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Main picture on front page from Chan Chew Wah

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# Director's Column

Not many Singaporeans know that Shuang Lin Monastery, the familiar landmark at one end of Toa Payoh, once played a significant role in the building of the Burma Road. In the 1930s, volunteers from around Southeast Asia were trained to drive at the monastery before they were sent to the Burma Road to transport material to China in the Sino-Japanese War.

Linking Burma and China, the Burma Road was used to ferry equipment and war material in support of China in the 1937 war between China and Japan. Cutting through rough mountain country and stretching 1,130 km long, it played a crucial logistical role in supplying Chinese forces striking at the invading Japanese army.

That's a lesson in history that we learnt from one of our Lee Kong Chian Research Fellows, one of the first two researchers who completed the Fellowship recently. In this issue of BiblioAsia, you will get to see what they did, in two extracts from their papers that they presented soon after completing their research. The other feature explores the early education of Malayan gentlemen by the British colonials. In case you think it is just another piece of research on early education, be prepared to be surprised: you'll find that education in the 1800s wasn't as straightforward as it would seem. The educators certainly had more than good English in mind, when they wrote textbooks and tried to teach locals the finer points of the English language.

The two research projects show how much benefit the Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship has brought to the National Library since we launched it in 2005. With their specific areas of interest and dedication, Lee Kong Chian Research Fellows have added to the field of research in Singapore, filling gaps in the National Library's collections and adding to the veritable wealth of heritage and archival information on local history. The Fellowship has also helped us to develop the capability of reference librarians, and boosted the use of our heritage collections.

It is certainly what we hoped for when we launched the Fellowship. Open to local as well as overseas researchers who plan to make use of the excellent collections and facilities in the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, the Fellowship is part of our efforts to establish the National Library as a preferred stop for Asian content. It welcomes researchers with interests in a

wide range of topics. For proof, look out for papers and articles from more Research Fellows in subsequent issues of BiblioAsia, and you'll see what we mean.

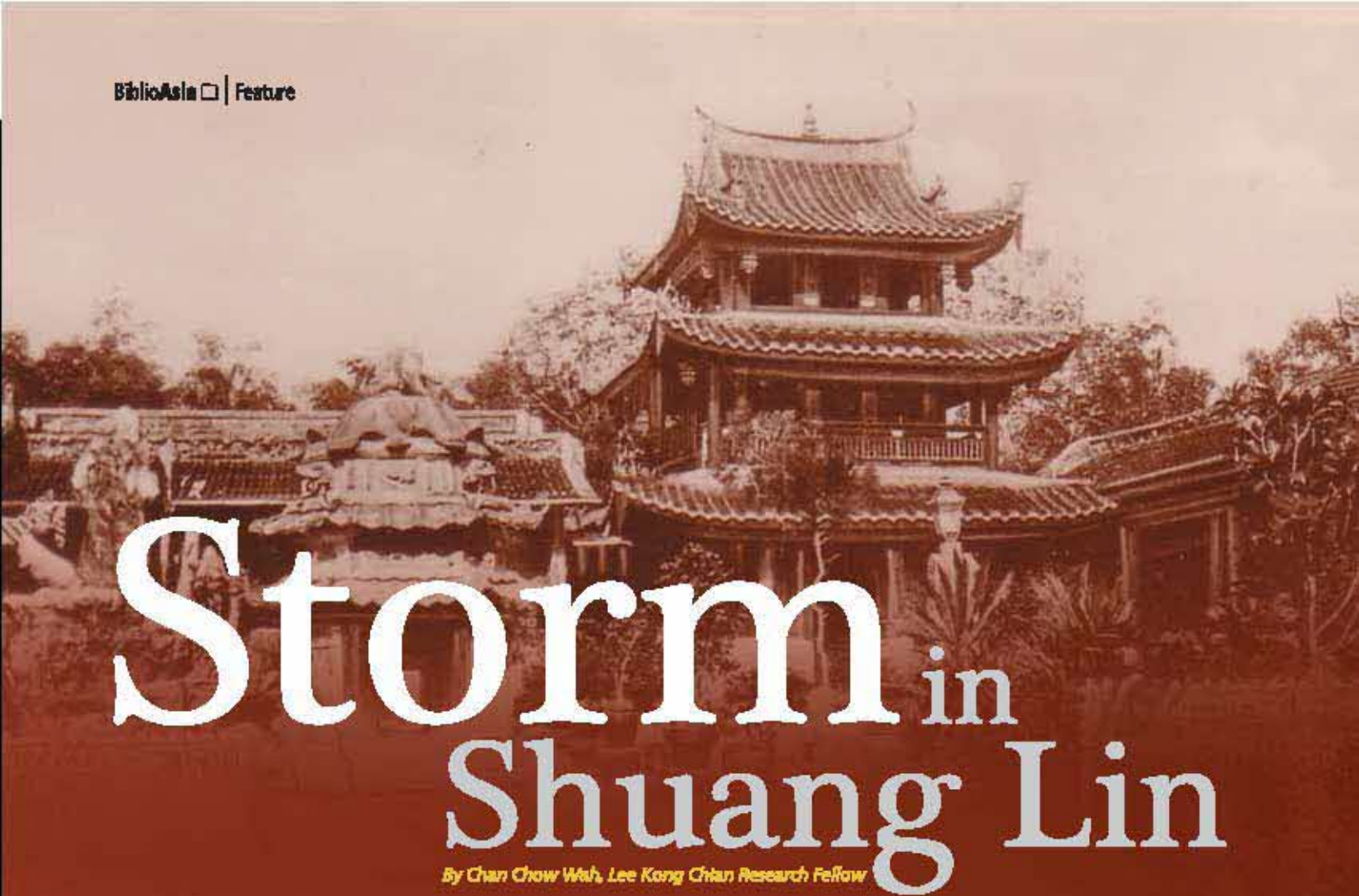
Other interesting topics coming your way include knowledge management in schools, and the influence of the Chinese press in the region on Chinese culture and ethnicity. But why wait for the articles to be published in BiblioAsia? Come down to the National Library to watch and hear the next batch of Research Fellows present their findings in person. At the sessions, you'll get the chance to interact with them and ask them follow-up questions on their research. It's all part of the National Library's interactive approach to learning and to stimulate a greater interest in research. Do look out for news on the next presentations on the NLB website at [www.nlb.gov.sg](http://www.nlb.gov.sg)

This issue of BiblioAsia promises more than research pieces from the Fellowship. We continue to feature articles based on the collections in the National Library, to give you a glimpse into the rich heritage collections that we have in the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library. You'll get to learn more about Indian festivals in Singapore, and find out about how people borrowed money in the early days of this country. Long before Shenton Way filled up with banks and ATM machines, the business district - as it was then - was already abound with opportunities and avenues for aspiring businessmen and hopeful investors to raise some capital for their businesses. Not all were official of course, but they certainly worked. Want to find out more? Visit our website, explore the Digital Library, or come down to the Library for a closer look.

And, of course, if you are now inspired to do a little research of your own, I would like to encourage you to think about becoming a Lee Kong Chian Research Fellow yourself. The details and application forms are available at all reception counters in all community and regional libraries, and also on our NLB website at [www.nlb.gov.sg](http://www.nlb.gov.sg). The next intake closes in August, so there's still plenty of time. Meanwhile, happy reading!

**Ms Ngian Lek Choh**

Director  
National Library



# Storm in Shuang Lin

*By Chan Chow Wah, Lee Kong Chian Research Fellow*

**THE WELL-KNOWN LANDMARK** of Shuang Lin Monastery at Toa Payoh was once used as a training ground for volunteers going to the Burma Road, which was instrumental in sustaining logistics in the Sino-Japanese War in the 1930s. It also had great impact on the lives of two men, Mr Wu Hui Min, a volunteer for the war effort, and Venerable Pu Liang, the Abbot of the monastery.

This is an extract from a paper, *Storm in Shuang Lin: Ethnography of Social Actors in the Political Climate of 1939-1942*, by Mr Chan Chow Wah, a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute and Member of the American Anthropological Association. He presented this paper in December 2006 as part of the inaugural Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship Series.

The Sino-Japanese War began on 7 July 1937. As the war developed, the Chinese seaports were either captured or blocked by the Japanese who attempted to terminate external supplies entering China. In response, the Chinese government developed alternative land supply routes.

The Burma Road, built as an alternative supply road, became China's most important supply route. The Singapore Free Press described it as "China's new munitions and supplies route"<sup>1</sup>.

Construction of the Burma Road between Yunnan in China and Lashio in Burma began in 1937 and was completed in 1938. Supplies were sent by sea to the Rangoon port

(Yangon), transported by rail to Lashio and through the Burma Road (滇緬公路) to Kunming (昆明) in China. The journey from Kunming to Lashio took about a week, and there were six stations along the route to support the drivers.

Due to the lack of experienced drivers and mechanics in China, the Chinese government requested Mr Tan Kah Kee, the Chairman of the China Relief Fund, to recruit drivers and mechanics from Nanyang (South East Asia).

The Nanyang Federation of China Relief Fund (南洋華僑救護祖國難民總會) was founded in 1938 to support China in the Sino-Japanese War. Mr Tan Kah Kee had been elected as its chairman, and its regional office was located



Ee Hoe Hean was the headquarters of China Relief Fund, and where Mr Tan Kah Kee's office was located.  
Chen Chow Wah, 2005.

at the Ee Hoe Hean Club (怡和軒) in Singapore. Representatives of the Fund set up their local China Relief Fund offices to implement programmes, forming a large network around the region.

The China Relief Fund raised money to purchase medication, medical equipment, clothing, food and military hardware such as planes, tanks, trucks,

explosives and weapons,<sup>2</sup> transforming the Overseas Chinese population into a regional force in support of China.

## DRIVERS AND MECHANICS FROM NANYANG (南洋華僑技工)

In response to the Chinese government's request for volunteers from Nanyang, the China Relief Fund published the first recruitment notice (number 6) on 7 February 1939<sup>3</sup>.

Among the candidates who responded were applicants who had borrowed licences or had very limited driving skills. At the same time, information from China indicated that the roads required extremely good driving skills. So the China Relief Fund decided to test drivers and to establish a Driving Institute.



A China-bound supply convoy travels up the Burma Road.  
OMH Online, U.S. Army Center of Military History.

After background checks were conducted, candidates whose driving licences had a photo were accepted while others were tested near Outram Road. Initially, the test involved basic driving skills with an empty truck. When further information on road conditions came in, the testers for the third or fourth and subsequent batches attempted to simulate road conditions in China by testing candidates on more difficult terrain on Neo Tiew Road (鐵樹路), and the trucks were loaded to increase driving difficulty.

Those who could not drive were sent to the Driving Institute located in Shuang Lin Monastery. The coordinators included Mr Ng Aik Huan (黃奕歡), Mr Lau Boh Tan and a training committee formed by a group of skilled drivers.



An old postcard of Shuang Lin Monastery, printed in England and dated 7 Sept 1932, depicts the monastery in the 1930s.  
Chen Chow Wah

The Shuang Lin Monastery was founded in 1898 by Mr Low Kim Pong (劉金壽) when he invited Venerable Xian Hui (賢德禪師) to be the first Abbot. It was the first Buddhist monastery in Singapore and one of the largest in the region.

Mr Ng recalled training and testing the candidates at the Shuang Lin Monastery, and described the training location as a "very big place" that was acquired by the government amid the post-war housing development projects. Dr Low Cheng Jin, grandson of Mr Low Kim Pong, mentioned that the training was conducted "behind the temple" where "entry could be made by the other side, not necessary through the temple's gate". At the back of the temple was a piece of open land with access roads.

On 7 July 1939, Mr Tan Kah Kee issued a notice<sup>4</sup> for more volunteers and cited recruitment efforts in Singapore, mentioning the recruitment of 200 semi-skilled drivers who were trained at a "distant location with rough terrain" for about three weeks. He then recommended other China Relief Fund local offices to adopt similar strategies to produce more qualified volunteers. The "distant location with rough terrain" was probably the land behind the monastery.

## ON TO THE BURMA ROAD

Qualified volunteers from Nanyang converged in Singapore to form a batch. Between February and August 1939, about 3,200<sup>5</sup> volunteers left in nine batches. The majority were Chinese men, but there were also Indians, Malays and four Chinese women<sup>6</sup> (蔣新珍, 白雲娟, 朱雲珍, 李淑英). These volunteers were known as Drivers and Mechanics from Nanyang (南洋技工). About 1,000 of them died in service, 1,000 settled in China and others returned to Nanyang after the war.

China's wartime leader Chiang Kai Shek (蔣介石) said that the volunteers' "spontaneous offer of service to the country



Convoys ascending a famous 21-curve stretch along the Burma Road.  
 CMH Online, U.S. Army Center of Military History

in the hour of crisis has not only brought material aid to China in the war of independence, but has also demonstrated to the world that the Chinese people everywhere are united by common loyalty<sup>7</sup>.

One of the volunteers who were trained in the Driving Institute was Mr Wu Hui Min.

### MR WU HUI MIN<sup>8</sup>

Mr Wu Hui Min (吳惠民) was born in Hainan, China, and came to Singapore in 1934 when he was 15 years

old. In Singapore, he worked for the Wu association and had the opportunity to read the Chinese newspapers every day. They updated him with developments of the Sino-Japanese war, and he participated in fund-raising activities like selling flowers, attended rallies and boycotted Japanese goods.

In 1939, Hainan Island fell to the Japanese and Mr Wu felt a deep sense of loss. He wanted to contribute towards the war efforts, as he felt that he did not have a home to return to, and believed that everyone should do whatever he could in a time of crisis.

For volunteers like Mr Wu, the Japanese Occupation of their homes had initiated a process in which they transformed the despair of personal loss into efforts towards the protection of their larger cultural homeland.

During this time, Mr Wu came across the notice for volunteers for the Burma Road, and went to register at the Shuang Lin Monastery<sup>9</sup>. All the volunteers lived in the Driving Institute and were trained by instructors. They started the day with morning exercises and military training, after which they had driving lessons. A few trainees shared a truck and took turns to drive.

