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IMMORTALITY AND LEGACY

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Contents

Director's Column

HOW DOES ONE ACHIEVE IMMORTALITY IN A CROWDED SPACE?

Some people may be content with their scant 15 minutes of fame, the fleeting media publicity that celebrated pop artist Andy Warhol famously referred to in 1968.

The reality is quite different: humans seek a more enduring form of immortality, and one that almost always revolves around their lives, loves and beliefs.

In this issue of *BiblioAsia*, I hope time will stand still long enough for us to provide context and specificity to the memories that are fast fading — as well as the ones we thought we'd understood for the longest time.

In the light of recent aspirations to achieve in our urban space the *kampong* spirit and the easy associations of neighbourliness and community, Nor Afidah recaptures in "Kampong Living: A–Z", the details of life in the village — how once the breaking of dawn and the end of daylight were significant events in daily life.

In a similar vein, Sharon Teng documents the vanishing trades of Singapore in "Time-Forgotten Trades" and explores new ways to "immortalise" the old ways, including digital recreations of these vanishing (or rather vanquished) trades and, in the case of Chye Seng Huat Hardware, keeping the original facade of a shophouse and reinventing it as a hip coffee bar.

The social norms and cultural values of generations past encapsulated in clans and kinsfolk are explored in Lee Meiyu's article — "The Jiapu Chronicles: What's in a Name?" — which traces family lineage using the means of *jiapu*, or Chinese genealogical records. Curator Tan Huism with gifted photographer Sean Lee show how the tracing of lineage can also be performed through the lines and contours of one's hands in their photographic showcase from the Singapore Memory Project's "Hands: Gift of a Generation" exhibition. I am especially taken with the story of Huism's grandmother's hands as they experienced different life stages, and how those hands are now indelibly reflected in Huism's own.

The capturing of an older Singapore is a growing fixation for Singaporeans and in Jun Zubillaga-Pow's article on the life of the late Singaporean composer, Tsao Chieh, read how the latter attempted a composition based on Turnbull's *A History of Singapore*; the dramatic work charts Singapore's progress, with each section of Tsao's work evoking a distinctive period of our nation.

Finally, while the process of recollection is delightful, it can also be a haphazard one. The Overseas Chinese in Singapore are often remembered for their financial contributions to China's war efforts. But their legacy went beyond money: Wayne Soon examines the impact that Overseas Chinese, in particular Singaporean-born medical doctors such as Lim Boon Keng and his son Robert Lim, had in China and how their efforts helped established higher standards of medical practice there.

The reality is that a mere 15 minutes of fame doesn't amount to much (Warhol may be turning in his grave as I write this) because the search for immortality and legacy is about creating a sense of permanence that outlives ordinary human perception of time and space.

I hope this issue of *BiblioAsia* extends the National Library's role in serving the reader with different perspectives of the peoples and lives of Singapore past — and in the process immortalise them in a manner that is based on a deeper appreciation of the context in which they once existed.

Gene Tan
Director, National Library

Editorial & Production

Managing Editor: Stephanie Pee
Assistant Director (Publishing): Francis Dorai
Editorial Support: Masamah Ahmad, Sharon Koh
Contributors: Kevin Khoo, Lee Meiyu, Lu Wenshi, Nor-Afidah bte Abd Rahman, Wayne Soon, Bonny Tan, Tan Huism, Sharon Teng, Zhang Renfeng, Jun Zubillaga-Pow
Design & Print: Relay Room, Times Printers

Please direct all correspondence to:
National Library Board
100 Victoria Street #14-01
National Library Building
Singapore 188064
Tel: +65 6332 3255
Fax: +65 6332 3611
Email: ref@library.nlb.gov.sg
Website: www.nlb.gov.sg
BiblioAsia is available online at:
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BiblioAsia, the flagship publication of the National Library, features articles on the history, culture and heritage of Singapore within the larger Asian context, and also presents highlights of the National Library's collections.

On the Cover

These hands, featured in the Singapore Memory Project's exhibition "Hands: Gift of a Generation", are just a few of the hands that have helped to build Singapore. (TOP ROW: LEFT TO RIGHT) Ang Mui Choo and Ho Hwee Long; (MIDDLE ROW: LEFT TO RIGHT) Leana Tamyah and M. Siraj; (BOTTOM ROW: LEFT TO RIGHT) Mdm Kok and Mr Low. *Photography by Sean Lee.*

SINGAPORE MEN OF SCIENCE AND MEDICINE IN CHINA: 1911–1949

Wayne Soon was a Lee Kong Chian Research Fellow at the National Library and is currently a PhD candidate in the History Department at Princeton University. His dissertation examines the history of Western medicine In China, with a focus on the new medical institutions created by Overseas Chinese doctors in China during the first half of the 20th century.

Wayne Soon sheds light on the enduring and underrated legacy of Overseas Chinese doctors such as Lim Boon Keng and Robert Lim on China's medical institutions.

HISTORICALLY, THE OVERSEAS CHINESE — DEFINED

as people of Chinese descent or birth who live most of their lives outside of China — were generally thought of as successful merchants and entrepreneurs, as coolies who toiled in mines, plantations, railways and farms in Malaya, Indonesia, Australia, the United States and Cuba, or as tax farmers who collected revenue on behalf of the European colonial authorities.[1] Over time, many of such Overseas Chinese carved a livelihood for themselves and assimilated the cultural and social mores of their adopted countries. As a result, such Chinese have generally been perceived as being much less interested in the affairs of China, especially beyond the focal point of the 1911 revolution when many Overseas Chinese participated in the establishment of the new Republic of China.[2] Indeed, to those Chinese living abroad at that time, the Chinese in China reminded them of the "Qing officials from whom so many emigrants [had] been glad to escape [from]."[3]

Yet, many Overseas Chinese returned to work and live in China, often occupying

(ABOVE) Despite being away from China, many Overseas Chinese such as Dr Lim Boon Keng, still contributed to the development of their homeland in one way or another. A group photograph of the first Straits Chinese British Association's committee. (Back row, from left: Seah Eng Kiat, Lim Boon Keng, Chia Keng Chin, Tan Boo Liat, Tan Hap Seng and Wee Theam Tew. Front row, from left: Ong Kew Hoe, Chan Chun Fook, Tan Chay Yan, Song Ong Siang (Honorary Secretary), Tan Jiak Kim (President), Seah Liang Seah (Vice-President), Lee Cheang Yee and Wee Kim Yam (1900)). *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

the highest echelons of leadership in various institutions in the first half of the 20th century. They range from Penang-born Gu Hongming who became the standard bearer for conservative intellectual currents at Peking University to Singapore-born Wu Tingfang who briefly became the Premier of the Republic of China. Even Tan Kah Kee, whose businesses were largely based in Southeast Asia, was actively involved in setting up schools in Xiamen.

Among these individuals were educated professionals who promoted and instituted Western science and medicine in modern China,[4] including Singapore-born Lim Boon Keng (林文慶 1869 – 1957) and Robert Lim Ko-sheng (林可勝 1897 – 1969).[5] This article focuses on the lesser-known aspects of their time spent in China, which not only broadens the study of the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia but also highlights the history of science, medicine and technology in China and Southeast Asia.

LIM BOON KENG: ADVOCATE FOR SCIENCE AND CONFUCIANISM

Lim Boon Keng was the first ethnic Chinese in Singapore to win the Queen's scholarship in 1887. He studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh from 1888 to 1892. Lim's education at Edinburgh was comprehensive: he attended classes on botany, anatomy, practical physiology, institute of medicine, pathology, surgery and clinical medicine, among several other classes.[6] He graduated with first class honours, the only one out of 204 students who graduated that year. Even though Lim did not enroll in public health classes at the University of Edinburgh, he would later use British texts in public health to establish health services for the new Republic of China in 1911.

Interestingly, Lim sought to integrate his eclectic views of Confucianism with the tenets of modern Western medical science.[7] Lim was a strong proponent of Western medical sciences in China and Southeast Asia. As early as 1897, he introduced the origins and vectors of diseases to readers across Europe and Southeast Asia in an 1897 article entitled "Infectious diseases and the public," published in the *Straits Chinese Magazin*e and read by the English-speaking Chinese diaspora throughout China and Southeast Asia. Lim argued that modern medical science (in the form of physics, chemistry and biology) refuted traditional Chinese understanding that miasma (or "bad air"), and not bacteria and viruses, spread diseases.[8] Lim cited British surgeon Joseph Lister and German bacteriologist Robert Koch, who were both known for their contributions to the study of bacteriology and tuberculosis respectively.

Koch had presented his findings on the *tubercule bacillus*, which causes tuberculosis, at the Berlin Physiological Society on 24 March 1882.[9] Less than five years later, a Chinese doctor trained at the University of Edinburgh published Koch's research halfway across the globe. Clearly, Lim kept pace with the latest changes in the fields of science and hygiene and was eager to share these radical new ideas through the *Straits Chinese Magazine*.

THE "RENOVATION" OF CHINA

Lim believed that the introduction of such cutting-edge modern science and medicine would lead to the "renovation of China." Yet, this promise of a renaissance was not merely contingent on the introduction of new ideas, more schools, better teachers and hardworking students. What was needed was the invalidation of traditional Chinese medical notions of "wind" and "water" and their effect on the human body so that Western medical ideas could take root in the Chinese mind.[10] Lim felt that dispelling these superstitions would come with the acknowledgement of Confucianism as the national religion of the Chinese, a religion based on rationality and acknowledgement of God.[11] "When faithfully carried out and supported by a modern course of liberal education," Lim concluded, "Confucianism [would then become the] ideal religion for which the thinking and critical world is seeking."[12]

Besides writing extensively on the importance of Science and Confucianism in the *Straits Chinese Magazine*, and later in *Principles of Confucianism* (1912), Lim took steps to translate his beliefs into action. Lim believed in an all-rounded education that included the study of sciences for female students. To this end he founded the Singapore Chinese Girls' School in 1899. That same year, in his work at the Legislative Assembly, he actively supported the formation of a school of tropical medicine in Singapore.[13] He was also an advocate for public health works in Singapore and a strong supporter of the King Edward VII Medical College (which later became the National University of Singapore Medical School).[14]

Lim's advocacy also reached China. In 1911, Dr. Sun Yat Sen, the first Provisional President of the Republic of China, appointed Lim to head the first Department of Health in the new Republic. After the dissolution of the Provisional Government in Nanjing, Lim left for Beijing to become the Inspector-General of Hospitals under Yuan Shikai's government where he published his second Chinese book, *Elements of Popular Hygiene* (1912).[15] Based on British doctor E.S. Reynolds's *Primer of Hygiene*, the only surviving copy of Lim's book is found at the National Library of Singapore. Distributed in Beijing and Singapore, the lectures in this handbook were divided into 11 chapters covering topics such as the causes of disease; origins of bacteria; necessities for proper food preparation; design of modern buildings and furniture that facilitate hygienic living; and development of a modern public health system. *Popular Hygiene* was envisioned as a programmatic handbook to help reshape Beijing according to British standards of *weisheng* (hygiene).

Lim continued his involvement in China when he was appointed as the President of Xiamen University (also known as Xiada) in 1921 by his close friend, Tan Kah Kee. There, Lim unequivocally supported the growth of the sciences. In a 1922 report on the university, Lim stated that the entire efforts of the college in recent years had been to promote scientific research, with the goal of establishing a comprehensive "Tan Kah Kee College of Science" (Chen Jiageng Kexueyuan 陳嘉庚科學院) to conduct interdisciplinary research and studies of chemistry, physics, biology, geography and zoology.[16] In 1931, Lim singled out the Zoological and Botanical departments of Xiada for their cutting-edge research as well as their ability to attract world-renowned professors.[17] The importance of the sciences at Xiada was reflected in the records of a local gazetteer. As noted by the Xiamen Republican-era gazetteer, 73 of the 122 graduates were from Xiada, with 26 of them from the science and engineering departments, making up the largest group among the graduates.[18]

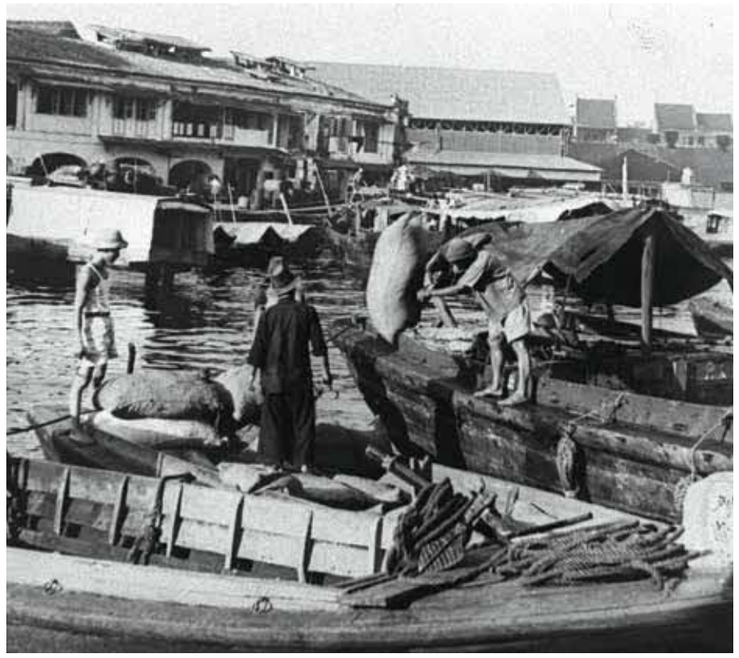
Lim's expertise in Western medicine as well as his longstanding commitment in promoting Western science and medicine in China resulted in his taking up leadership positions at new institutions of science and medicine at Xiamen University and the Department of Health at the first Republic of China.

Lim's sense of purpose was founded on his medical education at the University of Edinburgh, his commitment to leverage on transnational resources from Britain, China and the Straits Settlements, and his deep commitment to using his wealth and influence to turn ideas into medical action.

ROBERT LIM: LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

Lim Boon Keng's eldest son, Robert Lim, was also actively involved in the medical development of China. Robert Lim was born in Singapore in 1897 and left with his father at the age of eight to Edinburgh where he completed his secondary education. Lim kept in contact with his father in Xiamen, as well as his other family members in Singapore. He also visited Singapore twice in 1937 and 1949.[19] At the age of 17, Lim enrolled in the University of Edinburgh. He obtained his PhD from the university at the age of 23 and subsequently became a lecturer in histology in the physiology department.

In 1923, he was awarded a fellowship by the Rockefeller Foundation in the United States to study at the University of Chicago. There, he studied with famous physiologist Dr. A.J. Carlson (1875–1956) and began to research on the physiology of gastric secretion. It was during his stint at the University of Chicago that he began his lifelong research on this topic.



In 1924, Robert Lim received his doctor of science degree from the University of Edinburgh and made a life-changing decision to leave the West for China. He became a professor of physiology at the Peking Union Medical College (PUMC) and was soon promoted to head of department. Lim also worked with other Overseas Chinese who headed other departments at the Rockefeller-sponsored institution. These included Penang-born O.K. Khaw and C.E. Lim who led the parasitology and bacteriology departments respectively.

While Lim's research on the nature of gastric physiology was notable, it was his longstanding commitment to state medicine and military medicine that made an indelible impact on China and Southeast Asia. As early as 1921, he proposed several solutions in the *Chinese Student* to improve the state of medical education in China.[20] He urged doctors to produce a national medical curriculum, comprising translations of Western medical works as well as by expositions by local doctors. He also felt that doctors should have a working knowledge of the official language in China (*Guan hua* 官話) as well as have "complete esprit de corps." He acknowledged the historical contributions of missionaries in the construction of hospitals in China, and encouraged his foreign friends to do more to aid China's medical modernisation.

RAISING FUNDS FOR CHINA

During the Second World War, Lim was appointed by Chiang Kai Shek in 1938 to head the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps (CRCMRC). Lim and his sympathetic allies embarked on a global effort to raise funds for the organisation, especially among ethnic Chinese in Singapore and Indonesia. As a result, more than 60 percent of the funding for the organisation came from such Overseas Chinese communities.[21] The Chinese in Singapore organised a dinner and grand mannequin parade to solicit donations for the CRCMRC as well as the St Andrew's Hospital Sanatorium, advertising the event in the *Singapore Free Press* and *Mercantile Advertiser* on 4 June 1938. Dinner was priced at Straits Dollars $3.50 for diners and $2.50 for non-diners.

In September the same year, local ballroom dancers conducted a ballroom dancing class at the local New World Cabaret to raise funds for the CRCMRC.[22] Doing her part in fundraising efforts was ethnic Chinese swimmer Yang Shau King, who went by the moniker "Chinese Venus". She arrived in Batavia (present-day Jakarta) from Hong Kong

(ABOVE) Dr Lim Boon Keng at age 40 in 1909. *Ena Teh Guat Kheng collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(TOP) Coolies, commonly found transporting goods along the Singapore River, formed part of the Overseas Chinese community (1948). *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

and gave swimming demonstrations to raise funds for the CRCMRC.[23] Dancing, eating, and swimming — activities of local Chinese elites in Singapore and Indonesia — were platforms for fundraising for the CRCMRC, and reminiscent of similar efforts in China.[24]

At the CRCMRC, Robert Lim greatly expanded medical care for the wounded Chinese in the form of preventive medicine for unoccupied China. One key aspect of preventive medicine was delousing, which killed parasitic mites and lice on soldiers. The mites spread scabies, the number one affliction of Chinese soldiers then.[25] Scabies was a serious condition as soldiers would scratch their wounds into a secondary and more serious skin infection known as impetigo, a highly contagious bacterial infection. Typhus fever and relapsing fever were spread by lice, with the former being more serious, often leading to premature death if not treated expeditiously. These conditions were often exacerbated by the lack of access to bathing water and soap, which meant mites and lice would remain with their hosts for long periods of time.

The delousing programme began in 1938 and expanded significantly in 1939. Trained sanitary engineers and doctors in mobile units were sent across unoccupied China to delouse soldiers and their clothes. By mid-1939, mobile units had reached as far east as Jinhua (金華) in Zhejiang, as far west as Chongqing (重慶), as far north as Ganguyi (甘谷驛) in Shanxi, and as far south as Liuzhou (柳洲) in Guangxi.[26] By the mid-1940s, mobile units had reached further south to Nanning (南寧) in Guangxi and further west to Xiaguan (下關) in Yunnan.[27] The reach of the delousing units spread far and wide as it attempted to extend treatment to all soldiers in unoccupied China. In total, the sanitary units deloused a total of around 380,000 people as well as 800,000 articles by the end of December 1940, an exponential increase from January to June 1939 where around 17,000 persons and 145,000 thousand articles were deloused. In total, Lim's CRCMRC treated more than five million people.

LEAVING A LEGACY

Lim Boon Keng and Robert Lim's time in China were not without opposition. Lu Xun and other intellectuals from the May Fourth Movement (1917–1921) opposed Lim Boon Keng's promotion of sciences and Confucianism at Xiamen University. Unable to resolve their differences with him, these intellectuals left the university after teaching for only a few months.[28]

American officials from the United China Relief (UCR) organisation allegedly sought to remove Robert Lim from his medical leadership posts because of their opposition to the supposedly obstructionist and monopolistic behaviours of the American Bureau for Medical Aid to China (a New York-based organisation also known as the ABMAC), which Lim represented in China.[29] Other accounts suggest that some Chinese leaders opposed Lim's plan to extend medical aid to communist-held areas. These critics also thought his six-year medical programme for doctors was too lengthy under wartime circumstances.[30]

As a result of these pressures, Robert Lim left his position as the head of the Emergency Medical Services Training School (EMSTS) in 1942, but soon took on the role of chief medical officer in the Chinese Expeditory Forces. He also embarked on a tour of the US in 1944 that sought to boost medical contributions by Americans to the Chinese war effort. He held the position of surgeon-general of the Chinese Army (1945–1948) and founded the National Defense Medical Center (NDMC) in Shanghai in 1948, which remains an important institution of military medicine in Taiwan today.

Besides Lim Boon Keng and Robert Lim, there were other prominent Overseas Chinese who were instrumental in promoting Western medicine in China: Wu Lien-teh of the North Manchurian Plague Prevention Services (NMPPS) and National Qurantine Bureau (NQS); O.K. Khaw of the Peking Union Medical College and NDMC; C.E. Lim of the PUMC; and C.Y. Wu of the NMPPS, NQS and CRCMRC.

Of particular importance was Penang-born Wu Lien-teh, who was a Queen's scholar at Cambridge University. Wu was most famous for his discovery of an unknown disease (later found to be the pneumonic plague) that wreaked havoc across North China in the 1910s, as well as his role in the expansion of the Western-style public health system in the region. After heading the NMPPS from 1912 to 1930, he left North China to head the Shanghai-based NQS and established a comprehensive system of quarantine, fumigation, and health inspections in ports such as Shanghai, Hankou and Xiamen.[31]

Wu, together with the Lims and the other Overseas Chinese, represent an unsung group of medical diaspora who returned to work in China. These medical professionals facilitated the growth of medical and scientific research in China, and popularised new notions of Western science among the Chinese public. In addition, they instituted military medicine, introduced new forms of public health and sought to save lives during the Second World War. As medical professionals, they were not simply motivated by patriotism or altruism, but rather saw China as a place where they could fully utilise their expertise not only to improve the lives of their fellow Chinese, but also to advance their own careers as medical leaders of the new Republic. ●

ENDNOTES

1. Philip Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008)
2. For a survey of the Overseas Chinese's efforts at supporting the 1911 revolution in China, see Lee Lai To and Hock Guan Lee ed., *Sun Yat-Sen, Nanyang, and the 1911 Revolution* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011)
3. *Ibid.*, 270.
4. This is not to say there is nothing on the overseas Chinese in China. What has been neglected, however, is the importance of their diasporic identities. For example, Karl Gerth points out the importance of Wu Tingfang, a Chinese elite educated in the West, in mobilizing the Chinese population in Shanghai and Nanjing to boycott Japanese-made products in favor of Chinese-produced ones. Similarly, Klaus Mühlhahn showed how Wu overhauled the criminal justice system after the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. Wu drew up a new legal system for the Republic of China based on a synthesis of Western laws and Chinese tradition. The new system abolished flogging, introduced professional judges and western-style lawyers, and limited punishments to fines, jail, and the death penalty. Both Gerth and Mühlhahn however, did not mention that Wu was also a Overseas Chinese. Wu's experiences growing up in colonial Singapore and Hong Kong, as well as his legal education the University College London, enabled Wu to understand the intricacies of Western laws and Chinese tradition. These experiences and education allowed Wu to occupy critical positions in the new Republic. See Karl Gerth, *China made: consumer culture and the creation of the nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) and Klaus Mühlhahn, *Criminal justice in China: a history* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2009).
5. Another key individual was Wu Lien-teh (伍連德 1879–1960), who was instrumental in instituting western medicine in Manchuria and Shanghai from 1911–1937. He was famous as the plague fighter who combated the outbreaks of plague, cholera, and other communicable diseases in North China.
6. Lim Boon Keng Matriculation File for the Department of Medicine, University of Edinburgh Student Records, University of Edinburgh.
7. See for example Li, Yuanjin, *Lin Wenqing de si xiang: Zhong xi wen hua de hui liu yu mao dun* (Singapore: Xinjiapo Ya Zhou yan jiu xue hui, 1991).
8. Lim Boon Keng, "Infectious diseases and the public," *Straits Chinese Magazine* 1, no.4 (December 1897): 120–24.
9. Thomas D Brock, *Robert Koch: A Life in Medicine and Bacteriology* (Washington, D.C.: ASM Press, 1999), 117.
10. Lim Boon Keng, "The Renovation of China," *Straits Chinese Magazine* 2, no. 7 (September 1898): 88-98.
11. Lim Boon Keng drew his ideas of Confucianism as state religion for the Chinese, and the idea of Confucian as a god-like figure from prominent Late Qing reformer Kang Youwei. For an explanation of Kang's ideas on Confucianism as a state religion, see Yong Chen, *Confucianism as religion: controversies and consequences* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 43–53.
12. *Ibid.*
13. "Annual Department Reports, February 14, 1899," Colonial Office 279/59, National Archives at Kew.
14. Justin Corfield, *Historical Dictionary of Singapore* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010).
15. Lim Boon Keng, *Pu tong wei sheng jiang yi* (Xin jia po: Xin jia po hua zhong shang wu zong hui cai zheng suo, 1911).
16. "Lin Wenqing Xiaozhang Baogao," in Xiamen daxue xiaoshi bianweihui, *Xiamen daxue xiaoshi ziliao* (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chu ban she, 1987), 224–9.
17. Lim Boon Keng, *On the Tenth anniversary of the Founding of Amoy University* (Unknown publisher, 1931).
18. Xiamen Shi difang zhi bian zuan weiyuan hui, *Xiamen shi zhi: Mingguo.* (Xiamen Gazetteer: Republican Period) (Beijing: fangzhi chubanshe, 1999), 331 and 361–67. A total of 2013 students graduated from Xiada till 1947. In 1947, there were around 3,00 teachers and 1,227 students in Xiada, with the majority of the students in the science, technical and law departments.
19. Lim briefly visited his place of birth in 1937 and 1949, and wrote to his Singaporean relatives i in the 1960s. See "Malayan Broadcasting Interview with Robert Lim, July 14, 1949," and "Lim to Thiam, July 25, 1964," in Robert Lim's Papers, Institute of Modern History Archives, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan (hereafter Lim Papers, IMH archives)
20. Robert Lim, "The Medical Needs of China," *Chinese Student* (Nov. 1921): 24–25.
21. Seven reports of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, Lim's Papers, IMH Archives.
22. "Advertisement," *Straits Times*, September 18, 1937, 4.
23. "Chinese Venus' arrives at Batavia," *Straits Times*, July 24, 1938, 5.
24. Janet Chen describes similar efforts in Shanghai where elites would raise funds for Subei refugees right after the war through organising beauty pageants, and dance parties. Critics claimed that such efforts reflected the hedonistic life-style of the Shanghai elites, even though they appeared extraordinarily successful in raising funds for relief efforts. See Janet Y Chen, *Guilty of Indigence: The Urban Poor in China, 1900–1953* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 189–190.
25. 5th Report of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, Lim's Papers, IMH archives.
26. *Ibid.*, 135.
27. 7th Report of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, Lim's Papers, IMH archives, 2307001, 194.
28. Lu Xun, "Hai shang tong xin (Maritime Communications)" in *Lu Xun quanji* (Complete Collection of Lu Xun's works) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981), 158–61. Also see Lin, Yutang, Zhixue Liu, and Yanjie Bian, *Lin Yutang zi zhuan* (Lin Yutang's autobiography) (Shijiazhuang Shi: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1991), 98–100.
29. In folder "Alfred Kohlberg Original Memo," and "Alfred Kohlberg Second Report," American Bureau for Medical Aid to China Records, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York.
30. *Ibid.*, and Frederic E Wakeman, *Spymaster Dai Li and the Chinese Secret Service* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 389.
31. Yip Ka-che, *Health and National Reconstruction in Nationalist China: The Development of Modern Health Services, 1928–1937* (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 1995), 117–120.

