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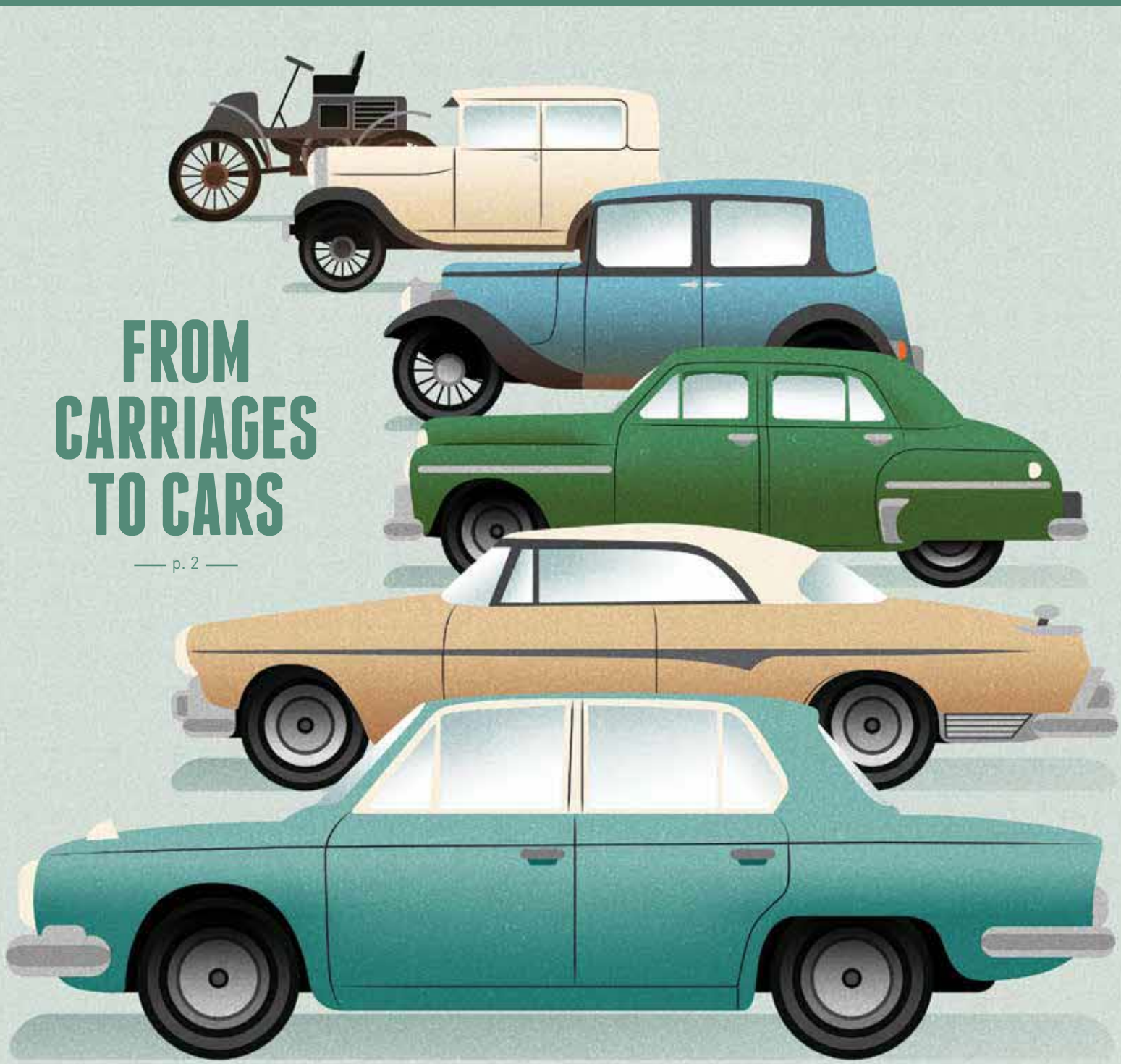

FROM CARRIAGES TO CARS

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BiblioAsia
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FEATURE

NL NOTES

Director's Note

How quickly the last quarter of the year is upon us! Welcome to the final issue of *BiblioAsia* for 2018.

The first automobiles were imported into Singapore in 1896, and shortly after, print advertisements began appearing in newspapers and magazines, enticing consumers with ever creative ways to part with their money for a new set of wheels. In the cover story, Mazelan Anuar tracks the rise of the automobile scene in Singapore, from carriages drawn by horse, bullock and human to the advent of the first cars – advertised as "horseless carriages" – from the late 19th century onwards.

Some of these early print ads on cars, along with those on food and drink to fashion and travel, and more, are on display at our latest exhibition – "Selling Dreams: Early Advertising in Singapore" – which takes place at the National Library Building until 24 February 2019.

Besides selling a product or service, advertisements also reveal intriguing aspects of life from a bygone era, as Sundari Balasubramaniam discovers in her examination of Tamil print ads published between the 1920s and 1960s.

We also turn our attention to a relatively unknown heritage building along Clarke Quay. Built in the southern Chinese style, this is the River House, which Martina Yeo and Yeo Kang Shua suggest might have served as the headquarters of a secret society in the 1880s.

Another edifice of historical significance is the Kranji War Cemetery, the final resting place of servicemen who perished during World War II. Athanasios Tsakonas tells us how and why the architect from the Imperial War Graves Commission, Colin St Clair Oakes, chose Kranji as the eventual site for his war memorial.

Interestingly, the first two Western-style pharmacies established in Singapore – the Medical Hall on Battery Road and the Medical Office on North Bridge Road – were started by German émigrés in the late 19th century. Timothy Pwee traces the 120-year-history of the Medical Office until its fairly recent closure in 2012.

Does traditional Malay medicine have more in common with science or magic and folklore? Nadirah Norruddin goes further back into our history to demystify the myths surrounding the age-old practice of Malay medicine and reports how it has evolved since colonial times when the British saw Malay village healers as little more than charlatans.

With gender-related issues so much in the news today, Phyllis Chew takes a look at the history of the Singapore Council of Women (SWC). Spearheaded in 1952 by activist Shirin Fodzar to break down barriers in society, the SWC was an instrumental force in the enactment of the Women's Charter in 1961.

In another, and mellower, look at women, Robert Yeo pays tribute to his daughter Sha Min and the acclaimed writer Catherine Lim, in an extract from a forthcoming sequel to his memoir Routes: *A Singaporean Memoir 1940–1975*.

Finally, we showcase two collections from the National Library: Ong Eng Chuan previews significant items from the Lee Kip Lee and Lee Kip Lin Family Archives of personal and business papers belonging to a prominent Peranakan family in British Malaya; while Barbara Quek highlights publications featuring some of Singapore's best hawker stalls from our Legal Deposit Collection.

On the subject of Legal Deposit, I should take this opportunity to highlight the recent amendment to the National Library Board Act which now allows us to archive Singapore websites without having to seek the express permission of website owners. Shereen Tay stresses the importance of systematically archiving the often ephemeral nature of web content for our future generations.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of *BiblioAsia*.

Mrs Wai Yin Pryke
Director
National Library

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

Editorial & Production

Managing Editor
Francis Dorai

Editor
Veronica Chee

Editorial Support
Masamah Ahmad
Jocelyn Lau

Design and Print
Oxygen Studio Designs Pte Ltd

Contributors
Athanasios Tsakonas
Barbara Quek
Martina Yeo
Mazelan Anuar
Nadirah Norruddin
Ong Eng Chuan
Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew
Raphaël Millet
Robert Yeo
Shereen Tay
Sundari Balasubramaniam
Timothy Pwee
Yeo Kang Shua

Please direct all correspondence to:
National Library Board
100 Victoria Street #14-01
National Library Building
Singapore 188064
Email: ref@nlb.gov.sg
Website: www.nlb.gov.sg

On the cover:
The evolution of automobiles from the noisy and clunky "horseless carriage" of the 1890s to the modern petrol-driven motorcar of the 1960s. *Cover design by Oxygen Studio Designs Pte Ltd.*

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WHEELS OF CHANGE 1896–1970

Advertisements targeting aspiring car owners have come a long way since the first automobile was launched in Singapore in 1896, as **Mazelan Anuar** tells us.

Mazelan Anuar is a Senior Librarian with the National Library, Singapore. His research interests are in early Singapore Malay publications and digital librarianship. He manages the National Library's Malay language collection as well as the NewspaperSG portal. (He is a safe driver, and owns the reliable and down-to-earth Toyota Wish.)

The word "automobilism", meaning the use of automobiles,[1] entered the English lexicon in the late 19th century when motor vehicles emerged as a new mode of private transportation. Karl Benz's "Patent-Motorwagen", first built in 1885, sparked a vehicular revolution that saw animal power replaced by the internal combustion engine. Thus was born the automobile, which literally means "self-moving" car. Although the term "automobilism" has fallen into disuse, the world's love affair with automobiles has never waned, with succeeding generations embracing it with as much enthusiasm as the early adopters.

THE HORSELESS CARRIAGE

The Katz Brothers ushered in the age of automobilism in Singapore when they imported the first automobiles in August 1896. Before this, the horse-drawn carriage, shipped in from Britain since the 1820s, was a popular means of passenger transport. Another common mode of transportation in the late 19th century was the *jinrickshaw* (literally "man-drawn carriage" in Japanese), originally from Japan and introduced in Singapore in 1880 from Shanghai.[2]

The Katz Brothers were the sole agents for Benz and Co.'s "Motor-Velociped", which was advertised as a "horseless carriage". A favourable review in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* described it as a "neat-looking four-wheeled carriage" that did not require an "expert driver", but commented that its $1,600 price tag was "somewhat high".[3]

Automobile ads continued to make reference to "horseless carriages" for decades afterwards, and well into the mid 1950s. This was usually to draw attention to the fact that the product or company had existed since the dawn of the automobile industry and had grown in tandem with it. Examples of such advertisements included those for Dunlop Tyres, Shell (formerly the Asiatic Petroleum Company) and Chloride Batteries Limited.

The introduction of automobiles was enthusiastically embraced by the who's who of Singapore and Malaya. A certain B. Frost of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company and subsequently Charles B. Buckley, publisher and famed author of *An Anecdotal History of Singapore*, were the first to own and drive the Benz in Singapore.[4] Soon, more automobiles were brought into Singapore. The Benz was followed by the De Dion Bouton and then the Albion.[5]

(Facing page) Ford's Consul Cortina was marketed as a woman's "dream car". The target customer as depicted in the advertisement here is a young, modern woman, suggesting the rising status of Singapore women in the 1960s. *Image reproduced from The Straits Times Annual, 1964, p. xxvii.*
(Below) A *jinrickshaw* puller at the corner of North Bridge and Rochor roads, 1930s. A common mode of transportation in late-19th century Singapore was the *jinrickshaw* (literally "man-drawn carriage" in Japanese), originally from Japan and introduced to the island in 1880. *Allen Goh Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*
(Right) The first automobile in Singapore was advertised as a horseless carriage. Its claim as "being quite silent" was most likely an exaggeration. *Image reproduced from The Straits Times, 29 August 1896, p. 1.*
(Bottom right) Instead of purchasing an expensive motorcycle or an even more costly automobile, the motorised bicycle was a viable alternative for those with a smaller budget. This advertisement shows a motorised wheel attached to the rear wheel of a bicycle to make it go faster. As there were no proper traffic rules in the early 20th century, people came up with ingenious ways to travel. *Image reproduced from The Straits Times, 10 March 1921, p.2.*

(Above) Before the advent of the automobile in Singapore in 1896, the common modes of transportation back then were the horse-drawn carriage, bullock cart and *jinrickshaw*, 1880s. *Courtesy of Editions Didier Millet.*
(Right) Charles B. Buckley in his Benz "Motor-Velociped", which was advertised as a "horseless carriage". He and B. Frost of the Eastern Extension Telegraph were the first to own and drive the Benz in Singapore. *Image reproduced from Makepeace, W., Brooke, G. E., & Braddell, R. St. J. (1921). One Hundred Years of Singapore (Vol. II). London: John Murray. [Call no.: RCLOS 959.51 MAK-[RFL]].*

All three models shared a reputation for being very noisy and hence did not require horns to make themselves heard. Buckley dubbed his car "The Coffee Machine" because of the awful grinding noises it made.[6]

WHO DARES WINS

Singapore's first lady motorist was Mrs G.M. Dare, who drove a Star motor-car before switching to a two-seater Adams-Hewitt in 1906.[7] That year, car registration came into force and Mrs Dare enjoyed the distinction of driving Singapore's first registered car, which bore the licence plate number S-1.[8] She nicknamed her car "Ichiban" (Japanese for "Number One"), but the locals, amazed and possibly fearful in equal measures at seeing her at the wheel, called it the "Devil Wind Carriage".[9]

Even more amazing was the fact that Mrs Dare clocked more than 69,000 miles (111,000 km) driving the car all over Singapore, Malaya, Java, England and Scotland.[10] She is also credited for teaching driving to the first Malay to obtain a driving licence in Singapore, a chauffeur by the name of Hassan bin Mohamed.[11]

THE RISE OF THE AUTOMOBILE

In 1907, the Singapore Automobile Club (SAC) was formed, with Governor John Anderson as its president. Notable members included the Sultan of Johor; Walter John Napier, a lawyer-academic who was the first editor of the *Straits Settlements Law Reports*; and E.G. Broadrick, president of the Singapore Municipality between 1904 and 1910 and later the British Resident of Selangor.[12] Remarkably, by 1908 – when the world automobile industry was still in its infancy[13] – there were already 214 individuals in Singapore licensed to drive "motor-cars, motor-bicycles and steam-rollers".[14]

In June 1907, *The Straits Times* announced that it was devoting a special column to automobilism.[15] The column started off as "Motors & Motoring" in 1910, was renamed "The Motoring World" in 1911 and ran until 1928.[16] Its longevity was testimony to the fascination with cars among the paper's readers, if not the general population.

The monthly *Motor Car and Athletic Journal* was launched in March 1908, but it proved short-lived and ceased publication after 12 issues.[17] It was only in the 1930s that the Automobile Association of Malaya (AAM), which SAC became a branch of in 1932, began to venture into publishing, with *Malayan Motorist* (first issue 1933), *Motoring in Malaya* (1935), *Handbook of the Automobile Association of Malaya* (1939) and, much later, *AAM News Bulletin* (1949).[18] Car advertisements were regularly featured in AAM's magazines as well as in the newspapers.

RELIABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Up until the 1920s, car advertisements in the United States and Europe tended to highlight the vehicles' technical features in order to familiarise potential owners with the exciting yet intimidating new world of automobile technology.[19] Manufacturers recognised that scepticism about dependability and reliability were major obstacles to widespread public acceptance of motor vehicles as a means of private transportation.[20]

It was a similar scenario in Singapore. Distributors and agents highlighted both the reliability and affordability of their vehicles by touting the technology behind the cars and their attractive prices. There were also attempts at associating prestige with the advertised cars, but this was meant to build brand reputation and reflected the manufacturers' ambitions rather than consumers' desire for high-end luxury vehicles.

Ford in Singapore
In 1909, just a year after Henry Ford's iconic Model T was introduced in America

TAXI! TAXI!

First introduced in 1910, the taxi-cab service in Singapore was the brainchild of C.F.F. Wearne and Company. Singapore became the second city in Asia after Calcutta, India, to have such a service and it was lauded as being modern and affordable. Two Rover cars were fitted with "taximeters" and were initially used to provide a reservations-only private taxi service before obtaining the licence to ply the streets for public hire. At a charge of 40 cents per mile and with a seating capacity of five passengers, taxi-cab services worked out to be no more expensive than hiring a first-class rickshaw.

In 1919, the Singapore Motor Taxi Cab and Transport Company Limited was incorporated in the Straits Settlements (comprising Singapore, Penang and Malacca) and published its prospectus in the local newspapers to raise $350,000 as capital. The company proposed starting a taxi service comprising a fleet of 40 Ford Landaulettes as taxi-cabs. The 20-horsepower six-seater Landaulette was distributed by C.F.F. Wearne and Company.

By the end of 1920, the Singapore Taxicab Co. was advertising a "Call a Taxi" service in *The Straits Times*. Its black-and-yellow taxis were stationed at Raffles Place, General Post Office, Grand Hotel de l'Europe, Adelphi Hotel, Raffles Hotel and the company's garage at 1 Orchard Road, ready to pick up passengers. The fare was 40 cents per mile – the same as when taxi services were introduced a decade earlier.

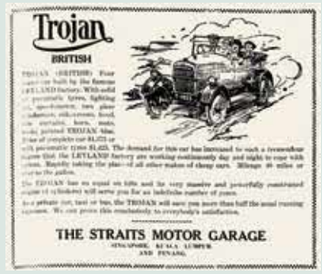
Abrams' Motor Transport Company started a vehicle-for-hire scheme in the mid-1920s. Customers could hire a car or lorry at $3 per hour, which was touted as being cheaper than a taxi. Among the car models available for hire was the five-seater Gardner.

In 1930, Borneo Motors Limited imported a new type of taximeter that could calculate fares automatically. Apparently there had been disputes between drivers and passengers over the correct fare to be paid (taximeters became compulsory only in 1953). The new taximeter had been used in other Asian cities such as Rangoon and Calcutta.

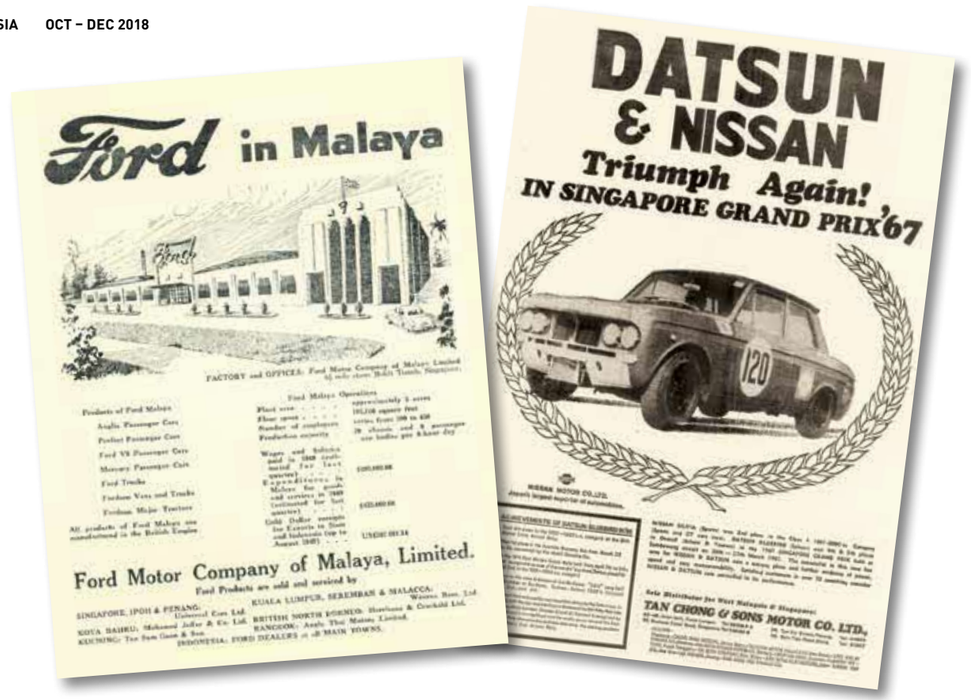
Yellow Top Cabs – launched by Universal Cars Limited which claimed to have the lowest metered rates for closed cabs – made its debut in Singapore in 1933. Advertisements for Yellow Top Cabs between 1933 and 1934 sang praises of their cleanliness, efficiency and reliability. The cabs were available at taxi stands – at Raffles Place, Collyer Quay, Battery Road, Raffles Hotel, Stamford Road and Orchard Road – and could also be booked by telephone.

After World War II, many private cars were used by unlicensed taxi drivers to ply the streets for hire. These illegal "pirate taxis" caused problems for both licensed taxi drivers as well as the authorities, although it was argued that they provided a much-needed public service.

In 1970, the National Trades Union Congress started its Comfort taxi service and offered pirate taxi drivers the opportunity to join its operations. A total ban on pirate taxis came into force in July the following year.



(Below) A fleet of taxis along North Bridge Road, 1968. Meters were made compulsory for all licensed taxis by 1953. However, many private cars were used by unlicensed taxi drivers to ply the streets for hire. People negotiated fares with the driver and strangers could be picked up along the way to share the fare. *George W. Porter Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*
(Right) The four-seater Trojan was promoted as a "private car, taxi or bus" that could halve the usual running expenses for a car. *Image reproduced from The Singapore Free Press, 9 September 1925, p. 5.*
(Bottom right) Yellow Top Cabs first appeared in Singapore in 1933 and soon became a familiar sight on the streets. *Image reproduced from The Straits Times, 6 November 1933, p. 16.*



and took the world by storm, Ford cars entered the Singapore market.[21] Initially imported by Gadelius & Company, Ford's presence grew in Singapore when the Ford Motor Company of Malaya was established in 1926 to supervise the supply and distribution of its products in Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, Siam and Borneo.[22] It initially carried out car assembly work in a garage on Enggor Street before expanding to larger premises on nearby Prince Edward Road in 1930. In 1941, the company moved to a newly built factory in Bukit Timah.[23]

Throughout this time, as well as in the decade following the end of World War II, Ford's advertisements in Singapore rarely departed from its marketing tactic of playing up the efficiency of its cars and competitive pricing.

Japanese Marques

From the late 1950s, Japanese-made cars became available in Singapore. By 1970, one in two cars purchased in Singapore was a Japanese model.[24] The main reason for their popularity? Value for money.

Japanese cars were much cheaper than their American and European counterparts, and were winning races in both local and international motor competitions in the late 1960s. The advertisements cleverly highlighted these achievements and, at the same time, banked on the tried-and-tested formula of good value, efficiency as well as reliability to attract buyers. ♦

(Left) The Ford Factory building along Bukit Timah Road, which was designed in the Art Deco style, opened in 1941. According to this advertisement, the factory was producing an impressive seven models of cars and trucks, and capable of churning out 20 chassis and eight passenger car bodies per day. *Image reproduced from AAM News Bulletin, November 1949.*
(Right) Japanese marques like Datsun and Nissan scored successes at local and international races and rallies, and these achievements were regularly trumpeted in their advertisements. *Image reproduced from The Straits Times, 29 March 1967, p. 15.*

Notes

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22 Ford Company opens here. (1926, November 23). *The Singapore Free Press*, p. 8. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
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1830s

Horse- and pony-drawn carriages were a common form of transportation throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, along with rickshaws, before they were phased out by motor vehicles. Horses and carriages were auctioned in the municipal square and advertised in local newspapers such as the *Singapore Chronicle*. *Images reproduced from Singapore Chronicle and Commercial Register, 30 April 1836, p. 2, and 9 July 1836, p.1.*

FOR SALE.

A handsome, strong, compact, and light BUGGY adapted for a poney, built by STEWART & Co. of Calcutta, with Collinges patent Axle, and just landed, may be seen on application to the undersigned

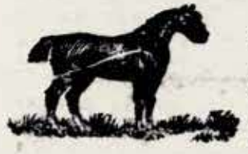
W. HEWETSON.

Singapore. 29th April, 1836.

HORSE.

FOR SALE.

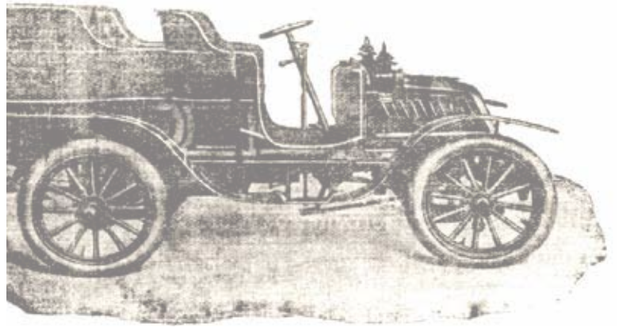
THREE FOURTHS BRED



AN ARAB,

(Imported from Madras by an Officer accustomed to the Saddle and to go in Harness. Price moderate. Apply at the Chronicle Office.

Singapore, 7th July 1836.



1900s

Companies that imported automobiles as their core business did not emerge until the mid-20th century. Prior to that, cars were brought into Singapore by general importers such as Guthrie & Co. Ltd. Swift Cars was a manufacturer from Coventry, England. The company began as a sewing machine manufacturer, eventually expanding to bicycle and motorised cycles before finally taking on automobiles. *Image reproduced from The Straits Times Annual, 1907.*

1920s

(Right) New Chevrolet car models touted as being "a class apart" from other cars with features such as beautiful colours that were long-wearing and weather resistant, and had "racy low-hung bodies", "full-crowned mud-guards and a distinctive radiator". *Image reproduced from The Straits Times, 23 July 1927, p. 13.*
(Far right) The REO Flying Cloud was advertised as appealing to the sensibilities of both men and women. *Image reproduced from British Malayan Annual, 1929, p. 32.*

1930s

Car advertisements appeared regularly in magazines published by the Automobile Association of Malaya. This is an advertisement for Jaguar sports cars, which were available in 1.5-, 2.5- and 3.5-litre models. *Image reproduced from Handbook of the Automobile Association of Malaya, 1939.*

1940s

An advertisement for the newly launched Morris Six. *Image reproduced from AAM News Bulletin, November 1949.*

1950s

(Below) The Renault Dauphine had every detail worked out to "anticipate the desires of lady drivers or their male consorts". *Image reproduced from The Straits Times, 15 February 1959, p. 9.*
(Right) Affordable Japanese-made cars were imported into Singapore in the late 1950s. *Image reproduced from The Straits Times, 25 February 1958, p. 4.*

1960s

(Right) An advertisement touting the various features of the Mercedes Benz 250S, such as its powerful 6-cylinder engine, the ergonomically built seats, the reliable breaking system, and the light and quick steering. *Image reproduced from The Straits Times Annual, 1968, p. 136.*
(Far right) This advertisement portrays car ownership as a happy family ideal, with a picture perfect modern family admiring their brand new Morris motorcar. *Image reproduced from Her World, November 1960.*

This essay is reproduced from the book, *Between the Lines: Early Print Advertising in Singapore 1830s–1960s*. Published by the National Library Board and Marshall Cavendish International Asia, it retails at major bookshops, and is also available for reference and loan at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library and selected public libraries (Call nos.: RSING 659.1095957 BET and SING 659.1095957 BET).

The exhibition "Selling Dreams: Early Advertising in Singapore" takes place at level 10 of the National Library Building on Victoria Street. A variety of print advertisements from the 1830s to 1960s on subjects such as food, fashion, entertainment, travel and more are on display until 24 February 2019.

FIVE ASHORE IN SINGAPORE

A EUROPEAN SPY FILM

Raphaël Millet sits through a B-grade movie dismissed by critics as belonging to the genre of Eurospy flicks that parody James Bond – and discovers a slice of Singaporean celluloid history.

Raphaël Millet is a film director, producer and critic with a passion for early cinema. He has published two books, *Le Cinéma de Singapour* (2004) and *Singapore Cinema* (2006), as well as directed documentaries such as *Gaston Méliès and His Wandering Star Film Company* (2015), screened as part of the 2015 Singapore International Film Festival, and *Chaplin in Bali* (2017), which opened the Bali International Film Festival in 2017.

Few foreign films, especially Western ones, have ever been shot completely on location in Singapore. In the latter half of the 1960s, a handful of low-budget commercial European films – or B-grade movies, to borrow a term from the film industry – were produced with the Lion City as an exotic backdrop. These "Eurospy films", a variation of the broader "super spy" genre, were obvious rip-offs of the James Bond series by Ian Fleming and were especially popular in Germany, Italy, France and Spain. When the first Bond movie *Dr No* was released in 1962, it was swiftly followed up by a string of copycat European films based on Secret Agent 007.

The "super spy" craze peaked between 1966 and 1968 and included a few shot-in-Singapore films like *So Darling So Deadly* (1966),[1] *Suicide Mission to Singapore* (1966)[2] and *Five Ashore in Singapore* (1967). Apart from rare mentions in articles or books,[3] precious little has been written about these films, even though they all captured Singapore at a time of change in the first few months or years following its independence in 1965. Of these three films, the most outstanding is *Five Ashore in Singapore*.

OSS 117, the "French Bond"

Five Ashore in Singapore (see text box) was a French-Italian collaboration between producers Pierre Kalfon and Georges Chappedelaine of Les Films Number One in Paris, and Franco Riganti and Antonio Cervi of Franco Riganti Productions in Rome. The international distribution of the film was handled by Rank Organisation, a British conglomerate created in the late 1930s.

Two versions of the film were produced simultaneously: one in English and the other in French, which is why the producers took pains to cast as many actors as possible who were bilingual so that they could play their parts in both languages. Only the few main actors who were not conversant in French had to be dubbed along with all the Singaporean extras.

(Facing page) The French-Dutch poster for *Five Ashore in Singapore*, 1967. After its initial premiere in France, the film was released in other parts of Europe and North America, where it was screened in cinemas right into 1968. *Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*

A MOVIE BY ANY OTHER NAME

Like similar B-movies of the era, the film went by several different titles. The English version in the United Kingdom was called *Five Ashore in Singapore*, and in the United States as the double-barrelled *Singapore, Singapore*.[1] Inexplicably, in Singapore it was first announced as *Singapore Mission for Five*,[2] before being eventually retitled and released as *Our Five Men in Singapore* in February 1968.

Its original title *Cinq gars pour Singapour* is French, as this is the title of the French novel it is adapted from. *Cinq gars pour Singapour*, when literally translated, means "Five guys for Singapore" – *cinq* is "five", *gars* is "guys" and *pour* is "for" – and is a clever phonetic pun on the name of the city, since *cinq-gars-pour* (when said quickly) sounds exactly like "Singapour".

The pun is lost in translation of course, but details such as the number of male protagonists and location were kept intact in most of the titles of the foreign-language versions that were either dubbed or subtitled, for example *Cinco Marinos en Singapur* in Spanish (also *Cinco Muchachos en Singapur* in Argentina), *Cinque Marines per Singapore* in Italian, *Vijf Kerels Voor Singapore* in Dutch, and *Pet Momaka za Singapour* in Serbian for the Yugoslavian version of the film.

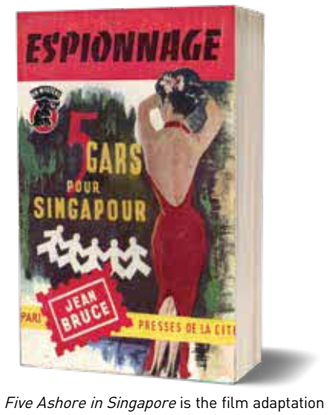
(Below) A Yugoslavian lobby card with the film title translated into Serbian – *Pet Momaka za Singapour. Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*
(Bottom left) The French press kit of *Five Ashore in Singapore*. The film was commercially released in March 1967 in France, where it enjoyed a long run at the Balzac Theatre in Paris. *Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*
(Bottom right) The Italian film poster for *Five Ashore in Singapore*, 1967. C*ourtesy of Raphaël Millet.*

Notes
1 Listed in IMDb by this title.
2 Sam, J. (1966, October 1). Solved-that Men from U.N.C.L.E riddle. *The Straits Times*, p. 12; When the kissing couldn't even get started. (1966, October 2). *The Straits Times*, p. 3. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.

Based on the 1959 novel *Cinq gars pour Singapour* by the prolific French writer Jean Bruce (1921–63), the film was initially titled *OSS 117 Goes to Singapore* after the spy novel series, *OSS 117*, which Bruce created in 1949. The story centres around the secret agent Hubert Bonnisseur de la Bath, who worked for the Office of Strategic Services, or OSS, during World War II. Like his spy novelist counterpart Ian Fleming, Bruce set his adventures in cities such as Tokyo, Bangkok, Caracas and Istanbul for the "exoticism" these places evoked in the minds of Western audiences. Naturally, Singapore was selected as the setting for *Five Ashore in Singapore*.

In real-life, the code number 117 was assigned to William L. Langer, chief of the OSS Research and Analysis Branch whom Bruce had reportedly met during World War II when the latter was involved with the French Resistance. Interestingly, while OSS 117 has been called the "French Bond" after the famous British Secret Service agent, Bruce's French agent actually pre-dates James Bond by four years (Ian Fleming's first Bond novel *Casino Royale* was published only in 1953). Furthermore, the archetypal three-digit code name 117 existed long before Fleming decided to call his character Agent 007.[4]

Even the silver screen adaptation of OSS 117 precedes James Bond: the French language *OSS 117 n'est pas mort (OSS 117 Is Not Dead)* was produced in 1956 and commercially released in 1957.



