Cultural Connections

Volume IV | 2019

A Special Issue to Commemorate Singapore Bicentennial 2019

About the Culture Academy Singapore

The Culture Academy Singapore was established in 2015 by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth to groom the next generation of cultural leaders in the public sector. Guided by its vision to be a centre of excellence for the development of culture professionals and administrators, the Culture Academy Singapore's work spans three areas: Education and Capability Development, Research and Scholarship and Thought Leadership.

The Culture Academy Singapore also provides professional development workshops, public lectures and publishes research articles through its journal, *Cultural Connections*, to nurture thought leaders in Singapore's cultural scene.

One of the Academy's popular offerings is its annual thought leadership conference which provides a common space for cultural leaders to gather and exchange ideas and best practices, and to incubate new ideas. It also offers networking opportunities and platforms for collaborative ideas-sharing.

Cultural Connections is a journal published annually by the Culture Academy Singapore to nurture thought leadership in cultural work in the public sector.

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Contents

Foreword

When we first issued *Cultural Connections* in May 2016, it was the Culture Academy's maiden effort at publishing an annual journal. Its objectives are to share perspectives to enrich our collective understanding of Singapore's distinctive arts and heritage which shape our cultural identity.

Over the past three years, the journal has published pieces from Singapore's thought leaders including diplomats, academics and researchers, as well as contributions from colleagues in the culture sector. We have had encouraging response from readers and received requests for additional copies from within and outside the arts and culture sector. Last year's edition to commemorate Singapore's chairmanship of ASEAN was particularly well-received by our missions overseas and organisers of key ASEAN meetings in Singapore. This is very heartening for us and we will endeavour to improve on the quality of the publication.

As Singapore is commemorating her bicentennial this year, this fourth volume of *Cultural Connections* focuses on themes which are relevant to our cultural development over the past 200 years. The bicentennial is an opportunity to reflect on the founding and progress of modern Singapore since 1819, in the context of a rich history spanning more than 700 years. As we participate in the many commemorative activities, exhibitions and programmes that have been lined up this year, it is also a time for us to reflect on how far we have come as a nation and honour the memories of the many men and women who have toiled hard to create the Singapore we live in today.

The articles in this issue remind us of how fast and far we have progressed from our early colonial days to a modern and liveable cosmopolitan nation which is rooted in its multicultural heritage. I am pleased to note that the essays took on varied perspectives as they tell the story of Singapore's history and heritage using artefacts and objects from our national collection. Perhaps a lesser-known fact is that 2019 is also the 60th anniversary of Singapore's self-government (1959 before our independence in 1965). To commemorate this historic event in our history, we have used 60 objects from our national collections to retell the history of Singapore.

I hope you will enjoy reading the essays that will take you back to before 1819 and bring you on an intellectually stimulating journey of Singapore's history and heritage and its progress till today.

Rosa Daniel (Mrs)
Deputy Secretary (Culture)
Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth

Editor-in-Chief's Note

Two centuries ago, Sir Stamford Raffles landed on the island of Singapore, setting the foundation of modern Singapore. 200 years on, as we commemorate the bicentennial of this historic event, it is also an opportune time to reflect on our journey since, and how far we have come as a people.

This fourth edition of *Cultural Connections* thus explores the bicentennial through an exciting collection of essays, contributed by notable personalities and culture professionals. Born in the pre-war years, Professor Tommy Koh, ambassador-at-large, opens the journal with his musings on what it means to be a Singaporean, against the backdrop of having had to take on four "identities". Novelist Dr Meira Chand wraps up the collection with her thoughts on the contents and discontents of being an immigrant, and finding a sense of home in Singapore, a nation built on immigrant cultures.

Professor Bernard Tan, physicist by day and music composer by night, and Phan Ming Yen, CEO of Global Cultural Alliance, contributed two illuminating pieces on the music of our nation. The first traces the evolution of the national anthem as Professor Tan attempts to hunt down the original manuscript. The second leads us to contemplate upon the question of music and its role in nostalgia, and the making of home and national identity.

For a visual treat, look out for the wonderfully curated journey by Director of Asian Civilisations Museum Kennie Ting. Through a careful selection of objects and images, Ting's piece showcases the stars, the lesser-knowns and the quirky from our national collections, weaving a diverse, rich tapestry of Singapore's stories. Besides this visual treat, we have another black and white spread by the curatorial team from the National Museum of Singapore who looks at the development of Singapore's entrepôt over the years through photographs and paintings from the museum's collection.

200 years on, the question of "What makes a Singaporean?" has become increasingly pertinent. Professor Lily Kong's chapter talks about the role of food in the making of the Singaporean identity. The question of place, sites and identity is explored from various perspectives by our essayists from various MCCY institutions and Centre for Liveable Cities.

Putting together this edition has been an enriching, rewarding experience for the editorial team at Culture Academy. We hope it brings you as much pleasure as it has for us.

Thangamma Karthigesu (Ms)
Director, Culture Academy Singapore
Editor-in-Chief

Nationality, Identity and Culture: A Personal Reflection

Professor Tommy Koh

Professor of Law, National University of Singapore
Ambassador–at–Large, Minstry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore

Son of the British Empire (1937 to 1942)

I was born in Singapore in 1937. Singapore was then a British colony, part of the mighty British Empire. My father worked in the private sector and my mother was a home-maker. I had two younger brothers.

What do I remember about colonial Singapore?

First, I remember that colonial Singapore was both racist and hierarchical. The whites were first-class citizens. The Eurasians were second-class citizens. The rest of us were third-class citizens. The only Asians allowed to enter the premises of prestigious clubs, like the Cricket Club and the Tanglin Club, were their servants.

Second, colonial Singapore was not a democratic society. The un-elected British governor had absolute power. The senior civil servants and the senior police officers were white men. The citizens were afraid of them. Anyone suspected of being disloyal to or critical of the British would be punished. The worst form of punishment was banishment to the country of the offending person's land of birth.

Third, we were taught to be loyal to the British crown. We had to learn to sing *God Save The King*. Most of us sang the British national anthem without conviction. There was, however, a minority, consisting mostly of Eurasians and Peranakans, who accepted the British narrative. Most of the residents of Singapore were loyal to their ancestral homes. I was too young to have any political aspirations.

Son of the Japanese Empire (1942 to 1945)

The British had repeatedly assured the people of Singapore that they had nothing to fear. We were told that Singapore was an "impregnable fortress." We believed in the British propaganda. The city was in a state of shock when the British surrendered to the Japanese on 15 February 1942.

Overnight, I had become a son of the Japanese Empire. Instead of *God Save the King*, we sang a new national anthem, *Kimigayo*. The island was renamed Syonan-to, meaning "Light of the South". The time in Singapore was moved forward to Tokyo time. English was replaced by Nippon-go.

Although the Japanese narrative was that they had come to liberate us from the British, the reality was quite different. I remember the Japanese rule of Singapore as a reign of terror. Slapping, torture and death were the punishments meted out to those who crossed them.

The Japanese Occupation was also a period of deprivation. We had to grow our own food. Instead of rice, we ate mostly tapioca and sweet potatoes. I will never forget going at night with my uncle Yean to catch eels from the monsoon drains for food. Because of malnutrition, my beloved grandmother died of beriberi.

Looking back on the 44 months of my life as a son of the Japanese empire, I must say that I never developed any loyalty for the Japanese Emperor. The Japanese rulers did not try to win the hearts and minds of the people they ruled. We were all relieved when the Japanese surrendered to the British in September 1945.

Back to the British Empire (1945 to 1963)

The lesser of two evils, the British, returned to rule Singapore in 1945. The people of Singapore no longer feared the British in the way they did before the war. Having been defeated by the Japanese, they had lost their charisma and superiority.

Gradually, the people of Singapore agitated for change. The British introduced elections, first, at the municipal level and, later, at the national level. In 1959, British granted Singapore self-government. This was also the year in which the People's Action Party first gained power in Singapore.

In the summer of 1963, when I went to study in the United States, I carried a British passport.

Citizen of Malaysia (1963 to 1965)

In September 1963, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak joined the Federation of Malaya to form a new country called Malaysia.

I had to go to the Malaysian Embassy in Washington, DC, to change my British passport for a Malaysian passport.

The period when Singapore was part of Malaysia was too short for us to transit from being Singaporeans to being Malaysians. I was very pleased when the separation was announced on 9 August 1965 because I had opposed merger on the ground that the fundamental differences in values between us would make merger unworkable. History has vindicated my position.

Citizen of Singapore

In 1965, I exchanged my Malaysian passport for a Singapore passport. I am proud to be a Singaporean. What makes me a Singaporean? My love for the land of my birth and for the people of Singapore.

We may be a small country but we have built one of the world's most prosperous and competitive economies. We are a living example that multiculturalism can work. The culture of Singapore is a unique blend of the British, Chinese, Malay and Indian civilisations. The British had left us with a rich legacy and we should acknowledge this during our bicentennial year. We inherited from the British a free port, free trade, an open economy, the English language, the rule of law, the civil service, town planning, low-cost housing and much more.

We are also united by certain shared values such as racial equality, religious tolerance, the rule of law, no corruption, our strong work ethic and our can-do and indomitable spirit. We have built on the legacies of those who came before us—whether British or Asian—and created a success story which has surpassed the wildest dreams of Raffles. ☐

The Hunt for Majulah Singapura

Majulah Singapura: Its origins and adoption as Singapore's national anthem –a personal account

Professor Bernard T. G. Tan

Emeritus Professor of Physics
National University of Singapore

The origins of *Majulah Singapura* as Singapore's national anthem began with the renovation of the Victoria Theatre by the Singapore City Council in the mid-1950s. An account of the anthem's history can be found in the National Library's online Infopedia (Sim n.d.). The official arrangements of *Majulah Singapura* by Phoon Yew Tien (Figure 1) can be obtained from the National Heritage Board's website (National Heritage Board 2019). Rohana Zubir's book on her father, Zubir Said, relates the early history of *Majulah Singapura* and shows "The original City Council version of *Majulah Singapura* in number notation" (Zubir 2012; "Numbered Musical Notation" 2019) (Figure 2).