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(TOP) Entrance of New World Amusement Park at Jalan Besar, circa 1960. This was where Chinese swimmer Yang Shau King helped to raise funds for the Chinese Red Cross. *Chinese Clan Association collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(MIDDLE) Group photograph of Singapore Overseas Chinese raising relief funds for China, headed by Tan Kah Kee. *Singapore Chinese Clan Associations Collection, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

There's more to the hand than meets the eye, as Tan Huism found out when she curated an exhibition using the motif of hands for the National Library recently.

A Tale of Many Hands

Tan Huism is the Head of Exhibitions and Curation with the National Library. She started her curatorial career at the National Museum of Singapore before moving to the Asian Civilisations Museum, where she became Deputy Director of Curation and Collections.

Sean Lee is a teller of short stories through his photographs. He was a winner of the 2011 ICON de Martell Cordon Bleu and a member of the Reflexions Masterclass (2011-2013). His work has been exhibited at the Prix Decouverte, Les Rencontres d'Arles (2009), Galeria TagoMago, Barcelona (2011), New York Photo Festival, New York (2011), Empire Project, Istanbul (2011) and TantoTempo Gallery, Kobe (2012), among others.

I HAVE ALWAYS WISHED MY HANDS WERE LESS BONY and veined. But then again, if they were not so, my hands would not remind me of my grandmother's. In the morning, her hands would be busy combing her hair, tying it into a neat bun finished with her jade and gold hairpins. In the afternoon, those same hands would be busy playing mahjong, and in the evening, tending the garden. Domestic chores aside, these were the daily activities of my grandmother in her twilight years. My grandmother's hands, from what I can remember, were always busy; even when relaxing her right hand would be holding a cigarette or the television remote control. My paternal grandparents were the first generation in my family to leave China for Southeast Asia.

At the recent Singapore Memory Project exhibition "Hands: Gift of a Generation" held at the National Library Building (7 Aug to 13 Oct 2013), the memories of Singaporeans who lived through the country's nation-building years were showcased. Evocative photographic images of their hands were used to represent the memories of their life's work. Using hands as the visual imagery seemed appropriate given that we shape the world with our bodies — particularly our hands. The portraits of the hands — a selection of which are showcased in this photo essay — were taken by award-winning Singaporean photographer, Sean Lee, whose works have been showcased in local and international exhibitions.

If you missed "Hands: Gift of a Generation" at the National Library, you can catch a modified — but no less interesting — version of the exhibition at the Woodlands Regional Library in April 2014. The "Hands" experience there will be adapted to flow naturally with the library spaces used by patrons. ●

"It was a great privilege to have been able to photograph so many Singaporeans who have, in ways big and small, contributed to the identity of the nation. There were many occasions during the course of shooting where I took pause to listen to their life stories. Very often, I felt enriched simply by being a part of that moment as a listener."

— SEAN LEE (PHOTOGRAPHER FOR THE HANDS EXHIBITION)

(ABOVE) Sean Lee photographing a 'Hands' profile. *Courtesy of Tan Huism*.

(FACING PAGE) Her hand movement in Indian dance tells stories. Santha Bhaskar has been dancing since the age of 3. *Photography by Sean Lee*.

"I was in full appreciation of the exhibition — it presented experiences of individuals and their contributions in a very unobtrusive way; the photographs were organic and aesthetic in composition capturing the individual in their natural element. The photographs also, I thought, teased the visitor into guessing who the individual might be, providing an experience of discovery."

— NALINA GOPAL (VISITED HANDS EXHIBITION IN SEPTEMBER 2013)

(ABOVE) Her hands promoted reading and libraries. Hedwig Anuar nee Aroozoo was the former Director of the National Library (1965–1988). *Photography by Sean Lee.*

(TOP RIGHT) His hands worked at the first watch plant in Singapore in 1973. Kok Kham Seng still works at Seiko Instruments. *Photography by Sean Lee.*

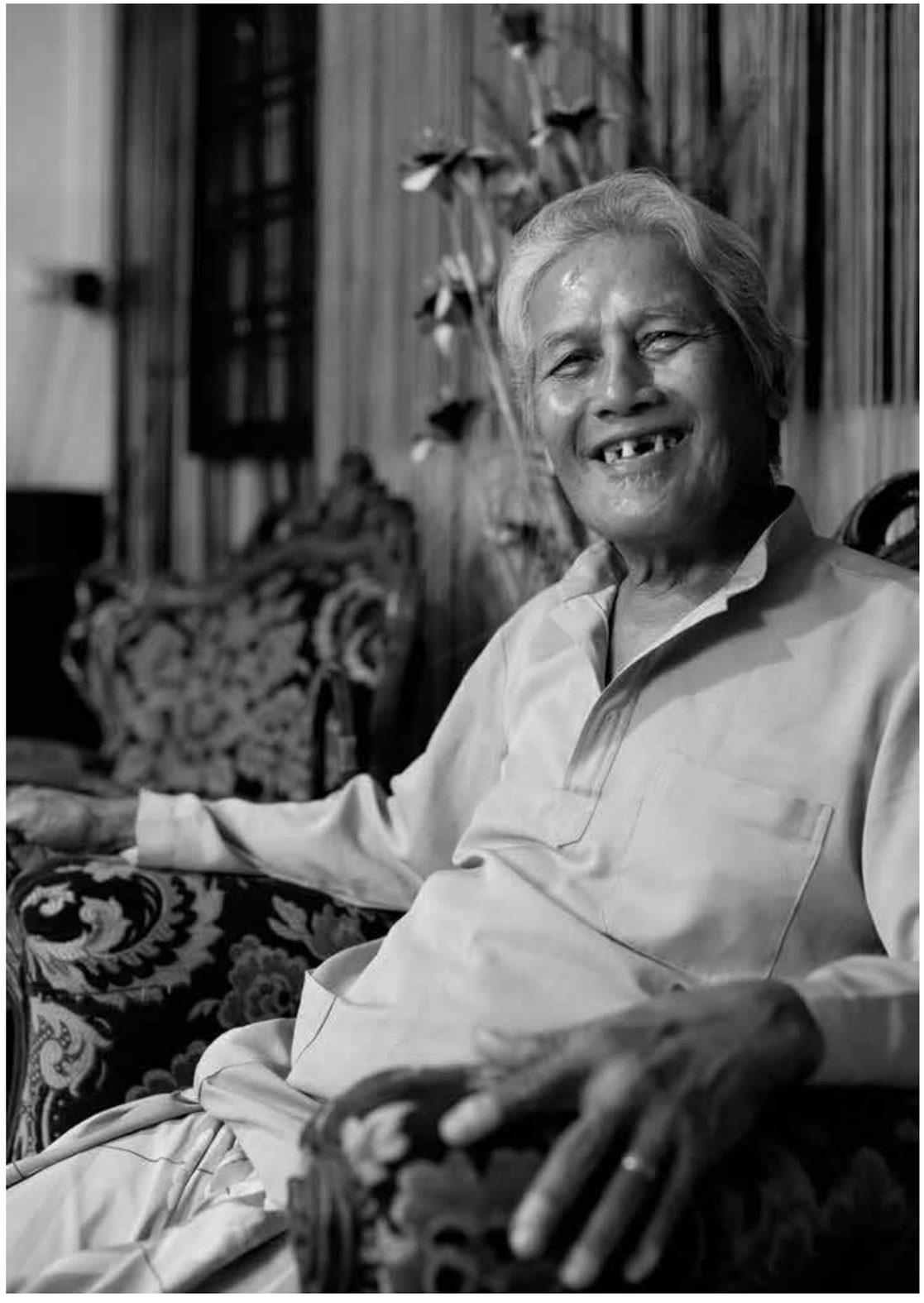
(ABOVE) Her hands worked for 67 years tailoring custom-made shirts. *Photography by Sean Lee.*

"I try to go about the photo-making in as natural a way as possible for these folks. The main aim is to shoot them in their natural environment such as their homes or workplace so that they are comfortable. I avoid making them pose. I just want to create simple portraits where their personalities come through."

— SEAN LEE

(TOP) Her hands worked to bring rights and protection for Muslim women. Mrs Mohamed Siraj co-founded the Young Women's Muslim Association (1952) and the Muslim Women's Welfare Council (1964). *Photography by Sean Lee.*

(BOTTOM LEFT) From her mid 30s till her 70s, her hands laboured on her husband's farm planting vegetables and rearing pigs and fish. Lim Beak is a centenarian. *Photography by Sean Lee.*



(FACING PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT) His hands punched their way to represent Singapore in the Olympics in 1972. Syed Abdul Kadir now coaches the new generation boxers. *Photography by Sean Lee.*

(ABOVE) His hands used to be on alert to fight fire. Today Abdul Rahman bin Osman is a gardener. *Photography by Sean Lee.*

THE UNLIKELY COMPOSER

TSAO CHIEH

I prefer to listen to good Michael Jackson than bad Mahler.

— TSAO CHIEH

Despite his untimely death at the age of 43, Singaporean composer Tsao Chieh's legacy lives on — immortalised through his small but significant body of experimental works. Jun Zubillaga-Pow traces the life of this underrated artist.

Jun Zubillaga-Pow is a PhD Candidate in music research at King's College London. He has performed and curated music events at The Esplanade, The Arts House, Theatreworks and The Substation. With the support of The National Arts Council, Jun is the co-editor of ***Queer Singapore*** and ***Singapore Soundscape***.

Although hailed as a musical genius by his peers, Singaporean composer Tsao Chieh's prodigious talents and legacy have been overshadowed by his untimely death at the age of 43. His accomplishments, unfortunately, have gone largely unnoticed by the general public, and this article is probably the first attempt at chronicling the composer's life — from his growing-up years in Singapore, his musical forays during his engineering studies in Manchester and California, and his creative accomplishments in between juggling a high-flying military career on his return to Singapore.

Given the dearth of published sources on Tsao Chieh, this article pieces together material from the composer's music manuscripts and newspaper articles as well as personal interviews with family members in 2010.

EARLY YEARS

Born on 27 December 1953, Tsao Chieh was presented with a toy piano at the age of three; his playful tinkering of the ivory keys at the time already an expression of his steely determination to become a musician. When he was six, his teacher, Theresa Khoo (丘秀玖), trained him to improvise on the piano. She would write different tunes, one of which Tsao Chieh recalled as a whimsical Malay tune about *kachang puteh* (white nuts). Growing up in Singapore during the 1960s, Tsao Chieh's exposure to Western classical music was probably more extensive than his contemporaries.

His father, an engineer with the civil service, was a great fan of classical music and owned a vast collection of gramophone records. The family would play music in the house during breakfast and after work. It was amid this nurturing musical environment that Tsao Chieh's affinity for music was cultivated. He gradually developed the ability to identify not only the different pieces, but also the performers on the records. After several years of studying the piano, it was discovered that Tsao Chieh had perfect relative pitch and, what was more, could differentiate pitches without using an instrument.

Tsao Chieh was already a proficient pianist by his early teens, acquiring a firm grounding of technical skills and musicianship. At 16, he came under the tutelage of well-known piano teacher and music critic Victor Doggett and achieved his Licentiate of the Royal School of Music (LRSM) in piano performance and Grade 8 qualification in theory. After topping his cohort at National Junior College, Tsao Chieh earned a Singapore Armed Forces Scholarship to study engineering at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology for the next four years.[1]

It was in Manchester that Tsao Chieh's musical horizons broadened exponentially. In addition to assiduously attending performances in the English city, such as those by the Hallé Orchestra, he also signed up for orchestration classes conducted by the Music Department and perused numerous scores from the university library. Tsao Chieh also travelled to the English National Opera and Wigmore Hall in London, where he recorded many Radio 3 programmes from the BBC on cassettes and brought them back to Singapore.

Living in another country had widened Tsao Chieh's cultural knowledge, but he could not be as involved with music as he would have liked during his subsequent three-year bond with the Ministry of Defence. In 1980, the unlikely composer obtained another scholarship to pursue his doctorate in Electrical Engineering at Stanford University. In California, in between his engineering studies, Tsao Chieh took up flute lessons, attended numerous concerts and extra classes in Mathematics and Music Composition. In an interview published by *The Straits Times*, Tsao Chieh said, "When I realised that with a little more effort I could get a Masters in Music Composition, I went for it."[2] Tsao Chieh's musical accomplishments are all the more astounding given the fact he was in Stanford studying to be an engineer at that time.

In the five years that followed, the musical prodigy produced six pieces for flute and piano, a piano sonata as well as a larger work for soprano and chamber ensemble. On his own, Tsao Chieh devoted three years acquiring proper harmony and compositional techniques. He revealed that his writing was "very clumsy" when he first started attending classes, but he soon learnt to think outside the box, discovering "the importance of contrapuntal freedom … and the idea of rhythmic freedom" respectively from Leland Smith and Richard Felciano; the latter was then a visiting professor from the University of California, Berkeley. The

(ABOVE) Tsao Chieh working on a composition in 1986. *Courtesy of Vivien Chen*.

notion of a "moving bass" was such a significant concept for Tsao Chieh that it would be mentioned over dinner conversations with his wife, Vivien Chen, whom he had met as a fellow student at NJC.

EARLY COMPOSITIONS

From 1980 to 1982, Tsao Chieh's three flute-and-piano pieces, *Rondelay*, *Idyll* and *Toccata*, secured prime positions in his foundational studies. While *Rondelay*, completed in September 1980, was dedicated to his flute teacher Alexandra Hawley, it was *Toccata* that received more performances at the university's Dinkelspiel Auditorium between May 1984 and 1985. From 1982 to 1983, Tsao Chieh began work on an *Overture in C* for full orchestra, which has yet to be performed at the time of writing.

According to his widow, Tsao Chieh thought that writing in C major would be a good place to begin his first orchestral work. From his sketches, the initial title of the work was *A Concert Overture*. He drafted a first version on a four-staff short score, completing it in Stanford on 10 July 1982 and signing off after the double bar lines. The short score only had a few indications of where the French horns and percussion would play, while the full orchestration was duly completed eight months later on 8 March 1983.

In terms of stylistic originality, his music only took on a personality of its own in 1983. Borrowing from the French composer Henri Dutilleux, the choice of character pieces in his *Movements for Flute, with Piano and String Quartet* would be an indication of Tsao Chieh's aesthetic preference for generic musical forms: the Intermezzo, Scherzetto, Cadenza and Ostinato. Unlike his earlier pieces, these allowed his musical imagination to be constrained within the emotional demands of the character pieces. As a trained engineer, it was natural that music became a less regimental outlet for Tsao Chieh to express himself.

In a similar vein, his *Piano Sonata* — which he personally performed at the premiere together with *Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 109* and Debussy's *Images I* at Stanford's Campbell Recital Hall on 2 May 1983 — could be said as being inventive in its structural formulation and aesthetic direction. Of course, the piano recital would not have been possible without the encouragement of his erstwhile piano teacher Naomi Sparrow, who taught him the finer details of dynamics contrasts and other musical expressivity.

Being industrious, Tsao Chieh composed, in his final year at Stanford, a *Caprice* for two flutes and piano for another of his flute teachers, Carol Adee, promptly finishing the piece on 3 February 1984. Unlike his other works for flute, the work was the only one to receive a posthumous premiere in Singapore.

His next work was *Four Songs from Romantic Poets* for soprano and chamber ensemble, which was influenced by the writing style of Samuel Barber and Alban Berg, the latter being one of Tsao Chieh's favourite composers. Similar to the *Piano Sonata* written a year earlier, atonal but romantic nuances could be discerned from this set of pieces. *Four Songs*, which won the first prize in the university's Paul and Jean Hanna Music Composition Competition, was based on the 19th-century poems of William Blake (*The Sick Rose*), William Butler Yeats (*The Unappeasable Host*) and Percy Shelley (*The Waning Moon* and *Victoria*). It was evident from this period that the perennial issue of musical communication between composer and audiences became one of the founding trajectories in Tsao Chieh's creation process.

In the campus report of 24 April 1985, Tsao Chieh explained the decisions over the preparation for the performance: "I thought a singer singing in English would be a good thing for the audience to focus on… something for them to recognise… The themes are of night and storm, probably influenced by my great love of horror stories when a child"; as well as over the selection of some of these poems: "'Victoria' is about the ghost of a man's murdered lover coming back to haunt him. I picked it because I wanted a nice, big ending. The poems I chose are actually quite perverse. There's lots of percussion and rhythmically it's very tricky. I think it's the best thing I've ever written…"[3]

When his work subsequently premiered at the end-of-year Music Awards concert in May 1985, soprano Patricia Mikishka and conductor Chris Lanz, thought the piece was both "dramatic" and "contemporaneous".

MUSIC WITH A SINGAPORE SPIN

From 1984 to 1985, not only did the accomplished polymath work on his engineering PhD dissertation, he also composed and orchestrated his symphonic poem, which was given the grand title *Singapore*. The idea of composing a series of tone poems based on the history of Singapore had already been churning in his head for over two years after reading Constance Mary Turnbull's *A History of Singapore*. It had been compulsory reading for the Ministry of Defence officer and the subject had surfaced in conversations over the dinner table. The engineer in him instinctively decided that each of the five movements of the suite would be based upon a specific period in Singapore's history. The 40-minute work, Tsao Chieh explained in an interview, charts the chronological progress of Singapore from the pre-colonial era to the Japanese Occupation to independent Republic. He said, "It's what I call an abstract work with symphonic unity… a cyclical symphony. Each section evokes a period in the history of Singapore. It will give an atmosphere, for instance, of Singapore before Raffles discovered it."[4]

Aligned with his preference for classical forms, the five movements are based on the characteristics of generic symphonic movements with programmatic subtitles. The first movement is a Prelude and Fugue, subtitled *Temasek*, while the second and third movements are a March and Scherzo, subtitled *Colonial Days* and *War* respectively. Music for the latter section was inspired by *Seventy Days to Singapore* by Stanley Falk, a telling of the Japanese invasion from Siam to Singapore. Before the Finale, which contains a quotation of the National Anthem as a proclamation of the new *Republic*, a Passacaglia is used to depict the cathartic *Aftermath* of the Japanese Occupation.

Upon his return to Singapore, Tsao Chieh offered the composition to the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO), which had premiered the music of Singaporean composers, such as Leong Yoon Pin, Bernard Tan and Phoon Yew Tien. The Singapore Festival of Arts in 1986 was fixed as an occasion for the premiere and the orchestra went about preparing the music; conductor Choo Hoey remarked that more musicians had to be engaged as a result of the composer's large-scale orchestration. In addition to the usual array of orchestral instruments, Tsao Chieh requested for an alto flute, a bass clarinet, a double bassoon and a very large percussion section of six timpani, four tom-toms, chimes, vibraphone, piano harp and a water-gong. In accounting for his programming of the work, Choo Hoey quipped, "He's young, up-and-coming and should be heard."[5]

When asked by an arts correspondent on his working process, Tsao Chieh mused about the concept of small beginnings, "An idea here. Another spark there. They can occur to me when I am brushing my teeth or going to sleep. Slowly, these fragments accumulate until they cohere to form a picture."[6]

For two evenings in June 1986, the work, together with Joseph Haydn's *Cello Concerto* and Igor Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, was performed by the SSO at the Victoria Concert Hall. Stravinsky happened to be one of Tsao Chieh's favourite composers. Responses to the symphonic suite ranged from the slightly disdainful: "a huge first novel, over-stuffed with ideas" and "a hodgepodge of various styles" to the laudatory: an "imaginative handling of the orchestra" with "pastoral woodwind lending a tranquil mood over a gentle landscape of strings."[7] The piece was correspondingly broadcast on public radio twice and televised on the now-defunct Channel 12 for the next few months.

