日,p15。

7. 洪铭铨:〈影艺人生如戏戏不如人生?〉,《联合早报》,2008年3月7日。

8. 林十五:〈《十五》少了一巴掌〉,《联合早报》,2003年5月13日。

9. 李亦筠:〈影艺新电团推介〉,《联合早报》,2008年3月1日。

10. 易水:《马来亚华语电影问题》,新加坡:南洋印刷社,1959. Call no.: Chinese 791.4301 IXS.

# Women and Warfare in Malaysia and Singapore, 1941-89



By **Mahani Awang**

Lee Kong Chian  
Research Fellow  
National Library

## INTRODUCTION

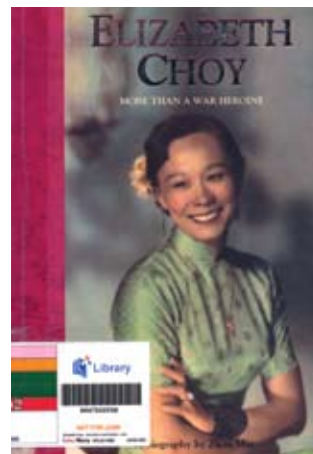
Much has been written about warfare – conquest and revolution, heroes and enemies. Yet women’s experience in warfare remains an uncharted area in Southeast Asian history. The paucity of records was partly rooted in patriarchal bias and ignorance on the part of historians when constructing new “autonomous” national histories after independence which sidelined those (including women) who did not fit into the new emerging national narratives, and was often cited as the main reason for this unfavourable situation. This led to misconceptions about women’s involvement in war. In the case of the Vietnam war, women soldiers remained invisible to most Americans and to the public gaze despite their contributions to the war and despite being an important facet of the most photographed war in history. With regards Malaya (including Singapore before their separation in 1965), the groundbreaking study on former Malayan Communist Party (MCP) women guerillas by Agnes Khoo (2004) in *Life as the River Flows* remains unchallenged, although there were efforts to compile stories on the life of former guerillas through video documentary.

This paper explores the involvement of women in warfare in Malaya and Singapore (also in south Thailand after the relocation of the MCP to the Malaya–Thai border in 1953) since 1941 until the 1989 Hat Yai Peace Accord. Using both historical method and gender as analytical tools, the study attempts to see how women differ from men in various activities connected to war.

## MYRIAD FACETS OF WOMEN IN WAR

History has shown the involvement of women in war in a myriad facets ranging from warriors, fighters and spies to women as wives, daughters, lovers and war-victims (including internees). In Southeast Asia, the Japanese Occupation during World War II saw women entering the war zone as fighters, internees and war-victims and some were involved indirectly by providing various assistance to the anti-Japanese guerillas without their entry into the war zone, such as in the case of two famous war heroines of Malaya and Singapore – Sybil Kathigasu and Elizabeth Choy.<sup>1</sup> Across Asia more than 100,000 women became victims of enforced prostitution and were known as “comfort women”; it took more than half a century after the war had

ended for the victims to come forward and reveal their painful past (Hicks, 1995).<sup>2</sup> Following the fall of Singapore, there were 2,800 civilian (mostly Europeans) internees at Changi prison; out of this, 430 were women and the number increased to 700 the following year. This number was actually small compared with the 7,000 women and children and 35,000 men interned in prison camps in Indonesia. Leaving the memory of pampered life behind, these internees lived under very harsh condition – the women and children were separated from their loved ones (except those interned in mixed family camps). They were no strangers to hunger, diseases, lack of medical supplies and a stressful life that resulted in recurring and sometimes violent bouts of despair and melancholy, with a few having gone mad and committed suicide (Allan, 2004).



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while in captivity (Colijn, 1995). The women internees in the Changi prison even published a camp newspaper called *POW WOW* which appeared from 1 April 1942 to 15 October 1943 (Michiko, 2008). Researchers believed internment had totally changed the women’s attitude towards life – from always depending on others to becoming more independent, strong and capable. Their life seemed much better than those of the offspring of Japanese-Indisch.<sup>3</sup> The mothers of these children insisted on covering up the Japanese origin of their children by “deliberately silencing and hiding it” as they could not endure the shame and fear of societal rejection for engaging in a

Despite the negative impact the war had on their lives, recent research on the “forgotten” or relatively neglected captives of war found that the lives of women and children internees in mixed family camps as “full of energy, industry, creativity, fun and freedom” (Archer, 2008). The women organised birthday parties, schools, cooking lessons, concerts, sports, dances, religious sessions as well as singing and music which helped sustain them

relationship with the enemy (Buccheim, 2008). As a result these mothers took their secret to the grave.

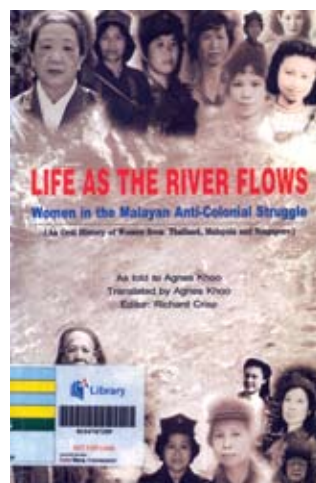
Overall, Malayan women, irrespective of their background, race or religion, suffered and endured dire hardship during the Japanese Occupation in 1942-45. Rapes had taken place before the eyes of their own family. Many survived the ordeal by disguising themselves as men and smearing their faces with mud and charcoal to make themselves unattractive to the Japanese soldiers (Sybil, 1983).

## WOMEN GUERILLAS

Since time immemorial, war with its masculine nature, is defined as a male activity, while the culturally female biology of women and motherhood means women do not take part in war. The exclusion of women from war and organised violence was a result of the general exclusion of women from the formal societal apparatus of power and coercion and their involvement in motherhood (Pierson, 1987). This polarisation subsequently creates gender differences – with war and public domain being a male preserve, while the women became a natural symbol for peace, the home and the protected society (Macdonald, 1987).

However, besides being war-victims, women did not distance themselves from the resistance movement in their locality. In the 1940s and 1950s the call for revolution issued by both the Hukbalahap guerillas in Luzon and the Viet Minh in North Vietnam, for instance, saw many women entering the war zone. In Malaya and Singapore, the signing of the Hat Yai Peace Accord in 1989 between the Malaysian government and the MCP which ended the 40-year guerilla war for the first time brought to the surface the story of women involvement in underground activities and the guerilla war. Subsequently, most of them settled in the four “peace” villages in southern Thailand which was opened by courtesy of the Thai government. Sixteen of the women were interviewed by Agnes Khoo and became the main source of *Life as the River Flows*. Khoo concludes that women, from different educational and social backgrounds joined the movement as “a form of rebellion against feudalistic, patriarchal oppression they experienced as young women” (Khoo, 2004).

Unknown to Khoo, many women had joined or followed their husbands, friends, relatives or lovers to join the guerillas without themselves having any understanding of the communist objectives/ideologies, but who nevertheless were impressed with the MCP leaders who always harped on British bias and discrimination against the poor and women. Some of them, especially those who had joined after the MCP relocat-



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ed to the Malaysia-Thai border in 1953 (referred here as the second generation), did so due to poverty; they believed life would be much better if they joined the guerillas because everything was provided for. After the relocation, which was made due to security reasons, access to food sources, which was the major problem for the MCP guerillas during the Emergency, had improved considerably because there was support from the local villagers (Ibrahim Chik, 2004). Undoubtedly, some were coerced to do so (Xiulan, 1983). There were cases in which women were kidnapped and taken to the jungle, such as the case of the 84-year-old Rosimah Alang bin Mat Yen from Kampong Gajah, Perak. Rosimah had spent 52 years of her life living with the communists after she was kidnapped while working on the padi field in Changkat Jering in Manjong district, Perak, at the age of 17 (*Utusan Melayu*, 30 May 2009).

The understanding of communist ideology and military struggle was more discernible among the first batch of women guerillas (those who had joined before the MCP withdrawal to south Thailand) who were born during the British colonial period and had witnessed the colonial domination in Malaya. The earliest involvement of Malayan women in the anti-colonial movement had taken place in the 1930s. The Japanese invasion of China in 1937 led the MCP to mobilise the Chinese regardless of gender into the anti-Japanese movement which became more organised during 1941-45. The women specially targeted were those with education; they were then subjected to the occasional communist propaganda (Suriani, 2006). Initially the Chinese women became underground members of the MCP or the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), acting as couriers, assisting the communists in their propaganda work, purchasing food for its armed forces and carrying out subversive activities. Chapman, during three-and-a-half years of living with the guerillas in the Malayan jungle as liaison officer with the MCP, dubbed the MPAJA girls as great fighters who were committed to fighting the Japanese and were never afraid to hold guns. He related one case: when the Japanese ambushed MCP leaders during a meeting near Kuala Lumpur; a girl emerged as an unlikely heroine firing at the Japanese with her tommy-gun to enable the men to escape until she was shot (Chapman, 1963). By the end of the Japanese Occupation, MCP propaganda had succeeded in bringing about the involvement of women into their armed forces and to continue the struggle against British colonial rule. Through educated Chinese women comrades, the MPAJA and MCP struggles were extended to the Malay villages where the anti-Japanese feeling was strong (Abdullah C.D, 2005).

Compared with the Chinese community – which put kinship relations and friendship network above everything – that provided family members or close friends who had joined the guerilla movement with all kinds of support (Stubbs, 2004), the majority of Malays viewed Malay involvement in the radical movement as against Islam and many stayed away. Families which had members openly involved in such activities were often looked at with deep suspicion. In the end, many did join secretly the guerilla movement. Many Malay women who joined the guerilla movement were former members of

the Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS), the women wing of the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP). These women had their own philosophy and were pursuing aggressively the liberation of women from feudal oppression and negative social practices (Ahmad Boestamam, 2004). When the British banned all radical and leftist movements like MNP, Pembela Tanahair (PETA), Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API) and AWAS in 1948, most of the radical Malays joined the MCP guerillas, including Shamsiah Fakeh and Zainab Mahmud, the leader and secretary of AWAS, respectively. This benefited the MCP enormously as these women were then widely accepted as “heroine” (*srikandi*) with their fluent and confident articulation, educational (religious) background, strong fighting spirit and unfazed by guns (Shamsiah, 2004).

### WOMEN COMRADES AT WORK

History has shown that each guerilla war has its own specific characteristics. However, a comparison among different guerilla wars shows that these wars do share some common traits. Like the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), female MCP cadres generally occupied a lower position in most of the military actions orchestrated by the party. Combat operations were normally handled by men and this became an impediment for women to climb to higher positions in the party hierarchy as combat experience was often taken into consideration for promotion (Hilsdon, 1995). The belief among female comrades that only those who were brave and intelligent could climb the ladder of success within the organisation was quite prevalent. This statement is quite true if we look at the “success” story of well known MCP women leaders like Shamsiah Fakeh and Suriani Abdullah or Eng Ming Ching before her marriage to Abdullah C. D., the commander of the Malay Regiment in the MCP – the 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment – in 1955. Starting as an MCP member in Ipoh in 1940, the urban-educated Suriani, who had fought for the liberation of Malaya (from the British) and also for the liberation of women, began the rapid climb in the MCP when she was entrusted to lead a propaganda team in Ipoh, and later in Singapore, and was directly responsible for the relocation of the 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment from Pahang to the Malaya-Thai border in 1953-54. The highest position Suriani had held was that of central committee member of the MCP (Suriani, 2006). Her charismatic way in handling the tasks and settling the problems given to her and her wide experience in wartime had led her to hold many important appointments within the MCP (Rashid Maidin, 2005). In other words, her marriage to the regimental commander was a mere coincidence. For Shamsiah, although it was not clear what her rank was within the MCP, her leadership was groomed by leaders of the 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment who were also former colleagues from the MNP, with the aim to attract more Malay women to join the movement (*Dewan Masyarakat*, August 1991).

Before the MCP relocated to south Thailand, women comrades, although their exact number was not known, formed an important part of the fighting strength of the MCP, with a few heading platoons and fighting units. Interestingly, Abdullah C.D. (2007) viewed those women who had perished in the

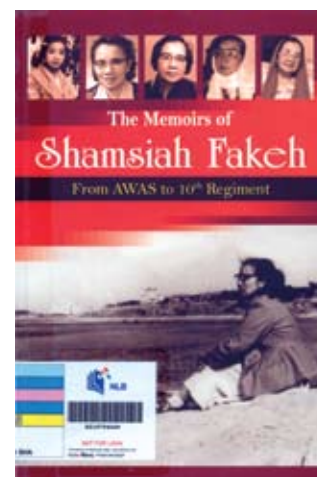
anti-colonial struggle as “*Srikandi bangsa*” (flowers of the nation), a label that was never accorded at the time by any other Malayan political movement to their women wing. They were also involved in the “long march” towards the Malaya-Thai border in 1953 which many MCP members dubbed the highest struggle when they had to march from one place to another through thick jungle and mountainous terrain, often at the risk of ambush by colonial forces, handicapped by shortage of arms, ammunition

and food, and without the support of the Orang Asli and Chinese squatters who were moved to “New Villages” following the implementation of the “Briggs Plan” in 1950.<sup>5</sup> The journey itself took a year and six months to complete (*Apa khabar Orang Kampong / Village People Radio Show*, 2007). For female comrades, they suffered more especially those who were pregnant, such as the case of Zainab Mahmud (Musa Ahmad’s wife)<sup>6</sup> who was at an early stage of pregnancy when the long march began (Aloysius, 1995). During this testing period, all hygienic needs during birth or menstruation were secondary with jungle plants used widely to stop or delay this biological process while some women stopped menstruating due to the hardship. These plants were also used to facilitate abortion or to prevent hunger.<sup>7</sup>

### LIFE IN THE GUERRILLA CAMPS

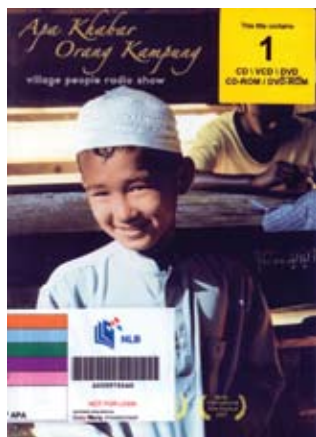
As stressed by Becket (1999), the word “guerilla” connotes war and wartime conditions in difficult terrains like mountain and jungle. Being well versed with the local environment provides mobility to the guerillas who favours “hit-and-run” tactics that would inflict damage. It also provides time and opportunity to evade the enemy. Guerillas also tend to enjoy local support, especially those living in the jungle, although at times this was secured through terror tactics which were a necessity so as to prolong the struggles (Beckett, 1999). This definition fits the nature of the MCP struggles. Its tactics of “attack and quick withdrawal” and “hide and survive” became the main feature of the MCP guerilla war which enabled it to survive until 1989. The MCP guerillas lacked both arms and food. Hunger and starvation were part of their lives and they also had to be constantly on the run and never camped for long in one place (Ibrahim Chik, 2004; *Apa Khabar Orang Kampong*, 2007).

Under this stressful and uncertain condition, both the MPAJA and MCP female guerillas lived their everyday life together with male comrades. During stressful times, such as the Japanese Occupation (1941-45) and the Emergency (1948-60) there was no clear boundaries or lines between gender especially during wartime as both male and female comrades had to combine their collective energy to ensure victory. Like the males,



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female combatants underwent a similarly difficult life; they had to abide by party discipline, undertake specific duties in the camps such as sentry duty, transporting food which many female comrades claimed as the most difficult task (Xiulan, 1983), cooking and nursing, besides attending military trainings and political courses. They were also exposed to offensive measures by Japanese intelligence apparatus and later British security forces and were liable to be killed if caught by the enemy as reported in the *Straits Echo and Times of Malaya* between the late 1940s and early 1950s.