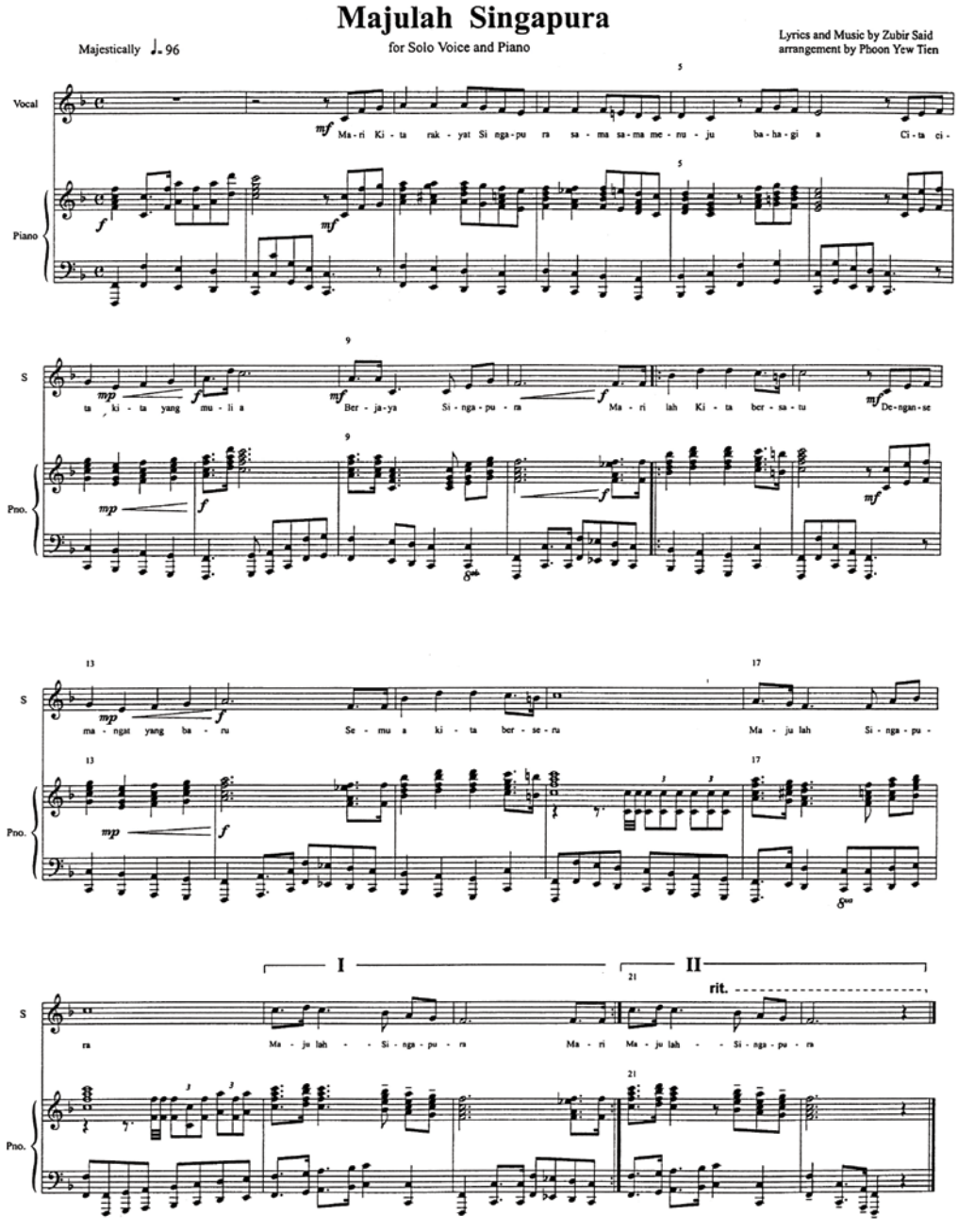

Figure 1. *Majulah Singapura*, Phoon Yew Tien piano and voice arrangement.
Image courtesy of National Heritage Board.

Figure 2. *Majulah Singapura*, number notation score.
Image courtesy of Puan Sri Datin Dr Rohana Zubir.

The invitation from the City Council

As the date of the opening performance of the renovated Victoria Theatre approached, the sub-committee tasked with the organising of the performance decided at its meeting on 26 May 1958 that the grand finale of the performance should be a new song based on the City Council's motto "Majulah Singapura".

The Mayor of Singapore, Ong Eng Guan, wanted a stirring patriotic official song for the City Council, and tasked the Superintendent of the Victoria Theatre and Memorial Hall, Yap Yan Hong, to create the song. Yap then asked Zubir Said, whom he had known in the course of his work, if he could write the new song (Sim n.d.). The sub-committee officially agreed to invite Zubir Said to compose the new song with Malay lyrics (City Council 1958a), subsequently writing to Zubir Said on 10 July 1958.

The letter of invitation dated 10 July 1958 from H. F. Sheppard of the City Council invited Zubir Said to compose the music and lyrics for the grand finale of the opening performance of the Victoria Theatre based on the theme "Majulah Singapura" (Sheppard 1958). Zubir Said replied to the invitation on 15 July 1958, accepting it by declaring that he was most honoured to have been given the privilege to compose the music and lyrics for the event, based on the theme "Majulah Singapura".

He must have worked with great speed and diligence as the minutes of the City Council's Finance and General Purposes (Entertainments) Sub-Committee on 28 July 1958 reported that "A recording of the music is played for the information of the Sub-Committee." The draft programme for the opening performance appears to have moved the performance of the new song from the end to the beginning of the concert (City Council 1958b).

A memo dated 30 August 1958 from Yap Yan Hong to all participants in the opening performance gives instructions for the rehearsals and performance and attaches a copy of the finalised programme (Yap 1958). Also attached to Yap Yan Hong's memo was a copy of the score of *Majulah Singapura*. This was a handwritten score with just the melody and lyrics (Figure 3) to be sung by all participants, with no accompaniment or harmonisation (Said 1958).

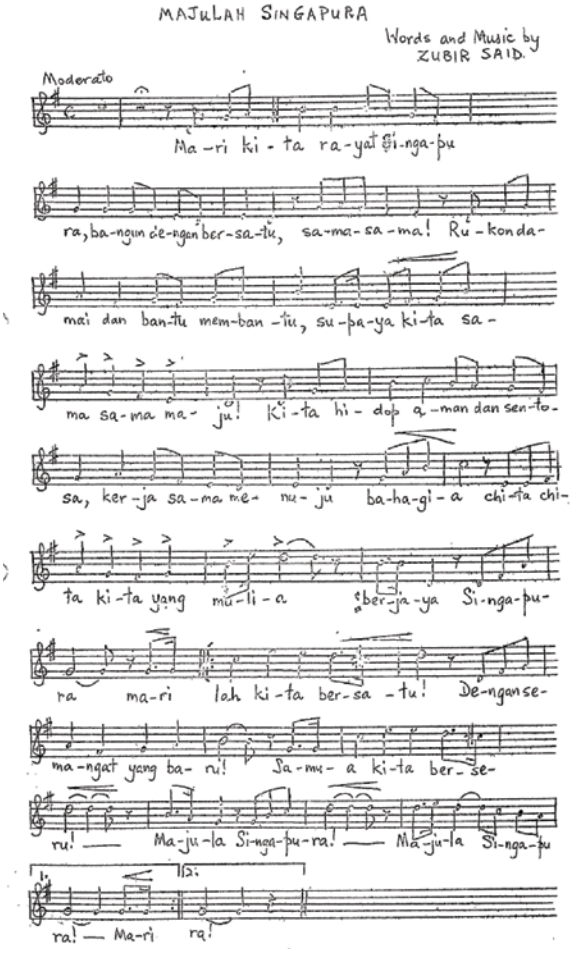

Figure 3. *Majulah Singapura*, Yap Yan Hong manuscript. City Council files.
Image courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore.

The first performance of *Majulah Singapura*

The first item of the opening performance on 6 September 1958 was *Majulah Singapura* performed by the choir and orchestra of the Singapore Chamber Ensemble conducted by Paul Abisheganaden, and the orchestration was by Dick Abell of Radio Malaya. *The Straits Times* report on the concert mentions, amongst the many concert items, "… a stirring song composed by Zubir Said, …." as well as " … an astonishing dance created by Mr Bhaskar, who took a Chinese legend of star-crossed lovers and …. told it in the expressive language of Indian dance conventions" (L.S.Y. 1958).

The next public performance of *Majulah Singapura,* this time for a much larger audience, was at the massive Youth Rally convened at the Padang on 23 February 1959 for the visit of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. I was present at the Padang with tens of thousands of school children to welcome the Duke and heard the stirring rendition of *Majulah Singapura* performed by the Combined Schools Choir under the baton of Paul Abisheganaden (*The Straits Times* 1959a; 1959h). Unfortunately no recording of the opening performance of Victoria Theatre on 6 September 1958, nor of the performance on the Padang on 23 February 1959, exists.

One musical question which remains unanswered is the date when the fanfare-like introduction to *Majulah Singapura* was introduced. The early manuscript attached to Yap Yan Hong's memo (which we will refer to as the Yap Yan Hong manuscript) of the original version of *Majulah Singapura* contains only the melody and does not have the introduction (Said 1958). The earliest recording of *Majulah Singapura* which I could locate in the National Archives of Singapore was made on 12 May 1959 and it starts with the fanfare-like introduction (Yeo, Jessica. 2016. Personal communication, May 18). This was also issued as a vinyl recording whose sleeve notes state that it was performed by the Bel Canto Choral Society conducted by Lim Lee and members of the Radio Singapore Orchestra led by Dick Abell (Peters 2014).

The new song quickly found favour with virtually everyone who listened to it. Zubir Said had written what is arguably his best song ever, and it immediately caught the hearts of people of all races. I certainly remember being very taken with *Majulah Singapura,* and I was inspired to make a piano arrangement of the song, which I would play whenever I had the opportunity to introduce *Majulah Singapura* to someone who did not know it.