Citing Luciano Berio and Pierre Boulez as influences, the masterpiece also aroused interest from both the musical circles and the general public. It provoked discussions on the definition of Singaporean music as well as the art of composition itself. Later, *The Straits Times* music critic Chang Tou Liang would recall that after listening to the masterpiece, he left the concert hall feeling proud to be a Singaporean.[8] In September, Tsao Chieh was selected to represent Singapore as the Outstanding Young Person of the Year in recognition of his contributions to society and his leadership qualities.[9]

(ABOVE) Several of Tsao Chieh's pieces were performed by Singapore Symphonic Orchestra performing at the Victoria Concert Hall under the baton of Choo Hoey. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Making Water Music

The Singapore Youth Orchestra brought one of Tsao Chieh's works Stasis *on tour to Perth, Australia, in June 1988. The general manager of the orchestra Tan Kim Swee[14] remembered the piece required a water tank, one "big enough to immerse a big gong". The story was that the first tank that had been acquired was too small for the gong and a second one had to be custom-made for the piece. This must have been so stressful for Tan that he even remembered the precise dimensions of the tank — 50 centimetres in breadth and length and 100 centimetres in height — which was to be filled with water as instructed by the composer. Tan recalled the ensuing frenzy over how the water tank had to be filled exactly to four-fifths of its height using buckets and subsequently emptied the same way before and after each concert. During both the local and Australian performances, the tank was placed at the back of the orchestra but elevated so that it remained visible to the audience. Tan also recalls clearly that the commissioned work required bamboo chimes and glass chimes, both of which had to be custom made.*

(TOP) The student orchestra performing at the official opening of the 1986 Singapore Arts Festival at Kent Ridge. Tsao Chieh's *Singapore* premiered on this occasion. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Reviews of Tsao Chieh's Music

Under the baton of Lan Shui, the Singapore Symphonic Orchestra recorded three compact discs of Tsao Chieh's orchestral works. In his review, Chang Tou Liang considered the composer to be a "modern-day Charles Ives, one who composed in his spare time." He said:

> *The impressionism of Debussy and Ravel, pomp and circumstance of Elgar and Walton, serialism of Schoenberg and the* passacaglia-*writing style of Shostakovich are all evident, mixed with a healthy dose of melody* — Rasa Sayang, Xiao Bai Chuan *(Little Sailboat) and one big tune of his own device.*[22]

In her review on Tsao Chieh's electronic music, the ethnomusicologist Tan Shzr Ee said that it does "lovely things to your ear." She elaborated:

> *It is a treasure box of weird and delightful sounds either simulating acoustic instruments to eerie effect, or churning out frenetic blubs of nonsensical noises which must surely carry abstracted meanings in their own right…*
>
> *Just when you think you have nailed the composer to a pastiche of Debussy or Bartok-styled chromatic harmonies, a tinkly horror-movie soundtrack surges into your hearing, stealing your breath away. Small and sparse jumbles of sound are thrown away here and there against a backdrop of tense calm created by near-silent electronic "whooshes".*
>
> *Sometimes, a woman laughs and a man snatches the space for his moment with a scramble of words. Themes which sound transplanted from a drama-mama Chinese opera groove against a dizzying spiral of unremitting notes. It is a trippy and absolutely mesmerising experience.*
>
> *But every now and then, a curious refrain of a decaying, owl-like "woo", flattened out in pitch towards it tail, rears up like a leitmotif. It reminds you of the constancy of — work? everyday existence? the inner rhythms of life? — that punctuate this album's otherwise over-the-top splendour.*[23]

In 1988, Tsao Chieh, now a Lieutenant-Colonel with the Ministry of Defence, was commissioned by the Chief of Artillery, then-Lieutenant-Colonel Low Yee Kah, to compose a military march for the Artillery's 100th anniversary celebrations.[10] The *Singapore Artillery Centennial March* was performed by the Singapore Infantry Regiment Band on 22 February 1988 at the military parade at Khatib Camp with past and present Artillery soldiers as well as members of the public in attendance.[11] The march was re-arranged the following year by Major Tonni Wei for the Singapore Symphony Orchestra's concert performance under the baton of Lim Yau.

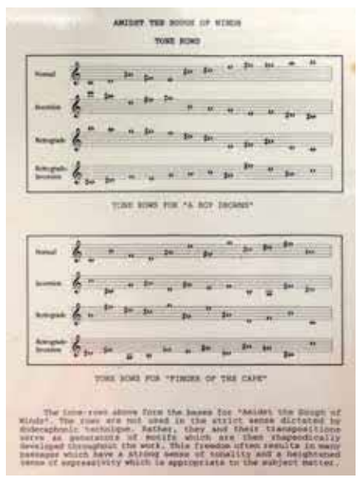
In March that year, a 12-minute piece was commissioned by the Singapore Youth Orchestra (SYO).[12] *Stasis* (see text box on page 16), Tsao Chieh revealed, was a combination of two ideas, the "stillness and change" in the rhythms of Thai music and the "minimalist compositions of contemporary composers such as Philip Glass."[13] The composer qualified that, although the work comprised only notes from the A major scale, it was still rhythmically complex and was without a constant meter. The work was given its maiden performance under the baton of Vivien Goh, who also programmed a Rossini overture, a Mozart symphony and a Beethoven concerto for the concert at the Victoria Theatre. While the SYO manager Tan Kim Swee felt *Stasis* was "contemporary" and "modernistic", the composer preferred to call his work "minimalist".

This characteristic of being "minimalist" can be readily discerned in Tsao Chieh's *Variations for Chamber Ensemble*, which was programmed in the New Music Forum II under the direction of Lim Yau in January 1989. Tsao Chieh mentioned that the structure of the work was derived from that of Big Band Jazz, and includes several unique instrumental effects, such as pitch-bending flute, water gongs and playing inside the piano.[15]

In late 1990, his work *Amidst the sough of winds…, Two Poems by Edwin Thumboo for Narrator and Large Orchestra* was performed by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra on two December evenings. Preceding Max Bruch's *First Symphony* and Peter Tchaikovsky's *First Piano Concerto*, Choo Hoey conducted the premiere at the Victoria Concert Hall with the poet as narrator. In 1986, Tsao Chieh had expressed his intention to compose "a piece for narrator and orchestra based on the poetry of some local poets", but he was unsure which poem would suit his aesthetics.[16] Eventually, he found two relevant pieces from the literary anthology *The Poetry of Singapore*, which was published by the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information, and fitted the text to his music. He contemplated including a chorus, but was advised against the idea by the visiting British composer Alexander Goehr.

COMPUTER MUSIC

In 1992, Tsao Chieh was featured in a news report about electronic or computer music. He had gradually progressed from using computers for music typography in 1986 to composing directly at the computer in 1992. He explained that "the hardest part is mastering the software programme, which is very complex. The learning curve is steep. You only become proficient after six, seven months or more."[17] Sceptics would probably say that the task was a walk in the park for someone with an engineer's mind and a proclivity for learning.



(MIDDLE) Photograph of Tsao Chieh taken in 1990. *Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reproduced with permission.*

(BOTTOM) Tone rows for *Amidst the Sough of Winds*. *Courtesy of Vivien Chen.*

His next work for the Singapore Youth Orchestra was composed directly on the computer, which enabled him to play back the music as synthesised sounds and make necessary changes. The commissioned work, *Prelude, Interlude and Fugato*, was performed in part under guest conductor Chan Tze Law on 24 July 1992 and only in full two years later under the baton of Lim Yau on 26 March 1994.[18] Both Tze Law and Lim Yau agreed that the music was a tad difficult for the youth orchestra, which resulted in longer rehearsal times. The Singapore Symphony Orchestra performed the work on 16 January 1998, two years after Tsao Chieh's passing.[19] Hearing only the final movement of the three-part composition, *The Straits Times* critic Philip Looi noted that Tsao Chieh's "rich instrumentation and often dense texture" were kept in good control by Tze Law, and that "the tuneful diatonic passages were played with a broad legato articulation that contrasted well with the strongly articulated 12-tone fugato sections."[20]

Tsao Chieh had been experimenting with recorded sounds by uploading them into the computer and manipulating them to create brand new sounds since 1992. He wanted to not only compose computer-generated works, but also to emulate composers who wrote computer programmes. He optimistically believed that "the range of sounds that the computer [could] create [was] only limited by the imagination", but the pragmatist in him acknowledged that he had to develop "his computer knowledge and technique first."[21] For the time being, however, the avid audiophile thought he might inject some of the computer generated sounds into his "traditional classical compositions."

Gradually, what came out of the germination process were three test pieces, a rhapsody for synthesised flute and a more substantial composition entitled *Sine. Mus.* Although all these electronic pieces were believed to be completed by 1995, the actual period of production and completion remain uncertain. In May 1994, the commissioned work *Two Little Pieces for Orchestra* premiered at the Victoria Concert Hall conducted by Chan Tze Law and played by the Temasek Junior College Orchestra. The two relatively neoclassical pieces in diatonic modes came with the titles *Idyll* and *Dance*; according to the composer, he had always wanted to write them since he was a teenager, but lacked the technical know-how.

> **"Of all the different artists, it is quite terrible to be a composer, because your dream has to be realised by other people."**

Tsao Chieh's *Two Little Pieces* was performed again the following year by the National University of Singapore Symphony Orchestra at the university's 90th anniversary celebrations. It was conducted by Lim Soon Lee this time round at the Victoria Concert Hall. In early 1995, Tsao Chieh set the poem *Old House at Ang Siang Hill* by Singaporean poet and Cultural Medallion winner Arthur Yap to music for soprano and piano.

Sadly, on 27 October 1996, Tsao Chieh passed away from liver cancer just two months shy of his 43rd birthday, leaving behind his wife and two young children. At the time of his death he had left the military and joined Sembawang Corporation as Special Assistant for Technology but all this while he remained active in local arts circles as a member of the National Arts Council (1993) and management committee of the SYO, chairing the music panel for the 1994 Cultural Medallion awards.

Despite his varied body of work, Tsao Chieh had always lamented that composers remained at the mercy of others. He said, "Of all the different artists, it is quite terrible to be a composer, because your dream has to be realised by other people." ●

ENDNOTES

1. 'Top HSC pupil: Two in the running', *The Straits Times*, 6 March 1972, Page 11.
2. 'Soldier composes a Singapore suite', *The Straits Times*, 6 February 1986, Page 32.
3. *Campus Report*, Stanford University, 24 April 1985.
4. 'Our history in music', *The Straits Times*, 15 February 1986.
5. 'Soldier composes a Singapore suite', *The Straits Times*, 6 February 1986, Page 32.
6. *Ibid*.
7. 'Romantic touch of Haydn', *The Straits Times*, 16 June 1986, Page 19
8. 'Too much to ask of Schweizer', *The Straits Times*, 18 September 1998, Page 7.
9. '11 vie for best of youth title', *The Straits Times*, 4 September 1986, Page 13.
10. 'Gunners plan big bang for centenary celebrations', *The Straits Times*, 9 February 1988, Page 15.
11. 'SAF chief tells of challenges', *The Straits Times*, 23 February 1988, Page 14.
12. Oral History Centre, National Archives Singapore. Accession No. 2992, Disc No. 27/34.
13. 'A young pianist's Sunday treat and a composer's static work', *The Straits Times*, 19 March 1988, Page 39.
14. Oral History Centre, National Archives Singapore. Accession No. 2992, Disc No. 27/34.
15. 'Local composers merit patronage', *The Straits Times*, 9 January 1989, Page 5.
16. 'Our history in music', *The Straits Times*, 15 February 1986.
17. 'It sure beats chicken-scratch', *The Straits Times*, 9 June 1992, Page 2.
18. 'Music Notes', *The Straits Times*, 22 July 1992, Page 5, and 'Music Notes', *The Straits Times*, 23 March 1994, Page 11.
19. 'Concert tribute to Singapore composer', *The Straits Times*, 15 January 1998, Page 79.
20. 'Rich, controlled performance', *The Straits Times*, 27 July 1992, Page 7.
21. 'It sure beats chicken-scratch', *The Straits Times*, 9 June 1992, Page 2.
22. A symphony with sound of Rasa Sayang?', *The Straits Times*, 7 December 2001, Page 19.
23. 'Electrifying electronica', *The Straits Times*, 1 February 2002, Page 8.

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Oral History Centre, National Archives Singapore. Accession No. 2992, Disc No. 27/34.

KAMPONG LIVING A — Z

It's hard to believe that Singapore was once a sleepy village outpost. Re-live those nostalgic *kampong* days with this laundry list of life as it once was.

SINGAPORE IS A CITY THAT RARELY SLEEPS. Commuters, workers, students and holiday-makers contribute to its near-insomniac thoroughfares, offices and shopping malls, blurring the transition from night to day. The breaking of dawn was more discernible until the early 1970s when many parts of Singapore were made up of *kampongs* (villages). Then, distinct sounds and habits signalled the end of nighttime and the start of a new day as W. Alexander wrote in *The Straits Times* in 1936:

> Nowhere in the world does the first flush of dawn [signal] a more rapid and general awakening than in Singapore... The noisy splash of water indicates early ablutions in one direction, while from another the clatter of cooking utensils and plates gives promise of breakfast on the way. Charcoal fires, slumbering throughout the night, leap to life when fanned ... while a noisy clatter as pails are banged on stone draws attention to the first patron of the standpipe — an elderly woman who carries her burdens slung from a yoke ... Perhaps a quarter of an hour, perhaps twenty minutes after the first streak in the sky, Singapore has fully awakened from its slumber.[1]

Many older Singaporeans would argue that their *kampong* days had a lot more character, their memories of village life firmly etched in their collective consciousness even as the physical landscape, structures and habits of the *kampong* disappeared over time. The act of recollecting the past, however, can be a delightfully haphazard exercise. To sharpen your musings, *BiblioAsia* presents an A-Z laundry list of *kampong* living as it once was.

This article was researched by **Nor Afidah Abd Rahman**, a senior librarian with the National Library Board (NLB).

A ARANG AND ANGLO: POOR MAN'S KITCHEN

Starting grandmother's old kitchen fire[2] was a huff-and-puff affair.[3] Pre-war households mostly relied on firewood, except for a few city dwellers who used *arang* (charcoal), gas or electricity.[4] Many *kampong* folks manually stoked the fire from their firewood or *arang* stoves, fanning the coals furiously to keep them burning. Firewood and *arang* were sold by weight (or *pikul*) and delivered via pedal tricycle or a two-wheel wooden cart. Although more expensive, many women preferred *arang* as it could be broken into small pieces by hand unlike firewood which had to be chopped with a hatchet.[5] Accompanying the *arang* was the clay stove or *anglo*.

In the early 1950s, the prices of firewood and charcoal soared, prompting the government to encourage the use of alternative fuel.[6] Housewives turned to the kerosene stove,[7] but in time it too proved to be a fire hazard.[8] The biggest blow to the *arang* trade was the introduction of cylinder LPG (liquid-petroleum gas) in the 1960s that claimed to "solve all ... cooking problems... It lights up at once, ... your kitchen will sparkle and shine..."[9] As Esso cylinders were briskly delivered to kitchens from the mid-60s onwards,[10] *tongkangs* along Geylang River — custom-made for the charcoal trade — were progressively laid up and scrapped in the 1970s.[11]

B BIDAN: PRELUDE TO "TANKEE YOU, MISSEE"

The *bidan kampung* (also known as *Mak Bidan* in Malay, or *jie sheng fu* in Chinese) — traditional midwives — were once the preferred choice of pregnant mothers. What many *bidan* lacked in certification they made up with experience. In fact in 1949, more babies were delivered at home in *kampongs* by rural midwives than at Kandang Kerbau Hospital (KK).[12] Families were poor but still continued to have children. In the 1950s, babies were born at the rate of 1,000 a week.[13] *Bidans* literally lost sleep over this frenzied reproduction, with one *bidan* confessing in *The Singapore Free Press*, "Sometimes I'd like to pretend I haven't heard the bell and turn over and go to sleep... but I never do. I always think of the poor mother waiting for me."[14]

The modern *bidan* or government-trained midwife, fondly called "missy", surfaced when the colonial government felt that the infant mortality rate was too high and that Singapore needed the guiding hand of Western maternity services. The "missy" visited *kampongs* and co-existed with the *bidan*. Her trademark was the neat white uniform, but keeping it white was a challenge during her *kampong* rounds. The sight of a "missy" was often a welcome forebearer of an *akan datang* (meaning "coming soon") member to the *kampong*.

(ABOVE) Infant growth assessment carried out by a trained midwife or "missy", in 1950. *School of Nursing collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

C CAPTEH AND OTHER CHILDHOOD GAMES

Many from the *kampong* generation have fond memories of running riot in the *kampong* playing games like "police and thief" (or "catching") and *hantam bola* (similar to dodgeball). Playtime did not end until sunset when all the kids would disperse and head back home. Sometimes, only the spectre of a *sapu lidi* (coconut broom) from an exasperated mother shrieking "*baaliik!*" ("go home" in Malay) was able to break the play marathon.[15] When they ran out of money for cheap 10-cent-a-ticket movies, the children would entertain themselves, running amok in the "open sprawling compounds",[16] playing games like *capteh*.

Capteh is a game known by different names across Southeast Asia. The game requires a light, fit-in-the-palm object called *capteh*. The base of the *capteh* was made by stacking a few round pieces of rubber usually taken from an expired bicycle tube, held together by a nail poked through the middle of the rubber. Sprouting from the base would be a bunch of rooster feathers tied with a rubber band. The *capteh* is tossed up repeatedly using the side of one's foot while the other remains on the ground. Players competed to see who could do this the most times consecutively without dropping the *capteh*.[17] *Capteh* games with exceptional players were long drawn — sometimes "... it took the whole of recess hour and... continued the day after or evening after school..."[18]

D DUKUS AND DURIANS: THE FRUITING SEASON

Having fruit trees in the house compound was a treat for *kampong* residents who could freely pick the fruits from the trees. Durians, however, were an exception. As far back as 1936, the durian was already considered an expensive fruit and attracted its fair share of thieves. They would "crawl around the trees in the dead of the night and drag along a large piece of gunny into which the thorns of the durians would stick. By studying the nature of the ground and the circumference of the tree, they could judge the approximate distance a fallen durian would roll..."[19]

Fruiting seasons were a heady affair that reminded villagers of nature's bounty: "Life lost its monotony when the countryside resounded with the thud of falling durians and red bunches of luscious rambutans brightened the landscape. All around were trees laden with mangosteens, *langsat*, *rambai*, *nangka* and other seasonal fruits."[20]

E ETHNIC ENCLAVES

Stamford Raffles' demarcation of Singapore's urban areas into ethnic enclaves took root in the *kampongs* too with pockets of Chinese huts sited apart from the Malay cluster, often separated by a hillock or a road. It was common to be asked if one came from the *kampong cina* (Chinese *kampong*) or *kampong melayu* (Malay *kampong*), a distinction borne out by varied housing designs and other cultural markers. The most distinct marker was religion: In a Chinese *kampong*, the *Tua Pek Kong* temple devoted to this Taoist deity and the *wayang* (Chinese opera) stage were crowd-pullers, while in a Malay village, the *surau* (small mosque) rallied residents for congregational prayers.

Kampong houses were designed to facilitate both easy flow of air for ventilation and neighbourly interaction via open verandas and compounds. The boundaries of each dwelling were usually delineated by natural features such as trees, which meant that the compounds frequently overlapped. This was more typical of the houses in a Malay *kampong*, whereas houses in a Chinese one usually had a waist-high wooden gate. But there was sufficient visibility around the houses in both types, fostering easy relations and camaraderie that often translated into a strong *kampong* spirit that did not significantly diminish even in a mixed *kampong* of Malay and Chinese dwellings. However, each *kampong* retained its distinct name and way of life.

Often, a common tongue bridged many cultural gaps. In those days, it was common to hear Malay being spoken not just by native speakers.[21] *Pasar* (market) Malay, a colloquial form of the language generously spiced with exclamations of "ayya" and "ayoyo"[22] helped smoothed conversations between the two communities.

(TOP) A man at a durian plantation circa 1915. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

F **FIVE-STONES**

This was a tossing game, geared towards girls with delicate fingers and usually played sitting cross-legged on the floor. The "stones" — handmade by the girls themselves — were actually small pyramid-shaped sachets simply sewn from scraps of cloth and filled with green beans, sand or rice grains. Instead of five, some used seven stones. The game is played by "throwing [the stones] up into the air and catching them back in some form of patterned movements."[23] Each stage has a particular pattern and increases in complexity as the player progresses in the game.

G **GOLI (MARBLES)**

It was easy to identify the marble king of a district as he usually strutted around with pockets bulging with his spherical conquests. The earliest marbles were made of clay before they were replaced by glass ones. There were multiple ways to win each other's marbles and regardless of their luck that day, all would return to the same patch the next day to have another go at the *goli* galore. It was a game with "lots of arguments and quarrels and fights … But by and large, the next day everybody would turn up again as if nothing happened and start the game [again]."[24]

H **HANTAM BOLA**

One of most exhilarating *kampong* games, *hantam* (or *hentam*) *bola* or *rembat bola* (whack ball) is a fiercely competitive and physical game. Speed and power reign supreme; players from one team will chase and hit their opponents with a tennis ball as one player described, "I was very good at *hantam bola* in my younger days, catch tennis ball with left hand and whack anyone in front with the right hand."

If unlucky, the ball would *kena* (hit) your face or head (followed by "*tao pio ah*" or "hit lottery", a euphemism for being doused on the head with bird poop). Playing *hantam bola* in the rain would send one rolling into muddy puddles but the fun would end immediately when your mother saw your dirty state; she would *hantam* (whack) you instead!

I **ITINERANT HAWKERS: UNLICENSED TASTE**

Street food vendors used to travel from *kampong* to *kampong* peddling their signature delicacies. An expectant crowd would gather in anticipation of the tantalising food, such as ice balls, *char kway teow* (noodles) and satay.[27] Unfortunately, the "dirt-cheap" hawker food was often dirt-riddled too.[28] In the 1960s, in a move to improve food hygiene, food peddlers were relocated to centralised hawker centres.[29]

J **JELON**

Unlike *hantam bola*, *jelon* is played within a set boundary. This game is called *galah panjang* or *hadang-hadang* (blocking) in Malaysia but it is known as *jelon* (a corruption of "balloon") or *belon acah* (literally meaning "tease balloon") in Singapore. When Singaporeans moved to flats, many children played *jelon* at the void decks or badminton courts. Within those spaces, mini-courts parallel to one another were marked and one team would defend the entrances to these courts. The aim of each team was to penetrate the entrances without getting tapped by their opponents. If one player managed to break through, his team would win, but if one of them got tapped the whole team was out.

Oh bey som!

Oh bey som *was a means by which teams or individual players were selected. Players would shout "oh bey som!" and simultaneously stick out their hands with their palms facing either up or down. All who had their palms facing in the same direction would be part of one team, and the rest on the other. A player would be singled out to be the* pasang *(catcher) if he or she was the only person with the palm facing a different direction from the rest of the group. Otherwise, the players would continue to* oh bey som, *eliminating the majority until only a single player remained.*

K **KLERET: HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER**

The aim of this game is to get a free piggyback ride from your opponent (pictured below).

L **LAMBONG TIN (OR "HIDE-AND-SEEK", "I SPY" OR NYOROK-NYOROK)**

Prior to the start of the game, a *pasang* (Malay for catcher) or spy would be selected via *oh somm* or *oh beh som* or *wah peh ya som* (see text box). Next, everyone would gather around and one player would shake a tin that had been filled with stones and then fling it. The moment the tin was flung, everyone would disperse.

(TOP LEFT) Five Stones is played with five small triangular cloth bags filled with seeds, rice grains or sand (1960s). *Singapore Sports Council (SSC) collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(ABOVE) *Keleret* must be played in pairs or teams. Flat stones or tiles (*batu keleret*) are thrown to get close to the target line or circle (1950S). *Courtesy of Singapore Sports Council (SSC) collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

The *pasang* would have to run to the tin and bring it back and shout "I spy!" which signalled that the game had started proper. If players needed a time-out they would signal for a break by making the "peace" sign with their fingers and shout "*chope*", "*chope* night", or "*chope* twist"! It would be honoured and everyone could take a break.