After three weeks of training, Mr Wu joined 506 others to



Mr Wu Hui Min, a volunteer who went to the Burma Road, had trained in the Shuang Lin Monastery. He settled in China after the war. This photo was taken in Hainan Island in 2005.  
 Chan Chow Web



Volunteers stayed at the Great Southern Hotel after graduating from the Driving Institute at the Shuang Lin Monastery.  
 Chan Chow Web



Mr Wu Hui Min and his batch of volunteers gathered at the Tong Ji Hospital before they left Singapore. Earlier batches of volunteers had stayed in the hospital.

from the ninth batch. They stayed at the Great Southern Hotel and left Singapore on 14 August 1939. At 6 am, they gathered at Tong Ji Hospital and left for Tanjong Pagar harbour at 10 am. The harbour was by then already crowded with people who had come to send them off. As the vessel Feng Qing (丰庆号) left the harbour at 3 pm, the crowds sang to encourage the volunteers and to bid them farewell<sup>10</sup>.

### THE SOOK CHING MASSACRE

On 7 February 1942, Japan began the invasion of Singapore. By 15 February, the British had surrendered and Singapore became Syonan (昭南島). On 21 February, the Japanese launched "Sook Ching" (肃清, 大檢证) to "clean up all anti-Japanese elements"<sup>11</sup>.

All male Chinese between the ages of 18 and 50 had to assemble at five assembly points at noon. One of them was Jalan Besar, where anti-Japanese suspects were transported to Changi Beach "just outside the wire of the Changi Prisoner of War camp"<sup>12</sup> for execution.

One of the victims of Sook Ching was Venerable Pu Liang, Abbot of Shuang Lin Monastery, who had allowed the China Relief Fund to establish the Driving Institution inside the monastery.

### VENERABLE PU LIANG<sup>13</sup>

Venerable Pu Liang (普亮法師) came to Singapore in 1912. In 1917, he became the 10th Abbot of Shuang Lin Monastery. From 1937 till his execution, the Venerable served as the chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association (星洲中華佛學會), a Buddhist charity and social association.

Venerable Pu Liang had two disciples to assist him in temple management, serving as an accountant and a clerk. Both

assistants were "very devoted"<sup>14</sup> to the Venerable.

The Venerable was a highly regarded and well-respected person who enjoyed wide support across different sectors of the Chinese community. During the Sino-Japanese war, he was involved in various activities to support the China Relief Fund and help war victims. A Chinese newspaper described him as "very active in relief work"<sup>15</sup>.



Venerable Pu Liang  
(普濟法師)  
Used with permission from The  
Singapore Chinese Buddhist  
Association.

On Vesak Day in 1939, he worked with the China Relief Fund to launch the "Shuang Lin Monastery Vesak Day Vegetarian Meal Fund Raising Event" (双林寺拜佛祖誕辰素食助賑會). Held on 28 May<sup>16</sup> in the monastery, it attracted "a few thousand" participants and raised about \$10,000 (Straits Dollars). It was covered by major newspapers<sup>17</sup>.

In early 1942, during Sook Ching, a group of Japanese soldiers arrived at the Shuang Lin Monastery to arrest Venerable Pu Liang. They had to force their way in, and upon entering, arrested the Venerable and his two disciples immediately. The rest of the people were ordered to squat along the corridors. The soldiers proceeded to search the Venerable's rooms, and opened trucks and lockers. Dr Low Cheng Jin, who was present, believed that the Japanese were looking for evidence of Venerable Pu Liang's "anti-Japanese" activities. Mr Ng Aik Huan, the China Relief Fund leader, believed that the Japanese found some belongings and marketing materials belonging to the Driving Institute's volunteers<sup>18</sup>.

Venerable Pu Liang, his two disciples and others in the monastery were taken to the Jalan Besar Inspection point. Most of the people who reported to Jalan Besar were released about a week later, but the three Venerables did not return. The monastery sent people to search for them, but they could not find them. They and Mr Ng concluded that the Japanese had executed the Venerables.

## A TARGETED ARREST

Although Venerable Pu Liang had participated actively in support of relief work for the war, many other Buddhist and Taoist organisations had held similar events. For example, in July 1939, a seven-day Chinese opera was put up at Tian Fu Gong (天福宮) to raise funds for the China Relief Fund<sup>19</sup>.

The Chinese Chamber of Commerce - whose chairman was Mr Tan Kah Kee, Japan's most wanted man - managed Tian Fu Gong. Yet, during the Japanese occupation, temples<sup>20</sup> managed by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce were not disturbed<sup>21</sup>. Venerables from major Buddhist institutions<sup>22</sup> that participated in memorial services and China Relief Fund activities were also left unharmed.

For example, Venerable Rui Yu (瑞于卿) Abbot of Seng Hong Temple (尊誠庵), had donated money<sup>23</sup> and participated in China Relief Fund programmes. After Venerable Pu Liang's execution, he became the Chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association and sought permission from the Japanese authorities to resume the association's activities<sup>24</sup>.

In general, Japanese troops were advised not to disturb religious institutions<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, the Japanese soldiers who went to Shuang Lin Monastery probably knew whom they wanted and what "crimes" they had committed.

The Burma Road was seen as China's major lifeline, and the Japanese had attempted to terminate it through diplomatic and military means. The fall of Singapore was perceived as a means for the Burma Road "to be completely cut off in the near future"<sup>26</sup>.

Even though Venerable Pu Liang had offered only the physical place, the Driving Institute was seen as part of the larger network to supply volunteers to the Burma Road. Shuang Lin Monastery was reported in the press as a recruitment and training ground for volunteers to the Burma Road, and training was conducted in the open, visible to people around the monastery, so it was not difficult for the Japanese to know about its activities. From the Japanese perspective, "volunteers" meant "guerillas"<sup>27</sup>.

This may have explained why the Venerable's rooms and the monastery were searched. Usually, Japanese soldiers would arrive to inform residents about inspections, but would not search the place.

Like most of the victims from Jalan Besar Inspection Point, Venerable Pu Liang and his two disciples were likely executed at Changi beach. The Venerable was probably the only Chinese Buddhist religious leader executed<sup>28</sup>, and he and his two disciples probably the only Chinese Venerables executed during Sook Ching.

## A POW WITNESS

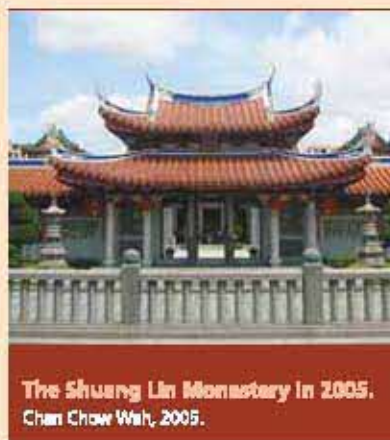
A British prisoner-of-war may have witnessed the execution of Venerable Pu Liang. Mr John Hamilton Wadge<sup>29</sup>, a Corporal (Service number S/93369), was part of the Royal Army Service

Corps attached to the 53rd Infantry Brigade of the 18th Division. Following the fall of Malaya, the 18th Division retreated to Singapore and was assigned to protect the northern shores of Singapore. On the day of surrender on 15 February 1942, the 53rd Brigade was stationed along Braddell Road.

Mr Wadge's group had moved southwards along Thomson road and taken shelter in an abandoned house, the former residence of a Michelin employee who had been evacuated from Singapore. They had been taken as prisoners of war in this house and transferred to the Changi area.

Mr Wadge witnessed three Chinese monks in robes being executed at the beach.

## HISTORY REMEMBERED



The Shuang Lin Monastery in 2005. Chan Chow Wah, 2005.

The volunteers to the Burma Road and their supporters were people from all walks of lives. Their decisions and actions were propelled by a culturally-conditioned world view, and through their actions, these individuals became the embodiments of

global-local forces. Their stories enable us to understand how an event influenced and impacted individuals, and how their actions shaped the course of the Sino-Japanese War.

As the place where volunteers were trained and whose Abbot paid a heavy price during Sook Ching, Shuang Lin Monastery is one of the few institutions<sup>30</sup> related to Burma Road volunteers that still exist, making it a "living" institution and a depository for the nation's collective social memories. The monastery was gazetted as a National Monument on 17 October 1980, and has embarked on a restoration project that continues to this day.

1 The Singapore Free Press, 1 June 1938, Pg 3  
 2 南坎峰, 新加坡. (1989). 南洋抗工同盟抗日史. 昆明: 云南人民出版社, pg 51  
 3 新加坡自由报, 8 February 1939, Pg 9  
 4 南洋商报, 8 July 1939, Pg 7  
 5 南坎峰, 新加坡. (1946). 南洋抗工同盟抗日史. 昆明: 云南人民出版社, Pg 108  
 6 南坎峰, 新加坡. (1989). 南洋抗工同盟抗日史. 昆明: 云南人民出版社, Pg 88-7  
 7 The Singapore Free Press, 31 May 1939, Pg 2  
 8 Wu Hui Min (personal communication, 16 July 2005)  
 9 联合早报星洲刊, 22 Aug 1999, Pg 11

10 姚少川. (1994). 陈嘉庚与南洋抗工. 北京: 中国青年出版社, Pg 122  
 11 Shinozaki Memoirs. (1975). Syonan - My Story. The Japanese Occupation of Singapore. Singapore: Asia Pacific Press Pte Ltd. Pg 21  
 12 Thompson, Peter (Peter A.). (2005). The battle for Singapore: the true story of the greatest catastrophe of World War Two. London: Portrait. Pg 375  
 13 Information on Venerable Pu Liang is constructed through Shuang Lin monastery publications, oral history records, Chinese newspapers of the period and accounts of British POW and The Singapore Chinese Buddhist Association archives (新加坡中华佛教会).  
 14 Low, Chang Jin (D). National Archives of Singapore, Oral History Centre. Accession Number 287.  
 15 南洋商报, 6 July 1939, Pg 9  
 16 南洋商报, 29 May 1939, Pg 7  
 17 星洲日报, 29 May 1939, Pg 9. 星洲日报, 29 May 1939, Pg 9. 南洋商报, 29 May 1939, Pg 9  
 18 Ng Aik Huan. National Archives of Singapore, Oral History Centre. Accession Number 35  
 19 南洋商报, 6 July 1939, Pg 7  
 20 The temples included Tian Fu Gong (天福宫), Heng Shan Ting 恒山亭, Jin Lan Miao (金山庙)  
 21 新加坡新闻: 天福宫与福建会馆. (2005). 新加坡新闻. Pg 70  
 22 The Buddhist monasteries that were active in China Relief Fund activities and frequently mentioned in the press include: 双林寺, 慈惠庙, 天福宫, 恒山亭, 佛光寺, 金山寺, 五善堂, 留神神位, 观音堂, 观音堂, 金山寺  
 23 南洋商报, 17 July 1939, pg 10  
 24 Singapore Chinese Buddhist Association (新加坡中华佛教会) archives  
 25 Tsuji, Masanobu. (1988). Singapore 1941-1942: the Japanese version of the Malayan campaign of World War II. H.V. Howe (ed.). (Margaret E. Lake, Trans.). Oxford University Press. Pg 306  
 26 The Shonan Times, 20 February 1942, FrontPage.  
 27 Tsuji, Masanobu. (1988). Singapore 1941-1942: the Japanese version of the Malayan campaign of World War II. H.V. Howe (ed.). (Margaret E. Lake, Trans.). Oxford University Press. Pg xi  
 28 A list of monasteries and their Abbots were constructed from newspaper reports of China Relief Fund programs that mentions Venerables. The list is checked against respective monasteries, publications, and archives to verify if they were executed during the Sook Ching period.  
 29 Information supplied by Ms Janet Hamilton Jacobs, youngest child of Mr. John Hamilton Wadge (Personal Communication, Feb 2006)  
 30 Other locations include Tong Ji Hospital (同济医院), Ee Hoo Club (怡和轩), Great Southern Hotel (南天大酒店)

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## LEE KONG CHIAN RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP SERIES: FIFTH RESEARCH FELLOW SIGNED UP

The Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship welcomed its fifth Research Fellow on 22 January 2007. Mr Peng Welbu signed the Fellowship with Ms Ngian Lak Choh, Director of the National Library.

Mr Peng, a doctoral candidate with the College of Journalism & Communication from Jnan University, China, will be researching on the Chinese press and its influence on Chinese culture and ethnicity, and will explore the history of Southeast Asian Chinese newspapers.

To date, two Research Fellows, Mr Chan Chow Wah and Ms Adeline Koh, have presented their findings.

The NLB's Research Fellowship awards researchers who make use of the Library's archived and preserved collections.



Mr Peng Welbu (top) and Ms Chiam Ching Leen (bottom right) were the two most recent researchers to be awarded the Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship.



# *Educating*

# MALAYAN

*By Adeline Koh, PhD candidate in  
Comparative Literature at the  
University of Michigan*

# *Gentlemen*

**WHEN** the British instituted English education in early Singapore, they appeared to have more than just education in mind; they were establishing an elite. This is what Ms Adeline Koh, a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan, posited in her research findings on British colonial education in her paper, *Educating Malayan Gentlemen: Establishing an Anglicized Elite in Twentieth-Century Colonial Malaya*. Ms Koh received a Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship. This is an edited extract from her paper.



The early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a huge shift in colonial educational policy across the British Empire, with the beginnings of a strict limitation on teaching English to native subjects.

This starkly contrasted with previous attitudes within educational policy, where English would be taught - particularly in India - with the hope of "civilising" the natives. The English language in 19<sup>th</sup> century British imperial policy was conceived of as an imperative civilising force - a tool for the enlightenment of the savage barbarians the British ruled over in the tropical exploitation colonies.

In contrast, 20<sup>th</sup> century attitudes towards the teaching of English to natives grew more conservative. The growth and consolidation of the British Empire by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century showed how important "native education" was becoming to colonial governments as an ideological tool - but English education could be both an important implement as well as a highly dangerous one.

The problem with English was that if too many natives spoke it as well as Europeans and became as highly educated as Europeans, they would necessarily challenge European rule - particularly the race-based exclusions which prevented them from rising to higher levels of power within the colonial state machinery across the British Empire. English was thus used as a discretionary tool to both civilise and tame native subjects.