Five Ashore in Singapore is the film adaptation of the 1959 French novel, *Cinq gars pour Singapour*, by the prolific French writer Jean Bruce. Literally translated as "Five Guys for Singapore", the title is a clever pun on the name of the city because *cinq-gars-pour*, when said quickly, sounds exactly like "Singapour". Pictured here is the cover of the first edition of the book published by Presses de la Cité in 1959. *Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*

On the other hand, *Dr No*, the first James Bond film, was produced in 1962. In the 1960s, the OSS 117 character was again featured in a successful Eurospy film series directed by French filmmakers André Hunebelle (in 1963, 1964, 1965 and 1968) and by Michel Boisrond (in 1966). On these occasions, the lead role was played initially by American Kerwin Mathews, and subsequently by Frederick Stafford.[5]

OSS 117 Becomes Art Smith in Singapore

It is within the context of the successful Eurospy craze that French producer Pierre Kalfon offered director Bernard Toublanc-Michel the chance to adapt another OSS 117 story, *Cinq gars pour Singapour*. Due to copyright issues, unresolvable because Jean Bruce had died a few years earlier, neither the character Hubert Bonnisseur de la Bath nor his codename OSS 117 could be used in the film.

Hence in the movie, the hero is renamed Art Smith. A clear playful allusion is nevertheless made at the beginning of the movie when a car waiting for him at Singapore's old Paya Lebar Airport is numbered 117.

Five Ashore in Singapore, like so many similar B-flicks, has a very simple plot that closely follows that of the original novel. Captain Art Smith of the Central Intelligence Agency is sent to Singapore to investigate the whereabouts of several US Marines who mysteriously disappear while on shore leave. Upon his arrival, Smith meets four Marines who volunteer to assist him. Together, the five men pretend to be a group of Marines looking for a good time, but in fact hoping to be caught in the same trap as their missing colleagues.

Their search takes them all around Singapore, and eventually leads them to a mad scientist who has apparently kidnapped the marines for a diabolical experiment. This lame twist in the film's finale is typical of super spy stories: however credible as a narrative, they generally end on a weak and often implausible note. Nevertheless, what makes *Five Ashore in Singapore* particularly noteworthy is its value as a documentary that captures realistic scenes of 1960s Singapore.

From R&R to I&I

Following the end of World War II, the US military used Singapore's facilities for the repair and refuelling of its ships and aircraft, and also as a "shore leave" destination for troops stationed in various conflict zones throughout Asia.

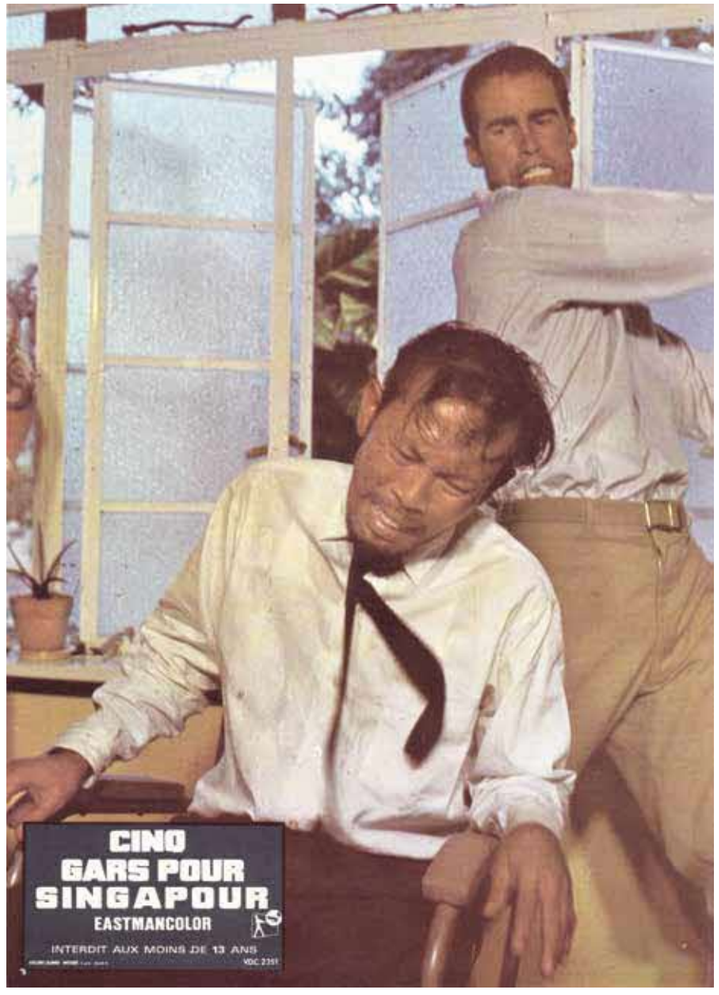
In addition, on the orders of US President Harry Truman, from as early as July 1950, hundreds of American military "advisers" accompanied a flow of American tanks, planes, artillery and other aid supplies to the French forces in Vietnam embroiled in the first Indochina War.[6] Many of these military personnel, inbound or outbound of Vietnam, transited at one time or another in Singapore.

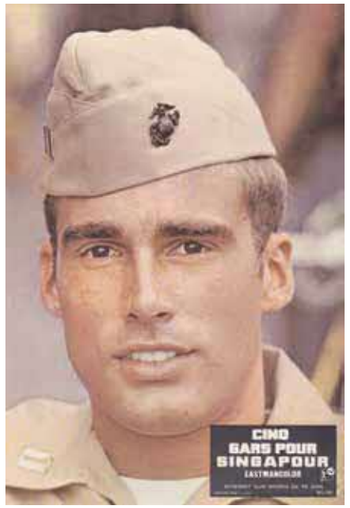
By the time director Bernard Toublanc-Michel adapted Bruce's novel into a movie in 1966, American involvement in Vietnam had dramatically escalated, with active combat units joining the fray in 1965 onwards to wage war against the communist forces of the north. This development impacted Singapore directly as demand grew for a Rest & Recuperation (R&R) programme for American troops. All active US military personnel serving in Vietnam were eligible for a five-day R&R during their tour of duty – after 13 months in the case of Marines, and 12 months for soldiers, sailors and airmen – in places such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Manila, Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo.

Soldiers nicknamed these breaks "I&I", or "Intoxication and Intercourse", as these outings were invariably fuelled by plenty of alcohol, drugs and sex. Singapore, true to its form then, was depicted as a rather seedy and dangerous city in publicity materials that were issued when *Cinq gars pour Singapour* was released in France in March 1967. The press release took pains to highlight the fact that American Marines are routinely warned to behave with discretion when they are in Singapore for R&R, including dressing as civilians when travelling in the city, because there has been cases where local boys had tried to pick a fight.[7]

In an interview given at his apartment near Paris on 1 June 2018, Toublanc-Michel said that the geopolitical context of Singapore against the backdrop of the Vietnam War was what made the adaptation of Bruce's OSS 117 novel *Cinq gars pour Singapour* so interesting to him: it gave him the opportunity to explore and expose what he calls "les à-côtés de la guerre" ("extra income and activities") that was generated on the sidelines of the war.[8]

In this sense, Bruce's novel and its film adaptation by Toublanc-Michel also pre-date Paul Theroux's 1973 novel *Saint Jack* and its subsequent 1979 film adaptation by Peter Bogdanovich depicting American soldiers in Singapore on R&R during the Vietnam War and the pimps who provide them with the necessary "entertainment".[9]





(Left) Sean Flynn (standing), who plays Captain Art Smith of the Central Intelligence Agency, in action with an unnamed Singaporean actor. French lobby card, 1967. *Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*
(Above) The lead character, Captain Art Smith of the Central Intelligence Agency, is played by Sean Flynn, son of legendary Hollywood actor Errol Flynn and French actress Lili Damita. The younger Flynn was then taking a break from his photojournalism stint in Vietnam during the war. French lobby card, 1967. *Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*

Direct mention of the Vietnam War is made in *Five Ashore in Singapore* when the Marines led by Captain Art Smith take refuge in a movie theatre, where a newsreel in Malay addressing the Vietnam conflict and showing images of North Vietnamese troops is screened. Real American vessels are also seen anchored in the Singapore Strait – Pierre Kalfon had managed to obtain from the US military a permit to film these scenes, much to Toublanc-Michel's delight[10] – a rare visual testament of US naval power in Singapore waters at the time.

The background setting of the Vietnam War is made even more significant by the fact that the lead character Art Smith is played by Sean Flynn, son of legendary Hollywood actor Errol Flynn (and Hollywood-based French actress Lili Damita). The younger Flynn was taking a break from his photojournalism stint in Vietnam, where he had arrived in January 1966 as a freelance photo-reporter, working occasionally for magazines like *Paris Match*, *Time*, *Life* and the *Daily Telegraph*. Flynn quickly made a name for himself and earned the reputation of being a high-octane risk-taking photojournalist along the likes of British photographer Tim Page and American photojournalist Dana Stone, both of whom Flynn had befriended in Vietnam.

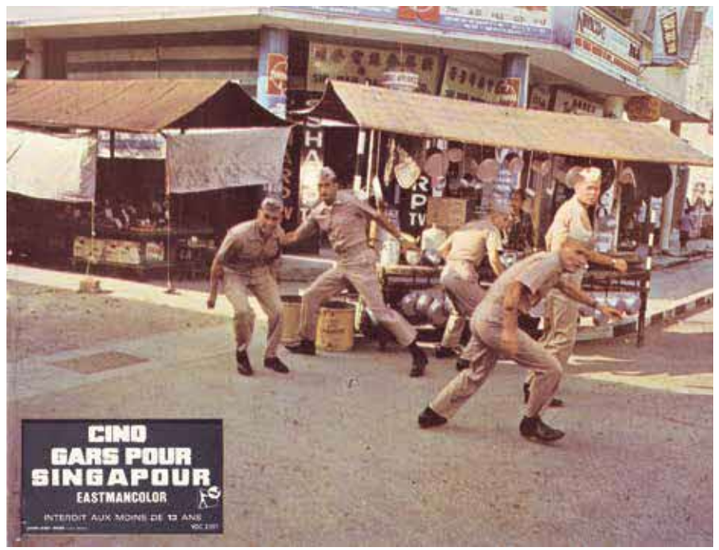
As freelance photojournalism did not pay well, Flynn went back to acting – something he had done from time to time since his teen years – to earn a fast buck. As Flynn had been in Vietnam and witnessed real action there, his sheer presence lent the film an added layer of authenticity.[11] As it turned out, *Five Ashore* was to be Flynn's last screen appearance before he returned to Vietnam to cover the war. He mysteriously disappeared in the spring of 1970 near the frontier between Cambodia and Vietnam, never to be found again. Flynn's mother would reluctantly declare him dead in absentia in 1984.

Singapore in the Summer of 1966

Five Ashore in Singapore was filmed on Eastmancolor, a colour film technology introduced in 1950, and shot entirely on location in Singapore between August and October 1966. When Bernard Toublanc-Michel was first approached by producer Pierre Kalfon to direct the screen adaptation of Bruce's book, he had insisted that the entire film be shot on location in Singapore.[12]

The rest is history: a total of 52 locations were used in the film,[13] such as the Cathay Hotel (where Captain Art Smith stays), Change Alley, Clifford Pier, the Majestic Theatre at Eu Tong Sen Street, the old Paya Lebar Airport, Boat Quay, Telok Blangah, Keppel Golf Club and some very rare footage of the long-gone Kampong Telok Saga on Pulau Brani.

(Below) Action scenes filmed in Chinatown. French lobby card, 1967. *Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*



This tour of the Lion City allows viewers today to travel back in time to 1966 "… wishing … [they] were in the company of less brutal, more appreciative tourists"[14] than this wild bunch of hard-drinking and brawling Marines.

The story begins on 5 August 1966, as indicated in the visa stamped on Art Smith's passport on his arrival in Singapore. It was just a few days before the fledgling republic celebrated its first National Day on 9 August, a week-long calendar of festivities that included a parade, fireworks displays and cultural shows. In the film, numerous glimpses of the national flag can be seen on the streets and on buildings, as well as billboards and banners with the words "Majulah Singapura", which had been officially adopted as Singapore's national anthem in 1965.

Having assisted New Wave film luminaries such as Agnès Varda and Jean-Luc Godard in their work, Toublanc-Michel was very familiar with portable film equipment that required little or no set-up time. Thus, he was ready to shoot nearly anywhere and at any time in Singapore, using two handheld cameras operated by director of photography Jean Charvein and cameraman Jean-Marc Ripert.[15]

In this way Toublanc-Michel was able to inject a documentary-like feel to his film, a characteristic captured by the numerous seemingly "stolen shots" of the city – of people and places caught unawares, something he remains particularly proud of[16]. With its tight budget, *Five Ashore in Singapore* could not afford to have entire streets or plazas cordoned off, nor could it hire dozens of extras.

To prepare for the scenes, Toublanc-Michel had his actors rehearse beforehand in the courtyard of the Cathay-Keris Studio on East Coast Road or at the Ocean Park Hotel next door where they were staying. Following the rehearsal, he would take his actors to the film location in a taxi, and have them wait while he discreetly positioned his two cameramen. The actors would emerge from the waiting taxi only when the director beckoned to them, walking into the scene to play their parts extemporaneously amidst whoever was present.[17] In this way, real passers-by were filmed watching the film being shot and unwittingly became part of a scene.

For Western audiences, one of the main draws of the film was to view the "real" Singapore with their own eyes. Instead of the typical backwater Asian city that they had expected to see, the audience was surprised to find a unique place burgeoning with "impressive buildings, luxury shops, grand hotels and traffic jams",[18] a place where the East and the West meet, to use a cliché.

To add a frisson of tension to the film, press materials highlighted the simmering undercurrents and often prickly relationship between the races, making reference to Chinese, Malays and Indians who "cohabit, but do not sympathise, distrust each other and reciprocally accuse each other".[19] This specific reference could have been a nod to the bloody racial riots of 1964.

Singapore is also melodramatically described in the press release as an unsafe city to live in: "At night, Singapore is very vibrant and even dangerous. Vibrant because people live on the streets[…]. Dangerous because there are frequent quarrels. Men of all races and all horizons have disappeared in it without leaving a trace, or have been found in back alleys with their throats cut".[20] The disquieting backdrop serves as the perfect setting for the hammy cloak-and-dagger film plot.

An International Cast (and Some Locals)

The main cast of *Five Ashore in Singapore* was international, with actors chosen not only for their good looks and talent, but also for their fluency in both English and French. The film was shot in both languages to avoid unnecessary dubbing during post-production work. Pure action scenes mostly required just one take, while heavily dialogued scenes with close-ups required two takes: the first in English, the second in French.[21] The two versions of the film are still in circulation today, and each presents a slightly different edit from the other.

Sean Flynn – in what would be his final and, in this writer's opinion, his best role yet – plays Art Smith with such detached nonchalance that he lends his character a certain mix of sangfroid and casual insouciance that most latter-day OSS 117 and perhaps even some James Bond screen incarnations have never been able to replicate. The other main male roles of the Marines went to American Dennis Berry, who had grown up in the US and France;[22] British middleweight boxer and former world champion Terry Downes; polyglot Franco-Swiss Marc Michel, who had recently gained

Accident scene in Chinatown. French lobby card, 1967. *Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*

SPY MUSIC

The music for *Five Ashore in Singapore* was composed by renowned French composer Antoine Duhamel, who had just begun his career by scoring French New Wave films by legendary directors Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut. At the request of *Five Ashore*'s director Bernard Toublanc-Michel, he composed *Somewhere in Singapore* (also known as the *Marines' March – "La marche des Marines"* in French) with lyrics by Jimmy Parramore.

Quite brazenly, the song was directly based on the melody of the now iconic *Yellow Submarine*, the Beatles' number one hit in 1966. Indeed, Toublanc-Michel had asked his actors who played the five Marines to stride out of Clifford Pier with the Beatles' song playing in their heads, so as to lend a certain rhythm to their swagger.

Other melodies with no lyrics composed by Duhamel include *Paradise Limited* for the club scene and *Thème de la drogue* (the drug theme) for the opium den scene.

Cover of the French record album of *Five Ashore in Singapore*, 1967. The music for the film was composed by renowned French composer Antoine Duhamel. © *Barclay Editions. Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*

fame for his part in Jacques Demy's 1961 film *Lola*; and the well-travelled Frenchman Bernard Meusnier. To look like real American Marines, the actors were given a crew cut by the hairdresser of the US Embassy in Paris before they arrived in Singapore.

The main female lead went to Swedish-French model and actress Marika Green, who had recently gained fame for her role in Robert Bresson's 1959 film, *Pickpocket*.[23] With her shapely figure and requisite long legs, the actress was the perfect "Bond Girl". All these performers were bilingual with the exception of Briton Terry Downes, whose lines had to be dubbed in French.

Several of the film's key Asian supporting roles unfortunately followed in the tradition of "yellowface", an early practice in the West (mostly on Broadway and in Hollywood) that saw Asian roles played by white actors. Hence, the mad scientist Ta Chouen was played by the Italian Andrea Aureli (credited by his Americanised stage name Andrew Ray); mama-san Tchin Saw by Trudy Connor; treacherous middleman Ten Sin, an improbable "Chinese" wearing a cap that resembles more a Muslim *songkok*, and played by Italian actor Jessy Greek (whose real name was Enzo Musumeci Greco); and odd-job man Kafir played by William Brix. All either wore terrible make-up, or appeared sans make-up, which only exaggerates the stereotyping to the point where one wonders if the yellowfacing was deliberate.

However, a couple of Singaporean talents did get a chance to act. For example, Ismail Boss[24] played the role of a mean Malay thug who kidnaps the American Marines. He was described in the press materials as an amateur actor who had been talent spotted by the production team whilst they were recceing a Malay stilt village where he lived.

The female role of Tsi Houa was played by Chan See Foon (credited as "See Foon" without her surname in the film).[25] Chan had been one of Singapore's early supermodels. After having won the title of Varsity Queen in university, she began modelling and played occasional bit parts on TV and in film. In *Five Ashore in Singapore*, she has a full scene with Sean Flynn on Pulau Brani in which her baby is forcibly taken away from her before she dies in an explosion. A few other minor Asian roles were given to Singaporeans too, such as the part of local boys played by actors Abdullah Ramand and Lim Hong Chin.

(Above right) The main female lead was played by Swedish-French model and actress Marika Green. With her blonde hair and shapely long legs, the actress was the perfect "Bond Girl". French lobby card, 1967. *Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*
(Right) Sean Flynn (left) as Captain Art Smith of the Central Intelligence Agency, Swiss actor Marc Michel as one of the Marines, and an unnamed Singaporean extra. French lobby card, 1967. *Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*
(Below) Chan See Foon, one of Singapore's early supermodels, plays Tsi Houa. She has a full scene, first with Sean Flynn who plays Captain Art Smith and then with Swiss actor Marc Michel who plays one of the Marines. In this scene on Pulau Brani, Tsi Houa's baby is forcibly taken away from her before she dies in an explosion. *Courtesy of Raphaël Millet.*

Five Ashore in Singapore was retitled and released on 17 February 1968 in Singapore as *Our Five Men in Singapore. Image reproduced from The Straits Times, 22 February 1968, p. 4.*

The Singapore production manager G.S. Heng was a producer employed by Cathay-Keris for many years under the command of general manager Tom Hodge. Cathay had excellent shooting facilities at its Katong studio on East Coast Road, which was used by many overseas productions, including *Five Ashore in Singapore* for its nightclub and opium den scenes. Next to the studio was Ocean Park Hotel (also owned by Cathay Organisation), where the cast and crew were conveniently accommodated during the entire duration of the shoot, and where a party scene was filmed.

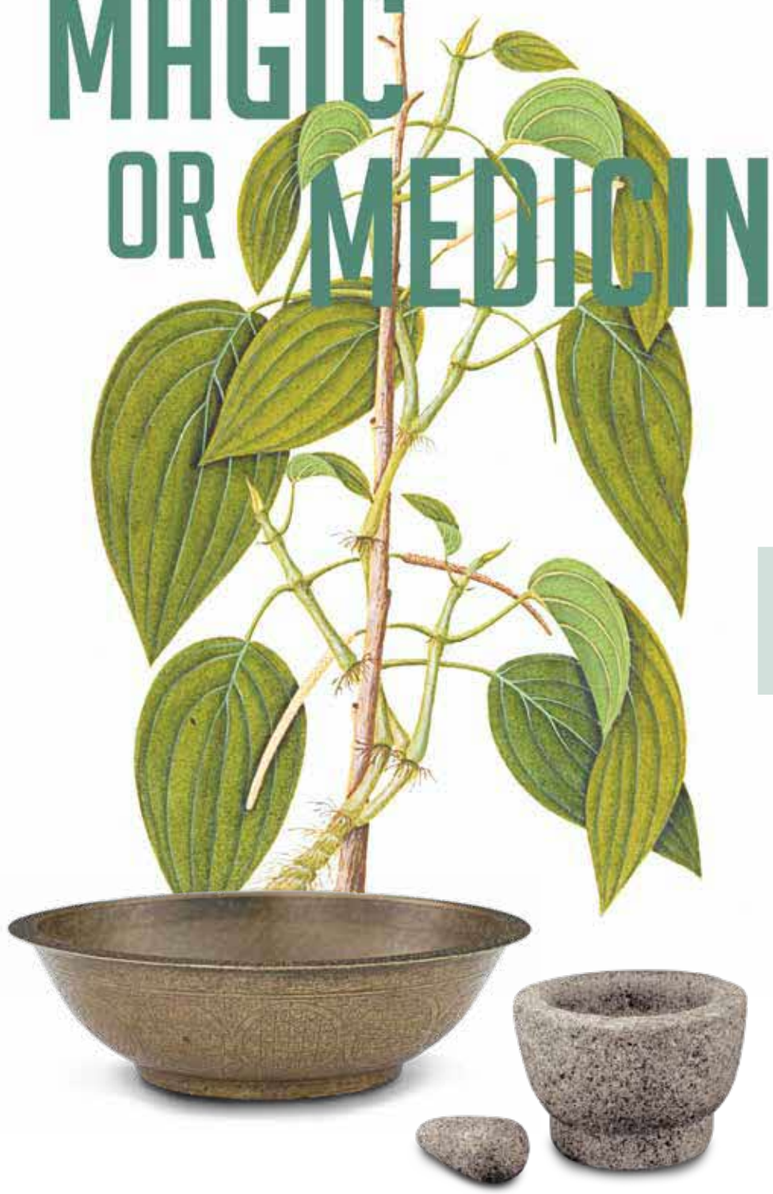
Today, *Five Ashore in Singapore* remains as a little-known but precious piece in the history of film in Singapore. Bringing together an international cast along with a few local actors, it captured the Lion City at a time of historic change. With its editing completed in January 1967, *Five Ashore* was commercially released in March 1967 in France – where it enjoyed a particularly long run at the Balzac Theatre in Paris – with a PG-13 rating. The film was subsequently released in Europe and North America where it was shown in cinemas right into the beginning of 1968.

As for Singapore, the film was retitled as *Our Five Men in Singapore* and opened on 17 February 1968 at the Odeon cinema on North Bridge Road. Advertisements enticed would-be patrons to catch the "exciting street fight in Katong" and "exotic back alleys of Chinatown", and touted it as "filmed entirely on location in Singapore". Perhaps this is the main reason why we should watch the film – regardless of the half-dozen titles it is known by – and recapture a slice of 1960s Singapore. ♦

Notes

1 *So Darling So Deadly* (1966; original title *Kommissar X – In den Klauen des goldenen Drachen*) is a co-production between Austria, Italy, West Germany, Yugoslavia and Singapore, and directed by Italian filmmaker Gianfranco Parolini under his American pseudonym Frank Kramer. It was set – but not entirely filmed – in Singapore; some images of Hong Kong were inserted.
2 *Suicide Mission to Singapore* (1966; original title *Goldsnake: Anonima Killers*, but also known in German as *Goldsnake, Das Geheimnis der goldenen Schlange*) is a co-production between France, Spain and Italy. Also set and shot in Singapore, the film, directed by the Italian filmmaker Ferdinando Baldi, tells of a secret agent who travels to the island-city to solve a mystery.
3 Slater, B. (2012, September). Cinq gars pour Singapour. *Cinematheque Quarterly, 1* (1), 48–56; Slater, B. (2015, Apr–Jun). Spies, virgins, pimps and hitmen: Singapore through the Western lens. *BiblioAsia, 11* (1), 20–23, p. 21. (Call no.: RSING 027.495957 SNBBA-[LIB]); Millet, R. (2006). *Singapore Cinema* (p. 147). Singapore: Editions Didier Millet. (Call no.: RSING q791.43095957 MIL). Codelli, L. (2014). Five Ashore in Singapore aka Cinq gars pour Singapour aka Cinque Marines per Singapore (1966). In L. Codelli (Ed.), *World Film Locations: Singapore* (p. 42). Bristol: Intellect Books. (Call no.: RSING 791.43025095957 WOR)
4 Bond spin-offs, spoofs and parodies often used three-digit prefixes, such as 008, 077, X77, S3S, and because of that it has often been easy to mistake OSS 117 for another pale copy of the original. However, it is far from the truth. By the time the first James Bond book was published in 1953, Jean Bruce had already published several OSS 117 novels. He was such a prolific writer that he wrote about 90 books altogether (including the OSS 117 series) before his untimely death in a car accident in 1963 at age 43.
5 In the mid-2000s, the character of OSS 117 was revived on screen by filmmaker Michel Hazanavicius as a French spy working for the French secret service and turned into a comic character, portrayed by French actor Jean Dujardin as an arrogant and blatantly politically incorrect imbecile (far from the original OSS 117 character and his previous screen incarnations).
6 This would lead to the Second Indochina War, better known as the Vietnam War (1955–1975), fought between North Vietnam (supported by communist China and the Soviet Union) and South Vietnam (supported by anti-communist allies, including the United States, Australia, South Korea and Thailand).
7 Bernard Toublanc-Michel's interview with the author, 1 June 2018.
8 French press kit of *Cinq gars pour Singapour*, 1967, p. 13.
9 *Saint Jack*, shot entirely in Singapore between May and June 1978, was banned in January 1980 as local authorities felt that it portrayed the city negatively. The ban was lifted only in March 2006, with the film given an M18 rating. The film had its first official public screening in Singapore in 2006. More on *Saint Jack*, see Slater, B. (2006). *Kinda hot: The making of Saint Jack in Singapore* (p. 240). Singapore: Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions. (Call no.: RSING 791.430232 SLA)
10 Bernard Toublanc-Michel's interview with the author, 1 June 2018.
11 Bernard Toublanc-Michel also thought of offering the role of Art Smith to Joe Dassin, son of Hollywood director Jules Dassin and a French woman. Like Sean Flynn, Joe Dassin was Franco-American and fluent in both English and French. In the end, Toublanc-Michel decided to cast Sean Flynn as he had experience working and living in Southeast Asia, and a better understanding of the geopolitical context of the plot. Interview with the author, 1 June 2018.
12 Bernard Toublanc-Michel's interview with the author, 1 June 2018.
13 French press kit of *Cinq gars pour Singapour*, 1967, p. 14.
14 Slater, Srp 2012, p.55.
15 Bernard Toublanc-Michel recalls having thought of Raoul Coutard, the most famous of all New Wave cinematographers, whom he had previously worked with, to shoot *Five Ashore in Singapore*, but this did not happen as Coutard was already hired for another film. Interview with the author, 1 June 2018.
16 Interview with the author, 1 June 2018.
17 Lombard, P. (2011). *Sean Flynn: L'instinct de l'aventure* (pp. 86–87). Paris: Editions du Rocher. (Not available in NLB holdings)
18 Lombard, 2011, pp. 86–87.
19 French press kit of *Cinq gars pour Singapour*, 1967, p. 3.
20 French press kit of *Cinq gars pour Singapour*, 1967, pp. 4.
21 Bernard Toublanc-Michel's interview with the author, 1 June 2018.
22 Dennis Berry was the son of the famous Hollywood director John Berry. The latter had escaped the United States in the early 1950s due to accusations of being a communist.
23 Marika Green would subsequently appear in infamously famous French softcore porn movie *Emmanuelle* in 1974, in another Asian setting: Bangkok.
24 It is not known whether "Boss" is the actor's real surname.
25 At the time of writing this article, the role of Tsi Houa is wrongly credited on both Wikipedia and IMDb as "Foun-Sen". Foun-Sen was a French actress of Vietnamese origin, and she was definitely not part of the cast of *Five Ashore in Singapore*.

MAGIC OR MEDICINE?



MALAY HEALING PRACTICES

Is traditional Malay medicine based on superstition and folklore or grounded in scientific evidence? **Nadirah Norruddin** uncovers the varying perceptions of Malay medicine in colonial Malaya.

Nadirah Norruddin is an Associate Librarian with the National Library, Singapore. Her main responsibility lies in managing and developing the Singapore and Southeast Asian collections.

Malay *ubat-ubatan* (medicine) and healing – which spans many centuries and has been passed down through generations either orally or in written form – is a complex and holistic practice.

Traditional Malay medicine incorporates principles and practices of pharmacology that are highly dependent on indigenous flora and fauna found in the wild.[1] Age-old literature and manuscripts – although scarce in number – document the ways in which plants, animals and minerals[2] native to the Malay Archipelago have been part and parcel of its healing practices. At the heart of Malay *ubat-ubatan* is the amalgamation of complex Islamic and Hindu beliefs and practices presided over by traditional or faith healers.

Colonial scholars and administrators in 20th-century Malaya were invariably conflicted in their perceptions of traditional Malay medicine. Local sources and interpretations were frequently overlooked, and this has in turn affected the way in which traditional Malay medicine has been studied and understood for decades. Some defined *ubat-ubatan* as remedies administered according to the principles of chemistry and scientific evidence, while others dismissed such healing practices as belonging to the realm of magic and the supernatural. For the most part, the British regarded traditional Malay medicine with suspicion and antithetic to its Western counterpart.

(Facing page) The betel vine, prayer bowl engraved with Quranic verses and invocations, and the mortar and pestle – among other items – are used in the practice of traditional Malay medicine. Bowl, *collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum*; betel vine, mortar and pestle, *courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.*
(Above) A portrait of a Malay traditional healer, c. 1900. These medicine men usually carried their bottles of medicine and herbs wrapped in a *kain sarong* ("sarong cloth") slung over their shoulders. *Lim Kheng Chye Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

As a result, the practice and form of traditional Malay medicine underwent dramatic changes under colonial rule. Legislations, for instance – shaped by altruism or bigotry, but more likely a combination of the two – were introduced by the British to stamp out traditional Malay healing practices and regulate village healers.

The Spread of Islam and Malay Medicine

The adoption of Islam in the Malay Archipelago from the 13th century onwards not only introduced a new religious doctrine to the region, but also fostered a pan-Islamic identity and defined new parameters for the spiritual, social and economic way of life of its inhabitants. Gradually, Islam became syncretised with the prevailing belief systems of the Malay world.

Western scholars of the time held the view that the Malay community adopted a hybridised form of Islam. In his address before the Straits Philosophical Society in 1896, English orientalist and linguist Charles O. Blagden postulated that Malays were "only superficially Muhammadan" as their folk rituals were "unorthodox" and "pagan" in relation to the basic tenets of Islam.[3] Such an assertion, however, simplifies the complex understanding and expressions of a dynamic and multifaceted faith.

Medicine in Islam is characterised by a history of enquiry, innovation and adaptation. This is reflected in the ease in which indigenous healers adopted and adapted Islamic symbolism in their practices. In the Malay Peninsula, ceremonies overseen by the *pawang* (or shaman) include Quranic incantations and prayers addressed solely to God, even though most other aspects of the rituals are Hindu-Buddhist or pre-Indic in character.

Although the origins are unclear, the Malay method of healing is mainly administered by the traditional medicine man or *bomoh* (see text box above), who derives his knowledge from either *ilmu turun* (inherited knowledge) or *ilmu tuntut* (apprenticeship) and, in some instances, complemented by the *Kitab Tibb* (The Book of Medicine).

There are numerous versions of *Kitab Tibb* manuscripts found in the Malay Archipelago. Mostly written between 1786 and 1883, these broadly outline three main types of healing practices: those using natural resources such as plants and herbs; those relying on *wafaq* (written symbols or amulets); and healing practices using Quranic verses, supplications and *salawat* (blessings to the Prophet). All these techniques can be used simultaneously or separately.[4]

PAWANG, BOMOH AND BIDAN

Traditional Malay healers are the main providers of Malay medicine. To achieve the necessary credentials, some have resorted to living in solitude, spending their time meditating, fasting or putting themselves through strict dietary regimens – all in the name of spiritual cleansing. Healers are also expected to have an extensive knowledge of botany and nature so that they can classify and identify the right plants and herbs as well as their healing properties, and prescribe the correct remedies.