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Moving to urban guerilla warfare in Singapore (Singapore became the main base for propaganda work), the colonial response saw the arrests of many women including a Chinese woman who was responsible for directing all the MCP activities in Singapore (CO 1022/207). Many were also caught by the Singapore authority for their involvement in the “anti-yellow culture” campaign of the 1950s which saw the active involvement of the Singapore Women Federation (PRO 27 330/56). The campaign was directed against imported culture which corrupted the individual and public moral but was perceived by the colonial government as communist propaganda to raise political awareness in the intellectual class (Harper, 1999).

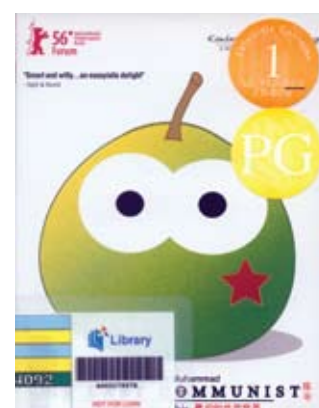
Even though their job seemed to be equal to that of the men’s, some of the former female guerillas claimed women were given comparatively easy tasks due to their physical built. Perhaps this refers to those from the second-generation combatants who saw fewer armed skirmishes and the women were given tasks such as sewing, breeding animals and nursing as well as tasks related to the kitchen; these job were less demanding whereas going to war was preferably given to men. Except for Chang Li Li, most of the women interviewed (most of them were from the second generation of MCP combatants) claimed they were never involved with any armed skirmishes and that women would be the last to be given weapon training compared with the men in their camp. They admitted the combination of bravery and intelligence would certainly enhance (in the eyes of their superior) the female cadres’ opportunity for success (namely, promotion) and to take part in military operations.

While war might break down gender boundaries especially during stressful times, and women were able to live in the hostile jungle, in reality, there was little to separate the women guerillas from womanhood or the emotion of motherhood. Of interest are their love life (to be in love and to be loved), marriage, procreation and children. Each camp conducted its everyday life in accordance with its own rules. Interestingly, while the Communist Party of the Philippines’ (CPP) practised a more liberal policy on sexual matters which created problem to the

movement by allowing marriage and, in the end, many female CPP were engrossed in looking after their family while war became the responsibility of the men (Hilsdon, 1995), the MCP seemed to have a stricter general policy about family life within the camp although, towards the end of the struggle, this policy became more lenient. Marriage was allowed in most MCP camps but during the Japanese Occupation, husband and wife were not allowed to work in the same camp to avoid sexual complications. As reported by Force 136 (during the liaison with the MPAJA), these matters were unheard of during their war against the Japanese (Chin & Hack, 2004). This complication became common during the Emergency and thereafter with certain camps putting up a strict policy with regards to love, marriage and pregnancy. The 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment in Natawee district, for instance, prohibited its women cadres to be pregnant; and if found to be so they were forced to have an abortion.

As the hostile jungle and wartime condition were not suitable to raise children, most camps had in place a ruling of giving away babies to local villagers. Again the female cadres had to face enormous emotional struggles to part with their loved ones. Although some interviewed women tried to hide their real feelings at the time of their involvement with the guerillas by saying they did not regret what they had gone through, there were women who refused to think or remember their life in the jungle, especially when asked about the separation with their children. Others simply could not resist motherhood and managed to escape from the camp. The 68-year-old Khatijah, who was interviewed in March 2009 in Betong, south Thailand, claimed many women had to endure the feeling of sadness upon leaving their family behind but did not have the courage to leave camp for fear of possible punishment by the MCP. Some felt miserable at the time of separation with their babies but relented as the safety of the children became their main concern (*I Love Malaya*, 2006). The most tragic incident befell Shamsiah Fakeh when she was accused of killing her own baby in the jungle, an accusation, which she claimed was meant to smear her reputation, that she had repeatedly refuted in her memoir. In the memoir she asked her readers “as a nationalist fighter, could a mother kill her own child?” (Shamsiah, 2004: 72).

The accusation of killing her son (in the case of Shamsiah Fakeh) is probably the only case of its kind in the history of female guerillas in the MCP. But the problem of illicit sex, which led to unwanted pregnancy was nothing new in guerilla life. Sometimes it also involved leaders of the movement which led to morale decline in the party. Some party members regarded illicit love affairs as a serious problem that started when the MCP tried to strengthen the party after the withdrawal to south Thailand by “accepting newcomers” (men and women) to the party, mostly local Thais. As there



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was no clear method to control recruitment, the MCP failed to differentiate the “good guys” from the “bad guys”. There were also members who believed women were manipulated as a tool to sabotage the MCP; these women were sent to create havoc by using illicit love affairs to ensure that leaders were engrossed in this distraction to the detriment of the political struggle and ideological purity (Ibrahim Chik, 2004: 202). Besides the issue of intimate relationship, MCP members had also claimed the enemy (Thai government) had used women to poison their leaders through food as women were in control of the kitchen. There were many cases of sabotage by poisoning which were highlighted in the memoirs of MCP leaders.<sup>8</sup>

Spies (including women spies) who had infiltrated the MCP had caused considerable chaos among party members at the end of the 1960s. In its effort to eliminate sabotage the MCP conducted a rectification campaign to identify and capture spies. Orchestrating these efforts were a few leading figures of the North Malaya Bureau, including a female leader by the name of Ah Yen who admitted to using torture to get the truth from those arrested. This campaign saw many women caught and punished on suspicion of being spies (*Bei Ma Ju Po Huo Di Jian Zheng Xiang*, 1999). In

1968, the rectification campaign in the 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment saw 35 members massacred, 200 others “exposed and criticised” and another 70 sacked from the party. The same drive was targeted at the 8<sup>th</sup> regiment.

The drive to capture spies in the MCP created cracks in the movement as some camp leaders claimed many combatants had become victims of unproven accusations. The rectification campaign, which affected every new recruit and later the veterans, brought about a major split in the MCP into factions, including the MCP central faction, 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment breakaway faction, the MCP (Marxist-Leninist) faction which was formed in August 1974 and the MCP revolutionary faction (formerly the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment).

### CONCLUSION

From the discussion, women do have their own “space” in war history whether as fighters, spies, wives, daughters and war-victims. In the case of the guerrilla movements in Malaya/Malaysia and Singapore, while the war broke down the boundaries between men and women as they had to fight for survival and victory, womanhood was never totally suppressed from the female comrades. To be in love and to be loved that often ended in unwanted pregnancies, the sadness of being detached from



Members of the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Photo courtesy of Mahani Awang.



The author at the entrance of the Khao Nam Khang Historical Tunnel Natawee District, Songkhla Province, which used to be the base camp for the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Photo courtesy of Mahani Awang.



The stairs inside the Khao Nam Khang tunnel which was used as an escape route. Photo courtesy of Mahani Awang.



motherhood as they were not allowed to raise children in the camps, and missing out on the “outside world” which led many to escape, were among the issues that had appeared within camp life in the jungle. This perspective offers a new insight with regards to women involvement in the guerilla movement in Malaya, and is different from Khoo’s *Life as the River Flows*

which is more concerned with the “voices” of these women collected through interviews without in-depth analysis.

The author wishes to thank Dr Cheah Boon Kheng, Honorary Editor, *Journal of Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS)*, for his constructive comments on an earlier draft of the paper. ■

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See, Sybil Kathigasu. (1983). *No Dram of Mercy* (with Introduction by Sir Richard Winstedt and Preface by Cheah Boon Kheng). Singapore: Oxford University Press; Zhou Mei. (1995). *Elizabeth Choy: More than A War Heroine*. Singapore: Landmark Books. Sybil and Elizabeth suffered direct physical and psychological torture in the hands of the Japanese kempeitai (military police). Sybil died in June 1949 due to the torture.

<sup>2</sup> The revelation was made through the publication of memoirs by victims. See, for instance, Maria Rosa Henson. (1999). *Comfort Women: A Filipina’s Story of Prostitution and Slavery under the Japanese Military*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; Swee Lian. (2008). *Tears of a Teen-age Comfort Women*.

Singapore: Horizontal Books; Jan Huff-O’Herne. (1994). *50 Years of Silence: Comfort Women of Indonesia*. Australia: Editions Tom Thompson.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Indisch’ denotes both European and Eurasian who had settled in the Netherlands East Indies. They were born through the intimate relationship of their mothers with Japanese soldiers.

<sup>4</sup> This information was based on interviews with former female MCP guerillas now residing in Betong, south Thailand, between January 2009 and March 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Iskandar Carey. (1976). *Orang Asli: The Aboriginal Tribes of Peninsular Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, p. 311. It was reported that by 1953, 30,000

Orang Asli were already under communist influence.

<sup>6</sup> Musa Ahmad was one of the important leaders in the 10th Regiment.

<sup>7</sup> This information was provided by Leong Yee Seng, the former members of the 8th Regiment who managed the Khao Nam Khang Historical Tunnel in the Natawee District of Songkhla Province during an interview on 14 March 2009. The Khao Nam Khang Historical Tunnel was formerly a main base for the 8th Regiment.

<sup>8</sup> Ibrahim Chik, Abdullah C.D. and Suriani Abdullah were among MCP leaders who had first-hand experienced of sabotage through poisoning.

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# Chinese Dialect Groups and Their Occupations

in 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Singapore

*"The Teochews are reputed for making fine kuayteow, the Hokkiens for their mee, the Hainanese for their coffee, and the Cantonese for their pee".<sup>1</sup>*

Li Yih Yuan, Yige Yizhi de Shizhen

[一个移殖的市镇：马来亚华人市镇生活的调查研究]



By **Jaclyn Teo**

Librarian  
Lee Kong Chian  
Reference Library  
National Library

The above ditty is a common saying indicative of social stereotyping among Chinese dialect groups observed in Muar, Johore, in the 1950s. In fact, as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were already studies in Singapore highlighting the relationship between the occupations held by Chinese immigrants and their dialect origins (Braddell, 1855; Seah, 1848; Vaughan, 1874). Hokkiens and Teochews, being early settlers on the island, were known to dominate the more lucrative businesses, while later immigrants and minority dialect groups like Hainanese and Foochows were frequently regarded as occupying a lower position in the economic standings (Tan, 1990). Drawing on published English resources available in the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, this article aims to explore why certain Chinese dialect groups in Singapore, such as Hokkiens, Teochews, Cantonese, Hakkas and Hainanese, seem to have specialised in specific trades and occupations, particularly during the early colonial period until the 1950s. It also posits some reasons why dialect group identities are no longer as dominant and obvious now as they used to be.

## CHINESE MIGRATION TO SINGAPORE

Before delving into the occupational specialisation of each dialect group, it is important to first understand the social and economic background that resulted in the large-scale migration of Chinese from China to Singapore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During that time, life was extremely difficult in China; overpopulation resulted in a shortage in rice, a basic food staple, which led to inflation. Chinese peasants were also exploited by landlords, who imposed exorbitant rents on cultivable land to counter the high land taxes and surcharges levied by the Qing government. Natural calamities further aggravated the situation. From 1877 to 1888, for example, the drought in north and east China left close to six million people homeless and, without any aid from the government, many starved to death. Moreover, China was also mired in political turmoil. The Taiping Rebellion (1850-65), which originated in southern China, wiped out about 600 cities and towns, destroyed all the central provinces of China and adversely affected agricultural production, leading to widespread poverty and lawlessness. All these factors pushed many Chinese to go overseas in search of a better life (Yen, 1986).

Fortuitously, the founding of Singapore by the British in 1819, and the subsequent establishment of the Straits Settlements states of Penang, Malacca and Singapore by 1826 opened up numerous trade and work opportunities for the Chinese. In the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the discovery of tin in the Malayan states, as well as the large-scale development of rubber plantations, were additional pull factors for the Chinese to migrate to the region (Tan, 1986). The British brought about law and order in the Straits Settlements and initiated policies of free trade, unrestricted immigration (at least until the Aliens Ordinance was introduced in 1933 to limit the number of male migrants) (Cheng, 1985) and non-interference in the affairs of the migrant population, all of which were advantageous to the Chinese migrants in search of economic advancement (Tan, 1986). Singapore, which came under direct British control as a crown colony in 1867, was not only the most important hub in the south of the Malayan Peninsula for the handling and processing of raw materials, it was also one of the major transit points where indentured labour from China and India were deployed to other parts of Southeast Asia. With a thriving economy, abundant job opportunities, and favourable British policies, large numbers of Chinese flocked to Singapore. In a letter to the Duchess of Somerset in June 1819, Stamford Raffles, the founder of modern Singapore, claimed that his "new colony thrives most rapidly... and it has received an accession of population exceeding 5000, principally Chinese, and their number is daily increasing" (quoted in Song, 1923, p. 7). By 1836, the Chinese population (at 45.9%) had already surpassed the indigenous Malay community to become the major ethnic group in Singapore (Saw, 1969).

## FORMATION OF TRADE SPECIALISATIONS

Despite originating from the same country, the Chinese community in Singapore was not a homogenous one, but was highly divided and fragmented instead (Tan, 1986). The Chinese came from different provinces in China and spoke different dialects: those who came from the Fujian province spoke Hokkien; the ones from Chaozhou prefecture spoke Teochew; people from Guangdong province spoke Cantonese, while those from Hainan Island spoke Hainanese. In addition, the dialect groups worshipped different local deities and considered their own

traditions and customs to be superior to those of the others (Yen, 1986). As the different spoken dialects posed a significant communication barrier between groups, the Chinese immigrants naturally banded together within their own provincial communities for security and assistance in this new environment (Yen, 1986). This phenomenon was further aided by Raffles' plan to segregate the different groups (Braddell, 1854). In 1822, Raffles proclaimed that "in establishing the Chinese kampong on a proper footing, it will be necessary to advert to the provincial and other distinctions among this peculiar people. It is well known that the people of one province are more quarrelsome than another, and that continued disputes and disturbances take place between people of different provinces". (Song, 1923, pp.12)

How then did the trade specialisations based on dialect groupings come about? Cheng (1985) posited that the concentration of each dialect group in specific areas on the island provided a geographical and socioeconomic base for starting a trade. As more and more people of the same dialect group moved into the same area, the trade that was initially started by some would become increasingly established and entrenched. This was especially so because new migrants to Singapore tended to turn to their relatives (usually of the same dialect group) for jobs. Indeed, an early immigrant, Ang Kian Teck, confirmed this point. He related that "when you first arrive in Singapore, you find out what your relatives are doing and you follow suit. If your relatives are rickshaw pullers, then you too would become one. My elder brother was already in Singapore working as *chap he tiam* shopkeeper, so I joined him." (quoted in Chou & Lim, 1990, p. 28). It was also natural for experienced migrants, such as fishermen, artisans and traders, to continue with their specialised trades when they resettled. Factors such as the physical environment, as well as the intervention of secret societies, also contributed to the dominance of particular dialect groups in certain trades (Mak, 1981).