The bulk of this interpretation of British educational policy in colonial Malaya stems from an examination of a series of Malayan-centred textbooks produced in Malaya in the 1930s in order to create a more "Malayan-centred" education distinct from an English education, which only had English and European references at their core.

A symptomatic reading of these Malayan textbooks from the 1930s will show the engineering of an elite English-speaking sensibility across the different "native races", or non-European races of Malaya - and is a way in which one can discern the ideological foundations of the Malayan

"collaborative elite," or a native bourgeoisie that would serve as the intermediaries between European colonials and the rest of the labouring colonised masses.

English in Malaya served as an instrument of power as it did within all British colonies. Used to separate master from servant, colonial from colonised, citizen and subject, it was a language of the elite, a language of the colonial state. The better one spoke English, the more one could rise up within the colonial state mechanisms - hence, the British also considered English education in Malaya dangerous because they were afraid that educating too many natives in English would threaten the security of their privileged position in Malaya.

Utilised by the British colonial state as a tool to structure and govern Malaya, English education in the 1920s became specifically reserved only for a distinctive elite class across the "major" races of Malaya: the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians.

Only this elite class were allowed to learn English, and this elite were usually aristocratic in origin - indeed, the English considered it highly dangerous to allow anybody but the native aristocracy to learn English as this would give them delusions of grandeur.

The colonial administrator Frank Swettenham argued in his Annual Report on Perak in 1890: "The one danger to be guarded against is to teach English indiscriminately. It could not be well taught except in a few schools, and I do not think it is at all advisable to give to the children of an agricultural population an indifferent knowledge of a language that to all but the very few would only unfit them for the duties of life and make them discontented with anything like manual labour." (Stevenson 57)

Further, the British felt that educating the "masses" in English would cause the bulk of the "native" population to revolt against British rule. As an editorial in the Ipoh English language newspaper *The Times of Malaya* opined, giving the Malays in particular a higher education "would be to put in their hands an intellectual weapon whereby they might attempt our undoing." (Stevenson 58)

As such, English education was something which was throughout the British empire reserved solely for the elite; for the bulk of the rest of the non-white population, Swettenham felt: "While we teach children to read and write and count in their own language, or in Malay, the 'lingua franca' of the Peninsula and the Archipelago, we are safe", and that "Beyond that I should like to see the boys taught useful industries, and the girls weaving, embroidery and mat making." (Stevenson 58)

English was thus associated with the intellect, power and control - and only knowledge of English would allow one to access these three things within the colony; however, on the other side of the coin, non-white "vernacular" languages such as Malay, Chinese and Tamil, were institutionally linked with manual labour and low status within the colonial state and society.

Hence, within the colonial state, English was institutionalised as a language of the elite - and only those who were elite were allowed to access this language.

As English also became the language of the colonial state and the language of the administration and the bureaucracy, it became essential also for one to be able to navigate the rules of the society; not being able to speak English would also mean that one would be powerless against the judicial system, and not be able to understand how one would go about getting a job and starting a business.

In this way, the British hoped to be able to control the non-white population, because educating them in English would allow them access to knowledge about the colonial system - and very possibly destabilise the privileges which the British accorded themselves through colonial state institutions.

English, therefore, functioned as a central tool of colonial power - by keeping the language of the state out of reach of most non-white people in the colonies, this meant that it would necessarily keep them under control as they would not be able to access information and understand enough to be able to negotiate the system.

Through making elite natives speak and think a certain way, this would help the colonial state to maintain its control over Malayan society. This was done through the normalisation of a certain way of thinking, through making these elite Malayan subjects believe that things worked in accordance to the laws of the colonial state - to engender an Anglophiliac sensibility, sensitive and compliant to British interests.

For this purpose, again, English was extremely important. Learning how to *speak English* in a particular way for the Malayan elite would also mean that they would learn to think *like* the British, to share British values and become more "westernised" and hence naturally favour the outlook, desires and goals of the European colonials; in other words, learning how to speak English in a particular way would show them how to think and sympathise with the British through the absorption of Western values.

Textbooks were thus specifically engineered to teach the colonised to recognise themselves in certain ways:



THE ONE DANGER TO BE GUARDED AGAINST IS TO TEACH ENGLISH INDISCRIMINATELY. IT COULD NOT BE WELL TAUGHT EXCEPT IN A FEW SCHOOLS, AND I DO NOT THINK IT IS AT ALL ADVISABLE TO GIVE TO THE CHILDREN OF AN AGRICULTURAL POPULATION AN INDIFFERENT KNOWLEDGE OF A LANGUAGE THAT TO ALL BUT THE VERY FEW WOULD ONLY UNFIT THEM FOR THE DUTIES OF LIFE AND MAKE THEM DISCONTENTED WITH ANYTHING LIKE MANUAL LABOUR.

– Colonial administrator Frank Swettenham, in 1890

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- The colonised were taught to recognise themselves as *elite* in class, to recognise themselves as *masters* over the other non-white natives;
- The textbooks tried to teach them their role as *subordinate* to the British, to teach them to accept the British as benevolent masters, to identify themselves as children vis-à-vis their colonial masters who were trying to uplift and civilise them;
- They taught the colonised elite to become Victorian English gentlemen through imbuing them with the sorts of Victorian upper-class distinctions that were endemic to the British public school system, such as notions of being from a "correct" background and the idea of team sports such as cricket, polo and notions of "fair play" and being a "good sport";
- The colonised were to understand the colony as being divided into races and to accept the truth of racial stereotypes and the importance of these racial stereotypes to good governance and rule over the colony.

Ideological control of the non-white elite by the colonial state was specifically accomplished through the creation of

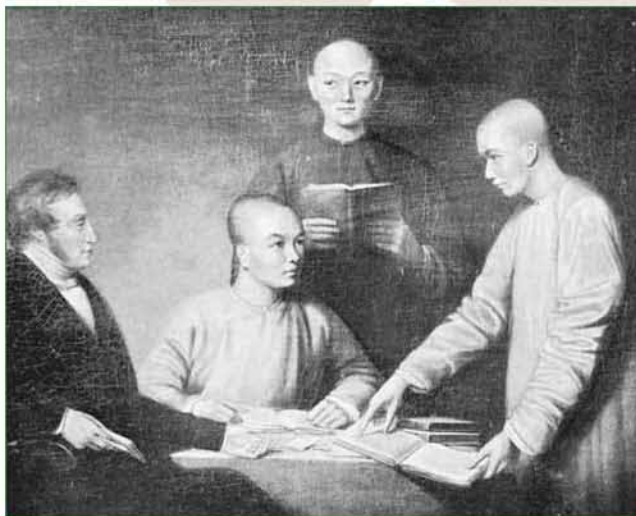
a "Malayan-centred" education - so that when the Malayan elite subjects read these textbooks, they would be able to clearly identify themselves in the positions of the subjects of these textbooks, and would be more easily and more completely ideologically convinced.

Furthermore, they would learn to identify with how the British *understood* Malaya, and understand themselves through how the British understood them rather than from their own cultures.

Through reading stories written by what editors call "men of distinction" - who were either colonial administrators or travel writers - Malayan elite children were taught to have great respect for the European point of view, the European way of thinking, and the European way of considering Malaya.

The textbooks taught these elite Malayan subjects to further recognise themselves in a role which the colonial state had clearly marked out for them: the role of the colonised elite - the intermediaries between the British and the native masses.

As such, they had to make sure that their subjects knew who they were in terms of *class*, in terms of their being masters over the other poorer, non-aristocratic non-white subjects.



THEY WERE ALSO TAUGHT TO NATURALISE EUROPEAN SUPERIORITY IN RELATION TO THEMSELVES, AND TO VALORISE THE BRITISH AS RULERS WHO WERE THE MOST DESIRABLE TO HAVE, ESPECIALLY IN COMPARISON WITH THEIR OWN NATIVE RULERS.

Picture reproduced from *One hundred years' history of the Chinese in Singapore*. All rights reserved, Murray, 1923

The narratives that make up these textbooks all portray as the subjects of their stories bourgeois, middle-class children who live in houses replete with important fathers, with mothers who take them shopping and who "lunch", and with the requisite racialised amahs, gardener, caretakers - all the underclass who labour happily to support the lifestyle of the westernized, bourgeois, elite child.

In *Happy Days*, a textbook for Standard I or upper-primary school in contemporary terms, we are led through the life of the privileged child Rosie, her adventures in school and with her friends. Like a child of her class, Rosie has a Cook, a Gardener, a Chauffeur, an Amah - all of whom love and pet the child, and who the child is taught to take for granted should be serving her enthusiastically, so long as she is polite to them.

*"Saturday is the best day of the week. When Rosie wakes up in the morning, she is happy to think she can spend the whole day at home. She can do just as she likes all day. She can go to the kitchen and watch Cook. Rosie likes to see Cook working. He can do things so quickly and he knows where everything is. When he comes back from the market, he puts what he has bought on the table and begins to prepare the meals. He brings meat, rice, vegetables, lovely red chillies, and many kinds of fruit. Rosie looks to see if he has got her favourite fruit. Now, I am sure you can guess what that is. It is the mangosteen. Amah cuts the shell for her and she enjoys the juicy white part round the seeds inside. Mummy says it is very good for her too."* (27-28)

Rosie's day is organised for her pleasure, and the servants in her house are assumed to be there also to provide her with innocent pleasure and amusement.

Cook provides a visual, benign feast for Rosie with the exotic imagery of his shopping and his ritualistic preparation of the food. His shopping, of course, must be always mindful of the petted child, hence he buys her her favourite fruit, the mangosteen.

Once Rosie is sated by the appealing visual performance of Cook - who is not even given a name, simply a job designation - her amah takes up the role of pleasing the child even further by knowing her place as a servant and proffering up the fruit to the child. Amah, additionally, is never given a name.

In narratives such as this, therefore, the elite child is taught to assume that she or he should be served by the lower orders, and to be patronisingly respectful of them but that they should know their place vis-à-vis themselves. They are not taught to treat them as human, as equal to themselves

because they are not individuals - they do not even have names.

But it is important that they are painted as happy, enthusiastic and grateful to serve their elite masters, and thankful of gratitude their masters bestow onto them for their service.

If the native elite are taught that they are superior to the rest of the non-white subjects of the British colony, they however also have to be taught to accept as natural their inferiority to the British and the Europeans more generally.

This means concretely that these native elite were specifically taught to regard the British as benevolent rulers who were driven by a mission to civilise - to uplift them from their natural states of savagery and teach them to be "modern" - to teach them to industrialise themselves, have better values, and to have respect for humanity in European terms.

They were also taught to naturalise European superiority in relation to themselves, and to valorise the British as rulers who were the most desirable to have, especially in comparison with their own native rulers.

This can be clearly seen, for example, in this textbook for the Malayan Cambridge O levels, in a historical lesson on Raffles:

*"In course of time the whole of the Malay Peninsula, from the British coastal colonies to the borders of Siam, became a British Protectorate. And the methods of this Protectorate have been as efficient and benignant as if Raffles himself had controlled it. Slavery, serfdom, piracy, rapine - all the worst miseries and savageries of that ancient land - have long died out. The deadly kris has lost its edge. Peace, order, justice are everywhere maintained. More than six hundred thousand schools have been established. Over a thousand miles of railway have been built, and between two and three thousand miles of metalled roads. Tin mines have been opened up, and rubber plantations introduced. The material development of Malaya has been one of the economic wonders of the world. But the feature of the Protectorate which Raffles would observe with the deepest pride, were he alive today, is the happiness of the people. More prosperous than they have ever been, safe at last from the old haunting fears, the old perpetual insecurity, tyranny and wars, the Malays are unquestionably happy. Singapore, then, the Queen of British Malaya, is Raffles' true memorial. He has been forgotten at times in London; he has never been forgotten there. Raffles Quay, Raffles Place, Raffles Museum, Raffles Hotel, Raffles Library, Raffles Institution, Raffles College - everywhere the city cries out his name. And in the centre of Raffles Plain - in front of him the azure roadstead with its crowd of ships from all over the world, behind him the*



**AS SUCH, THIS ELITE IS TAUGHT TO BE GRATEFUL TO THE BRITISH - AND TO THEIR RULE. THE BEST SORTS OF NATIVES, ACCORDING TO THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATORS, WERE ONES WHO WOULD KNOW THEIR PLACE - MEANING THAT THEY WOULD WANT TO BE LIKE THE BRITISH BUT NEVER CHALLENGE THEM.**

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*green peninsula with its millions of contented villagers, stands Raffles' statue, watching for all time over his child. There, if anywhere on earth, his spirit lingers at peace, his dream fulfilled." (219-221)*

First of all, it is posited that the Malays are the original rulers of the land - the land is termed the "Malay" Peninsula rather than the Malayan peninsula.

Secondly, it is subtly and rhetorically argued that British control is unquestionably superior to former Malay control over the land. Malays are related to savagery - "Slavery, serfdom, piracy, rapine" are interminably interlinked with the poignant imagery of the "deadly kris", symbolic of Malay power. This "deadly kris" has given way to the glories of European civilisation by the logic of moving towards what the British consider a higher order of humanity.

"Peace, order and justice" are considered to be a European preserve. The reader goes through this passage and relates Malay rule with the "deadly *kris*", redolent with backwards, savage Oriental despotism, and European rule on the other hand with all the blessings of industry and modernity.

The British are also considered to have given the people of Malaya education through schools, industry through mines and rubber plantations, infrastructure through metalled roads. And for this, the Malay people should be grateful that their own despotic sultans have been replaced by the benign paternalism of British rule.

It is painted that it is so logical that the Malays should accept British rule because of the blessings the British see themselves having brought to them - hence, these colonised elite children are taught that "the Malays are unquestionably happy."

To top it all off, Raffles is posited as the benevolent founder to which these colonised elite children should be grateful: hence, the city should "cry out his name." As he is portrayed as a god-like, benign figure, he watches over the city as his ghost rests, which these colonised elite children should pay homage to.

As such, this elite is taught to be grateful to the British - and to their rule. The best sorts of natives, according to the colonial administrators, were ones who would know their place - meaning that they would want to be like the British but never challenge them.

This sort of complaisance is reflected in a short story in one of the textbooks written by the colonial educationists, R.O. Winstedt. Called "Gula", about a Malay man Winstedt knew who was "so sweet he was like sugar", Gula's attitude is reflective of what a "real native" should be like.