Attainment of self-government

In the meantime, a multi-party delegation from Singapore had been negotiating with the British government for the colony's self-government and eventual independence. After protracted negotiations, Singapore attained self-government on 3 June 1959. The Legislative Assembly decided that the new state of Singapore should have its own flag, crest and anthem, and Deputy Prime Minister Toh Chin Chye was given the task of creating these new symbols of statehood.

The People's Action Party (PAP) had already gained control of the City Council since the Council members were fully elected in 1957, with PAP's Ong Eng Guan appointed as the first Mayor.

Ong reminded Toh that the City Council had just created a song *Majulah Singapura* which would make an excellent national anthem. Toh Chin Chye readily agreed but requested that *Majulah Singapura* be shortened if it were to be the national anthem (Chew 1990; Toh 1989). Toh felt that the original version was too long for an anthem, as there would be occasions when citizens would have to stand still while the anthem was being played. The shortening would also mean fewer Malay words, making it easier for non-Malay citizens to learn.

The shortening of *Majulah Singapura*

It is logical that Zubir Said himself would have been given the responsibility of shortening the song (Zubir 2012; Said 1984). *Majulah Singapura* in its original form is a verse of 16 bars, followed by an eight-bar chorus which is repeated, effectively making it the same length as the verse, i.e. 16 bars (Figure 4a). Zubir's method of shortening was to truncate the verse to eight bars, leaving the chorus unchanged. The current official national anthem is indeed structured like this; it can be argued that this is less aesthetically balanced than the original 16-bar verse and (effectively) 16-bar chorus.

However, before Zubir Said could work on the shortening, it appears that someone else (who remains unknown) had done the shortening without consulting him (Zubir 2012). He wrote on 14 October 1959 to Minister for Culture S. Rajaratnam to say that he had a copy of this shortened version which had already been distributed to schools, and that the way it was shortened was "…wrong and spoils the composition…". Zubir declared that "We would all be ashamed to have an anthem which is out of musical form".

I distinctly remember seeing a copy of this unapproved version on the first souvenir card issued to schools. (In the following discussion we will number the bars from the start of the verse without the introduction.) From my memory, the shortening was done by leaving out eight bars from the middle of bar 4 to the middle of bar 12, thus achieving a reduction from 16 bars to 8 bars (Figure 4b). In musical terms, Zubir was certainly correct that this shortening was less than satisfactory.

How did Zubir Said himself shorten the verse from 16 to 8 bars? This was accomplished by going from bar 6 directly to bar 15, leaving out bars 7 to 14. To accommodate the change in the lyrics, the second half of bar 6 is slightly modified from the original. This truncation results in the official version well-known to Singaporeans as the national anthem (Figure 4c), and is certainly far superior to the unapproved version he had complained about to S. Rajaratnam.

Majulah Singapura Verse Original Version

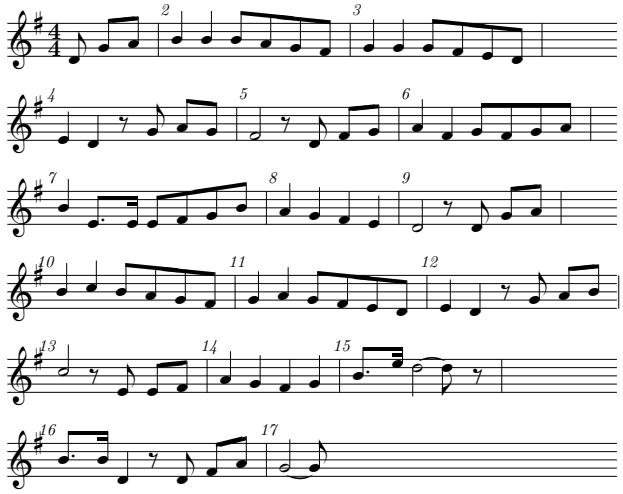

Figure 4a. *Majulah Singapura*, verse original version.
Image courtesy of Bernard Tan.

Majulah Singapura Verse Unapproved Version

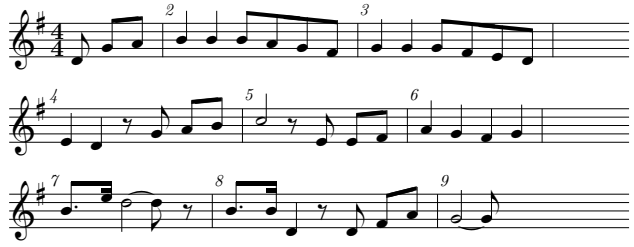

Figure 4b. *Majulah Singapura*, verse unapproved version.
Image courtesy of Bernard Tan.

Majulah Singapura Verse Official Version

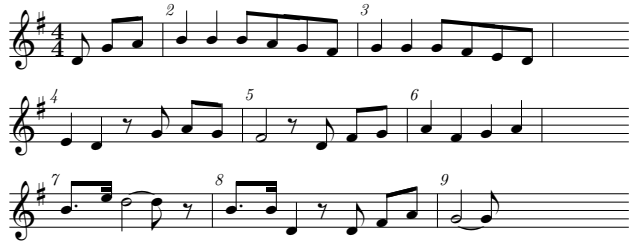

Figure 4c. *Majulah Singapura*, verse official version.
Image courtesy of Bernard Tan.

The adoption as the national anthem

Zubir's shortened version—with bars 7 to 14 removed and the second half of bar 6 modified—became the new national anthem. The National Anthem Bill to adopt the shortened *Majulah Singapura* as the new national anthem was originally to be introduced at the session of the Legislative Assembly on 14 October 1959, but was withdrawn at the last minute, most likely due to Zubir's last minute appeal to S. Rajaratnam (*The Straits Times* 1959g).

The Ministry of Education directed that all students were to be taught the new anthem, and sixty school music teachers were requested to attend a rehearsal at the Singapore Military Forces drill hall at Beach Road where the teachers would "run over the finer points of the song" (*The Singapore Free Press* 1959; *The Straits Times* 1959b). Zubir Said and the Minister for Education, Yong Nyuk Lin, were present at this rehearsal, with the band of the Singapore Military Forces in attendance.

Figure 5a. Souvenir card, back and front.
Image courtesy of Bernard Tan.

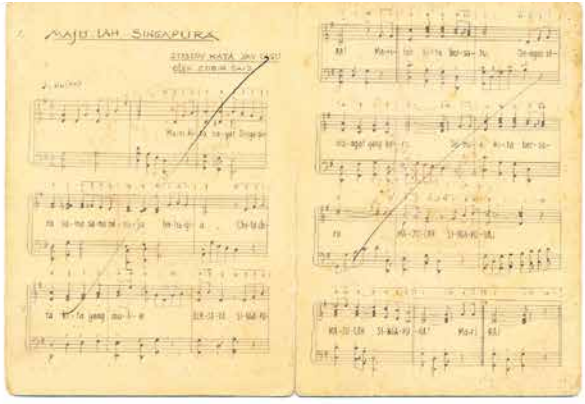

Figure 5b. Souvenir card, inside.
Image courtesy of Bernard Tan.

Majulah Singapura was officially adopted as the national anthem at the session of the assembly on 11 November 1959 (*The Straits Times* 1959c). In preparation for the introduction of the new anthem, which was to be officially launched during National Loyalty Week from 29 November to 5 December 1959, half a million of the four-page souvenir cards in which were printed the words and music of the new anthem (Figures 5a and 5b) were distributed to school children and the general public (State of Singapore 1959; *The Straits Times* 1959d).

The cover showed the state flag, and on pages two and three were a music score of the shortened *Majulah Singapura* for piano and voice neatly written out by Zubir Said, but with his handwritten lyrics replaced by type-set words. The back cover was occupied by the new state crest (State of Singapore 1959). No copies of the previously-issued souvenir card with the unsatisfactory shortening have yet been found. A service was introduced to enable the new anthem to be heard over the telephone by dialling 2 or 3 (*The Straits Times* 1959e).

The highlight of National Loyalty Week was the installation ceremony of the new Head of State or Yang di-Pertuan Negara, Yusof Ishak, on the steps of City Hall in front of a VIP audience and a huge crowd on the Padang (*The Straits Times* 1959f). There, both *God Save the Queen* and *Majulah Singapura,* heard for the first time as the new national anthem, were played together.

Arrangements of the national anthem

The initial official orchestral and band recordings of *Majulah Singapura* were made by the Radio Singapore Orchestra and the Singapore Military Forces band. Toh Chin Chye was never really satisfied with the recordings then made by these ensembles, so when the Berlin Chamber Orchestra performed in Singapore in 1960, he requested the conductor to do a recording of their arrangement of the national anthem. In fact, the Berlin Chamber Orchestra recorded a number of versions for official use by the Singapore Government (Yeo, Jessica. 2016. Personal communication, May 18).

The orchestra recorded both what is officially known as the "short version" and the "long version". The "long version" is not the original *Majulah Singapura* with the eight missing bars restored, but merely the entire National Anthem with introduction, (shortened) verse, and chorus. The "short version" omits the chorus and ends at the end of the verse. The "long version" is generally used in formal ceremonial occasions and when the President of the Republic is present, while the "short version", also known as the "abridged version" (National Heritage Board 2019) is used for less formal occasions. The Berlin Chamber Orchestra recordings were used as the official recordings for many years.

As with the Berlin Chamber Orchestra, visiting foreign orchestras had to play our national anthem if the President of the Republic were present, and this gave rise to other recordings. Two such recordings are by the NHK Symphony Orchestra in 1963, and by the London Symphony Orchestra in 1968. Rather intriguingly, the London Symphony Orchestra arrangement is listed as being by Stokowski—one wonders whether this was the famous conductor Leopold Stokowski who would have been 80 years old in 1968!

The inaugural performance of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra

In 1977, Deputy Prime Minister Goh Keng Swee set in motion the formation of the first fully professional symphony orchestra in Singapore, which was founded in 1978 as the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO). The inaugural concert of the SSO was scheduled for January 1979, and it was planned that as this would be a grand occasion attended by many dignitaries, the new orchestra would begin the concert with the national anthem.