Pawang
A *pawang* is commonly defined as a shaman or general practitioner of magic who incorporates incantations into his craft. He is usually involved in conducting agricultural rituals and divination ceremonies to sanctify the village. *Pawangs* have also been referred to as "wizards" by scholars such as Richard J. Wilkinson for their ability to manipulate the course of nature through the use of incantations and divination practices.

Dukun/Bomoh
A *dukun* or *bomoh* is a general practitioner who treats fevers, headaches, broken bones, spirit possession and various ailments. The skills and reputation of a *dukun/bomoh* stem from the person's knowledge of humoural medicine, the healing properties of local flora and fauna as well as syncretic ritual incantations. Some were well known for their treatment of victims of sorcery. The *bomoh akar kayu* (the latter words meaning "roots" in Malay) is known for his expertise in gathering and preparing *ubat-ubatan* from plants and herbs

In his book, *A Descriptive Dictionary of British Malaya* (1894), Nicholas B. Dennys compares the *dukun* to "being on par with witch doctors of history". Although the *dukun* has been generally described in disparaging terms by Western scholars, a small minority saw the merits of these traditional healers. Percy N. Gerrard defines the "doctor" as a *bomoh*, *dukun* or *pawang* in his dictionary, *A Vocabulary of Malay Medical Terms* (1905).

Bidan
Also known as "Mak Bidan" or "dukun beranak", these midwives specialise in women's health matters, including fecundity, midwifery and contraception, along with a variety of beauty-related disorders. Up till the 1950s, it was common for mothers in Singapore to deliver their babies at home with the help of village midwives. Today, the role of these women is limited to providing antenatal and postnatal care, such as confinement services for new mothers or general massage therapies.

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(Left) A typical *Kitab Tibb* (The Book of Medicine) manuscript from 14th-century Iran listing the cures, properties and methods of preparation for healing purposes. Such manuscripts were later translated and used in the Malay Archipelago. *Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum.*
(Right) An *anchak* or sacrificial tray used by the Malay medicine man (or *bomoh*). The tray has a fringe around it called "centipedes' feet". The *ketupat* and *lepat* (rice receptacles made of plaited palm fronds) are hung from the "suspenders" attached to the tray. *Image reproduced from Skeat, W.W. (1900). Malay Magic: Being an Introduction to the Folklore and Popular Religion of the Malay Peninsula (p. 414). London: Macmillan and Co.*

The earliest edition of the *Kitab Tibb* was written on 12 wooden sheets, and prescribed medications based on plants, herbs and spices commonly found in the region. The manuscript also includes a list of dietary restrictions and a variety of taboos (*pantang larang*) the afflicted should observe.[5] By the 19th century, surviving copies of the *Kitab Tibb* in the Malay Peninsula were known to contain detailed observations by the *bomoh*, including visual representations of disease symptoms as well as the appropriate incantations.

Types of Healing

Traditional Malay healing offers a holistic, multifaceted and ecological solution to a multitude of illnesses and ailments. It comprises aspects of the spiritual, such as magic, shamanism and the supernatural, and the empirical, such as dietetics and herbalism, which can be scientifically explained.

Although Islam may have encouraged the use and incorporation of nature in traditional Malay medicine, natural remedies were already widely used in local healing practices and rituals prior to the arrival of Islam in the Malay world. For example, common plants, herbs and spices like *bonglai (Zinggibar cassumunar)* had been used to treat migraine, cough and gastrointestinal problems for centuries.

As observed by British physician John D. Gimlette in his book, *Malay Poisons and Charm Cures* (1915),[6] *bomohs* used rattan splints for simple fractures and wood ash as an antiseptic dressing. When a baby was delivered by a *bidan* or midwife, the umbilical cord is cut with a bamboo stem and the stump dusted with wood ash or a paste made of pepper, ginger and turmeric.

Islamic medical science introduced new concepts to the pre-existing knowledge of the human body and the environment. The seeds of Islamic medicine and healing can be traced back to the Quran, the underlying philosophy of using flora and fauna in natural remedies grounded in the belief in Allah as the Creator of Nature. As such, tapping on the healing properties of the earth has been a long-standing aspect of the Islamic medical tradition. One of the verses from Surah An-nahl (16:69) of the Quran reads thus:

> "Then eat from all the fruits and follow the ways of your Lord laid down [for you]. There emerges from their (bees) bellies a drink, varying in colours, in which there is healing for people. Indeed, in that there is a sign for people who give thought."

Ancient medical texts in the Malay world did not have specific titles but were generally referred to as *Kitab Tibb* and primarily consisted of translations from Persian and Indian sources. Different manuscripts prescribed different courses of treatment even for the same ailments. Interestingly, the vast array of natural sources described in these manuscripts are likely still in use today in the Malay Peninsula, either as supplements or natural remedies.

The Andalusian botanist and pharmacist Ibn al-Baytar's pharmacopeia, titled *Compendium of Simple Medicaments and Foods* and published in the 13th century, is still a widely consulted text in the world of Malay healing today. It lists 1,400 plants, foods and drugs, and their uses, organised alphabetically by the name of the plant or plant component.

Apart from their knowledge of humoural theory (see text box page 21) and botany, traditional Malay healers also offered spiritual healing to cure the sick. The belief is that animate and inanimate objects, including the physical body, possess *semangat* (a vital force or soul). The loss of *semangat* can be detrimental to one's physical and mental well-being.

A healer is purportedly able to manipulate and revive the *semangat* of the sick – particularly those suffering from mental and spiritual ailments. To treat patients who might have been "disturbed" by unseen forces, healers invoke supernatural entities through *jampi* (incantations), spells and elaborate rituals. Such ceremonies may sometimes take the form of a public event, witnessed by the entire village and accompanied by loud music. The public nature of such rituals was often derided by colonial administrators and scholars, who saw these practices as primitive and irrational or, as Gimlette puts it, "circumvent[ing] Muhammadan tenets".[7]

The Cultural and Scientific Divide

There is a paucity of comprehensive written records of traditional Malay healing as much of it have not survived the ravages of time. Whatever extant Malay manuscripts – mostly inherited and passed down orally from one generation to the next *(ilmu turun)* or by way of apprenticeship *(ilmu tuntut)* – along with books and documents authored by colonial scholars, provide the only window into the ancient practices and beliefs of the Malay world.

In striving to achieve a balance of the body, mind, health and spirit, traditional Malay medicine does not differ much from Ayurvedic, Chinese and Hippocratic traditions that emphasise the same – especially with regard to humoural theory. Colonial writings, however, have tended to focus on Malay folk religion and animism, centering their writing around the use of amulets, incantations, charms and sorcery by the community.

The late 19th to early 20th centuries saw a significant output in research by colonial scholars who studied Malay belief systems and healing practices. The body of ideas and literature generated by these early observers were often biased, filled with racist sentiments or tinged with romanticism, although some scholars were of the view that the sudden rise in writings on Malay magic and medicine was simply an effort at documenting the "primitive" and vanishing aspects of the social and cultural lifestyles of the Malays.[8]

The use of magic and the fervent belief in religion among Malays have often been cited as stumbling blocks to the development and progress of the community. In his September 1896 report from Kuala Langat, Selangor, where he worked in the Straits Settlements civil service, English anthropologist Walter W. Skeat made the overtly racist remark that "indolent and ignorant Malays" needed to be "saved from themselves", and attributed the "many crippled lives and early deaths" to the "evil influence of the horde of bomors".[9] In fact, Skeat believed that increasing "contact with European civilisation" by the local Malay tribes had diminished their use of charms and spells.[10]

Biased perceptions of traditional Malay society, such as its healing practices, could have been used by the British to justify its political domination and imperialist motives.[11] There were, however, several scholars such as Thomas N. Annandale and John D. Gimlette, who acknowledged the benefits and scientific merit of traditional Malay medicine.[12] Both men were heavily involved in fieldwork and were well known for their research on traditional

The *bomoh akar kayu* (*akar kayu* means "roots" in Malay) believes that nature is the source of life and is imbued with restorative qualities. The *bomoh akar kayu* is well versed in the healing properties of plants and herbs, and forages hilly areas and dense forests like the one illustrated here in search of plants to make *ubat* (medicine). This 1869 print titled "Bathing Place Near Selita" in Singapore is by Austrian naturalist Eugen von Ransonnet. *Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.*

HEALING PRACTICES

One of the most notable Malay medical manuscripts translated into English is Ismail Munshi's *The Medical Book of Malayan Medicine.* Originally written in Jawi (c. 1850), it contains over 550 remedies for maladies ranging from migraines to depression, bloatedness and leprosy.

	FOR VIOLENT HEADACHES AND LOSS OF ENERGY	FOR DIZZINESS AND VERTIGO	FOR NIGHT CHILLS
Ingredients	Cumin seeds (5 cents) Garlic (10 cents) Indian hemp Ginger *Smilax china* Mace (35 cents), Nutmeg (5 cents) Henbane Javanese ginger	5 young shoots of betel vine Red onion Fennel seeds	*Daun medan* (root of an unidentified plant) 7 kernels of the fruit of the candle nut
Method	Pound all ingredients together and mix with honey to form into tablets. Patient to take tablets until course of treatment is complete.	Grind finely. Place the pulp on a piece of cloth. Squeeze the juice into the patient's eyes for three days.	Reduce both ingredients to fine pulp. Apply to patient's head.

Reference

Burkill, I.H., & Ismail Munshi. (1930). *The medical book of Malayan medicine.* Singapore: Botanic Gardens. (Call no.: RCLOS 615.3209595 MED)

HUMOURAL THEORY AND MALAY MEDICINE

Humoural theory, which is one of the oldest theories of medicine, is organised around the four humours – blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile – and is associated with the four elements of earth (flesh), water (phlegm), air/wind (temperament), and fire (blood). The four elements are in turn paired up with the four qualities of cold, hot, moist and dry. Each individual has a particular humoural makeup, or "constitution". As optimal health is attained when the humours are in harmonious balance, any imbalance of the humours may result in disease and sickness.

In one of the earliest Malayan accounts of humoural theory, English scholar Thomas J. Newbold describes Malay medicine as being based on the fundamental "principle of 'preserving the balance of power' within the four elements, specifically, air, fire, water and earth".[1] This ranges from the consumption of certain hot or cold foods (such as meat and fruit respectively), hot and cold temperatures, wind, micro-organisms and supernatural forces. Dry chills and dizzy spells arise when the "earth" element is too strong and from ailments such as cholera and dysentery, which are caused by excessive heat and moisture from the "air".[2] Consuming large amounts of food that contain "air" may cause feebleness in some. The plants and herbs prescribed by Malay healers help to revitalise and restore these imbalances in the human body.

Notes

1 Newbold, T.J. (2015). *Political and statistical account of the British settlements in the Straits of Malacca, viz. Pinang, Malacca, and Singapore, with a history of the Malayan states on the peninsula of Malacca vol. 2 of 2* (p. 242). London: Forgotten Books. (Call no.: RSING 959.5 NEW)
2 Squeamishness, heartburn and fevers arise when the "fire" element is too strong. The "water" element causes damp chills and vomiting.

(Top) The Malay midwife, or *bidan*, holds a *pelepas* (made from double slipknot palm fronds or string) before the mother and child as she recites an incantation to release them from the postpartum period. *Image reproduced from Laderman, C. (1983). Wives and Midwives: Childbirth and Nutrition in Rural Malaysia. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Call no.: RSEA 301.209595112 LAD)*
(Above) Group photograph of Malay midwives in Singapore, 1950. Known as *bidan*, these midwives specialised in women's health matters, including fecundity, midwifery and contraception, along with beauty-related disorders. *Haji Mawardi Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Malay medicine. Gimlette referenced local sources, including Kelatanese manuscripts, for his book *Malay Poisons and Charm Cures* (1915), which today remains a classic and definitive reference guide to the practices of Malay healers. As the use of some herbs and plants could lead to fatal consequences, Gimlette's study of the wild varieties of vegetation in the Malay Archipelago opened up a new field of study for physiologists and pharmacologists.[13]

An attempt to comprehend the Malay pathological framework for medicine and disease is also evident in Percy N. Gerrard's medical dictionary, *A Vocabulary of Malay Medical Terms* (1905).[14] As a medical professional, Gerrard's efforts were borne out of the desire to understand his patients' medical issues from a scientific and cultural point of view. This enabled him to treat his patients using Malay herbal medicine whenever necessary. Gerrard drew parallels to Western medicine and, in doing so, lent credibility to Malay practices and beliefs – at least in the eyes of the colonial administrators.

Like Gimlette, Gerrard praised the Malays' profound understanding of plants and herbs, and highlighted the medicinal value of these untapped sources and the native knowledge of local medicine. Despite his affirmations of the scientific value of herbs in Malay healing, Gerrard felt that the community's belief in the supernatural was an impediment to British acceptance of traditional Malay medicine and healers.

It is clear that colonial observers of 20th-century Malaya have largely contexualised their understanding and knowledge of Malay medicine against Western markers. This cultural chasm was mainly due to a lack of empathy and the inability to comprehend the complexities behind the religious rituals and healing systems of indigenous groups. For the most part, Malay healing practices were regarded as superstitions and folklore that could not be explained by scientific theories. Hence over time, some traditional Malay healers co-opted the language of religion[15] and, eventually, science into their practice in order to gain wider acceptance by their Western critics.

Legislating Malay Medicine

Although Western medical services were gradually introduced to the local population, most Malays continued to consult their community healers as they allegedly had "complete faith in their own particular charms and cures" and "dread[ed] hospitals, doctors and western medicines".[16] As traditional healers were also involved in non-medical matters such as state, social and cultural affairs, they occupied an esteemed position in the indigenous communities they served.[17]

By the turn of the 20th century, the British had become more receptive to Malay healing practices. Although dismissive of the efficacy of traditional Malay medicine, the British were aware that traditional healers formed the backbone of a long-established support system that locals could turn to in times of physical, emotional and spiritual distress.

A significant example would be the role of the *bidan*, or midwife, in the community. Before the colonial government set up a maternity hospital in 1888, the demands of pregnancy – ranging from prenatal care to actual delivery and postpartum care – were handled by *bidans*.

Although colonial medical officers acknowledged the importance of *bidans*, they were concerned that these midwives were operating under unsanitary conditions. In the early 20th century, a surge in the infant mortality rate was mainly attributed to traditional midwifery practices: many babies died from *Tetanus neonatorum* (umbilical infection).[18] The authorities thought it imperative that *bidans* be trained and supervised to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates, and to develop trust and spread awareness of Western medical services among Malay mothers.

Under the Midwives Ordinance enacted in the Straits Settlements in 1915, all *bidans* had to be registered with the Central Midwives Board and undergo in-service training. Local women were also trained in biomedicine, midwifery and nursing in order to replace the traditional role of the *bidan*. The intention was not to encourage women to deliver in hospitals (due to a lack of beds and facilities), but rather to establish a pool of trained and licensed midwives who could recognise complications during pregnancy and refer the women to the hospitals if necessary. By the 1920s, mobile dispensaries as well as home and school visits were available to communities living in rural areas, and public campaigns were mounted to ensure that people had access to medicine and healthcare.

By 1936, there were 720 trained midwives in Singapore, 574 in Penang and 224 in Malacca. Despite these efforts, traditional *bidans* were still sought after by Malayan women in the subsequent decades due to the personal nature of the antenatal and postnatal services they provided, including up to six weeks after delivery.

Two other legislations introduced by the colonial government further threatened the existence of traditional healers and the provision of traditional medicine. Under the Sale of Food and Drugs Ordinance that came into force in 1914, the sale of adulterated drugs was deemed an offence "if the purchaser [was] not fully informed of the nature of adulteration at time of purchase".[19] The second legislation, the Poisons Ordinance of 1938 "regulate[d] the possession and sales of potent medicinal substances, to prevent misuse or illicit diversion of poisons".[20]

These laws compromised the role of traditional Malay healers in the community, especially given the latent suspicions surrounding Malay medicine. However, due to the high costs involved in establishing an islandwide public healthcare system, the British authorities were rather lax at enforcing these legislations, and allowed itinerant and home-based traditional healers to continue practising their craft.

With the introduction of Western-style healthcare, including clinics and hospitals, and the increasing availability of over-the-counter medications from the turn of the 20th century onwards, traditional Malay healing played a smaller role in the lives and rhythms of the community.

State controls and the exposure to Western education further put paid to the services of traditional Malay healers. Although their numbers have drastically dwindled over the years, traditional Malay medicine continues to play an ancillary – and occasionally complementary – role to Western medicine today for those who recognise its efficacy in providing ritual care and treating spiritual ailments and conditions not yet acknowledged in Western medical science. ♦

Notes

1 The World Health Organization defines traditional medicine (also known as folk, indigenous or alternative medicine) as "the sum total of the knowledge, skill, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness". Herbal medicines include "herbs, herbal materials, herbal preparations and finished herbal products that contain as active ingredients parts of plant, or other plant materials or combinations". See World Health Organization. (2018). *Traditional, complementary and integrative medicine*. Retrieved from World Health Organization website.

2 The *Kitab Permata* from 19th-century Patani (southern Thailand) discusses the characteristics and medicinal properties of gemstones. minerals and metals. This text is commonly used by traditional healers in the north coast of the Malay Peninsula.

3 Blagden, C.O. (1896, July). Notes on the folk-lore and popular religion of the Malays. *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 29*, 1. Retrieved from JSTOR via NLB's eResources website.

4 Malay healers used Quranic verses to supplement the efficacy of herbs and medicinal plants. Supplications remain at the heart of Malay healing. A healer may choose to use only plants and herbs with supplications but without *wafaq*, while another may use fewer plants and herbs and more *wafaq* in his practice.

5 A prominent Patani scholar, Sheikh Ahmad al-Fathani, laboured his discourse in Islamic knowledge with the science of medicine. His manuscript, *Tayyib al-Ihsan fi Tibb al-Insan*, which was produced in 1895, was widely consulted by traditional healers in 20th-century Malaya.

6 John D. Gimlette was a physician who resided in the Malay state of Kelantan for many years and was extremely interested in the subject of Malay poisons, sorcery and cures. See Gimlette, J.D. (1915). *Malay poisons and charm cures*. London: J. & A. Churchill. (Call no.: RRARE 398.4 GIM-[JSB])

7 Gimlette, 1915, p. 106.

8 Winzeler, R.L. (1983). The study of Malay magic. *Bijdragen Tot De Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde, 139* (4), 435–458, p. 436. Retrieved from JSTOR via NLB's eResources website.

9 Malay "doctors". (1896, September 22). *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, p. 4. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.

10 Skeat, W.W. (1900). *Malay magic: Being an introduction to the folklore and popular religion of the Malay Peninsula* (pp. 424–425). London: Macmillan and Co., Limited. (Call no.: RCLOS 398.4 SKE-[GH])

11 Winzeler, 1983, p. 447.

12 Thomas N. Annandale was a Scottish zoologist, entomologist, anthropologist and herpetologist, who became interested in Malay animism, related magical lore and curers.

13 From pineapples *(Ananassa sativa)* and *keladi (Alocasia denudata)* to *cheraka* (Plumbaginasea), the poisons Gimlette examined have been described to contain active ingredients useful in the study of modern medicine.

14 Gerrard, P.N. (1905). *A vocabulary of Malay medical terms*. Singapore: Kelly & Walsh. (Microfilm no.: NL27512)

15 Anthropologist Thomas Fraser notes that in village processions led by the *pawang* who is healing a physically ill or possessed patient, the *imam* (Islamic worship leader) is also involved to officiate the ritual from a religious perspective. This prevents any possible conflict with Islamic beliefs that may border on *shirk* (idolatory or Polytheism).

16 Why fewer babies are now dying in Singapore. (1935, July 21). *The Straits Times*, p. 13. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.

17 In the Malay villages, traditional healers were involved in sanctifying the village via ceremonies and rituals, and were also involved in the affairs of the state. In 1946, *bomohs* worked alongside European medical officers to combat the smallpox epidemic in Malaya.

18 Owen, N.G. (Ed.). (1987). *Death and disease in Southeast Asia: Explorations in social, medical and demographic history* (p. 258). Singapore: Oxford University Press. (Call no.: RSING 301.3220959 DEA)

19 Singapore. The Statutes of the Republic of Singapore. (1987, March 30). *Sale of Drugs Act* (Cap 282, 1985 Rev. ed.). Retrieved from Singapore Statutes Online website.

20 Singapore. The Statutes of the Republic of Singapore. (1999, December 30). *Poisons Act* (Cap 234, 1999 Rev. ed.). Retrieved from Singapore Statutes Online website.

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IN HONOUR OF WAR HEROES

THE LEGACY OF COLIN ST CLAIR OAKES

Who was the architect behind Singapore's Kranji War Cemetery and other similar memorials in South and Southeast Asia? **Athanasios Tsakonas** has the story.

Athanasios Tsakonas is a practising architect with degrees from the University of Adelaide and the National University of Singapore. This essay is a precursor to his book on Colin St Clair Oakes, the Principal Architect from the Imperial War Graves Commission who designed many of the war cemeteries found in South and Southeast Asia.

On a bright and early Saturday morning on 2 March 1957, Governor of Singapore Robert Black presided over the unveiling of the Singapore Memorial at the Kranji War Cemetery. Under a sky filled with towering clouds, Black, a former prisoner-of-war interned in Changi during the Japanese Occupation (1942–45), was received by Air Marshal Sir Arthur Longmore, Vice-Chairman of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC).

Some 3,000 guests, including dignitaries and representatives of the various Commonwealth governments, had gathered to bear witness to the culmination of an event that had commenced over a decade earlier in the aftermath of World War II.

Unveiling the Memorial

As the party comprising Black, selected guests and the presiding clergy was about to lay their wreaths at the base of the Cross of Sacrifice, a weeping, elderly Chinese woman dressed in a worn *samfoo* suddenly emerged from the crowd and stumbled up to the cross. Major-General J.F.D. Steedman, Director of Works at the IWGC, gently put his arm around her shoulders and led her away to a chair under the shade of a tree. Journalist Nan Hall reported in *The Straits Times* the following day that the woman had "sobbed loudly and rocked her head in her hands".[1]

Following the unveiling and a short speech by Governor Black, the *Last Post* was played, hymns were sung, and blessings offered by clergy from the Hindu, Islam, Buddhist and Christian faiths. A flypast by jet fighters from the Royal Australian Air Force punctured the sky in a salute. The British national anthem, *God Save the Queen*, concluded the service prior to the laying of wreaths and inspection of the memorial by invited guests. The ceremony, steeped in the tradition of a protocol dating from the beginnings of the IWGC in 1917, would be over within a few hours.

A panoramic view of Kranji War Cemetery and Memorial. The memorial is designed to resemble an aeroplane with its 22-metre (72-ft) central pylon and wing-shaped roof supported by 12 stone-clad pillars. Annual memorial services are held at the cemetery on Remembrance Day and ANZAC Day. *Courtesy of Chester Chen via flickr. Photo was shot with a pinhole camera on Kodak 120 black and white negative film.*

After the ceremony, the sobbing woman identified herself as Madam Cheng Seang Ho (alias Cheong Sang Hoo), an 81-year-old wartime heroine whose husband's name was one of those engraved on the very memorial being unveiled. Madam Cheng and her husband Sim Chin Foo (alias Chum Chan Foo) had joined a group of army and civilian fighters known as Dalforce during the Japanese Occupation.[2] Her husband would subsequently be captured by the Kempeitai, the Japanese military police, and tortured to death.[3]

It was a poignant moment that captured the essence of the human sacrifice the memorial was erected to convey, not only for the servicemen who died in the war and whose names were inscribed on the stone panels, but also for those who would come to pay their respects and find some measure of solace.

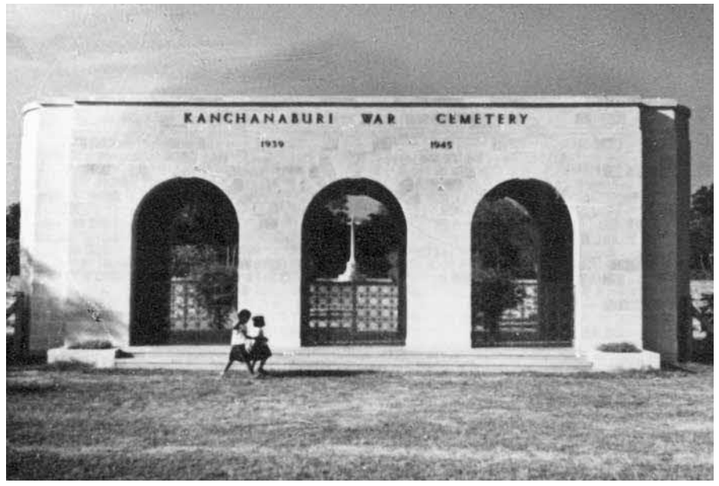
The Legacy

Designed by a relatively unknown young architect named Colin St Clair Oakes (see text box opposite), the Kranji War Cemetery resembles the design of many such war cemeteries he would design in South and Southeast Asia, influenced by his military service background and experience of having lived and worked in this part of the world.

Oakes' appointment by the IGWC would prove an astute choice as he would introduce a modernist sensibility to the various commemoration and pilgrimage sites he designed in the region, a sensibility that would later define his career. Similarly, Kranji can be framed within the wider context of similar sites that bear testament to the horrors and brutality of war. Although located in disparate countries, the shared architectural heritage of these sites gave rise to a common history with its own narrative: the advance of the Japanese campaign, its subsequent military confrontation and occupation, and eventual retreat.

Kranji War Cemetery, like other similar sites in the region, had a contested history from the outset. It was perceived as quintessentially British or "imperial" in form, sentiments not shared by a colonised populace seeking independence from their oppressors. From the IWGC's perspective, this "sacred site" represents the fallen soldiers and airmen of the Commonwealth forces in the war against the Japanese.

The bodies interred and names inscribed at Kranji reflect a foreign enterprise far removed from their places of origin. Kranji also bears testimony to its uncomfortable position within a society that is culturally different from the West. As a result, the cemetery has become relatively isolated, bereft of visitors as well as the accompanying vigils and commemoration services that might occur at the better known and more frequently visited war cemeteries and memorials of Western Europe.



(Right) The Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, designed by Colin St Clair Oakes, in the town of Kanchanaburi in Thailand, near the border with Burma. The stone entrance portico and visitor shelter frame the cemetery, which houses almost 7,000 identified casualties from the notorious Siam-Burma Railway. *Courtesy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.*
(Below) The view along the main axis of the Sai Wan Bay War Cemetery located in Chai Wan, Hong Kong. Built in 1946, it commemorates fallen soldiers from World Wars I and II. The bay view beyond is now obscured by high-rise housing estates. *Courtesy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.*
(Bottom right) The Cross of Sacrifice atop Garrison Hill at the Kohima War Cemetery in Nagaland, India, 1954. Garrison Hill – the former site of the British Deputy Commissioner's residence housing his bungalow, garden and tennis court – witnessed the most bitter fighting in the Burma campaign. Colin St Clair Oakes, who also designed the cemetery, elevated the cross above a stone shelter and preserved the historic tennis court in memory of the fierce hand-to-hand combat that took place here. *Courtesy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.*

A BIOGRAPHY OF COLIN ST CLAIR OAKES

Born 23 May 1908, in the village of Tanyfron in north Wales, the childhood of Colin Sinclair Rycroft Oakes was bookended by the achievements of the Victorian age and the catastrophe of World War I. This was a period that also ushered in new attitudes to function and style – a movement that otherwise became known as Modernism.

Admitted to the Northern Polytechnic School of Architecture in 1927, Oakes would come under the tutelage of British abstract artist and pioneer of Modernism, John Cecil Stephenson. The polytechnic would instil in him a cosmopolitan outlook and design temperament that veered towards the contemporary. It also inspired his first overseas foray, departing in April 1930 for Helsinki, Finland, to join the practice of architect Jarl Eklund. Eklund would also mentor a young Eero Saarinen, one of the great architects of the 20th century.

Oakes' return home in 1931 would prove short-lived. His application to the prestigious Rome Scholarship in Architecture, offering an opportunity to live and study at the British School at Rome, was successful. Travelling to the historic cities of Europe and producing detailed measured drawings from archaeological sites, Oakes' work would be exhibited at the Royal Academy, and see his scholarship extended for a second year. It would also be the last, as by 1932, Italy's fascist regime, coupled with rising anti-British sentiments, had created an environment of hostility.

By spring of 1936, Oakes once again left England, this time for India. Appointed Second Architect to the Government of Bengal, he would quickly assume the role of Acting Government Architect, responsible for the design of numerous public projects such as the Calcutta Custom House, expansion of Dum Dum Jail, and technical colleges in Dacca and Chittagong. His design contribution included three bridges, notably the iconic Sevoke-Teesta Bridge spanning the Teesta River.

Oakes' experience of living in India, along with membership of the Territorial Army during his youth, would prove beneficial to the British Army when the Japanese entered World War II. Commissioned as a Captain, Oakes' posting to Bengal would see his active involvement in the Allies' Arakan Campaign into Burma. For his role in the campaign, Oakes was bestowed an MBE in May 1944 and promoted to the rank of Major.

Shortly after the end of the war, Oakes came to the attention of Sir Frederic Kenyon, Director of the British Museum and Artistic Advisor to the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC). On 2 November 1945, Oakes was invited to undertake a three-month long tour of the very regions he had recently lived and fought in – along with Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Siam (Thailand), Malaya and Singapore – on behalf of the IWGC.

It would culminate with his appointment as a Principal Architect of IWGC, and tasked with the design of numerous war cemeteries and memorials in Asia. These edifices would later prove to be his defining body of work, bringing together all that he had learnt from his past. In accepting the position, Oakes would follow in the footsteps of his predecessors but, unlike them, he would become the only Principal Architect who had served in the recent war.

Colin St Clair Oakes, the architect with the Imperial War Graves Commission responsible for designing a number of cemeteries located across South and Southeast Asia. These include Kranji War Cemetery in Singapore; Taiping War Cemetery in Malaysia; Kanchanaburi War Cemetery and Chungkai War Cemetery, both in Thailand; Rangoon War Cemetery in Burma; Imphal War Cemetery in India; Sai Wan Bay Cemetery in Hong Kong; and Chittagong War Cemetery in Bangladesh. *Courtesy of the Oakes Family Collection.*

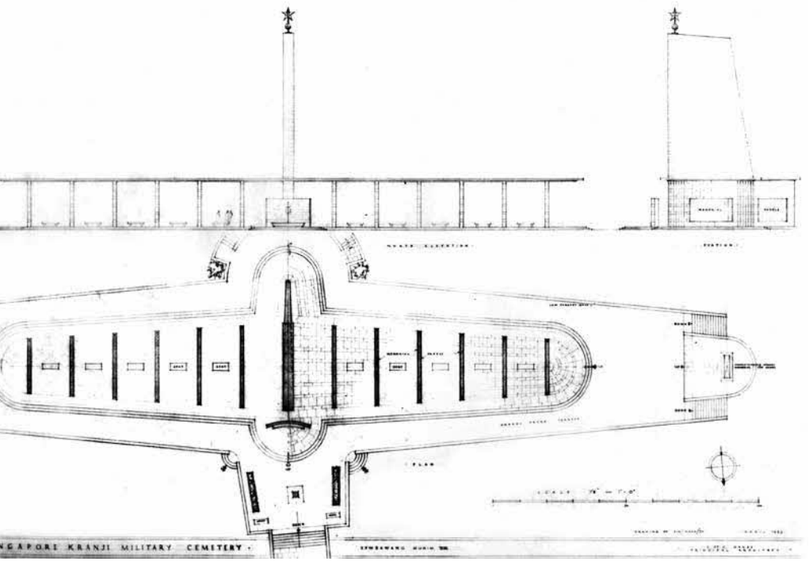
Over the years, the literature on Kranji has placed the war cemetery and memorial within various scholarly frameworks. Edwin Gibson and G. Kingsley Ward's *Courage Remembered* (1989), Philip Longworth's *The Unending Vigil* (1967) and Julie Summers' *Remembered: A History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (2007), nominally view Kranji through a Eurocentric lens, as an effect of the institution and its ideals. It is one of the few cemeteries created from the "distant" war against Japan, yet somehow fitting in within the wider war graves endeavour.