Winstedt's narrator asks Gula whether modernity has been good for him:

" 'Yes, Dato,' I laughed, 'but the old order has changed a lot - hasn't it? The Raja came here today in a motor-car; you came by train. Your grandson talks to me in English. Is the change for the worst?' 'The peaceful life brought by the white man is very sweet to a tired old fellow, Tuan; and the young men like the novelties of the day. As you say, my grandsons are clever. They talk English, and earn good wages, and make more money out of a good deal in rubber than my father ever possessed.' " (115)

The goals of this paper have been to flesh out some issues that indicate some of the trends in colonial education in Malaya in the 1930s: the historical role of English education in the colonial state of British Malaya, and the engendering of a specific type of elite sensibility that would cultivate a

certain class of rulers who would be grateful for their privilege and at the same time be subservient to European rule.

This sensibility had two aspects: that of allowing these elite subjects to recognise their privilege and the "right ways to act" in relation to this privilege in their society; and to internalise their inferiority to the white man.

The sort of distribution of power that resulted from this construction of an English-speaking elite sensibility, the sort of organisation of power in accordance to language - may go some way in indicating how colonial languages manage to manifest their power, even after the demise of the colonial state has long passed.

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# சிங்கப்பூர்த் தமிழர்களின் கலாசாரத்தில் விழாக்கள்

Article by Sundari S Balasubramaniam  
Pictures contributed by Yashodha Devi Natarajan

பல இன மக்கள் ஒற்றுமையாக வாழும் நாடான சிங்கப்பூரில் இந்தியா, இலங்கை, சீனா, மலேசியா, இந்தோனீசியா, ஐரோப்பா போன்ற பல்வேறு நாடுகளில் இருந்து மக்கள் குடியேறியிருந்தாலும் சிங்கப்பூரைத் தாய்நாடாகக் கொண்டு வாழ்ந்து வருகின்றனர். பல இன மக்களால் இங்கு பலவித கலாசாரங்களையும் காணலாம்.

பண்பாடு, கலாசாரம், மரபு என்பன ஒரு சமுதாயத்திலுள்ள மக்களின் வாழ்க்கை முறையை, அவர்களின் தனிப்பட்ட பழக்கவழக்கங்களை, நம்பிக்கைகளைக் குறிப்பதாகும். இவையாவும் அச்சமுதாயத்தின் குறிக்கோள்கள், தேவைகள் அடிப்படையில் தோன்றியனவாகும். ஒவ்வொரு சமுதாயமும் தனக்கெனச் சில தனித்த மரபுகளைக் கொண்டிருக்கக் காண்கிறோம். மரபுகள் சமுதாயத்தோடும் மாறுபட்டாலும் அவை அச்சமுதாயத்தின் சிறப்பியல்புகளைக் காப்பதால் மனித சமுதாயம் அவற்றை இன்றும் போற்றிப் பாதுகாத்து வருகின்றது. ஒரு சமுதாயத்தின் கலாசாரத்தில் அவர்கள் கொண்டாடும் விழாக்கள் முக்கியப் பங்காற்றுகின்றன. அனுமட்டுமல்லாமல் அவர்களின் வளர்ச்சி, போக்கு, விழ்ச்சி, மறுமலர்ச்சி ஆகியவற்றையும் நமக்குக் காட்டுவனவாக உள்ளன.

தமிழரின் தனித்தன்மையைக் காலங்காலமாக அவர்கள் கொண்டாடும் விழாக்கள் பறைசாற்றுகின்றன. விழாக்கள் சமயம் சார்ந்த சடங்குகளோடும், இயற்கையோடும் தொடர்பு உடையனவாக உள்ளன. இவ்விழாக்கள் மக்களின் அன்றாட வாழ்வில் ஏற்படும் சோர்விலைப் போக்கி இன்பமும் மகிழ்வும் தருகின்றன. இவ்வாறு சமுதாயத்தை ஒன்றுபடுத்தி மக்களை மகிழ்ச்சியில் திளைக்க வைப்பதே விழாக்களின் முக்கிய நோக்கமாகும். மேலும், நம்முடைய பாரம்பரியம், பண்பாடு, கலாசாரம் ஆகியவற்றை அறிவதற்கும் உதவுகின்றன. சிங்கப்பூரில் தமிழரின் கலாசாரத்தில் அவர்கள் கொண்டாடும் விழாக்கள் பற்றி இங்குக் காணலாம்.

சிங்கப்பூரில் தமிழர் கொண்டாடும் விழாக்களை

1. குடும்ப விழாக்கள்
2. சமுதாய விழாக்கள் என இரண்டு வகையாகப் பிரிக்கலாம்

## குடும்ப விழாக்கள்

குடும்பத்தினர் தமது இல்லத்தில் கொண்டாடும் விழாக்களைக் குடும்ப விழா எனலாம். அவை குடும்பத்தினரின் சமயம் சார்ந்தவையாகவும் சடங்குகளோடு இணைந்தவையாகவும் உள்ளன. பிறப்பு முதல் இறப்பு வரையிலான பல சடங்குகள் காலத்தின் வளர்ச்சியில் இன்று விழாக்களாக உருவெடுத்துள்ளன. இங்கு கொண்டாடப்படும் விழாக்களில் புதுமனை புகுவிழா, அறுபதாம் ஆண்டு விழா, காணலிவிழா, பூப்புநீராட்டு விழா, மணவிழா, வலனகாப்பு விழா போன்றவை சிறப்பாகக் கொண்டாடப்படுகின்றன.



புதுமனை புகுவிழாச் சடங்கு

## புதுமனை புகுவிழா:

புதுமனை புகுவிழா என்பது புதிதாக வீடு வாங்கிக் குடியேறவதற்கு முன்பு செய்யப்படும் சிறப்பு பூஜையாகும். நடுவீட்டில் விளக்கேற்றி, புரோசிதர் யாகம் வளர்த்து, மந்திரங்கள் ஓதி, பூஜை செய்து, பிறகு பால் காய்ச்சிச் சர்க்கரையிட்டி, வந்தவர் அனைவருக்கும் விருந்துடன் வழங்குவர்.

## பூப்புநீராட்டு விழா:

பூப்பெய்திய பெண்ணுக்குப் பூப்புநீராட்டு விழா செய்கின்றனர். பெண் பருவமடைந்த பதினாறாம் நாள் நடைபெறும் இவ்விழாவில் முதலில் பெண்ணை

நீராட்சி செய்து தாய்மாமன் சீதனமாகக் கொண்டுவந்த நகை, ஆடை ஆகியவற்றைக் கொடுத்து அணியச் செய்வர். பழம், வெற்றிலை, பாக்கு, மஞ்சள் கிழங்கு, தேங்காய் முதலியவற்றைச் சேலை முந்தானையில் கொட்டி மடி நிரப்புவர். தாய்மாமன் மாலை அணிவித்து சடங்கை முடித்து வைப்பார். அன்று வீட்டிற்கு வந்த உற்றார் உறவினர் நண்பர்கள் அனைவருக்கும் விருந்து படைப்பர். அக்காலத்தில் இப்பெண் திருமணம் செய்வதற்கு ஏற்றவள் என எல்லாருக்கும் பறைசாற்றுவதற்காக இச்சடங்கு ஏற்படுத்தப்பட்டது. அத்துடன் தாய்மாமனுக்கு இவ்விழாவில் முதலிடம் கொடுப்பது, சனோதரிபிள் பிள்ளைகளைத் தந்தைபோல் இருந்து கவனித்துப் பேணுவார் என்பதாகும்.

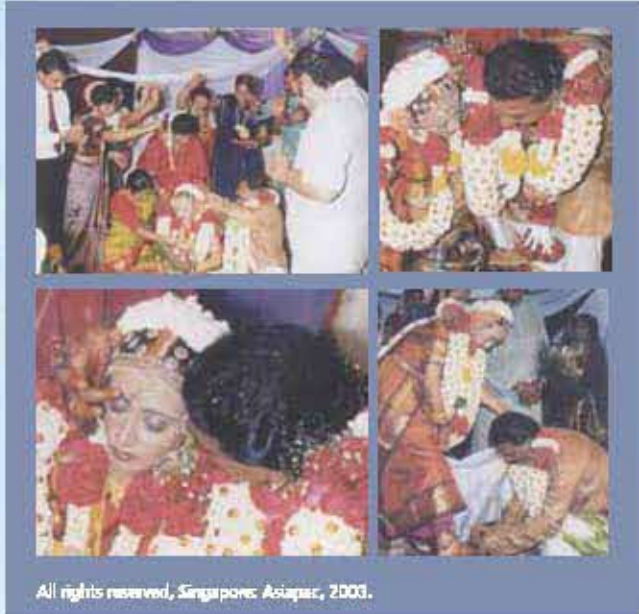


பூப்பு நீராட்டு விழாச் சடங்கு

## திருமண விழா

திருமண விழா அவரவர் வசதிக்கேற்ப ஆடம்பரமாகவும் எளிமையாகவும் நடத்தப்படுகிறது. உற்றார், உறவினர், நண்பர்கள் கூடிச் சிறப்பாக நடத்தப்படும் இவ்விழாவில் மணமக்கள் சிறப்பாக அலங்கரிக்கப்பட்ட மணமேடையில் பண்டிதர் அக்கினிக் குண்டம் வளர்த்து மந்திரங்கள் ஓத, மங்கல நாதம் ஓலிக்க மணமகன் மணமகள் கழுத்தில் தாலி கட்டுவதோடு முடிவடைகிறது. மணமகன் மணமகள் காலில் மிஞ்சி மாட்டுவதும், தாலி கட்டுவதும் பிறகு அக்கினிக் குண்டத்தை வலம் வருவதும் திருமண விழாவின் முக்கிய அம்சங்களாகும். விருந்தினர் அனைவருக்கும் அறுசுவை உணவு வழங்குவர். இவ்விழாவில் ஒவ்வொரு பிரிவினரும் தங்கள் வழக்கத்திற்கேற்பச் சடங்குகள் செய்வர். பெரியவர்கள் மணமக்களுக்கு நலங்கு எனக் கூறப்படும் சடங்கு செய்வர். இதில் மணமக்களுக்குச் சந்தனம் குங்குமம் தடவி மலர் தூவி ஆசீர்வாதம் செய்வர். மணமக்கள் பெரியவர்களின் காலில் விழுந்து வணங்குவர். மணநாளுக்கு முன் தினம் பெண் வீட்டார்களால் மாப்பிள்ளை அழைப்பு என்ற சடங்கு நடத்தப்படுகிறது.

மாப்பிள்ளையைத் திருமண மண்டபத்திற்கருகில் உள்ள கோவிலில் இருந்து ஊர்வலமாக மண்டபத்திற்கு அழைத்து வருவர். ஊராருக்கு இவர் தான் தங்கள் மாப்பிள்ளை என்று பெருமை பொங்க காட்ட இவ்வைபம் நடத்தப்படுகின்றது. பிறகு மாப்பிள்ளை வீட்டார் மணப்பெண்ணை அவர் வீட்டிலிருந்து திருமண மண்டபத்திற்கு அழைத்து வருவர். மறுநாள் திருமணத்திற்கு முன் மாப்பிள்ளை காசியாத்திரை செல்லும் சடங்கு நடைபெறும். மாப்பிள்ளை கோபித்துக்கொண்டு கோயிலுக்குச் செல்வதும் மணப்பெண்ணின் சகோதரர் அவரை சமாதானம் செய்து அழைத்து வருவதும் நடைபெறும். இது அந்தணர் சமூகத்திலிருந்து பின்பற்றப்பட்டு வருகின்ற ஒரு சடங்கானும். மணப்பெண்ணின் சகோதரன் மாப்பிள்ளைக்கு மிகுந்த அணிவித்தலும் இதையொட்டி நடைபெறும். இவ்வாறு கோலாகலமாக நடைபெறும் திருமண விழா மணமக்கள் வாழ்க்கையில் ஒரு முக்கியமான விழாவாகும்.



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## வளைகாப்பு விழா

பெண்களின் வாழ்வில் மிக முக்கியமான மற்றொரு விழா அவர்கள் முதன் முதலில் தாய்மை அடைந்த ஏழாம் மாதத்தில் அல்லது ஒன்பதாம் மாதத்தில் நடத்தப்படுகிறது. பெண்ணின் பெற்றோர்களால் அவளின் புகுந்த வீட்டில் நடத்தப்படும் சிறப்பான வைபவமாகும். பெண்ணிற்குக் குடும்பத்தில் உள்ள மூத்த பெண்கள் கண்ணாடி வளையல்கள் அணிவிப்பர். கண்ணாடி வளையல் அணிவது அழகுக்காக மட்டுமல்லாமல் மற்றொரு பயனும் உள்ளது.

தாய்மை அடைந்த பெண் எங்கு சென்றாலும் அவளின் வளையல் ஓசை மற்றவர்களுக்குத் தெரியப்படுத்தும். ஏதேனும் ஆபத்து என்றால் அவள் இருக்கும் இடத்தை மற்றவர்களால் எளிதில் அறியவும் உதவும். சடங்கு முடிந்ததும் பொங்கல் சோறு, தேங்காய்ச்

சோறு, புளிச்சோறு, எலுமிச்சைச் சோறு, தமிழ்ச் சோறு ஆகிய ஐந்துவகை உணவுகளும், பலனாரங்களும் சமைத்து அனைவருக்கும் பரிமாறுவர். வீட்டில் உள்ள பெண்கள் யாவருக்கும் வளையல்கள் வழங்கப்படும். விழா



வளைகாப்பு விழா

முடிந்ததும் பெண்ணைத் தங்கள் வீட்டிற்கு அழைத்துச் சென்றுவிடுவர். குழந்தை பிறக்கும் வரையில் பெண்ணின் பெற்றோர்களை எல்லாப் பொறுப்புகளையும் ஏற்றுக்கொள்வர்.