I was involved in the founding of the SSO, and some months before the concert, I casually remarked to the Chairman of the SSO, Tan Boon Teik (who was also Attorney-General), that the original version of *Majulah Singapura* was actually eight bars longer than the official national anthem. He immediately said that we should play the original version of *Majulah Singapura* at the inaugural concert!

While a little unsure of the legality of playing an unauthorised version of the national anthem, I volunteered to insert the missing eight bars in the current orchestral score of the anthem. The orchestration being used at that time was by a well-known British brass musician, Elgar Howarth. I did not have a score of the original *Majulah Singapura*, so I inserted the missing eight bars of the melody into Howarth's score purely from memory, and then orchestrated the inserted bars, doing my best to make the insertion sound seamless with the rest of Howarth's score (Figure 6).

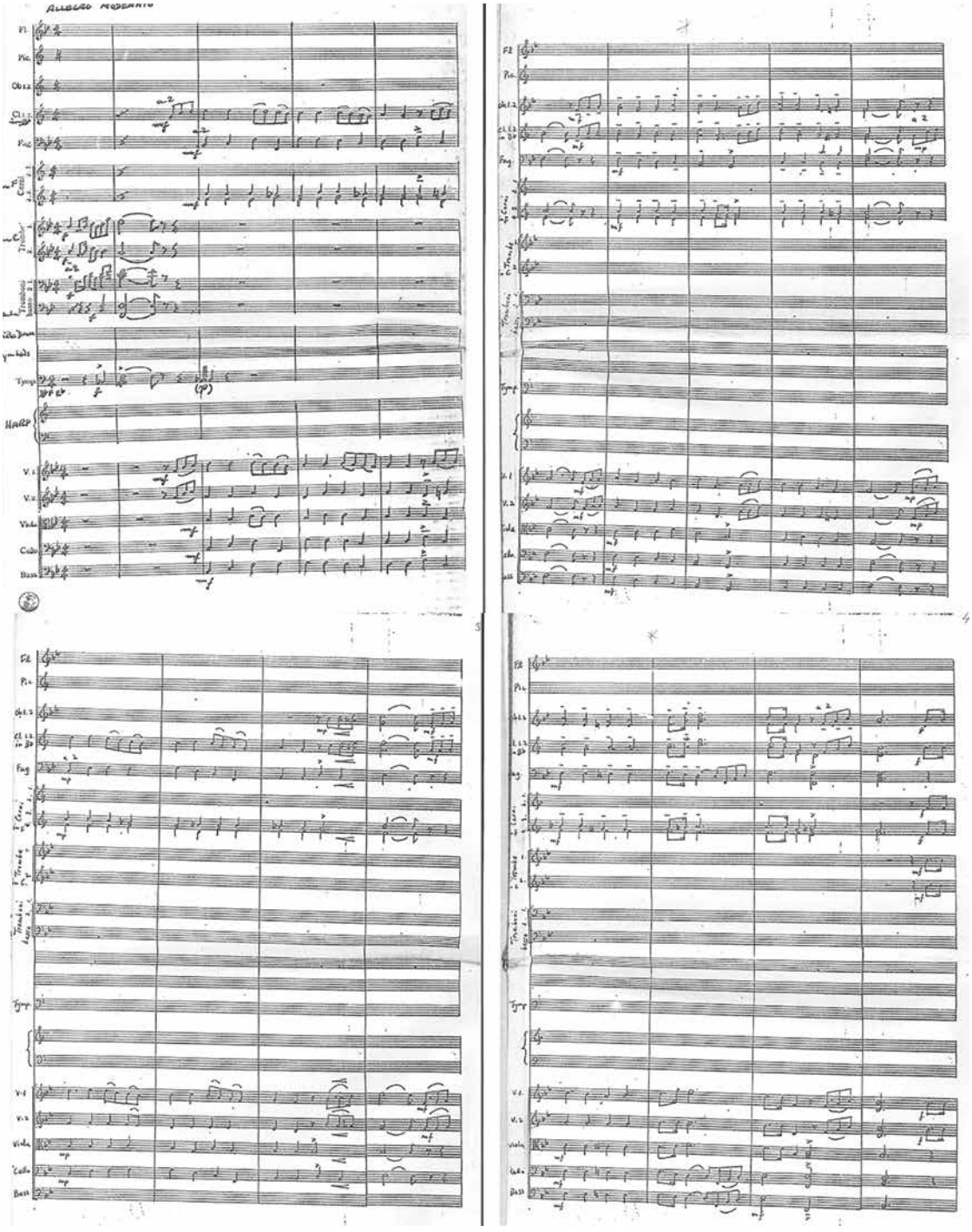

Figure 6. *Majulah Singapura*, Howarth orchestration amended by Tan.
Image courtesy of Singapore Symphonia Company.

The performance of the original version of *Majulah Singapura* instead of the official version of the national anthem did not appear to cause any great commotion or even comment. However, the next morning's report of the inaugural concert in *The Straits Times* remarked that the orchestra "played a spirited version of the national anthem with a variation and in a manner few Singaporeans had heard before" (Fong 1979).

The new orchestration of 2000

In 2000, it was decided that there should be a new orchestration of the national anthem. A committee to revise the orchestration was set up by the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA), which I was asked to chair. At that time, the orchestration being used was by the British composer Michael Hurd, and we decided to invite Singaporean composers to create new orchestral arrangements of the national anthem.

The original key of *Majulah Singapura* was G major (Figure 3), meaning that the highest note to be sung in the national anthem was E5, which was difficult for quite a lot of people. Therefore I took the opportunity at this point to propose that the new arrangements of the national anthem for orchestra, keyboard and other instrumentations be shifted down to the key of F major. This would put the highest note at D5 instead of E5, which would make it easier to sing (Perera 2010; Peters 2014; Tan 2001a; Gee 2001). Interestingly, the early version in number notation states that it should be sung in the key of F (Figure 2).

The composers were thus asked not just to re-orchestrate the national anthem, but to lower its pitch by one full tone to bring it to the key of F major. A number of our leading composers were invited to submit their orchestrations of the national anthem for consideration.

Kelly Tang's orchestration was wonderfully exuberant, perhaps a little too extroverted for an official version of the anthem. Phoon Yew Tian initially did not submit an orchestration because he did not want to compete with Leong Yoon Pin, out of respect for his former teacher. However, I eventually managed to persuade him to submit an orchestration, and the committee selected his version.

The committee's decision had to be submitted to the cabinet for approval, and my MITA colleague, Ismail Sudderuddin, who had been steering the project, asked me to appear before what I believe was the pre-cabinet meeting at the Istana. This was to brief the cabinet on the project, including why we wanted to change the key of the anthem (Tan 2001a).

My briefing seemed to go quite well, maybe because I had already explained the project to key ministers such as Teo Chee Hean. After my briefing, it was time for the cabinet to ask questions, but there seemed to be no questions and I was congratulating myself on getting away cleanly. Then one Minister raised his hand to ask a question—none other than Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew!

What he asked stunned me, not because it was an unexpected question; in fact, it was a perfectly reasonable one: "Would it be possible to have the different versions for orchestra, band and choir in different keys?" (or something to that effect). Of course, it was not impossible, but it would have been much less desirable since the sung versions would be in different keys when accompanied by different ensembles. So I nervously replied to say that it was not possible, and Minister Mentor luckily did not quibble with my somewhat unsatisfactory answer!

The Orchestra of the Music Makers

In 2015, the year of the 50th anniversary of Singapore's independence, the Orchestra of the Music Makers or OMM (whose board of which I was then Chairman), decided to make its contribution to the celebrations by performing Mahler's 8th Symphony (the Symphony of a Thousand). OMM's Music Director, Chan Tze-Law, knew of the original longer version of *Majulah Singapura*, and wanted to conclude the concert with a performance of this original version followed by the official national anthem using the massive choral and instrumental forces already gathered on stage for the Mahler 8.

He asked me to arrange both versions of *Majulah Singapura* for the same choral and orchestral forces (including organ) as for the Mahler 8, and so I hurriedly scored these two versions as requested. It was not really a straightforward scoring assignment as the orchestral forces for the Mahler 8 are huge, including the organ and two choirs. Fitting all the required staves on a page produced a fearsome-looking score, but I duly delivered it to OMM in time for the concert.

At the concert, immediately after the conclusion of the Mahler 8, Chan Tze-Law turned to the audience and explained what the orchestra was going to play. The original version of *Majulah Singapura* was then performed and heard for the first time by a new generation of Singaporeans, and was subsequently posted on YouTube where it has been viewed more than 50,000 times (Orchestra of the Music Makers 2018).

The original manuscript of *Majulah Singapura*

It had long been believed that the original manuscript of *Majulah Singapura* in its original unshortened form had been lost (Zubir 2012; Tan 2001b). The number notation score in Rohana Zubir's book is not the original handwritten manuscript as it is in a printed typeset format. After the OMM performance in 2015, I decided to make a search for the original manuscript. I believed the best place for the search was the National Archives of Singapore, since that was the most likely place where the City Council's documents would have been preserved.

It was fortunate for me that the Director of the National Archives of Singapore then was Eric Chin, who had been a member of the National Advisory Committee for Laboratory Animal Research (NACLAR) which I chaired. Eric was most willing to help and arranged for his officers to assist me in combing through the relevant documents belonging to the period when the City Council was commissioning Zubir Said to write *Majulah Singapura*.

Most of the correspondence between the City Council and Zubir Said was available, and was the major source of the account of the commissioning of *Majulah Singapura* as described in the opening paragraphs of this article. The handwritten copy of *Majulah Singapura* attached to Yap Yan Hong's memo as earlier described was among the documents, but was not then thought by me to be significant, as it was simply the melodic line and the lyrics of *Majulah Singapura*.

It is possible that I, and other researchers who had been looking for the original manuscript, overlooked this handwritten copy—the Yap Yan Hong manuscript—as it was so unprepossessing and written in a rather casual manner, possibly in a hurry. I guess that all of us were looking for a more formal-looking manuscript, probably with a piano accompaniment, which Zubir Said would have carefully written out with his usual impeccable penmanship.