M **MOSQUITO BUSES: UNCONTROLLED BREEDING**

The mosquito bus (1920s–1950s) was a form of public transport that appeared about every half hour. The unregulated growth of these buses invited many complaints, particularly about their horn-happy drivers: "[they made] day and night hideous with their incessant horn-blowing (I could, for instance, recognise from my bed No. 425 by his "signature tune" as he went up or down Bukit Timah Road.) In those days, it was common for buses to tootle away, while standing at the end of *lorongs* in Geylang Road, in order to inform potential travellers that they were waiting."[30]

For all that ruckus, the mosquito buses could only take six seating passengers and one standing. Little wonder that when bigger motorcars appeared, these buses lost their buzz. By the 1950s, they were allowed to ply only in rural areas and the outer fringes of the city.[31]

N **NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOURS: "NO SALT? NO PROBLEM!"**

Today, when a housewife in the midst of cooking realises she has no salt in her larder, she turns off her gas-powered stove and heads to the nearest grocery store. Decades ago, she would have probably left her *arang* stove on while she dropped in on her neighbour to borrow some salt. Privacy in *kampongs* was less guarded as doors or gates were left ajar, inviting interactions and exchanging of small favours. A mother could *tumpang* (drop) her kids with the next-door neighbour while she ran an errand, or ask her neighbour to pick up some vegetables and fish on her behalf at the market. The *gotong-royong* (community help) spirit was much alive with neighbours looking out for one another.

O **OPEN-AIR CINEMAS = OPEN SKIES TREATMENT**

Children who lived in rural areas were able to enjoy the movies thanks to open-air cinemas. It cost 50 cents to secure a (wooden) seat. Many children caught reruns after school and when it rained, people would huddle to the side for shelter. One movie-goer remembered "patronising the cheap open air cinema called Peking Theatre located opposite the present MacPherson market… [movies were only] 5 cents but [one had] to endure the mosquitoes and there were no refunds if the show was cancelled due to heavy rain or power failure."[32]

(ABOVE) Tay Koh Yat bus service's "Mosquito Buses" at Sembawang (1955). *F. W. York collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(TOP) Unlicensed hawkers outside the Jalan Eunos Wet Market in 1958. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

P POLICE AND THIEF

This game of catch comprises two teams: police who chase and the thieves who flee. A spot would be designated as a prison (to hold "arrested" thieves), usually the trunk of a coconut tree. Thieves would not only be busy running from the police, but also freeing their imprisoned mates by infiltrating the prison and tapping them, though this was not always possible: "The captured thieves would be sitting near the tree waiting for some daring thief to tag them … the tree was tightly guarded … creating an impenetrable fortress … even think Alcatraz [was not] this tough.[33]

Q QUEUING AT STANDPIPES

In the days before the convenience of tap water at home, *kampong* residents had to queue at the common standpipes or wells to draw their water; the worse time for this was in the morning when everyone was getting ready for work or school. After things quietened, the next tranche of users were usually housewives who would crowd around the standpipes to do their washing. Invariably, it was more than just dirt that was swapped as the standpipe also doubled up as the village rumour mill.

R REMPAH AND SINGAPORE'S OWN SPICE GIRLS

Before there were powdered spices and packaged spice mixes, women used to make their *rempah* (spice paste) from scratch. They would prepare ingredients such as shallots, lemongrass, garlic and chilli and mix them with dry spices such as coriander seeds, cumin, and cloves. All these would be crushed by stoneware crushers (see "S") until the ingredients melded into a *rempah* ready for the frying pan. *Rempah* is considered the heart and soul of Malay, Eurasian and Peranakan curries and sauces.[34]

Rempah was freshly made daily and, in the days before home refrigeration, only what was needed was prepared. Such were the standards that went into the making of fish curries, *asam pedas* (a sour fish curry with pineapple chunks) and spicy *sambal* concoctions. For ladies whose fingers were too delicate for the hard work, hired hands were always available for about $1.50 a month. In particular, the Kadayanallur Muslim women, who migrated from Tamil Nadu in India, made this their signature trade, making daily home deliveries from house to house carrying baskets of ground spices on their heads. Some of them also sold fresh spice pastes at the wet market, which they ground with a granite rolling pin and a slab.

S STONEWARE SISTERS: BATU GILING AND BATU TUMBUK

Before blenders and food processors, stoneware ruled the kitchen and came in a few shapes and sizes. One was a bolster-shaped roller that crushed all kinds of spices on a rectangular slab called *batu giling* by the Malays. The *batu giling*'s immovable bulk earned it a fixed place in the kitchen, and perhaps also contributed to its earlier demise than the more portable pestle and mortar, called *batu lesung* or *batu tumbuk*. The *batu lesung* is still used in many Singapore kitchens and traditionalists still swear by the shrimp paste and chilli condiment called *sambal belacan* it makes. This implement is preferred over its electrical counterparts as it "pulverises by crushing hard ingredients into tiny fragments between two hard surfaces." It's best for coaxing the fragrant oils from hard spices such as peppercorns, cinnamon bark, cardamom, sesame seeds or coriander, "producing flavours superior to bottled or electric-ground spices."[35]

T TARIK UPIH: THE GREEN F1 RACE

The game starts with a child sitting on an *upih* (dried palm leaf) which is then dragged by his friend with as much speed as he can muster. The team that crosses the finishing line with the "passenger" *still* on top of the *upih* leaf wins. Girls, or the leaner ones, almost always enjoyed "priority seating" because it did not pay to have a heavyset player sit on the *upih* if the team wanted to win. The steeper the slope, the bigger the thrill and the trickier it was to remain on the *upih*.[38]

U USE-FIRST-PAY-LATER: 555 NOTEBOOK

The "555" notebook — with literally these numbers printed on the front cover — was used by businesses to keep a record of customers' tabs. It was a system built on trust: "when you go [to the provision store], you buy provisions from them… You can just take [items], there's a little book and then they will write your name, block, your address and all this… And then, [at the] end of the month they will tell you how much you owe them."[39] This handy little notebook also went round the *kopitiam* and *warungs* (coffeeshops) taking unpaid orders. At the end of the month however, the "owner would wave the 555 notebook; [a reminder] that the bills had not been settled."[40]

Another debt-reminder that was less pleasant than your sundry shop-owner was the *chettiar*, or Indian money-lender. Life usually turned bleak after taking a loan from them as come rain or shine, the *chettiar* would never fail to show up at your doorstep to demand his dues.

V VANISHING TRADES: THE BHAI OF YESTERYEARS

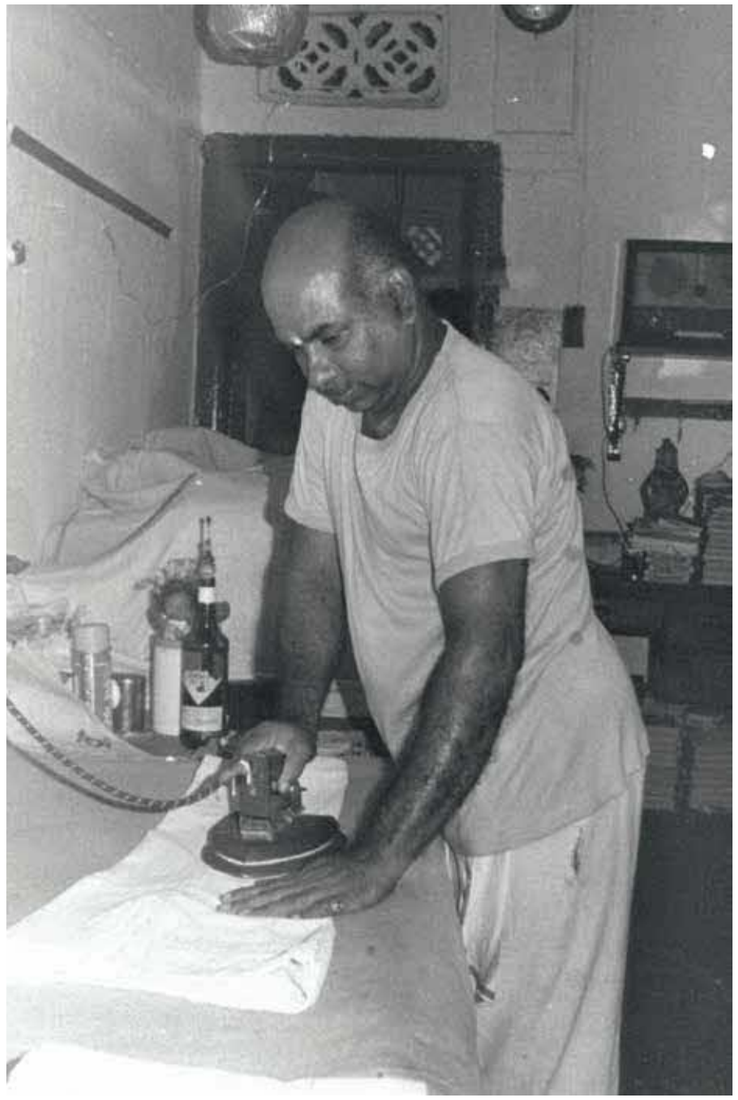
Several professions were synonymous with men who migrated from India to earn a living in Singapore. For example, the *bhai serbat* came to Singapore from Uttar Pradesh after the war and dominated the coffeeshop business. Others became laundrymen, security guards or sold *chapati* (unleavened flatbread).

Dhobies were laundrymen who eventually had a street named in their honour. In 2005, a *dhoby* shop, which had retained its "tossing and slapping" washing method, was found still running on St George Road. The owner of the shop, Mr Suppiah, came to Singapore in 1945 as a starry-eyed 15-year-old with big dreams. Life was hard back then as he used to hand-wash up to 500 articles of clothing a day, toiling from eight in the morning to 10 at night.[42]

The *sarabat* (original) stallholder or *bhai serbat*'s signature takeaway was *teh sarabat* (ginger tea) or *teh tarik* (pulled tea). The most famous *sarabat* stalls were those along Waterloo Street opposite the old St Joseph Institution's football field.[43] Another was at Kerbau Road near Serangoon where at a tender age of 12 in the 1960s, Mr Balbeer Singh was already juggling and pulling tea.[44] In the laid-back atmosphere of the *sarabat* stall, Singaporeans from all walks of life met and swapped stories. Even politics was not too grand for the *sarabat* stall. Kutty Mydeen of the Naval Base Labour Union recalled making an appointment to see lawyer Lee Kuan Yew about the formation of a new political party in the 1950s. Their pre-PAP roundtable talk was just one of the conversations that took place in a *sarabat* stall one fine morning in Market Street.[45]

Cattlemen and milkmen were mostly Tamils from South India. Serangoon was a cattle-rearing area in Singapore before the activity was banned in 1936. *The Singapore Free Press* observed "a herd of 40 or 50 cattle which completely blocked the public thoroughfare [in Victoria Street]. Some of the animals were grazing along the Street; others were lying in the centre of the road while the herder, an old Kling man, was comfortably taking a nap on the ground under the shadow of the close hedge of a compound."[46]

In the 1930s, the area between Cross Street and New Bridge Road was known as Kampong Susu (milk *kampong*) and the place lived up to its name from the many Indian milk sellers "identified by a tiny top knot of hair".[47] These Indian milkmen (or *bhai jual susu* to the Malays) ran door-to-door delivering fresh milk. Sometimes, the cow was milked on the spot: "[The milkmen came] with a cow and people [would] just buy the adulterated or diluted sort of thing. So fresh milk was really fresh…"[48]



(TOP) A Malay house in Kampong Bedok Luat. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(MIDDLE) A Nonya lady cooking in her kitchen using firewood. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(ABOVE) Close-up of Indian *dhoby* ironing clothes in Serangoon Road (1982). *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

W WOODEN WASHBOARD: THE LEAN MEAN MACHINE

This slim rectangular wooden block was a dirt-crusher that all housewives swore by to remove stubborn stains. But housewives who spent hours using these boards as they sat around communal standpipes or wells wished they could give it up as it was literally a pain in the neck, back and bottom. The wooden corrugated surface was also hard on the hands, and one could tell the washerwoman's devotion to this tool from her well-worn hands.

X "XTREME" DISASTERS: FLOODS AND FIRES

Kampongs were subject to frequent flooding that occurred during heavy rainfall. The flood waters often dragged objects along its wake and, once, the residents of Lorong Kinchir were astounded to spot a crocodile in the Kallang River near their *kampong* after a huge flood; apparently an inmate that had managed to escape from the Lorong Chuan farm.[49]

Kampongs were also vulnerable to fires due to their wooden and *attap* structures. The Bukit Ho Swee fire of 1961 is one that is etched in the nation's consciousness. The famous 19th-century Malay writer Munsyi Abdullah was living in Kampong Glam when it was gutted by a fire in 1847, robbing him of his valuables and letters. The incident so affected the writer that he was moved to pen his now-famous poem *Syair Kampung Glam Terbakar* (*Kampong Gelam On Fire*) that was published in the same year.[50]

The Tajam Batu Man

The tajam batu *man was usually a Punjabi (Sikh) who made his bicycle rounds in the* kampong *with his sharp tools. He would call out* "tajam batu!"*, which literally means "stone sharp(ening)" in Malay. The women would take out their stone slabs that had become too smooth to crush the spices for him to service. He would chisel the surface of the slabs with a giant nail and hammer, etching small holes to make the surface rough for better grinding.[36] For some reason, adults would scare children with stories of the* tajam batu *man kidnapping children, decapitating them and offering their heads for new constructions, bridges in particular. Scenes of scampering children would often precede the arrival of this "devilish" man.[37]*

Y YEH YEH (ZERO-POINT)

Yeh yeh requires a rope that is made by stringing rubber bands together. The aim is to jump over the rope as it is hoisted higher and higher by two other players each holding one end of the rope. At the start of the game, the rope is laid flat on the ground with players exclaming "zero-point" as they jump over. Players then jump across at increasingly "varying heights beginning with the ankle and ending with the head. To compete further, an 'inch' above the head is added. The rule of thumb is no part of [your] body can touch the rubber rope. Once any part of [the] body accidentally touch[es] the rope, the jumper '*mati*' ('dies') and the next person has to jump."[51]

Z ZERO-WATT NIGHTS: SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY

Electricity only reached the *kampongs* in 1961.[52] Before this, residents lit up their nights with kerosene lamps. The absence of electricity in retrospect actually forced people to interact more: "There was no radio or television; and certainly no Internet or online gaming to keep one away from others. After dark, the most one could do was to read a book by the glow of a kerosene lamp..."[53]

However, many unfortunate villagers became victims of fires as a result of accidentally overturning these oil lamps. One such incident was reported in *The Straits Times* in 1959, where "[a fire] roared through a *kampong* about 50 yards from the Alexandra Road fire station at 1.35 a.m. and destroyed 30 huts housing about 150 people."[54] To stem the hazard, the government introduced the 1963 *kampong* electricity scheme which promised that all villages would be provided with electricity by 1966.[55] ●

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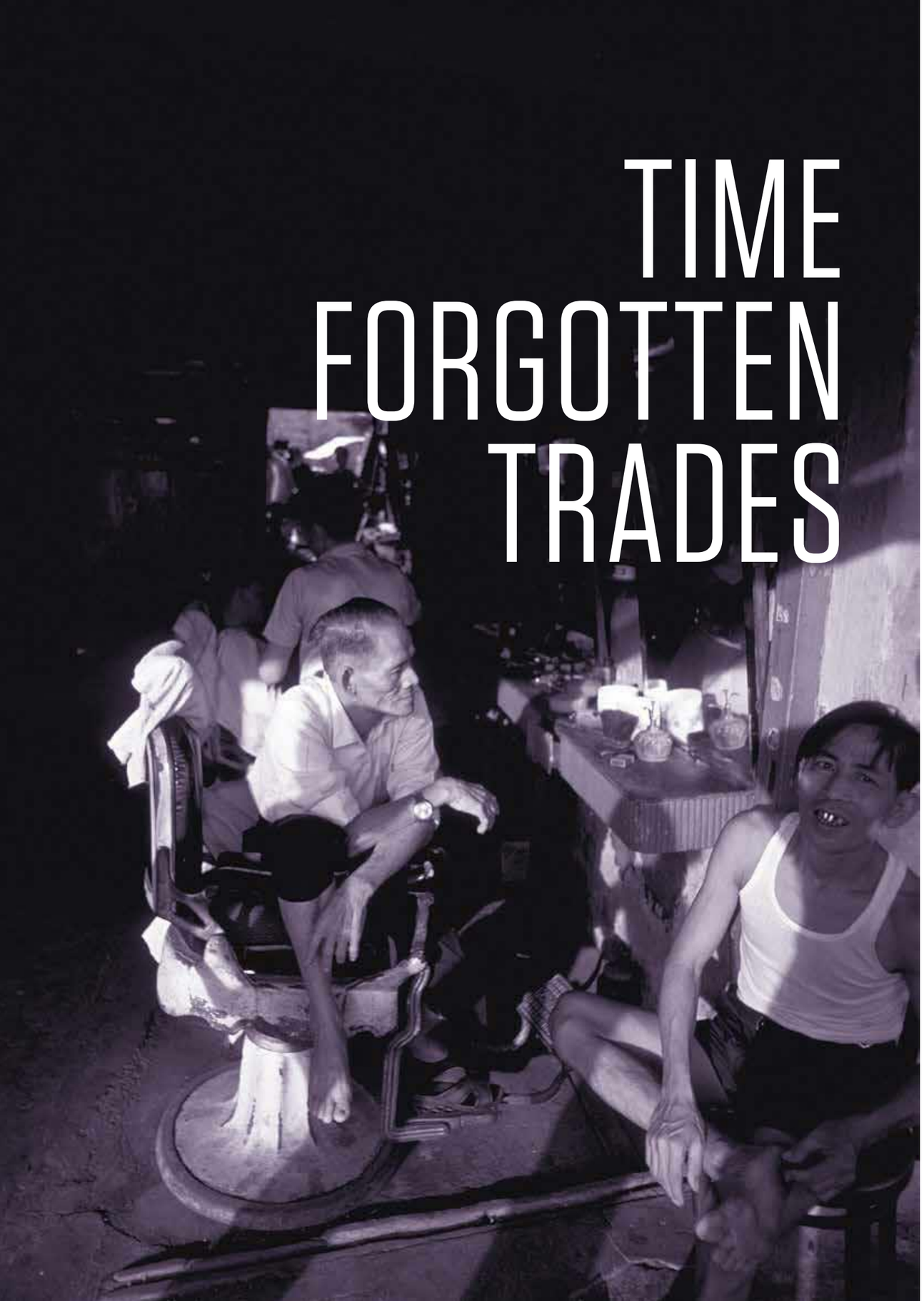
(TOP) Women washing laundry at a common standpipe, circa 1960s. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore*.

TIME FORGOTTEN TRADES



Unable to keep pace with Singapore's economic progress and development, many of Singapore's early crafts and trades have disappeared. Sharon Teng tells us about these trades and what is being done to remember them.

Sharon Teng is a Librarian with the National Library Board. She has contributed articles to *BiblioAsia* as well as Infopedia, NLB's online encyclopedia of Singapore. Her interest areas include the use of technology and social media in libraries.

THE STREETS OF CHINATOWN, LITTLE INDIA AND the arterial roads encircling the Central Business District were once crammed cheek by jowl with shophouses, street vendors and roadside stallholders peddling a mind-boggling variety of goods and services. These traditional peddlers are now virtually extinct — economic progress and urbanisation having dealt a death blow to these small-time trading activities.

From the late 19th to the early 20th centuries, there was a continuous influx of unskilled immigrants from China, India and Southeast Asia who came to seek their fortunes in Singapore. Many had minimal or no education, meagre possessions and limited funds. Some were already skilled tinsmiths, goldsmiths, locksmiths, seal carvers, image carvers, boat makers, and mask and dragon makers while others with more artistic inclinations had been trained as portrait and photo artists, opera actors and actresses, glove puppeteers and calligraphers. Others picked up various trades after they arrived in Singapore by serving as apprentices to local barbers, cobblers, furniture restorers and clog makers.

A few enterprising immigrants started plying their trades along the "five-foot-ways" — which was what sheltered pedestrian walkways measuring five feet wide were called in colonial times — in front of shophouses. These makeshift stalls sold inexpensive goods and services that required minimal financial outlay and equipment to set up. These trades were known as *gho kha ki* (Hokkien for "five-foot-way") trades[1] and included "knife sharpeners, streetside barbers, mask makers and fortune tellers" as well as "locksmiths, letter writers, traditional medicine men or *bomoh*" (Malay shaman) and several others.[2]

A TRADE BY ANY OTHER NAME

Merriam-Webster defines a tradesman or tradesperson as a skilled worker engaged in a particular trade or craft. Trades are an integral component of the manufacturing industry; in traditionally run businesses, inter-generational workers usually engage in labour-intensive work, sometimes using simple machinery or hand tools to produce a commodity for sale. Sullivan defines these trades as "making-things business" or "cottage industries", emphasising the "handwork aspect of such manufacturing".[3] These trades are usually family-run, "have less than twenty workers, including [the] working proprietor; may consist of only one or two people … [and the] work space and living space are combined or are nearby".[4]

DISAPPEARING TRADES

Over time, some trades have been completely obliterated due to dramatic changes in lifestyles or a drop in demand, such as charcoal dealers and craftsmen making paper bags, hair buns, *daching* (beam scales), wooden barrels, stools and masks.

Due to technological advancements and mechanisation, factories were able to mass-produce goods cheaply and more efficiently, contributing to the end of artisanal craftsmen such as tinsmiths, silversmiths and goldsmiths. The arduous life of a goldsmith, for example, with its long hours, meagre wages and a long apprenticeship (up to five years) discouraged new entrants into the profession.

Singapore's evolving economic, land and labour policies also spelt the demise of these trades. During the 1980s and 1990s, many shophouses were demolished and itinerant five-foot-way peddlers relocated to flatted factories. The subsequent increase in overheads, coupled with anti-pollution regulations and the difficulty in finding new workers — particularly among the younger generation who eschewed manual work — made it impossible for the smaller trades and cottage industries to sustain their businesses.[5]

A few trades have survived the march of time, such as the mobile ice-cream cart vendor, roadside cobbler, traditional bakeries and provision shops and the odd shoe last maker, but their numbers are slowly dwindling and it is a matter of time before they are completely wiped out from the cityscape. There are sporadic openings of new "old" shops that try and recapture some of these time-honoured trades, but these are usually hard-nosed businesses that use nostalgia to create a commercial buzz. Chye Seng Huat Hardware in Tyrwhitt Road for instance is a hip coffee bar operating in a restored 1950s shophouse that still bears its original name, while Dong Po Colonial Café in Kandahar Street tries to recapture a slice of yesteryear with its old-fashioned butter cakes and thick black coffee.

(LEFT) A barber shop along a five-foot way at Wayang Street in 1986. *Ronni Pinsler collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

SINGAPORE'S EARLY ENTREPRENEURS: FIVE-FOOT-WAY TRADERS

COBBLERS →

History When Singaporeans switched from wearing clogs to modern footwear during the 1950s, cobblers filled in the demand for shoe repairs. Many cobblers started out as shoe shop apprentices before setting up their own businesses. The trade comprised predominantly Chinese males, although there were also several Malay and Indian cobblers.

Job Scope Cobblers worked flexible hours with incomes varying from month-to-month and provided services such as shoe polishing, replacement of worn-out heels and soles, and stitching-up of torn slippers. Some branched out into more premium services by making and selling their own slippers (*capal*) and shoes. Replacing the sole or heel of a shoe would have cost around $1.50 in the late 1970s, with the cobbler earning around $300 a month on average.

Tools of the Trade Cobblers used an array of tools; "different kinds of knives, hammers, nails, pincers, adhesive, shoe lasts, shoe polish, shoe brushes, thread and needles, scissors, leather, vinyl, rags and rubber pieces".[6]

Then and Now Cobblers used to operate along five-foot-ways and roads in city areas. They stationed themselves at fixed locations or moved around housing estates on bicycle-carts filled with the tools of their trade. Traditional cobblers can still be found in Chinatown and Raffles Place, although they are gradually being replaced by shoe repair chains such as Mister Mint and Shukey Services that are conveniently located in shopping malls.[7]

FORTUNE TELLERS ↗

History Chinese fortune-telling as a trade began in the 1800s when there was a huge influx of Chinese immigrants to Singapore. Having little or no education, people who needed help with selecting a felicitous date for a wedding or the opening of a shop for example, would seek the advice of a fortune teller.