Mak (1995) puts forth several reasons to explain why such occupational patterns continued to persist. First, businesses which were capital-intensive, by the very fact that they required large amounts of resources, tended to exclude the poorer dialect groups. Close network ties within communities similarly prevented other dialect groups from participating in the same trades. The way trade groups were organised, and the formation of occupational guilds and the apprenticeship system, were successful in keeping businesses within certain dialect groups. Occupational guilds helped to contain the supply of materials and information required for the trade within the dialect group. For example, the Singapore Cycle and Motor Traders' Association, dominated by Henghuas, ensured that the continuation of trade stayed within the same dialect group by encouraging members to take over the retiring businesses of fellow clansmen (Cheng, 1985). The apprenticeship system, which entails the passing of skills from one to another, was more effective when employers and trainees understood each other. Hence, the employer who was looking for an apprentice would tend to choose someone from the same dialect origin. Over time, the acquired reputation of a dialect group in a particular trade

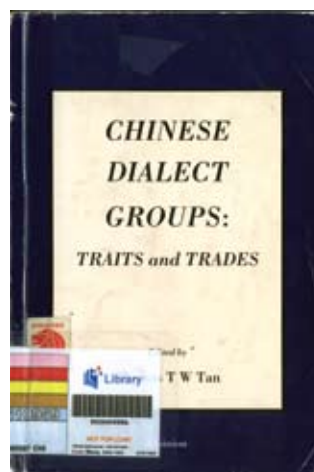
might also prevent other dialect groups from competing in the same trade successfully.

All the above factors reinforced one another and strengthen the dialect group's position in that trade. As a result, the "consequence of dialect trade specialisation is that the particular dialect becomes the language of the trade. Dialect incomprehensibility among different dialect groups, dialect patronage, and trade associations are mutually influencing and reinforcing; and together they form a barrier by excluding members of other dialect groups from entry or effective participation. Thus, unless the conditions for dialect trade are disrupted, the trend of development is towards further consolidation and expansion." (Cheng, 1985, p. 90).

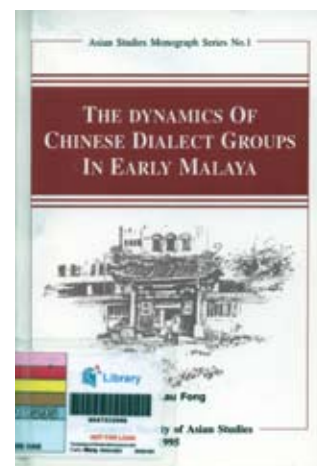
## DOMINANT TRADES FOR MAJOR DIALECT GROUPS

### Hokkiens

Among the various dialect groups, Hokkiens were among the earliest to arrive in Singapore. It was recorded that the first groups of Chinese to arrive in Singapore had come from Malacca and most of these early migrants were believed to be Hokkiens, then known as Malacca-born Chinese (Seah, 1848). Subsequently, Hokkiens from Quanzhou, Zhangzhou, Yongchun and Longyan prefectures of Fujian province also migrated to Singapore (Cheng, 1985). With a long history of junk trade involvement in Southeast Asia, it was natural for Hokkiens to continue to be active in commerce, working as shopkeepers, general agriculturalists, manufacturers, boatmen, porters,



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fishermen and bricklayers, according to an estimate made in 1848 (Braddell, 1855). In fact, Braddell noted that the Hokkien Malaccan Chinese, who were Western educated and had prior interactions with European merchants, had "a virtual monopoly of trade at Singapore" in the 1850s (p. 115). Raffles also noted in a letter to European officials that the more respectable traders were found among the Hokkiens (Tan, 1986). The Hokkiens congregated and settled in Telok Ayer Street, which was near the seacoast, and this gave them an added advantage for coastal trade. All these propelled the Hokkiens to successfully establish a

strong commercial footing on the island (Cheng, 1985).

Hokkiens' strong economic position allowed them to accumulate capital, which in turn gave them a higher chance of venturing into new businesses like rubber planting when the economy grew (Cheng, 1985). Hokkien capitalists were the first pioneers to invest in rubber planting, which was considered to be a riskier and more capital-intensive venture than gambier planting, as rubber could be tapped only after many years, and was also subjected to violent price fluctuations. The rubber boom during World War I and the Korean War strengthened Hokkiens' economic position further and Hokkiens went on

to control the speculative coffee and spice trade, as well as a number of banks, including the Ho Hong Bank (1917), Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation (1932), United Overseas Bank (1935), Bank of Singapore (1954), and Tat Lee Bank (1975), to name a few (Cheng, 1985).

Another well-documented trade specialisation among Hokkiens (specifically those who came from Anxi of Quanzhou prefecture) was the *chap he tiam* business, otherwise known as the "mixed goods" store or retail provision store business (Chou & Lim, 1990). Well-known Hokkien personalities like Tan Kah Kee and Lee Kong Chian were also involved in the pineapple-canning business (Tan, 1999). All in all, Hokkiens dominated the more lucrative trades and had a lion's share in the following fields: banking, finance, insurance, shipping, manufacturing, import and export trade in Straits produce, ship-handling, textiles, realty and even building and construction (Cheng, 1985).

Hokkiens were and continue to be the largest Chinese dialect group in Singapore, accounting for more than 40% of the overall Chinese population (Leow, 2001).

### **Teochews**

Teochews, who are sometimes known as the "Swatow People", formed the second largest dialect group in Singapore (Tan, 1990), and originated largely from



**A *chap he tiam* in China Street stocked with dried goods and Chinese produce. Image reproduced from Tan, T. (Ed.). (1990). *Chinese dialect groups: Traits and trades*, p. 24. All rights reserved, Opinion Books, 1990.**

the Chaozhou prefecture in Guangdong province.

Teochews were inclined towards agriculture, and their economic prowess was anchored in the planting and marketing of gambier and pepper (Tan, 1990). Records have shown that even before the arrival of the British in Singapore, some Teochew farmers and their gambier plantations were already on the island (Bartley, 1933). The first Teochews to arrive on the British colony were believed to have come from the Riau Islands (Cheng, 1985), which had a large Teochew settlement, and was a centre for gambier trade. With a free port status offering a gateway to international markets, Singapore soon replaced Riau as the preferred gambier trading centre for many Teochew traders. Before long, the gambier and pepper trades in Singapore were dominated by Teochews, and in the 1840s,



**A kelong. Image reproduced from Tan, T. (Ed.). (1990). *Chinese dialect groups: Traits and trades*, p. 39. All rights reserved, Opinion Books, 1990.**

they made up more than 95% of the Chinese gambier and pepper planters and coolies (Braddell, 1855). Seah Eu Chin, a Teochew, was said to be the first Chinese to initiate the large-scale planting of gambier and pepper on the island and his plantation “stretched for eight to ten miles from the upper end of River Valley Road to Bukit Timah and Thomson Road” (Song, 1923, p. 20)

As gambier and pepper produce was transported to town via waterways, Teochews tended to settle along the middle portion of the Singapore River. It was said that Teochews on the left bank of the Singapore River were mainly involved in gambier, pepper and other tropical produce while Teochews on the right bank of the



**Traditional Chinese medicine shop.**  
Image reproduced from Tan, T. (Ed.). (1990). *Chinese dialect groups: Traits and trades*, p. 53.  
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Singapore River virtually dominated the sundry goods and textile trades (Phua, 1950). Teochews were also involved in the boat trade with Siam, Hong Kong, Shantou, Vietnam and West Borneo (Hodder, 1953), and had a dominant share in the trading of rice, chinaware, and glassware as well (Cheng, 1985). The establishment of the Four Seas Communications Bank by leading Teochews in 1907 marked the peak of their economic strength.

Unfortunately, gambier cultivation declined in Singapore from 1850 as a result of soil exhaustion. This led many Teochews to move their base to Johore (Makepeace, et al, 1921). In addition, as chemicals increasingly replaced gambier as a dye, Teochews' economic strength dwindled further.

Another group of Teochews was recorded to have settled in Punggol and Kangkar, along the northern coastal fringes of the island (Chou, 1990). Living close to the sea, they became experienced fishermen, boatmen, fishmongers and fish wholesalers. Their livelihood as fishermen was badly affected, however, when the Singapore government decided to phase out *kelongs* (the largest form of fish trap) in favour of fish farms in 1981.

### **Cantonese**

Numbering 14,853 in 1881, Cantonese were the third largest dialect group after Hokkiens and Teochews.<sup>2</sup> Cantonese originated from the Pearl River Delta region, particularly from the Guangzhou and Zhaoqing prefectures in Guangdong province. They were sometimes labelled as “Macaus” as they had used Macau as their main port of emigration prior to the opening up of Hong Kong in 1842 (Tan, 1990). The first Cantonese to

arrive in Singapore was believed to be Chow Ah Chi, who arrived in Singapore together with Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819. One source mentioned that he was a carpenter from Penang (Cheng, 1985), while another source claimed that he was in fact the cook named Ts'ao Ah Chih on board Raffles' ship (Tan, 1990). Cantonese were among the first to arrive in Singapore, and they settled in the Kreta Ayer region as they preferred the elevated inland areas to the swampy waterfront district (Cheng, 1985).

Cantonese were involved in a wide variety of occupations. Seah Eu Chin (1848) observed in 1848 that Cantonese and Hakkas were predominantly artisans. Similarly, William Pickering, who later became the First Protector of Chinese in Singapore, wrote in 1876 that most Cantonese and Hakkas in the Straits Settlements were miners and artisans. The Cantonese in Singapore were known to work as bricklayers, carpenters, cabinet-makers, woodcutters and goldsmiths. Cantonese women from San Sui (Three Rivers), in particular, were noted for their contribution to Singapore's construction industry in the 1950s and 1960s (Tan, 1990). The Cantonese also opened a number of restaurants and herbal medical stores in Singapore during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Mak, 1995).

Vice was another trade that was reportedly linked to Cantonese (Mak, 1995). The Superintendent of Census remarked that most prostitutes were of Cantonese origin, and newspapers of that period reported that there were a few thousand prostitutes in the Kreta Ayer region, an area that was predominantly occupied by Cantonese. Although there were also Hokkien and Teochew brothels, their numbers decreased due to pressure from Hokkien leaders to close down Hokkien broth-

els in a bid to undo the shame brought to their dialect group, as well as a ban on the emigration of Teochew women from Chaozhou in the 1880s.

The trades engaged by Cantonese were mainly craft-based and were small in scale. Such trades, when compared to the import and export businesses dominated by Hokkiens, generated much less income and wealth. Thus, Cantonese were generally regarded as less economically well-off than Hokkiens and Teochews.

### Hakkas

Unlike the other dialect groups which were based in one or two prefectures, the presence of Hakkas was extensive throughout China. Known as the nomads of China, the southward migration to Southeast Asia was a natural progression

100 as barbers. Hakkas (together with the Cantonese) in the Straits Settlements were also recognised by Pickering in 1876 as miners and artisans. Mak (1995) suggested that Hakkas did not seem to like sea-related work, as there was no evidence of any Hakkas working in or near the sea although there were records of Hokkien longshore men, Cantonese boat-builders, and Teochew fishermen.

Two trades engaged by Hakkas warrant special mention. Pawnbroking was one of them. Regarded as the “poor man’s bank”, pawnshops had more than one hundred years of history in Singapore (Cheng, 1985). Pawnbroking was a service that the poor could utilise to get quick cash in return for a pledge of their valuables. According to Tan and Chua (1990), Hakkas seemed to have dominated this trade right from its beginning. In 1880, Singapore did not have any pawnshops, but the British

government subsequently decided to kick start the industry by issuing pawnshop licences to applicants who were willing to pay a fee of \$200 per annum. A Dabu Hakka, Mr Ho Yuen Oh, pioneered this industry by successfully obtaining the licences to operate the first eight pawnshops in Singapore. Since then, Hakkas have dominated this trade.

Another trade worth noting was Hakkas’ participation in the textile trade. The textile trade was initially dominated by Teochews and Hokkiens, but Hakkas managed to compete and gain a slice of the market share by directing their textile exports to Johore Bahru, Malacca, Ipoh and some parts of Indonesia, all of which were not covered by the other two dialect groups (Cheng, 1985).

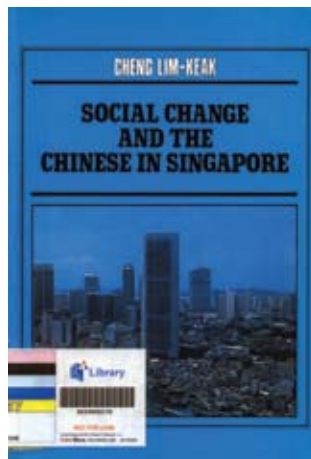


Interior of a pawnshop. Image reproduced from Tan, T. (Ed.). (1990). *Chinese dialect groups: Traits and trades*, p. 70. All rights reserved, Opinion Books, 1990.

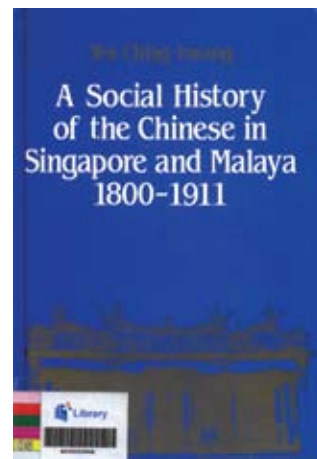
for the community. The term “Hakka” is actually a Cantonese translation for “guest family”, or “ke jia” in Mandarin.

In Singapore, it was documented that Hakkas had settled in South Bridge Road, North Bridge Road and the Lorong Tai Seng area in Paya Lebar (Tan, 1990), while Cheng (1985) also suggested that they had largely settled in Pasir Panjang, Lim Chu Kang, Chua Chu Kang, Kampong Bahru and Jurong.

Like Cantonese, Hakkas were involved in a wide range of craft-related occupations such as shoemaking, garment manufacturing, tailoring and jewellery making. Estimating the numbers and occupations of Chinese in Singapore in 1848, Braddell (1855) recorded that there were about 1,000 Hakkas working as house carpenters, 800 involved as woodcutters, 600 as shopkeepers and traders, 500 as blacksmiths, 400 as tailors and shoemakers, 200 as cabinet makers, 100 as goldsmiths and



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### **Hainanese**

Hainanese originated from Hainan Island, which was under the jurisdiction of Guangdong province. Most Hainanese in Singapore had come from either the Wencheng or Qiongzhou districts of Hainan Island (Tan, 1990). Some Hainanese still address themselves as “Kheng Chew Nang” (people of Kheng Chew), the old name for Hainan Island. Currently, Hainanese are the fifth largest dialect group in Singapore, constituting 6.69% of the Chinese population (Leow, 2001).

Hainanese migrated to Singapore much later than the other dialect groups, mainly because of the late opening of Hainan Island to foreign trade when Hankou was made a treaty port in 1870. Cheng (1985) noted that there was a lack of Hainanese presence in Singapore in the first 20 years after the island’s founding, and the first Hainanese association in Singapore was established only in 1857. This late migration affected Hainanese economically and left them with few employment choices as early settlers such as Hokkiens and Teochews had by then established a firm foundation in the more lucrative businesses like commerce, trade and agriculture. With no business contacts, and possessing a dialect that was not comprehensible to most other groups, Hainanese found it difficult to break into the commercial sector. They eventually carved a niche for themselves in the service industries, dominating a range of occupations largely associated with food and beverages, such as coffee stall holders and assistants, bakers, as well as barmen and waiters in local hotels and restaurants (Yap, 1990). In fact, the signature local concoction “Singapore Sling” was said to be created by Ngiam Tong Boon, a Hainanese bartender who worked at Raffles Hotel (Conceicao, 2009). Many Hainanese also found jobs as domestic servants or cooks for European families and rich Peranakan households. It was not unusual for a British family to hire a Hainanese couple with the husband taking charge of both the cook’s and butler’s responsibilities while the wife would assume the role of a housekeeper (Yap, 1990). The experience of working for these European and Peranakan families equipped Hainanese with the culinary skills they are known for even today – Western food and Nyonya cuisine. Due to their jobs in European households and the military bases, clusters of Hainanese could be found in the Bukit Timah, Tanglin, Changi and Nee Soon areas (Tan, 1990).