Zubir Said's official national anthem manuscript

I also received valuable assistance from Winnifred Wong, Principal Librarian at the National University of Singapore (NUS) Library, who was aware of my search for the manuscript. She introduced me to Rahim Jalil, a retired lawyer who is now the current owner of the apartment in Joo Chiat which had belonged to Zubir Said. Rahim had done his best to preserve the apartment as a memorial to Zubir and to restore it to a condition close to what it might have been during Zubir's time there.

Rahim had in his possession a number of copies of the manuscript of the shortened version of *Majulah Singapura* which had become the official national anthem, in Zubir Said's own neat handwriting. This manuscript had in fact been used as the template for the printed official version in the cards issued to the schools, but the handwritten lyrics in the score had been replaced by typeset lyrics (Figure 7). One of these copies had an original handwritten inscription in ink written by Zubir himself.

It was then that I decided to take another more careful look at the City Council documents from the National Archives of Singapore. I then realised that the Yap Yan Hong manuscript might perhaps be the original manuscript. Since I now had the neat manuscript of the official national anthem indubitably in Zubir's handwriting from Rahim, I could directly compare the handwriting on the Yap Yan Hong manuscript with Zubir's actual handwriting. In particular, the lowercase letter "p" was written in an unusual manner in both manuscripts, with the vertical of the "p" protruding some way above the curve of the "p". For example, this can be easily observed in the word "Singapura" in the very first line of the verse as written in the Yap Yan Hong manuscript (Figure 3) and the neatly written copy of the manuscript of the official version in Rahim's possession (Figure 7).

I then brought both manuscripts, plus a couple of other copies of scores with lyrics handwritten by Zubir (extracted from Rohana's book) to Yap Bei Sing, Document Examiner at the Health Sciences Authority and a recognised expert in handwriting identification. Yap was able to say that the writer of the Yap Yan Hong manuscript was "probably" the same as the writer of the Rahim manuscript. A stronger conclusion such as "most probably" was difficult to arrive at due to the paucity of handwriting samples available.

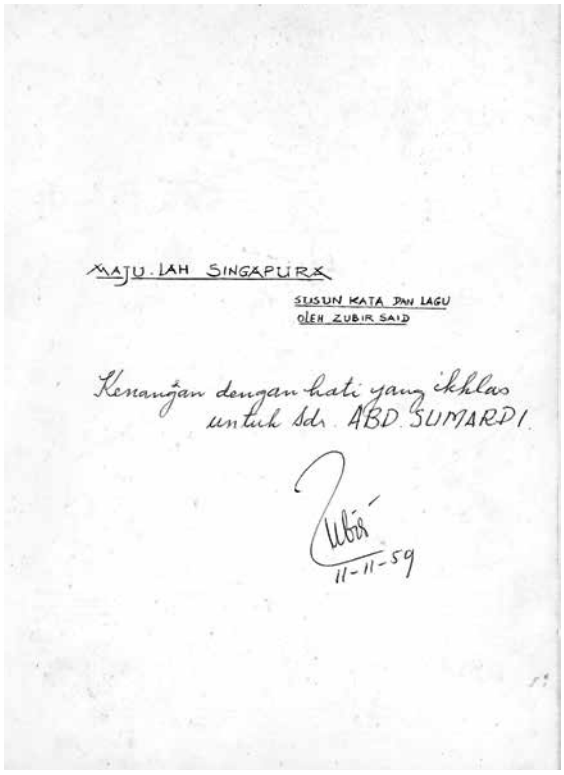

Figure 7a. *Majulah Singapura*, Zubir Said, official version manuscript. Image courtesy of Rahim Jalil.

The search for the original manuscript

The judgment that Zubir Said was "probably" the writer of the Yap Yan Hong manuscript was good enough for me, in view of its undoubted provenance from the City Council archives with other documents relating to the commissioning of *Majulah Singapura*. I therefore officially approached the National Archives of Singapore with a request for the original manuscript from which the copy of the Yap Yan Hong manuscript had been made.

The current Director of the National Archives of Singapore, Wendy Ang, then requested her staff to mount a search for the original manuscript (Figure 3). This manuscript may be viewed online in an article by Fiona Tan on *Majulah Singapura* on the National Archives of Singapore website (Tan 2016).

At the time of writing, the National Archives of Singapore are still engaged in a search for the original Yap Yan Hong manuscript. It is hoped that the original manuscript will be found in time for National Day in Singapore's bicentennial year of founding in 2019. ☐

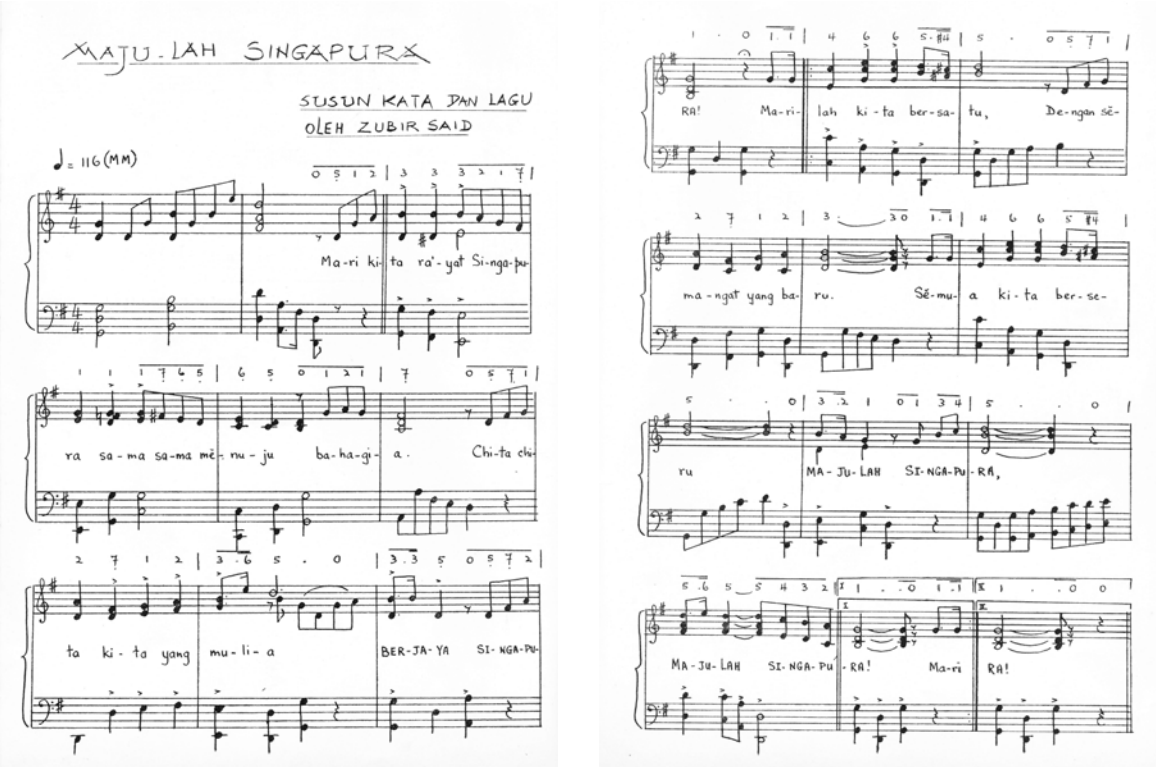

Figure 7b. *Majulah Singapur*a, Zubir Said, official version manuscript.
Image courtesy of Rahim Jalil.

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Rohana Zubir, daughter of Zubir Said

Yap Bei Sing, Document Examiner,
Health Sciences Authority

Chng Hak-Peng, Chief Executive Officer,
Singapore Symphony Group

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Recalling Home: Looking at Western Classical Music in Singapore 100 Years Ago

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2019 marks two major anniversaries in Singapore.

The first—following the arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819—is that of the 200th anniversary of what prime minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong has called the beginning of "a modern, outward-looking and multicultural Singapore", at the launch of the Singapore Bicentennial. The second is that of the 40th anniversary of the first professional performing arts group in Singapore, i.e. the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) which was founded in 1979.

It is this second anniversary within the context of the first that is of interest in this article.

The guest of honour at the SSO's 40th anniversary gala—which was held at the country's main performing arts centre, Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay—was also the prime minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong. Lee's message in the programme booklet for the occasion is telling of the role the type of music commonly known as Western classical music plays in the nation's development and the necessity of support for such music.

Referencing Singapore's second deputy prime minister Dr Goh Keng Swee's comment in 1973 that it was a "minor scandal" that Singapore did not have an orchestra then, Lee noted that "Our nation would be soul-less without an appreciation of arts and culture" and that "our founding fathers believed a symphony orchestra would enrich our culture and show the world that Singapore aimed to be a gracious society."

The more obvious question thus to ask would be: How did the practice and performance of Western classical music take root in Singapore and rise to a position of prominence until the founding fathers of Singapore believed that a symphony orchestra would enrich the country's culture and show the world that she aimed to be a gracious society?

Work done in early 2000s by myself to address this question while as a research scholar with the National Institute of Education had revealed various challenges. The main one was that the attempt to trace the arrival of "Western classical music" in the 19th century and to re-construct musical interaction between European and Asian communities in the early and mid-20th century revealed (and still reveals) a paucity of histories of musical activities in Singapore during the period mentioned. Primary documents (such as memoirs, correspondence, data on clubs or associations) pertaining to Western classical music activity from at least 1819 up till the mid-1950s and secondary histories—primarily journal or newspaper articles by a pioneering generation of musicians born in Singapore who emerged after World War II—generally remain relatively few and far between.