Outside the "imperial" view, the most comprehensive book written on Kranji is by Singaporean journalist Romen Bose. Titled *Kranji: The Commonwealth War Cemetery and the Politics of the Dead* (2006), the book offers the first insight into the establishment of the cemetery from the perspective of its host country.[4] It details all of Kranji's individual memorials and explores the politics of its approval and funding, along with the official unveiling of the Singapore Memorial. The publication also marks an important shift in the local perception of Kranji.

From the late 1980s onwards, there was renewed interest from both the public and state over the battlefield history of the Japanese invasion and occupation of Singapore. New literature on the subject gave rise to a national discourse on Singapore's post-colonial history, raising important questions on national identity.[5] Academics Brendah Yeoh and Hamzah Muzaini have described the prevailing literature as tending to "analyze these spaces of memory as loci of 'personal' mourning or as symbolic manifestations of imperial identities".[6]

The Imperial War Graves Commission in Asia

Barely two months after the surrender of the Japanese and the end of World War II, three senior officers of the British Army gathered at Croydon Airfield in South London on the wintry morning of 14 November 1945. The men had been tasked by the IWGC to travel to India, Burma and the Far East to visit sites that had witnessed some of the heaviest battles of the war and assess the burial sites where their fallen comrades had been laid to rest. They would then recommend the suitability of these sites in becoming permanent war cemeteries.



An early sketch design of the Singapore Memorial by Colin St Clair Oakes, with the tower's original height of 24 metres (80 ft). Preliminary costings exceeded the budget and in order to avoid a perception of excess, the entire memorial was scaled down by 10 percent and the tower height reduced by 8 ft. *Courtesy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.*

Accompanying the IWGC's Deputy Director of Works, Major Andrew MacFarlane, was Colonel Harry N. Obbard,[7] seconded from the army as the Inspector for India and Burma, and Major Colin St Clair Oakes, an architect recently discharged from active service. The itinerary included visits to all known military cemeteries so that the advisory architect could make proposals for their general layout and architectural treatment. The men would also traverse the Siam-Burma Railway and advise on the number, location and layout of military cemeteries from this dark episode of World War II. Covering over 26,000 miles by air, rail, road and water, the trip would conclude in Singapore. It would be late February 1946 before the team returned to London.

Despite having to contend with the difficulty of travelling in war-ravaged countries, the party managed to visit hundreds of burial sites – many hastily prepared by the army graves service units – in five countries and over 50 cities within the space of just three months. Working around the clock with little rest, Oakes was forced to write his notes and prepare sketches under hurricane lamps well into the night. Yet, in spite of the personal discomforts of the trip, the conceptual ideas for the present-day Commonwealth War Cemeteries in India, Burma, Bangladesh, Thailand and Singapore had been cast.

Kranji: The Final Choice

A long-standing policy of the IWGC was to select sites that were the scene of significant battles or were associated with disturbing but significant memories. The scholar Maria Tumarkin in her book *Traumascapes* (2005), identified the places upon which war cemeteries are founded as bearing the tangible imprint left behind at a place of violent suffering or "traumascape".[8] Obbard and Oakes were aware of this policy. In their initial tour of Asia, they were asked to identify sites that could be built as war cemeteries. Notable examples in this regard were Kohima and Imphal in India, Chungkai and Kanchanaburi in Thailand, Thanbyuzayat in Myanmar, and Sai Wan Bay in Hong Kong.

Arriving in Singapore on 6 January 1946, Obbard and Oakes would meet Colonel Foster Hall, the British Army's Deputy Director of Graves Registration & Enquiries, and were also briefed by Lieutenant-Colonel A.E. Brown, the recently appointed head of the Australian War Graves Service.[9] Over the next seven days, they visited burial grounds at Buona Vista, Changi, Nee Soon, Melaik (located north of the former Mental Hospital along Yio Chu Kang Road), Wing Loon, Point 348 (Bukit Batok Hill) and Kranji. Their primary task was to critically assess the suitability of the existing burial sites and select one place where all the Allied war graves on the island could be consolidated and re-interred permanently. Oakes would then assess each location and compile the final report for the IWGC.

Buona Vista, situated high up in a cluster of hills about five miles to the west of the port, had few trees but possessed excellent coastal views. However, its sandy soil and water run-off were problematic. Melaik, on the other hand, would be the most centrally placed cemetery on the island but was unfortunately enclosed within a dense plantation of rubber trees and the site hemmed in on three sides by building development. On the fourth side, across the road, it adjoined the mental asylum and leper colony.

Wing Loon, located at the eastern end of the island near Changi Prison and accessible by a semi-private road, had much to commend it with its views of the sea. But it would entail securing permanent access rights to the road and additional sea-fronting land to its south; this site was later ruled out due to the difficulty of acquiring land.

Nee Soon, Changi and Kranji had existing cemeteries. Nee Soon was situated on sloping ground facing the Seletar River estuary, about 400 yards from the main road. Oakes had identified Nee Soon as a "pleasant and suitable" site for a war cemetery, but agreed with Obbard that it was better retained as a permanent Muslim War Cemetery given the large number of Muslim graves at this site.

Changi cemetery, established during the Japanese Occupation by POWs incarcerated at the adjacent Changi Prison, was Obbard's original choice for the Combined Allied Christian War Cemetery in Singapore.[10] Its well-tended graves told a tragic history that was well suited for memorialisation. However, as it was located adjacent to the runways of Changi Aerodrome, which the Royal Air Force was enlarging, it was precluded from consideration as it would involve removing and re-interring the existing graves.

Ironically, Kranji cemetery, located within the grounds of a former POW hospital overlooking the Johor Straits, was not even considered in the first place. "Difficult cemetery to expand and situation not exceptional", reported Oakes.[11] Obbard too concurred that Kranji, along with Buona Vista, as being "surrounded by jungle and are on very sandy soil, and would be costly to construct... [besides] there are no special historical associations with these two sites at Buona Vista and Kranji".[12]

It was, in fact, a small yet prominent hill in central Singapore that captured Oakes' imagination and fulfilled all the necessary requirements. At a height of 104 ft, Point 348, also known as Bukit Batok Hill, overlooked Ford Motor Factory, site of the Allied surrender to the Japanese. Tall and conical in shape, it was well situated along the main road connecting Singapore town to the Johor Straits. The summit had been levelled and extensively terraced with a wide road built to access it, all constructed by Australian POWs.

During the early days of the Occupation, the Japanese had used the same labour force to erect a war memorial and a Shinto shrine known as Syonan Chureito on its summit to commemorate their war heroes. In a small gesture to the prisoners, the Japanese had allowed the Allied forces to build a memorial to honour their war dead; this comprised a 15-foot-tall wooden cross behind the Shinto shrine. Both were destroyed when the Japanese surrendered, and only two entrance pillars and a steep flight of 120 steps leading to the summit remained when the officers arrived to assess the site.[13]

In his report submitted to the IWGC, Oakes identified Point 348 as the site most suited for the development of the permanent war cemetery in Singapore. Writing to headquarters, he said:

> "The site is one of the most impressive imaginable. From the summit, the views across the whole island, and to the sea beyond are superb.... Taking into consideration all factors, POINT 348 is probably the best site for the proposed Allied Christian Cemetery. With it could well also be combined a memorial to the missing from that theatre of operations."[14]

The "factors" Oakes referred to were, in fact, three minor difficulties he foresaw in shaping the hill for its new role as a war cemetery. Aside from the existing terracing which was unable to accommodate the almost 2,500 estimated war graves, there was the "large unsightly factory with tall chimneys, which at present disfigures the main axis and proposed cemetery approach".[15] Both, however, were not obstacles to Oakes. To accommodate additional war graves, he recommended levelling the lower slopes of the hill to create more terraces, and as for the "unsightly" factory, he proposed screening it out with a gently sloping carriageway winding around the hill along with suitable plantings.

(Right) Governor of Singapore Robert Black in conversation with relatives of servicemen who had perished in World War II during the unveiling of the Singapore Memorial at Kranji War Cemetery on 2 March 1957. *Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(Below) Another vista of the Kranji War Cemetery framed against the setting sun. *Courtesy of Tan Heng Wang via flickr.*

It was the third difficulty that proved insurmountable. Given the presence of the Japanese shrine, Oakes noted that "its previous association as an enemy memorial might be considered objectionable".[16] Obbard recognised the sensitivities associated with the site and, in the end, recommended that Changi be the preferred choice for the war cemetery, with Nee Soon to be retained for the Muslim war graves.

However, soon after the men left Singapore, they were informed that additional land required for establishing a war cemetery at Changi could not be secured. Instead, the Royal Air Force had demanded the urgent removal of the graves in the cemetery so that the airport could be expanded. Obbard then revised his recommendation in line with Oakes':

> "This hill [at Point 348] forms actually the best of all the sites we saw for a cemetery. We did not suggest it in the first place because its previous use as a Japanese memorial hill might be regarded as objectionable; but, if the Changi site is not available, then we strongly recommend the adoption of this hill site, on which a most impressive cemetery can be formed, and on which also a memorial to the missing could very well be set up. The advisory architect is preparing a suggested layout on this site."[17]

However, in the subsequent chaos of the aftermath of the war and in spite of the uncertainty of the Changi site, the IWGC went ahead to recommend it as the permanent war cemetery for Singapore. This decision carefully avoided the sensitivities Point 348 would have generated among locals and returning service personnel. But it would be a short-lived decision, for HQ Air Command South East Asia had proceeded with extending the airport at Changi in the meantime and would not guarantee building near the earmarked site. With both sites Obbard and Oakes had recommended declared unsuitable, Kranji, which had been placed well down on their lists, was selected as a suitable compromise.

Work on establishing Kranji as a war cemetery began in April 1946, with all available clues to the locations of other grave sites in Singapore followed up. Search workers from the Graves Units in Australia and the United Kingdom were despatched to Singapore, but the lack of manpower to physically dig and relocate graves made progress painfully slow. Returning Singaporean residents assisted in the effort to locate and identify graves and remains. It was not until the end of 1946, some 16 months after the Japanese surrender, that all the war graves on the island had been exhumed and moved to Kranji.

Post-War Developments

Colin St Clair Oakes would not see through the completion of Kranji War Cemetery, nor attend the unveiling ceremony of his "winged" memorial. By the late 1940s, he had taken up a partnership at Sir Aston Webb & Son, and rejoined the Architectural Association. In 1949, with a young family and having endured years away during the war, followed by months travelling for the IWGC, Oakes was appointed Chief Architect of Boots Pure Drug Company,[18] continuing his predecessor's work in rebuilding the many Boots stores in England that were destroyed during the German bombings. ♦

KRANJI'S WAR DEAD

Named after the local tree, *pokok kranji* or *keranji*, Kranji is situated in the north of Singapore, on a small hill with commanding views over the Straits of Johor. The British first established a military base in this area in the 1930s, which also served as a depot for armaments and ammunition during the early days of World War II. When the Japanese attacked Singapore by air on 8 December 1941, the camp was turned into the battalion headquarters for the Australian forces. On 9 February 1942, Kranji was defended by the Australian 27th Brigade and a company of Chinese Dalforce volunteers when the Japanese first landed on Singapore soil at nearby Kranji Beach.

During the Japanese Occupation, Kranji camp was appropriated as a field hospital for the Indian National Army (INA) until its departure in 1944. The camp was then modified to accommodate returning POWs from the Siam-Burma Death Railway as well as large numbers of sick and injured POWs transferred from Changi Prison. As with the small hospital at Changi, the makeshift "Kranji Hospital" also established a small cemetery for those who died within its care. When the war ended, this simple hospital graveyard would be expanded to become Singapore's main war cemetery.

In early 1946, the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) would send officers and an architect to Singapore to advise on the general layout of Kranji for its impending transformation into a war cemetery and a memorial to the missing. Yet, plans for the present-day cemetery would not materialise immediately. As the IWGC had a long-standing policy of not taking over any remains that could not be satisfactorily proven as entitled to a war grave burial, there was a protracted impasse over identifying the remains of both combatants and non-combatants.

Across the causeway, the Malayan Emergency and numerous post-war independence movements in Asia seeking sovereignty from colonial rule would see further delays. It would take more than 10 years and the involvement of various parties, the British Army and War Office, the British Colonial Office, the IWGC and the Singapore government, before the Kranji War Cemetery and Memorial was officially unveiled on 2 March 1957.

Today, Kranji contains the remains of 4,461 Commonwealth casualties of World War II from numerous burial sites spread across Singapore, including graves relocated from Changi, Buona Vista and Bidadari. The Chinese Memorial marks the collective grave for 69 Chinese servicemen killed during the Occupation in 1942. In addition, there are the Singapore (Unmaintainable Graves) Memorial, Singapore Cremation Memorial and the Singapore Civil Hospital Grave Memorial; the latter commemorates more than 400 civilians and Commonwealth servicemen buried in a mass grave on the grounds of Singapore General Hospital. The Kranji Military Cemetery, which is the resting ground for non-world war burials, adjoins to the west.

The most visible structure is the Singapore Memorial, designed to reflect an aeroplane with its 22-metre (72-ft) central pylon and wing-shaped roof supported by 12 stone-clad pillars inscribed with the names of over 24,000 casualties who have no known graves. It is dedicated to servicemen from the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Ceylon, India, Malaya, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

Annual memorial services are held at the Kranji War Cemetery on Remembrance Day and ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day. The Remembrance Day ceremony is traditionally held on the second Sunday of November to honour those who sacrificed their lives in war. ANZAC Day takes place on 25 April.

Sorting and reburial of remains by workers despatched from the Graves Units in Australia and the United Kingdom, 1946. Kranji War Cemetery. *Courtesy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.*

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An aerial view of Kranji War Cemetery and the Singapore Memorial. The Kranji Military Cemetery of non-world war dead is located on the right. *Photo by Weixiang Schrödinger Lim.*

Notes

1 Hall, N. (1957, March 3). Thoughts of the past move 81-year-old war heroine to tears. *The Straits Times*, p. 1. Retrieved from NewspaperSG; Blackburn, K., & Hack, K. (2012). *War memory and the making of modern Singapore* (p. 110). Singapore: NUS Press. (Call no.: RSING 940.53595 BLA-[WAR])

2 Dalforce was a volunteer army whose members were recruited from among the ethnic Chinese community in Singapore. It was formed in December 1941 and named after its commander, Lieutenant Colonel John Dalley of the Federated Malay States Police Force. See National Library Board. (2014, August 19). *Dalforce* written by Chow, Alex. Retrieved from Singapore Infopedia. Mdm Cheng and Sim Chin Foo's aliases courtesy of Kevin Blackburn in written communication, 24 April 2018.

3 Private Sim Chin Foo, Dalforce, Service no. DAL/46, died 1 September 1942, col. 399, Singapore Memorial.

4 Bose. R. (2006). *Kranji: The Commonwealth war cemetery and the politics of the dead*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions. (Call no.: RSING 940.54655957 BOS-[WAR]). Kranji would later be included as a chapter in Bose's 2012 book. See Bose, R. (2012). *Singapore at war: Secrets from the fall, liberation & aftermath of WWII*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions. (Call no.: RSING 940.5425 BOS-[WAR])

5 Lee, A. (2015, November 9). *A case of renewed identity: The fading role of WWII in Singapore's national narrative*. Retrieved from Singapore Police Journal website. Lee asserts that the war memory in Singapore is political rather than emotional. Singapore's abandonment by the British and subsequent occupation by the Japanese was used to emphasise self-reliance and the concept of "total-defence", and the importance of a strong national identity.

6 Hamzah Muzaini & Yeoh, B.S.A. (2007, June). Memory-making 'from below': Rescaling remembrance at the Kranji War Memorial and Cemetery, Singapore. *Environment and Planning, 39* (6), 1288–1305, p. 1288. Retrieved from ResearchGate website.

7 Harry Naismith Obbard (1898–1970) was commissioned into the Royal Engineers during World War I. Seconded to the Indian Army in 1924, he was serving on the staff of GHQ, New Delhi, when he was loaned out to IWGC for the tour of India, Burma and the Far East. By November 1946, Obbard had been promoted to Brigadier and appointed Chief Administration Officer, IWGC India, Pakistan and Southeast Asia District, overseeing all the Commission's works in the region, including French Indo-China and Hong Kong.

8 Tumarkin, M. (2005). *Traumascapes: The power and fate of places transformed by tragedy* (pp. 10–11). Melbourne: Melbourne University Press. (Not available in NLB holdings)

9 CWGC SDC 97 Box 2004. Obbard's Tour Reports 1945–46. Annexure 2. The meeting also included British Army officers Major-General K.G. McLean and Major-General Denning. Foster Hall at the time was heading the Graves Registration Units, undertaking the recovery and concentration of remains found in Burma and along the Siam-Burma Railway. Brown would in a few years be appointed Secretary-General of the IWGC, heading up the ANZAC Agency responsible for the war graves throughout Australia, Indonesia, Borneo, Papua New Guinea, the Pacific and Japan.

10 CWGC SDC 97 Box 2004. Obbard's Tour Reports 1945–46. Annexure 6, In his notes on the selection of sites for permanent military cemeteries on Singapore, Obbard highlights that Foster Hall's original proposal was for three Christian cemeteries at Buona Vista, Kranji and Changi, and one Muslim cemetery at Nee Soon. Agreeing on Nee Soon for the Muslim site, Foster Hall indicated it contained the ashes of Hindu cremations and the need to scatter them.

11 CWGC Add 1/6/17 Box 2003, Oakes report, Nov–Dec 1945.

12 CWGC SDC 97 Box 2004, Obbard's Tour Reports 1945–46.

13 Bose, 2006, pp. 47–50. Also referred to as the Bukit Batok Memorial, and along with the Allies' memorial cross, it was constructed under the engineering commander-in-charge Yasugi Tamura, using 500 Australian prisoners-of-war from the Sime Road and Adam Park camps.

14 CWGC Add 1/6/17 Box 2003, Oakes report, Nov–Dec 1945.

15 CWGC Add 1/6/17 Box 2003, Oakes report, Nov–Dec 1945.

16 CWGC Add 1/6/17 Box 2003, Oakes report, Nov–Dec 1945.

17 CWGC SDC 97 Box 2004, Obbard's Tour Reports 1945–46. In a special note to Annexure 6.

18 *Beacon*, October 1949. In-house publication of Boots Pure Drug Company. Oakes joined Boots in 1949, with an arrangement with the IWGC to hand over part of the outstanding war cemeteries whilst committing to completing the remainder. This arrangement would conclude on 31 March 1953.

BLAZING A TRAIL

THE FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN SINGAPORE

The Singapore Council of Women was the city's first female civil rights group that took bold steps to champion laws affecting women. **Phyllis Chew** documents its hard-won victories.

"Forget for a time the rights and privileges which a dying custom and a faulty judgment bestows upon a selfish husband, and learn to think in terms of your duties as fathers. The destiny of millions of Chinese girls is in your hands. Deal with them as you would like your daughters to be dealt with."[1]

Shirin Fozdar,
Secretary-General, Singapore Council of Women, 23 August 1954

After the Japanese Occupation ended in 1945, Singapore women – emboldened by a political awareness brought about by the events of World War II – emerged with a greater confidence in their abilities. They had witnessed the humiliating defeat of British forces by Japanese military might, and with it a shattering of the myth of white colonialist supremacy.

Taking inspiration from women such as Elizabeth Choy, the war heroine who was incarcerated and tortured by the Japanese military police, gender-related inhibitions were slowly cast away. Women began contributing to the war rehabilitation effort – for the first time two women were elected to the Municipal Commission[2] – and started reaching out to less fortunate segments of society.

Emerging from the confines of their homes, women volunteered for jury services and several took office as Justices of Peace. They volunteered at feeding centres set up by the colonial government for thousands of impoverished children who were denied food and basic nutrition. Others banded together to establish the first family planning association in Singapore, convinced that families should have no more children than they could feed, clothe and educate.

Women recreated an identity for themselves by setting up alumni associations (such as Nanyang Girls' Alumni), recreational groups (Girls' Sports Club) race-based groups (Kamala Club), religious groups (Malay Women's Welfare Association), housewives' groups (Inner Wheel of the Rotary Club), professional groups (Singapore Nurses' Association), national groups (Indonesian Ladies Club) and mutual help groups (Cantonese Women's Mutual Help Association).

One association, however, stood out amidst the post-war euphoria – the Singapore Council of Women (SCW). This was a group energised by its vision of uniting Singapore's diverse women's groups across race, language, nationality and religion in its fight for female enfranchisement. Looking back at the history of the women's rights movement in Singapore, it would not be an overstatement to claim that the SCW marked the awakening of Singapore women to a new and heightened consciousness of what they could achieve.

By defining clear goals, organising working groups, enlisting public support, and engaging the media, government and the international community, the SCW showed how Singaporean women, hitherto overshadowed and relegated to the fringes of society, would lead the way in changing their status quo.

Dr Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew is a professor at Nanyang Technological University. She has written many books, including *Emergent Lingua Francas* (Routledge, 2009) and *A Sociolinguistic History of Early Identities in Singapore* (Palgrave, 2010). She is past president of AWARE (Association of Women for Action and Research) and UWAS (University Women's Association of Singapore).

(Facing page) In the 1959 Legislative Assembly general election, the People's Action Party was the only political party to campaign openly on the "one man one wife" slogan. As voting had become compulsory by then, women came out in full force on polling day. *Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*
(Below) War heroine Elizabeth Choy (in *cheongsam*) was the president of the Singapore Council of Women's Protem Committee (1951–1952). As president, she helped to unite the diverse women groups in Singapore. *Image reproduced from Lam, J.L., & Chew, P.G.L. (1993). Voices & Choices: The Women's Movement in Singapore (p. 116). Singapore Council of Women's Organisation and Singapore Baha'i Women's Committee. (Call no.: RSING 305.42095957 VOI).*

Origins of the Singapore Council of Women

The seeds of the SCW were sown on 12 November 1951 when a small group of women under the leadership of Shirin Fozdar (see text box below) called a public

SHIRIN FOZDAR: FEMINIST EXTRAORDINAIRE

Shirin Fozdar was born in 1905 in Bombay (now Mumbai), India, to Persian parents. She studied at a Parsi school in Bombay and then at St Joseph's Convent in Panchgani, Maharashtra. After graduating from Elphinstone College, she enrolled at the Royal Institute of Science (both in Mumbai) to study dentistry, where she met her husband, Khodadad Muncherjee Fozdar, a doctor. When the couple arrived in Singapore in 1950, polygamy was a common and accepted practice.

As Secretary-General of the Singapore Council of Women between 1952 and 1961, Fozdar was the "brains" and public face of the women's rights group. Inspired by the Baha'i principle that men and women are equal in status, Fozdar had begun the fight for the emancipation of women in India when she was just a teenager.

Her involvement in the women's movement in India culminated in her nomination in 1934 as the country's representative at the All Asian Women's Conference on women's rights at the League of Nations in Geneva. In 1941, Fozdar delivered peace lectures to the riot-torn Indian city of Ahmedabad on the instructions of Mahatma Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement against British rule, who called her "his daughter".

Fozdar passed away from cancer on 2 February 1992 in Singapore, leaving behind three sons and two daughters; her husband had died in 1958. Her personal collection comprising newspaper clippings, letters, correspondences, minutes of meetings, receipts and invoices are on loan to the National Library Board for digitisation by her son Jamshed. These are found in the library's Jamshed & Parvati Fozdar Collection.

Shirin Fozdar was the Secretary-General of the Singapore Council of Women between 1952 and 1961. Strongly believing that women are equal to men, she had begun the fight for the emancipation of women in India when she was just a teenager. *Image reproduced from Ong, R. (2000). Shirin Fozdar: Asia's Foremost Feminist (cover). Singapore: Rose Ong. (Call no.: RSING 297.93092 ONG).*

meeting to discuss the formation of an organisation that would champion women's rights in Singapore. Thirty prominent women in the community met, including Elizabeth Choy, Vilasini Menon, and Municipal Commissioners Mrs Robert Eu (nee Phyllis Chia) and Amy Laycock (see Note 2).

The women agreed that despite the fine work done by the Young Women's Christian Association, the Social Welfare Department and the Malay Women's Welfare Association, their "admirable work could not ameliorate the legal disabilities under which women have been suffering and which were the root causes of many of the social evils".[3]

Accordingly, Fozdar called for the setting up of a new organisation that would unite the women of Singapore and would not "overlap [with] the work and activities of the existing social welfare organisations, but go to the root causes of all the social evils that exist and handicap the progress of women towards their emancipation and their enjoyment of equal rights...".[4]

Taking advantage of the politically conducive climate, the SCW was inaugurated on 4 April 1952, barely five months after that first meeting mooted by Fozdar. The first executive committee (with Fozdar as Secretary-General and Choy as President) comprised mainly members drawn from the main women's groups of the period, including the YWCA. Altogether there were seven Chinese, four Indians, two Malays, one Indonesian and one Briton – a composition that would not change much over the next 10 years. This racial mix in turn reflected the composition of the rank-and-file SCW membership; the majority were Chinese, followed by Malays, Indians, Eurasians and Europeans.

An International Sisterhood

Influenced by two of its members – Winnifred Holmes, the overseas representative of the Women's Council of the United Kingdom in Singapore and V.M. West, a former member of Britain's National Council of Women – one of the first things the SCW did was to affiliate itself with leading overseas women's rights groups, such as the International Council of Women (ICW), the National Council of Women in Great Britain, the National Council for Civil Liberties in London, and the British Commonwealth League.[5]

Viewing itself as part of a network of a worldwide confederation of women, the SCW kept abreast with world affairs and lobbied for women's rights through letter and telegram lobbies. When British women petitioned the House of Commons on 9 March 1954 to demand for "equal pay for equal work", the SCW sent a telegram of support. When the United Nations Economic and Social Council registered the Convention on the Status of Women on 7 July 1954, the SCW alerted the local press.[6] When Egyptian feminist Doria Shafik went on a hunger strike in March 1954 to seek voting rights for the women of her country, the SCW sent a telegram to General Muhammed Neguib of Egypt asking him to consider her demands.[7]

Closer to home, when Perwari, the Indonesian Women's Association, marched to Indonesian Prime Minister Ali Sastroamidjojo's office demanding the abolition of polygamy and child marriages in December 1953, the SCW extended its support.[8] When Governor of Singapore Robert Black was transferred to Hong Kong in 1957, the SCW petitioned him to assist the Hong Kong Council of Women in its efforts to change marriage laws in the British colony.[9]

Both Fozdar and the SCW's second president Mrs George Lee (nee Tan Cheng Hsiang) liaised with women's groups in Hong Kong, Vietnam, Cambodia, China and Britain and undertook lecture tours.[10] At the 1958 Afro-Asian Conference in Colombo, Fozdar's criticism of Singapore as an important stop in the trade of Asian women triggered press publicity and caused an uproar with government officials, including Singapore's Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock.[11] The SCW had been increasingly concerned about prostitution in Singapore as well as the rising number of girls and women from Hong Kong and China sold to brothel owners against their will.[12]

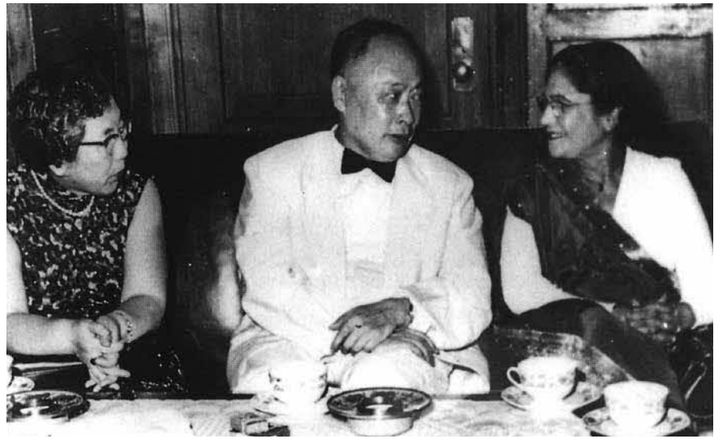
In the Public Eye

Throughout the 1950s, the SCW raised its public profile in Singapore by giving public talks to make its agenda known.[13] But it wasn't all talk and no action. The group developed its own distinct brand of community service. Instead of merely raising funds and working with existing welfare organisations, the SCW pioneered several new initiatives that it ran itself.

In February 1953, the SCW set up the first girls' club in Singapore. Money was raised and a suitable site at Joo Chiat Welfare Centre was found. Equipment such as typewriters and sewing machines were donated, and SCW members recruited to teach English, cooking, sewing and self-defence. The club proved so popular that 200 girls registered on the first day, forcing the SCW to transfer some classes to Tanjong Katong Girls' School.[14]

Another task the SCW pioneered was the setting up of crèches in factories in 1952. Noticing that large numbers of working women were finding it difficult to raise their children with full-time jobs, they appealed to factories that employed more than 100 women – such as Lee Rubber Co Ltd., Malayan Breweries and the Dunlop Rubber Purchasing Co. Ltd. – to consider setting up crèches within their factory premises.[15] SCW members offered advice on how to run these crèches economically "so that children will not be left unattended... while the mother is at work". Unfortunately, while some factories

Mrs George Lee (left) and Mrs Shirin Fozdar (right) of the Singapore Council of Women were invited by the China Women's League to visit the People's Republic of China. They met up with Vice-Premier Marshal Chen Yi in Beijing in 1958. *Image reproduced from Lam, J.L., & Chew, P.G.L. (1993). Voices & Choices: The Women's Movement in Singapore (p. 119). Singapore Council of Women's Organisation and Singapore Baha'i Women's Committee. (Call no.: RSING 305.42095957 VOI).*



The Singapore Council of Women pioneered the setting up of crèches in factories in 1952. Lee Rubber Co. was one of the first companies that agreed to set up such a facility for its employees' children. Chartered Industries of Singapore (pictured here) was one of a handful of companies that followed suit in the late 1960s. *Image reproduced from Lam, J.L., & Chew, P.G.L. (1993). Voices & Choices: The Women's Movement in Singapore (p. 78). Singapore Council of Women's Organisation and Singapore Baha'i Women's Committee. (Call no.: RSING 305.42095957 VOI).*

promised to look into the matter, most were reluctant to take up SCW's offer.

The main focus of the SCW, however, was to provide counselling to the many hapless women who had been deserted or divorced by their husbands. SCW members spent much time liaising with the Department of Social Welfare on marriage counselling, and pressured the Department of Immigration to curb the importation of women from Hong Kong, China and Japan who came to Singapore to become secondary wives. With regard to the vice trade, the SCW proposed establishing a centre where women who wished to leave prostitution could be rehabilitated and taught useful skills to make a new living for themselves; this call, however, fell on deaf ears.[16]

Municipal Commissioner Mrs Robert Eu, who was a founding member of the SCW recalled: "Whenever a mother came to see me in tears that her husband was taking another wife because she was three months pregnant, I had to tell lies to Immigration so as to prevent the man from importing another wife from Shanghai." Lies were necessary because "if I told the truth, they would say I was interfering with Chinese customs, so I had to say he was importing a wife to be a prostitute".[17]

The Fight Against Polygamy

In 1953, the SCW drafted an ordinance, the Prevention of Bigamous Marriages, which it distributed to members of the Legislative Assembly.[18] The bill essentially called for the abolition of bigamous marriages.

This was a time when women were completely subject to customary and religious laws that allowed men to take more than one wife. Divorce laws were lax and women were greatly disadvantaged. While a man could divorce his wife on the slightest pretext, women could not do the same since the wife and children were often financially dependent on the husband as head of the household.

In addition, as most marriages were not properly registered, women were left with few rights for settling grievances in court and often had to resort to government or quasi-government agencies, like the Social Welfare Department and the Chinese Consulate General, for informal arbitration.

However, the bill was roundly criticised by conservative leaders from the Malay, Indian and Chinese communities, all of whom protested against it on the grounds of culture and customary laws.[19] Undaunted, the SCW appealed to the colonial government, calling on the British authorities "to do for the women of Singapore what Lord Bentinck, your countryman, did for the women of India".[20]

In 1954, a petition was sent to Stanley Awbery, a member of the House of Commons in England, decrying "the terrible insecurity of married life in this country" and the opposition the SCW faced in its attempts to institute reforms. The petition prompted Awbery to ask the Secretary of State for the Colonies in the House of Commons to report on the divorce rate in Singapore as well as "the steps which were being taken to tighten the marriage and divorce laws so as to give the women the same marital rights as are enjoyed by women in other parts of the British Commonwealth".[21]

The colonial government was placed in a difficult situation. While concerned with the protection of women in the colony, they were unwilling to interfere in local customs and careful with enacting legislation that would arouse religious controversies. The British authorities advised the SCW to first change the opinions of the men sitting on the Muslim Advisory Board (MAB) with regard to the rampant practice of polygamy, the high divorce rate and the many instances of girls under 16 years of age who had been divorced multiple times in the community.