Parrot astrology was the domain of Indian fortune tellers who originated mainly from Tamil Nadu and Kerala in South India.

Job Scope There were several popular methods that Chinese fortune tellers used, such as palmistry, face reading, *bazi* (using one's birth date to predict one's destiny or to gauge the compatibility of a match-made couple), *kau cim* (using a set of 78 sticks for short-term predictions) and *tung chu* (using the almanac to select auspicious dates for important events such as weddings and shifting house).

Indian fortune tellers relied on their specially trained green parakeets to foretell the future. The bird would pick a fortune card based on the customer's name and birth date. The astrologer would then interpret the image on the card (which depicted deities of different faiths, accompanied by lucky messages) that would address the customer's concerns, which ranged from chances at the lottery and matrimonial compatibility to the recovery of a sick loved one.

Tools of the Trade Chinese fortune tellers operated from a simple consultation booth, furnished with a small table and a few stools for customers. On display would be religious iconography such as the statue of Buddha or other Chinese deities, lighted incense or joss sticks, pictures of palms, cards, bamboo sticks and books among others.

An Indian fortune teller, dressed in a white *dhoti* and shirt, would have had an even more basic set-up: a small table or even just the pavement itself, where a deck of 27 fortune cards would be displayed along with some charts, a notebook and caged parakeets. To supplement their paltry daily incomes of $10 to $15, they would also participate in cultural shows and trade exhibitions, earning up to $100 to $200 per job.

Then and Now In the past, fortune tellers were usually found along five-foot-ways and in temple grounds. Today, Chinese fortune tellers are still commonly seen around Chinatown, at Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple in Waterloo Street, and at older HDB estates such as Bedok, Toa Payoh and Ang Mo Kio.

Parrot astrologers were based in Serangoon Road but they also made house calls, especially during festive occasions. Today, there are fewer than five still in business in Little India, as many Indians have ceased to believe in this method of divination.[8]

ICE-BALL SELLERS ↑

History Ice-balls were hugely popular during the 1950s and 1960s, particularly among school children and teens. Ice-ball sellers were mostly Indian males, who sold drinks in addition to these cool delicious treats.

Job Scope To make an ice-ball, the ice-ball seller would use a towel to press a block of ice against an ice shaver. One hand would hold a bowl beneath to catch the shavings. He would then shape the ice shavings into a semicircle, enclosing within ingredients such as cubes of *agar-agar*, or jelly, sweetened red beans and *attap-chee* (mangrove palm seeds). Using yet more ice shavings, he would deftly compact it into a spherical snowball. Then lashings of red and green and palm sugar syrup are drizzled over the ice-ball, followed by a trickle of evaporated milk for added sweetness.

Tools of the Trade The ice-ball vendor's stall or pushcart would be packed with glass bottles of soft drinks and drinking glasses, plastic containers filled with various sugar syrup concoctions, ingredients for the ice-ball fillings and the all-important wooden ice shaver.

Then and Now Ice-ball vendors were usually found near schools or along shophouses but sometimes moved to different locations with their mobile carts. Ice-balls are the predecessors of the more elaborate plated dessert called ice *kachang* sold in hawker centres and food courts. In 2011, ice-balls were brought back as part of the dessert menu at the Singapore Food Trail (a dining attraction featuring popular local dishes), located next to the Singapore Flyer.[9]

KACHANG PUTEH SELLERS ↑

History A Malay phrase, "*kachang*" (nuts, beans or peas) and "*puteh*" (meaning white) was a popular snack up until the 1990s. The peanuts coated with melted white sugar is one of the most popular varieties and probably accounts for the name "white nuts". *Kachang puteh* originated from an Indian snack called *chevdo*.[10] Nuts of various colours and prepared in a variety of ways (steamed, fried, roasted or coated with sugar) were sold by the vendors, who were mostly Indians.

Job Scope The early itinerant *kachang puteh* seller hawked his wares stored in bottles or paper bags from a tray balanced on his head, moving from one location to the next. Some used push carts or bicycles, while others stationed themselves at fixed locales. Typically between five and 20 varieties of *kachang puteh* would be sold and each serving (either a single or mixed flavour of nuts) would be packed into rolled-up paper cones, using pages torn from old newspapers, Yellow Pages directories and school exercise books.

Tools of the Trade *Kachang puteh* vendors either roasted and flavoured their own *kachang* at home (a lengthy and painstaking process) or bought ready-made *kachang* directly from suppliers.

Then and Now *Kachang puteh* sellers used to frequent schools, cinemas, swimming pools and shopping centres. Such independent vendors have all but vanished today, except for perhaps the sole surviv-

(TOP) Cobbler operating from pavement (1980). *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(MIDDLE) Parrot fortune teller at Serangoon Road in 1980. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(ABOVE) An Indian ice-water seller making a syrup coated ice-ball in 1978. *Courtesy of Ministry of Information and The Arts (MITA).*

(TOP RIGHT) A roadside '*kachang puteh*' seller (1985). *Chu Sui Mang collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

ing *kachang puteh* seller in Singapore, Mr Nagappan Arumugam, who has manned a pushcart at Peace Centre on Selegie Road for over 20 years.[11] *Kachang puteh* is now available in commercially pre-packed versions at supermarkets and 24-hour convenience stores all over Singapore. A push cart stall can also be found at the Singapore Food Trail.[12]

LETTER WRITERS ↓

History The thousands of illiterate and semi-literate Chinese immgrants in Singapore — *coolies* (manual workers), *amahs* (domestic helpers) and *Samsui* women (female construction labourers from Guangdong Province) — who yearned to communicate with their families in China resulted in the demand for letter writers. The 1950s and 1960s were boom times for such letter writers, with long queues of people patiently waiting to send word back home after World War II, along with food, clothing and money. Letter writers were usually Chinese males in their 50s and 60s.

Job Scope A letter writer would pen the feelings and thoughts of his customers and also read letters aloud for the illiterate, bridging the physical and emotional distance between relatives who resided thousands of miles away and their families in Singapore. The letters were written in a mixture of classical and vernacular Chinese. The writer would sometimes write "spring couplets, invitation cards, leases [and] marriage certificates"[13] and, sadly, even suicide notes. Letter writers also wrote ancestral tablets for religious worship and to display at home for immigrants who moved into new residences. Due to the usually penurious circumstances of his clientele, the letter writer in the 1960s charged nominal sums for his services, such as a dollar per letter and earned about $250 a month.

Tools of the Trade The letter writer's stall was spartan, furnished with only a small table, one or two chairs and his writing instruments, comprising paper, Chinese brushes, ink and an abacus.

Then and Now Letter writers were once a common sight in Chinatown but the trade lost its popularity after the 1980s with the passing of many old-time patrons. The increase in literacy and communication technology such as the telephone also contributed to the trade's decline. Letter writers today focus primarily on writing ancestral tablets for the younger Chinese generation and entertain occasional requests from tourists to compose spring couplets and auspicious words or to have Chinese translations of their English names written.[14]

STREET BARBERS →

History Street barbers gained popularity after the 1911 Chinese Revolution, when Chinese immigrants who arrived in Singapore lopped off their braided "pigtails" (which had been a symbol of repression during the Qing Dynasty). Many barbers were self-taught, while some apprenticed at barber shops. The profession was equally represented by the Chinese, Malay and Indian races.

Job Scope Operating along five-foot-ways or in roadside makeshift tents, street barbers offered haircuts, shaving, ear wax removal, nose-hair trimming, and scalp, face and shoulder massages.

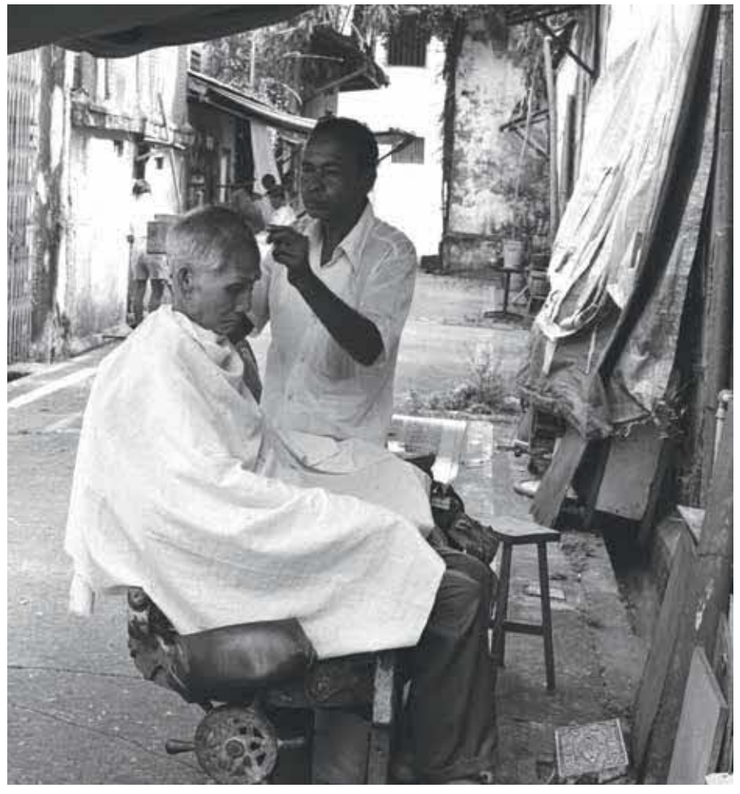
Barbers worked from around eight in the morning to dusk, charging about 50 cents for a haircut in the 1960s, and raising their prices during the Chinese New Year season to cater to increased demand. Some made house calls to shave the heads of babies or to provide haircuts for the elderly and infirmed.

Tools of the Trade A street barber's equipment usually included one to three barber chairs, several pairs of scissors, manual clippers, combs, brushes, razor blades, powder puffs and a mirror.

Then and Now Street barbers once operated along the aptly named Barber Street, between Jalan Sultan and Aliwal Street and at the cobbled lane between Jalan Sultan and North Bridge Road. They were also found in Chinatown, Serangoon Road and Tanjong Pagar.

With the erection of high-rise flats in the 1960s, barbers plied their trade along the corridors of housing estates. Today, however, they operate out of air-conditioned shops found in virtually every neighbourhood, with modern equipment such as electric clippers and shavers. What has survived is the unique icon denoting these neighbourhood barbers — the barber's pole, with its spinning helix of tri-coloured red, white and blue stripes.[15]

(ABOVE) A letter writer with a customer along a five foot way in Kreta Ayer. From the Kouo Shang-Wei collection 郭尚慰收集. *All rights reserved, family of Kouo Shang-Wei and National Library Board, Singapore, 2007.*



(TOP) Barber at Tras Street in 1988. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

IMMORTALISING THE TRADES OF YESTERYEAR

Although many of the early trades and cottage industries no longer exist today, they have nonetheless left indelible imprints on the economic and social fabric of Singapore. Official documentation and archival records of these early trades act as historical and sociological testaments of how people lived and worked in early Singapore. These records acknowledge and pay tribute to the contributions of Singapore's early entrepreneurs in the economic development of the island. At the national level, memory recorders and archivists hope that by helping the public understand the people and events that shaped the nation's past, a deeper collective understanding and appreciation for Singapore's history can be nurtured.

Cultural institutions, societies, commercial entities and private individuals have in their own ways expanded the government's efforts — using traditional and new media, such as print, oral recordings, photographs, videos and social media platforms like FaceBook, Instagram and Twitter — to immortalise Singapore's early trades and craftsmen. Exhibitions organised by societies and cultural groups with demonstrations of long-lost or soon-to-be-extinct trades deliver an experiential learning dimension for a contemporary audience by making history come alive through authentic recreations of the past.

PRINT AND DIGITAL DOCUMENTATION

From a national perspective, libraries, museums and archives are seen as the appointed custodians and curators of the country's social, economic, political and cultural history. In this vein, the Singapore Memory Project was started in 2011 as a national initiative "to collect, preserve and provide access to Singapore's knowledge materials, so as to tell the Singapore Story".[16] Visitors to the portal, and its accompanying iremembersg blog, are able to view personal memories posted by members of the public on vanishing trades such as the "Chinese *wayang*", "iceball vendor" and "painted typography".

Other sources include articles on long-lost trades by the National Heritage Board, as well as newspaper articles from the National Library Board's digitised newspaper archive, NewspaperSG. These articles provide credible first-hand accounts of significant historic personalities and events, and offer an objective binocular view of Singapore's past.

Blogs[17] created by individuals and community groups are private archival repositories shared with an online public audience. These blog entries express the blogger's personal thoughts, opinions and insights. These "man-in-the-street" perspectives reveal the private expressions of what the national "Singapore Story" represents to distinct individuals in society.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs are visual records that present a still-life simulacrum of a bygone era. NLB's PictureSG and the National Archives of Singapore's (NAS) picture archives database, PICAS, provide a visual tableau of Singapore's history and social development and serve as invaluable repositories of Singapore's early trades and craftsmen.

Beyond that, image hosting social platforms such as Flickr allow users to share personal photographs. This enables

disparate individuals and groups to engage and network, and facilitates the collective pooling of materials that result in a deeper and richer multi-varied historical narrative. Through the social platform medium, the subject of vanishing trades is reinvigorated for the digital generation.

EXHIBITIONS / TRADE FAIRS

"The Lost Arts of The Republic of Singapore"[18] is an example of a vanishing trades project that straddles the physical and digital realms. This project was initiated by two local artists to "document the current state of vanishing arts and crafts of Singapore". Through interviews with 10 existing practitioners, the artists crafted an exhibition for the Pop-Up Singapore House and London Design Festival in 2012, which presented a fresh interpretation of traditional symbols and transformed them into modern narratives. The exhibition was featured in two local journals (*The Design Journal*, March 2012, and *Zaobao Fukan*, July 2012). In addition, the artists posted photos of their exhibition and journal write-ups on Flickr.

Through the decades, commercial and non-profit cultural organisations and societies such as the Singapore Handicraft Centre, Singapore Heritage Society, Chinatown Heritage Centre, Indian Heritage Centre and the Malay Heritage Centre have been actively organising cultural exhibitions and trade fairs, providing those still engaged in Singapore's pioneering trades the opportunity to showcase dying or long-forgotten crafts or arts.[19]

In December 2011, the National Heritage Board put together a roving exhibition called "Traditional Provision Shops: A Thriving Past & An Uncertain Future", which showcased 18 traditional provision shops and collectibles.[20]

The National Museum of Singapore has also curated several exhibitions on vanishing trades over the years, with the most recent being "Trading Stories: Conversations with Six Tradesmen" in March 2013, which featured true-life accounts of six pioneer tradesmen who have either retired or are still active in their occupations.[21]

ORAL RECORDINGS

Established in 1979, the Oral History Centre of the National Archives of Singapore documents and provides access to the stories of individuals who have lived through significant moments in Singapore's history. These oral records document Singapore's political and social histories, covering periods such as the Japanese Occupation, political and leadership transitions and the development of the arts, education and sports, among other areas. The reflections and emotions of men and women who laboured and contributed towards Singapore's economy in the pre- and post-war periods are captured in these interviews.

The recordings reveal fascinating details such as the reasons for entering or abandoning a trade, remuneration, details of goods and services provided, customer profiles, business practices, challenges and triumphs of the profession, anecdotes on training and apprenticeship, family stories and comparisons of past and present standards of living.

DOCUMENTARIES AND DRAMAS

Vanishing trades have been documented in local Chinese documentaries such as *Vow of Celibacy* (1980)[22], *The Vanishing Trades* (1983)[23] and *My Grand Partner* (webisode 11),[24] which featured a traditional shoe maker and fountain pen repairman. These trades have also been the focus of local Chinese drama serials such as *Five-Foot-Way* (1987)[25] and *Samsui Women* (1986).

Videos on vanishing trades can also be found on YouTube, posted by teachers and students for school projects, as well as film enthusiasts through local short film competitions such as ciNE65[26] and also by local history buffs and hobbyists.

COMMEMORATIVE MEMORABILIA

Vanishing trades have been featured in commemorative memorabilia such as the 1978 *Straits Times* calendars[27] and a set of collectible Econ minimart phonecards sold in 1996.[28] Street traders of the early 1900s were also featured on a series of thematic MRT cards released in 1997.[29]

Samsui women, with their iconic red headgear and black trousers, have also been immortalised as dolls and t-shirt emblems sold at the Chinatown Heritage Centre. Photographs of *samsui women* were also displayed at bus stops during the M1 Singapore Fringe Art Festival in 2011.[30]

While the demise of these trades is inevitable due to economic progress and advancements in technology, continual efforts are being made at the individual, community and national levels to capture, document and preserve the memory of our early trades and the people who toiled at their crafts. We can take comfort that Singapore's pioneer tradesmen and craftsmen will not likely disappear from society's consciousness but continue to live on in our communal memories and national chronicles. ●

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(TOP) Some of the individuals featured in the 2013 exhibition, "Trading Stories: Conversations with Six Pioneering Tradesmen" by the National Museum of Singapore include Sam Sui women and a movie poster painter. *Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.*

(MIDDLE LEFT AND RIGHT) "The Lost Arts of The Republic of Singapore" (2012) documented the vanishing arts and crafts of Singapore. *Courtesy of Su-Jin Ng.*

家谱

THE JIAPU CHRONICLES

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Records of family lineage were important in traditional Chinese society. Lee Meiyu charts the history of these documents, or *jiapu*, which track not only family roots but also the social norms and cultural values of China at the time.

Lee Meiyu is a librarian at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library at the National Library Board. The subject of genealogy is close to her heart and she has worked on resource publications that complement NLB's exhibitions such as *Money by Mail to China: Dreams and Struggles of Early Migrants* (2012) and *ROOTS: Tracing Family Histories — A Resource Guide* (2013).

In ancient Chinese society, *jiapu* (家谱) or Chinese genealogy records, were created for the express reason of documenting the ancestry of each family. Before the Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE), lineage determined a person's social class in China, and *jiapu* were used as official documents by the imperial court to prove the identity of a member of the ruling class and justify his position. This objective, however, evolved during the Song Dynasty when *jiapu* became a social tool to unify families by kinship instead. This shift took the practice of recording *jiapu* beyond the realm of the courts to the non-ruling classes, leading to a peak in genealogy studies and documentation.[1]

As genealogical studies flourished and matured in China, guidelines on how, what and when a *jiapu* could be written were formulated. These guidelines were flexible and evolved with the times. As the *jiapu* was a lineage blueprint that served as a basis for families to function, its presentation and content reflected the characteristics and beliefs of society at a particular point in time. As society evolved, so did the function of the *jiapu*, and consequently, its content.

INVENTED TRADITIONS AND NATIONALISM

Although the history of *jiapu* documentation in Singapore can be traced to China, over time, the form and content of local Chinese genealogical records have evolved. In general, *jiapu* published by Singapore's clan associations still follow the structure of older *jiapu*, since the majority of them are revised editions or compilations of the originals. However, with the introduction of the English language and influences from other cultures, the style and form of new genealogies written by Chinese families in Singapore have changed drastically.

This new form of *jiapu* is written in English and commonly records only three to five generations due to the short history of the migrant family, and includes names of female members, which is a departure from the traditional norm. Their contents are simpler, often comprising generation charts, oral history documentations and photographs. In fact, it might be more appropriate to describe these as family history records as opposed to traditional *jiapu*. The changing content of the new *jiapu* reflects the environment in which Singapore Chinese found themselves. For example, it is uncommon for clan rules to be detailed in *jiapu* in the context of a society with a fully developed legal system, as the legal framework would supercede the clan rules. These texts reflect a change in the purpose of recording *jiapu*; today, the documentation is more for creating a sense of self-identity than a social tool to regulate the functions of a clan.

In this essay, the rich history tracing the development of different chapters in a traditional Chinese *jiapu* will be explored, illustrated with selected examples from the National Library's *jiapu* collection.

TITLE OF GENEALOGY (*PU MING* 谱名)

In traditional practice, the title of a *jiapu* was important as it indicated which clan the records belonged to. It was common for the title to be made up of a combination of the name of the settlement area, surname, name of the ancestral temple, district-names, name of first migrant ancestor, and even the number of revisions done to the *jiapu*.[3]

INTRODUCTION (*PU XU* 谱序)

Provenance was a very important criteria in *jiapu*. The reason and goals for revision, identity of the reviser, the year and background of revision, and the revision process were all recorded in the introduction. An interesting practice was to include all previous introductions found in the older editions of the *jiapu* in the current edition, so as to keep the provenance intact.

Apart from updating the *jiapu* with the latest clan members' information, the compiler also had to ensure and verify that all information recorded was true, accurate and authoritative. This included information that had been recorded in the previous edition. Hence, it was not uncommon for earlier compilers to record unverified information and leave remarks for future generations to verify the content when new sources of information surfaced. Due to the nature of the research, compilers tended to be scholars or clan members who had an in-depth knowledge of classical texts.[4]

Since *jiapu* served to document lineage, tracing the origin of a clan's surname became an important chapter in the evolution of the *jiapu*. This was especially so if the surname could be traced to an ancient king or noble line that glorified the clan and affirmed their social status.

ORIGINS OF SURNAME (*XING SHI YUAN LIU* 姓氏源流)

Chinese surnames have a long history. Some studies postulate that surnames first appeared in the matrilineal society of Chinese civilisation from approximately 5,000 to 3,000 BCE. Surnames were used to differentiate descent through maternal lines. As society became patrilineal, new surnames appeared, beginning with the ruling class. These new surnames were often derived from official titles, names of ruling areas or living places.[5]

Due to the form in which surnames were derived, they became associated with the historical developments of clans and revealed information about migration and ancestral history. Studies on Chinese surnames appeared as early as the Han Dynasty[6] (206 BCE–220 CE), which explained the historical origins of each surname. Since *jiapu* served to document lineage, tracing the origin of a clan's surname became an important chapter in the evolution of the *jiapu*. This was especially so if the surname could be traced to an ancient king or noble line that glorified the clan and affirmed their social status.

The chapter on surnames from the genealogy of the Bai (白) clan from Bangtou Town in Anxi County in Fujian Province (福建安溪榜头), China, is a classic exam-

(TOP) Women folding *kim chua* (paper money) for religious or ancestral offering along Clarke Quay in 1978. *Ronni Pinsler collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(MIDDLE LEFT) Ancestral altar tablets displayed in a clan ancestral hall (1978). *Ronni Pinsler collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(MIDDLE RIGHT) An ancestral hall of the Hakka community at Lorong Makam (1986). *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

In traditional Chinese society, *jiapu* could comprise the following 18 types of information[2]:

- Ancestor portraits and praises
- Content page
- List of editorial members
- Introduction
- Writing style guide
- Records of meritorious deeds
- Genealogy studies and its history
- Origin of surname
- Generation chart
- Biographies
- Clan rules
- Clan practices
- Ancestral hall
- Ancestral graves
- Clan properties
- Documents pertaining to properties
- Literary works
- List of members who had a copy of the genealogy

Some of the information listed, also known as chapters as they appeared in the *jiapu*, are still being recorded today. This is especially true for modern publications that are merely updated editions of older *jiapu*.

ple of how surnames and district names reveal information about the lineage and migration history of a clan. The chapter begins by pointing out the uncertainty of the surname's origin, with four possible origins proposed. These origins separately suggest that the Bai surname descended from either an official, Bai Fu (白阜), who lived during the pre-dynastic times of the Yan Emperor; Bai Fen (白份, 12th-century BCE), lord of the feudal state of Zhang; Bai Yibing (白乙丙, 7th-century BCE), a general of the State of Qin; or Bai Gongsheng (白公胜, 5th-century BCE), an advisor in the State of Chu.