The presence of Western music is an *a priori* assumption, attributed to the colonial past and a causal relationship implied between activities of pre-independent Singapore and her future. There is thus the following on Singapore of the 1950s in composers Ting Chu San, Leong Yoon Pin and Bernard Tan's chapter titled "Singapore" in Ryker Harrison's *New Music in the Orient: Essays on Composition in Asia Since World War II* published as recently as 1991:

As a colony, the major cultural activities were all greatly influenced by currents from the West: music was no exception. At that time, the only established musical institution was the Singapore Music Society, previously known as the Singapore Philharmonic … In addition to regular concerts, there were an annual music contest, an annual performance of Handel's Messiah: both events provided some basis of future development.

Other writers (also renowned practitioners) such as Joseph Peters and Paul Abisheganaden attribute music education (vis-a-vis the creation of the post of Master of Music in 1935) in government and mission schools as a factor which led to the development of an interest in Western classical music among the young in pre-independent Singapore.

Yet, the bulk of the data or information on musical activity in 19th century and up till mid-20th century Singapore remains in the multitude of contemporaneous newspaper reports, advertisements, trade figures of instrument trade, anecdotal histories or recollections which still require much verification of facts and a historical framework to make sense of.

However, while looking through the newspaper reports (especially those of the Singapore Free Press in the late 19th century and up till early 20th century) and whatever published secondary material that is available, a few primary questions emerged: What did music making (i.e. Western classical music) mean for a group of people (i.e. the European and more specifically the British community) who were living away from their home? Why did it matter to them? And would that answer be same to that of why Western classical music matters to a Singaporean society of the 21st century?

As Singapore celebrates its bicentenary (and as the arts group which was founded to show to the world Singapore's aim to be a "gracious society celebrates its 40th anniversary), it is perhaps timely and instructive to reflect on an article on music written a hundred years ago to celebrate Singapore's centenary, so as to see what the musical past has to offer the present and next generation of arts practitioners, managers and researchers.

One hundred years of Singapore

Just two years short of a hundred years ago, a two-volume book documenting the history of Singapore from its founding as a British settlement in 1819 up till 1919 was published to celebrate the centenary of the capital of the Straits Settlements.

Titled *One Hundred Years of Singapore: Being Some Account of the Capital of the Straits Settlements from its Foundation by Sir Stamford Raffles on the 6th February to the 6th February 1919*, the book was sponsored by a Centenary Committee that was appointed by the Straits Settlements government a year earlier in 1918. The committee was chaired by the acting Colonial Secretary George Maxwell. *One Hundred Years of Singapore* was published in 1921 in London and the tome came up to close to 600 pages per volume.

The compilation of material for the book was entrusted to the hands of three editors who in turn worked with a London subcommittee of former Singapore residents. The editors were prominent persons in Singapore then: Walter Makepeace (1859–1941) who was proprietor/editor of *Singapore Free Press* as well as a public figure; Gilbert Edward Brooke (1873–1936), Port Health Officer; and Roland St John Braddell (1880–1960), whom historian Mary Turnbull regarded as the "most illustrious of the three editors" in her introduction to the 1991 reprint of the book, a prominent lawyer and a scholar of Malayan history who would subsequently play a key role in the negotiations leading to the formation of the Federation of Malaya.

For the three, as they stated in their preface to the book, the writing of the articles was a "labour of love: how great a labour only those who have worked in Singapore and have had occasion to rummage in the scrap-heap of its history can realise." As there was "no cultured class with ample leisure to spare for making an exhaustive chronicle of the past" in Singapore at that time, the various articles were contributed by volunteers whom the three editors felt were "public-spirited enough to turn their leisure hours into more work".

The article on music appears as a subsection of a chapter titled "Amateur Theatricals and Music" in the second volume of the book. This section (based on the 1991 Oxford University Press reprint of the book) occupies about 16 pages or about just slightly more than one per cent of the entire book. The other chapters addressed a vast array of topics including Sir Stamford Raffles, land tenure, education, public works, municipal government and social life.

The author of the article was one Edwin Arthur Brown (1878-1955), a man who until his memoirs *Indiscreet Memories* from 1935 was republished in 2007 by Singapore publisher Monsoon Books, was largely forgotten by a younger generation in Singapore. He was remembered only by pioneering Singapore musicians such as Alex Abisheganaden, Vivien Goh and Victor Doggett. Today, Brown warrants an entry—dating from 2009—in the National Library's free online electronic encyclopaedia, Singapore Infopedia. He is described as a "Singapore broker, municipal councillor and long-time stalwart of music and theatre in Singapore."

At the time of writing, Brown was a partner with Adis & Ezekiel exchange brokers, in command of the Chinese company of the Singapore Volunteer Corps (having been commended for his command during the 1915 sepoy mutiny) and choirmaster at St Andrew's Cathedral up till the outbreak of World War II in Singapore, amongst other responsibilities.

His obituary in the November 1955 issue of *Malaya: Journal of the Association of British Malaya* perhaps best summed up his legacy:

"E.A" will be remembered by all who lived in Singapore between 1900 and the Japanese invasion as a churchman (the cathedral was almost his second home), for his musical ability, and for his services to the S.V.C. The way he threw himself into all that he undertook was characteristic of the man for his zeal was unlimited.

Almost 100 years later, Brown's article which looks back at music 100 years from his time of writing (presumably between 1918 and 1919) is revelatory.

Up till its time of publication and even until now, the article remains perhaps the only contemporaneous historical account of Western classical music activities in Singapore in late 19th century and early 20th century Singapore.

Music over one hundred years

That which Brown regarded as being "music" can be obtained through the layout of the article in the book. Every odd-numbered page of the article (and of the book) is given a topic title at the top of the page. Thus in Brown's article, the topic titles refer to a subject matter that was addressed at length.

The first of these topics was: "Edward Salzmann", a man whom this article will further discuss. The second was "Orchestral Concerts", which referred to the activities of the Singapore Philharmonic Society, a society of amateur musicians founded on

the initiative of William Graeme St. Clair (1849–1930). St. Clair was a polymath: he was editor of *Singapore Free Press,* an amateur musician, and had formed the Singapore Volunteer Rifles. Makepeace in his article *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* described him as the "doyen of Press in the Straits Settlements". In his obituary of St. Clair for the *British Malaya* magazine in May 1930, Makepeace wrote that it was 'difficult to name any part of the life of Singapore during the years he was there that he did not influence and stimulate". The first organ at Victoria Concert Hall, the St. Clair Organ, was named after him.

"Sweet Singers of Singapore" followed, which referred to amateur vocalists in Singapore, while the fourth topic, "Choral Society" was about a choral society Brown himself had formed within the congregation of St Andrew's Cathedral and also the Philharmonic Choral Society which had been in decline at that time.

The topic "Regimental Bands", which spoke about the role military bands played in assisting productions and providing music for public occasions, as well as their own performances, closed the article.

Brown: "To sit quietly on the verandah after dinner was over …"

Yet, as my research has shown, Brown's article as history is to be read with caution.

A series of errors and omissions emerges when one tries to verify Brown's account with contemporaneous newspaper accounts.

This is evident in Brown's account of the man whom he placed at the centre of his narrative: a musician called Edward Charles Salzmann, whose photograph, the only image in the section on music, is placed at the beginning.

Salzmann, who died in Singapore in 1930 at the age of 87, is a name largely forgotten today. Born in Florida, educated in Europe, a professor of music at Royal Naval College and a member of Michael Costa's (1808–1884) orchestra at Covent Garden Opera in London before coming to Singapore as organist of St Andrew's Cathedral in 1874, Salzmann played a central role in Singapore's classical music life up till his death. He was also the oldest European in the community at the time of his passing.

Brown and Salzmann were close friends. In *Indiscreet Memories,* Brown wrote that his friendship with Salzmann and Salzmann's wife was one "that never faltered, never was broken until death itself cut the chain. How good they were to me in those days! Almost every Sunday after church they would have me up to dinner …"

In fact, Brown's account of Salzmann in his article for *One Hundred Years* is possibly the only existing secondary source of Salzmann's early life in Singapore.

Yet, interestingly, his introduction to Salzmann is riddled with errors.

First, he notes that the first public notice of Salzmann appeared in the "March papers of 1874: 'Mr Salzmann, Professor of Music at the Royal Naval College, London, had been appointed organist of St Andrew's Cathedral." Brown then follows this with "On the 11th March of that year, Madame Arabella Goddard gave a concert here, at which Mr Salzmann, Mr Buckley and Mr Crane performed. Mr Salzmann had succeeded a Mr Iburg, who left for Shanghai after a short

stay here, his predecessor at St Andrew's being Mr E B Fentum."

In 1874, there were two English newspapers: *The Straits Observer* and *The Singapore Daily Times*. The unavailability of copies of the former dating from the period mentioned by Brown necessitated a focus on the latter.

Here, research revealed that the first notice of Salzmann in *The Singapore Daily Times* did not appear in March but in April. More significantly, Arabella Goddard (1836–1922) who was England's leading pianist of the second half of the 19th century, did not perform in Singapore in March but on 4th and 8th May. According to *The Singapore Daily Times* in February of that year, Goddard was in fact originally scheduled to perform in April but she did not arrive till 29th April, hence her performing only in early May.

This error may seem innocuous at first glance but if one looked at other "omissions" in Brown's article, it would appear that something else is at play.

In Brown's entire article, there are only two mentions of visiting professional musicians to Singapore: Goddard's performance in 1874 and a performance in 1889 by Tasmanian-born soprano Amy Sherwin (1855–1935) who was known as the "Tasmanian Nightingale" and in 2005 was inducted into the Tasmania Roll of Honour for her service to the arts.

Sherwin did perform in 1889 in Rossini's *Stabat Mater* conducted by Salzmann as Brown notes:

In 1889, Miss Amy Sherwin took a leading part in a performance of the Stabat Mater with Mr Salzmann's choir, in which Mrs Salzmann sang 'Quis est homo' with Ms Amy Sherwin. The celebrated artist also played in Turned Up …

What is not mentioned however is that Sherwin had performed with her own company earlier in 1889 during which Salzmann came into contact with her.