Following this advice, the SCW began to petition the MAB for reforms. Thus began in 1953 a series of correspondences between the SCW and the MAB, the local body responsible for advising the government on social, cultural, economic and religious matters pertaining to Muslims.[22]

In 1953, SCW's Muslim sub-committee members, many of whom had joined anonymously "for fear of being divorced" by their husbands, produced a handbill that was distributed to various *kampongs*. Quoting from the Quran, the handbill argued that monogamy, rather than polygamy, was the natural state of affairs:

> "And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice [between them] then [marry] only one or what your right hand possesses [i.e. females taken as prisoners of war]; this is more proper that you may not deviate from the right course."[23]

However, the police quickly put a stop to the distribution of these handbills for fear of serious repercussions (Shirin Fodzar had already been threatened with murder on two occasions).

In 1955, the SCW wrote to General (and to be president) Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, then the dominant force in Arab politics, imploring him to rescue Muslim women all over the world and to legislate for monogamous marriage, so that other Muslim countries could follow in Egypt's footsteps.[24]

Aware that marriage laws in the Federation of Malaya were more flexible and that Malay men wishing to avoid Singapore's stricter laws could make use of the loophole and get married in Johor, the SCW began to include the Federation in their agenda. In November 1955, a petition was also sent to all the Sultans in the Malay states.

A series of talks was undertaken by SCW committee members between 1955

and 1957 in the town halls of Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Ipoh, Taiping and Muar.[25] Fozdar's rallying cry that "shame and misery are forced on Muslim women in Malaya in the name of God and religion"[26] at one of these talks won her many supporters as well as opponents.

Another reason the SCW took its fight across the border was because it was fired by its ambition to establish a Malayan Women's Council (which would include Singapore in its make-up). Although *The Malay Mail* reported that Shirin Fozdar and the SCW had "a rapidly increasing following throughout Malaya and Singapore and not from the womenfolk only",[27] it criticised "her programme for a Malayan Women's Council... as revolutionary in its way as that of the most extreme nationalists in Malaya".[28]

Nevertheless, the seeds had been planted: a meeting of the UMNO Kaum Ibu (Women's Section of the United Malay National Organisation) in 1958 moved a resolution that concrete steps should be taken to curb the high divorce rates and that divorced women should be given alimony.[29] A National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO) in Malaya also took root in 1963 with the express aim of raising the status of women by fighting for, among other things, reforms in marriage and divorce laws.

These developments placed pressure on the conservative MAB in Singapore for reforms and to agree to most of SCW's demands as stipulated in the Muslim Ordinance of 1957.

FOUR OBJECTIVES OF SCW

The SCW was a broad-based organisation with four main objectives:

- affiliation with other women's organisations in Singapore;
- furthering the cultural, educational, economic, moral and social status of women in Singapore;
- ensuring through legislation, if necessary, justice to all women and to further their welfare as embodied in the Declaration of Human Rights Charter;
- facilitating and encouraging friendship, understanding and cooperation among women of all races, religions and nationalities in Singapore.

Reference

The Constitution of the SCW, Registrar of Societies, 1952.

The Women's Charter of 1961

Between 1955 and 1959, the SCW lobbied various political parties in Singapore to address the injustices faced by women, arguing that "the attainment of independence will remain an idle dream if the men in this country do not rise to generous heights to grant that independence to their own kith and kin – the women of the country".[30]

While leaders of several political parties jostling for power – this was the tumultuous period before the British acceded to Singapore's request for internal self-government in 1959 – were sympathetic to SCW's cause, they felt that putting it down as party policy could cost them votes in future elections due to its controversial nature.[31] However, the People's Action Party (PAP), under pressure from members of its Women's League – many of whom were young, Chinese educated and markedly socialist in their ideals – took the strongest stand on women's rights.

Launched in 1956 under the leadership of Chan Choy Siong, a pioneer female politician, the PAP Women's League adopted SCW's 1952 slogan of "one man one wife", as part of its anti-colonial manifesto.[32] The first big event organised by the league was the celebration of International Women's Day on 8 March 1956.

The rally was held at four places simultaneously and attended by more than 2,000 people, most of whom were trade unionists and Chinese school students.[33] Women leaders from all walks of life were invited to celebrate the occasion. The SCW's representative was Shirin Fozdar, who urged the frenzied crowd to support the abolition of polygamy. On the same day, a resolution was passed by the Women's League in support of the principle of monogamy (and subsequently moved during the PAP's annual general meeting in 1957).

Thus, the PAP became the only political party to campaign openly on the "one man one wife" slogan. The extent to which the adoption of women's rights contributed to the PAP's unexpected landslide victory in the 1959 general election that launched Singapore as a fully self-governing state should not be underestimated.[34] Women came out in full force on polling day because voting was now compulsory. The party's clear victory – it won 43 of the 51 seats contested – and its subsequent control of the Legislative Assembly meant that Singapore society was now prepared to accept the idea of civil rights for women. As a result, the long-drawn-out controversy over the issue of polygamy and child marriages finally came to an abrupt end.

It took two years before the Legislative Assembly passed the Women's Charter Bill on 24 May 1961 – with the ordinance coming into force on 15 September 1961 – finally bringing to a climax SCW's decade-long fight for women's rights. The Charter provided that the only form of marriage permitted would be monogamous, whether the rites were civil, Christian or customary. Women could now sue their husbands for adultery and bigamy, and receive both a fair hearing and justice under the law. The Charter strengthened the law relating to the registration of marriages and divorce, and the maintenance of wives and children, and also contained provisions regarding offences committed against women and girls.

Members of the Women's League of the People's Action Party. The party canvassed on the Singapore Council of Women's 1952 slogan, "one man one wife", during the International Women's Day rally in March 1956. *Courtesy of Phyllis Chew.*

Some of the committee members of the Singapore Council of Women, 1957. *Image reproduced from Lam, J.L., & Chew, P.G.L. (1993). Voices & Choices: The Women's Movement in Singapore (p. 90). Singapore Council of Women's Organisation and Singapore Baha'i Women's Committee. (Call no.: RSING 305.42095957 VOI).*

Although the Charter did not apply to Muslim women, its promulgation forced the Muslim community to look into ways of further improving the status of Muslim women through an amendment of the Muslim Ordinance of 1957. In 1960, the Muslim Syariah Court was empowered to order husbands to provide maintenance to their divorced wives until these women remarried or died. Getting divorced was no longer a simple process for Muslim men, and they were not allowed to take another wife if they were unable to show proof of their financial means. Although the SCW was unable to introduce monogamy in Muslim marriages, it was, nonetheless, able to limit the practice of polygamy.

The End of the Singapore Council of Women

Having achieved her mission, Shirin Fozdar left Singapore in 1961 to set up the Santhinam Girls' school in Yasohorn, northeast Thailand, an impoverished area where rural girls would have opportunities to learn livelihood skills instead of resorting to prostitution.

Deprived of Fodzar's vision and dynamism, the SCW languished in the 1960s under a new political climate that saw grassroots organisations, such as the People's Association, taking over many civic activities that were once left to NGOs. Eventually, left without a purpose and mission, the SCW was deregistered in 1971.

The SCW's legacy goes far beyond the successful lobbying that led to the Women's Charter of 1961. It blazed an entirely new path for women after World War II, seeing women as being equal to men and lifting women's groups in Singapore beyond fundraising, social networking and self-improvement courses.

Rather than accept that women could only play supporting roles to men in society, the SCW confronted the injustices faced by all women in Singapore. From the outset, the SCW was single-minded in the pursuit of its goals, vociferous in its demands, wide-ranging in its call for reforms benefiting women, and forward-looking in its agenda. In short, the SCW was responsible for the awakening of Singapore women to a new consciousness of themselves as humans with a purpose and a goal.

Notes

1 SCW to Chinese Advisory Board, 23 August 1954; SCW to Secretary for Chinese Affairs, 11 November 1954.
2 The first two women elected to the Municipal Commission were Mrs Robert Eu (nee Phyllis Chia) in 1949 and Miss Amy Laycock in 1950. The Municipal Commission was renamed the City Council in 1951 when Singapore acquired city status.
3 Minutes of Protem Committee, 20 November 1951.
4 Minutes of Protem Committee, 20 November 1951.
5 SCW to President, International Council of Women 6 January 1959; YWCA to SCW 31 May 1954, Minutes of the SCW 9 September 1953.
6 *The Singapore Free Press*, 15 July 1954.
7 SCW to General Neguib of Cairo, March 1954.
8 SCW to Indonesian Women's Association, Djarkarta, 26 December 1953.
9 Minutes of the SCW, 30 July 1958.
10 Annual report of the SCW, 1954 and 1960; *The Sunday Times*, 17 August 1958; *The Singapore Free Press*, 8 August 1959; *The Straits Times*, 10 August 1959; *The Sunday Times*, 6 September 1959, *The Straits Times*, 8 September 1959.
11 *The Sunday Times*, 17 August 1958; Minutes of the SCW 1 June 1957, 18 November 1957 and 19 March 1958.
12 SCW to Minister for Labour and Welfare, 16 September 1957; Minister for Labour and Welfare to SCW, 25 September 1957. See also Lai, A.E. (1986). *Peasants, proletarians and prostitutes: A preliminary investigation into the work of Chinese women in colonial Malaya* (pp. viii, 115). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. (Call no.: RSING 331.409595104 LAI)
13 *The Straits Times*, 29 April 1952; *The Straits Times*, 2 March 1952; *The Straits Times*, 6 August 1957; *The Singapore Free Press*, 30 August 1957; *The Straits Times*, 26 July 1958; *The Singapore Free Press*, 15 October 1959; *The Sunday Times*, 2 August 1959; see also Rev S.M. Thevathasan to SCW, 27 February 1952 and Methodist Fellowship Group to SCW, n.d.
14 Muriel Blythe to the SCW, 17 February 1953; *The Straits Times*, 2 April 1953; *The Singapore Free Press*, 16 February 1953; *The Straits Times*, 20 February 1953; Minutes of the SCW, 19 September 1953, 20 October 1953 and 16 September 1957.
15 Lee Seng Gee to SCW, 2 July 1952; Dunlop Rubber to SCW, 3 July 1952; Malayan Breweries to SCW, 14 July 1952.
16 *The Singapore Free Press*, 30 July 1958; Minutes of the SCW, 16 October 1957, 18 November 1957 and 3 January 1958.
17 Interview with Mrs Robert Eu, 11 November 1992.
18 See Appendix A in Chew, P.G.L. (1994, March). The Singapore Council of Women and the women's movement. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *25* (1), 112–140, p. 139.
19 Minutes of the SCW, 5 January 1954.
20 SCW to the Governor-in-Council, 3 June 1957.
21 House of Commons, Reply from Hopkinson to Awbery, 27 January 1954; Letter of Awberry to SCW, 21 January 1954.
22 Minutes of the SCW, 6 August 1953; SCW to MAB, 14 December 1953 and 19 March 1954; MAB to SCW, 18 December 1953.
23 Handbill distributed by the SCW, c. December 1953/January 1954. See also Minutes of SCW, 8 January 1954, 12 January 1954 and 9 February 1954.
24 SCW to President Nasser of Egypt, 8 September 1955.
25 *Borneo Bulletin*, 19 March 1954; *The Malay Mail*, 23 May 1955; *The Straits Times*, 20 April 1958; *The Malay Mail*, 25 July 1960.
26 *The Straits Times*, 5 February 1958; *The Weekender*, 7 March 1958.
27 *The Malay Mail*, 25 April 1958.
28 *The Malay Mail*, 30 May 1955.
29 *The Straits Times*, 7 June 1958.
30 *The Malay Mail*, 9 July 1955; *The Weekender*, 4 November 1955.
31 J.M. Jumabhoy to Shirin Fozdar. 26 April 1958; Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock to Shirin Fozdar, 22 March 1956; SCW to Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock, 3 February 1958; SCW to Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock, 6 July 1955; See also *The Malay Mail*, 9 July 1955.
32 Interviews with Dr Toh Chin Chye, 27 January 1993; and S. Rajaratnam, 1 February 1993.
33 *The Straits Times*, 9 March 1956.
34 Interview with Ong Pang Boon, 27 January 1993.

AN ODE TO TWO WOMEN

Acclaimed poet and playwright **Robert Yeo** pays tribute to his daughter and a noted author in chapter two of his work-in-progress sequel to his memoir *Routes*.

(Top left) Robert Yeo's daughter Sha Min, who was born on 15 February 1976. *Courtesy of Robert Yeo.*
(Top centre) Robert Yeo in a pensive pose in 1966 when he was 26 years old.
(Top right) Catherine Lim is regarded as the doyenne of Singaporean writers. *Little Ironies: Stories of Singapore* (1978), which is her first published book, earned her many accolades and is an all-time bestseller. *Courtesy of Marshall Cavendish Editions.*

My wife Esther reminded me that it was a miracle, considering what she did in Bali in June 1975. It was our first visit to the famed island and we chose to stay in Kuta. It was all sea, sand, waves and coconut trees. We even asked a boy to climb a tree to pluck coconuts for us to drink the water. There were no buildings on the beach.

The surfing waves were not suitable for swimming but we found ways to enjoy ourselves. We allowed the waves to toss and roll us onto the sand, taking repeated tumbles, sometimes all shook-up and even painfully so. We did this twice a day over three to four days.

We loved one particular item and bought it, a beautifully carved full-length 1½-foot sculpture of the Hindu goddess Sita, made from tree bark and which weighed 10 pounds. On the way home, I was feverish and Esther had to carry the piece back to Singapore all by herself. Back home, she too became feverish a few days later and discovered she was pregnant. Wow, we thought, how lucky she was, what with all the tumbles she took in Kuta and carrying a heavy piece of sculpture, that nothing happened to her baby, our baby!

I became a father on 15 February 1976. My daughter Sha Min was born in Kandang Kerbau Hospital. There were two facts remarkable about her birth: the first that it was long and difficult, needing 20 hours of labour; and second, at the time of her birth, the government public maternity hospital held the record of delivering the most number of babies per year in the world. This record, which the hospital held from 1966 to 1976, may have later contributed to the government's fear of overpopulation and prompted it to regulate birth as an official policy.

In the midst of her long labour when her pain became unbearable, my wife asked a nurse about epidural intervention and was confronted by the cold question from one of the nurses, "Who told you about epidural?" So the birth was natural, but the experience certainly did not make her feel she would like another baby in the near future.

Sha Min (善敏) means kind and alert. Esther was adamant that she did not want her first daughter to have a name that has a *Nonya* syllable, such as Gek, Geok, Poh, Neo, as my mother had lined up traditional names for her first grand-daughter. I agreed and so we consulted a Chinese almanac that took into account time, date of birth and gender, a process managed by Esther's late father, who is Cantonese.

What was it like to be a father for the first time and a daughter as the firstborn? 1976 was the year of the dragon and a traditional Chinese father would expect a boy who could continue to bear the Yeo surname.

I wrote a poem about it.

A Dragon for the Family

For My Daughter Sha Min

Hushed, we hovered between rabbit and dragon,
Between a whitish squeak and flaming breath.
When you declined to be a rabbit, like
Your father, the hush dissolved, and I was pleased
Knowing how auspicious the dragon is.
I was prepared to wait, but it's lovely
To be scorched so soon, as long as you will
Promise not to burn our house to the ground

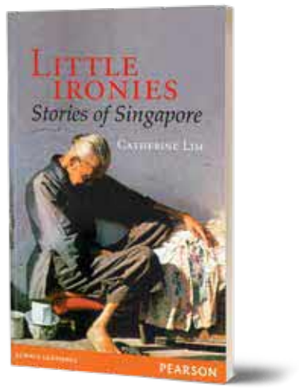
Girl or boy, your sex didn't really matter.
I'm not the traditional Chinese father
Who needs a son to continue his line
And swell his clan. My brothers may line up,
And my clan of two-and-a-half million,
Though small, is big enough for me, for us.
I don't know whether small is beautiful,
But since we have no choice, let's make it so.

Sha Min, sweetheart, you know this prayer
I offer you is really not a prayer as
You are born in a good year in a good place,
The prospect of water-rationing notwithstanding...
Say rather that I'm offering you a hope,
One of the many hopes; and so as not to seem
Arbitrary, let there be three, yes three,
As this is the year of the three-clawed dragon.

I quote the poem fully to demonstrate the disjunct between the name and the character the baby is supposed to take on. Sha Min did not turn out to be dragonish at all; in fact, she grew up to be a very agreeable and even-tempered girl.

In addition, quoting the poem entirely also shows the pains I took to write in such a way that avoided the obvious influence of the great poem by W.B. Yeats, *A Prayer for My Daughter*. Hopefully, the Chinese mythological references will differentiate my poem from his.

In the process of collecting and editing short stories for an anthology of Singaporean writing from 1940 to 1977, I came across the stories of Catherine Lim. Subsequently I met her.



Catherine Lim's collection of 17 short stories, *Little Ironies: Stories of Singapore*, was first published in 1978 by Heinemann Southeast Asia in the Writing in Asia Series. It was used as a text for the GCE N-Level examination in 1987. In 2015, *The Business Times selected Little Ironies* as one of the Top 10 English Singapore books for the period 1965–2015.

Catherine was a young teacher of English Language and English Literature in a junior college. She had lively, sparkling eyes, and was very fair and slim in a way that fitted the *cheongsam* she wore. I told her I liked the few stories of hers that I had read in magazines and newspapers, and asked if she could show me more.

A few days later, a few stories arrived and I was struck first by their appearance. Typed and marked up with pencilled or inked corrections, the A4-sized papers were crumpled, yellowed and dog-eared, evidence that they had been kept in drawers, read, moved-about and all but forgotten.

Secondly, I thought the stories were excellent as they had a sharp, satirical eye for human foibles and detail, showing a society in the throes of transiting from tradition to modernity. I thought, "How exciting it would be if she had enough for a single volume of just her stories", and asked her to send more.

I had read about seven to eight stories, but they were not enough to make up a book. She did send more, altogether 17 stories. I forwarded them to John Watson, the genial, tall and bearded Englishman who was the General Manager of Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd, which had an office in Jalan Pemimpin.

Together with Leon Comber, based in Hong Kong, John had just started to publish titles in the Writing in Asia Series and he was pleased with Catherine's stories. Consistent with editorial practice, he sent her stories to the eminent English author, Austin Coates, who lived in the British colony; Coates was the author, among many books, of one of the best biographies of Jose Rizal, the Filipino doctor, revolutionary and national hero, and he gave her stories a ringing preview. John showed me what Coates wrote:

> "They are riveting; there is no other word for them. In their Singapore Chinese context they rank with the best of Guy de Maupassant and the Alphonse Daudet. Each story has the same sureness of observation, clarity in the presentation of character, and finely judged economy both of words and emotion.... Her knowledge of Chinese ways of living and habits of thought is masterly. It may sound absurd to say this, but so few people are able, as she is, to draw back and look at it objectively. She exposes men and women with a mixture of complacent ruthlessness and compassion."

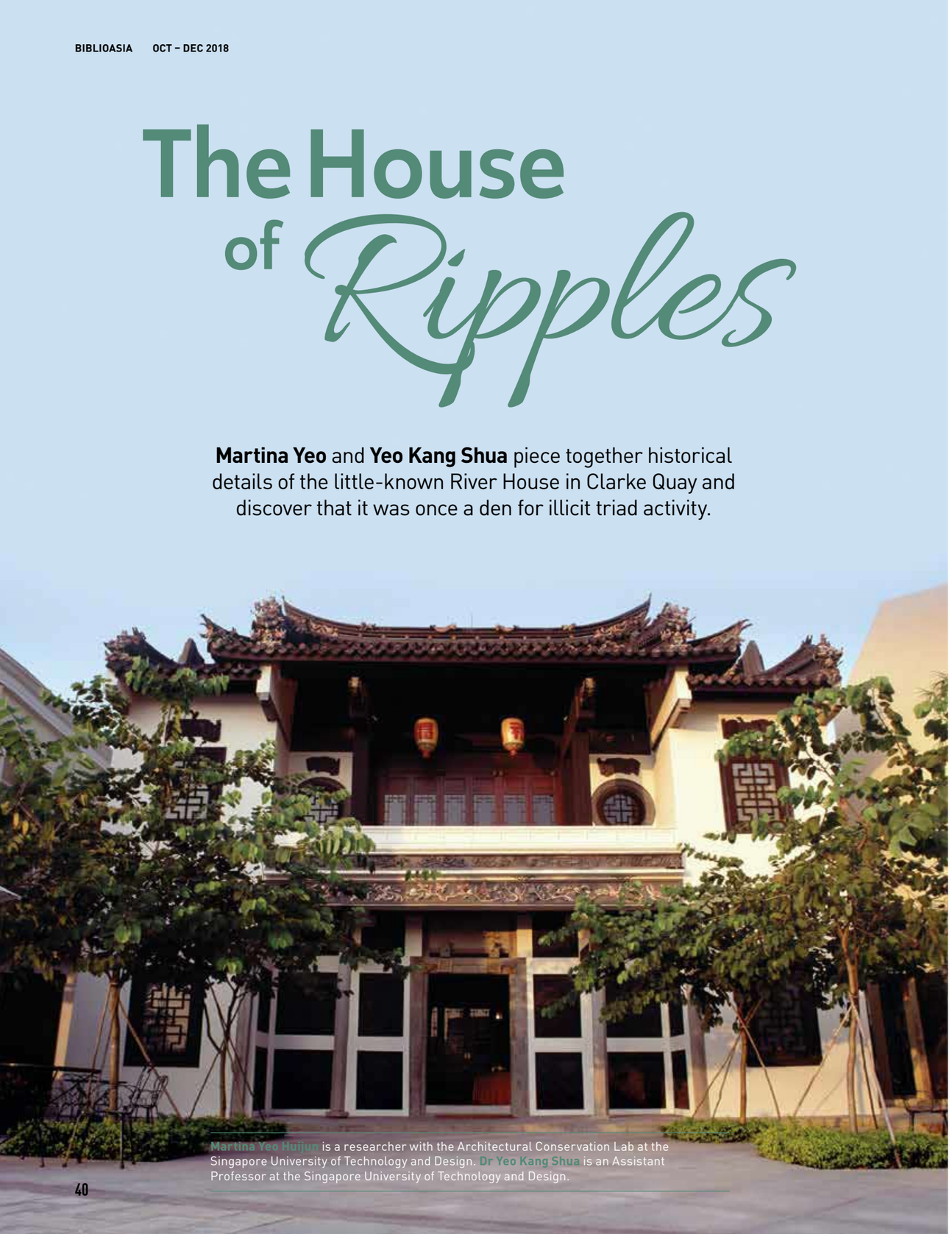
Catherine Lim's stories were published in a book entitled *Little Ironies* in 1978 to much acclaim. It marked the beginning of her remarkable career in English writing in Singapore. ♦

Robert Yeo's memoir, *Routes: A Singaporean Memoir 1940–75*, was published by Ethos Books in 2011. Volume 2 of his memoir is targeted for publication in 2019. *Routes* is available for reference and loan at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library and selected public libraries respectively (Call nos.: RSING S822 YEO and S822 YEO).

Robert Yeo, born 1940, is best known for his poems and plays published in *The Singapore Trilogy* (plays) and *The Best of Robert Yeo* (poems). He has also written in other genres, including essays, libretto for opera and edited anthologies of Singapore short stories. His most recent work is the play *The Eye of History* (2016). Volume 1 of his memoir, *Routes: A Singaporean Memoir 1940–75*, was published in 2011.

The House of Ripples

Martina Yeo and **Yeo Kang Shua** piece together historical details of the little-known River House in Clarke Quay and discover that it was once a den for illicit triad activity.



Martina Yeo Huijun is a researcher with the Architectural Conservation Lab at the Singapore University of Technology and Design. Dr Yeo Kang Shua is an Assistant Professor at the Singapore University of Technology and Design.

(Facing page) In 1993, River House was restored – sadly with some of its original Teochew characteristics lost in the process – and rented out as a commercial space. *Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority.*
(Left) Portait of Tan Yeok Nee (陈旭年), a wealthy Teochew gambier and pepper merchant, 1890. Until very recently River House was believed to have been built by Tan in the 1880s. At around the same period, Tan also ordered the construction of another elaborate Chinese-style mansion along present-day Clemenceau Avenue, now a national monument known as the House of Tan Yeok Nee. *Boden-Kloss Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Walking along the Singapore River – where godowns (warehouses) lining its banks were a ubiquitous sight in the 19th and 20th centuries – one building strikes the casual observer as being atypical. Designed in the southern Chinese style with a prominent tiled roof and a curved ridge embellished with ceramic shards, the building is stylistically different from the others in the area. This is River House along Clarke Quay, poetically known as "House of Ripples" or *Lianyi Xuan* (涟漪轩) in Chinese.

Until very recently, River House was believed to have been built in the 1880s by Tan Yeok Nee (陈旭年), a wealthy Teochew gambier and pepper merchant. The house is a two-storey building with its front entrance facing the Singapore River. Unlike traditional southern Chinese mansions, however, the house is devoid of a detached entrance gateway that aligns with the edge of the street and typically leads to a forecourt.

Around the same period, Tan Yeok Nee also ordered the construction of another elaborate Chinese-style mansion along present-day Clemenceau Avenue – which has since been preserved as a national monument and is known as the House of Tan Yeok Nee. Given the geographical proximity of the two dwellings (they are only about one kilometre apart) and the similar architectural styles and approximate construction periods they shared, one wonders why Tan built the two residences so close to each other. More interestingly, it calls to question whether River House was even built by Tan in the first place.

River House has had different addresses over the course of its history: at first Municipal No. 3 North Campong Malacca (also concurrently as Warehouse No. 3 North Campong Malacca) in the late 19th century, followed by 13 Clarke Quay, and today, 3A River Valley Road. Its original address and location within the traditional commercial and godown district suggests that River House served as or was perhaps even originally built as a warehouse, as opposed to a private residence. An examination of the land leases and architectural history of the building will shed light on its owners, design, purpose and subsequent development.

Shady Beginnings

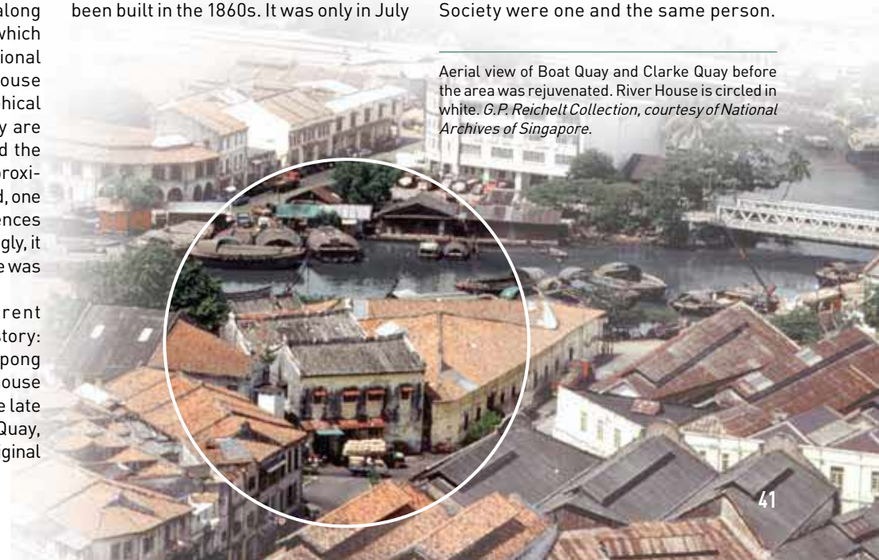
River House occupied eight parcels of land, five of which form the grounds of the main building. The land leases for these five plots were issued by the British East India Company to two different people between 23 July 1851 and 1 November 1855. The leases for the remaining three plots, which stretched from the main building to the now expunged vehicular road known as Clarke Quay, were issued only on 26 October 1881. All were 99-year leases.

An 1863 photograph taken by Sachtler & Co. and another dating from the mid-1860s show the land being occupied by a two-storey masonry building and several smaller single-storey houses. Surrounding the structures were swampy grounds with houses on stilts clearly visible on the opposite river bank.

The two-storey building in these photographs cannot be River House as it is stylistically different in form and much smaller than the building we see today. In fact, River House had not yet been built in the 1860s. It was only in July 1870 that the five land leases of the main house were consolidated under a single ownership comprising three individuals. This possibly marks the earliest date of construction. Given that the earliest building plans of private buildings held by the National Archives of Singapore date from 1884 and that no original building plan of River House has ever been found, it is possible to surmise that the house was likely built sometime between 1870s and 1883.

What's more, there is no indication from archival records that River House was ever owned or leased by Tan Yeok Nee. The three owners in 1870 – Choa Moh Choon (蔡茂春), Lee Ah Hoey (李亚会) and Neo Ah Loy – had interesting backgrounds and were likely unrelated to each other as they had different family names.[1] The probable identities of two of these owners, however, provide a clue as to what the house could have been used for.

From as early as 1854 until his death on 10 January 1880, a man named Choa Moh Choon was known to be the headman of the notorious Ghee Hok Society (also known as Ghee Hok Kongsi; 义福公司). Based on evidence, such as the date of Choa's death (as indicated in the *Straits Settlements Government Gazette* and various land transactions), it is highly likely that the owner of the land in 1870 where River House was subsequently built and the headman of the Ghee Hok Society were one and the same person.



Aerial view of Boat Quay and Clarke Quay before the area was rejuvenated. River House is circled in white. *G.P. Reichelt Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

The first and second storey plans as well as the longitudinal section of the River House redrawn from a 1919 Ho Ho Biscuit Factory building alteration plan. The floor plans show the *sidianjin* (四点金) or "four-points of gold" layout of the River House, with its two internal courtyards and a pair of *huoxiang* (火巷) or fire alleys on either side. The longitudinal section shows the *tailiang* style (抬梁式) roof truss system used for the building. The alteration plan also proposed to cover up the two internal courtyards. *Drawings by Chen Jingwen.*

Choa was born in the Teo Yeo (潮阳) district of the Teochew prefecture (Guangdong province) in China and arrived in Singapore in 1838 when he was around 19 years old. His official occupation was listed as "Doctor and Theatre Manager" after it became compulsory for secret societies and their headmen to register themselves.[2] In actual fact, Choa was known to be involved in illegal activities. He operated brothels and framed a man who wanted to leave the Ghee Hok Society, causing the latter to be imprisoned for two years.

After Choa's death, the aforementioned Lee Ah Hoey (one of the other title deed owners) became the society's new headman. On official records, Lee was a "Rice Shop Keeper and Manager of Theatre", but in reality, he was better known as the ringleader of the failed 1887 attempt to murder William A. Pickering, the first Chinese Protector of Singapore.[3] As part of Pickering's job was to stamp out Chinese triad activity in the colony, he made many enemies in the community.

Lee was subsequently tried and banished from the Straits Settlements on 12 October 1887, leaving the leadership of the Ghee Hok Society with no clear successor.[4] Before Lee left Singapore, he appointed one Lee Yong Kiang (李永坚) to handle matters pertaining to River House. An Indenture of Mortgage dated 7 February 1890 between Lee Ah Hoey and Hermann Naeher of Lindau, Germany, indicates that Lee Ah Hoey was purportedly residing in China at the time the document was signed and that Lee Yong Kiang was acting on his behalf. Sometime between 7 February 1890 and 1892, Lee Ah Hoey had surreptitiously returned to Singapore. He was subsequently caught and deported for life in October 1892.

As for the third owner Neo Ah Loy, little is known about him. When the five land parcels were mortgaged in August 1873, the names listed on the mortgage document were Choa Moh Choon, Lee Ah Hoey and Leang Ah Teck (梁亚藉), suggesting that Neo Ah Loy might also have gone by the name Leang Ah Teck. This is not an improbable supposition given that Neo and Leang are Teochew transliterations of the family name *Liang* (梁).

A "Secret Society" House

Since two of its three owners were headmen of the infamous Ghee Hok Society, could River House have been or intended to be its new *kongsi* (secret society) house? Or was it purely coincidental that they were joint owners?

The Ghee Hok Society was predominantly made up of Teochews. It is believed to have been founded around 1854 by those involved in the "Small-Dagger" (厦门小刀会) rebellion in Amoy (Xiamen), China, who fled to Singapore after the movement failed. The Ghee Hok was one of several societies that made up the Ghee Hin Kongsi in Singapore – where it was variously known as the Heaven and Earth Society (Tiandi Hui; 天地会) and the Triad – whose main objective was to overthrow the Manchus and restore the Ming dynasty in China. Despite being part of the same umbrella organisation, the Ghee Hok Society engaged in frequent clashes with rival Ghee Hin triads.