## பதினாறு கும்பிடுதல்

குழந்தை பிறந்த 16ஆம் நாள் நடக்கும் இச்சடங்கில் இதுநாள் வரை தனித்து இருந்த தாயும் சேயும் அன்று எண்ணெய் தேய்த்து நீராடிப் பிறகு அறையை விட்டு வெளியே வருகின்றனர். அன்று கணவர் வீட்டிலிருந்து அனைவரும், நெருங்கிய சற்றத்தாரும் வந்து குழந்தையை ஆசீர்வழிக்கின்றனர். குழந்தைக்கு வளையல், தண்டை, காப்பு, அரைஞாண் போன்றவற்றை அணிவிப்பர். இரண்டு பாணைகளில் வெண்பொங்கல் மற்றும் சர்க்கரைபொங்கல் செய்து இறைவனுக்குப் படைக்கின்றனர். பிறகு குழந்தையின் தாயும் தந்தையும் இறைவனை



பதினாறாம் நாள் நடைபெறும் சடங்கு

வணங்கியதோடு அவர்கள் தீட்டு கழிந்துவிட்டதாகக் கருதப்படுவர். சிலர் பண்டிதரை வரவழைத்து பூர்ண சூம்பம் வைத்து, ஹேராமம் வளர்த்து மந்திரங்கள் கூறி பூஜை செய்துப் பிறகு சூம்ப நீரை வீட்டின் எல்லா இடங்களிலும், அங்குள்ள அனைவரது தலையிலும் தெளித்துத் தீட்டு கழிக்கின்றனர். இச்சடங்கு செய்த பிறகு தாயும் சேயும் கோயிலுக்குச் சென்று வழிபடுவர்.

## காதணி விழா:

குழந்தையின் முதல் பிறந்த நாளுக்குப் பிறகு ஒரு விசேட நாளில் முடி இறக்கிக் காது குத்திக் காதில் காதணி அணிவித்தல் நடைபெறுவது வழக்கம். காது குத்தல் என்பது பழந்தமிழரின் போர்ச்செயல்களின் தாக்கம் என்பர். அக்காலத்தில் வீரத்தை உயிரெனக்கருதிய தமிழர்கள் குழந்தை இறந்தே பிறந்தாலும் உடலில் வீரத் தழும்பு இருக்க வேண்டும் என வானினால் அடையாளம் கிட்டுப் புகைப்பர். அப்பழக்கம் தான் காது குத்தும் விழாவாக இன்றும் கடைபிடிக்கப்படுகிறது என்கின்றனர் ஆய்வாளர். தலை முடி இறக்கிக் காது குத்தும் நிகழ்ச்சி தமிழர் வாழ்வில் இரண்டரக் கலந்துள்ளது. விழாவன்று அனைவரும் குலதெய்வம் கோயிலுக்குச் செல்வர். குல தெய்வம் என்பது அவர்கள் குடும்பத்தில் வழி வழியாகப் பாட்டனார், முப்பாட்டனார் காலத்திலிருந்து வழிபட்டு வரும் கடவுளாகும். குழந்தையைத் தெய்வத்தின் முன் கிடத்தி வழிபடுவர். பிறகு தாய்மாமன் மடியில் உட்காரவைத்து நாவிதரைக் கொண்டு தலை முடியை மழிக்கச் செய்வர்.

பிறகு குழந்தையை நீராட்டி புத்தாடை அணிவித்துத் தலையில் அரைந்த சந்தனத்தைப் பூசுவர். மீண்டும் தாய்மாமன் மடியில் உட்காரவைத்துப் பொற்கொல்லரைக் கொண்டு குழந்தைக்குக் காது குத்திக் காதணி அணிவிப்பர். இச்சடங்கு முடிந்ததும் எல்லோருக்கும் காப்பிரிசி (பச்சரிசி, பாசிப்பருப்பு, எள்ளு, வெல்லம் கலந்த கலவை) வழங்கப்படுகிறது. பிறகு அனைவருக்கும் விருந்தளிக்கும்படும்.



முடி இறக்கும் வைபவம்

## அறுபதாம் திருமண விழா

அறுபதாம் திருமண விழா என்பது வயதான தம்பதிகளின் 60ஆம் வயதில் நடத்தப்படும் திருமணமாகும். ஆண் 60 வயதை எட்டும்போது அவரின் குழந்தைகள், பேரன் பேத்திகள், உற்றார் உறவினர் அனைவரும் சேர்ந்து நடத்தும் கோலாகலமான நிகழ்ச்சியாகும். இவ்விழாவில் தம்பதிகள் இருவரும் நீண்ட ஆயுளோடும், ஆரோக்கியத்தோடும் வாழவேண்டும் என்று இருவருக்கும் அதே சம்பிரதாயங்களுடன் உற்றார் உறவினர் அனைவராலும் திருமணம் செய்துவைக்கப் படுகிறது. மணமகன் மணமகள் கழுத்தில் இரண்டாம் முறையாகத் தாவினட்டும் வைவத்துடன் இனிதே நிறைவேறும் இவ்விழாவில் அனைவரும் மணமக்கள் காலில் விழுந்து ஆசீர்வாதம் வாங்குவது மிக முக்கியமாகக் கருதப்படுகிறது. இந்து வேதத்தின்படி மணிகளின் ஆயுள் 120 வருடங்களாகும். அதில் பாதிசைக் கடந்த இத்தம்பதிகள் மீதி வருடங்களையும் ஆரோக்கியத்தோடும், மகிழ்ச்சியோடும் வாழவேண்டும் என்பதுதான் இத்திருமணத்தின் முக்கிய நோக்கமாகும்.

## சமுதாய விழாக்கள்

இல்லந்தோறும் கொண்டாடப்படும் விழாக்கள் பல சமுதாயம் சார்ந்தவைகளாகக் கருதப்படுகிறது. ஏனெனில் அனைவர் இல்லத்திலும் அதே நாளில் இவ்விழாக்கள் கொண்டாடப்படுகின்றன. பல, சமயம் சார்ந்தவையாகவும் உள்ளன. சிறப்பாகக் கொண்டாடப்படும் சமய விழாக்களில் முக்கியமானது கைப்பூசம், தீமிதி ஆகியனவாகும். பண்டிகைகளில் பொங்கல் விழா, தீபாவளி, ஆகியவை சிறப்பாகக் கொண்டாடப்படுகின்றன.

## கைப்பூசம்

கைப்பூசத் திருவிழா தமிழர்களின் கடவுளாகிய முருகக் கடவுளிடம் பக்தர்களின் வேண்டுகளை நிறைவேற்றும் விழாவாகக் கொண்டாடப்படுகிறது. மீசுப் பழமையான பேங்க் ரோடு தண்டாயுதபாணி ஆலயத்தில் 1835ஆம் ஆண்டு முதல் இவ்விழா சிறப்பாக நடைபெற்றுவருகிறது. உலகில்

உள்ள அனைத்து சிவன் கோயில்களிலும், முருகன் கோயில்களிலும் கைப்பூசம் சிறப்பாக நடைபெறுகிறது. ஆனால் மற்ற நாடுகளைவிட சிங்கப்பூரிலும் மலேசியாவிலும் மிகக் கோலாகலமாக இத்திருவிழா நடைபெறுகிறது. சிறுவர் முதல் முதியோர் வரை பால் குடம், பால் காவடிகள், அவளுக் காவடிகள் எடுத்தும், தேர் இழுத்தும், தங்கள் வேண்டுகோள்களை நிறைவேற்றிக்கொள்கின்றனர். அதிகாலையில் ஒரு மணிக்குத் தொடங்கி மறுநாள் நள்ளிரவு வரை சிராங்குடன் சாலைப் பெருமாள் ஆலயத்திலிருந்து டேங்க் ரோடு தண்டாயுதபாணி ஆலயத்திற்கு வரிசையாகச் செல்லும் பலவகையான அலகுக் காவடிகளை ஏராளமான வெளிநாட்டுச் சுற்றுப் பயணிகள் வியப்புடன் கூடிப் பார்ப்பதைக் காணலாம். கைப்பூச நாளில் பெருமாள் ஆலயத்திலும் தண்டாயுதபாணி ஆலயத்திலும் வரும்



அலகுக் காவடி எடுக்கும் பக்தர்

பக்தர்கள் அனைவருக்கும் அன்னதானம் வழங்கப்படுகிறது. மேலும் காவடிகள் செல்லும் வழி நெடுகிலும் பக்தர்கள் தண்ணீர் பந்தல்கள் அமைத்துத் தாகம் தண்ணீர்க்கும் அறப்பணிகளையும் செய்கின்றனர்.

### தீயிதித் திருவிழா

இந்துக்களால் கொண்டாடப்படும் தீயிதித் திருவிழா சிங்கப்பூரில் 1855ஆம் ஆண்டு முதல் சிங்கப்பூரின் மிகப் பழமையான கோவிலான சுவத் பிரிட்ஜ் ரோட்டில் அமைந்திருக்கும் ஸ்ரீ மாரியம்மன் கோவிலில் கொண்டாடப்படுகிறது. மகாபாரதத்தின் நாயகியான திரௌபதை, மாரியம்மனின் அம்சமாகக் கருதப்படுகிறாள். அவள் போரின் இறுதியில் தீயிதித் தான் தூய்மையானவள் என நிகழ்த்த நிகழ்ச்சியின் ஏற்பாடுகளைக் கொண்டாடப்படும் இவ்விழாவில் முதல் நிகழ்ச்சியாக மாரியம்மனின் பரிவாரங்களுள் முக்கியத் தெய்வமான ஸ்ரீ பெரியாச்சி அம்மனுக்குப் பூஜை நடைபெறுகிறது. இதையடுத்து வேப்பிலைக் கரகமும் மாவிலைக் கரகமும் எடுக்கப்படுகின்றன. விழாவிற்கு முதல் நாள் திரௌபதைக்கும் அர்ஜுனருக்கும் திருமணச் சடங்கு

அடுத்து முக்கிய நிகழ்ச்சியான அரவானைக் களப்பலி கொடுக்கும் சடங்கு நடைபெறுகிறது. இத்தீயிதி விழாவில் பல சடங்குகள் மகாபாரதப் பின்னணியைக்கொண்ட சடங்குகளாகும். இதன் பிறகு பக்தர்கள் பால்குடம், சும்பிடுண்டம், அங்கப்பிரதட்சணம் போன்ற வேண்டுகோளை நிறைவேற்றுகின்றனர். தீயிதிக்கும் நாளன்று அதிகாலையிலேயே தீயிதிக்கும் சடங்கை ஆரம்பித்து விடுவர். தீயிதிக்கு இரண்டு நாட்கள் முன்பாக வெள்ளி இரத ஊர்வலமும் நடைபெறும்.

### பொங்கல் விழா

பொங்கல் விழா மத வேறுபாடின்றி தமிழர் எல்லாரும் மத மாதத்தில் கொண்டாடும் ஒரு விழாவாகும். நான்கு நாட்களுக்கு இவ்விழா கொண்டாடப்படுகிறது. முதல் நாள் போகிப் பண்டிகையன்று வீட்டைச் சுத்தப்படுத்தி தேவையில்லாதவைகளை அப்புறப்படுத்துவர். இரண்டாம் நாள் அன்றுதான் கையாடல் முதல் நாள் பொங்கல் வைத்துச் சூரியனை வழிபடுவர். மூன்றாம் நாள் நமக்கு உதவும் ஆடு மாடுகளுக்கு நன்றி செலுத்தும் வகையில் பொங்கலிட்டு சால்நடைகளுக்குப் படைப்பர். சிராங்குடன் சாலையில் இந்த வருடம் மாடுகளை ஊர்வலமாக நடத்திச் சென்று மாட்டுப் பொங்கலின் முக்கியத்துவத்தை மக்களுக்கு உணர்த்தினர். நான்காம் நாள் காணும் பொங்கலன்று மக்கள் தம் உறவினர்கள் விடு சென்று உரையாடி மகிழ்வர்.

### தீபாவளித் திருவிழா

யிழ் வருடத்தின் ஐப்பசி மாதத்தில் வரும் இப்பண்டிகை உலகம் முழுவதும் உள்ள இந்துக்களால் கொண்டாடப்படுகின்றது. தீபாவளிக்குப் பல காரணங்கள் கூறப்பட்டாலும் வறும் ஒருநாள் அனைவரும் புதிய ஆடைகள் உடுத்தி கோவிலுக்குச் செல்வதும், வீட்டுப் பெரியவர்களிடம் ஆசி பெறுவதும் எல்லாரும் கண்டிப்புக்கூடுகிறது. தீபாவளி அன்று அதிகாலையிலேயே தலைக்கு எண்ணெய் வைத்து நீராடி வீட்டில் பலனாரங்கள், இனிப்பு வகைகள் பல செய்து தாரும் உண்டு அண்டை வீட்டாருக்கும், நண்பர்களுக்கும் கொடுத்து மகிழ்வர். தீபாவளிக்கு முதல் நாள் இறந்த முன்னோர்களுக்குப் பலவித பலகாரங்கள், உணவு வகைகளை நீண்ட தலை வாழை இலைப்பரிமாறி பூ ஆடைகள் வைத்துப் படையல் வைப்பர்.

முன்னோர்களை நினைவு கூறுகமாக செய்யும் இந்நிகழ்ச்சியில் விட்டு உறுப்பினர் அனைவரும் கலந்துகொள்வர். சிங்கப்பூரில் தீப ஒளியேற்றலும் தீபாவளிக்கென்றே பிரத்தியேகமாக



ஆரம்பிக்கப்படும் தீபாவளிச் சந்தையம் சிறப்பு வாய்ந்தவை. தீபாவளிக்கு ஒரு மாதத்திற்கு முன்பு தமிழர் கடைகள் அதிகமாக உள்ள சிராங்கூன் சாலை நெடுகிலும் அலங்கார வண்ண விளக்குகளால் அலங்கரிக்கப்படும். மற்றும் தீபாவளிச் சந்தையில் பல விதமான கடைகள் ஒரு கூடையின் கீழ் களைகட்டும்.