Research has also revealed that there were other artists who visited Singapore during the period which Brown was writing about: in 1886 there were concerts by the famed violinist Ede Remenyi (1828–1898) whose playing was said to have influenced the great composer Brahms and in 1896, there was a recital by Polish pianist and composer Antonie de Katski (1817–1899) who was the first classical pianist to give a concert in the Philippines. These were concerts by musicians who were as famous as Goddard and Sherwin and whose performances drew considerable excitement among audiences in Singapore. More significantly, chronologically, their concerts took place much closer to the time that Brown was writing.

Similar omissions can be found also in the works that Brown listed as being performed during the period under review. The only works highlighted were oratorios and cantatas, all performed by Salzmann's choir of the Singapore Philharmonic Society:

1889 : *Stabat Mater* by Rossini
1891 : *The Rose Maiden* by Frederick Cowen
1892 : Musical evening of oratorios and selections from *Messiah*
1893 : Selections from *Elijah* by Mendelssohn
1895 : *Ruth* by Alfred Gaul, *Crusaders* by Nils Gades and *Lauda Sion* by Mendelssohn
1896 : *Stabat Mater* by Rossini

In fact, when in his article Brown subsequently recounts the "outstanding efforts" over the past 20 years, he referred to a performance of the *Messiah*, selections of Costa's *Eli*, the formation of a choir to sing at the official reception of the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George V and his queen) and a choir formed on the occasion of the coronation of King Edward VII during which the song *Land of Hope and Glory* was sung.

Brown seems to have ignored other works performed by the Singapore Philharmonic Society then: movements from Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*, Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 20 in D-minor* and Mendelssohn's *Piano Concerto No. 2*. These were concerts which the society had been proud of.

Yet, Brown fails to mention them. Moreover, Brown also fails to give more information on Sazlmann's predecessors, Iburg and Fentum. Why?

These omissions and errors could be due to the fact that, as the editors of *One Hundred Years* qualify, the articles in the book were written by volunteers and not professional historians.

So, we could surmise that Brown was only working on hearsay.

But then the question arises: Who gave him the information of those years before he had arrived in Singapore? What information did he select and why? What does it tell us about what music meant to the community?

In my research, it is likely that Brown's entire article was based primarily on what Salzmann wanted to be remembered or had remembered. In the section on Salzmann, Brown wrote that "If Mr Salzmann could have been induced to write his musical memories of Singapore, this article would have been unnecessary."

This statement was probably written not out of modesty. There is a likelihood that Brown meant it and he was aware that Salzmann could have provided a better account since at the time of his writing, Salzmann had already been in Singapore for 45 years as compared to Brown's 20. Read in another way then, Brown's statement could be taken to imply that since Salzmann could not be induced to write his musical memoirs, Brown's article would then be Salzmann's memoirs. The only way to do this then was to have Salzmann as his main and only source.

In fact, it is highly likely that Brown was relying heavily on Salzmann and this is the possible explanation for the absence of a host of visiting artists and why only certain personalities and repertoire performed were highlighted.

It is through a closer look at these highlighted personalities and repertoire that we can imagine (or re-imagine) what music-making meant to the community of people away from their homeland.

Both Goddard and Sherwin were musicians from within the British Empire and the repertoire highlighted and the "outstanding efforts" remembered by Brown mainly comprised cantatas, oratorios or occasions related to England. As it has been noted, musical life in 19th century Britain was governed not by opera as was the rest of Europe, but by the oratorio.

The artists remembered and the repertoire highlighted in Brown's article were about home. They were all related in one way or another to England, the land where Brown and Salzmann spent their formative years. Brown recalled of evenings spent in Singapore with Salzmann and another prominent figure in colonial Singapore, Charles Burton Buckley (1844–1912), whose book *Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* Brown also drew from:

… it was always a source of delight to me to sit quietly on the verandah after dinner was over, and to listen quietly to the two 'old' men yarning of their old days in London …

In fact, in his memoirs, Brown stated that Salzmann was "conservative" and "hated new things" and "the music he had lived in and on in London was his mind the best, and he would not believe that the best of his days could perhaps be bettered by the best of later days … "

Brown's article appeared in a book whose viewpoint—given the background to the publication of the book—can be deemed to be also that of the public as a whole. This perhaps affirms that music then, given that virtually all memories of performances and performers who visited were from England, in its practice and even in the memories of it, was about home.

Music served, as it were, a means through which a community of people living away from their homeland could continue to reinforce their cultural identity and a way to be culturally at home despite being geographically away.

100 Years On

What then does such knowledge hold for the arts practitioner, manager or researcher in a Singapore of the 21st century?

The programme of the SSO's 40th anniversary gala concert on 18th January 2019 included two works performed at its inaugural concert in 1979: American composer Charles Ives's The *Unanswered Question* and Beethoven's popular *Piano Concerto No. 5.*

The concert however opened with a work written in 1980 by pioneering Singapore composer Leong Yoon Pin (1931–2011), *Dayong Sampan Overture,* a work based on a popular Malay folk tune and the first Singapore work performed by the SSO. As Leong himself said about the work as cited in the SSO's programme booklet:

Against the distant drums, horns and bassoons … herald … the quiet dawn.

The aquatic sports on the southern seas being with the allegro section in full merriment … the timpani … [ushers in] the well-known Malay folk tune, Dayong Sampan, played by the oboe and clarinet against pizzicato strings and tambourine …

A four bar adagio leads into the recapitulation, and the coda is meant to be played with great jollity.

The concert concluded with Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7* which at its premiere in 1813, the audience demanded its second movement to be repeated. The SSO's programme notes on the work for the concert ends with composer Richard Wagner's description of the exuberant final movement as one in which "in the last whirl of delight a kiss of triumph seals the last embrace."

One could say that musically, the concert brought the audience back in time. One could say that musically, the SSO's gala started at home and then moved on to the rest of world.

In this then, one could also say that for a 21st century Singapore audience who is already at home—the concert played to a packed house—music continues to serve a reminder of home but at the same time, it is also an expression of a desire to move forward.

The central part of this article is derived from the author's unpublished thesis Music in Empire: Western Music in 19th Century Singapore Through A Study of Selected Texts *submitted to the National Institute of Education (NIE), Nanyang Technological University in 2003 in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of the Master of Arts when the author was a research scholar with the School of Visual and Performing Arts, NIE.* ☐

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From *Sushi* in Singapore to *Laksa* in London: Globalising Foodways and the Production of Economy and Identity

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Food is an integral part of Singapore's heritage and culture. This can be seen in many aspects of life in the country, from the many food blogs and websites to Singapore's recent bid to inscribe hawker culture on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In this adapted extract of Professor Lily Kong's chapter in Food, Foodways and Foodscapes: Culture, Community and Consumption in Post-Colonial Singapore, *Professor Kong explores the foodscapes in Singapore and the role of food in our identity. Reproduced with the kind permission of the author and publisher, the essay has been further updated to reflect subsequent changes to organisations mentioned and other developments.*

Beginning in the 1970s, the introduction of new foods and cuisines from overseas dramatically altered Singapore's culinary scene. Leung et al (2001) describe the changes that occurred around this period. Previously, Singapore's food scene consisted mainly of street foods, hawker stalls, *kopitiams* (coffee shops) and "conventional" restaurants. However, the 1970s saw the entry of Western fast food joints into Singapore, and the movement gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s. Specialty restaurants sprang up during this period, Western fast food chains mushroomed (Leung, Ahmed, and Seshanna 2001, 51; Omar 2008) a greater range of international cuisines appeared, Japanese food gained popularity (Ng 2001, 8) and ethnic cuisines such as Thai and Indonesian became more widely available. New dining concepts and ways of serving food were also introduced. The now ubiquitous food court which offers an integrated one-stop spread of different food options was one such concept, as was the concept of fast food franchises offering customers speedy and convenient meals. Al-fresco dining caught on and Singapore's nightlife received a boost with the development of Boat Quay and Clarke Quay in 1993 which enabled restaurants, pubs and cafes to be built by the Singapore River. By 1998, close to 40% of restaurants in Singapore served Western or "International" cuisine, while around 56% offered "Oriental" cuisine (Leung, Ahmed, and Seshanna 2001, 51–52). Since then, a growing smorgasbord of cuisines and foods from all over the world has established a presence in Singapore. This includes food from Europe, Central and Latin America, the United States, East Asia and other parts of Southeast Asia, ranging from convenience food to gourmet food served at high-end restaurants. In what follows, I elaborate in further detail on the foreign foods that have contributed to the globalisation of food in Singapore.

One key evidence of the globalisation of food in Singapore has been the expansion of Western-style fast food and international food franchises into the country. Henderson (2014) notes that the proliferation of international fast food chains and food and beverage franchises are an indication of how the food industry in Singapore is globalising. The very first fast food joint to open in Singapore was A&W in 1968, perhaps best remembered among Singaporeans for its root beer floats and curly fries. Though it subsequently closed down, A&W paved the way for other American fast food chains in Singapore. Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) was the next to enter Singapore in 1976, followed by McDonald's in 1979 (Omar 2008). Burger King also commenced operations in Singapore in 1982 and Long John Silver's in 1983. By 2008, McDonald's, KFC and Burger King had become leading players in Singapore's fast food sector (Omar 2008). Wendy's re-opened in Singapore in 2009, furthering the proliferation and popularity of typical fast food fare like burgers, French fries and milkshakes. Competition in Singapore's fast food industry is intense, which explains the closure of A&W in Singapore in 2003 and why global brands like Taco Bell have come and gone. Yet this has not deterred more recent entrants. Newer players in the Singapore market include Carl's Junior, Mos Burger and Jollibee.

In addition to global fast food conglomerates, international food franchises have also introduced non-traditional foods to Singapore. American-style pizza has become a common food in Singapore, largely due to the promotional efforts of franchises like Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza and Canadian Pizza. Relatively smaller pizza start-ups like Sarpino's, Oishi Pizza and Pelican Pizza have entered the mix and enabled more choices for consumers. All these pizza chains usually target younger consumers who tend to be fond of Western food (Wang 2006; *Media* 2010). Similarly, global franchises like Dunkin' Donuts and Krispy Kreme from the United States have heightened the appeal of non-traditional foods like doughnuts among consumers in Singapore.