In the decades leading up to the 1880s, the membership of the Ghee Hok Society grew from 800 in 1860 to 14,487 in 1889, the year before it was dissolved. Society members included those involved in illicit businesses as well as ordinary folks such as small-time hawkers and peddlers. Before 1886, the society's registered address was 25-4 Carpenter Street, during which time it frequently clashed openly with rival societies in the area – such as the Say Tan (姓陈), Say Lim (姓林) and Hai San (海山).

On official records at least, there is no reference to River House serving as the Ghee Hok Society's headquarters before 1886. From 1886 until its dissolution in 1890, the society was located at 3 River Valley Road, which was very near the junction of River Valley Road and Hill Street. It is possible that the leaders of the society were searching for a new site near Clarke Quay, presumably for easier access to the port facilities of the Singapore River. Both the official old and new headquarters – first at Carpenter Street and then at River Valley Road – were very small units and seemed rather unbefitting for such a large society. If this was the case, River House could have served as the unofficial headquarters of the Ghee Hok Society.

In December 1880, an earlier loan that was taken up before Choa Moh Choon's death, and which used the house as collateral, was repaid in full. The house was then transferred to Lee Ah Hoey, Teng Seng Chiang (郑成章) and Koh Hak Yeang (许学贤) at the behest of the two remaining original owners, Lee Ah Hoey and Neo Ah Loy. It is likely that the legal owners of the house might have held the property unofficially in trust for the Ghee Hok Society. As we shall see later, this was indeed the case for a subsequent group of owners of River House.

Teochew Influences

What we do know for certain is that the predominantly Teochew make-up of the Ghee Hok Society is reflected in the architectural style of River House. The building has a Teochew *sidianjin* (四点金) or "four-points of gold" layout, with two internal courtyards flanked by a pair of *huoxiang* (火巷) or fire alleys.

Traditionally, Teochew houses, especially the more elaborate mansions, contain side wings or *congcuo* (从厝) that extend beyond the fire alleys. The alleys serve as physical breaks that prevent fire, should one break out, from spreading easily from one part of the house to another. Additionally, these alleys provide privacy to extended families living in different sections of the house.

Side wings, however, are noticeably absent in River House. Could the owners have intended to build side wings after they had raised enough money to acquire the adjacent plots of land? Or did the owners foresee the importance of having physical breaks in an area packed cheek-by-jowl with godowns knowing fully well how fires can easily spread?

Regardless, the fire alleys were probably the reason why River House survived a raging fire that engulfed its neighbour at 14 Clarke Quay on 21 August 1920. The fire was so huge that it required 36 firefighters and three fire-fighting machines before it was finally extinguished. The fire alleys, which provided the only escape routes for the occupants of River House, had front and back doors. The back doors opened into Clarke and Read streets, while the front doors opened into the now expunged Clarke Quay road. The main building did not have a back door at the time.

Besides its layout, other features of River House are typically Teochew too. These include the gentle curves of its roof ridges, its structural system as well as the recessed entranceway. The roof ridges are decorated with *qianci* (嵌瓷), or ceramic shard ornamentations, in an array of colours. According to the 1919 building alteration plan showing the proposed alterations to the house, the roof truss system is in the *tailiang* style (抬梁式), which "comprises successive tiers of beams and struts in a transverse direction".[5] The ends of the granite cantilever beams on the front facade, known as *jitou* (屐头), are carved in a highly abstract *chihu* (螭虎) motif. *Chihu* is believed to be one of the nine sons of a dragon or *long* (龙). Such cantilever beams are also characteristic of Teochew architecture.

Fronting the river is the house's recessed entranceway. It is called the *aodumen* (凹肚门) as the layout of the entranceway resembles the Chinese character "凹". In traditional Teochew architecture, the recessed entranceway does not have any openings leading to the outside apart from the main door, with lime-moulded panels or *huisu* (灰塑) taking the place of windows. However, River House has a window on either side of the entranceway. These windows are unlikely to be later additions, as they were already in place by the time the plans for proposed alterations were drawn up in 1918 and 1919.

The centrepiece of the entranceway is a doorway framed with solid granite carved with different motifs. An examination of the geological composition indicate that the granite is possibly of local origin. The motifs include a pair of dragon-fish or *aoyu* (鳌鱼) carved with eyelets known as *diaoliankong* (吊帘孔), which were used for hanging ceremonial banners; a pair of door seals or *menzanyin* (门簪印) as well as a pair of incense stick holders or *chaxiangkong* (插香孔) embellished with a flower-and-vase motif and flanking the entrance. Traces of the green pigment used specifically in Teochew architecture can still be seen in the inscribed grooves of these motifs.

Above the door lintel, the plaque bearing the name of the house is held up by a pair of stone lions known as *biantuo* (匾托). The present pair of *biantuo* found at the house today protrude and appear to be blocking the plaque rather than elevating it; these are new and not the originals. The proportions and style of the new lions are unlike the flatter and rounder style that is typically Teochew.

In addition, the presence of a void between the plaque and the lintel is unique to Teochew architecture. The void and the plaque are currently concealed by the signage for the restaurant that currently occupies the building.

A Gambier Shed

By 1890, with the remaining owners – Teng Seng Chiang and Koh Hak Yeang – having passed away, River House came under the sole ownership of Lee Ah Hoey. As mentioned earlier, he had mortgaged the house in February 1890 to Hermann Naeher, a German who later became an honorary citizen of Lindau in southern Germany.[6]

When Lee defaulted on the mortgage, the house was sold to Arthur William Stiven of Stiven & Co. on 20 June 1891. This took place before Lee was deported for the second time in October 1892. Stiven subsequently

(Below) Close-up photos showing the door seal (*menzanyin*; 门簪印) and its eyelet in the dragon-fish motif with remaining bits of string still tied to it, and one of a pair of incense stick holders or *chaxiangkong* (插香孔) in the flower-and-vase motif flanking the entrance. Traces of the green pigment used specifically in Teochew architecture can still be seen on these structures today. *Courtesy of Yeo Kang Shua.*
(Right) River House has a roof truss system in the *tailiang* style (抬梁式), which is made up of "successive tiers of beams and struts in a transverse direction". This photo shows three cantilever beams on the front elevation of the building: one beam on the first storey and two on the second storey. These beams are known as *jitou* (屐头), and their ends are carved in a highly abstract *chihu* (螭虎) motif. The manner in which the beams are cantilevered is unique to Teochew architecture. *Courtesy of Yeo Kang Shua.*

sold the property to Tan Lock Shuan (陈禄选) on 7 July 1896.[7] It is unclear what the house was used for under Stiven's ownership, although his company was listed as "Merchants and Commission Agents" in the 1893 *Singapore and Straits Directory*, with offices at Boat Quay and Battery Road.[8]

Soon after Tan Lock Shuan acquired the property, he engaged an architect to design and build a gambier shed on the open space in front of the house. This open space made up the remaining three land parcels of River House, which were acquired by Lee Ah Hoey and Teng Seng Chiang in 1881. The shed remained a feature of River House for almost a century until it was demolished in the early 1990s when Clarke Quay was conserved as a heritage area.

Tan was the *kangchu* (港主) or headman of Sungai Machap, a pepper and gambier plantation, in Johor. From the mid-1880s onwards, large tracts of land in Johor were cleared for pepper and gambier plantations, both of which were lucrative cash crops then. The harvested crops were shipped to Singapore for processing and transhipment before being exported to the rest of the world. Tan most probably used the shed at River House for the processing, storage and trading of gambier from his Johor plantations.

The 1896 building plan of the gambier shed is significant as it shows the existence of River House by this date. No demolition of any structures in the open area in front of the main house are indicated on the building plan. It is thus unclear if there were any structures, such as the detached entrance gateway typically found in Chinese mansions, in the open space prior to 1896.

A School Campus

After Tan Lock Shuan passed away on 30 July 1908 without leaving a will, the Supreme Court of the Straits Settlements granted Letters of Administration of his estates to Tan Soo Guat (陈思悦). Three years later, on 26 July 1911, the latter mortgaged River House to Tan Tji Kong for $23,000, a handsome sum at the time. While Tan Soo Guat would make timely payments on the loan's nine-percent interest rate, he had trouble repaying the principal sum. Fortunately, he was able to sell the house on 30 April 1913 for $24,250, which was more than enough to repay the principal sum.

The new group of owners were Leow Chia Heng (廖正兴), Chua Tze Yong (蔡子庸), Ng Siang Chew (黄仙舟) and Low Cheo Chay (刘照青), all prominent leaders of the Teochew community and trustees of Tuan Mong School (端蒙学堂).[9]

Chua also served as the president and vice-president of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce in 1907 and 1908 respectively. He was a wealthy merchant who made his money in the import and export of rice and sugar. Both Chua and Ng were also trustees of Ban See Soon Kongsi (万事顺公司), a small Teochew society formed in May 1847, which made significant contributions to the finances of Tuan Mong School. Low was also a staff of Ban See Soon and managed its estates. Although River House was legally held under their individual capacities, the four men were, in fact, acting for and on behalf of Tuan Mong School.

In July 1913, the school relocated to River House from 52 Hill Street after the landlord sought to increase its rent. During the graduation ceremonies of the third, fourth and fifth student cohorts in December 1914, December 1915 and June 1917 respectively, photographs were taken at the recessed entranceway of the building – to date the first extant close-up photos of the building.

The photos show *huisu* (灰塑) or pargetting work (decorative plastering) on the walls of the recessed entranceway in sets of three panels: upper, middle and lower. These panels were traditionally moulded from oyster-shell lime (贝灰), sometimes with paper fibre added to the mixture to improve its tensile strength and to prevent cracking. The panels were then coloured using fresco painting. By the time the first graduation photo of the third student cohort was taken at River House in 1914, the original panels had been given a whitewash. The steps leading to the house that were once visible in the photos no longer exist today, after the ground in front was raised during restoration work in 1993.

By 1917, River House could no longer accommodate Tuan Mong's rapidly expanding student population and the school's board of management started looking for new premises. On 26 April 1918, the building was sold to Ho Ho Biscuit Factory for $65,000 – more than two-and-a-half times the purchase price just five years earlier – and the school moved to 29 Tank Road.

In 1918 and 1919, Ho Ho Biscuit Factory submitted alteration plans to convert River House into a godown, suggesting that the house was perhaps not originally built to be a warehouse. The alterations included covering up the internal courtyards as well as reinforcements that increased the load capacity of the building. Although Ho Ho Biscuit sold the property in 1946, for the next five decades – from the 1940s to 90s – the different owners of River House continued to use it as a warehouse.

Leaving a Legacy

In 1993, River House was restored – sadly with some of its original Teochew characteristics lost in the process – and rented out as a commercial space (it is currently occupied by the VLV restaurant and lounge).

Despite its prominent location and intricate architecture, the fascinating story behind River House has been buried in the annals of Singapore's history for too long. The evidence drawn from the National Archives of Singapore and other government agencies reveals a building with a somewhat dubious past, but nevertheless one that is intimately intertwined with the social, economic and political conditions of the time.

The location and architecture of River House bear testimony to the importance of the Teochew community in Singapore's early trade, and the refined building traditions they brought from southern China. For nearly 150 years, River House has witnessed the rise and decline of the Singapore River as a trading centre along with various communities who made and lost fortunes along this body of water. Today, River House continues to play a similar role as successive generations recreate their own meanings while the building is repurposed for new functions. ♦

A 1980s photo showing Tan Lock Shuan's gambier shed built in front of River House. Tan was the *kangchu* (港主) or headman of Sungai Machap, a pepper and gambier plantation in Johor. The shed was demolished in the early 1990s when Clarke Quay was conserved as a heritage area. *Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority.*

Graduation photograph of the fifth Tuan Mong School cohort, taken in June 1917, at the recessed entranceway of River House. The panels of pargetting works (decorative plastering) known as *huisu* (灰塑) on the walls of the entranceway were originally moulded from oyster-shell-lime and coloured using fresco painting. The panels had been whitewashed by the time this photo was taken. The steps visible in the photos no longer exist today after the ground in front was raised during restoration in 1993. *Image reproduced from Tuan Mong Collection: Photographs, 1914–1960. (Accession no.: B18977485E)*

Notes

1 Choa Moh Choon was also spelled as Choah Moh Choon, Chua Moh Choon and Chuah Moh Choon. He was also known as Choa Cheng Moh. In addition, Lee Ah Hoey was spelled as Lee Ah Hoy and Li Ah Hoey.

2 Pickering, W.A. (1880, January 26). Report of the Chinese Protectorate, Singapore, for the year 1879 (G.N. 154). *Straits Settlements Government Gazette, 14*(15), p. 228. Singapore: Government Printing Office. Retrieved from BookSG.

3 Pickering, W.A. (1881, April 29). Annual report on the Chinese Protectorate, Singapore, for the year 1880 (G.N. 192). *Straits Settlements Government Gazette, 15*(18), p. 357. Singapore: Government Printing Office. Retrieved from BookSG.

4 There was no one listed as the President of the Ghee Hok Society for 1887 in the "Table showing the Number of Chinese Secret Societies, registered under Section 3 of Ordinance No. XIX of 1869, with Situation of Meeting Houses of Members, &c., in Singapore." Found in Pickering, W.A., (1888, April 27). Annual report on the Chinese Protectorate, Singapore, for the year 1887 (G.N. 261). *Straits Settlements Government Gazette, 22*(20), p. 909. Singapore: Government Printing Office. Retrieved from BookSG.

5 Kim, Y.J., & Park S.J. (2017). Tectonic traditions in ancient Chinese architecture, and their development. *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering, 16* (1), p. 32. (Not available in NLB holdings)

6 Hermann Naeher was also spelled as Hermann Näher.

7 Tan Lock Shuan was also spelled as Tan Lok Shuan and Tan Lok Swan.

8 *Singapore and Straits directory for 1893.* (1893) (p. 161). Singapore: Printed at the Mission Press, p. 161. (Microfilm no.: NL1180)

9 Chua Tze Yong was also known as Chua Choo Yong, while Leow Chia Heng was sometimes spelled as Liau Chia Heng.

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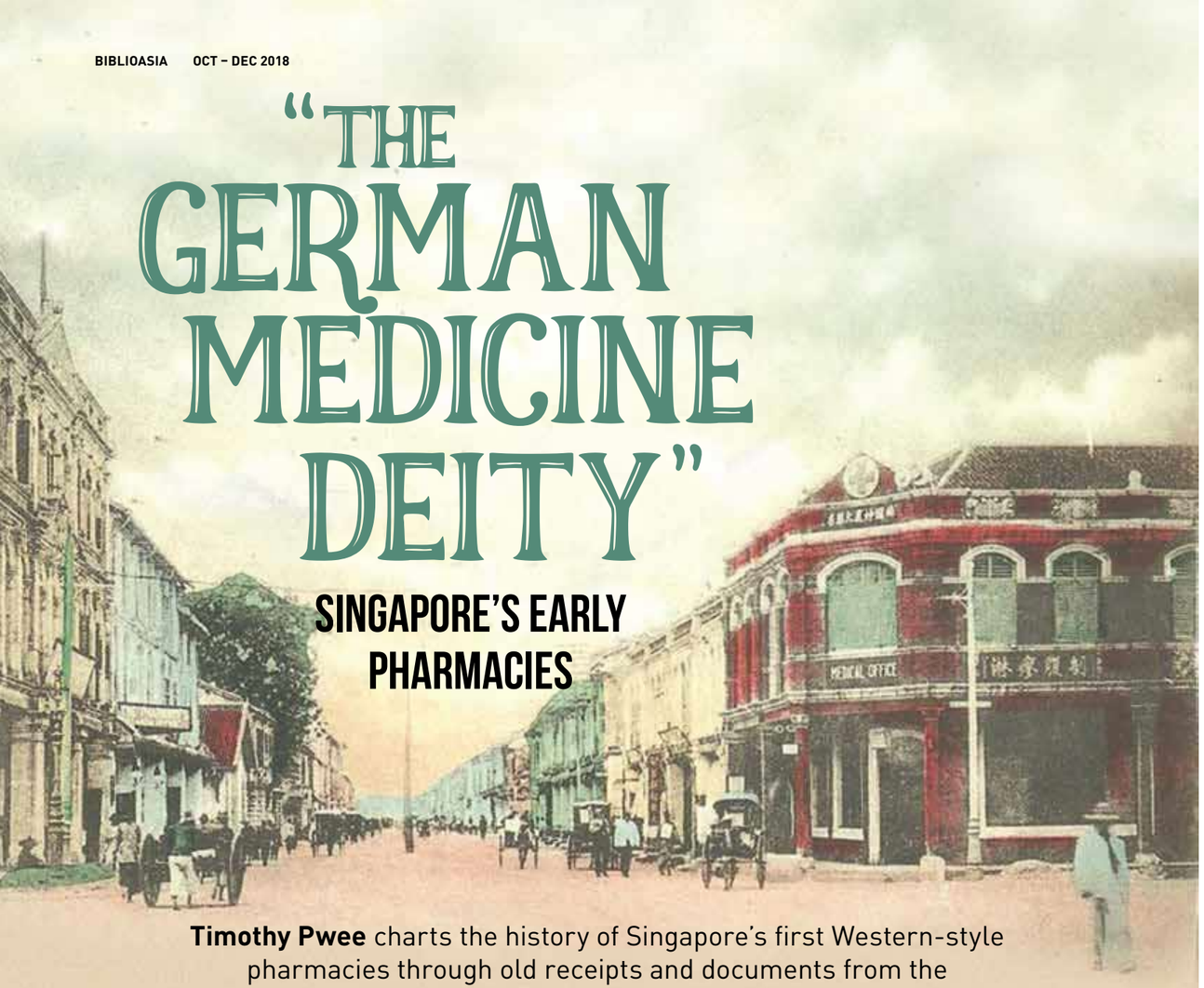
"THE GERMAN MEDICINE DEITY"

SINGAPORE'S EARLY PHARMACIES



Timothy Pwee charts the history of Singapore's first Western-style pharmacies through old receipts and documents from the National Library's Koh Seow Chuan Collection.

Among the items donated to the National Library by the philanthropist and architect Koh Seow Chuan are documents dating between the 1920s and 40s from the Medical Office in Singapore. The Chinese name of this old-style Western dispensary, 德国神農大藥房 (De guo shen nong da yao fang; or in simplified Chinese 德国神农大药房), literally translates as "German Medicine Deity Medical Office" – a name that sounds altogether incongruous as 德国 is the Chinese name for Germany, while 神農 refers to the Chinese deity of medicine.

Timothy Pwee is a Senior Librarian with the National Library, Singapore. He is interested in Singapore's business and natural histories, and is currently developing the library's donor collections around these areas.

Dr Trebing and the Medical Hall

The history of the Medical Office is predated by that of the better known Medical Hall, another German-owned dispensary housed in the landmark red-brick building near Fullerton Square on Battery Road. From the 1860s onwards, dispensaries stocked with Western medications – the Singapore Dispensary at Commercial Square and the New Dispensary at the corner of Kling and Waterloo streets – were joined by an increasing number of competitors as Singapore's population and the accompanying demand for medical expertise, including the services of surgeons and accoucheurs (male obstetricians or midwives), grew.

In the mid-1870s, a German medical doctor by the name of Christopher Trebing arrived in Singapore and started his practice. From as early as August 1874, print advertisements for one Dr Ch. Trebing, M.D., formerly a doctor with the 82nd Regiment in Province Hessen Nassau, Germany, began appearing in local newspapers.[1]

By all accounts, the good doctor was successful because by the end of the 1870s, his practice had expanded from a single room in the Europe Hotel to a standalone building on Battery Road called the Medical Hall.[2] Although Trebing died a decade later, the Medical Hall survived him and passed through a succession of German owners. In around 1970, the iconic Medical Hall building was demolished to make way for the Straits Trading Building.

A selection of lotions, tinctures, ointments and powders made by the Medical Office right until its closure in 2012, bringing the curtains down on a company with a history that spanned 120 years. The company, however, still manufactures Milderma (extreme right), a prickly heat powder. *Courtesy of Foo Suan Dick and Foo Suan Wee.*

The Medical Office's Inauspicious Start

Among the competitors that emerged in the following decades was the Medical Office, set up by German chemist Emil Kahlert in 1892 at the corner of North Bridge and Bras Basah roads. German eye specialist Dr Eugene von Krudy, who was already practising in Singapore, became the dispensary's physician.

In 1897, another German chemist by the name of Frederick Dreiss travelled to Singapore to acquire the Medical Office. Apparently, Kahlert, who had been planning to return to Germany, had taken out advertisements announcing his intention to sell the Medical Office in a number of German newspapers.

When Dreiss arrived here in April 1897, he agreed to the purchase price of $9,000 that von Krudy was asking for the Medical Office. However as Dreiss only had $7,000 on him, von Krudy agreed to lend him $2,300 and got the buyer to sign a legal document at his lawyer's office.

Dreiss, who did not understand English, could not communicate with the lawyer and later claimed that he thought the document was merely a receipt for the loan. He later found out that the document was in fact a mortgage for the business, its stock-in-trade (i.e. the Medical Office's stock of supplies such as drugs and equipment) and some furniture.

In October that same year, von Krudy had all the furniture, equipment and supplies seized from the Medical Office when he was not paid the sum he was owed by Dreiss. At the court hearing in November, Dreiss claimed that both Kahlert and von Krudy had conspired to cheat him by misrepresenting the Medical Office's volume of business and duping him into signing the mortgage. During the hearings, several interesting facts emerged. One was that Kahlert had been made bankrupt back in 1891. Kahlert, however, failed to report to the Official Assignee and continued to do business in Singapore. Only when Dreiss' lawsuit made the news did the Official Assignee summon Kahlert and ask for his finances to be examined. On hearing this, von Krudy immediately paid off Kahlert's debts.

(Facing page) The Medical Office at the junction of North Bridge and Bras Basah roads, c. 1970s. Founded in 1892 by German chemist Emil Kahlert, this was one of Singapore's earliest Western-style pharmacies. Its history has been eclipsed by the better known Medical Hall, a landmark for many years on Battery Road and established at least two decades earlier by another German, a doctor named Christopher Trebing. *Courtesy of Foo Suan Dick and Foo Suan Wee.*

Another revelation was that Max Wispauer, who became the owner of the better known Medical Hall in the 1890s, had met Dreiss when the latter first arrived in Singapore. Dreiss had sought Wispauer's advice about buying the Medical Office and even asked to borrow $2,000 from him. However, Dreiss' claims of being cheated by von Krudy were contradicted by various witnesses, and the presiding judge did not find sufficient evidence for the case to go to trial even though he found the entire matter altogether suspicious. Dreiss could have pursued his claim as a civil case but there are no records to indicate that he did so.[3]

After this debacle, von Krudy and Kahlert appeared to have left Singapore for good. In the 1899 *Singapore and Straits Directory*, the Medical Office was listed as a branch of the Medical Hall with Wispauer indicated as the proprietor of both dispensaries.

Regulating Drugs and Pharmaceutical Professionals

From the beginning of the 20th century onwards, quite a number of dispensaries as well as other companies doing business in Singapore began listing the names of their non-European staff in the *Singapore and Straits Directory*. The Medical Hall and Medical Office did not follow suit until more than a decade later when the names of three medical dispensers for the Medical Hall and two for the Medical Office respectively were mentioned in the 1912 edition of the directory.

Interestingly, the lead dispensers at both outlets – Foo Khee How who worked at the Medical Hall on Battery Road and Au Shin Wong of the Medical Office at the corner of North Bridge and Bras Basah roads – had the term "local qualification" mentioned after their names to distinguish them from their foreign colleagues. This qualification referred to was the passing of an examination administered by the new Straits and Federated Malay States Government Medical School for people applying for licences to retail poisons.[4]

In Britain, the licensing of people who sold drugs and medicines had begun over one-and-a-half centuries ago. Shopkeepers who sold drugs, both herbal remedies as well as chemically derived ones, had started to organise themselves with the formation of the Pharmaceutical Society in 1841. This was around the same time that statistics on drug usage patterns and deaths due to the misuse of drugs were being collected. The 1852 Pharmacy Act in Britain resulted in the establishment of a register of pharmacists and limited the use of the job title to only those registered with the Pharmaceutical Society. This, in turn, led to the Pharmacy Act of 1868, which restricted the sale of specific drugs and poisons to qualified and registered pharmacists.[5]

It took another few decades before Singapore followed suit. Narcotic substances such as opium and morphine were of particular concern as they were highly addictive, and the first ordinances restricting their availability and use were passed in 1894 and 1896 respectively. In 1905, the Poisons Ordinance came into force, limiting the sale of listed dangerous chemicals to licensed persons. In 1910, the Poisons Ordinance was joined by the Deleterious Drugs Ordinance, which further limited the distribution of certain drugs (and syringes) to registered pharmacists, doctors and dentists. This meant that dispensaries had to have a registered person on its staff who was authorised to import or buy medical supplies, prescribe and fill prescriptions, and keep a record of transactions.

Interestingly, Western dispensaries back then in Singapore provided the kind of services that Chinese medical

halls do today. At the beginning of the 20th century, the mass manufacturing of pharmaceuticals as an industry had only just begun and Western medical dispensaries prepared their own array of treatments, including most ointments, lotions, mixtures and even tablets, in the shop itself.[6] As late as the 1960s, the pharmaceutical practical examination at the University of Singapore required students to make tablets on the spot. Going by an account of a student from that era, if the examiner managed to break the pill with his hands, the student would immediately fail.[7]

The End of a (German) Era

World War I, which began in 1914, saw increasing hostility by the British Empire towards Germans, both by nationality and by birth. In August 1915, Sir Evelyn Ellis, a member of the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements, raised the motion that the Alien Enemies (Winding Up) Ordinance of 1914 be applied to both the Singapore Oil Mills and the Medical Hall (it had already been applied to other firms). He said that the current owner of the Medical Hall – despite being a naturalised British subject – was "an imitation Britisher" and "a German at heart", and that "the business was being carried on purely in German interests".[8] Although Ellis later asked to withdraw the motion, the execution of his orders was merely delayed.

On 19 February 1916, *The Malaya Tribune* reported that the Colonial Secretariat in London had ordered all enemy firms in the colonies to be liquidated with immediate effect.[9] In line with this order, the liquidation notice for The Medical Hall Limited was published three days later on 22 February.[10] Finally, two years later, on 15 April 1918, both the Medical Hall and the Medical Office were auctioned off by the Custodian of Enemy Property, thereby closing the chapter on the era of German pharmacies in Singapore.[11]

Decades later, the memory of Germans running the Medical Office still loomed large in popular memory. In T.F. Hwang's "Down Memory Lane" column published on 24 March 1979 in *The Straits Times*, he noted that "to taxi operators and SBS bus workers, the name [of Bras Basah Road] in Hokkien/Teochew dialects is Teck Kok Sin Long [德国神农]."[12] Teck Kok meaning Germany and Sin Long being the Chinese deity of medicine.

As a result of the forced seizure and auction, the Medical Hall at Battery Road was taken over by pharmacist George W. Crawford in partnership with Dr A.P. Lena van Rijn.[13] The Medical Office, on the other hand, was acquired by a group of former staff led by its lead dispenser Foo Khee How, who later became the firm's manager.[14]

The business receipts and invoices in the Koh Seow Chuan Collection, the earliest of which date from the 1920s, reveal that both the Medical Office and the Medical Hall used the same Chinese name 神農大藥房 (the Medical Office used the Chinese characters 神農大藥房 in the advertisements it ran in the Chinese press but 神蓩大藥房 on its letterhead – 農 and 蓩 were apparently used as variants of each other). This could suggest that the Chinese name for the Medical Hall originated sometime before World War I and continued to be used by both firms even though they were separate entities.

The Medical Hall's Foo Khee How passed away in December 1931, leaving behind four sons and five daughters.[15] Foo Chee Guan, one of Foo's sons, studied medicine at the Hong Kong College of Medicine where Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Republic of China, had graduated back in 1892. When Foo Chee Guan graduated, he returned to practise at the Medical Office just before the outbreak of World War II in 1942.[16]

From the oral history recordings of Foo Tiang Fatt, nephew of Foo Chee Guan, we know that some members of the Foo family escaped to their rubber plantation in the Karimun islands west of Singapore for the duration of the Japanese Occupation. Foo Chee Guan and his cousin Foo Chee Foong, however, stayed behind and continued to operate the Medical Office.

From perusing the business receipts of the Medical Office in the Koh Seow Chuan Collection and a number of newspaper articles, it appears that the Foos contributed to various causes before the Japanese Occupation, including the China Relief Fund, which helped raise money for China's war effort against Japan, and St Andrew's Cathedral. According to the bills of exchange in the collection, pre-war imports came mainly from Europe and America. The collection also contains numerous receipts for local purchases made at other dispensaries. The receipts issued in 1943 during the Japanese Occupation show that medicines were still available for sale at the Medical Office, particularly Japanese-made ones.

A 1920s colour poster advertising the services of the Medical Office. The design is typical of the Shanghai "picture calendar" style (*yue fen pai*; 月份牌) popular in China and overseas Chinese communities between the 1920s and 1940s. *Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.*

These two receipts from the Medical Hall (left) and an invoice from the Medical Office (below left), both issued in 1927, reveal that both companies used the same Chinese name 神農大藥房 (the Medical Office used the Chinese characters 神農大藥房 in the advertisements it ran in the Chinese press but 神蓩大藥房 on its letterhead – 農 and 蓩 were apparently used as variants of each other). This could suggest that the Chinese name for the Medical Hall originated sometime before World War I and continued to be used by both firms even though they were separate companies. *Koh Seow Chuan Collection, National Library Board.*

Modernity and Manufacturing

When the war ended in 1945, business activity in the Medical Office picked up. Foo Chee Guan and Foo Chee Foong took charge of the company in 1955, and the former's nephew, Foo Tiang Fatt, joined them the following year.[17] The 1960s, however, marked the beginning of the sunset years for the Medical Office as well as the other old-style Western pharmacies that prepared their medicines manually on their premises. The advent of the Western drug manufacturing industry and modern pharmacy retail chains were slowly beginning to make their presence felt.

In the 1970s, Cold Storage started expanding its Guardian Pharmacy outlet into a chain and began opening branches all over Singapore. In 1988, Hongkong-based Watsons Personal Care Stores entered the Singapore market and set up outlets in shopping malls and housing estates.[18] When the government acquired the premises of the Medical Office in 1982, control of the company was passed to Foo Tiang Fatt and his cousin Foo Tiang Suan, and the firm moved to Geylang Road.[19]

Foo Chee Guan retired from practising medicine in 1985, at 74 years of age.[20] In the end, faced with increasing costs, the difficulty of finding reliable staff and poor business, the Medical Office was shuttered down for good and deregistered in 2012. ♦

Notes

1 Page 3 advertisements column 3: Miscellaneous: Ch. Trebing, M.D. (1874, August 29). *The Straits Times*, p. 3. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
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4 Freer, G.D. (1907, August 30). Appendix 7: Straits and Federated Malay Straits Government Medical School (p. 73). In *The Straits Settlements Medical Report for the Year 1906* (pp. 73–75). (Microfilm no.: NL1062); List of persons licensed under "The Poisons Ordinance 1905". (1908, February 21). *Straits Settlements Government Gazette* (p. 308). (Microfilm no.: NL1064).
5 Derks, H. (2012). *History of the opium problem: The assault on the East, ca. 1600–1950* (pp. 113–120). Leiden; Brill, Boston. (Call no.: RSEA 363.450950903 DER)
6 Lee, P. (Interviewer). (1988, May 22). *Oral history interview with Dr Wong Heck Sing* [Transcript of cassette recording no. 002024/09/02, pp. 23–24]; Ng, B. (Interviewer). (2012, November 6). *Oral history interview with George Yuille Caldwell* [Cassette recording no. 003776/38/18]; Ng, B. (Interviewer). (2012, November 29). *Oral history interview with George Yuille Caldwell* [Cassette recording no. 003776/38/20]. Retrieved from National Archives of Singapore website.
7 Personal communication with a graduate of the 1960s.
8 Legislative Council: Medical Hall. (1915, August 14). *The Malaya Tribune*, p. 5. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
9 Fiat Justitia. (1916, February 19). *The Malaya Tribune*, p. 8. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
10 Page 7 advertisements column 2: Notice. (1916, February 22). *The Malaya Tribune*, p. 7. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
11 By order of the custodian of enemy property. (1918, April 3). *The Singapore Free Press*, p. 3. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
12 T.F. Hwang takes you down memory lane. (1979, March 24). *The Straits Times*, p. 16. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
13 Death of Mr. G.W. Crawford. (1941, September 29). *The Straits Times*, p. 9. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
14 *The Singapore & Straits Directory* (p. 193). (1917). Singapore: Printed at the Mission Press. (Microfilm nos.: NL 185–1190)
15 Deaths: Foo Khee How. (1931, December 21). *The Malaya Tribune*, p. 8. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
16 73 and still going strong. (1984, November 12). *The Straits Times*, p. 11. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
17 Death. (1955, May 26). *The Straits Times*, p. 6. Retrieved from NewspaperSG; Chan, J. (Interviewer). (2013, December 30). *Oral history interview with Foo Tiang Fatt* [Cassette recording no. 003840/11/1]. Retrieved from National Archives of Singapore website.
18 Koh, T.Y. (1981, August 15). Another Guardian Pharmacy store soon at Goldhill. *The Business Times*, p. 5; Subramanium, S. (1989, June 16). Watson's to open its 11th outlet in Funan Centre next week. *The Straits Times*, p. 43. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
19 *Oral history interview with Foo Tiang Fatt*, 30 Dec 2013.
20 *The Straits Times*, 12 Nov 1984, p. 11.