Hainanese influence could also be found in the areas around Beach Road and Seah Street. These places were peppered with Hainanese coffee shops, a trade which the Hainanese dominated until the 1930s (Yap, 1990). Hainanese chose to enter the food trade as it did not require a large amount of capital investment. They were able to set up simple coffee stalls with just a few pieces of furniture by the roadside serving coffee to the masses. From such humble beginnings, Hainanese eventually progressed and moved their businesses to better locations in shop houses when the rentals for shop houses fell during the Depression years. However, Hainanese dominance in the coffee shop trade waned in the 1930s and gave way to Foochows instead, who operated bigger ventures, were better able to cooperate and were more willing to take advantage of bank loans (Yap, 1990).

### **Other Dialect Groups**

Other dialect groups that existed in Singapore included Foochows (who dominate the coffee shop trade after the 1930s), Henghuas and Hokchias (who specialised in the rickshaw and bicycle trades) and Shanghainese (otherwise known as the Waijiangren or Sanjiangren) who were involved in the tailoring, leather goods, antiques, cinema entertainment and sundry goods businesses (Cheng, 1985).

### **EROSION OF DIALECT GROUP IDENTITY**

In the past, dialect group identity played an important role in the choice of occupational specialisation among the early Chinese immigrant society. However, the same cannot be said for today. Mak (1995) had, in fact, commented that dialect group identity was by now a “social reality of the past” (p.189).

There are a number of factors that have brought about this change, one of which could be occupational differentiation. When the island was first founded, the jobs available to the new immigrants were labour-intensive ones that were mostly associated with the primary sectors. The requirements for jobs were similar and employers tended to hire based on similar dialect origins, which also guaranteed similar language, culture and a certain level of trust (Mak, 1995). As the economy advanced and grew, jobs grew in complexity and required different skill sets. As a result, employers began to hire according to one’s skills or education rather than dialect group association. The presence of job placement and training agencies also perpetuated the importance of skills in a successful job search.

A second reason for dialect group erosion could be the decreasing need to maintain ties with clansmen (Tan, 1986). Early immigrants felt a need to band together within similar dialect groups for security and support in a new environment. However, generations later, there is a much lower sense of cultural affinity to China, and a greater focus on nation-building in a multicultural Singapore instead.

Another important factor that contributed to the erosion of dialect group identity would be the “Speak Mandarin” campaign launched in 1979, which promoted the use of Mandarin as a common language in a bid to unify the Chinese of different dialect groups.

### **CONCLUSION**

The early Chinese settlers who migrated to Singapore in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries banded together in their respective dialect groupings for security and support in a new environment, which reinforced the occupational specialisations associated with special dialect groups. Hokkiens, being early arrivals, had gained a lion’s share in lucrative trades like commerce, banking, shipping, and manufacturing, while Teochews were mostly agriculturalists and their financial strength was anchored in the planting and marketing of gambier and pepper. Cantonese dominated the crafts-related trades, Hakkas in pawnbroking, and Hainanese featured prominently in the services sector. While patterns could be observed between the types of occupations and dialect groups, it should be pointed out that the situation of “one dialect group one occupation” never



existed and could only be regarded as a myth (Mak, 1995). Hence, even when a dialect group dominated a particular trade, there might still exist minority members from other dialect groups who were involved in the same trade.

Today, dialect groupings no longer play such an important

role in occupational choice. While employers in the past tended to hire based on similar dialect origin, such clan affiliations are no longer as important in today's recruitment scene, and have given way to other employment considerations such as educational qualifications and suitable skill sets instead. ■

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Pee: a crude slang implying a lady's genitals.

<sup>2</sup> Cheng (1985) claimed that between the years 1891 and 1947, Cantonese were the second largest group after Hokkiens, and were only overtaken by Teochews in numbers after 1947.

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# National Library Distinguished Reader Insights from Dr Andrew Chew



By **Joseph Dawes**

Research Associate I  
Publishing and Research Services  
National Library

Dr Andrew Chew is one of the National Library's Distinguished Readers. The National Library Distinguished Readers Initiative was launched in April 2006 with the aim to honour and pay tribute to prominent and learned Singaporeans whose leadership and professional success in their respective fields

population informed. Our library is unique and I have not seen an equivalent anywhere else. Even libraries have changed as the world has changed in terms of technology and the Internet. I trust the Wikipedia to a large extent even though some may have reservations. As the world has changed in terms of technology,

probably the type of user has changed as well. Yet, I still like reading from a book or magazine rather than a computer screen, despite the Internet and its technologies. Individuals read selectively. For some, a trip to the library is a family affair, and different members are in different sections of the library. So libraries are still very useful, but it has different purposes for different individuals. If an individual enjoys his experience in the library, he is bound to draw in others he knows as well, and that creates the multiplier effect. What the libraries in Singapore have done is make everybody comfortable and people know what and where to get anything they want



**Dr Chew... multiplier effect.**

have propelled Singapore as a key player on the global stage, whether in government, business, academia or the arts. The National Library interviews Dr Chew on his insights.

**National Library:** You have said you found the most satisfaction in finding ways to create a multiplier effect. You extolled teaching and teachers (in any profession) as being able to create that multiplier effect. How can libraries be part of that landscape in teaching and learning to multiply the talent base in Singapore?

**Dr Andrew Chew:** Libraries are important because they keep the

easily. Today, it is really wonderful that libraries here are a connected network rather than operating as single entities.

**NL:** What is your favourite book or discourse? Why do you like it and would you recommend it to others?

**AC:** It could be something I could have enjoyed years ago, and yet go back to it again to enjoy it. But I do not read very lengthy things. I had a visitor from Texas who asked for books that would describe Singapore. I said there were many books written by Singaporeans, but I gave him a book by a man who stayed here for 10 years and since migrated to Australia. The

author is Neil Humphreys whose latest publication is Complete Notes from Singapore – Omnibus Edition. That is one of my ways to share about Singapore.

I also enjoy books that teach you what to do. My interest in National Geographic over the years has triggered and sustained my interest in maps. For example, my granddaughter who is at McMurdo (or Mac Town) in the Antarctica for research, studying various periods of the Ice Age in the south, has posted pictures of different places there on her blog. As long as I am interested in that, I have got to find out where exactly Mac Town is! So my interest in maps has remained intact over the years and is tied up with my interest in the National Geographic magazine. And wherever I held office, I had a lot of detailed maps. Looking at a map is fascinating as the orientation to the place is different from that if I were to have just read about it.

Interest is developed as you go along. One does not need to tell others to develop an interest. Reading as many sources as possible provides you with a way to pick and choose what is interesting for yourself. I do, from time to time, share what I have read with others and even recommend it. For example, if I find an interesting read on doing business in India, I print out a copy of the article and pass it on to someone who may need it. That is my way of passing on information that is useful.

**NL: The knowledge economy requires leadership that operates on different resources and premises from those that succeeded in the industrial economy. How do you think Singapore can enhance its human capital investments in the knowledge economy?**

AC: Per capita income of families has gone up, which is good. Parents can now afford to give their children more. They have given them access to modern electronic equipment, which is very important. In the old days, parents would say, "Why should we spoil these kids and waste their time by giving them games when they should be studying." But we find now that their ability to send SMSes (short message service) or punch keys is going to serve them well in the office and, more importantly, in the SAF (Singapore Armed Forces). From that point, we should not stop them from picking up and keeping these skills. Today, our youngsters have a very good knowledge of what is available. Modern instrumentation has made all this possible.

Modern armies have also changed. Look at how the Americans fought the war in Afghanistan and in Iraq. These are soldiers with brains. And that's what our third-generation SAF has to be. We want soldiers who can make use of robotic equipment and in the enemy territory, without getting themselves exposed. Even if you have the money, but if you don't have the basic knowledge, you can't make it. The way we see it, our youngsters in the SAF are going to be top-notch soldiers.

When it comes to mathematics, Indians are very strong. If you look at the graduates from the neighbouring countries, most are from the arts and social sciences and not the hard sciences. We have a balance of both.

So IT (information technology) is something we must push very hard and we must continue to do so though we are doing okay. Today, we can do a surgical procedure with

modern IT equipment making very small punctures in the body and getting the job done. You can develop the skills. So it's about education. I'm glad we spend about 6% of our national budget on defence, and a little over 4% on education. Think about some countries that spend about 50% on defence, but their economy is not that great. So the rest of the country is living very poorly.

**NL: You have noted that progress tends to come in spurts and yet there is a tendency to want to accomplish things so fast that some in the public may feel marginalised or flat footed. How can libraries remain relevant or even become touchstones of new forms of learning without alienating some in the public?**

AC: It's a fact that those who are fortunate can get a lot and can get it very quickly. So there is this difference in society already. We cannot run away from this: there will always be the rich and there will always be the poor. But we try to even out as much as we can. Fortunately for us in this country, we have a thick base of middle-class. That's very important. And that, of course, helps to maintain a stable government and country. To keep pace with advances, scientific libraries will provide that direction. But in the overall education of the public, libraries will continue to be important.

In Singapore we have an educated population that can respond to the progress of the libraries. Censorship is something that we can't run away from. I don't believe in the so-called total freedom that some advocate. The way the Americans practise democracy is a bit extreme and I would not like it for this country. We come from a different part of the world and we find their way a bit strange. Total freedom is only good when a person can exercise 100% responsibility. In any population, that cannot be guaranteed. Not every individual is trustworthy. So there will always be a need for caution and modification.

**NL: What are some of your cherished memories of the libraries in Singapore or around the world?**

AC: In Australia, there are libraries in townships and counties, but not to the extent we have here. My own experience of libraries is that they are specific to the place I study or work. Both as an undergraduate and as a post-graduate, I visited the medical library quite often. Libraries must also be easily accessible and this promotes use of the library, and people take advantage of the proximity. There was a library in Siglap Community Centre, which was just 200 metres from my home. I used to visit that place many days a week. I borrowed books, read and returned them and borrowed again. I really enjoyed it. Then the library moved to Marine Parade. I found I was visiting the library less after that. But I still visited.

I am not a user of libraries in other parts of the world though I have visited them. In Singapore, of course, libraries are useful for me when I have a need for something. I used the medical library very often even 25 years ago. Today I don't access library facilities like I once used to though there are other ways and means I get the information I want.

**NL: How would you describe your experiences sitting in on Cabinet meetings across two prime ministerships?**

AC: As Head of Civil Service I served the first and second Prime Ministers. As Chairman of the Public Service Commission I liaised closely with the second and third Prime Ministers.

Of course, when they had private matters to discuss, we would not be inside for the meeting. We would be there only for the weekly Cabinet meetings during which proper papers were presented.

One very good thing I noted was that a decision once made was said to have consensus. There was no such thing as someone saying, "Please write down that I have made an objection." The decisions were fairly straightforward. Consensus is how the government has worked and it has been very good. A lot would have been decided even before the meeting is held. But controversial issues would have to be sorted out first, involving two or three ministries putting their heads together even before the meeting, or else it wouldn't be brought up.

Preparations for Cabinet meetings were very carefully carried out. It also showed that ministries could not just work on their own. They must liaise with one another. There was a time when two ministers couldn't agree on some financial issues and the government swapped their portfolios just to help them see the other's need. You know best when you are inside it, not when you see it from the outside! So both the prime ministers were cautious and careful and the ministries worked as a team, which was wonderful.

**NL: What were the changes taking place in outlook and aspirations of young Singaporeans during the period when you chaired the PSC (Public Service Commission) since you had interviewed so many of them for scholarships?**

AC: Actually, the changes occurred well before that. We could see that quite clearly. Even when I worked at different ministries, there were scholars who wanted to break their bonds. I would speak to them as I wanted to know their reasons. For example, one said the family business needed him, and you could understand his needs. But at the same time I took the approach, "the door is always open, please come back when you think you want to come back." We had conveyed a very bad impression that once you've left, you cannot come back, which was wrong. I had always made it a point not to leave a bitter taste in their mouth. Their reasons for breaking the bond as they saw it, seemed right to them, even though it might not seem so to me. But that did not mean they were wrong. There were president's scholars who said, "I will never get a chance to work in this American law firm if I do not take it up now." So we said, "We'll meet you half way. One year? Two years? Then come back?" They said, "No, they want me for many more years." Then, if the parents were willing to pay the bond, they were free to leave. A few factors needed to be taken into consideration: No longer were scholarships sought after because the applicants were poor. Some could afford them and still wanted the scholarships, so we gave them on merit.

At that time we knew the number of "A" level students who applied for scholarships and realised not all eligible ones

applied. Their parents could afford their education. So you can see that patterns have changed because the per capita income has gone up. Sometimes the families may prefer them not to take up the scholarship. Sometimes the youngsters may not want the scholarship. We want good scholars, so we sell. But we sell in such a way that we don't lose dignity in the process. We try to make it clear that we view them as persons who can fill leadership positions in the civil service. Even as undergraduates, they will be exposed to areas that we will arrange to make them realise that we are serious. In this way, it is a very clear and open way to show that we know their concerns and that we also have our concerns, but let us do it this way. I have spoken to the prime ministers on this and they have said to continue to give as many scholarships as we can. But we make sure they know that this is something special and not treat it as a run-of-the-mill offer. And there is no quota. This year if there are only 100 eligible, so be it. And next year if there are 150, every one of them must get it.

But scholars also have changed. Some have been given local scholarships, and they ask to go overseas. We did that for a long time with the medical scholars; we never gave scholarships to study overseas. But the market changes. As I said, parents can afford it. So I decided before I finished my term of office, that I should reverse the trend and I gave them scholarships to study medicine in the United Kingdom.

But we still have scholars who want to study in Singapore and they have their reasons. Maybe they want to remain close to their families, or some other reason. There was a time when only the medical faculty received president scholars. Then science, engineering and all the other faculties asked why they didn't receive president scholars. But actually, most of the president scholars wanted to study abroad.

**NL: As the head of the civil service once yourself, and now a user of civil service products, what do you think are the new skills and mindset that civil servants need to serve Singapore well?**

AC: When we talk about civil servants, don't forget there is a total range: from the top man to the one who serves you across the counter. I think of myself today as a user of services and I go to the counter. We have provided the training skills at that level to enable them to serve the public. As far as I am concerned this has been reasonably well fulfilled. I have had occasions when I was a little upset - not necessarily encountering another civil servant, but even in the private sector. These are things you have to accept. And I don't think you want to use a very coarse instrument against everybody. So if you ask me what we need to do, there so many levels - each one must ensure that each level functions well. Not only horizontal integration, but a little bit of vertical integration as well. When I talk about vertical integration I am not talking about the 10 layers. I am talking about only two layers. It's impractical to talk about the top.