The second section of this chapter deals with the origin of district-names (*junwang* 郡望) of the Bai clan. District names refer to the geographical areas where clans first originated or prospered. The district-names associated with the Bai clan are: Fengyi (冯翊, in modern-day Shanxi); Taiyuan (太原, in modern-day Shanxi); Nanyang (南阳, in modern-day Henan); and Xiangshan in the Luoyang area (洛阳香山, in modern-day Henan). This is followed by the migration history of the Bai clan from northern China into the southern regions. The first ancestor to migrate to Anxi was Yi Yu (逸宇公) during the Ming Dynasty in 1424 CE. Yi Yu escaped to Anxi with his family when they were falsely accused of treason.

GENERATION CHART (*SHI XI TU* 世系图)

The Zhou Dynasty (1066–221 BCE) rulers incorporated the patriarchal lineage system into their ruling structure so successfully that it had a lasting impact on the entire Chinese civilisation. The Zhou people were ruled by a king who was known as the Son of Heaven. This position was passed down from a father to his eldest surviving son. Younger sons were conferred the title of feudal lords, and their titles were in turn inherited by their eldest sons. Lineages formed by the eldest sons of each feudal lord family were known as the "Main Branch" (*dazong* 大宗), while those formed by younger sons were known as the "Side Branch" (*xiaozong* 小宗). The Main Branch enjoyed higher social status than the Side Branch and was granted more privilege, respect and power. As blood relatives to the Son of Heaven, feudal lords were obliged to protect him and rule their given lands on his behalf. The Zhou ruling class created a society that used lineage as the basis to determine the distribution of wealth and power. This set of societal rules was known as the "System of Lineages" (*zong fa zhi du* 宗法制度).

The Zhou ruling system did not survive after the fall of the dynasty. However, it was later adopted by the Chinese as a means to organise their clans. The concepts of Main Branch and Side Branch were adopted into the *jiapu*, which recorded every clan members' ancestry and served as documented proof of his inheritance rights and social status. The documentation methodology matured with the publication of two ground-breaking works during the Song Dynasty — "The genealogy chart of the Ouyang clan" (*Ouyang shi pu tu* 《欧阳氏谱图》) and "The genealogy of the Su clan" (*Su shi zu pu* 《苏氏族谱》). The authors, Ouyang Xiu (欧阳修) and Su Xun (苏洵), became the pioneers of traditional Chinese genealogy.[7]

The generation chart of the Lu (吕) clan from Tiannei Town in the Meishan area (嵋山田内) is an example of how traditional Chinese generation charts are laid out. Read from right to left, the rightmost column of the chart states the different generations of the clan, with the first generation at the top and the fifth generation at the bottom. Descendents of the same generation are placed side by side, with the oldest to the youngest son in the same row. The genealogy is composed of several charts, and limiting the documentation to five generations per chart was a concept first proposed by Ouyang Xiu and Su Xun. Both defined the Side Branch as descendents of younger sons within five generations, with Su Xun also stating that generations beyond the fifth were no longer considered as part of the clan.[8] In modern Chinese genealogy this restriction is not followed, even though the representation of five generations in a chart is generally still practised.

The concept of the Main Branch stipulated that eldest sons of eldest sons formed the main bloodline of a clan, and they could inherit the privileges and responsibilities of a clan patriarch. Such privileges included the inheritance of wealth, power and social status. The responsibilities of a clan patriarch was to ensure clan harmony, lead ancestral rites and prayers, and groom the next patriarch, thus ensuring the bloodline remained unbroken.[9] The clan patriarch of each generation had great power and control over other clan members who were considered to be of lower hierarchy. In the Lu generation chart, the names of the eldest sons in each generation are written directly below their fathers' names in larger text, at the beginning of the second column. The clear presentation of continuous lineage serves as an easy reference to determine the hierarchy of a member in relation to others in the clan.

GENERATION NAMES (*ZI BEI* 字辈)

Generation names were used to differentiate the generation that clan members belonged to within a large clan, which would in turn determine the appropriate greeting and conduct of members. Those born in the same generation would have the same Chinese character as the first character of their names. In most cases, clans would use Chinese characters from a poem that recorded meritorious clan deeds or virtues valued by the clan as the sequence of characters to be used. Hence, clan members would be able to infer the seniority of another based on the sequence of their generation names as indicated in the poem.[11]

ANCESTRAL HALL (*CI TANG* 祠堂)

Ancestor worship is an important activity in Chinese culture, based on the belief that the spirits of the dead can influence the activities of the living. In order to gain the blessings of the spirits, rites are performed to appease them. Apart from obtaining blessings, ancestral rites also serve as important familial focal points and reminders of their blood ties. Ancestral tablets of a clan are housed in an ancestral hall and this is also where the *jiapu* is kept. The ancestral hall is a physical manifestation of the connection between the generations, bestowing a sense of identity on the clan as a whole as well as individually.

The naming of the ancestral hall is of utmost importance. An appropriate name reflects the history of the clan or reminds future generations of a desired virtue. It is common for ancestral halls to be named after the district names of the clan. In traditional Chinese society, one's district name was often introduced together with one's surname at social gatherings; this would enable others to know which ancestral temple and clan a person belonged to.[12]

Some *jiapu* are named after their ancestral halls, such as the genealogy of the Liugui Hall (六桂堂). Although the term *liugui* is not the district name of the clan, there is good reason for naming it so. The original surname of the clan was Weng (翁), descendents of the royal family of the Zhou Dynasty. During the Song Dynasty, six brothers were successful in the imperial examinations and became officials. It was a glorious occasion for the clan and the event was remembered as *liu gui lian fang* (六桂联芳), meaning "the six brothers who became officials". Hence, the term *liugui* was associated with this significant historical event, and was used to remind descendents of their ancestors' achievements. The six brothers later adopted different surnames — Weng (翁), Hong (洪), Fang (方), Gong (龚), Jiang (江), and Wang (汪), and lived in different parts of China. Although the descendents of these six branches live separately and have different surnames, they maintain contact with each branch through their local ancestral halls that have preserved their clan records.

A 1949 drawing plan shows the Liugui Hall built in Quanzhou, China — where the six brothers originated from. There was a hall for the ancestral tablets, management offices for clan members and a stage for Chinese opera. Their *jiapu* was republished in conjunction with the construction of the ancestral hall (see page 41).

LANDS BELONGING TO THE ANCESTRAL HALL (*JI TIAN* 祭田)

Funds were needed to upkeep the ancestral hall as well as pay for the expansion of the building, the performance of ancestral rites, clan events, distribution of money to needy members, and even updating of the *jiapu*. Different households would contribute funds to the ancestral hall, but it was common for richer clan members to donate land to the ancestral hall. These were rented out as sources of revenue that went to the management of the ancestral hall. Information on these lands was often recorded in the *jiapu* as well.[13]

BIOGRAPHIES (*ZHUAN JI* 传记)

Biographical writings in *jiapu* appeared as early as the Han Dynasty. An example would be the "Records of the Grand Historian" (Shi ji《史记》) by Sima Qian in which a compilation of 12 royal genealogies appeared in the "Imperial Biographies". Biographical writings con-

Five degrees of mourning clothes (wufu 五服)

Wufu was the set of rules that determined the mourning clothes and the mourning periods to be observed by different clan members within nine generations (*jiu zu* 九族). The nine generations were defined as the four generations before oneself (from father to great great-grandfather) and the four generations after oneself (from children to the great great-grandchildren). Mourning clothes were separated into five different types, and mourning periods ranged from three months to three years. In general, the closest kin to the deceased wore the coarsest fabric and observed the longest mourning period. These five degrees of mourning were separately known as *zhancui* (斩衰); *zicui* (齐衰); *dagong* (大功); *xiaogong* (小功); and *sima* (缌麻).[10]

(ABOVE) *The Lu clan's generation chart is an example of how traditional Chinese generation charts are laid out. It is limited to five generations, with the first generation at the top and the fifth at the bottom. It is read from right to left. Meishan Tiannei Lu shi jiapu* (Genealogy of the Loo clan from Tiannei Town in the Meishan area), 1994, Singapore Loo Clan Association, Singapore.

(TOP) *A wufu chart was used to determine the mourning clothes and duration of mourning for a clan member.* *Ningxiang Nantang Liu shi si xiu zupu* (Genealogy of Liu clan from Nantang Town in Ningxiang County), 2002, Chen Zhanqi, China National Microfilming Center for Library Resources, Beijing.

Memorial arches (pai fang 牌坊)

*In general, there were two main types of memorial arches: the Meritorious Deeds Memorial Arch (*gong de pai fang 功德牌坊*) and the Virtuous Memorial Arch (*dao de pai fang 道德牌坊*). These arches glorified the clan and reminded descendents of desired virtues and conduct through the stories inscribed on the arches. Memorial arches were sometimes located near the ancestral hall and considered part of the compound.*

In traditional Chinese society, women were usually not mentioned in jiapu*, unless they had given birth to sons, in which case, their surnames would be recorded. However, if a widow did not re-marry after the death of her husband, her virtue would earn her a chastity memorial arch. These women were also granted a chapter in the biographical section of the* jiapu*, which was considered to be a great honour.*[14]

tinued to appear in *jiapu*, eventually forming its own chapter. As biographies detailed the lives of individuals, they were used to highlight illustrious ancestors, glorifying the clan indirectly.[15]

Similar to biographies were chapters of "Ancestor Portraits and Praises" (*zu xian xiang zan* 祖先像赞) and "Records of Meritorious Deeds" (*en rong lu* 恩荣录). Important individuals such as first migrant ancestors, ancestors within the nine generations, ancestors who had illustrious careers, and ancestors who had performed virtuous or meritorious acts are included in these chapters.

Biographies typically only contain text, while "Ancestor Portraits and Praises" include pictures and poems that praise the importance of an individual. The biographies in the genealogy of the Xu (许) clan from the Shigui and Yaolin areas in Jinjiang, Fujian (福建晋江石龟瑶林) combine both the "Ancestor Portraits and Praises" and biographical writings into one chapter. It highlights the first migrant ancestor of the Shigui and Yaolin branch, Ai (Ai Gong, 爱公). The poem recounts that Ai, on orders from the imperial court, was assigned to develop the Quanzhou area during the Tang Dynasty. The biography states the year of his assignment (678 CE) and that he moved from Yaolin to Shigui in 710 CE after deciding that Yaolin was too small for the clan if its numbers grew. Ai was a general with an illustrious military career and had three sons. The ancestral temple honouring him and his sons was destroyed and rebuilt several times over the course of time.

CLAN RULES (*JIA FA* 家法)

Besides documenting familial ties, *jiapu* were also instrumental in guiding members' conduct towards one another to promote harmony and cohesion within the clan. This appeared in a chapter called "Clan Rules". Clan rules was a set of moral teachings stating how clan members should behave in order to avoid conflict.[16]

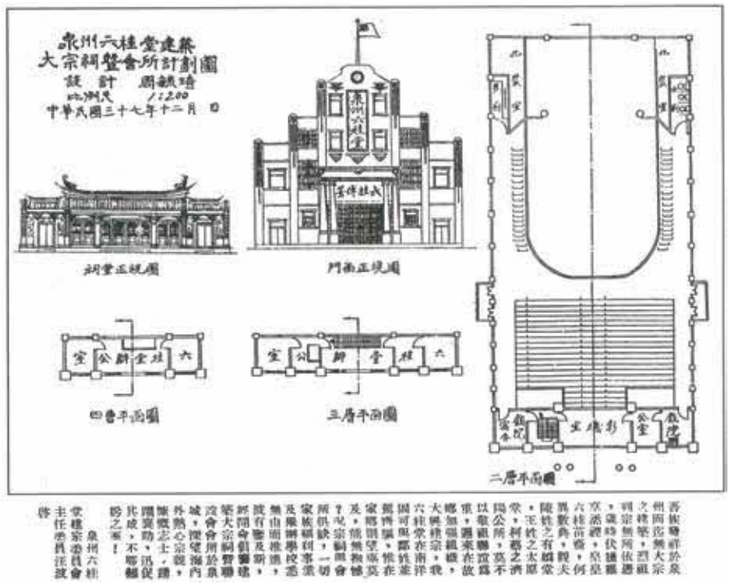
The genealogy of the Huang (黄) clan from Pengzhou and Xialu Village (蓬洲霞露) had 15 rules to abide by: to be filial, maintain harmony within the clan, maintain peace with neighbours; be humble and courteous; committed to work; to strive for knowledge; obey teachers; maintain ancestors' graves; avoid having same names as elders; avoid court cases; avoid bad habits; obey superiors; avoid deviating from sagely teachings; avoid committing crimes; and to revise *jiapu* regularly. This was followed by a chapter on implementing the rules in daily activities.

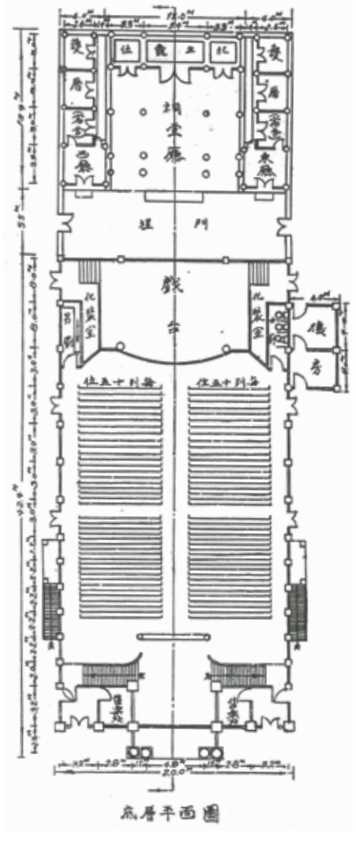
Such chapters were heavily influenced by Confucian teachings on respecting authority and elders, and emphasised that rituals were important activities that reinforced hierarchy and united clan members. These chapters also proved that *jiapu* were used as basic documents that recorded the "laws" of a clan.

CONCLUSION

The *jiapu* chapters discussed here offer only a peek into the wealth of information found in traditional Chinese genealogical records. There are no fixed rules on how to write a genealogy, and many Chinese families have adapted aspects of *jiapu* that best suit the needs of their families. As a result, the *jiapu* is an ever-evolving document that captures the characteristics of society at a particular point in time, and also offers a glimpse into the historical continuity of Chinese family structure and beliefs. ●

(ABOVE) *A chapter in* jiapu *discussing the origins of the Bai surname. Here, the chapter explores the four possible origins of the Bai surname.* All rights reserved. *Genealogy of Peh Clan Pangtou Anxi Fujian China*, 1989, Singapore Peh Clan Association, Singapore.





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(ABOVE) *Floorplans of the ancestral hall of the Liugui clan. Ancestral halls were the focal points for clans, where ancestral tablets were kept, and ancestral worship rites and other clan activities took place.* All rights reserved. *Leok Kooi Tong genealogy*, 1949, Hong Tiansong, Leok Kooi Tong, Quanzhou.

Kevin Khoo is an archivist at the National Archives of Singapore. He is a historian by training, and alumni of the National University of Singapore's history department. His interests include cultural and social history, comparative religion, philosophy, literature and poetry, economics and archival science.

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

Archiving and Immortality

Man is immortal; therefore he must die endlessly. For life is a creative idea; it can only find itself in changing forms.

— RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Immortality — the idea of living eternally, never aging, dying or being forgotten — has captivated mankind throughout history. Humans — as sentient beings gifted with intellect, self-awareness and creativity, capable of love and the capacity to conceive and perceive infinity, yet bound by mortal bodies which invariably age and die — have always sought an escape from this inevitable fate.

Mankind has sought immortality in a variety of ways, the most obvious being physical immortality. Rooted in the joys of mortal life and the fear of oblivion at death, this form of immortality — to be forever youthful and deathless — remains a goal of medical science and has found expression in contemporary popular culture, with its morbid fascination for vampires, who live forever, albeit at a terrible cost.[1] Indeed the pursuit of physical immortality, perhaps for its hubris and overreach, has a history closely intertwined with morbidity. One recalls the Chinese Emperor Qin Shih Huang's attempts to prolong his life by consuming mercury pills, which instead led to his insanity and premature death,[2] as well as the grim Greek legend of Tithonus, a handsome youth for whom the goddess Eos procures immortality. But she forgets to ask for enduring youth, and Tithonus degenerates into a withered object of horror, longing to die but unable to.[3]

Immortality is also at the heart of many religions and forms of spirituality — whether Platonic, Abrahamic, Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu or Taoist — in the notion of an immortal soul that survives the death of the physical body and continues in an afterlife as a spirit, or in a reincarnated body or a glorified resurrected body — depending on one's belief. Immortality in such instances is never questioned either because of one's firsthand interaction with immortal beings or a personal conviction that such supernatural beings exist, whether as spirits, angels, or God Almighty. As the reasoning goes — since immortals exist, and because humanity has the means to relate with them, immortality is possible. But such immortality is at best intangible because it is experienced in another place and time.

IMMORTALITY AND MEMORY

More tangible is the idea of immortality gained through memory, in the remembrance and recollection of human accomplishments, recorded permanently in the annals of history. Here "one lives in the hope of becoming a memory" as the Argentine poet Antonio Porchia said. Recollection gives one's achievements permanence far beyond a mortal life, creating a legacy and freeing one's work from the futility inherent in most human activity, to be forgotten soon after it is accomplished. Today, we still recall and honour the works and deeds of people such as Aristotle, Alexander the Great, Newton, Lao Zi, Shakespeare, Paul of Tarsus and Pythagoras centuries and even millennia after their deaths. But how many remember a news article (or worse, an email) written the last year, or perhaps even last week?

As memory is probably the most plausible way for man to attain a measure of immortality in this world, it has encouraged many to strive to realise excellences that merit recalling. Yet the paradox is that while an achievement might be personal, the process of recollection and recognition depends on the ones who remember. For unless others actually choose to remember, the memory of one's achievement invariably dies. Rulers, seeking immortality, have erected vast monuments to commemorate the achievements of their reigns. But such efforts are typically futile if there is no general and voluntary consensus corresponding with the self image of those in power. Shelley's haunting poem, *Ozymandias* comes to mind:

> I met a traveler from an antique land / Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone / Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand, / Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown, / And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command… / And on the pedestal these words appear: / "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" / Nothing besides remains. Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away.[4]

Thus most fundamentally, one's "immortality" rests on the acclaim and recognition by others. Memory cannot be forced, and immortality is not something won by mere dictate or design.

Surely God would not have created such a being as man, with an ability to grasp the infinite, to exist only for a day! No, no, man was made for immortality.

— ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ARCHIVING AND IMMORTALITY

An archive is in effect a repository of memory — of records of legal, historical and cultural significance, generated and organised in the course of business or social transactions across the lifetime of individuals and organisations. As a primary function of an archive is to safekeep records that have been appraised and deemed worthy of preservation, documents selected for an archive's permanent collection acquire — by extension — a form of immortality. Archives form a select corpus of records that allow people to reconstruct and understand events that have occurred in past times. As archived records are carefully safeguarded to preserve their provenance — or their

(ABOVE) Selected pages from Sir Stamford Raffles' original instructions to Sir William Farquhar for the development of Singapore Town, 25 June 1819.[10] Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

(ABOVE) Percy Bysshe Shelley was inspired by the imminent arrival of this colossal fractured statue of the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses II (image via Wikimedia Commons[5]) in London to write his poem "Ozymandias" in 1818. The statue was acquired by the British Museum and remains a centrepiece of the museum.[6]

original form and context — they have been accorded a special value by researchers and historians since ancient times.

As records — "frozen in time" as it were — properly archived documents have a basic trustworthiness relative to other sources. Such archived documents can impart a lasting quality to works based on them. An example of this is the Justinian Code or "Corpus Juris Civilis". Commissioned in 6th century CE by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, the Code was based on centuries of carefully archived Roman legal precedents and remains the basis of much European civil law till today.[7] Another example is the Historical Records of the Grand Historian Sima Qian, the famed court historian of the Han Dynasty. Written in the 1st century BCE, his work drew heavily on the Han imperial court archives and remains a classic and reliable resource on ancient Chinese history to this day.[8]

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As a primary function of an archive is to safekeep records that have been appraised and deemed worthy of preservation, documents selected for an archive's permanent collection acquire — by extension — a form of immortality.

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For all its impressive possibilities in relation to immortality, a notable feature of an archive is that it may contain many records that are not monumental. While treasures can be found in most state archives — iconic documents such as the English Magna Carta (1215), the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America (1776), and here in Singapore, records such as the letters of Sir Stamford Raffles and the Singapore's own Proclamation of Independence (1965) — a large part of archived records are more operational and administrative in nature. At the National Archives of Singapore (NAS), one finds alongside records on key decisions and policy-making, documents on school attendance, marriages, cemetery records, applications for licences, appeals for wage increases, and other records that might be considered routine in nature.

Yet, routine records can be of great practical and historical importance. And not infrequently, it is such routine records that help historians immortalise a period in writing. For example, because property and taxation records established legal obligations vital to governing populous and geographically widespread states like Imperial Rome and China, historians have used these records to address questions such as how government was organised and the relationship between state and society at the time.

Highly operational records, such as lighthouse maintenance and administrative records, meteorological records, immigration control records, as well as shipwreck salvage permits and accident reports are examples of archives used in Singapore's successful defense of its sovereignty over the island of Pedra Branca at the International Court of Justice in 2008. Singapore's legal team was able to reconstruct from such routine records how Singapore had administered the island and its waters for a long time.[11] Another notable and innovative application of seemingly routine archives was how social historian James Warren used coroner records to understand the way of life, diet and disease common to rickshaw pullers in pre-war Singapore.[12]

Many modern archives also have growing collections of photographic and audio-visual records that capture everyday scenes in which historical changes in aesthetics, mannerisms, technology and others aspects of material culture are captured in a highly evocative form. As the famed British archivist Sir Hilary Jenkinson put it — because routine records are created as a by-product of everyday actions, and were not consciously produced "in the interest or for the information of posterity" they ironically can become some of the best sources for telling us, with relative impartiality and naturalness, things as they actually happened in the past.[13, 14]

Immortality is a concept fraught with paradoxes. As far as physical immortality remains impossible, it implies a non-material existence which extends beyond mortal life; the continuation of a personality beyond death (whether in spirit or on record), and the retention of its capacity to influence this world however disembodied. The idea has pre-scientific roots, but retains a hold on a popular culture that is increasingly dominated by empirical studies and science. Immortality is granted to people and events that merit remembering, but also, as reflected in the contents of an archive, it is given to things which may have had no intention or conscious desire of being remembered. ●

The National Archives of Singapore (NAS) houses the collective memory of the nation, which allows current and future generations of Singaporeans to understand its different cultures, explore its common heritage and appreciate who we are as a people and how we became a nation.

As the official custodian of the corporate memory of the government of Singapore, NAS manages public records and provides advice to government agencies on records management. From government files, private memoirs, historical maps and photographs to oral history interviews and audio-visual materials, NAS is responsible for the collection, preservation and management of Singapore's public and private archival records, some of which date back to the early 19th century.

NAS protects the rights of citizens by providing evidence and accountability of government actions. Its repository of archival materials makes NAS an important research centre for those in search of information about the country's history. NAS also promotes public interest in Singapore history and heritage through educational programmes and exhibitions.

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(TOP) Mural depiction of the Emperor Justinian who ruled between 527–565 CE at the height of the Byzantine Empire's influence. Image via Wikipedia Commons.