சிங்கைப் பத்திரிகை விளம்பரங்கள் 1920–1960 வரை ஒரு பார்வை

Sundari Balasubramaniam examines Tamil print advertisements published between the 1920s and 1960s, and discovers fascinating insights of life during this period.

Sundari Balasubramaniam is a Librarian with the National Library, Singapore. Her responsibilities include managing and developing the Tamil collection at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library as well as the provision of reference and research services.

சுந்தரி பாலசுப்ரமணியம், லீ கொங் சியன் மேற்கோள் நூலகத்தில் நூலகராகப் பணிபுரிகிறார். மேற்கோள் சேவை, தகவல் ஆய்வு, தமிழ்த் தொகுப்பு நிர்வகித்தல் ஆகியன இவரின் பணியாகும்.

விளம்பரம் என்பது வணிக நிறுவனங்கள் தங்கள் தயாரிப்புகளை வாடிக்கையாளர்களிடம் விற்பனை செய்வதற்குப் பயன்படுத்தும் உத்தியாகும். இன்று கணக்கிலடங்கா விளம்பரங்கள் பல்வேறு ஊடகங்கள் வாயிலாக மக்களின் மனப்போக்கை அறிந்து அதற்கேற்றார்போல் வடிவமைக்கப்பெற்று நம்மைத் திணரடிக்கின்றன. மன உறுதி மிக்கவராயினும் நிறுவனங்களின் மனதை மயக்கும் விளம்பரங்களுக்குப் பலர் அடிமையாகிவிடுகின்றனர் என்பதே இன்றைய நிலைமை.

இன்றுபோல் அதிக ஊடகங்கள் இல்லாத அக்காலத்தில் விளம்பரங்கள் செய்ய வானொலி, வார இதழ்கள், நாளிதழ்கள் போன்றவை பயன்பட்டன.

60, 70 வருடங்களுக்கு முன் பத்திரிகைகள், வானொலி தவிர வேறு எந்த ஊடகங்களும் இல்லாத காலக்கட்டத்தில் விளம்பரங்கள் எவ்வாறு நம் வாழ்க்கையில் பங்கு வகித்தன என்பதை இக்கட்டுரை விளக்கும். மேலும் ஒரு பத்திரிகையில் வெளிவரும் விளம்பரங்களைக் கொண்டு அந்தச் சமுதாயத்தின் வளர்ச்சியை, அதன் வரலாற்றை அறிய முடியும்.

சிங்கப்பூரில் வெளிவந்த பொதுஜன மித்திரன் (1923), தமிழ் முரசு (1936-1960) ஆகிய பத்திரிகைகள் இக்கட்டுரைக்குப் பயன்படுத்தப்பட்டுள்ளன.

100 வருடங்களுக்கு முன்பு சிங்கப்பூரில் வெளிவந்த தமிழ்ப் பத்திரிகைகளில் விளம்பரங்கள் மிகக் குறைந்த அளவே வந்தன. அக்காலக்கட்டத்தில் நாட்டு நடப்புகளே அதிகம் செய்திகளாக வந்தன. உலகப் போர் நிகழ்வுகள், ஜப்பானிய ஆட்சி, இந்திய சுதந்திரப் போராட்ட நிகழ்வுகள், காலனித்துவச் செய்திகள் ஆகியவை அதிகம் இடம்பெற்றன.

1920களில் வெளிவந்த விளம்பரங்கள் அக்கால மக்களின் தேவைகள், கலாசாரம், அந்நிய அரசாங்கத்தின் பாதிப்பு, மக்களின் விருப்பங்கள், வாழ்க்கைத் தரம் போன்றவற்றைப் பிரதிபலித்தன.

பொதுஜன மித்திரன்

1920களில் வெளிவந்த இப்பத்திரிகையில் விளம்பரங்கள் முக்கியத்துவம் பெற ஆரம்பித்தன.

அக்காலக்கட்டத்தில்காப்புறுதித்திட்டங்கள்,உடலுக்குச்சக்தியூட்டும் மருந்துகள் அதிகமாக விளம்பரங்களில் இடம்பெற்றுள்ளன. ஒரே மருந்து பலவகையான நோய்களைக் குணப்படுத்துவதாகப் பல விளம்பரங்களைக் காணலாம். அடுத்ததாகத் தலைமுடிக்கான தைலம் அல்லது எண்ணெய் விளம்பரங்கள் அதிகமாக உள்ளன.

(Left) உடல் சோர்வு, இரத்தச் சோகை, விஷக்காய்ச்சல், நரம்புத் தளர்ச்சி என பலவகையான நோய்களுக்கு ஏற்புடையன. *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. பொதுஜன மித்திரன் [Potujana mittiran]. (1923, டிசம்பர் 8) (பக். 1). (Call no.: Tamil RCLOS 059.94811 PM)*
(Below) நெருப்பு, கடல், வாகன விபத்து, வணிகம் நலிவடைதல் போன்ற பலவகையான இழப்புகளுக்கு காப்புறுதி வழங்கப்படுகிறது. *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. பொதுஜன மித்திரன் [Potujana mittiran]. (1923, டிசம்பர் 8) (பக். 1). (Call no.: Tamil RCLOS 059.94811 PM).*

இனிப்புச் சுவைநீர் (சோடா), தனியார் மருந்தகங்கள் போன்ற விளம்பரங்களும் உள்ளன.

மருந்தகங்கள் தங்கள் தயாரிப்புகளை எடுத்துக்கொண்டால் உடல் சோர்வு, இரத்தச் சோகை, விஷக்காய்ச்சல், நரம்புத் தளர்ச்சி என பலவகையான நோய்கள் குணமாகுமென்று விளம்பரப்படுத்துகின்றனர். அத்துடன் அதை எவ்வாறு எடுத்துக்கொள்ளவேண்டும் அல்லது பயன்படுத்தவேண்டும் எனவும் விளக்குகின்றன.

அக்காலத்தில் மக்களிடையே சாதிபாகுபாடு அதிகமாக இருந்தது. உணவகத்தில் மிகவும் ஆசாரமாகத் தயாரிக்கப்பட்ட பானங்கள், உணவுகள் கிடைக்குமென்றும், உயர் பதவியில் வேலை செய்பவர்களுக்குத் தங்க இடம் ஏற்பாடு செய்துத்தரப்படுமென்றும் விளம்பரங்களைக் காணலாம்.

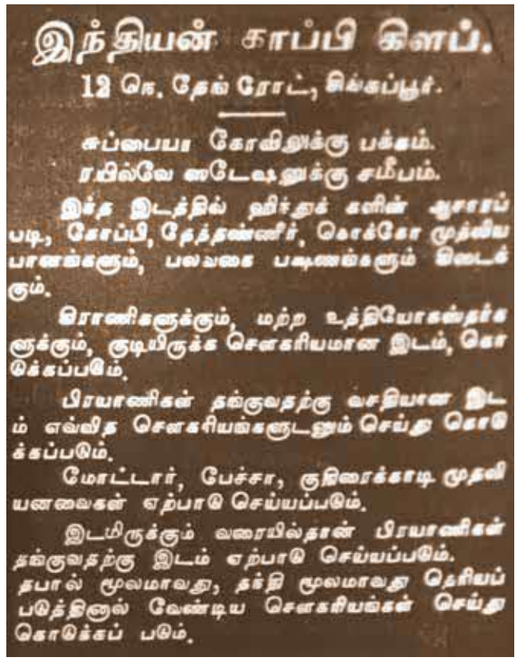
தமிழ் முரசு

1935 ஆம் ஆண்டு முதல் இன்றுவரை சிங்கப்பூரில் வெளிவருகின்ற ஒரே தமிழ் பத்திரிகை. இதில் சர்வரோக நிவாரணிகள், உடலுக்கு சக்தி தரும் மருந்துகள், கூந்தல் தைலம், திரைப்படங்கள், மது வகைகள், குறிப்பாக திராட்சை ரசம், பீர் சுருட்டு (சிகரெட்) போன்ற விளம்பரங்கள் அதிகமாக வெளிவந்தன.

குல்பஹார் வாசனை எண்ணெய், சந்தன எண்ணை விளம்பரங்கள், கோகுல் கூந்தல் எண்ணெய் என இதுபோல் பல நிறுவன கூந்தல் எண்ணெய்களின் விளம்பரங்கள் அதிகமாக

(Top left and right) ஹின்னாம், மருந்தகம் தங்கள் மருந்துகள் பலவகைகயான நோய்களுக்குத் தீர்வு என்றும், மலிவு விலையில் கிடைக்குமென்றும் அறிவிக்கின்றன. *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. பொதுஜன மித்திரன் [Potujana mittiran]. (1923, டிசம்பர் 8) (பக். 1). (Call no.: Tamil RCLOS 059.94811 PM)* ஹின்னாம் & லிட்டில் மருந்தகம் லிமிட். 1938-1939. நார்த் ப்ரிட்ஜ் ரோடு. நார்த் பிரிட்ஜ் சாலையில் இயங்கி வந்த ஹின்னாம் & லிட்டில் மருந்தகம் லிமிட். 1938-1939. *அன்புரிமைச் சலுகை, சிங்கப்பூர் தேசிய மரபுடைமைக் கழகம்,சிங்கப்பூர் தேசிய அரும்பொருளகம்.*
(Above left and right) சின்சியர் மருந்தகம் தங்கள் மருத்துகள் பலவகைகயான நோய்களுக்குத் தீர்வு என்றும், மலிவு விலையில் கிடைக்குமென்றும் அறிவிக்கின்றன. *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. பொதுஜன மித்திரன் [Potujana mittiran]. (1923, டிசம்பர் 8) (பக். 1). (Call no.: Tamil RCLOS 059.94811 PM).* சின்சியர், மருந்தகம், சூலியா ஸ்ட்ரீட், லீ கிப் லின் தொகுப்பிலிருந்து. *காப்புரிமைக்குட்பட்டது, லீ கிப் லின் மற்றும் தேசிய நூலக வாரியம், சிங்கப்பூர், 2009.*

(Below and bottom) ஆசாரமாகத் தாயாரிக்கப்படும் உணவுகள், பானங்கள் கிடைக்கும் என்ற விளம்பரம். *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. பொதுஜன மித்திரன் [Potujana mittiran] (1923, டிசம்பர் 15, பக். 8). London: British Library. (Call no.: Tamil RCLOS 059.9481)* டேங்க் ரோடு ரயில் நிலையம் அருகில் இந்தியன் காப்பி கிளப் இயங்கிவந்தது. அன்புரிமைச் சலுகை, சிங்கப்பூர் தேசிய ஆவணக்காப்பகம்.



வந்தன. அனைத்துத் தைலங்களும் முடி கொட்டுதல், உடல் சூடு போன்ற பல பிரச்சனைகளைத் தீர்க்கும் என்பதாக விளம்பரம் செய்யப்பட்டுள்ளன.

மிக அதிகமாக வந்த விளம்பரங்களுள் உடல் சக்தியைக் கூட்டும் மருந்துகளும் ஒன்று. ஆண்களின் சக்தியை மேம்படுத்துவதாகக் காட்டப்படுகிறது. காந்தரசம் என்ற நிறுவனம் தயாரிக்கும் லேகியத்தை உண்டால் சிங்கத்தையே அடக்கும் சக்தி பெற்றவராகிவிடுவர் என்று விளம்பரம் கூறுகிறது. இம்மருந்தை தயாரித்த காந்தரசம் என்ற மருந்து நிறுவனம் திரு அ.சி சுப்பையா அவர்களால் சிங்கப்பூரில் 1930 முதல் 1955 வரை நடத்தப்பட்டது.

அக்காலக்கட்டத்தில் அதிகமாக யுனானி மருந்தகங்கள் செயல்பட்டுவந்தன. இன்று அவை வழக்கில் இல்லை. பலவிதமான நோய்களுக்கும் இங்கு மருந்துகள் கிடைக்கும். சித்தவைத்திய நிலையங்களும் பரவலாக இருந்தன. இனிப்பு நீர், சயரோகம் போன்ற நோய்களைக் குணப்படுத்துவதாக விளம்பரம் உள்ளது. அக்காலக்கட்டத்தில் சயரோகம் பலருக்கு இருந்ததால் பல விளம்பரங்களில் அதைப்பற்றிக் காணலாம். 1936 ஆம் ஆண்டு வெளிவந்த விளம்பரம் வணிகக் கண்காட்சியைப் பற்றி அறிவிக்கிறது. பெண்களைக் கவரும் வண்ணம் அவர்களுக்கு அழகூட்டும் பொருட்கள் இக்காண்காட்சியில் கிடைக்கும் என்கிறது விளம்பரம். அக்காலக்கட்டத்திலேயே வணிகக் கண்காட்சி நடந்ததைக் காட்டுகிறது.

இன்று பிரபலமாக இருக்கும் மைலோ 1930களில் இல்லை. ஓவல்டின் பானமே மக்களின் சத்து பானமாக விளங்கியது. இன்று வரும் விளம்பரங்கள்போல இந்தப் பானத்தைப் பருகினால் அனைத்துவித ஊட்டச்சத்துகளும் பெற்று ஆரோக்கியமாக வாழலாம் என உறுதியளிக்கிறது.

அக்காலக்கட்டத்தில், மதுவகைகள் குறிப்பாக, திராட்சை ரசம், பீர் போன்றவை ஆரோக்கிய பானம் எனவும், இவைகளை அருந்தினால் உடல் ஆரோக்கியமாக இருக்கும் என்றும் கூறும் விளம்பரங்களைக் காணலாம்.

1930களில் புகைப்பது நாகரிகமாகக் கருதப்பட்ட காலம். இந்திய மங்கைகள் புகைப்பது போன்ற விளம்பரங்கள், ஆண்களும் பெண்களும் புகைப்பது போன்ற விளம்பரங்கள் அதிகம் வெளிவந்தன.

அக்காலக்கட்டத்தில் திரைப்படங்கள், நாடகங்கள் பார்ப்பது, புத்தகங்கள் படிப்பது போன்றவைகளே மக்களின் பொழுதுபோக்கு அம்சங்களாக இருந்தன. தமிழ் நூல் நிலையங்கள் பல இயங்கின. நம் முன்னோடி எழுத்தாளர்கள் பலர் இந்நூல் நிலையங்களுக்குச் சென்று தங்கள் தமிழ் அறிவை வளர்த்துக்கொண்டனர்.

விளம்பரங்கள் நமக்கு பொருட்களைப் பற்றி மட்டும் அறிமுகப்படுத்துவதில்லை. அக்கால நாகரிக வளர்ச்சி, மக்களின் ஆரோக்கியம், பொழுதுபோக்குகள், பழக்க வழக்கங்கள், நாட்டின் பொருளாதாரம் போன்ற பலவற்றை நாம் அறிந்துகொள்ளலாம். மக்களின் வாழ்க்கை உயர உயர, விளம்பரங்கள் அதற்கேற்றாற்போல் மாற்றம் காண்கின்றன. ஆய்வாளர்களுக்கு இவை மிகவும் பயன்படும் ஒரு வளமாகும். ♦

1. காந்தரசம் கம்பெனியின் பொருட்கள் பற்றிய விளக்க புத்தகம். *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. காந்தரசம் கம்பெனி: சித்த வைத்திய பார்மசி [Kāntaracam kampeṉi: Citta vaittiya pārmaci]. (1930). Singapore: Victoria Press.* (Call no: RCLOS 615.321 KAN)
2. தமிழ் நூல் நிலையம். அக்காலத்தில் பல தமிழ் நூல் நிலையங்கள் இயங்கின. *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. தமிழ் முரசு [Tamil Murasu], 3 மார்ச் 1941, பக். 10.*
3. குல்பஹார் வாசனை எண்ணெய். அனைத்துவித முடிப் பிரச்சனைகளுக்கும் இந்த எண்ணெய் ஒரு தீர்வாகும் என்ற விளம்பரம். *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. தமிழ் முரசு [Tamil Murasu], 5 மே 1936, பக். 1.*
4. மஹா வீர்ய விர்த்தி லேகியம் என்ற மருந்தின் விளம்பரம்.இந்த லேகியத்தை உண்டால் சிங்கத்தையே அடக்கும் சக்தி பெற்றவராகிவிடுவர் என்று விளம்பரம் கூறுகிறது. *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. தமிழ் முரசு [Tamil Murasu], 8 பிப்ரவரி 1939, பக். 3.*
5. ஜோதி சித்த வைத்திய நிலையம். சித்தவைத்திய நிலையங்களும் பரவலாக இருந்தன. இனிப்பு நீர், சயரோகம் போன்ற நோய்களைக் குணப்படுத்துவதாக விளம்பரம் உள்ளது. *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. தமிழ் முரசு [Tamil Murasu], 13 ஜனவரி 1954, பக். 9.*

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6. மால்பரோ திரையரங்கில் வெளிவந்த சேவாசதனம் திரைப்படம். *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. தமிழ் முரசு [Tamil Murasu], 1 மார்ச் 1939, பக். 8.*
7. 1936 ஆம் ஆண்டு வெளிவந்த இந்த விளம்பரம் வணிகக் கண்காட்சியைப் பற்றி அறிவிக்கிறது. பெண்களைக் கவரும் வண்ணம் அவர்களுக்கு அழகூட்டும் பொருட்கள் இக்காண்காட்சியில் கிடைக்கும் என்கிறது விளம்பரம். *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. தமிழ் முரசு [Tamil Murasu], 5 மே 1936, பக். 5.*
8. புலி மார்க் பீர் விளம்பரம்.அக்காலக்கட்டத்தில், மதுவகைகள் குறிப்பாக, திராட்சை ரசம், பீர் போன்றவை ஆரோக்கிய பானம் எனவும், இவைகளை அருந்தினால் உடல் ஆரோக்கியமாக இருக்கும் என்றும் கூறும் விளம்பரங்களைக் காணலாம். *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. தமிழ் முரசு [Tamil Murasu], 5 மே 1939, பக். 1.*
9. கிரவன் ஏ. 1930களில் புகைப்பது நாகரிகமாகக் கருதப்பட்ட காலம். இந்த விளம்பரத்தில் சேலைகட்டிய இந்திய மங்கை கையில் புகையும் வெண்சுருட்டோடு காட்சியளிக்கிறார். *படம் மறு ஆக்கம் செய்யப்பட்டது. தமிழ் முரசு [Tamil Murasu], 10 அக்டோபர் 1939, பக். .*

9

படங்கள் ஆதாரக் குறிப்புகள்

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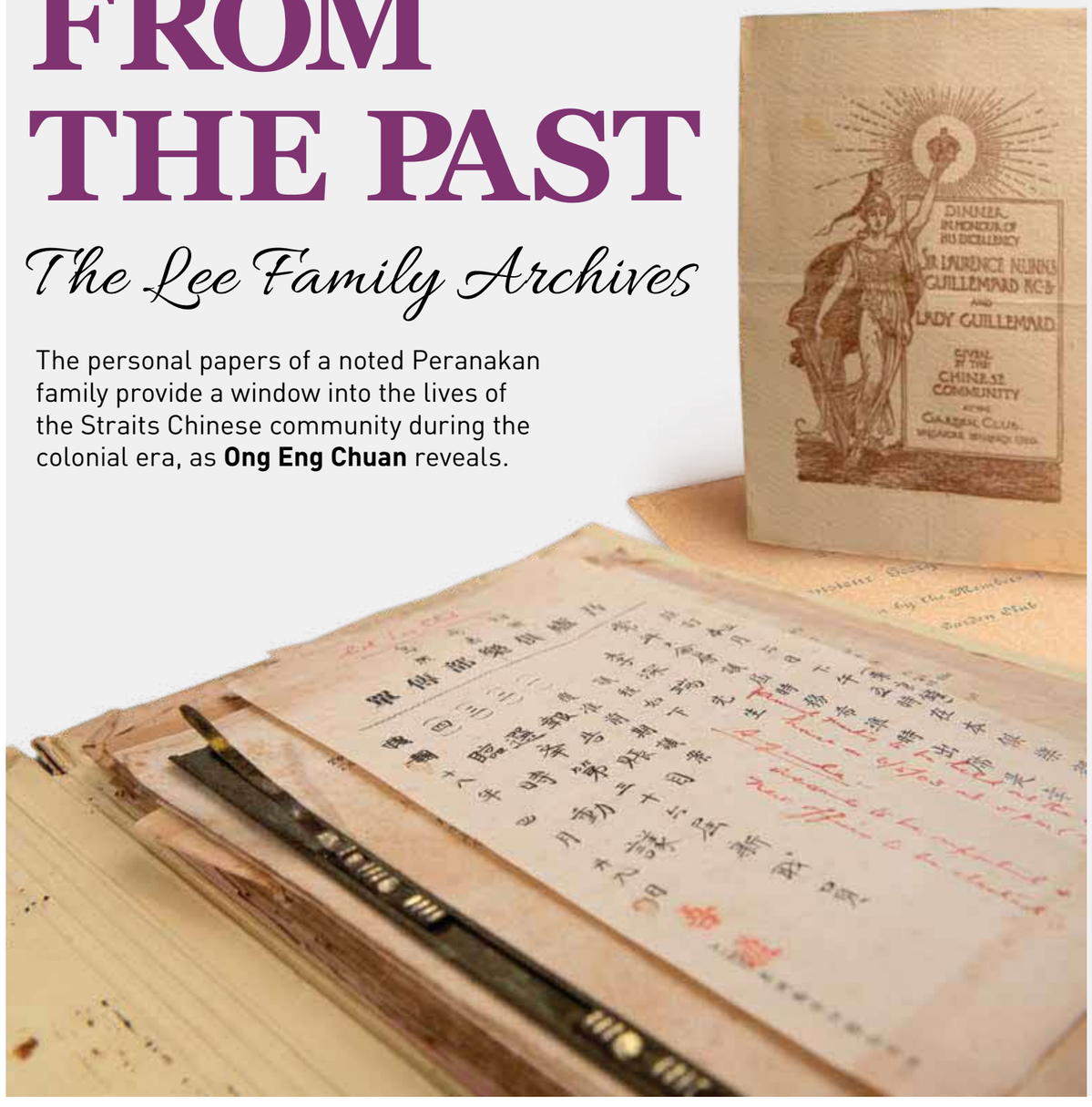
PAPERS FROM THE PAST

The Lee Family Archives

The personal papers of a noted Peranakan family provide a window into the lives of the Straits Chinese community during the colonial era, as **Ong Eng Chuan** reveals.



Ong Eng Chuan is a Senior Librarian with the National Library, Singapore. His responsibilities include managing the library's Rare Materials Collection as well as the provision of reference and research services.

In 2016, the National Library Board received a donation of personal papers and documents from the family of Lee Kip Lee and Lee Kip Lin. Lee Kip Lee is a former president of The Peranakan Association, where he still holds the position of honorary life president for his contributions to the association during his 14-year tenure between 1996 and 2010. His younger brother, the late Lee Kip Lin (1925–2011) was equally well known as an architect, university professor and author of several books on Singaporean architecture.

The Lee family papers include documents that the brothers inherited from their father Lee Chim Huk (1889–1958) and uncle Lee Chim Tuan (1880–1955), both of whom were eminent figures in Singapore's early Peranakan (Straits Chinese) and business communities.

Family Connections

Lee Kip Lee and Lee Kip Lin hail from a distinguished Peranakan family whose roots in the region date back to more than two centuries ago. Their grandfather Lee Keng Kiat (1851–1917), after whom Keng Kiat Street in Tiong Bahru is named, moved from Malacca to Singapore sometime in the second half of the 19th century and became a partner of a shipping company called Keng Yong Brothers on Telok Ayer Street.

Lee Keng Kiat had six sons and four daughters. His fifth son was Lee Chim Huk (the father of Lee Kip Lee and Lee Kip Lin). Among the siblings, Lee Chim Huk was closest to his brother, Lee Chim Tuan, who was older by nine years. In his childhood memoir *Amber Sands*, Lee Kip Lee recounts that his father and uncle went to the extent of pooling their finances into a common kitty which they called the "Tuan-Huk" account. He remembers that "although the bulk of the income [was] derived from Uncle's sources, Uncle didn't mind that Pa, with his wife and five children, were spending more of it than he did".

Lee Chim Tuan grew up to become a successful entrepreneur. With his younger brother Lee Chim Huk as his partner, they ventured into various businesses in Singapore and Malaya. Lee Chim Tuan was also one of the founding-directors of *The Malaya Tribune* newspaper, which started in Singapore in 1914. But for the most part, he was better known as the "right-hand man" of his father's first cousin Lee Choon Guan (1868–1924), a prominent businessman[1] and the son of Malacca-born Lee Cheng Yan who, in 1858, established Cheng Yan & Co., one of the leading Chinese firms in Singapore at the time and dealing mainly in property and financing.

In 1912, Lee Choon Guan co-founded Chinese Commercial Bank together with the Straits Chinese luminary Lim Boon Keng[2] and a few other Chinese merchants, and was appointed its chairman. Lee was also one of the founding directors of Hong Ho Hong Bank in 1917, and sat on the board of several important companies, including the Straits Steamship Company.

Lee Chim Tuan was appointed as general manager of Cheng Yan & Co., and over time became the trusted aide and "confidential manager" to his boss Lee Choon Guan. So close were their ties that in 1921, the younger Lee accompanied his employer, his wife and their family on a long holiday to Europe, America and China. When Lee Choon Guan passed away in 1924, Lee Chim Tuan was named as one of the trustees of the estate in the will.

Overview of the Collection

The Lee Kip Lee and Lee Kip Lin Family Archives contain approximately 6,000 items, mainly the business and private correspondences of Lee Kip Lee, Lee Kip Lin, Lee Chim Tuan, Lee Chim Huk, Lee Choon Guan and other family members. Besides letters, there are also business documents such as company annual reports, minutes of meetings, busi-

(Facing page front) A notice on 29 April 1943 announcing the annual general meeting that was to take place on 2 May 1943 to elect a new committee for the Goh Loo Club (吾庐俱乐部). Members of the club were mainly of Hokkien ancestry and included prominent community leaders and businessmen such as the Straits Chinese luminary Lim Boon Keng. Goh Loo Club and Singapore Chinese Weekly Entertainment Club (中华维基利俱乐部), both located on Club Street, were leading Chinese social clubs of the time, providing a space for members to relax as well as socialise and network.
(Facing page back) Lee Choon Guan was a prominent member of the Straits Chinese community and also well regarded by the British. He was frequently invited to attend social functions, such as the dinner given on 18 March 1920 by the Chinese community for the newly appointed Governor of the Straits Settlements, Laurence Nunns Guillemard.
(Above) Lee Chim Huk, father of Lee Kip Lee and Lee Kip Lin, striking a pose with his brother Lee Chim Tuan (standing) and a niece, in the vicinity of Amoy Street, where they grew up, c. 1900. *Courtesy of Peter Lee.*

Mr and Mrs Lee Choon Guan (she is dressed in a *qun-ao* [裙袄] and standing next to her husband in a Western-style suit) in a photograph taken in the 1920s. Lee Chim Tuan, who was the trusted aide of Lee Choon Guan (his father's cousin and a director of the Straits Steamship Company) is standing at the extreme left wearing a hat. *Courtesy of Peter Lee.*

ness contracts, ledger books and receipts, as well as personal family records such as estate papers, household accounts books, bank statements, remittance slips, invitation cards, postcards and school magazines.

Spanning nearly a century between the 1890s and 1980s, the collection covers critical periods in Singapore's history, from the colonial era to World War II and the Japanese Occupation, the subsequent return of the British, and the post-independence period.

Assistant Professor Koh Keng We of Nanyang Technological University's School of Humanities, who has a keen interest in Southeast Asian history and previewed the collection, had this to say: "The collection provides a unique window into the social, cultural, business, and political lives of members of a Chinese Peranakan family over two generations" through which "... we can obtain a detailed picture of their everyday lives, in terms of their business activities, the social and cultural organisations and events that they took part in, their networks, and the social, political, and cultural worlds they lived in."

Insights into the History of Business

Indeed, one of the most significant aspects of the collection is the record of business activities and transactions preserved in various letters and documents of the extended Lee family network. These documents serve as primary source materials pertaining to the business and economic history of Singapore – particularly the shipping, banking, mining, rubber and oil industries – from the early 1900s onwards.

Although Singapore did not produce tin or oil, and its rubber yield was negligible, these commodities were the island's most important exports after the 19th century and once described as "the three pillars" of Singapore's economic growth. In the first decade of the 1900s, tin was Singapore's leading export until it was overtaken by rubber in the 1920s. Hence, many of the letters and documents from the early 20th century onwards record the family members' business activities in rubber and tin as well as their involvement in companies such as Peninsular Tin, Malacca Pinda Rubber Company and Sime Darby & Co.

By the 1920s, oil had overtaken tin to become Singapore's second most important export. Seizing the opportunity, Lee Chim Tuan and his brother Lee Chim Huk became involved in the oil industry from the very start. Singapore's oil sector took root in 1891 when Shell (which started out as M. Samuel and Company) began using Pulau Bukom as a storage centre for kerosene. Seeing an opportunity, the two men, along with another brother Lee Chim Teck, established Lee Chim Teck & Co., which provided stevedoring and material handling services to Shell.

When Lee Chim Teck passed away in 1927, the company was renamed Lee Chim Tuan, or more popularly LCT, and continued its long relationship with Shell over the next few decades. So valued was the relationship that when Lee Chim Tuan passed away in 1955, the flag at the Shell's signal station on Pulau Bukom was lowered to half-mast as a mark of respect.

Lee Kip Lee joined LCT after the war and later managed it with his sister-in-law Lee Li-ming (who was married to his brother Lee Kip Lin) until his retirement in 1988, when the company wound up its business. LCT's business correspondences, meeting minutes and other records capture a rarely explored slice of the history of the oil industry in Singapore, including the management of the labour force that supported the industry. At the same time, these papers document the history and development of Pulau Bukom into the key oil and petrochemicals facility it has become today.

The collection also contains significant documents pertaining to the shipping trade and the banking industry in Singapore during the early half of the 20th century. Notable items include a folder containing letters and business papers relating to Straits Steamship Company's acquisition of Eastern Shipping Company in 1922, providing an insider's look into the negotiations and discussions between the two companies. The Straits Steamship Company had been founded some three decades earlier in 1890 by Dutchman Theodore Cornelius Bogaardt and several local Chinese businessmen, including Lee Cheng Yan (father of Lee Choon Guan), Tan Jiak Kim and Tan Keong Saik.

In the early years, Straits Steamship focused its operations on the western coast of the Malay Peninsula and mainly transported tin ore. Following in his father's footsteps, Lee Choon Guan became a director in the Straits Steamship Company. One of the company's most successful achievements under his stewardship was the acquisition of the Penang-based Eastern Shipping Company in 1922.

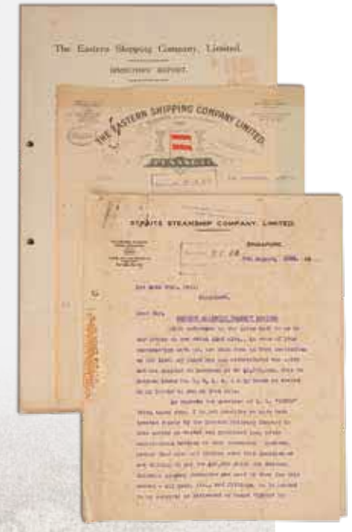
The Eastern Shipping Company was initially controlled by the Khaw family in Penang who was well connected with the Siamese royal court. The company provided shipping services to tin-rich areas in Burma, Siam and Malaya, and by 1922 had amassed a fleet of 40 vessels. The fleet, however, was in poor shape as there was not enough money to maintain it. Sensing a business opportunity, Lee Choon Guan tasked Lee Chim Tuan to negotiate the takeover of Eastern Shipping Company. The younger Lee eventually acquired the company for $1.3 million. For his efforts, he was paid a commission of 7.5 percent of the sale price.