## விழாக்களில் முக்கியமாக இடம்பெறும் சடங்குகள்

விழாக்களில் முக்கிய அம்சமாக தோறாம் வளர்த்தல், பூண்கும்பம் வைத்தல் (ஒரு சிறிய குடத்தை வெள்ளை நூலால் சுற்றி, அதில் நீரை நிரைத்து அதன் வாயில் மாவிலைகளுடன் முறுத்தேங்கையை வைத்து அதன் மேலே சிறிய பூ மாலை அணிவிப்பர்), வாசலில் மாக்கோலம் இட்டு மாவிலைத் தோறணம் கட்டுதல் ஆகியன பிக முக்கியமாக இடம்பெறும். பண்டைய தமிழரிடம் அக்கிவி வளர்த்து தோறணம் செய்யும் வழக்கமில்லை. பின்னர் இயற்கையை வணங்கும் ஆரியர்களின் தாக்கத்தினால் ஏற்பட்டது என்கின்றனர் ஆய்வாளர். இப்போது எந்த நிகழ்ச்சியானாலும் பண்டிதர் யாகம் வளர்த்து மந்திரம் சொல்லாமல் நடப்பதில்லை. அடுத்து நம் நாட்டில் மஞ்சள் குங்குமம் மங்களமரமானா? பொருட்களாகக் கருதப்படுகிறது. எல்லா முக்கிய விழாக்களிலும் மஞ்சள் குங்குமம் இடம்பெரும். பூப்பு நீராட்டு விழா, திருமணச்சடங்கு, புதுமை புது விழா, ஆகிய மங்கள நிகழ்ச்சிகளில் மஞ்சள் கரைத்துத் தெளிக்கப்படுகிறது. எல்லா நிகழ்ச்சிகளிலும் மஞ்சளை சிறிது தண்ணீர் சேர்த்து இறுக்கமாகப் பிள்ளையார் பிடித்து



வண்ணக் கோலம்

அதற்கு குங்குமம் இட்டு அருகம்பல் வைத்து பூசை செய்யப்படுகிறது. விருந்தினர் அனைவருக்கும் வெற்றிலை பாக்கு மஞ்சள் குங்குமம் தவறாமல் கொடுக்கப்படும்.

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## Festivals in Singapore Indian culture

This article highlights some of the important Indian festivals celebrated in Singapore. Festivals are culturally imperative in the lives of people regardless of race or religion. Indian festivals in Singapore can be categorised as Family festivals and Social festivals. The former includes housewarming and weddings where family members and friends come together in a celebrative spirit. The festivals like Deepavali, Pongal and Thalpusam are Social festivals which are embraced at a communal level to promote goodwill, understanding and harmony among people. The article also gives an idea of how the celebrations are carried out and the various ceremonies performed.

# Money Lending

## A short history

By Ong Eng Chuan, Reference Librarian,  
Lee Kong Chian Reference Library

**SINGAPORE** is a well-developed financial centre with many banks and other financial institutions offering a host of banking products and services to businessmen and consumers. But during the colonial period, the financial landscape was entirely different. Back then, businessmen and ordinary residents on the island who were in need of money, whether for personal consumption or the financing of business ventures, had to rely on different means.

## SINGAPORE'S FIRST BANKS

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Stamford Raffles first set foot on Singapore, it was essentially a small fishing village whose residents relied mainly on barter trade for goods and services. Soon after Raffles established Singapore as an entrepot port, trading activities expanded rapidly, and there naturally arose a need for banking facilities to support the growing number of traders and merchants on the island.

It was first suggested that a bank be established in Singapore in 1833. However, it was not until 1840 that a branch of the Union Bank of Calcutta was opened here. The bank offered merchants advances on goods to be imported, up to three-fourths of their value at an interest rate of 9 percent. It also provided loans against bullion, up to 90 per cent of its value, with an interest rate of 7 percent. Other banks subsequently opened branches in Singapore - the Oriental Bank in 1846, the Mercantile Bank of India in 1855, Nederlandsche Handel Maatschaapy in 1857, Chartered Bank in 1859, and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in 1866.

In the beginning, these banks were established primarily for the China trade. Their business was confined to providing trade financing and currency exchange services for traders and merchants plying their trade in the region, and their main clientele was the European mercantile community.

When it came to dealing with Chinese traders and merchants, each bank found it expedient to hire a local middleman known as the *comprador* (Portuguese for "buyer"). The banks lent money to Chinese merchants and traders through the *comprador*, who was responsible for every Chinese account opened. The *comprador* was also responsible for



**The Merchant Bank of India, Ltd. Singapore**

Source: Wright, A., & Cartwright, H. A. (Eds.). (1908). *Twentieth century impressions of British Malaya: its history, people, commerce, industries, and resources* (p. 145). London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Pub.



**Kwong Yik Banking Company. Wong Ah Fook (Founder)**

Source: Wright, A., & Cartwright, H. A. (Eds.). (1908). *Twentieth century impressions of British Malaya: its history, people, commerce, industries, and resources* (p. 145). London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Pub.

hiring and managing all local staff. In the early days, *compradors* were men with good connections and established family backgrounds.

Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the banking system in Singapore consisted mainly of European banks. It was only at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the first local banks were established. Kwong Yik Bank was the first Chinese bank: it was set up in 1903 by Wong Ah Fook and several Cantonese businessmen. The bank's services included banking facilities, mortgages and loans, and its clientele was mainly Chinese. The second Chinese bank, Sze Hai Tong Bank, was set up in February 1906. One of its directors, Tan Swi Phiau, also held the important position of *comprador* to Netherlands India Commercial Bank.

## THE RISE OF AGENCY HOUSES

Another source of finance for many businesses were agency houses such as Guthrie & Co. Established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by colonial pioneers, these companies had started off as trading businesses, but later diversified into non-trading businesses such as banking and finance.

Guthrie & Co., for instance, started off as an import-export establishment. As the company accrued assets from the profits it made from trading activities, it decided to make good use of the surplus assets by providing finances for other people's business ventures, such as building factories and sawmills in Singapore. It also provided loans to businesses such as tin-mining and rubber cultivation in the Malay states.

## ENTER THE CHETTIARS

Outside the realm of European banks and agency houses, the chettiars were the most prominent professional moneylenders. They were an influential class of merchants from South India who had over time established a reputation in the field of commerce and finance. As the Europeans expanded their colonial influence in Southeast Asia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the chettiars had also extended their network throughout the region.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the chettiars had become a formidable force in the business of moneylending in Singapore, having large amounts of capital at their command. Many chettiars were agents of wealthy men in India who were the main source of capital. They also made use of capital from local depositors and European banks, obtaining money from the banks on demand notes signed by two or more chettiars. The amounts advanced by the banks on the demand notes depended on the standing of the chettiars who signed them.

In some cases, banks would insist on a personal guarantee from the chettiars' own "shroff," or head cashier, as an additional precaution. Nevertheless, so great was the business aptitude and reputation of the chettiars, that the losses incurred by the banks in dealing with them were relatively small (Wright, 1908, p. 141). The money obtained from banks was then lent out to others, such as Chinese traders, at higher rates of interest.

The chettiar's loans operated in the following manner: The borrower would be required to sign a promissory note, and this was considered sufficient for small loans and loans granted without collateral. For larger amounts, jewels, gold or land title deeds were held as collateral.

The amount actually received by the borrower would be less than that stated on the promissory note. A rate of interest

would be charged on the amount mentioned in the promissory. If the borrower did not repay the principal and interest on the due date, the amount owed would be automatically adjusted to comprise the principal and accrued interest, and a higher interest would be charged.

By lending to the chettiars, the European banks were able to profit from the local credit market with a much reduced risk. At the same time, local borrowers got access to capital from the European banks, which would otherwise have been unavailable. Most of the Chinese traders and merchants were illiterate, and hence turned to the chettiars instead of banks, as it involved fewer formalities, less hassle and minimal documentation.

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the chettiars were among the wealthiest members of the community. However, most of them led a simple lifestyle, as illustrated in the following

description of chettiars in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Singapore:

**THEY ARE AMONGST THE WEALTHIEST MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, BUT THEY LIVE IN A VERY SIMPLE WAY. THEIR DRESS CONSISTS MERELY OF A STRIP OF MUSLIN CLOTH WOUND LOOSELY ROUND THEIR LIMBS AND A PAIR OF LEATHER SANDALS. AS AN ORNAMENT THEY OFTEN WEAR A GOLD WIRE ROUND THE NECK WITH A MASSIVE GOLD ORNAMENT ATTACHED TO IT. THEY SELDOM OR NEVER PURCHASE ANY OF THE LUXURIES OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION, BUT THEY SPEND LARGE SUMS OF MONEY ON THE HINDU TEMPLE WHICH THEY ATTEND.**

— Description of Chettiars In early Singapore

"They are amongst the wealthiest members of the community, but they live in a very simple way. Their dress consists merely of a strip of muslin cloth wound loosely round their limbs and a pair of leather sandals. As an ornament they often wear a gold wire round the neck with a massive gold ornament attached to it. They seldom or never purchase any of the luxuries of Western civilization, but they spend large sums of money on the Hindu Temple which they attend." (Wright, 1908, p.141).

However, chettiars were at times criticised for usury and labelled as

"Shylocks of the East" (Wright, 1908, p.219). This was not helped by the fact that chettiars were not slow to bring people to court to enforce loan agreements. Indeed, it was a common saying that chettiars spent their time between the banks and the court.

## ARAB, CHINESE AND SIKH MONEYLENDERS

Apart from the chettiars, there were also Arab, Chinese and Sikh moneylenders. Chinese moneylenders ranged from wealthy businessmen to itinerant moneylenders such as shopkeepers, who provided small credit. These moneylenders often provided a source of capital for Chinese immigrants

STATEMENT OF THE REVENUE OF SINGAPORE, FROM 1823-24, TO 1836-37.

|                   | 1823-24. | 1824-25. | 1825-26. | 1826-27. | 1827-28. | 1828-29. | 1829-30. | 1830-31. | 1831-32. | 1832-33. | 1833-34. | 1834-35. | 1835-36. | 1836-37. |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|                   | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  | S. Drs.  |
| Opium ...         | 1,615    | 2,960    | 20,32    | 2,050    | 2,060    | 2,730    | 2,060    | 3,270    | 3,390    | 3,440    | 4,000    | 5,060    | 4,800    | 4,570    |
| Spirit ...        | 682      | 1,540    | 941      | 1,000    | 1,015    | 1,300    | 1,210    | 1,735    | 1,630    | 1,765    | 1,610    | 2,130    | 2,315    | 1,920    |
| Pork ...          | 302      | 302      | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | 820      | 550      | 660      | 670      | 560      | 690      | 740      |
| Gun Powder ...    | ..       | 217      | ..       | ..       | ..       | 201      | 135      | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       |
| Pawn Broker ...   | ..       | 175      | 63       | 111      | 265      | ..       | ..       | 165      | 120      | 160      | 140      | 100      | 180      | 180      |
| Gaming ..         | 778      | ..       | 3,042    | 2,556    | 2,718    | 2,822    | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       |
| Market ...        | ..       | ..       | 210      | 379      | 328      | 362      | 375      | 397      | 426      | 453      | 470      | 480      | 476      | 509      |
| Secren ...        | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | 575      | 490      | 570      | 490      | 550      | 500      | 525      |
| Toddy and Bung .. | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | ..       | 80       | 76       | 60       | 90       | 90       | 70       | 112      |

**Statement of Revenue of Singapore from 1823-24 to 1836-37**

Source: Newbold, T. J. (1839). *Political and statistical account of the British settlements in the Straits of Malacca, viz. Pinang, Malacca, and Singapore; With a history of the Malayan states on the peninsula of Malacca.* (Vol. 1, p.361). London: J. Murray.

to set up small businesses, though not all businesses did well:

"After completing their twelve months as *Sinkeh's*, many get an advance of money from town shopkeepers, clear a piece of forest land, plant vegetables, plantains and indigo at first, and eventually gambier and pepper; under certain government regulations forest lands are thus cleared and cultivated, and a grant obtained in perpetuity from the state. The returns are so slow, and the exactions of the money lenders so stringent, that in a few years the squatters are forced to sell their land to repay their creditors. *Hokiens* are often the purchasers." (Vaughn, 1879, p.15.).

The Sikhs were first recruited from Punjab to go to Malaya to serve as policemen. As the Sikh community in Singapore expanded, a number of them went into the business of moneylending, which was not a difficult trade to learn and offered good profits.

Unlike Chinese and Sikh moneylenders, Arab moneylenders had to avoid Islamic prohibitions on interest dealings, and relied on other means, such as making use of real estate, for their moneylending activities.

## THE FIRST PAWNSHOPS

For the majority of the population, the most easily available lending facility in times of need was the pawnshop. The pawnbroking business, which had a long history in China, was brought to Singapore by Chinese immigrants. As the only banks available in the early days were European and most of the Chinese immigrants spoke no English, they

naturally fell back on the traditional practice of pawnbroking.

Since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, pawnbroking activities had been widespread in Singapore. They served as a source of revenue for the British colonial administration, which had adopted the practice of revenue farming. This gave those holding the contracts of revenue farms the sole right to sell opium and spirits, and to manage gambling and pawnbroking businesses.

However, this convergence of pawnbroking with gambling, drinking and opium raised public

concerns, and as a result, the colonial administration introduced the Regulations for Pawnbroker Shops in 1822 to regulate pawnbroking activities in Singapore. The regulations made pawnbroking a licensed trade and separated it from gambling and opium concessions.

However, in 1830, instead of issuing licences to individual pawnbrokers, the colonial administration decided to revert to the farming system by giving the pawnbroker farmer the exclusive right to run the pawnbroking business. Describing the pawnbroking scene in Singapore, John Cameron, an editor of *The Straits Times* in the 1860s, wrote that "in Singapore alone, where there are not 100,000 souls, the farmer can pay a premium of 450*l.* a month for a monopoly of the pawnshops." (Cameron, 1865, p.218).

The farming system offered a few advantages for the colonial administration. Firstly, by giving the pawnbroker farmer the exclusive right to operate the pawnbroking business, it was able to avoid having to manage pawnbroking activities and collecting dues from pawnbrokers.

Secondly, the farming system tended to bring about higher revenue, since interested pawnbrokers bid high to secure the pawnbroking farms. However, this raised concerns that the system tended to result in high interest rates, because pawnbrokers naturally charged more to meet the high rents. The issuing of licences was seen as a better solution to keep interest rates low.

This was a perpetual dilemma for the colonial administration, and in the ensuing decades, it oscillated between revenue farming and regulation by licensing. This continued until 1934, when the colonial government implemented a new

system, in which pawnbrokers' licences were granted on a tender system.