This country is not run by just people at the top. Many are contributing at the lower levels. Let's not allow them to feel they are losing out on the quality of life. ■

# Green Matters: The Environment and Sustainability Collection

at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library



By Sara Pek

Senior Librarian  
Lee Kong Chian  
Reference Library  
National Library

*"We are living in this planet as if we had another one to go to."*

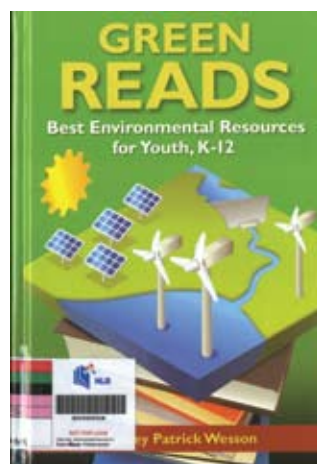
Paul Connett  
Professor Emeritus of Chemistry  
St Lawrence University, Canton, NY<sup>1</sup>

The first major study<sup>2</sup> on the full impact of climate change on human life warns that the world is in the throes of a "silent crisis". Published in June 2009, it claims that more than 300 million people are seriously affected by global warming today and that number will double by 2030.

We face many environmental challenges such as water shortages, pollution, global warming and consequent rising sea levels. As citizens of the planet Earth, we can and should take responsibility to save the environment. The Environment and Sustainability collection at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library aims to inform and provide insights and ideas on a broad spectrum of resources on major environmental trends and issues such as climate change, global warming, sustainable development, green business and buildings and clean technology. This article highlights selected publications from the collection.

## ENVIRONMENT101

Environmental awareness is a hot topic today. To increase youth's awareness of the living surroundings, schools are integrating environmental concepts into their curriculum. One useful resource that can help teachers, librarians, environmental educators and parents find authoritative information on building a library of environmental books, curriculum planning and story-time activities is Green reads: *Best environmental resources for youth, K-12* (Wesson, 2009).



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More than 450 current fiction and non-fiction titles about the environment, including digital media, are covered.

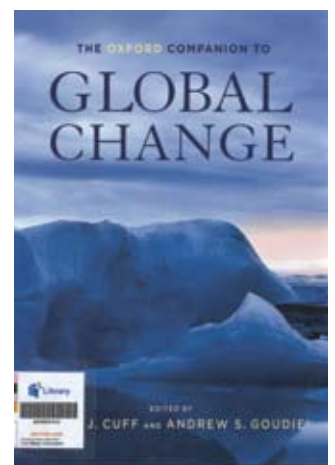
Students and professionals seeking to understand the environmental sciences can refer to a range of references on the topics. *The Oxford companion to global change* (Goudie & Cuff, 2009) is a well-balanced coverage of the Earth systems and human factors. It examines key environmental events, trends and issues related to global change. The 2007

report of the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)*, which assesses the scientific, technical, environmental, economic and social aspects of climate change, is discussed.

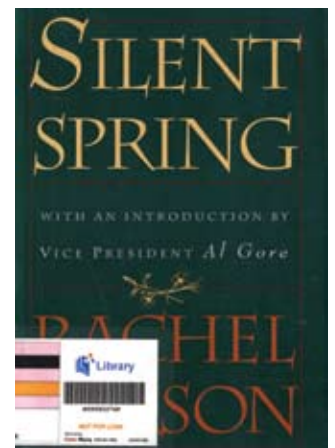
Numerous heroes of the environment have cared intensely about the environment. Works on these prominent environmental leaders and visionaries, activists, scientists, innovators and entrepreneurs such as Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, Jane Goodall, John Muir, David Attenborough, Al Gore, Tim Flannery, Lester Brown and Henry David Thoreau can be found in the library.

One book that many considered as the most important environmental book of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is Rachel Carson's *Silent spring* (Carson, 1962, 1994 reprint). Carson alerts readers on the widespread use of chemical pesticides destroying wildlife and posing serious threat to public health. The brave woman faced condemnation and strikes by the chemical industry to ban the book. In the end, she succeeded in creating public awareness of the environment, which led to changes in government policy and inspired the modern ecological movement.

Earth Day is celebrated every year. It is a special day to appreciate the planet Earth and be environmentally conscious. The first Earth Day in 1970 was often thought as one of the factors leading to the field of environmental ethics. A good introduction to this increasingly urgent topic is



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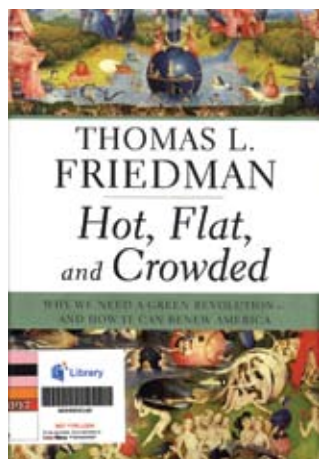


All rights reserved, Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

*Environmental ethics: An anthology* (Rolston & Light, 2003). This text is compilation of classical and contemporary essays on key environmental debates and issues.

Cities throughout the world face the common challenge to balance sustainability, economic progress and good governance. There are many discussions addressing the subject of environmentally sustainable development such as: *Resilient cities: Responding to peak oil and climate change* (Newman, Beatley & Boyer, 2009) and *World cities: Achieving liveability and vibrancy* (Ooi & Yuen, 2010).

The largest and most discussed report in recent years is *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change* (Stern, 2007). This 700-page report is a comprehensive analysis of the economic aspects of environmental issues. Compiled by an economist, the review gives an optimistic assessment for the future but warns that the world must act now on climate change to avoid devastating economic consequences.



All rights reserved, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, c2008.

A deluge of eco-literature has been coming to the library shelves. Some books carry weight for the specific message they convey. Others stand out for the clarity they bring to environmental and climate issue such as global warming, carbon footprints and greenhouse emissions. Many popular works have become instant classics.

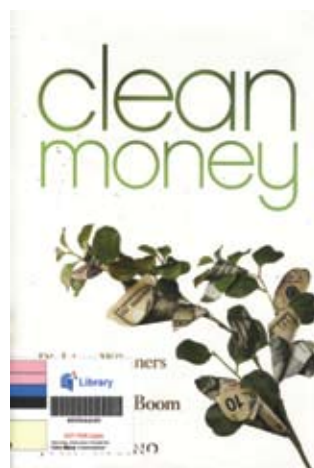
Some of these green books include: *Our choice: A plan to solve the climate crisis* (Gore, 2009), *Hot, flat, and crowded: Why we need a green revolution – and how it can renew America* (Friedman, 2008), *Earth in mind: On education, environment, and the human* (Orr, 2004) and *Eco barons: The dreamers, schemers, and millionaires who are saving our planet* (Humes, 2009).

## GLOBAL RACE FOR CLEAN RESOURCES

*“Because our economic future depends on our leadership in the industries of the future, we are investing in basic applied research... We know the nation that leads in clean energy will be the nation that leads the world.”*

*United States President Barack Obama’s speech<sup>3</sup> on the economy and job creation ideas on 8 December 2009.*

The benefits of producing clean and sustainable power from renewable energy sources have received growing attention worldwide, including in Singapore. The International Energy Agency (IEA) reports<sup>4</sup> that nations must invest US\$37 trillion in energy technologies by 2030 to avoid climate catastrophe and meet energy needs. Asia’s rising “clean technology tigers”<sup>5</sup> – China, Japan and South Korea – are poised to win the clean energy race with their hefty investment in clean energy infrastructure and technology.



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All rights reserved, Collins Business, 2008.

Since identifying clean technology as a strategic part of a sustainable economy, the Singapore government has committed \$700 million<sup>6</sup> for R&D and manpower training to grow the sector. Clean technology or “clean-tech” is applied in a broad range of industries, including energy, water, manufacturing, advanced materials and transportation. Examples of clean-tech are solar and wind energy, water filtration and electric vehicles.

To support the information needs of this rapidly emerging field, the library has built a collection of key publications on market trends, investment, technological and economic aspects of renewable energy. Recent titles include: *Global energy transformation: Four necessary steps to make clean energy the next success story* (Larson, 2009), *Clean money: Picking winners in the green tech boom* (Rubino, 2009) and *The clean tech revolution: Discover the top trends, technologies, and companies to watch* (Pernick & Wilder, 2008).

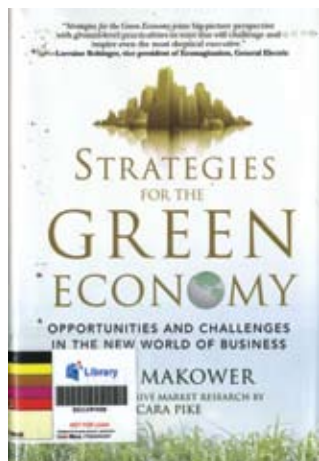
The push for environmental and water technologies (EWT) industry has also thrown up new and exciting challenges for those in the engineering fields. Job seekers and practicing engineers looking to strengthen their career prospects can refer to titles like *Alternative energy systems and application* (Hodge, 2010) and *Energy systems engineering: Evaluation and implementation* (Vanek & Albright, 2008), *The Yaws handbook of properties for environmental and green engineering* (Yaws, 2008) and *Handbook of environmental engineering calculations* (Lee & Lin, 2007).

Online databases<sup>7</sup>, such as IEEE/IET electronic library, SpringerLink, Nature.com and Proquest Science offer, premium content from international journals and reports. Library users can access these resources at the library or at home. Some of the periodicals available are *Energy Design Update*, *Energy Compass*, *Energy Engineering*, *Energy Intelligence*, *The Energy Journal*, *The Journal of Energy Markets*, *Water & Wastewater International*, *Water Environment Research and Journal of Water Resource and Protection*.

## GOING GREEN

Green is now mainstream. A National Geographic survey, Greendex<sup>8</sup> shows that consumers are buying more green

products even during the economic crisis of 2008. Companies are introducing new greener products. Books on green marketing and green business like *The truth about green business* (Friend & Kordesch & Privitt, 2009), *Harvard Business Review on green business strategy* (Harvard business review, 2007) and *Strategies for the green economy: Opportunities and challenges in the new world of business* (Makower & Pike, 2009) are relevant to this segment of readers.



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However, media experts<sup>9</sup> warn that marketing strategies dubbed “greenwashing” could be leading the eco-conscious astray as more companies are making false or misleading green marketing claim.

With pressing interest in green economy, organisations are adapting to new environmental policy and regulations. Others are developing strategies for sustainable business or “green” their operation. Policy makers and business stakeholders wondering how policy decisions come about can be better informed from books such as *Environmental policy analysis and practice* (Greenberg, 2007). The author explains clearly how all policy considerations are broken down and tools that are widely used in policy analysis.

The Singapore government has been a key driver for environmental change since independence. After 40 years of dedicated green and clean programmes, the country has won numerous international accolades. Readers interested to trace the remarkable transformation of Singapore can refer to books about Singapore’s experience with environmental management and pollution control.

Energy-efficient buildings are universally recognised to reduce greenhouse gas emission. A Singapore Green Building Council (SGBC) was set up to drive the green-buildings movement in Singapore.<sup>10</sup> The Building and Construction Authority (BCA) has announced ambitious efforts to have 80% of Singapore’s buildings attain minimum green-certified standards by 2030. The “green collar” sector is expected to grow by leaps and bounds. There will be strong demand for manpower in the development, design, construction,

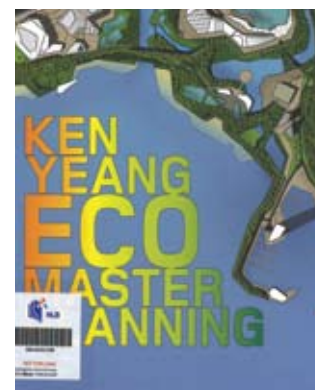
operation and maintenance of green buildings.

Environmental planners, consultants and plant operators looking for references on energy efficient buildings, green architecture and ecology will find many new titles on the topics, for example, *The green building bottom line: The real cost of sustainable building* (Melaver & Mueller, 2009), *Ecomasterplanning* (Yeang, 2009) and *Green architecture now!* (Jodidio, 2009).

Green vehicles will soon hit the roads in Singapore. A multi-agency taskforce led by the Energy Market Authority (EMA) and Land Transport Authority (LTA) has embarked on national electric vehicles (EVs) test-bedding programme.<sup>11</sup> It will allow testing of different EV prototypes and charging technologies and research into vehicle-to-grid (V2G) power. Anyone interested to know the technology and issues behind EV can refer to books such as *Future cars: Bio fuel, hybrid, electric, hydrogen, fuel economy in all sizes and shapes* (Bethscheider-Kieser, 2008) and *Plug-in electric vehicles: What role for Washington?* (Sandalow, 2009).



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## CONCLUSION

It is currently believed that science and technology can provide effective solutions to most environmental problems. However, efforts to conserve natural resources and preserve the wilderness and even local culture should not be overlooked to ensure a healthy environment for all living beings on Earth. To quote a recent ad from The Singapore Environmental Council (SEC), “It starts with their lives. It ends with yours.” Humans and animals are all affected by global warming. Go, read green and live green. ■

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# Early Tourist Guidebooks to Singapore

## The Handbook to Singapore (1892)



By **Bonny Tan**

Senior Librarian  
Lee Kong Chian  
Reference Library  
National Library

*"No part of the world is now to be sacred from the intrusive foot of the tourist and where the traveler goes, guide-books will ultimately follow...."*

G. M. Reith, Padre in partibus, p. I

Travellers from Europe saw their journey to the East cut down by as much as half when the Suez Canal opened in 1869. Steamships, helped along with advances in their engine development, were preferred over sailing ships as they proved faster and more efficient. Beginning as mail services dispatching post, ships from companies like the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company soon became vessels for ferrying passengers. In turn, travelogues written by the adventurous sojourner who happened to be sailor, civil servant or missionary soon evolved into travel guides published by travel companies for the paying tourist seeking a leisurely but safe journey to the mystical but demystified Far East.

### A USEFUL VADE-MECUM

At a time when guidebooks for the Western hemisphere were being churned out by such publishers as Murray and Badaecker, Rev. George Murray Reith, resident minister of the local Presbyterian Church, took it upon himself to write a handy guide to Singapore for visitors to the town.

*"It is intended to supply a felt want in Singapore; to give in a handy form some notes historical, descriptive, scientific, &c, in regard to the town and island; to afford what information is necessary to guide visitors during their stay, and to obviate some of the difficulties which travelers always encounter in a strange place."* (Reith, 1892, p. iii).

This "useful vade-mecum" (Reith, 1892, p. iii) or ready reference was designed to help visitors who had merely a few hours to a few days in the town. In contrast, earlier guides that had preceded it, namely, *The Stranger's guide to Singapore* (1890) by B. E. D' Aranjó and *Picturesque and busy Singapore* (1887) by T. J. Keaghran had proved too "limited" in their "scope" (Aranjo's) (Reith, 1892, p. iii) or "too general to be of practical value" (Keaghran's) (Reith, 1892, p. iii).



Inside page to *Handbook to Singapore* (Reith, 1892)<sup>1</sup>.

Segmented into 15 chapters, the guide starts off with a condensed historical overview of Singapore beginning with its founding in 1819 by Stamford Raffles<sup>2</sup> and giving insightful details of events prior to 1900. Reith's historical overview is based on Buckley's articles in the *Singapore Free Press* entitled *Anecdotal history of Singapore* which later was to be published as an important text on Singapore's history.

### DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ENVIRONS

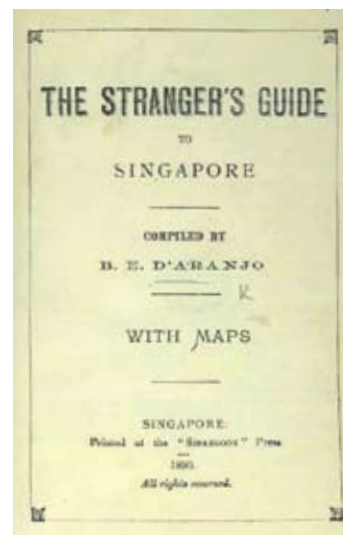
Following this is a general description of the town and its environs, walking tours or drives, descriptions of buildings and landmarks as well as places of worship and hospitals. Reith does not merely describe landscape and landmark, but waxes lyrical over scenery and the island's natural beauty. For example in describing the approach to Singapore from the west, he notes:

*"The scenery has a quiet beauty that impresses every spectator; and as the water in the channel is generally smooth, all are able to enjoy the prospect. Every now and then the ship startles a gar-fish that skips nimbly over the surface of the water to a safe distance. Occasionally a golden-coloured watersnake may be seen hurrying away from the bows."* (Reith, 1892, p. 26).

He highlights details which set off the unusual beauty surrounding the island. For example, in the same passage he

points to a common optical illusion in which the distant southern islands seem to be suspended above the sea.

In Chapter Four, he gives directions for four tours around and beyond the town, each one accommodating a tourist's length of stay which could vary from a few hours to half a day. The tours skirt around the wharves through the town to locations such as the Botanical Gardens, the Impounding Reservoir (MacRitchie Reservoir), a climb up Mount Faber, and a carriage ride to Johore



Inside page to *The Stranger's Guide to Singapore*, 1914.

Bahru. In delineating the journeys, Reith also paints a three-dimensional picture of Singapore town in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, highlighting familiar locations and landmarks now long forgotten, and capturing the leisurely lifestyle of the expatriate along with the labouring duties of the natives.



**View of the Harbour (Souvenir of Singapore, 1914, p. 6).**

*“(There) lies the Esplanade (Padang Besar) a large plain, encircled by a well-laid-out carriage drive. The Singapore Cricket Club, and the Singapore Recreation Club divide the plain between them for the purpose of cricket, tennis, bowls, and other athletic sports, and in the centre stands a fine statue of Sir T. Stamford Raffles, erected in 1887. A large part of the Esplanade occupies ground recently reclaimed from the sea; and it is now a favourite afternoon resort of the residents. On the landward side are the Hotel de l’Europe (Punchaus Besar) and St. Andrew’s Cathedral (Greja Besar)...”* (Reith, 1892, p. 36).



**Buildings and landmarks around the Esplanade (Souvenir of Singapore, 1914, p. 12).**

He also gives an interesting perspective on the Raffles Library’s standing during that era with an interesting emphasis on J. R. Logan’s collection of philological works:

*“The Raffles Library and Museum (Tempat Kitab)... is well worth a visit, for the Library is one of the largest and most comprehensive in the East, and the Museum, which is being daily enriched by zoological, mineralogical, ethnological and archaeological collections from the Peninsula and the Archipelago, promises to be, in time, one of the finest exhibitions of its kind in Asia... There is a valuable collection of Oriental literature, called the Logan Library, access to which may be obtained by special permission from the Secretary.”* (Reith, 1892, pp. 36 – 37).

Chapter Five offers descriptions of public buildings and places of interest, listing them alphabetically, many of which are no longer extant. They include the gaol which used to stand at the Sepoy Lines, Boustead Institute and the Chinese Protectorate. Others are of large spaces like Bukit Timah hill, the dockyards and the esplanade. Many of them are of government buildings and civic locations although he does highlight unusual local buildings and sights such as the Shrine of Iskandar Khan and the Shrine of Habib Noor along with Whampoa’s garden.

Other useful information such as a listing of clubs, societies, banks, consulates, religious buildings, hospitals, hotels and shops are also compiled in subsequent chapters. Of pragmatic importance are the rates for hiring private and hackney carriages, listed with tables of distance and relevant fares. The principal steamship lines and agents along with a listing of ports

are given in a separate chapter. Statistical details of population, imports, exports, shipping and even weather conditions reflect the dynamics between trade and people in Singapore at the turn of the century. There is even a chapter on the fauna, flora and geology of the island. He credits W. Davison of the Raffles Library and Museum for his work on the fauna, and H. N. Ridley for his piece on the flora and geology of Singapore, both of which were published in his handbook.<sup>3</sup>

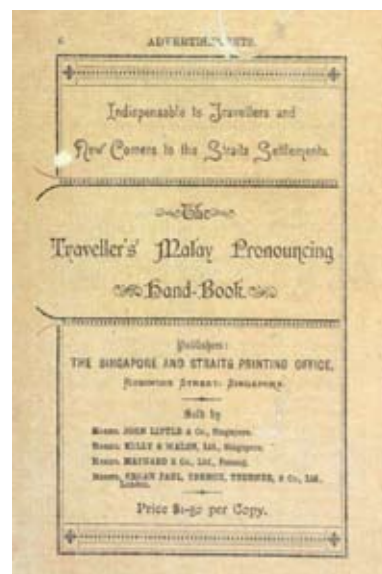
## COLLOQUIAL EXPRESSIONS

Throughout the text, Reith gives the colloquial place names mainly in Malay of colonial buildings and landmarks with footnotes giving pronunciation as well as English translations. A longer listing of Malay place names alongside their English names are given in Chapter 9, revealing how the locals viewed some of these colonial landmarks. For example, the Masonic Hall was known familiarly as “Rumah Hantu” (Reith, 1892, p. 90) or “Haunted House” and so the Methodist Episcopal Church that had just been established beside it was known as “Greja dekat Rumah Hantu” (Reith, 1892, p. 90) or the “church near by the Haunted House”. Also listed are Malay terms for giving directions to hackney carriage drivers such as “Turn the Carriage” – “Pusing kreta”, “Light the lamps” – “Pasang pelita (or Lampo)”, “Too much” – “Banyak chukup” and “Off with you!” – “Pulang!” (Reith, 1892, p. 92-93). He concludes with advice to purchase the *Malay pronouncing hand-book*, published in 1886, to better equip the visitor in communicating with the locals.

A full chapter, the last in the book, focuses on the Malay language and literature and was commended by Paul Kratoska in the introduction to the 1985 reprint as “a competent summary of the then current views on the Malay language” (Reith, 1985, p.v). Here, Reith reveals his appreciation for the poetic nuances found in local expressions:

*“Many of the common words and phrases of ordinary life are, from a Western point of view, highly poetical, owing to the childlike, but artistic combination of ideas that are not naturally connected. The Malay, for example, calls the sun Mata-hari, “the eye of day,” he speaks of a brook as anak sungei, “the son of a river,” when he is sorrowful or angry he says he is sakit hati, “sick at heart”...”* (Reith, 1892, p. 130)

Reith also introduces the reader to the wealth of Malay literature ranging from its dramatic legends to the profound truths found in *pantuns* or poems while lamenting the loss of “a valuable collection of Malay manuscripts,



**Advertisement for a popular book on Malay vocabulary (Reith, 1892, Advertisements, p. 6).**

made by Sir Stamford Raffles" (Reith, 1892, p. 133) when his ship went up in flames.

## ILLUSTRATIONS AND ADVERTISEMENTS

Although there are no sketches, photographs or illustrations, there is a useful map of Singapore with an accompanying index. Interestingly, a plan of the Botanical Gardens is also the only other illustrated panel in this publication. Unfortunately, the Library's copy lacks the town map and plan of the gardens. Eleven pages of text-based advertisements end off the guide and show some aspects of the early companies and agencies that helped fuel the tourist trade.



The dining room of a hotel (Souvenir of Singapore, 1914).

## REPRINTS, REVIEWS AND REMISS

Reith had taken some pains to ensure that the published information was accurate although in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, this had proved difficult. Even so, Reith had pre-empted a reprint of the guide saying: "... it is hoped that future editions... will correct the errors that may have crept into this edition" (Reith, 1892, p. iii). Indeed, some 15 years later, Walter Makepeace would help update the guide, adding an extra chapter on the Federated Malay States and photographic plates of landmarks and sights in Singapore by G. R. Lambert, besides providing the most current statistical and informative data for 1907. This version of the guide remained highly valued with a reprint made in 1985 by Oxford Press with an insightful introduction by Paul Kratoska.

Mary Turnbull, in her review of the 1985 reprint summarises the handbook's value succinctly, thus accounting for its repeated reprints across almost a century:

*"Designed for the days of leisurely sea travel, the Handbook is more informative than more modern counterparts, assuming an intelligent interest in government and civic matters. It thus provides the modern reader with a clear picture of some aspects of Singapore life at the turn of the century, although heavily slanted towards the expatriate minority."* (Turnbull, 1988, p. 302).

Kratoska, in his introduction to the 1985 reprint of the handbook, notes that "Something of the character of the late Victorian traveler can be seen from the information Reith provides

and the sights he recommends. The attraction was not Asia but European activities and accomplishments in Asia, and the city's main points of interest were the fruit of the Public Works Department's art." (Reith, 1985, pp. v – vi). Turnbull, however, counters Kratoska's criticism of the text as being European-centric by pointing out that "the guide was enterprising for its day in recommending strolls through the "native quarters" and shopping forays into the "Thieves Market" in Rochor (Turnbull, 1988, p. 302).

Reith seemed aware of the cultural tightrope he walked when writing his guides and travelogues, and had published an open apology for any offence inadvertently made which he published in his subsequent book, *Padre* (1897):

*"If offence has been given by some of my remarks and criticisms, I am heartily sorry; none was intended: but in this age one cannot put pen to paper without unwittingly wounding somebody's sensibilities, especially when the manners and customs of other nations are involved... Nations very naturally feel hurt when they are taken at anything lower than their own estimate, or described in terms which do not correspond with their own glorified ideas of themselves. But the description that startles and hurts them does not mean envy or malice in the describer – at least not usually; it is sometimes done with the best intentions."* (Reith, 1897, p. ii)

And then as if to explain both why such offence is likely to be made by one especially from the British Isles, and how the Briton can sustain similar criticisms, he says:

*"The Briton seems to be the only person in the world who can take the prick of a foreign free-lance with a laugh and a careless shrug of the shoulders. This no doubt is due to the invulnerable vanity and insufferable arrogance of the Anglo-Saxon, about which other nations are in a chronic state of eloquence... Most of our countrymen, however, live in healthy and blissful ignorance of what their neighbours think and say of them: and it is well that they should be so."* (Reith, 1897, p. ii)

Both Kratoska and Turnbull agree that the handbook is a child of its time – "a competent guide to a colonial city and a colonial way of life" (Reith, 1985, p. x) as well as offering "a justifiable pride in showing off the settlement to visitors" (Turnbull, 1988, p. 302). It was after all written from a British perspective for the Western tourist and we must read it with a Scotsman's sense of humour!

The guidebook can be read online at the Singapore Pages at <http://sgebooks.nl.sg/details/020000003.html>. The 1907 reprint by Walter Makepeace as well as the Oxford Press 1985 reprint are also available at the National Library. Photographic plates for this article were derived from the *Souvenir of Singapore*, 1914 which is also available at the Singapore Pages at <http://sgebooks.nl.sg/details/020000029.html>. ■



The local people (Souvenir of Singapore, p. 8).

# About George Murray Reith

(b.1863, Aberdeen Scotland – d.1948, February 27, Edinburgh)

## EARLY LIFE

The eldest son of Dr Archibald Reith, George Murray obtained his MA at Aberdeen University in 1884 and furthered his education at New College, Edinburgh. He assisted at Dundee Mc-Cheyne Memorial before being ordained at the London Free Church Presbytery. Then he was sent to serve in Singapore in 1889 where he was made the minister of the local Presbyterian church in Singapore between 1889 and 1896.

## PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER

He was the eighth minister appointed to the Presbyterian church since the founding of the local church in 1856. It came under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of London (North) as many of the merchants who attended this church would retire to London. However, the church was always associated with the Scots who had formed the first congregation. The church building at Stamford Road was established more than a decade earlier in 1878 prior to Reith's arrival. Ministers stayed between four and six years, so Reith's term of about seven years was considered long. He preached at the Presbyterian church as well as the Boustead Institute each Sunday. Besides this, he also conducted monthly lectures on Church history and Biblical Criticism along with special classes on the background to Scotland. He was unafraid to engage the authorities in controversial matters such as labouring on Sundays<sup>4</sup> and the problems of gambling at the races. Nicknamed the Presbyterian padre, likely after his publication *Padre in partibus* (1897), he was succeeded by Rev S. Stephen Walker in 1896 after which Reith returned to Edinburgh in Scotland.

## COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

As a parting gift, the community in Singapore gave him a silver ink stand – a sign of how his contribution to Singapore town was greatly appreciated. Besides serving as preacher and minister, he was also founder and the first secretary-treasurer of the Straits Philosophical Society which began in 1893. In addition, he was also a committee member of the Straits Settlements Association as well as the Straits Asiatic Society, Raffles Institution and Raffles Library. He also gave direction to the local Theological Society which held monthly meetings. He remained active in the community even after he left Singapore, contributing to the local press, writing particularly of the Scottish community until as late as 1910. Locally, he was most known for publishing the *Handbook to Singapore* in 1892, which was then revised by Walter Makepeace and republished in 1907. The later version was republished in 1985 by Oxford Press almost a century later.

## LIFE IN SCOTLAND

Upon his return to Scotland, he was appointed minister to St Cuthbert's United Free Church, Edinburgh in 1898. He continued writing and served as editor of the *Proceedings and Debates of the Free Church General Assembly* in Great Britain from 1900. His poor health led him to resign from St. Cuthbert in 1911 although he continued ministry serving as minister to Cumbernauld Baird United Free Church in Glasgow between 1916 and 1917.

## QUOTATION

"Do not believe all the evil things that well meaning and religious people with ample leisure write and say about their fellow countrymen abroad, and the worse things they imagine about them. Do not withdraw yourself from the life of the place, for fear of contamination. Mingle freely with people of all ranks and classes, learn their lives, carrying with you the white flower of a blameless life and you will find, that though the social life is freer, and the morality more lax than that to which we have been accustomed in Europe, the hearts of most are sterling gold – metal which may be worked up, and worked up by you, to adorn the temple of God." – (The Presbyterian Church. (1896, April 27). *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, p.2)

## FAMILY

**Father:** Dr Archibald Reith, Aberdeen.

**Sister:** Mary Reith, eldest sister (b.1865? - d. 1947, March 25). She had married James Moffatt, the learned theologian who became well known for his translation of the Bible.

**Wife:** May McNeill Bowie (m. 1907), daughter of Rev. John Sharp Bowie.

**Sons:** He had four sons.

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[Call no.: RRARE 959.57 REI, Microfilm no.: NL7522]
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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Library's bibliographic record indicates "Imperfect copy".

<sup>2</sup> It does however touch on early references to the island in Malay legend found in the *Sejarah Melayu* and in the *Lusiad* of Cameon – a Portuguese epic.

<sup>3</sup> Davison's and Ridley's articles are found in chapter 13, but Davison's is an abridged version of the original.

<sup>4</sup> Reith argued against labour on Sunday despite the increase in wages. The matter was being discussed at the Colonial Office

particularly among shipping firms, docks and mariners. *The Straits Times*, (1891, September 21), p. 2.