(ABOVE LEFT) Painting of Sima Qian, who served as court historian during the Han Dynasty between 145/135–86 BCE. Image via Wikipedia Commons.[9]

(TOP) An image of Orchard Road circa 1900s when its surroundings were mostly spice and fruit plantations. This is a far cry from Orchard Road today (ABOVE), which is a highly urbanised and chic shopping belt. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore and Kevin Khoo, respectively.*

A Colonial Heritage

Collections of the Anglican Diocese of Singapore

Bonny Tan is a Senior Librarian who has served at the Reference Library at the National Library Board (NLB) since 1997. She has a keen interest in Singapore church history and has been researching this subject since the early 1990s.

ESTABLISHED IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY BY THE East India Company (EIC), the development of the Anglican church in Singapore was closely intertwined with that of the colonial government, which initially supported the chaplains and priests as government employees and subsidised the construction of Anglican churches on the island. Singapore's evolution as a political entity, first as a colony of Great Britain and subsequently as an independent nation, has thus strongly influenced the growth and shape of the Anglican Church in Singapore. In turn, woven into the story of the local Anglican church are the larger stories of changes within the Malay Peninsula during colonial times.

The Anglican church first gained a foothold in the Malay Peninsula when Captain Francis Light took formal possession of Penang in 1786. Services for the British colonials and their families were at first conducted by itinerant chaplains but, gradually, as the community became more established, priests were assigned to specific churches, and the building of schools and more churches followed. In 1814, the Diocese of Calcutta was formed under the EIC. Its jurisdiction covered all Anglican missionary work east of the Suez, including that of Penang and later Malacca and Singapore.

In 1823, Stamford Raffles chose the strategic location — the Esplanade — as the place to build the first Anglican church in Singapore soon after establishing the settlement. The large green expanse sat in the heart of the European residential population, locked between the business centre and the Chinese town to the west, and the Malay community to the east. St Andrew's Cathedral (see text box on page 48) still stands there today, a towering testament to the vision of Raffles.

THE STRAITS SETTLEMENTS PERIOD

After Singapore, Malacca and Penang were brought together to form the Straits Settlements in 1826 and the colonial capital was established in Singapore, the Anglican church received its first full-time Chaplain, Reverend Robert Burns. Subsequently, a year after the control of the Straits Settlements was transferred from Bengal (in India) to the Colonial Office in Britain, the first Colonial Chaplain, Reverend John Beckles, was appointed in 1868.

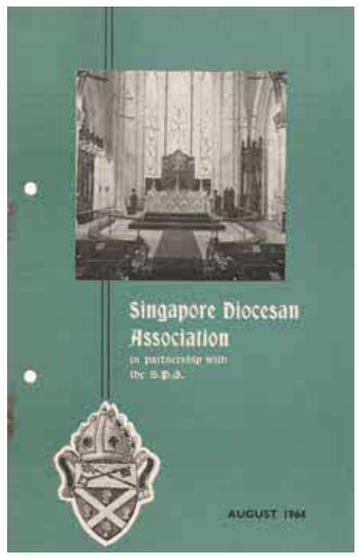
The centre of authority for the Anglican church moved gradually from Calcutta to Southeast Asia when a United Diocese of Singapore, Labuan and Sarawak was formed in 1881. In the late 19th century, churches were increasingly established across the Peninsula, including Taiping (1887), Kuala Lumpur (1887) and Seremban (1893).[1] This was a natural consequence as the Malay States opened up with the signing of the Pangkor Treaty in 1874 and the British started to establish themselves commercially, in businesses and plantations, in the Peninsula. During this time, local Tamils and Chinese from various dialect groups began joining the Anglican church.

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Increasingly, the need to centre Anglican missionary work in Singapore became apparent. Archdeacon Hose, a brilliant preacher and Malay scholar, started the Bishopric Endowment Fund to help set

The Singapore Diocesan Magazine (Diocesan Digest)

First published as the Singapore Diocesan Magazine *in November 1910,[6] it was "a quarterly record of church work etc. in the Diocese".[7] The Diocese of Singapore, formed in 1909, had extended beyond the Straits Settlements to include the Federated Malay States, Java and Siam (Thailand). The first issue noted how the* Singapore Diocesan Magazine *was inspired because "we in the Church of England seemed to know very little about each other's doings, and in consequence were not sufficiently united." The quarterly thus gave updates on recent church activities and events in each district as well as in the church-run homes, schools and institutions along with appointments of both clerics and laity. The digitised collection spans from the first issue of 1910 until Volume 27, Number 104 of November 1936. The magazine continues today as the* Diocesan Digest.



(ABOVE) The Anglican Diocese at St Andrew's Village. *All rights reserved, National Library Board, Singapore.*

(ABOVE) The *Singapore Diocesan Quarterly Leaflet*, Vol. 1, No. 2, May 1939. *Image courtesy of the Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Singapore.*

(ABOVE) An example of subsequent editions renamed the *Singapore Diocesan Association Magazine*, August 1964. *Image courtesy of the Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Singapore.*

(ABOVE) Cover page of the first issue of the *Singapore Diocesan Magazine*. *Courtesy of the Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Singapore.*

1786–1814

The British annexed Penang in 1786 and established the Anglican Church through the EIC in the Malay Peninsula.

1814–1869

The Malayan chaplaincies of the Straits Settlements — Penang, Malacca and Singapore — come under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Culcutta.

1869–1881

Singapore and the rest of the Malayan chaplaincies of the Straits Settlements are placed under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Singapore, Labuan and Sarawak.

1881–1908

A United Diocese of Singapore, Labuan and Sarawak is formed with St Andrew's Church in Singapore being made the Cathedral Church of the newly established Diocese.

1908–1959

The Diocese of Singapore becomes a separate entity.

1960–1969

The Diocese of SIngapore and Malaya is formed.

1970

With the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, the Diocese of Singapore became a geographically distinct Diocese.

1996

The establishment of the Province of South East Asia sees Bishop Moses Tay from Singapore serving as the first Archbishop of the Province. The province of South East Asia covers the Dioceses of Kuching, Sabah, Singapore and West Malaysia.

Brief History of the Anglican Church in Southeast Asia

(Largely based on Batumalai (2007). *A bicentenary history of the Anglican Church of the Diocese of West Malaysia* with inputs from Reverend Canon Soon Soo Kee)

(LEFT TO RIGHT) The front cover of the January 1937 issue of *The Courier* can be found in the holdings of the Anglican Archive;[9] Letters of Patent to the Straits Settlements in the 33rd year of HM Queen Victoria (1869) and its accompanying seal. *All rights reserved, National Library Board.*

up the Diocese of Singapore.[2] The Diocese of Singapore was formed in 1909 and included the Straits Settlements, namely Singapore, Penang and Malacca, as well as the Federated Malay States, Java and Siam (Thailand). Unfortunately, the Diocese suffered financially during this period because of the Great Depression and the two World Wars. To make matters worse, the Japanese Occupation seemed to have obliterated what was left physically of the Anglican church as its expatriate priests were interned.

Thankfully, a stronger Asian leadership emerged after the war. The church, with an awakened local laity, arose ready to ride the new wave of nationalism. The chaplaincy system was replaced by parishes in 1947, a signal of the endorsement of "a permanent civil establishment".[3] In 1960, the Diocese was renamed the Diocese of Singapore and Malaya, soon after Malaya's independence from British rule in 1957. By 1970, five years after Singapore separated from Malaysia, the Diocese of Singapore reverted back to her former name with jurisdiction only over Singapore initially but later expanding in the 1990s to encompass the six deanery countries of Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam.

St Andrew's Cathedral

The location where St Andrew's Cathedral now stands was selected by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1823. Prior to the construction of St Andrew's Cathedral stood the St Andrew's Church, which was designed by George D. Coleman and completed in 1836. The building was deemed unsafe in 1852 — after being struck twice by lighting — and was eventually demolished.

St Andrew's Cathedral as we know it today was designed by Lieutenant-Colonel Ronald MacPherson and built between 1856 and 1864 by Indian convict labourers. Interestingly, the walls are plastered with a material called Madras chunam, a mixture of egg white, coarse sugar, lime, coconut husk and water that has weathered surprisingly well in Singapore's tropical climate.

During the Japanese Occupation, church services ceased as the cathedral acted as an emergency hospital, treating casualties of the frequent bombings. A memorial plaque stands in the church grounds, commemorating Malayan Civil Service officials who died in World War II.

St Andrew's Cathedral is the oldest Anglican house of worship in Singapore and was gazetted as a national monument in 1973.

THE ANGLICAN ARCHIVES IN SINGAPORE

As early as 1868, the Church showed concern that its records "[were] in danger of being injured or lost" and its leadership took steps to obtain a small iron safe.[4] However, the Anglican Archives at the Diocese was not formally established until 2008.

That same year, the National Library Board of Singapore (NLB) began digitising the heritage records preserved in its holdings. These include nine volumes of the Church Record Book spanning from 1838 to 1941 — comprising old manuscripts from St Andrew's Church (later rebuilt as St Andrew's Cathedral) and include records such as minutes of meetings, appointments and updates. As the church was closely linked with Singapore's colonial government, these manuscripts give insight not only to the clergy and laity within the church but also make references to early leaders in the colonial government in Singapore.

For the genealogist, there are several resources that may prove valuable for research. Baptism records indicate pertinent details of a child and the family such as date of birth, parents' names, location of home and even father's vocation. There are also marriage notices, including records of marriages consecrated at St Andrew's Cathedral during the Japanese Occupation between 1944 and 1945. The records indicate the ages of the newlyweds, the profession of the groom, the residential addresses of both partners and the name as well as profession of the groom's father. The respective nationalities of the bride and groom were also required, revealing several Chinese and Indian names. Nominations to lay leadership present details such as place of birth, marital status, number of children and occupation, alongside details of ministry experience. The Cathedral's most extensive death records is the nine-volume Book of Remembrances, acknowledging those who had died in the war.

Besides primary BMD[5] records, the archival holdings also include several publications unique to the Diocese, namely *Singapore Diocesan Magazine* and the *Singapore Diocesan Quarterly*. Minutes of meetings such as the Singapore Diocesan Association records (1911–1931) are not merely administrative records; when taken as a whole, these unfold much of the history and ministry of the Anglican community in the Malay Peninsula. The records include profiles of leaders and details on the establishment of churches, schools, hospitals and other forms of social infrastructure. These are supplemented with information contained in the *Singapore Auxiliary Diocesan Association Quarterly Leaflets*. Much earlier records have also been digitised, such as the Church Records of the St Andrew's Church Committee from the mid-19th century; these are often scrawled minutes of meetings in elegant but not always legible handwriting.

These digitised resources are available for onsite viewing at the National Library of Singapore. Some significant national gems within its holdings include the Letters of Patent to the Straits Settlements in the 33rd year of HM Queen Victoria (1869), which officially placed the Diocese of Singapore, Labuan and Sarawak directly under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Canterbury as well as the Letters of Patent to Labuan and its dependencies in the 34th year of HM's reign (1870). These massive manuscripts are housed in glass cases along with their impressive large seals complete with embossed images.

Besides these rare items are limited numbers of photo albums, architectural drawings and various handwritten letters and records. The Anglican Archives continues to grow as it receives and collects invaluable materials such as *The Courier*, the St Andrew's Cathedral's magazine published since 1915, and several other publications from various churches within its fold. The Anglican Archives is open to researchers who make advance appointments. ●

The author would like to thank Ms Lau Jen Sin and Reverend Canon Soon Soo Kee for reviewing this article.

ENDNOTES

1. Loh, 1963, p. 4
2. Batumalai, 2007, p. 16
3. Batumalai, 2007, p. 20
4. Minutes of A Meeting of the Trustees of the St. Andrews' Church, (19 Nov 1868), from the holdings of the Anglican Archives digitised by NLB (040002935, p. 106)
5. Birth, marriage and death records
6. *Singapore Diocesan Magazine*, (November 1910), Vol. 1, Issue 1, p. 1
7. From the title page of *The Singapore Diocesan Magazine*, November 1910
8. Cornelius-Takahama, V. and Tan, J.H.S. "St Andrew's Cathedral". *Infopedia*. Retrieved 20 November 2013 at http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_25_2_2008-12-01.html
9. The Courier is not in NLB's holdings but is available at the Anglican Archives.

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Marriage documents in the Diocese of Singapore Collection

Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees of the St. Andrews' Church. (19 November 1868). *Singapore Diocesan Magazine*, (November 1910), Vol 1, Issue 1, p. 1

(CENTRE) St Andrew's Cathedral. *chooyutshing, via Flickr.*

CURATOR'S SELECTION

Old Singapore
PLACES IN PICTURES AND ORAL HISTORY

WITH THE PASSING OF TIME, MANY PLACES AND buildings in Singapore have undergone facelifts or changed their identities, while some have disappeared altogether and become part of our history. However, many who grew up, played or worked at these places still have vivid memories of them. The National Archives of Singapore (NAS) is a treasure trove for Singaporeans seeking for a bit of nostalgia or to capture something of the old charm and colour of yesteryear. Journey back in time and revisit Singapore through these interviews and images from NAS's Oral History Centre and photograph collection — each a personal story, yet immediately recognisable to many as cherished collective memories of a different era.

← NATIONAL THEATRE

"There were cats running up the stage, bats flying around the stage and sometimes brushing against the performers because they picked up sounds but not lights due to their blindness. Such things would affect the performance. But we could not do anything when faced with such incidents. We tried to prevent, for example, prior to the performance we would blast loud music to chase the bats away; our cleaning staff would get rid of the cats and rats but since animals moved around, they could return."

— Mr Yap Pau Eng, former director of National Theatre Trust, on precautionary measures taken to minimise disruptions during performances. Translated from Chinese oral history interview no. 1489, reel 2, conducted in 2009.

CITY HALL →

"Third floor, Ministry of Culture… All I remember was that I just went up there. It was just a room. I don't know what it was before. It was just a City Council office with little cubby-holes. All I had was a table and a chair. So I said "How do you start?" I think the first couple of days was just bringing in furniture and files and digging up stuff. At one point, I thought of having my Ministry in Radio Singapore because that was one part of the Ministry of Culture. But that would have been out of the way."

— Mr S. Rajaratnam, then-Minister for Culture, describing his office in City Hall on his first day of work in 1959. Oral history interview no. 0149, reel 28, conducted in 1982.

GRAND HOTEL DE L'EUROPE →

"…when we were at Europe Hotel, for dinner we used to play classical music which included opera, German waltzes and all sorts of things. French waltzes, all sorts of things we used to play… We frequently [played] the Italian operas. Any tune, I tried to improvise the thing and it turned out to be well."

— Mr Claude Oliveiro, pianist at Grand Hotel de l'Europe, on the music he used to play at the luxury hotel, which eventually made way for the Old Supreme Court in the 1930s. Oral history interview no. 1085, reel 2, conducted in 1989.

(TOP, MIDDLE AND BOTTOM) *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

← NATIONAL STADIUM

"Very fond memories, I've been here before I joined the Sports Council: to watch football games, of course watched some concerts as well. Michael Jackson sang here twice. Before I joined the Sports Council, I think the early part of 1993, that was the first time Michael Jackson came here. [T]he stage was right at the northern end of the stadium, at the other side. And I remember I came with my family, we were watching on the stands. Second time he came back was I think 2001 or 2002 around that period. So I watched it the second time. So there are a lot of concerts here, of course National Day Parade has always been here and I attend every National Day Parade so I watched a lot of National Day Parades here, watched a lot of football games. So I've got very pleasant memories of this place."

— Col (Ret) Kwan Yue Yeong, former executive director of the Singapore Sports Council, on his memories of the National Stadium in the 1990s and early 2000s. Oral history interview no. 3101, reel 3, conducted in 2006.

← CAPITOL THEATRE

"Capitol [had] a very wide hall, I mean, it may [have been] three times as large as Pavilion [Cinema] and it's got some three dimensional figures on the sides. It had quite a decorative ceiling, they had curtains that come down and come up – very attractive. Well, all in all it's a building that would have caught the attention of many people who went there for the first time to admire, unlike [the] Pavilion."

— Mr Khoo Beng Chuan Benjamin, former principal of Chai Chee Secondary School, on the interior of Capitol Theatre and why it was such a distinctive cinema in the 1930s. Oral history interview no. 2911, reel 26, conducted in 2005.

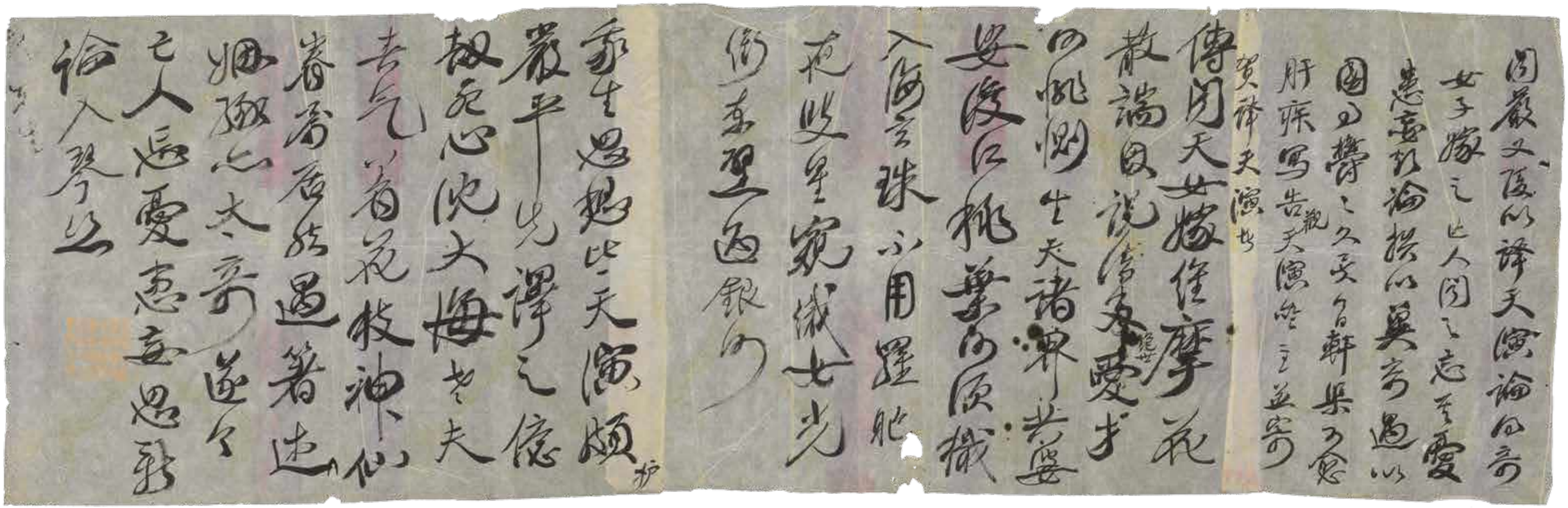
OLD HILL STREET POLICE STATION →

"The area where family activities were held was at the café area of the current MICA building — at that time the space was larger. There was a screen showing black-and-white films. They would sit there and eat. To be frank, [the] level of hygiene was low; there was the smell of food. As children, we would walk in from the main door. The police officer would ask why we wanted to go in. Sometimes he would not allow us to enter. We would ask ourselves what to do. So we went by the back door; there was a drain. We went in from there and blended in with the police officers' children. We were playful, we watched black and white films. I remember they showed Tarzan, (The) Lone Ranger, those old Western films. There were also Indian films."

— Mr Tay Kiam Hong, artist and interior designer, on his childhood memories of the Old Hill Street Police Station, where he would participate in activities organised for the families of police officers in the 1950s. Translated from Chinese oral history interview no. 1504, reel 2, conducted in 2010.

Lu Wenshi is an Oral History Specialist with the National Archives of Singapore. She conducts oral history interviews with individuals from different walks of life. Some oral history extracts in this article were contributed by Wenshi's interviewees, and their narrations inspired her to curate this selection. She also conducts training for institutions that are keen to embark on their own oral history programme.

(TOP, MIDDLE AND BOTTOM) *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore; Ronni Pinsler collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore; Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*



邱菽园与康有为的友谊与交往 — 再读邱菽园后人王清建先生珍藏历史文献

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

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

IN THIS SECOND ARTICLE BY PROFESSOR ZHANG Ren Feng (the first was published in *BiblioAsia* Oct – Dec 2013, Vol. 9 Issue 3), he outlines the 20 years of friendship between Khoo Seok Wan (1874 – 1941) and Kang You Wei (1858 – 1927) that began at the start of the 20th century by piecing together their letters to one another over the years, as well as their respective poetry. In the course of his research, Professor Zhang clarifies some myths about their friendship, as well as provides insights into certain historical events in the late Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911). The manuscript of Khoo and Kang's letters are kept by the family of Mr. Ong Cheng Kian, descendent of Khoo Seok Wan.