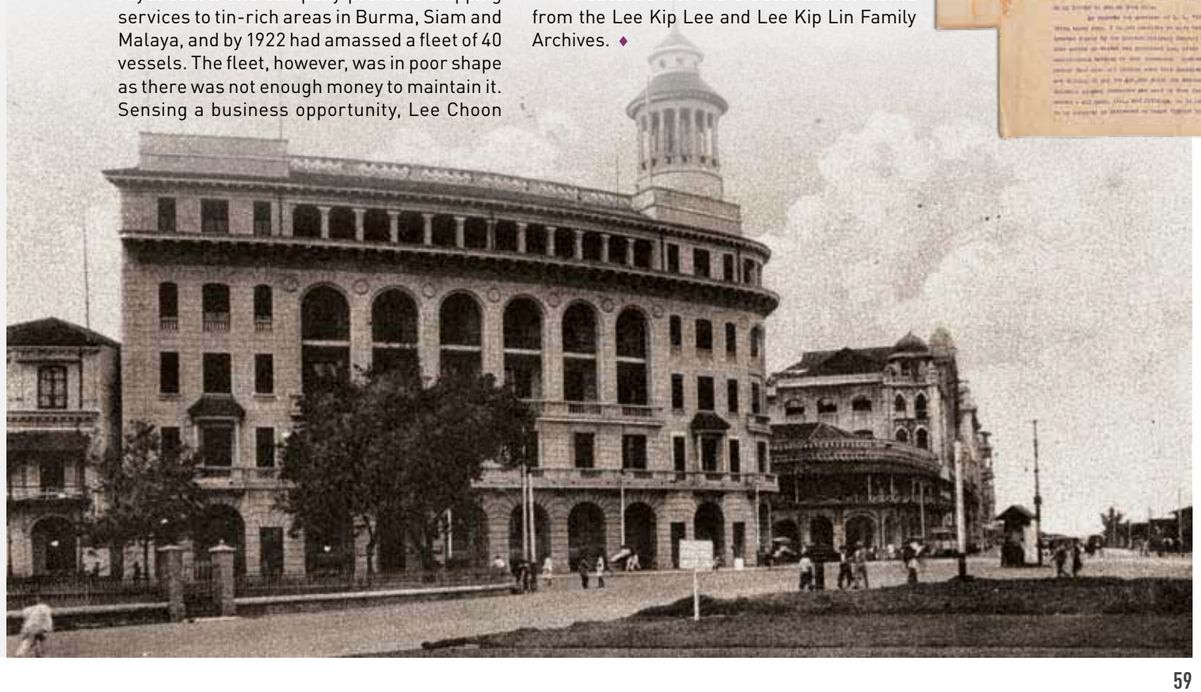
The collection is important for the valuable insights it provides into the Straits Chinese business community, and the clues that point to its business connections and personal ties. The collection not only contains the papers of the Lee family, but also those of individuals from the family's extended circle of relatives, friends and associates. These include prominent Straits Chinese such as Tan Cheng Lock, who was also the brother-in-law of Lee Chim Huk. Tan later became the founder and president of the Malayan Chinese Association, and played a critical role in the economic, social and political history of Singapore and Malaya in the years leading to and after World War II.

The collection also includes documents pertaining to other important Chinese business leaders in Singapore and Malaya, such as Lim Peng Siang, Chan Kang Swi and Chee Bong Quee, as well as the Lee family's correspondences with British officials and merchants and even members of the Malay royalty.

Apart from business documents, the collection also offers a rich resource of primary research materials on other aspects of Singapore's history – such as the correspondences and records of the Lee family during World War II documenting the conditions, deprivation and strategies for survival during this period.

Featured here is a selection of items from the Lee Kip Lee and Lee Kip Lin Family Archives. ♦





(Below) One of many letters regarding the acquisition of Eastern Shipping Company by the Straits Steamship Company in 1922. In this letter dated 9 August 1922 from the Straits Steamship Company to Lee Chim Tuan (who was helping to negotiate the purchase), the company agrees to increase its offer price for Eastern Shipping Company to $1.3 million. The sale eventually went through.
(Bottom) The original Ocean Building erected in 1866 at the corner of Collyer Quay and Raffles Quay was demolished to make way for this second Ocean Building that was completed in 1923. The Straits Steamship Company was located in this building, 1920s. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

1

6th September,1932

The Secretary.,
The Chinese Commercial Bank,Ltd,
Singapore.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of 5th inst., I shall be glad if you will vote for the amalgamation of the Ho Hong Bank with the Chinese Commercial Bank and Oversea Chinese Bank.

Yours faithfully,

The Chinese Commercial Bank, Limited.

Singapore, 5th September 1932.

Lee Chim Tuan Esq.,
Singapore.

Dear Sir,

With reference to the 75 shares in the Ho Hong Bank deposited with us as security for your overdraft

Singapore, 5th September 1932.

Lee Chim Tuan Esq.,
Singapore.

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your letter of date, instructing us to vote in favour of the Amalgamation of the Ho Hong Bank with the Oversea Chinese Bank and the Bank.

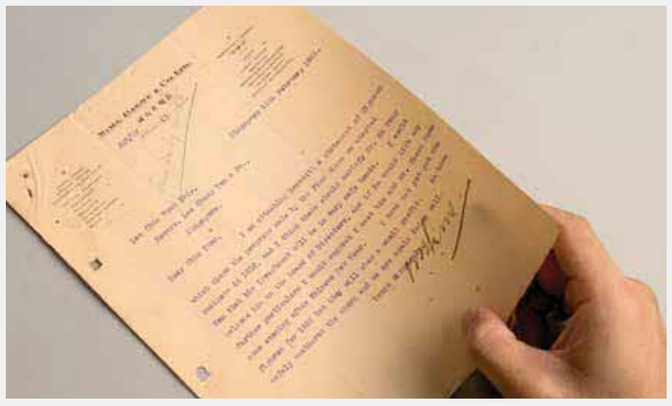
Yours faithfully,

1. **Letters pertaining to the formation of the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation, 1932**
A set of letters pertaining to a critical period in the history of banking in Singapore, namely the amalgamation of three Hokkien banks – Chinese Commercial Bank (1912), Ho Hong Bank (1917) and Oversea-Chinese Bank (1919) – into the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation in 1932. One of the letters, dated 5 September 1932, is from Lee Chim Tuan to the company secretary of the Chinese Commercial Bank (in which Lee held shares) to cast his vote for the merger of the three banks.

2. **Letter from W.M. Sime to Lee Chim Tuan, 15 February 1923**
W.M. Sime was co-founder of Sime Darby & Co., a rubber and tin mine agent and merchant established in Malacca in 1910, while Lee Chim Tuan was a director of the company. This letter was written shortly before the businessman Eu Tong Sen – of the Eu Yan Sang chain of medicinal shops – invested in Sime Darby. In this letter, Sime asks Lee to invite Eu to join the company's board of directors. Sime enclosed with the letter a report on the company's financial statements, from the year it began operations in 1910 to 1921, to prove to Eu that the company had sound financial standing and to assure Eu that his investment would be "in very safe hands".

3. **Agreement between Asiatic Petroleum Company (Straits Settlements) Limited and Lee Chim Tuan, 12 July 1927**
This is a contract signed between Lee Chim Tuan and Asiatic Petroleum Company (APC), later renamed Shell, in which APC agrees to hire Lee to provide labour for its installations at Pulau Bukom and Pulau Samboe (in Indonesia). According to the contract, Lee was to supply and maintain at these islands a sufficient supply of labour to meet APC's requirements, including "experienced mandores and winchmen" as well as "coal coolies" to supply coal to steamers. In return, APC would pay Lee for the labour at agreed rates. The contract also required Lee to hire a manager who would devote his "full time and attention" to the job, and it was agreed that his brother Lee Chim Huk would be ideal for the role.

2



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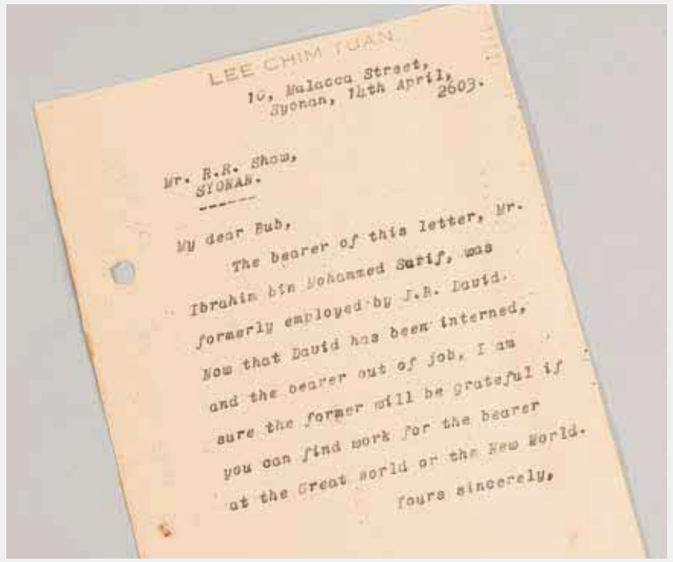


LEE CHIM TUAN
10, Malacca Street,
Syonan, 14th April, 2603.

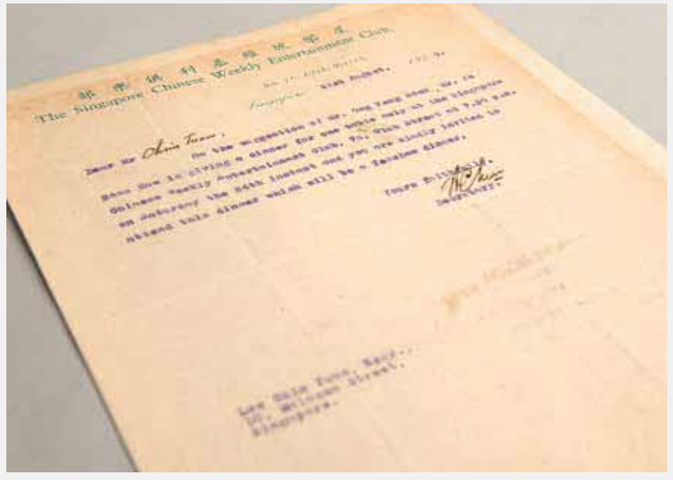
Mr. R.R. Shaw,
SYONAN.

My dear Bub,

The bearer of this letter, Mr. Ibrahim bin Mohammad Sarif, was formerly employed by J.H. David. Now that David has been interned, and the bearer out of job, I am sure the former will be grateful if you can find work for the bearer at the Great World or the New World.

Yours sincerely,

5



The Singapore Chinese Weekly Entertainment Club.

Dear Mr Chim Tuan,

On the suggestion of Mr. Ong Yang Sam, Sr. we have to invite a dinner for the above club to the Chinese Weekly Entertainment Club, 77, Club Street on Saturday the 24th instant and you are kindly invited to attend this dinner which will be a Fancies dinner.

Yours Sincerely,

Secretary.

Lee Chim Tuan, Esqr.,
10, Malacca Street,
Singapore.

4. **Letter from Lee Chim Tuan to Run Run Shaw, 14 April 1943**
A letter from Lee Chim Tuan to Run Run Shaw – who later established Shaw Brothers Studio – written during the Japanese Occupation. The letter seeks Shaw's assistance in finding work for a Ibrahim bin Mohammad Sharif. Ibrahim was made jobless because his European employer J.S. David had been interned by the Japanese.

5. **Letter from the secretary of the Singapore Chinese Weekly Entertainment Club to Lee Chim Tuan, 24 August 1946**
This is an invitation to Lee Chim Tuan to attend a dinner hosted by "Tiger Balm King" Aw Boon How at the Singapore Chinese Weekly Entertainment Club (中华维基利俱乐部) on Club Street. The club was a private "millionaires' club" for the Straits Chinese community and has a history going back to 1891. Lee Choon Guan was a founding member of the club and served as the club's president for a number of years.

Notes

1 Song, O.S. (1984). *One hundred years' history of the Chinese in Singapore* (p. 130). Singapore: Oxford University Press. (Call no.: RSING 959.57 SON)

2 Lim Boon Keng (1869–1957) was a prominent member of the Straits Chinese community. Trained as a medical doctor, Lim was also a public intellectual and writer who championed Confucianism and supported Sun Yat-sen's revolution in China. He served as a member of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council for 14 years and pushed for social reforms aimed at reforming the lives of the Chinese.

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MAKAN PLACES AND COFFEE SOCKS

Barbara Quek highlights publications that showcase Singapore's unique hawker fare from the National Library's Legal Deposit Collection.

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Singaporeans are perennially eating or else talking about their next meal – such is their obsession with food. The city's gastronomic scene is renowned, with *makan* ("eat" in Malay) places offering everything from hawker fare to haute cuisine. The inclusion of hawker stalls in the *Michelin Guide Singapore* (the third edition was launched recently[1]) is testimony of the heights that hawker fare with its humble street food origins has risen to.

Hawker Tales

Hawker centres are quintessentially Singaporean institutions. First-time visitors – usually tourists – are often amazed at the rich and affordable array of freshly cooked food conveniently housed under one roof.

The "irony of the hawker centre" in Singapore, notes social scientist and geographer Lily Kong, is that the hawker no longer goes around selling goods.[2] Singapore's hawker culture can be traced to itinerant hawkers from the 19th to mid-20th centuries who literally moved from one place to another calling out to customers and peddling food, drinks and household wares. In order to eradicate problems arising from contamination, improper refuse disposal and traffic congestion caused by makeshift stalls, the government resettled street hawkers within purpose-built standalone hawker centres from the 1970s onwards.

Over the years, street hawker food has made its way to hawker centres, coffeeshops, food courts and even the menus of fancy restaurants.[3] The iconic Satay Club at the Esplanade and Glutton's Square on Orchard Road are long gone, but more traditional hawker centres such as Newton Food Centre, Maxwell Food Centre and Chomp Chomp Food Centre still pack in the crowds despite competition from fast food outlets, air-conditioned food courts and new-fangled cafes.[4]

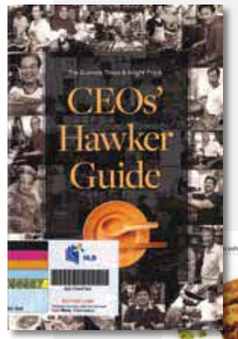
Kopitiam and Coffee Socks

The ubiquitous *kopitiam* (literally "coffeeshop"; *kopi* meaning "coffee" in Malay and *tiam* for "shop" in Hokkien) is found in almost every neighbourhood in Singapore, with many open 24/7 for people who need their coffee (or supper) fix. Coffeeshops have been around for as long as people remember them and have come to symbolise our forefathers' entrepreneurial spirit.

Barbara Quek is a Senior Librarian with the National Library, Singapore. She is currently with the Advocacy & Statutory Function group that oversees the compliance of Legal Deposit in Singapore.

1. **Around Lau Pa Sat: A "What's On" Guide to Singapore's First and Only Festival Market** (Sep/Oct 1993)
Opened in 1894, Lau Pa Sat (meaning "old market") – also known as Telok Ayer Market – in the Central Business District – is known as the "grande dame of markets". The market was converted into a hawker centre in 1972. The Sep/Oct 1993 edition of the newsletter features budget meals and recommends dishes such as *kueh pie tee*, vegetables and rice, and soup from the various stalls.

2. **Not for Sale: Singapore's Remaining Heritage Street Food Vendors** (2013)
This commemorative book pays tribute to 300 hawker and street food stalls who have had a long history in Singapore. The editorial team visited various hawker centres in Singapore over a two-year period to locate, interview and document the trials and tribulations of our heritage hawkers. As highlighted in the introduction, each has a unique story to tell, with its "own set of challenges, circumstances and accomplishments".[5]



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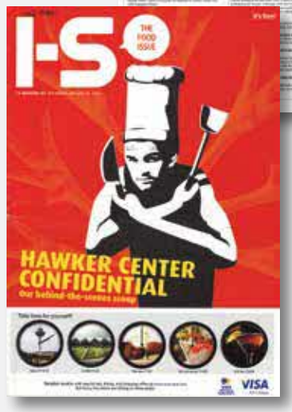

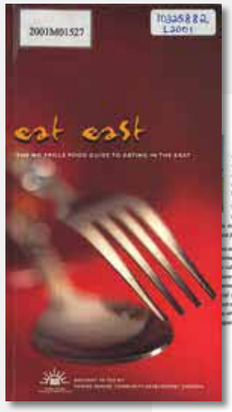

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WHAT'S YOUR BREW?

Nothing rouses the senses more than the aroma of freshly roasted *kopi* brewed in traditional "coffee socks", which are reusable filter bags made of muslin. To enjoy a proper Singapore-style coffee, you need to order as locals do. For example, if you just say "kopi" when placing your order, it means that you want coffee with condensed milk and sugar, and when you say "kopi c", you'll be given coffee with evaporated milk and sugar. If you like your coffee thick, say "kopi gao" and if you don't want sugar, remember to say "kosong".

Foreign residents in Singapore have also learned to appreciate local coffee, and taken to using these local lexicons with gusto. According to food editor Tan Hsueh Yun, the ultimate treat is "kopi gu yew", or coffee with butter, which contains just enough butter and "condensed milk to sweeten the drink without obscuring the nuances of the coffee".[1]

Notes

1 Tan, H.Y. (2014, September 26). Food picks. *The Straits Times*, p. 6. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.

The coffeeshop is patronised by Singaporeans from all walks of life. It is a place where one can enjoy good local food and catch up on gossip over a freshly brewed cup of *kopi* or *teh* ("tea") paired with toast slathered with *kaya* (coconut jam) and half-boiled eggs drizzled with dark soy sauce.

There are no baristas at these coffeeshops, just "uncles" and "aunties" who have mastered the art of making that perfect cup of coffee. Doctor and food blogger Leslie Tay remembers the "uncle in pajama pants making *kopi*" and reminisces that "stepping into Heap Seng Leong [along North Bridge Road] is like stepping into a time portal".[6]

Here is a sampling of publications featuring hawker stalls and coffeeshops from the National Library's Legal Deposit Collection. ♦

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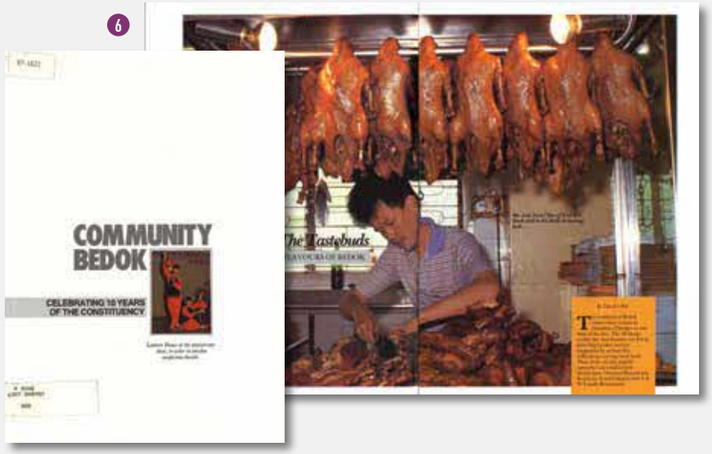

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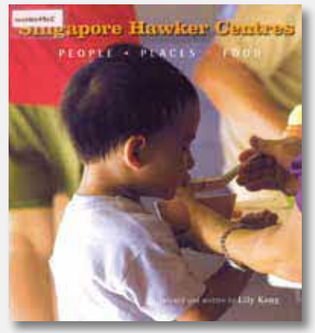

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3. **The Business Times & Knight Frank CEOs' Hawker Guide** (2010)
Published by *The Business Times* and Knight Frank in 2010 to raise funds to preserve Singapore's hawker heritage, this book presents the personal food stories of some of Singapore's prominent business leaders. In all, 134 stalls in 26 local food categories are featured, ranging from *bak kut teh* and *nasi padang* to *roti prata*. Obviously, CEOs are just as comfortable eating out at hawker centres as they do at fine-dining restaurants.[7]

4. **I-S Magazine** (2008)
The writers claim that it is "no secret that food factors largely in the psyche of the average Singaporean… [and] nothing comes remotely close to the colourful experience of eating in a hawker centre… from the most sinful *char kway teow*, *or luak* (fried oyster), Hokkien noodles, chicken rice and carrot cake…"[8] They stake out four popular hawker centres – People's Park, Maxwell, Newton and Bedok Interchange – to find out what goes on in a day in the life of the average hawker.

5. **Eat East: Food Guide of the Marine Parade District** (2001)
This food guide was published for residents of Marine Parade housing estate. It features some of Singapore's best-loved multiracial *makan* places.

6. **Community Bedok: Celebrating 10 Years of the Constituency** (1987)
In "Adventure for the Tastebuds: The Varied Flavours of Bedok", writer Lau Li-choo claims that residents living in Bedok have no reason to complain of hunger. The constituency is served by many hawker centres and coffeeshops selling good food. Pictured here is Lau Soon Chye of Wah Kee Duck stall, located across the road from the former Bedok and Changi cinemas, deboning ducks for his customers. Unfortunately, the stall has since closed.

7. **Singapore Hawker Centres: People, Places, Food** (2007)
Commissioned by the National Environment Agency, this coffee table book by Lily Kong looks at the changing face of hawking in Singapore, and features different types of local food. The book also includes case studies and interviews with enterprising hawkers, and is illustrated with photos.

8. **旧机场路小贩中心百货商店二周年纪念特刊 (Old Airport Road Hawkers' Centre & Emporium 2nd Anniversary Souvenir Magazine)** (1975)
The Old Airport Road Hawkers' Centre & Emporium opened in 1973 with 192 food stalls on the first floor and 120 shops selling sundries on the second floor. It was so popular that people from all over Singapore came here to shop and eat. Kallang Airport was located nearby between 1937 and 1955, hence its name. Known as Old Airport Road Food Centre today, it still continues to draw the crowds as foodies say that some of Singapore's best hawker fare is found here.

WHAT IS LEGAL DEPOSIT?

Legal Deposit is one of the statutory functions of the National Library and is supported through the provisions of the National Library Board Act. Under the act, all publishers, commercial or otherwise, are required by law to deposit two copies of every physical work and one copy of every electronic work published in Singapore, for sale or public distribution, with the National Library within four weeks of its publication. The Legal Deposit function ensures that a repository of Singapore's published heritage is preserved for future generations. For more information, please visit www.nlb.gov.sg/Deposit.

Notes

1 Michelin Guide. (2018). *Michelin Guide experiences: Restaurants, lifestyle in Singapore*. Retrieved from Michelin Guide website.
2 Kong, L. (2007). *Singapore hawker centres: People, places, food* (p. 31). Singapore: National Environment Agency. (Call no.: RSING 381.18095957 KON)
3 Pang, J. (2013). *Not for sale: Singapore's remaining heritage street food vendors* (Foreword). Singapore: Good Food Syndicate LLP. (Call no. RSING 647.9509225957 PAN)
4 Kong, 2007, p. 15.
5 Pang, 2013, p. 12.
6 Tay, L. (2013, November 26). *Heap Seng Leong coffeeshop: And time stood still*. Retrieved from ieatishootipost.sg website.
7 Phoon, A., & Cheah, U-H. (2010). *The Business Times & Knight Frank CEOs' hawker guide*. Singapore: Business Times. (Call no.: RSING 647.95095957 BUS)
8 Wan, B., & Yong, Y.S. (2008, January 18). The great hawker crackdown. *I-S magazine* (pp. 8, 10, 12). Singapore: Asia City Pub. (Call no.: RSING 052 ISM)

ARCHIVING THE SINGAPORE-WIDE WEB

Recent amendments to the National Library Board Act now allow the National Library to preserve Singapore websites without the express permission of content owners. **Shereen Tay** explains.

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Have you ever bookmarked a favourite website only to later find a broken link, or worse, find that it no longer exists? Unlike print materials, websites are ephemeral, and their content easily updated or removed with a mere swipe of the screen or click of the mouse.

Within the span of just one year, between 2016 and 2017, the total number of websites on the World Wide Web grew by a whopping 69 percent to more than 1.7 billion.[1] As at 10 September 2018, the number is close to a staggering 2 billion.

Websites are important records of memory, knowledge and history, and as more and more content is created online, there is an increasing need to ensure that websites are systematically archived and the information preserved for future generations. In recognition of this, many national libraries and institutions around the world today are collecting and preserving websites through a process called web archiving.

As the custodian of our nation's published heritage, the National Library of Singapore embarked on a web archiving initiative more than a decade ago in 2006. An online portal, the Web Archive Singapore (WAS), was specially created to archive Singapore-related websites. Its reach, however, was limited as the National Library Board (NLB) Act only empowered the National Library to collect print materials via the Legal Deposit function.[2] As the archiving of websites involved the administratively cumbersome process of seeking the written consent of website owners, it hampered the building of a comprehensive national collection of Singapore websites.

Following in the footsteps of national libraries in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea, the NLB Act amendment bill was passed by parliament in July 2018 to allow Singapore's National Library to archive websites containing the .sg domain without the need for written permission.[3] With the introduction of the new legislation, the library intends to archive publicly available .sg websites at least once a year. Selected websites, such as those covering significant events like National Day and the Southeast Asian Games, will be archived more frequently.

Shereen Tay is an Associate Librarian with the National Library, Singapore. She is part of the team that oversees the statutory functions of the National Library, in particular web archiving.

1. **National Day Parade** (Archived on 25 August 2015)
The National Day Parade website is updated annually to reflect the programmes and events of that year's celebrations. The National Library has archived the website since 2006, including the momentous SG50 milestone in 2015 celebrating Singapore's Golden Jubilee.

2. **Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts** (Archived on 27 January 2006)
The Ministry of Communications and Information has undergone several reorganisations and name changes since its formation in 1959 as the Ministry of Culture. Prior to its most recent change in 2012, it was known as the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts.

3. **Fighting SARS Together!** (Archived on 3 July 2006)
The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003 is a tragic episode in Singapore's history. This website was launched by the government to keep the public informed of the latest news and information on the disease.

4. **First Toa Payoh Secondary School** (Archived on 8 November 2015)
Founded in 1968, First Toa Payoh Secondary School was one of four secondary schools merged in 2016 due to falling student enrolment. The WAS portal contains several archives of its website, including the 2015 version before it was absorbed into Bartley Secondary School.

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Revamping Web Archive Singapore (WAS)

In preparation of the work ahead, the National Library revamped the WAS portal in August 2018. The website now has a completely new look with added features and functions, along with other enhancements to provide a better user experience.

Curation of website content took centre stage in the portal's transformation. "Special Collections" contains websites on significant events or topics relating to Singapore, while the monthly "Librarian's Pick" highlights a specific archived website that is of interest for that month. Selected and managed by librarians of the National Library, these two features aim to promote the web archive collection, generate interest among researchers and encourage further exploration of the portal.

The search capability of the portal has been enhanced too and now facilitates full-text search right down to the individual webpages and files within the archived website. In addition, screenshots of archived websites are included; these are especially handy when technical limitations hamper the display of archived websites.

To encourage public participation, users are invited to help build the national web archive collection by recommending websites that should be archived via an online nomination form. These website suggestions will be reviewed by librarians before they are selected for archiving.

The revamped Web Archive Singapore portal now boasts new features such as curated content and enhanced full-text search.

Next Steps

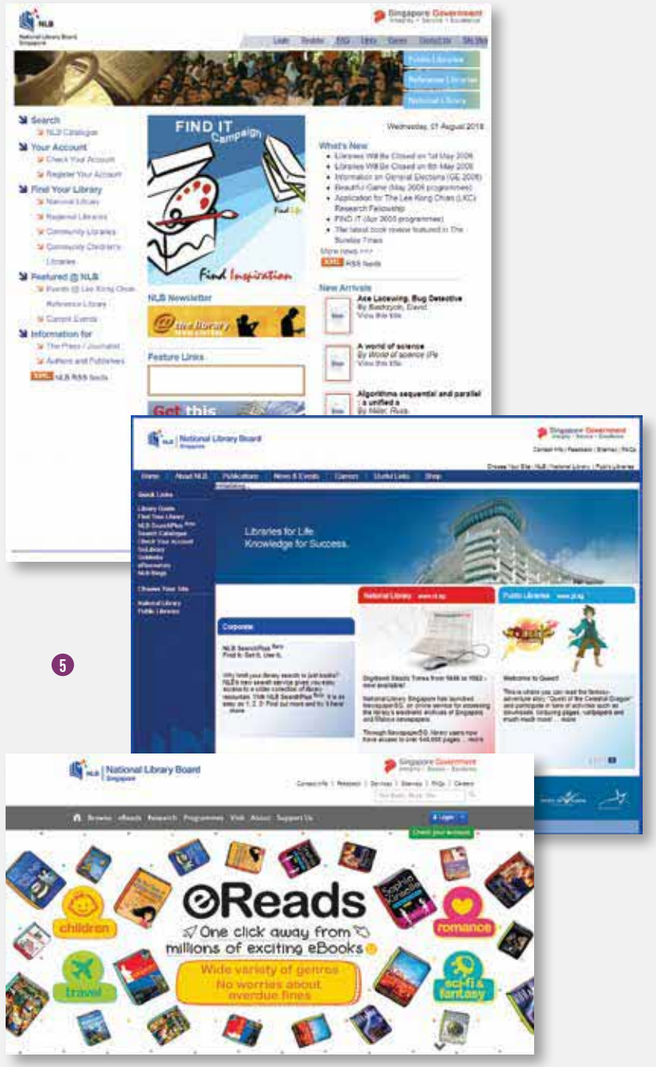
The new legislation to collect and preserve Singapore-related websites is a notable step forward for NLB. It enables the National Library to strengthen its national collection by collecting published heritage materials that are born digital, including all Singapore websites. These digital materials will not only enrich and supplement existing local content and create a lasting legacy for future generations of Singaporeans, but also enhance the National Library's standing as a public and heritage institution.

The journey, however, does not end here. Given the more than 180,000 registered .sg domain websites[4] and with the number set to increase every year, collecting and preserving Singapore-related websites is an uphill task. To complicate matters, there are many non-.sg websites out there with significant Singaporean content. As non-.sg websites are excluded under the new NLB Act mandate, the National Library is legally bound to seek written consent from website owners before such sites can be archived.

The WAS portal currently comprises mainly government websites as well as a handful of websites of private organisations that had previously granted NLB permission to archive their sites.

Featured here are some highlights from the collection. ♦

5. **National Library Board** (Archived on 28 April 2006, 15 November 2009 and 24 August 2015) Archived websites are not only useful in tracing organisational history, they also show how website designs and functionality have changed over the years. The National Library Board's website has undergone several transformations between 2006 and 2016. From static HTML to dynamic content such as carousel banners, websites have to continually reinvent themselves to improve the user experience.



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WHAT IS WEB ARCHIVING?

One of the new statutory functions of the National Library Board (NLB) Act is web archiving. Web archiving, which ensures that Singapore's online published heritage is preserved for future generations, is done via a systematic process of collecting content that has been published on the World Wide Web at a specific point in time, storing it in an archive, and making the collected data accessible for future research. Under the NLB Act, the National Library is empowered to collect publicly available Singapore websites that end with the .sg domain. For more information, please visit eresources.nlb.gov.sg/webarchives.

Notes

1 Internet Live Stats. (n.d.). *Total number of websites*. Retrieved from the Internet Live Stats website.
2 Legal Deposit is a statutory function of NLB. All publishers, commercial or otherwise, are required by law to deposit two copies of every work published in Singapore with the National Library within four weeks of its publication. The National Library has collected close to 1.3 million print publications over the last 50 years.
3 The amendments to the NLB Act extended the scope of the Legal Deposit function to include digital materials and web archiving. All publishers are now required by law to deposit one copy of every digital work published in Singapore with the National Library within four weeks of its publication.
4 Singapore Network Information Centre. (n.d.). *Registration statistics*. Retrieved from the Singapore Network Information Centre website.

Step into the World of Advertising in Early Singapore

Medical Office Poster, c. 1930s

This poster for a prominent local pharmacy was designed in the Shanghai 'picture calendar' style, which was highly popular in China and among overseas Chinese communities from the 1920s to 1940s.

Visit the exhibition to view more of such advertisements.

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