The first pawnshop in Singapore was *Sheng He Dang* (生和当), set up by Lan Qiushan (蓝秋山) and a few partners. In 1878, He Yuane Shi (何云尊氏) obtained the first pawnbroking farm from the Straits Settlements government. He operated eight pawnshops and paid an annual fee of \$200 for each. In the early days, the pawnbroking business was dominated by Hokkiens and Teochews, two of the largest dialect groups among the Chinese immigrants. However, they were later superseded by the Hakkas. By 1941, there were 26 pawnshops, 24 of which were owned by Hakkas.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of the pawnbrokers also went into the banking business. For instance, when Kwong Yik Bank was first established in 1903, five of the bank's 11 directors were proprietors of pawnshops, including the managing director, Lam Wel Fong.

Pawnshops remained an important source of lending for the community at large until recent years. Unlike the affluent class, most people did not own land nor other recognised assets against which they could borrow from the banks. While they charged higher interest than any other forms of commercial credit, pawnshops enabled people without large assets to borrow money for weddings, funerals or festivals.

## HUI (会)

The *hui* was another popular source of lending among local Chinese. In Western terms, the *hui* was commonly referred to as "tontine", an annuity scheme named after Neapolitan banker Lorenzo Tont, who started the scheme in France around 1653.

Like the tontine, the *hui* was a form of loan association set up for mutual assistance. Each member would pay a fixed amount to the *hui* every month, and each month, a different

member had the use of the total amount collected. Those who wanted to use the money that month would bid for the privilege, with the member offering the highest interest, securing the loan.

The membership size of a *hui* ranged from 10 to 60. Members met for the monthly "drawing", which was usually held at

the beginning of the month at the organiser's residence. At the meeting, members tendered for the loan by passing slips of paper to the organiser stating the rate of interest they offered. The cash was then collected and handed over to the highest bidder.

The organiser often got a fee called *teh poh* (地舖) for bringing the participants together. In the early years, account books were rarely kept, as the organisers or managers were often illiterate. They kept record of members' obligations and liabilities by "numerals, dots, circles and crosses (*tulisan ayam*)" (Koh, 1938, p.xi). Subsequently, it became a common practice to issue members with account books called *Wui Poh* (金簿), on which organisers would acknowledge the contributions received from members.

However, the *hui* had its risks - advances were given without collateral, and participants were susceptible to risks such as the death or default of members, or the failure of the headman to pay up the subscription collected. Moreover, participants were not protected by law, even though written accounts could be presented by the organiser to the subscribers; the Societies Ordinance made any loan association with 10 or more members unlawful if unregistered.

Despite the risks, the *hui* was a popular source of lending for local Chinese who had little access to banks or could not offer collateral. The common folk relied on it as a source of lending to meet emergency or short-term needs, such as



Pawnbroking receipt  
Source: Koh Siew Chuan Collection

hospital bills or children's weddings, and small Chinese traders relied on it for their credit needs.

For those with surplus assets, the *hui* acted like a "savings bank" that offered a higher rate of interest than banks. The *hui* was reportedly very popular among the women folk, who saw it as a means to invest and increase their savings. It was said that "nine out of every 10 amahs and three out of every 10 nonyas" were members of a *hui*. (Koh, 1938, p.xli)

Among the local Indians, there was a loan association similar to the *hui*, called *kurtoo* or *kurthu*. However, there was no

interest and members' right to borrow was determined by casting lots. For Indian immigrants, the *kurtoo* provided a means of securing capital to set up a small business, such as selling iced water or a cigarette stall in a corner shop.

## COMING SOON

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE MONEY-LENDING SCENE IN EARLY SINGAPORE AT AN EXHIBITION AT THE LEE KONG CHIAN REFERENCE LIBRARY

### CASH, CREDIT & COLLATERAL

Money-lending in Singapore, 1820s - 1930s

Some perspectives from the Koh Seow Chuan Collection

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# DIGITAL ARCHIVING

storing for the future

Mr Tony McSean, the Director of Library Relations of publishing giant Elsevier, shared his thoughts and experience on the future of digital archiving at an Executive Management Programme in February, themed "Technology and the Profession". This is an edited extract from his presentation.



In the old world of paper, the preservation of materials was simple, broadly understood and widely accepted.

Libraries would buy and keep the print materials, which existed in fairly stable medium and long-lived formats. Back files could be stored and preserved in great libraries, and scholars could visit the libraries or archives to consult and gain access to the materials. It was a process and system that was easily understood.

In this paper world, publishers were never involved in the process of archiving, and while the "technology" has become obsolescent, it was, and still is, resilient.

The advent of new technologies, however, has changed the face of archiving. The aims remain the same, but the options and demands pose a new set of challenges that paper archiving never had to deal with. ⇨

Today's archives and libraries have to address the needs involved with the availability, storage and preservation of intellectual content in digital documents. These are produced worldwide, and libraries must still attempt to ensure that the access to this content is permanent, resilient, guaranteed and assured.

The new problems that digital archives face are manifold.

Digital media still represent a relatively new, unknown and volatile environment, with media that are unstable and changing formats. With digital archiving, it is data that does the travelling, not the user.

Because of the new way in which digital documents are produced, shared and published, a host of questions have emerged that have to be answered, such as: Where can the back files be kept? And, who should take the responsibility for keeping the files?

Another significant difference between archiving in the paper world and the digital world is the involvement of the publisher. Libraries, archives and publishers have found that digital archival has to be a library-publisher partnership. E-publishing has changed everything, and publishers are increasingly finding that they have to take the responsibility of archiving - something that has not been part of the publishing culture in the past.

Publishers like Elsevier have found that as they enter the world of archiving, they have had to reassure customers who were concerned about retaining access to the archived material, assure authors that their work would stay accessible for the future, and also reassure libraries that they would get it right.

Since 1999, Elsevier has adopted and developed a formal archiving policy. This includes maintaining a permanent archive of the journals it owns, placing the archive in one or more independent, librarian-approved depositories, and trying to preserve subscribers' access to journals which have been transferred to other publishers.

Digital archives can take several forms, some of which include:

- Documents are stored in the depository of the publisher, who has to manage the risks and scale of archival. Users or subscribers get access to the files.
- Publishers' customers store the documents locally, but with an access commitment limited only to their own communities.

- Self-designated "national" archives such as libraries or other institutions keep an archival copy locally, as a national or regional security measure.
- Publishers and trusted archival institutions form formal, contractual relationships that ensure permanent retention and access to the digital files for future generations.
- Trusted third-party providers run permanent archives that provide access to publishers and for library members on a subscription basis.

Whatever form the digital archives take, publishers, libraries and other providers need to keep to agreed standards to ensure that the archives serve their function. For example, they must ensure that the digital archive lasts more than 100 years, and that sufficient resources are committed to archiving the content itself.

Archives, which should drive technology migration, should also not compete with publishers, yet they should not be totally "dark" - that is, they ought to be used.

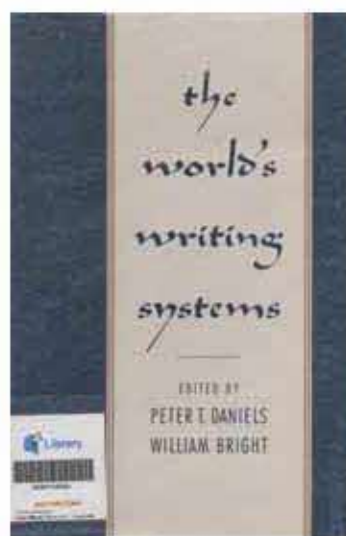
There is an urgency for digital archives to be set up and kept alive and functional. When publishers go out of business, there may be no-one to take up their assets, and the digital documents could be lost forever. Natural or man-made disasters, or unforeseeable catastrophes, too could destroy the intellectual content.

As publishers, libraries and providers constantly review the developments, standards and changes in requirements for digital archiving, they need to keep working on the appropriate protocols, procedures and agreements - and listen to the library community - to ensure that digital documents are preserved adequately and over the very long term.

## EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

This topic was among the several featured at the National Library Board's Executive Management Programme (EMP) series. Held regularly, EMP flagship seminars and roundtable discussions draw senior practice executives and decision makers to discuss current and relevant issues and trends. Featuring visionary leaders and policy-makers in the research services sector who have made and are still making significant contributions to the development of the practice, the sessions are recognized for their current and top-notch content distilled from strong research and editorial input from the NLB.

# BOOKREVIEWS



## THE WORLD'S WRITING SYSTEMS

Edited by Peter T. Daniels and William Bright

Publisher: New York : Oxford University Press, 1996

Call no.: R 411 WOR

"Humankind is defined by language; but civilisation is defined by writing." With this in mind, the editors of this book, along with nearly 80 international scholars, attempt to explore and delve into how scripts are applied to individual languages. Beginning with the ancient Near East and the earliest known scripts, it features the historical origins of writing right up to present-day writing, with explanations on how various writing systems work, from Egyptian hieroglyphs and Chinese characters to European alphabets and Arabic scripts.

Essays in the world's writing systems are grouped by topics such as grammatology, ancient Near Eastern, East Asian and European writing systems for easy reference. There is also a detailed index to guide readers to specific terms or languages covered in the book.

What makes this offering by Daniels and Bright a comprehensive resource on the world's major writing systems is not only its extensive discussion on the social and cultural contexts in which each group of writing systems was developed, but also the useful visuals on each writing system. These appropriately cover the structure of writing, delineated with tables that show the forms of the written symbols as well as the relationship of writing systems to the phonology of the corresponding spoken languages.

## INDONESIAN PALAEOGRAPHY: A HISTORY OF WRITING IN INDONESIA FROM BEGINNINGS TO C. A.D. 1500

By J. G. de Casparis

Publisher: Leiden: Brill, 1975.

Call no.: RCLOS 499.2017 CAS

In Indonesian Palaeography, renowned historian de Casparis attempts to survey and update the existing knowledge of ancient writings and inscriptions in Indonesia from its beginnings till 1500 A.D.

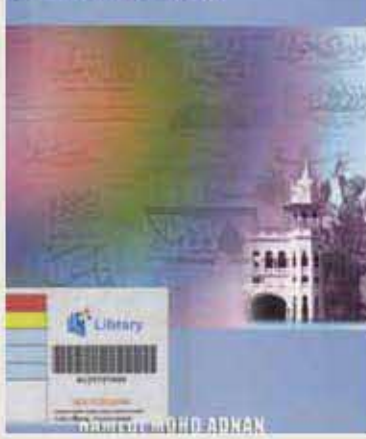
Apart from discussing the history of the study of writing and the nature of the writing systems in Indonesia, he has included descriptions of all the known Indonesian scripts dated before 1500 A.D. and tried to determine the relationships between the different types of scripts as a contribution to the history of writing in Indonesia.

The chronological presentation of the study begins with Indonesian scripts before the middle of the 8th century, and deals with the Early and Later Pallava script. The book then discusses the early Kawi script, which according to de Casparis is a cursive script used for writing on palm leaf. A detailed comparison of the writing styles of Early and Later Kawi is followed by the description of the Javanese and regional scripts of the Majapahit period. The author also deals with Indonesian scripts from the middle of the 15th century as well as foreign scripts, such as Tamil and Arabic. The book includes a list of plates with short transcriptions.

Drawing from his investigation, the author concludes that there is no necessary relationship between political history and the history of writing, and that writing was much more widespread in the region than has been generally assumed.



## DIREKTORI MAJALAH-MAJALAH MELAYU SEBELUM MERDEKA



## DIREKTORI MAJALAH-MAJALAH MELAYU SEBELUM MERDEKA

By Hamed Mohd Adnan

Publisher: Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2002.  
Call no.: R 059.9928 HAM

Penerbitan majalah-majalah di dalam bahasa Melayu pada peringkat awal telah dirangsang oleh faktor agama dan juga perjuangan bersifat kebangsaan. Malah, majalah agama amat ketara kerana terdapat hampir 30 majalah keagamaan yang diterbitkan sehingga penghujung tahun 1941. Kemudian barulah ia dilukut dengan majalah-majalah yang berkaitan dengan semangat kebangsaan dan kesusasteraan.

Inilah yang menjadi bahan perbincangan buku ini. Selain itu direktori ini juga menyenaraikan majalah-majalah yang pernah diterbitkan dari tahun 1900 sehingga 1957, seperti Mastika, Hiboran dan Temasek. Butir-butir penerbitan majalah-majalah tersebut, seperti penerbit, jenis, pengarang dan penyunting dapat membantu pengkaji membuat penyelidikan lanjutan. Tambahan pula, penulis telah menyertakan penjelasan ringkas dan latar belakang setiap satu majalah tersebut.

## உலகத் தமிழர் பண்பாட்டுக் களஞ்சியம்



Compiler: கலியபெருமாள், கா.  
Publisher: மலேசியா: வள்ளலார்  
அன்பு நிலையம், 2005  
Call no.: R 306.095482 KAL

தமிழர் பண்பாட்டை உலக நாடுகளுக்கும் தெரிவிக்க வேண்டும் என்ற சீரிய சிந்தனையில் பல ஆண்டுகள் ஈடுபட்டு இயந்தகத்தை வெளிக்கொண்டு வந்தது எல்லா தமிழர்களின் திரு கலியபெருமாள் அவர்கள்.

தமிழ் அறிஞர்களிடம் தமிழரின் பண்பாடு குறித்த அறிவுரைகளையும், கட்டுரைகளையும் பெற்று ஒரு வாழ்வியல் களஞ்சியத்தைத் தொகுத்து இரண்டு பாகங்கள் கொண்ட நூலாக வெளியிட்டுள்ளார். இந்நூல் தமிழகத்தில் வாழும் தமிழர்களுக்கு மட்டுமன்றிப் பிற நாடுகளில் வாழும் தமிழர்களுக்கும் மிகப் பயனுடையதாக இருக்கும். முதல் பாகத்தில் ஆறு பகுதிகளில் தமிழர் பண்பாடு பற்றி வரலாறு, இலக்கியம், நாட்டுப்புரவியலில் அறக்கோப்பாடு, சமயம் ஆகிய கோணங்களில் ஆராய்ந்து எழுதப்பட்ட கட்டுரைகள் தொகுக்கப்பட்டுள்ளன. இரண்டாம் பாகத்தில் ஒப்பனைக்கலையில் தமிழர் பண்பாடு, இல்லற வாழ்வில் தமிழர் பண்பாடு என தமிழரின் பழக்கவழக்கங்கள், சடங்குகள், நம்பிக்கைகள் பற்றிப் பல அரிய தகவல்கள் அடங்கிய ஆய்வுக் கட்டுரைகள் தொகுக்கப்பட்டுள்ளன.