邱菽园与康有为的友谊与交往，历二十余载，然而记述这段历史的文章不多见。2007年中国人民大学出版社出版姜义华、张荣华两位先生编校的《康有为全集》，是目前收集康氏著述最完满的文本，书后选用三篇极具权威性的康传：梁启超《南海康先生传》、陆乃翔、陆敦骙《南海先生传》和张伯桢《南海康先生传》，对此均未提及。本文试图以在新加坡国家图书馆见到邱菽园外孙王清建先生所藏历史文献，参以其它史料，勾勒出邱、康两人友谊与交往的初步框架，亦冀随着这批史料的进一步解读而不断充实，日臻完善。

一、 南洋初会

戊戌变法失败，康有为流亡日本，次年去加拿大成立保皇会，以维新改良思想，唤起海外华侨爱国求变、民族振兴的激情。邱菽园原本敬佩康有为“公车上书”的胆识，1899年末，邱菽园邀请康有为从香港前往新加坡居住。此时邱、康两人尚未谋面。王先生收藏两封康自港发出的信件，已录入拙文《1900 – 1901，康有为在南洋》（载 *BiblioAsia* 2013年10 – 12月号）。康还有七绝记述两人订交之起始：

> 邱菽园孝廉未相识，哀我流离，
> 自星坡以千金远赠于港。赋谢。
> 天下谁能怜范叔，余生聊欲托朱家。
> 英雄末路黄金感，稽首南天一片霞。[1]

康有为与梁铁军、汤觉顿、侄康同富遂于己亥年十二月廿九日离港，庚子年正月初二日抵新，“寓星坡邱菽园客云庐三层楼上，凭窗览眺，环水千家，有如吾故乡澹如楼风景，感甚。”[2]

王先生所藏文献中，有康有为手书题邱菽园《选诗图》的真迹（见附图）。更有趣的是康的另一首诗作手迹。1900年春夏，在客居他乡，为“国事郁郁久矣”的心情中，忽闻严复续娶的喜讯，难得悦乐开怀，赋诗以述，并将诗作写录一遍，赠送邱菽园。“事涉游戏，未知真否”，故称“游戏之作”，即今日所谓“搞笑”。这首诗辑入崔斯哲手写本《康南海先生诗集》（商务印书馆1937年影印本）。《康有为全集》又据以迻录，但文字与康氏手稿多有出入。现据手稿重录，并附原件照片（见附图 1），以飨读者。

> 闻严又陵以译《天演论》得奇女子嫁之。亡人闻之，忘其忧患。妄欲论撰，以冀奇遇。以国事郁郁久矣，今日轩渠，可愈肝疾。写告观天演斋主，并寄贺译《天演》者。
>
> 传闻天女嫁维摩，花散端因说法多。
> 绝世爱才何悱恻，生天诸界共婆娑。
> 渡江桃叶何须楫，入海玄珠不用罗。
> 昨夜双星窥织女，光衔东壁过银河。
>
> 我生思想皆天演，颇妒严平先译之。
> 亿劫死心沈大海，老夫春气着花枝。
> 神仙眷属居然遇，著述姻缘亦太奇。
> 遂令亡人忘忧患，妄思新论入琴丝。[3]

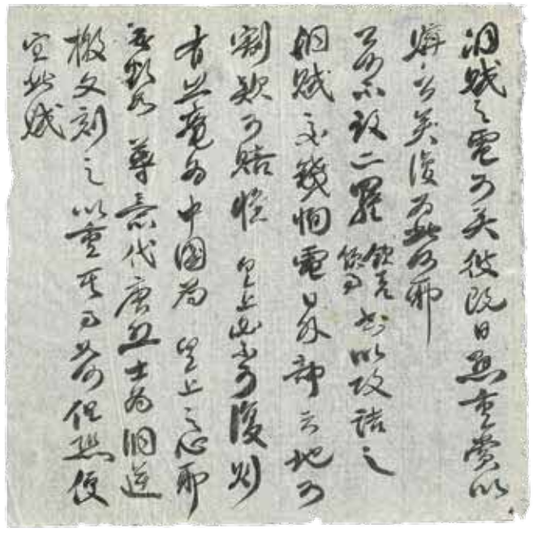
严复（又陵）原配王氏夫人1892年去世，此后便专心翻译《天演论》等西方哲学、社会科学名著，为近代中国引进西方思想文化作出巨大贡献。《天演论》以“物竞天择，适者生存”为中心，对晚清知识界求变、改良、保种、图存思潮的形成有极大的影响，诗句“我生思想皆天演”即是此意。1900年初夏，他在上海续娶受过良好教育的朱明丽女士。这两首诗所记乃文坛趣事，然则在更深的层次，反映了邱、康等维新人士的共同思想基础。

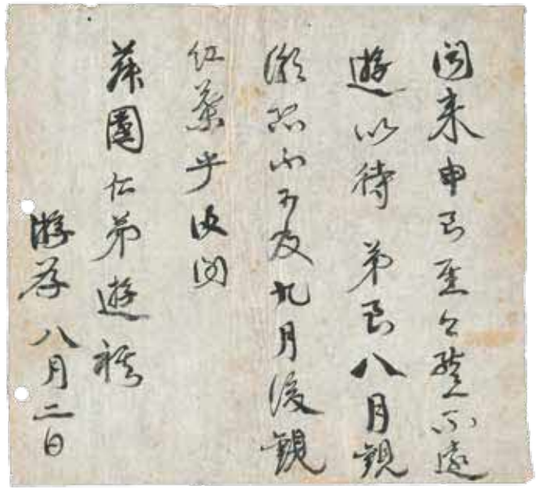
二、 自立军起事前后

1900年，中国国内最重大的政治事件是慈禧盲目排外，招致八联军入侵北京和长江流域发生唐才常为首的自立军起事。

英国当局为保护康有为的人生安全，于七月邀康迁居，于是康有为离开新加坡。“七月偕铁君及家人、从者居丹将敦岛灯塔。岛在麻六甲海中，顶有灯塔百尺，照行海船。吾居住塔院顶楼中。”“七月朔入丹将敦岛，居半月而行。”“七月望英总督亚历山大以轮船

(ABOVE) 附图 1. *All Rights Reserved, the late Khoo Seok Wan Collections, National Library Board, Singapore 2013. Courtesy of Ong Family, descendents of Khoo Seok Wan.*





来迎，同往槟榔屿，即馆吾于督署”[4] 康入住槟榔屿，几与外界隔绝，也不希望有外人去见他，唯与邱菽园的通信，是他与外界联络的主要渠道。这里有一封仅署“廿二日”的信，当书于他入住槟榔屿不久：

> 井上有书来，言品虎狼也，今以供应不足，几有胁制反噬之心。介口亦有养虎之喻。然勉尚携以来见，可谓谬甚。若果来，公可告以坡督新迁吾某岛，非坡督船，不能往，寄信亦然，且须数日一见。即告以此，俾易于谢之。别有书示勉，即望交之。复有来访者，凡未信妥之人，皆望以此意行之。勿遽告信址，如答藻裳、宫崎之类是也。
>
> 大岛吾兄　　廿二日[5]

康有为被慈禧为首的清政府视为眼中钉，必欲除之而后快。派人暗杀的可能性很大。康也十分注意自身的安全。对“凡未信妥之人”一概不见，连通信地址都要保守秘密。读到这些自我保护措施同时，更可以看到康对邱菽园的绝对信任。其时，康将所住英督的庇能节楼称为“大庇阁”，后来将这段时间内所作147首诗汇集成《大庇阁诗集》。因此，有一封信署名“大庇”的致邱氏信，亦必书于同期：

> 桃发得书（得廿日书），匆匆答，见一答一。
>
> 论某人，诚是。但僕今日不可失人心，断天下之望。仍乞酌拨款，或千或数百，以济其急。听桃与之面商。
>
> 公甚得处双木之法，但密事惟公与僕两人共之便可。前事罢论。
>
> 盈竟未来。
>
> 译书彙编望寄来。
>
> 崔洞又一洞矣。总之今日之洞无不变。
>
> 章君文雅，惟人品不可近。
>
> 君力汇款，甚是甚是。前函已告急矣。在外与人借，甚无体面之故。惟五百盾是几何？望示。美中千金仅得五百金用耳。恐当寄足。再阅书，知已足千金矣。
>
> 采风不顶亦可，听之公。僕亦无成心。今日诚以存款为要（檀山尚有四万未交）若公不决，则千五百金即以赠李提，余为善后，办海事可也。购报事再待详复亦可。千五金亦不能为大用，且恐勉失然诺耳。公意刻印刊，诚是。僕亦同之矣，故主意反不定，请公决之。僕与公一体，共二人也。
>
> 大士　　大庇
>
> 前属寄二千日本还紫珊，今亦不甚催（尚欠五千），可不必汇二千，或汇一千数百以见意，如何？
>
> 公又笑吾刻印刊手段，可笑。[6]（见附图4）

以唐才常为首的自立会1900年初在上海成立，及夏，八国联军攻陷北京，慈禧与光绪出亡西安。他们便以“勤王”为名，意图发动起义，推翻慈禧政权，“归政”于光绪。但一帮毫无军事、政治经验的书生，仓猝起事，能调动的力量都是无能之辈，甚至乌合之众，因此，在老谋深算、心狠手辣的湖广总督张之洞面前，即时失败，唐才常等人立遭杀害。康有为远在南洋，鞭长莫及，再说他也未必真有军事指挥的能力。邱菽园慷慨捐助自立军，一人一己之力，毕竟有限，资金流动的渠道不畅，究竟有多少可以达于自立军之手也很难说。康、邱在南洋面对的是无情的、严酷的事实。这对他们的友谊是极大的考验。更为严峻的考验是邱菽园被张之洞发现是自立军的主要资助人，于1900年多次致电清政府驻英国公使罗丰禄和驻新加坡总领事罗忠尧（按，当时新为英属地，清政府驻新领事隶属于驻英公使管辖）请其“劝导”邱菽园，与康有为断绝关系。此时，邱本人虽身居南洋，朝廷一时还奈何他不得，但他在福建原籍的家族，逃脱不了酷吏的手掌。于是邱立即在11月22日《天南日报》刊登启事，宣布“谢绝人事”，1901年6月，又有“报效闽赈银二万两，以明心迹”，以及10月22日在《天南新报》发表《论康有为》文，表示与康决裂。[7] 一次次被迫表态，终于使张之洞满意，奏请朝廷予以开脱罪责，一家满门始得活命。

然而，一次次被迫表态的同时，邱菽园究竟真实的思想如何，有待深入研究。王先生藏有其时康有为致邱菽园的一封信：

> 洞贼之电可笑。彼既日悬重赏以购，可笑复为此何耶？
>
> 公何不致二罗钦差、领事书以攻诘之？洞贼交钱恂电曰：“外部云，地可割，款可赔，惟皇上必不可复。”则有丝毫为中国为皇上之心耶？吾欲如尊意代唐烈士为洞逆檄文刻之，以重其事。如何？但恐便宜此贼。[8]（见附图2）

这封信书写的时间不详，但很可能是1900年9月7日张之洞第二次致电罗丰禄之后，“可笑复为此何耶”中的“复”字可证。可以肯定，邱菽园把张之洞要求两位罗姓外交官对他“开导”的信息，即时全盘告诉了康有为。

1901年3月，张之洞给他的学生、新任两广总督陶模去电，要求他对在新的康、邱、林文庆等人的活动密查严防。陶模以规劝口吻撰文刊登在新加坡等地报纸上，邱菽园有感于此，写了三千字的《上粤督陶方帅书》，慷慨陈辞，讴歌皇上推行新政，坦言自己是“维新中人也”，不否认结识康梁，并称“维新变法者，天下之公理公言也，无所用其禁，而亦非刑禁所能穷”。又言“若夫复辟（按，指光绪皇帝重新执政）难期，不闻新政，沉沉此局，坐俟瓜分，是天未欲平治中国也”。一片爱国之心，跃然纸上，十分感人，即陶模亦为之所动。此时，邱迫于朝廷和张之洞辈的压力，不敢公开称颂康梁，不敢公开与康的交谊，但他支持维新变法的思想一即与康有为友谊的基石，丝毫没有改变。

自立军事件持续的时间很短，1900年8月，唐才常等被杀之后，余波也很小。康有为也许自知力量远不足以与清廷抗衡，此后逐渐转向思考中国的思想与文化的改造、重塑等问题。在槟榔屿期间，开始着手《大同书》的创作。王先生珍藏的文献中，看到一封信：

> 《李觉传》窅而曲，往而复，造境运笔皆以极险极逆为之，诚为佳作文。少看山，不当平。若如井田，有何可观？惟壑谷幽深，峰峦起伏，乃令游者赏心悦目。或绝崖飞瀑，动魄惊心。山水既然，文章正尔。固知中外同然，乃天理人心之自然也。尊批发明透彻，盖妙义亦赖发明者，乃令人易见。拙著《物质救国论》关系甚大，而未有批发明。君暇何不批之？俾再刻。（当于中国有益）拙诗亦然。已批评点定，不欲观。
>
> 菽园老弟多福　　更生　五月廿九日[10]

这封信书写的年份待考。据《康有为全集》，《物质救国论》完成于1904年。此信中对邱的称呼，既不是开始交往时“菽园仁兄”那么拘束、客气，也不是自立军起事前后“救国大士”那么激情。这表示他们之间的友谊已然度过了汹涌激荡的政治风暴，趋于成熟，内容也纯粹是谈论文章的写作，稳健而平实。

三、十年重逢

康有为于1901年12月7日离槟榔屿前往印度，开始了长达八年的游历和考察，1909年冬又来到槟榔屿，1910年5月和1911年初，两度前往新加坡，并与邱菽园相聚。两人回首往事，吟诗作赋，畅叙离情。今选录两人的诗作，表明他们的友谊续存，并不存在外界传闻的所谓“绝交”。

> 庚戌十二月再还新加坡，菽园三书请助卒岁计，并出新诗百
> 余相示。追思庚子立储之变，菽园因迎吾来坡，为之感慨。
> 前度康郎今又来，桃花开落费疑猜。
> 十年来往星坡梦，笑指苍桑变几回。
> 昨夜云开见月明，天容海色渐澄清。
> 钓竿拂得珊瑚树，犹听老龙嘘浪声。[11]

邱菽园同期亦有记述两人晤面的诗作：（限于篇幅，仅录四首之一）

> 康更生先生自五大洲游归，重晤新坡，蒙出诗稿全集
> 属校，感赋四首。
> 惨淡风云久遯荒，但论诗界合称王。
> 杜陵忠爱悲君国，屈子芳馨动楚湘。
> 渺渺寥天飞只鹤，森森万木绕虚堂。
> 乾坤终古皆陈迹，我自低吟欲断肠。[12]

他们以各自的身家性命相护持的开明君主已经离开人世，他们维新改良救国保种的共同理想也已破灭，从此空怀悲怆而已。

五、“不见又十年”

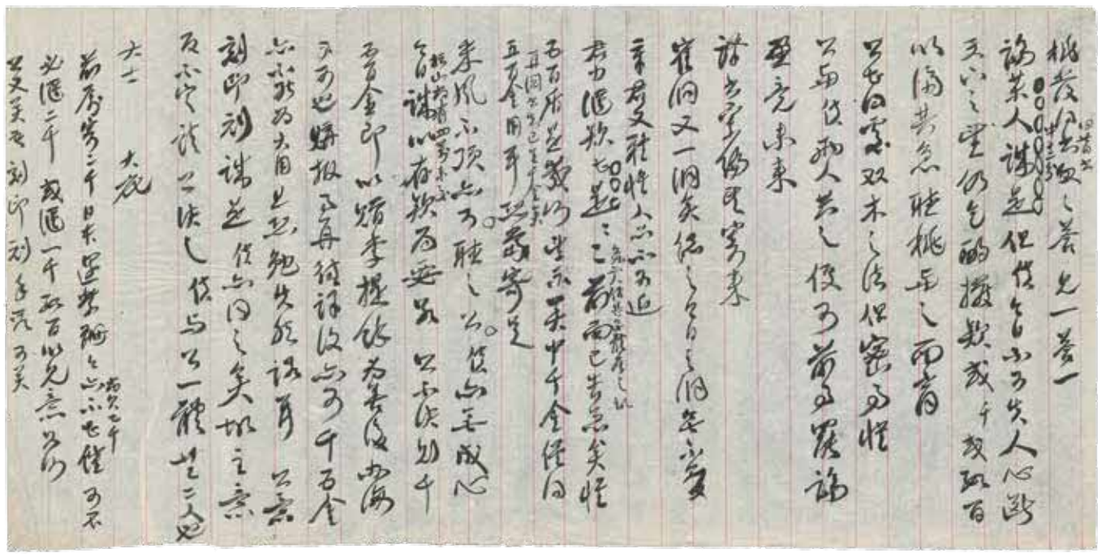
有文章论说邱菽园生平，称其1920年返福建省亲，此为其定居新加坡后唯一一次回到故籍，但未曾提及邱还到了上海，并会晤康有为。康撰《邱菽园集序》，有“吾问其近作，菽园谓正集未编，手写此钞来沪，皆游戏之作，然多有寄托。”[13]是绝好的证明。王先生所藏文献，有几封康有为致邱菽园信，是研究这一时期邱、康交往的重要资料。

> 久不得讯，顷得书，勤勤厚问，至感。不见又十年，国事益不可言，吾亦日老而无用矣。与老弟是廿年前过来人。今之云来已登云，与弟则逍遥诸天，俛视五浊可也。厦门游还何不便道游沪，馆于吾家？可一见诸老或同游苏杭，亦与弟灵山会后不可少之因缘。□今年消息至佳，或有以报。弟近作诗稿想益多，望钞示。书法高雅，杜陵谓峻拔为之主。由唐入六朝，正得其妙。吾昔年书不足观。伍君带港之书，或可分赠人耳。海云万里，迢企为身，敬问万福。
>
> 菽园老弟　　有为示　二月十九日

游是一身，偶然辛园，家累甚大，不易迁复。有书可常通，上海于吾名，人皆知，不必住址也。去年于西湖得一地，占湖山第一好处。顷营园，林广袤，高下可三十亩，营菟裘以为老计。弟来，园粗成，可共登临。爱居爱处，联吟题咏，其乐无量。　更蛙又启[14]

上面这封信是两人多时未通音问之后，康接邱来信，并悉邱将还厦省亲，遂复信邀至上海，可以居住辛园（在上海新闸路），也可一同去杭州新营建的别墅。下面一封短信则是得知邱来沪日期，并打算去海宁观潮，康即复：

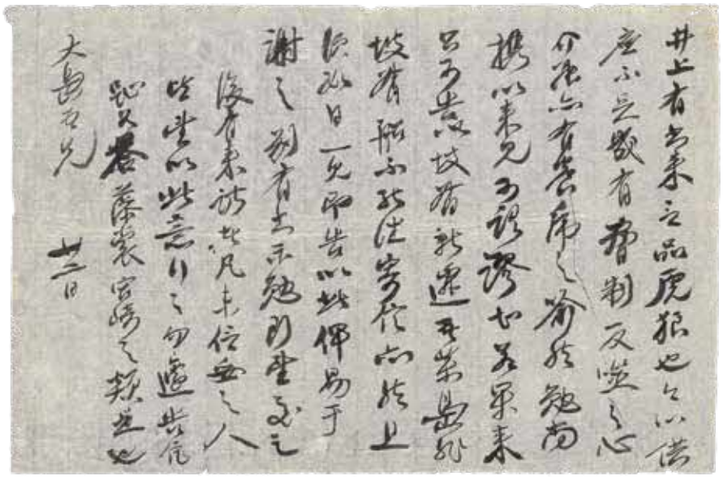
> 闻来申有期，今暂不远游，以待弟至。八月观潮恐不可及，九月后观红叶乎？复问菽园仁弟游祺　　游为　八月二日[15]
>
> （见附图3）



(TOP LEFT) 附图 2. *All Rights Reserved, the late Khoo Seok Wan Collections, National Library Board, Singapore 2013. Courtesy of Ong Family, descendents of Khoo Seok Wan.*

(TOP RIGHT) 附图 3. *All Rights Reserved, the late Khoo Seok Wan Collections, National Library Board, Singapore 2013. Courtesy of Ong Family, descendents of Khoo Seok Wan.*

(ABOVE) 附图 4. *All Rights Reserved, the late Khoo Seok Wan Collections, National Library Board, Singapore 2013. Courtesy of Ong Family, descendents of Khoo Seok Wan.*



王先生所藏文献中，有康有为为邱菽园《啸虹生诗钞》撰写序言的毛笔抄稿。何人抄录，则不得知，但很明白，书于壬戌秋九月，即1922年10月，与《康有为全集》辑入的《邱菽园集序》由编者注明撰写月份晚了三个月，文字上也有较大的差异。不过文意大致相同，故本文不再采录。所见康有为致邱菽园的最后一封信书于壬戌年六月朔，即1922 7月24日。是年，康有为65岁，邱菽园49岁。原件不署书写年份，信中“顷悼亡”，指1922年康有为元配夫人张云珠去世，书写年份据以确定。

> 璧女来，承万福，得诗集，即再序付印（前序亦失）。此集少，选炼更佳，则避误亦反有益，亦塞翁之失马也。顷悼亡，既伤怀，不多及。即问菽园仁弟近祉
> 期更甡示　六月朔
> 再者，久别南洋，故人离索或不知一切。今□讣文三十（已有廿寄昌婿），望代分寄（与昌婿同商之，璧女所熟识者亦可）。星坡、槟屿、仰光、大小霹雳旧交，度亦寥寥矣。
>
> 又及[16]

信中“璧女”是康的二女康同璧，“昌婿”是二女婿罗昌。信中提到邱的诗集，“前序亦失”，“即再序付印”，可能就是上述署明“壬戌秋九月”的那篇序。

六、结语

本文意在 将笔者所见到王清建先生珍藏文献中的部分康有为致邱菽园信件加以整理、抄录，介绍给读者，因此文内所引用的信件都全文逐录，以保持其原真性。信中蕴藏大量历史信息，有待读者进一步解读。有一个问题须要说明：笔者见到过一些文章，称邱菽园在1900年8月自立军起事失败，唐才常遇害后，即与康有为绝交，原因是康梁扣押了华侨汇款，导致唐才常兵败死难。这种说法出自冯自由《革命逸史》所说“菽园缘是熟知康徒骗款卖友内幕”。笔者认为，这种说法系不实之词。首先，邱、康并没有“绝交”，本文引用的资料足以说明这一点。其次，康有为1901年4月5日在槟榔屿致女儿康同薇书中说：“吾本决往欧西久矣，……而苦于无款。观此情形，今各款不来，恐往欧徒成虚愿也。”[17] 如果说康有为果真侵吞邱菽园援助自立军的巨额款项，何愁欧西之行“苦于无款”？康同薇、同璧是康有为子女中最出色的二位，受过良好的教育，康在国外流亡多年间，重大事情甚至不告知老母、妻室，而是与这两个女儿商量。因此给女儿私信的内容是真实的，“苦于无款”之说是可信的。第三，邱菽园到了行将步入知天命之年，汇集一生所作诗篇，打算结集出版；1949年邱、康都已经作古，邱的女儿邱鸣权、女婿王盛治合编《丘菽园居士诗集》，两者都冠以康序，[18] 如果邱果真认为康是一个“骗款卖友”的恶棍，那么怎么会将一个恶棍书写的序言置于卷端以玷污自己或先人的作品集呢？这一点，恰是一项毋须史学家研究考证便不解自明的常识。

确实，邱菽园曾在《天南新报》上发表《论康有为》文表示与康决裂，此前也还有多次刊登表示脱离《天南新报》等的启事。笔者认为，这一切皆迫于清政府的巨大压力。慈禧专制政权视维新思潮及其代表人物康有为、梁启超如蛇蝎，必欲除之，而邱竟在海外与之“ 勾结”，唐才常是真刀真枪对抗朝廷的“叛逆”，而邱竟以巨款相助，这比办报倡言维新或发通电要求光绪归政严重得多。如果邱菽园其人在国内，必被拿获问罪，刑罚不下于谭嗣同和唐才常。此时，邱不在国内，但专制政权使出诛灭九族的毒手，不是没有可能。其时清政府虽摇摇欲坠，但慈禧依托张之洞之辈镇压诚实本分的老百姓却依然易如反掌，在福建老家的大家族面临极大的危险，他不得不顺从张之洞、陶模等的“劝导”而终止政治活动。张之洞本人学识渊博，才干过人，口碑也不错，但他是一个既得利益者，镇压自立军之后，当然邀功请赏，禄位永保，宁做慈禧的忠实奴仆，把统治集团通过自身改革、体制内调适和变革，从而达到民族振兴，跟上世界进步潮流的大门紧紧关闭，使清廷永远错失了近代中国走上改革、立宪的机会。正是慈禧、张之洞等人，扼杀维新改良思潮和维新派的非暴力活动，使之很快衰退，影响迅速消解，使革命派获得了良机，从此形成了在中国非倡言革命便无法容身社会的局面，卷入了从“革命尚未成功”到“无产阶级专政下继续革命”的漩涡，百年来无法自拔。贬低乃至妖魔化异己者，历来是各种政治势力、利益集团惯用的手法。今天我们回顾这段历史的时候，宜依据史料、史实，不受各种政治派别的蛊惑，远离已经固化的思维模式，还原历史真实面貌。

本文写作过程中，得到新加坡国家图书馆王连美女士、赖燕鸿先生、叶若诗女士的大力相助，谨表感谢。●

引注

1. 《康有为全集》第12集，姜义华、张荣华编校，中国人民大学出版社2007年9月版，第201页
2. 《康有为全集》第12集，姜义华、张荣华编校，中国人民大学出版社2007年9月版
3. 原件，王清建藏
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5. 原件，王清建藏
6. 原件，王清建藏
7. 此处资料转引自茅海建《张之洞策反邱菽园》，载《四川大学学报》哲学社会科学版，2012年第1期
8. 原件，王清建藏。此信仅见此一页，未见称呼、署名、书写日期
9. 邱菽园《上粤督陶方帅书》，载《菽园赘谈》，排印线装本，上海图书馆藏
10. 原件，王清建藏
11. 《康有为全集》第12集，第316页
12. 《丘菽园居士诗集》，丘鸣权、王盛治同编，排印本，1949年新加坡印行出版，卷三，新加坡国家图书馆藏
13. 《康有为全集》第11集，第213页
14. 原件，王清建藏
15. 原件，王清建藏
16. 原件，王清建藏
17. 《康有为全集》第5集，第393页
18. 《丘菽园居士诗集》，有康有为庚戌夏五（1910夏）序，与编入《康有为全集》的《啸虹生诗集序》不同

(TOP) 附图 5. *All Rights Reserved, the late Khoo Seok Wan Collections, National Library Board, Singapore 2013. Courtesy of Ong Family, descendents of Khoo Seok Wan.*

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