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# The Asian Children's Collection

## Multicultural Children's Literature



By **Panna Kantilal**  
Senior Librarian  
Professional Services  
National Library Board



& **Norasyikin Binte  
Ahmad Ismail**  
Librarian  
National Reference  
& Special Libraries  
National Library

The Asian Children's Collection on Level 10 of the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library (LKCR) started at a time when children's literature was predominantly of British/American origin. The core aim of establishing this collection of works written for children pertaining to Asia and its people was to present the concept and raise the awareness and understanding of Asian-centric children's literature compared with that of Anglo-Saxon children's literature. Since its inception in the early 1960s when it had fewer than 200 books, the collection has with time evolved into a unique resource of more than 20,000 materials for research relating to Asian Children's literature.

The collection is targeted towards researchers interested in the origins of Asian-oriented children's books and the influences and attitudes affecting the pattern and stages of their development. The target audience would include the educationist, writer, illustrator, publisher, student and librarian interested in the use and production of children's reading and learning materials from an Asian perspective and an Asian identity.

This collection covers literary materials for children up to 14 years of age in the four official languages – English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil – and selectively in other Asian languages with English translations. It comprises fiction books, picture books, folk/fairy tales, myths and legends and select non-fiction materials in children's literature (largely materials that depict the customs, culture and mores of Asian society, such as poetry, social beliefs, religion, etc) as well as reference materials such as guides, bibliographies and studies on Asian Children's literature.

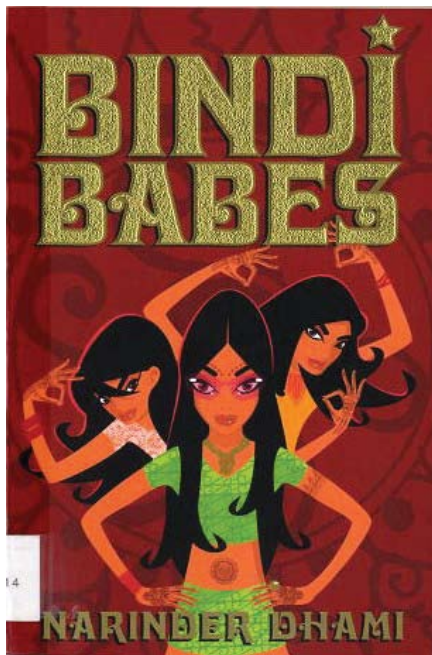
Comprising primarily children's materials, it provides the user with a multicultural experience and at the same time exposes the user to the richness and variety of Asian customs and civilisations. Moreover, the materials in the Asian Children's Collection also promote a thoughtful understanding of

the Asian way of life and values. This is crucial since there is usually a greater exposure to Anglo-Saxon literature which predominates the publishing market and which inadvertently projects values, customs, traditions, way of life and culture that are somewhat different from those found in Asia.

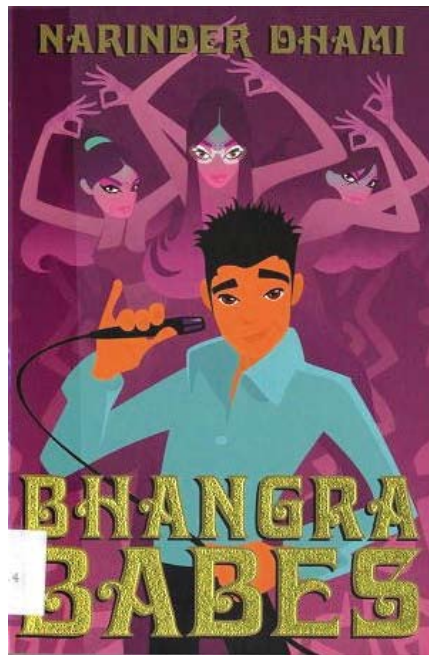
The importance of this collection stems from the fact that it was developed with the aim to interest researchers to delve into the study of children's literature with an Asian theme and setting or with an Asian protagonist. Since the "publishing industry categorises all books with non-white characters as multicultural" (Hill, 1998), the Asian Children's Collection can be classified as multicultural literature since it contains children's literature covering the following geographical regions: Southeast Asia, South Asia, East Asia, Central Asia and South West Asia.

Research in this field has shown multicultural literature as a vehicle that encourages tolerance and understanding among children (Bainbridge, 1999). This is achieved because multicultural literature is "literature about racial or ethnic minority groups that are culturally and socially different from the white Anglo-Saxon majority" (Norton, 1999). As Bainbridge (1999) says "multicultural literature is literature that depicts and explores the lives of individuals who belong to a wide range of diverse groups" and hence it encourages positive attitudes towards difference. "If literature is a mirror that reflects human life, then all children who read or are read to need to see themselves reflected as part of humanity" (Loh, 2006).

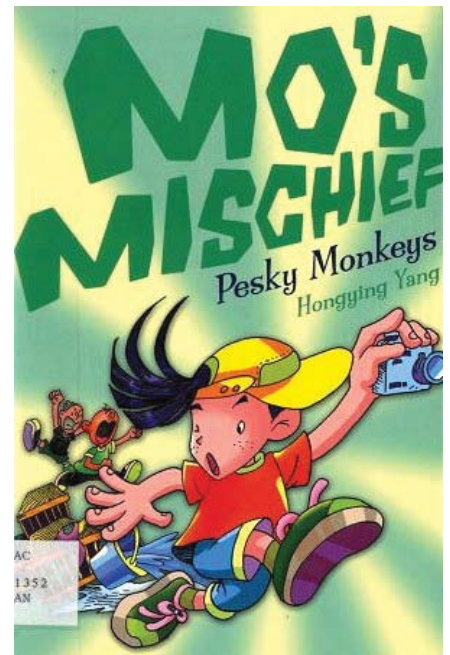
Therefore, it is important for children to read and be exposed to materials depicting their own culture and minority cultures. This is so because "books can be a powerful tool for promoting cultural understanding" and "reading about diverse perspectives enhances multicultural awareness" (Loh, 2006) as it supplies the reader with images, ideas and models



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that they can relate to. Moreover, it is crucial that children's literature reflects the reality of our pluralistic society (Higgins, 2002) so that children are then better able to see themselves and their lives reflected in the books they read (Aoki, 1992; Slapin & Seale, 1992).

A number of multicultural children's literature is about the Asian diaspora, the dispersion of people from their original homeland (Free Dictionary). Originally this word was used for the dispersion of Jewish people outside their Holy Land, but now it has taken on a broader meaning connoting issues of social and cultural significance such as displacement, loss of a shared identity, shared values and customs. Hence issues of hybridism arise, mainly "the notion that there are no pure identities" (Clammer, 2002) and this is especially so in post-colonial societies.

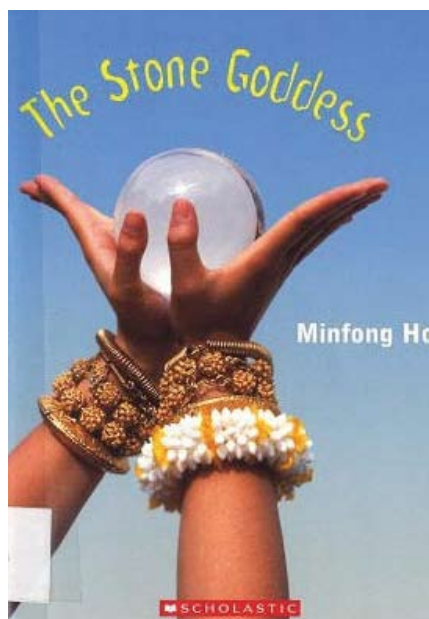
Diaspora in children's literature would be one topic of interest, especially to students and researchers of Asian literature. Below are some highlights of Asian diaspora – Cambodian, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese – in the LKCRL Asian Children's Collection.

The Chinese and Indian diaspora in children's fiction has grown in importance socially, culturally, politically and economically in recent years, especially in Singapore. Consequently, it has become relevant to see how the different cultures have diversified and how the Indian and Chinese characters are

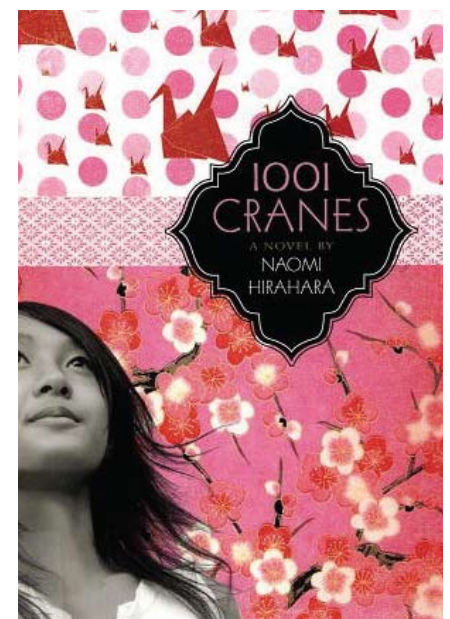
represented in non-Asian settings around the world. Narinder Dhams's *Bindi Babes* (2003) and *Bhangra Babes* (2005) are examples of the Indian diaspora literature housed in the Asian Children's Collection.

From the author who wrote the novel *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Bindi Babes* focuses on the life episodes of three sisters – Amber, Jazz and Geena – who get a surprise visit from an "unhappening" aunt from India. This story centres on how the sisters deal with their intrusive aunt. In *Bhangra Babes*, a sequel to the *Bindi Babes*, Amber, Jazz and Geena face another set of problems, but this time the trouble is at school.

An example of the Chinese diaspora in children's literature would be the Mo's Mischief series, which centres on the



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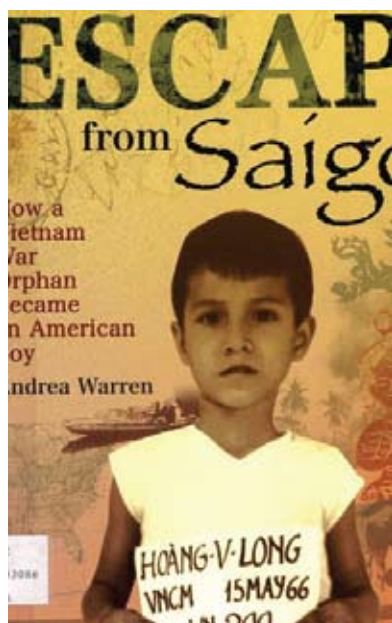


All Rights Reserved, Delacorte Press, 2008.

mischievous life of a Chinese boy in primary school called, Mo Shen Ma, with his four friends, Hippo, Penguin, Monkey and Bat Ears. In the third series, *Pesky Monkeys*, Mo goes to his grandma's house for the summer holidays and teaches his grandma's pig to roller-skate.

*The Stone Goddess*, a story on the Cambodian diaspora, is a touching tale of a 12-year-old Nakri and her elder sister's attempts to maintain their hope as well as their classical dancing skills in the midst of their struggle to survive after the communist takeover Cambodia and her family is torn from their city life. Nakri's family begins life anew in America after Cambodia is liberated.

*1001 Cranes*, a story of the Japanese diaspora, is an engaging tale of a valued Japanese American custom that transforms the life of a lost 12-yearold Japanese American



All Rights Reserved, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.

girl, Angela Michiko. With her parents on the verge of separating, she spends the summer in Los Angeles with her grandparents, when she folds paper cranes into wedding displays, becomes involved with a young skateboarder, and learns how complicated relationships can be.

*Slant*, a story about the Korean diaspora, is a charming tale of 13-year-old Lauren, a Korean-American adoptee, who is tired of being called "slant" and "gook," and longs to have plastic surgery on her eyes. However, after she convinces her father to agree to the surgery, Lauren starts to question some of her own assumptions when she learns a long-kept secret about her mother's death.

*Escape from Saigon*, a story about the Vietnamese diaspora, depicts the experiences of an orphaned Amerasian boy, Long – the son of an American father and a Vietnamese mother – from his birth and early childhood in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City), through his departure from Vietnam in the 1975 Operation Babylift and his subsequent life as the adopted son of an American family in Ohio.

Given the diversity of topics of interest available in the Asian children's Collection, this treasure trove of a collection is an important and valuable resource for the local library scene. The collection will continue to be developed with the aim to present some of the most excellent children's publications from across Asia and to showcase the richness of Asian classical stories and fables as well as attractive illustrations for reference and research purposes. ■

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# The George Hicks Collection



By **Geoff Wade**

Visiting Senior Research Fellow  
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

In an age when the printed word is being rapidly transformed into a digital signal and the page into an electronic image, it is always pleasing to meet people for whom the book is still a treasured object. While books may not necessarily still be today what Charles William Elliot, the long-standing president of Harvard University, called “the most accessible and wisest of counselors,” bibliophiles generally see them as the most aesthetic and collectable carriers of information and ideas.

Those who have amassed personal libraries value their books both for their content and for the beauty inherent in their physical production, and some collectors try to ensure that the contents of their libraries will be available to future generations for decades or centuries to come by donating their collections to public institutions.

The National Library of Singapore has been fortunate through the years to have been the beneficiary of major collections created over decades by such collectors - scholars such as Tan Yeok Seong, Edwin Thumboo and Carl Gibson-Hill; professionals such as Koh Seow Chuan; and specialised collectors such as the film aficionado Ang Kok Sai.

The National Library Board (NLB) has recently received a major gift of books from George Lyndon Hicks – economist, author, book-lover, traveller, businessman and long-time Singapore resident. A large part of his personal library has now been given to the people of Singapore through this donation to the National Library. The collection, comprising more than 3,000 rare and contemporary volumes, is particularly valuable in its

China, Japan and Southeast Asia foci, with economics, history and culture being the areas best represented by the works.

The collection reflects, naturally enough, the interests and life journey of Mr Hicks, an Australian who has lived, studied and worked in various parts of Asia for more than half a century. It was in the late 1950s that Mr Hicks’ connections with Asia began, first through involvement with the international student movement and subsequently as an economist travelling north to conduct research on the nationalisation of Dutch enterprises in Sukarno’s Indonesia.

It was there, as he trawled the second-hand book stores of the major cities of Java, that the beginnings of the Hicks collection emerged. The wide range of rare Dutch works on Asia, and particularly on the 19<sup>th</sup> century economic history of Indonesia, which he purchased during this period and subsequently – and on the basis of which some of his own books were written – were in later years presented as a gift to the Indonesian Academy of Sciences (LIPI). This unique collection included 11,000 reports of companies which had operated in the Dutch East Indies and Indonesia. Mr Hicks was again in Indonesia during the tumultuous years of 1963-65 but, following the attempted coup of 30 September 1965, left to return to Australia to continue his work.

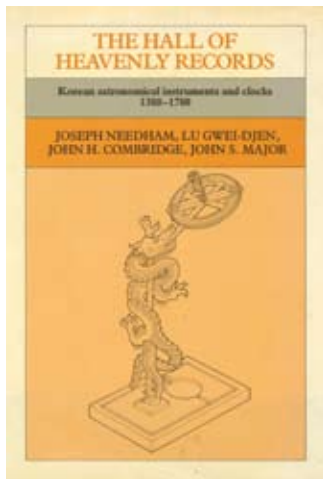
Being on the first flight out of Jakarta following the attempted coup meant that he was, on arriving in Australia, in much demand for news and comment. His work on Indonesia and the books collected allowed Mr Hicks to jointly compile with Geoffrey McNicoll an influential listing of key works on the economy of Indonesia: *The Indonesian Economy, 1950-1965: A Bibliography* (Southeast Asia Studies Program, Yale University, 1967).