## 新加坡、马来西亚华族民生文化的演变 黄大志、王业莎 主编 (2005)

Publisher: 新加坡: 新加坡炎黄文化研究会  
Call no.: RSING / RCO 306.095957 XIN

本论文集收录了八篇以华族民生文化为主题的文章, 关注华族在新马区域的社会与经济生活, 并探讨时代、科技、与生产技术所带来的演变, 是新加坡炎黄研究会的第一本丛书。

论文中探讨的课题有: 新加坡福源戏 — 一枚艺歌仔戏的个案研究、新加坡华资银行的演变与未来、20世纪30年代新马华人妇女的职业与阶层分析、新加坡华人妇女职业变迁、新加坡的翻译行业、华文教师的教学变革、二坡前新马华人女性的工作与社会活动和二坡后新加坡各民族的职业流动。论文数量虽不多, 涉及的范围也不广, 但八篇论文的七位作者来自文界各个领域, 对各自的课题进行过深入的研究, 是一部可读性非常高的民间作品。



# NEWS

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE BRINGS TOGETHER LEADING INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE EXPERTS

By Jaime I-Lyn Goh, Corporate Communications Department; Damien Wang, INVENT

More than 270 delegates and speakers converged in Singapore in January to meet fellow information and knowledge professionals to discuss the future of libraries and librarians.

Over two days, they joined leading researchers, scholars, librarians and information professionals from Singapore, the US, Germany, Philippines and Australia in discussions covering such topics as knowledge and information management trends, the impact of the Infocommunication revolution on the role of libraries, and how to attract Generation Y to libraries.

Titled "Librarians: Learning -> Strengthening -> Moving Forward", the conference was organised by the Library Association of Singapore (LAS) from January 29 to 30, and served as a timely platform for the exchange of ideas and deliberations on issues and challenges faced by libraries.

Ms Sylvia Yap, President of LAS, said the conference was significant given the rapidly changing global environment and rising need for continuous learning. She added:

"It is also a great opportunity for information and knowledge professionals from Asia and beyond to foster international relationships and engage in insightful exchanges on the future of the knowledge world."

The two-day conference was kicked off by Singapore Ambassador-at-Large Professor Tommy Koh, who noted in his keynote address that many successful Asian countries and economies faced one major challenge: To climb to the next peak, and go from being middle-income to high-income countries and economies.

He said: "Working harder is no longer enough. We have to learn to work smarter. This means major investment in education and training. It means embracing the KBE or knowledge based economy, in which innovation and creativity will be the new drivers and creators of wealth."

Prof Koh's pertinent message was followed by a series of presentations and discussions by leading information experts.

Ms Leigh Watson Healy, Chief Analyst of US company Outsell, Inc., started off by discussing markets in the information industry and top technologies, trends and the actions that libraries could undertake in 2007. She was followed by Mr Chris Palma, Strategic Partner Development Manager at Google, who spoke about how libraries could become fully-optimised search engines. Professor Daniel Seng, Associate Professor in the Department of Law of the National University of Singapore, then shared about copyright laws and rights management. Greater awareness of these, he noted, was needed to ensure that the library and information services sector remained relevant.

Several speakers also touched on the development of library professionals. Associate Professor Gillian Hallam from the Queensland University of Technology, Australia, and Professor

Antonlo Santos, Chief Law Librarian of the University of the Philippines, shared case studies of how librarians' standards of professional service were maintained and regulated in their home countries.

Mr Choy Fatt Cheong, University Librarian in the Nanyang Technological University, meanwhile, spoke about local efforts to encourage professional librarians in Singapore to continuously upgrade

themselves and keep their skills relevant. He presented and described the "Certification of Continuous Professional Development for Librarians in Singapore", a scheme developed by the National Committee on Library & Knowledge Professionals in Singapore.

The second day of the conference saw another keynote speech being delivered by Dr Claudia Lux, President-Elect of the International Federation of Library Associations and Director-General of the Foundation Central and Regional Library in Germany.

With the virtual and physical world blending together, a greater emphasis is placed on the role that libraries can play in connecting people and resources around the world. In her speech, "Libraries: Connecting People to People and People to the World's Resources", she stressed the role that libraries play in connecting people with each other, and people with



Librarians and professionals packed the hall to hear about the latest trends and practices

the world's resources. Libraries in developing countries, she noted, provided a link to the outside world for those living in rural areas.

Ms Ulla Wimmer from the Coordinator Network of Excellence for Libraries in the German Library Association followed up with a presentation on the BIX Library Index, a nationwide benchmarking system for public and academic libraries in Germany. Ms Wan Lye Tim, Deputy Director of Technical Services in the Singapore Polytechnic Library, then gave a local perspective, sharing the Singapore Polytechnic experience in benchmarking.

The conference then turned an eye on the future, focusing on the library users of the future – Generation Y. Mr James Soh, Executive Director of the National Youth Achievement Award Council, and Mr John Johnson, High School Librarian in the Singapore American School, joined two student representatives in a lively and insightful discussion on how to make libraries attractive to Generation Y users.

Wrapping up the conference was Ms Ngian Lek Choh, Director National Library. She said, "We are heartened by the huge turnout at the conference. After this conference, we feel that we are in a better position to meet the challenges of the emerging trends and chart our journey in this new age of interactive and digital media."



Many lively and interesting panel discussions were held to flesh out issues and trends

## COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING WITH THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION, NTU

By Hameedah Mohamed Ibrahim, Reference Librarian, Lee Kong Chian Reference Library

The Lee Kong Chian Reference Library (LKCRIL) recently conducted a session on Sharing of History Enquiries with Nanyang Technological University (NTU) MSc Students at NTU.

Mr Neo Tiong Seng and Mr Timothy Pwee, Reference Librarians from the LKCRIL, conducted the January 23 sharing session for seven students, which complemented a module in the MSc Information Studies course called "Reference Sources for Humanities and Social Sciences: Sources for Historians on Southeast Asian History: H6602".

Apart from introducing and promoting the collections and services at LKCRIL, the session also facilitated networking among fellow information professionals to share and exchange ideas.

Associate Professor Brendan Luyt from the Division of Information Studies, School of Information and Communication, NTU, kicked off the session with a lecture on primary, secondary and tertiary information sources in print and electronic formats.

This was followed by a presentation by Mr Timothy Pwee on reference works, during which he shared examples of enquiries received on the historical aspects of Singapore and Southeast Asia. Search strategies, query formulation and refinement in retrieving high precision results were also covered, accompanied by numerous examples demonstrating the process of research in handling history enquiries.

Mr Neo continued with a presentation on reference enquiries on Asian history, giving examples of enquiries on the history of China, India and countries in the Middle East. The session rounded up with a lively and interactive question-and-answer session.

All in all, the participants found the session useful: They said the sharing session gave a good insight into the work of reference librarians and helped them gain a better understanding of reference work at LKCRIL.

## AKSARA: THE PASSAGE OF MALAY SCRIPTS EXHIBITION

By Mazelan Anuar, Lee Kong Chian Reference Library

The Aksara: The Passage of Malay Scripts Exhibition was opened on 18 January 2007 to much fanfare and excitement. The opening of the exhibition was marked by a grand launch, which took place on the ground-floor Plaza of the National Library.

The opening ceremony was officiated by Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources and Minister-In-Charge of Muslim Affairs. In his opening speech, Dr Yaacob marvelled at the openness, dexterity and dynamism of the Malay language and encouraged all to reflect deeper on Singapore's shared past. Meaningful cross-interactions, he noted, have enhanced Singapore's heritage and multi-cultural identity.

This was followed by a vibrant dance item, performed by local dance troupe Sri Warisan. Dr Yaacob and guests then visited the exhibition on Level 10 of the National Library, and was taken on a tour of the exhibits which traced the different writing systems used in the Malay world.

The exhibition included some of the oldest races of Malay script, found on ancient, valuable and rare manuscripts, letters and artifacts. Some of the artifacts are from private individuals, local and overseas libraries, museums, institutions and organisations such as the National Library of Indonesia, National Museum of Singapore, the Malay Heritage Centre, the Bodleian Library in the United Kingdom, the British Library Board and the Vietnam History Museum.

They include a stone edict which dates back to 686 and was found in Sumatra, a fourth-century stele with Sanskrit script from Vietnam, and a 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscript believed to be the oldest existing Malay manuscript in the world.

Visitors can also see the originals as well as replicas of rare and valuable manuscripts and artefacts, such as a 1895 Baba-Malay translation of the Chinese classic, Romance of the Three Kingdoms, 19<sup>th</sup> century translations of the Bible in the Malay language, and the works of Munshi Abdullah, widely regarded as the father of modern Malay literature.

The Aksara exhibition is part of a series of exhibitions organised by the National Library, starting with the Zheng He & Maritime Asia Exhibition in 2005. It will be followed by one on Indian Influences on Southeast Asia.

'Aksara' is Malay for 'alphabet' or 'system of writing'. The exhibition, which will be on till 30 June 2007, will take visitors through the influences that different cultures had on the Malay system of writing. Scripts used in the Malay World reflect the illustrious and rich cultural history of the region that witnessed a blending of indigenous, Indic, Islamic and Western influences.



Guest of honour Dr Yaacob Ibrahim takes a close look at one of the exhibits

The scripts used in the Malay Archipelago during the pre-Islamic era were ancient Indic scripts such as Pallava and Kawi, or their adaptations. This reflects the process of Indianisation that took place at that time. With the arrival of Islam, *Jawi* script, which was derived from Islamic Arabic-Persian writing traditions, became the dominant form of Malay writing system. The use of *Jawi* was a key factor driving the emergence of Malay as the lingua franca of the region.

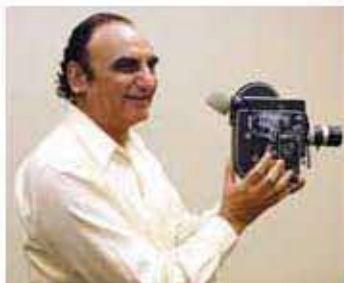
The arrival of the European explorers and traders brought a Latinised form of spelling and writing of Malay, which became known as *huruf rumi*. Over the years, this has come to be the more widely used script.

After Singapore was opened as a British trading port in 1819, it became a hub for Malay publishers, writers, educators, religious reformers and journalists. The introduction of printing technology saw many Malay works printed both in *Jawi* and *rumi*. These developments paved the way for a significant phase in the development of the Malay language, boosting the production of Malay works, which had previously been handwritten in manuscript form.

**VISIT THE AKSARA: THE PASSAGE OF MALAY SCRIPTS EXHIBITION AT LEVEL 10 OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY, ON TILL 30 JUNE 2007, 10 AM - 9 PM.**

## NLB AND ASIAN FILM ARCHIVE SIGN AGREEMENT

Local film buffs have much to rejoice about: A reference library collection of films made by Singaporean and Asian filmmakers will soon be set up.



Mr Rajendra Gour was honoured as a pioneer in local film-making

Under a Memorandum of Understanding which the National Library Board (NLB) and the Asian Film Archive (AFA) signed on 16 January 2007, library users and film researchers will be able to get access to and view the films in the AFA's collection. NLB will facilitate this access at library@esplanade, while the AFA will evaluate,

collect, document and catalogue films for this growing community.

Director National Library Ms Ngian Lek Choh, who signed the agreement on NLB's behalf, said, "With the MOU in place, NLB will continue in its vision to bolster our audio-visual collection for our patrons while preserving local film heritage with our strategic partners. The collaboration will also ensure that unpublished local films as well as rare and significant Asian-centric films can now be archived, preserved and shared among the community where it was not available commercially before."

She added that the NLB will work closely with the AFA to host film literacy seminars, film screenings and workshops at library@esplanade.

There's more good news for the local film community: In a joint effort to preserve and promote Singapore's film heritage, the NLB, AFA and the Singapore Film Commission (SFC) also signed a tripartite agreement to build a collection of Singapore films and film-related materials, especially those by independent filmmakers.

Laying out the aims of the collection, Chairman of AFA Professor Kenneth Paul Tan said, "A great archive, we believe, is not just an archive of old, dusty and rotting films, but a living archive that not only preserves films but pro-actively makes them available to people to celebrate them as part of our cultural landscape."

Agreeing, Director of SFC Mr Man Shu Sum said the collection will help inspire local filmmakers and aid them in developing their own voice: "It is crucial for the development of our nascent film industry, as young filmmakers can draw on the influence of our own culture and cinematic style captured and shared through the archives."

The signing ceremony was followed by the screening of two short films produced by local filmmaker Mr Rajendra Gour, who was honoured for making the earliest known Singapore award-winning short films screened at overseas film festivals.

The short films were *Sunshine Singapore* (1968-72) and *A Labour of Love - The Housewife* (1974). Mr Gour's first film, *Mr Tender Heart*, was showcased at the Commonwealth UK Festival in 1965. Unfortunately, the print and negative could not be salvaged and preserved.

Mr Gour said, "The last film I made for myself was in 1978. Since then, I have only made films for organisations. It is an honour to be finally recognised and I am planning to make another personal film again."



DNL Ms Ngian and AFA chairman Prof Tan sign the agreement

**A GREAT ARCHIVE, WE BELIEVE, IS NOT JUST AN ARCHIVE OF OLD, DUSTY AND ROTTING FILMS, BUT A LIVING ARCHIVE THAT NOT ONLY PRESERVES FILMS BUT PRO-ACTIVELY MAKES THEM AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE TO CELEBRATE THEM AS PART OF OUR CULTURAL LANDSCAPE.**

– AFA Chairman Prof Kenneth Paul Tan

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University of Queensland Library • Royal Library of Belgium • Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Brunei • Bibliotheque Nationale du Burundi  
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