The late 1960s saw Mr Hicks move to the Philippines to pursue further studies on the background of Southeast Asian economic development. On the basis of this research, he published *Trade and Growth in the Philippines: An Open Dual Economy* (Cornell University Press, 1971). The studies, reports and monographs accumulated during his stay in the Philippine Islands were added to his growing library.

Japan was the next destination in the 1970s, where again he pursued economic research as well as conducted a study of the Korean minority in Japan, which was subsequently published as *Japan’s Hidden Apartheid: The Korean Minority and the Japanese* (Ashgate, 1997). A wide range of Japan- and Korea-related books, on both economic and



**Dr N Varaprasad, Chief Executive, National Library Board, presenting the Distinguished Patron of National Library award to Mr George Hicks on 26 February 2009.**



**The Hall of Heavenly Records: Korean Astronomical Instruments and Clocks, 1380-1780** by Joseph Needham, Lu Gwei-Djen, John H. Combridge and John S. Major. All rights reserved, Cambridge University Press, 1986. The George Hicks Collection comprises a collection of publications by Joseph Needham.

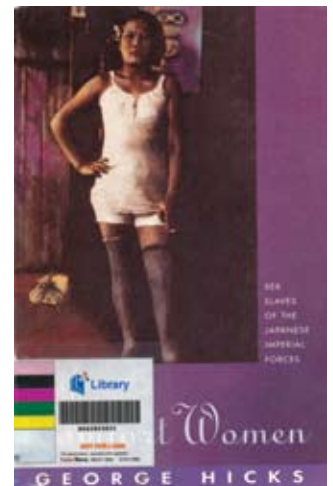
cultural history, can thus be found in the Hicks Collection.

The two decades which the Hicks family spent in Hong Kong from the 1970s to the 1980s saw George's business interests, as well as his scholarly interests and library, expanding greatly. Many of the China-related books which were acquired during this sojourn are included in the collection donated to the NLB, as are works he drew on in writing his frequent contributions to the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and the *Asian Wall Street Journal*. The economic studies he had conducted regionally in the previous decades provided Mr Hicks with a powerful context and basis on which the rapid develop-

ment of the region during this period could be analysed and described.

After coming to reside in Singapore in the 1990s, Mr Hicks continued to travel (and purchase books) widely throughout other parts of Asia, and began to increasingly concern himself with Japanese denial – described as either amnesia or concealment – of World War II atrocities. He subsequently spent five years of his life researching and writing his famous study *The Comfort Women: Sex Slaves of the Japanese Imperial Forces* (Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1995).

Over the same period he was also engaged in publishing, through Select Books in Singapore, a range of studies on the Chinese in Southeast Asia prior to World War II – *Overseas Chinese Remittances from Southeast Asia 1910-1940* (1993), Fukuda Shozo's *With Sweat and Abacus: Economic Roles of Southeast Asian Chinese on the Eve of World War II* (1995) and *Chinese Organisations in Southeast Asia in the 1930s* (1995). He also published *A Bibliography of Japanese Works on the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, 1914-1945* (Asia



**The Comfort Women: Sex Slaves of the Japanese Imperial Forces** by George Hicks. All rights reserved, Heinemann Asia, 1995.



**Kite-flying at Hae Kwan.** Image reproduced from Allom, T. (1843). *China, in a series of views, displaying the scenery, architecture, and social habits of that ancient empire*. London: Fisher, Son & Co.



A map of Southeast Asia.  
Image reproduced from Commelin, I. (ed.) (1646). *Begin ende voortganch, van de vereenighde Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie*. Amsterdam.

Research Service, Hong Kong, 1992). The wide range of books he procured to assist in these various writing and editing projects, a large number of which are rather scarce works relating to the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia prior to the Pacific War, further enhance the value of the Hicks Collection.

But it is not only Asia which has enthralled Mr Hicks through the last half century, and the donated collection is certainly not solely Asia-focused. Rather, the works contained within it also reflect Mr Hicks' preoccupation with the European Enlightenment, and the ideologies of this key period in world history. Issues with which we still grapple today – the role of critical thought, reason and rationality, as well as the scientific method – were all pondered by 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries thinkers of the Enlightenment, including Galileo, Descartes, Newton and Bacon. The development of these ideas, as well as related issues on the advancement of science in Asia, and particularly Needham's grand question as to why China was overtaken by the West in science and technology despite its earlier lead, are thus also reflected in a range of works within this collection.

However, the gems of the Hicks Collection are undoubtedly a range of very rare works included in the donation. These include: An English translation of Simon La Loubere's account of Ayutthaya, *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam* (London, 1693), a copy of William Thorn's *Memoirs of the*

*Conquest of Java* (London, 1815), and the original edition of Raffles' *The History of Java* (London, 1817). Also donated are Marsden's *History of Sumatra* (London, 1811) and several volumes of beautiful engravings of China from the 1840s based on paintings by Thomas Allom. Without a doubt, the *pièce de résistance* of the collection is a superb example of the two-volume *Begin Ende Voortganch, Van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie* ('*The Beginning and Ending of the Dutch East India Company*'), compiled by Isaac Commelin and published in Amsterdam in 1646. This has been assessed as one of the finest examples of this work extant in the world today, and is indeed a treasure for the NLB.

The Hicks Collection is as fine as it is extensive, and the areas selected for comment above are only a very key foci of this outstanding donation. The books are now in the perpetual care of the National Library of Singapore. The donor is pleased that these works provide to the people of Singapore some resources previously unavailable, but at the same time also hopes that they will help to engender, particularly among the young, a love of the book and that they will help visitors to the library, in the words of Henry Fielding, "read in order to live."

Selected titles from the George Hicks Collection are on display at the Donors Gallery, Level 10, Lee Kong Chian Reference Library. Please approach the Information Counter at Level 11 for any queries on the collection. ■

# Research Collaboratory Client Series: “Policy Making 2010 – Emergent Technologies”



By **Samuel Sng**  
Research Associate I  
Publishing and  
Research Services  
National Library

How will emergent technologies shape policy making? This theme was pertinent enough to attract more than 100 representatives from mostly government agencies to the inaugural Research Collaboratory Client Series in December last year

icy-making is not supposed to be “cast in stone”, he noted that the changes in social policies aptly reflect our nation’s evolving social strata.

As technology evolves from Web 2.0 to cloud computing,

barriers have been lifted and possibilities seem limitless. In his keynote address, Prof Paul Gandel suggested that such a transition presented both opportunities and challenges for organisations. The acting chief information officer of the Singapore Management University also explained how technological trends and learning has impacted businesses in America and globally by using three case studies from his experiences in developing private computing clouds, green computing and learning through global engagement.

Mr Nicholas Aaron Khoo, co-founder of Cybersports and Online Gaming Association (SCOGA), revealed that Singapore boasted 1.37 million online gamers in 2009. With a large proportion of these online gamers being children and youths, SCOGA has been



**Participants listening with rapt attention to the speakers.**

at the National Library Building. Hosted by the Publishing and Research Services (PRS) of the National Library Board (NLB), this public forum showcased divergent perspectives of experts from various disciplines.

In her welcome speech, NLB’s Deputy Chief Executive, Ms Ngian Lek Choh, said that with the ubiquitous acceptance of Web 2.0, policymakers and institutions can benefit from this environment by interchanging the role of proponent and recipient.

Mr Peter Lim, former Straits Times chief editor and media consultant, opened with a video from his most recent publication to illustrate changes in social policies over the years. Using the family planning agenda in the 1960s, Mr Lim described how the government had changed mindsets on marriage and children by the 1980s. Although pol-

using outreach events in helping parents to bridge the digital divide and grapple with the challenges that gaming poses. Some of these outreach programmes include: the Singapore Arcade Showdown (November 2008), the MDA Media Fiesta 2009 Gamer’ Forum, Licence2Play and National Family Celebrations 2009.

In its quest to transform Singapore into a knowledge-based economy, NLB has been one of the key



**Mr Panicker...skills for an uncertain world.**

agents of knowledge creation. Mr Samuel Sng, a research associate, showed how PRS can benefit organisations through research and consultancy. In line with NLB's role to facilitate knowledge creation, PRS would be launching the Research Collaboratory platform in early 2010. Aptly called "Ideapolis", this online site provides researchers with the latest domain-specific information, social networking tools, a directory of researchers, project spaces and a document repository.

After the recent economic crisis, corporate leaders require a new management compass to steer their organisations through uncharted waters. Mr Ramesh Panicker, regional creative director of Soundview and Executive Resources (S) Pte Ltd, expounded on the "10 new leadership skills for an uncertain

(2) performance measurement, and (3) striking a balance between information sharing and security.

As information grows, so will the opportunity to find answers to fundamental questions. Ms Cheryl Fung from the Futures-Group (Ministry of Trade and Industry) argued how Singapore could use data to gain a competitive edge for its economy. In the next decade, creative economies must not only be able to process, comprehend and extract value from data, they must also be able to visualise and communicate it effectively. She cited case studies from America and Singapore to illustrate how these two countries were able to use data creatively to improve society and the economy.



**The speakers (From left): Ms La Marca, Prof Gandel, Ms Fung, Mr Lim and Mr Khoo during the panel discussion... insightful.**

world". These attributes are: (1) maker instinct, (2) clarity, (3) dilemma flipping, (4) immersive learning ability, (5) bio-empathy, (6) constructive depolarisation, (7) quiet transparency, (8) rapid prototyping, (9) smart mob organising, and (10) commons creating.

Social media has become a powerful business tool for enhancing public relations, customer service, product development, brand awareness, marketing and competitive analysis. Ms Daniela La Marca, co-founder and managing director of MediaBUZZ Pte Ltd and editor of Asian eMarketing, revealed that a recent consumer survey has shown that 78% of respondents trusted peer recommendations more than advertisements (14%). She also delved into the 5 Ws (why, what, who, where and when) of social media policy and championed the need for a code of ethics to regulate the use of social media.

In a lively floor exchange with Dr Leong Mun Kew, Deputy Chief Information Officer of NLB, the audience brainstormed and voted on the 10 most critical information needs in 2010. The top three areas identified were: (1) quality of information,

The day's proceedings culminated with an insightful panel discussion by the speakers, moderated by Dr Leong. Here are excerpts from four questions posed by the audience:

**Q: It appears that social data is not easily available. This poses a problem for social policy-making. What can be done about this?**

*Considering the amount of data that is available on the Internet, policy-makers need to be creative when they are searching for social data. They can study what people are searching in Google to ascertain issues that are of interest to people. Unemployment data could also be used to gauge social problems in society while surveys could be conducted to find out more information about people.*

**Q: How big a part does Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) play in the Asian context?**

*CSR is a Western concept. Giving is not considered to be a "big thing" in Asia as it is in the West. If there are enough incentives for giving, people might be motivated to give.*

**Q: Does the content in social media "touch the heart"? Are people emotionally engaged in what they write, or is social networking a shallow pursuit?**

*Social media such as Facebook have brought out a lot of caring and feelings from people. Social networking is like any other social interaction and the conversations and connections can be meaningful.*

**Q: What will be considered the "sexiest" jobs in the next five years?**

*Games developer, new generation social worker, statistician, data visualiser and librarian. ■*



**Dr Leong...striking a balance. Join IDEAPOLIS (Research Collaboratory) at ideapolis.sg.**

# Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship

## Three new research fellows awarded

The Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship welcomes three new research fellows: Sharon Wong Wai Wee (Hong Kong), Tan Teng Phee (Malaysia) and Dr Noel Chia Kok Hwee (Singapore). They were awarded their fellowships by Judy Ng, Deputy Director, National Reference and Special Libraries on 12 January.



(From left): Ms Angie Ng Gek Tee, witness for Dr Chia; Dr Chia; Dr Mahani Awang, witness for Ms Wong; Ms Wong; Mrs Kornphanat Tungkeunkunt, witness for Mr Tan, and Mr Tan.

Sharon Wong's research topic is "An Overview of the Cultural and Technological Interactions Between the Chinese and Mainland Southeast Asian Ceramics Industries During the Period 9<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries".

She says of herself:

*"I chose to continue my study in Singapore for more than four years because I believe that Singapore is a hub of Southeast Asia. While I also realise that Hong Kong is a gateway to the south China region, both of these two places have provided me with the best research environments in the regions. My research at the National Library will focus on the cultural and technological interaction between the Chinese and Southeast Asian ceramic industries from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. One of my favourite experiences was joining the archaeological dig in Phnom Kulen in Siem Reap, Cambodia. I had the experience of being brought closer to the daily life of Cambodians. Besides work, I like travelling, watching movies and drama, cycling, and spending my time in bookstores and museums."*

Tan Teng Phee's research topic is "The Assassination of Henry Gurney and the case of the Tras New Village and the Malayan emergency".

He says of himself:

*"Born in Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia, I had lived in several different Chinese New Villages and these life experiences had inspired me to explore the history of Chinese New Villages for my doctoral research. I commenced my PhD programme at the Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, Western Australia,*

*in April 2006. My doctoral thesis attempts to analyse the everyday lives of the Chinese New Villagers behind barbed wire, and how they responded to the British colonial government's coercive policies. During the course of the Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship from January 2010 to July 2010, I will focus on the unique case of the Tras New Village and its links to the assassination of the High Commissioner of Malaya, Henry Gurney, in 1951. This micro-level study aims to analyse how the assassination of the high commissioner both implicated and changed the New Villagers' lives and circumstances in Tras, during the Malayan Emergency period."*

Dr Noel Chia's research topic is "A Survey on the Growth of Imagination in Children's English Literature in Singapore: 1965 - 2005."

Dr Chia says of himself:

*"I am a board-certified educational therapist registered with the Association of Educational Therapists, United States, as well as a board-certified special education professional registered with the American Academy of Special Education Professionals. Besides, I am a registered professional counsellor with the Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors. Currently, I am an assistant professor with the Early Childhood & Special Needs Education Academic Group at the National Institute of Education/Nanyang Technological University. I spend most of my free time reading and writing not only academic papers but also stories and poems for children. Together with my daughter, Grace, I love creating imaginary tales along the line of fantasy and science fiction. I like humour and enjoy cracking jokes to make myself look silly! I have always been passionate about promoting Singapore children's literature in English. Here I am ... on this Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship to research on the topic closest to my heart: imagination in children's literature..."*

The Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship invites scholars, practitioners and librarians to undertake collection-related research and publish on the National Library of Singapore's donor and prized collections. The fellowship aims to position the National Library Board as the first stop for Asian collection services. It is open to both local and foreign applicants, who should preferably have an established record of achievement in their chosen field of research and the potential to excel further. For information on the Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship, please contact the Administrator at:

Email: [LKCRF@nlb.gov.sg](mailto:LKCRF@nlb.gov.sg)

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# 6 – 9

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# Asian Festival of Children's Content



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### What it should have been

We apologise for the errors in the article "A Graphic Tale in Baba Malay: Chrita Orang Yang Chari Slamet (1905)" published in Vol 5, Issue 3, October 2009.

1) Page 34, right hand column, second paragraph: "Another Baba, Chew Cheng Yong, was recruited to help in verifying the accuracy of the translation; but little is known of him."

Not "Another Baba, Chin Cheng Yong, was recruited to help in verifying the accuracy of the translation; but little is known of him."

2) Page 35, left hand column, last paragraph: "W.T. Cherry had taken over from Shellabear in the running of the Methodist printing press in Singapore."

Not "T.W. Cherry had taken over from Shellabear in the running of the Methodist printing press in Singapore."



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**National Library Board**  
100 Victoria Street  
#14-01 National Library Building  
Singapore 188064