Another segment of Singapore's food and beverage industry that has witnessed the entry of global players is Western theme restaurants such as Hard Rock Cafe and Planet Hollywood. MacLaurin and MacLaurin (MacLaurin and MacLaurin 2000, 76–77) observe that the theme-restaurant industry grew rapidly in Singapore beginning in 1990. Hard Rock Cafe was the first to open in Singapore that year and was designed around a rock-and-roll theme. The food was mainly Western-style, and customers were able to purchase product merchandise and music memorabilia. Other theme restaurants like Hooters subsequently followed in 1996, and Planet Hollywood also established one of its chains in Singapore in the same year. Consumers thus became acquainted with a new and novel Western/ international restaurant concept.

Aside from Western fast foods and global franchises, European foods—particularly Italian, Spanish and French—are also among the most popular cuisines that have played a part in making Singapore a globalised food hub. Italian food and dessert can be found in the many Italian restaurants here from *trattorias* like Pasta Fresca da Salvatore and Da Paolo, to scoop-shops offering gelato. Pasta Fresca, which was set up in Singapore in 1988, claims it was one of the pioneering restaurants to introduce fresh pasta to customers here, and that it imports its cheese fresh from Italy and continues to uphold the culinary traditions of the Italian kitchen. Italian fare like pizza, pasta and *tiramisu* is also offered by establishments like Da Paolo which began in 1989 and runs pizza bars, gourmet delis and bistro bars. Even Italian restaurant chains with an international presence chose to expand into Singapore. Jamie's Italian, founded by celebrity chef Jamie Oliver and his Italian mentor Gennaro Contaldo (*The Straits Times* 2013), picked Singapore as the location of its first restaurant in Asia. Opened in 2013, it offers fresh *antipasti* and pasta, further adding to the choice and range of Italian foods that can be enjoyed in Singapore. *Gelato*, the frozen Italian-style ice cream, has also become a familiar and popular food in Singapore with numerous *gelaterias* found all over the city.

Besides Italian food, Spanish cuisine has made headway in Singapore as well. *Tapas* bars became a craze in Singapore in 2010 (*CNN Travel* 2010) and well-known favourites like *paella* can be found at Spanish restaurants here. French cuisine can also be savoured in Singapore, whether at high-end award-winning restaurants like Les Amis, or more casual eateries. An interesting concept was introduced when TFS Bistrot—formerly known as The French Stall and started by French chef Xavier Le Henaff—sought to bring affordable French food to Singapore's suburbs/heartlands by opening its eateries in *kopitiams* and food courts. Other European cuisines available in Singapore include Swiss food which, though less common, has been popularised through Marché restaurant outlets in Singapore. Marché in fact chose to establish its flagship Asia-Pacific outlet in Singapore at VivoCity (Marché 2007).

Latin and Central American foods have not quite penetrated Singapore's culinary scene as extensively as European and other cuisines, but can still be found in Singapore. Examples are Mexican and Costa Rican dishes such as *fajitas, quesadillas, salsa, burritos, tortillas* and *tacos*. These dishes are not only offered at mid-or up-market restaurants in bustling food and beverage districts like Clarke Quay and Duxton Hill, but humble hawker centres as well, such as at Golden Shoe Food Centre (closed) and Amoy Street Food Centre (*MoneySmart* 2014; *The Straits Times* 2014).

Closer to home, East Asian cuisines, like those from Japan and South Korea, as well as those from neighbouring parts of Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar, present among them some of the more popular cuisines that have spread to Singapore. Japanese food is very well-received in Singapore. *Sushi*, *ramen* (noodles), *teppanyaki* (hot-plate food) and other Japanese dishes are widely consumed in Singapore through a variety of different channels ranging from *ryotei* (formal Japanese restaurants), family restaurants, *kaiten-sushi* (sushi on a conveyor belt) restaurants, takeout *sushi* counters to fast food restaurants like Yoshinoya (Tanimura 2006; Ng 2001). The acceptance of Japanese foods by Singaporeans, however, was not immediate and occurred gradually over time. Ng (2001, 10) notes that Singaporeans' acceptance of *sushi* was initially tepid in the 1980s as locals were not accustomed to eating cold raw fish. However, *sushi* culture gained a strong following in the 1990s and early 2000s after some localisation of taste and reduction in price. Local entrepreneurs recognised the business potential in bringing Japanese *sushi* chains to Singapore, such as Singaporean businessman David Ban who opened franchises of the successful Genki Sushi in Singapore in 1994 (Matsumoto 2006, 18). Sushi Tei, which debuted in the same year, is owned by a Japanese and imports certain ingredients from Japan, while Sakae Sushi was founded by a Singaporean and also features *kaiten-sushi*. All of them have helped to bring *sushi* to Singapore and popularised it among locals (Ng 2001, 13). Today, *sushi* can even be purchased at counters in supermarkets like Cold Storage, Giant and NTUC Fairprice. *Ryotei* and family restaurants, on the other hand, provide a more extensive menu than *sushi* outlets, with additional dishes such as *bento* (Japanese food served in a lacquered box), *tempura, donburi* (Japanese "rice bowl dish") and *teppanyaki*. Prices at *ryotei* are higher as they tend to use higher-quality ingredients and are located in hotels, while Japanese-style family restaurants are less expensive (Tanimura 2006, 43-44).

Korean food is another "well-travelled" cuisine that has made an impact in Singapore. Most Singaporeans have tried spicy *kimchi* (fermented cabbage), hotstone *bibimbap* (Korean "mixed rice") and *bulgogi* (barbecue beef). It is not uncommon to find Korean food stalls in food courts in Singapore, and there is a growing number of Korean restaurants specialising in Korean-style charcoal grill barbeque or offering other traditional dishes such as ginseng chicken soup or *pa jon* (Korean pancake with eggs, vegetable or meat). The first Korean restaurant in Singapore was set up by Singaporean Lim Siang Hee in 1973 and since then, the Korean food scene has continued to develop. A sort of mini "Korea town" formed in Tanjong Pagar from the cluster of Korean restaurants and Korean supermarkets there, and more Korean restaurants can be found within the Central Business District and hotels. Such development may have been aided by Singaporeans' increased interest in Korean cuisine following the Seoul Olympics in 1988 (*The Straits Times* 2005). One of the more recent trends has been the expansion of Korean barbeque chains into Singapore. Three well-known ones—Boss BarBQ, Kkongdon BBQ and Bornga—set up their first outlets in Singapore in 2012, and some have plans to open even more outlets in the country. Two more Korean BBQ restaurants also

popped up in Tanjong Pagar in the same year—Supulae and Mini Korea Bistro & Izakaya. As of 2012, there were at least 150 Korean restaurants in Singapore (*The Straits Times* 2012).

Cuisines from Singapore's Southeast Asian neighbours have also become commonplace in Singapore. Indonesian *nasi padang* (steamed rice with choice of various pre-cooked dishes) is easily found in Singapore. *Nasi padang* originated from Padang, a region in Sumatra, Indonesia, and is particularly common in the area near Masjid Sultan (or Sultan Mosque), a landmark mosque in Singapore around where immigrants set up eateries. Indonesian style *ayam goreng bumbu* (fried chicken) and *gulai kikil* (beef tendon in curry) are just some of the Indonesian foods that can be enjoyed in Singapore (*The Straits Times* 2006). Vietnamese and Laotian food have also entered and become part of Singapore's multicultural culinary market. These ethnic cuisines can be consumed at different places in various settings—from simple stalls at Joo Chiat Road, to more chic and expensive restaurants like the IndoChine chain (Carruthers 2012). Examples of Vietnamese/Laotian dishes available at such eateries are *pho bo* (Vietnamese beef noodles), Sai Kog Laotian sausages, and Laotian *laksa* (spicy noodle soup). Today, most Singaporeans are already very familiar with signature dishes of these ethnic cuisines like Vietnamese rice paper rolls and *pho*. Thai cuisine is popular in Singapore too and the Thai foodscape in Singapore is similarly varied, made up of simple eateries such as those in Thai migrant enclaves like Golden Mile Complex, mid-end restaurants like Sukothai and ThaiExpress situated in more upmarket locations like Boat Quay, Holland Village, the Esplanade or shopping centres (Chua 2003), and restaurants in still more sophisticated settings, like Patara. Though relatively lesser known, Burmese cuisine is nonetheless available in Singapore as well. Most Burmese eateries and supermarkets tend to be concentrated in Peninsula Plaza, with some restaurants even specialising in minority ethnic cuisines of Myanmar. Examples of Burmese dishes found in Singapore are *mee shay* (rice noodles with meat sauce), *lap pat thut* (Burmese tea leaf salad) and *hsanwin makin* (Burmese semolina cake dessert) (*Makansutra* 2012).

Clearly, many different foods from all over the globe have spread to Singapore and contributed to the vibrancy of the country's foodscape, adding to its already internally diverse cuisine. As a result of the influence of these foreign cuisines, the presence of fusion food has been growing in Singapore. Lovallo (2013) writes that fusion food is "both a result and indicator of globalisation" and elaborates on various concepts of fusion food. Fusion cuisine can be viewed as a merging of cuisines or culture. Alternatively called "World Cuisine", fusion cuisine has also been described as "a sort of culinary globalisation [sic] generally considered to be 'post-modern' ... [a] new international cuisine ..." (Clave and Knafou 2012; Lovallo 2013, 3). Both culinary chefs and enterprising restaurateurs have engaged in creative experimentation, mixing elements of different culinary practices, usually based on the similarity of ingredients. For example, some may look for "bridging ingredients" that appeal to the taste buds of both cultures, upon which global flavours and preparation methods can be layered to result in fusion cuisines (Ganeshram, quoted in Remizowski 2010). Fusion food not only involves a combination of different flavours, but inventive culinary techniques as well. Furthermore, it requires an understanding of the culture and history of component cuisines (Lovallo 2013, 22-24). In 1997, "New Asia Cuisine", a form of fusion cuisine, began to develop in Singapore. New Asia Cuisine may involve combining European culinary techniques with Asian flavours, or fusing Western ingredients with Asian preparation techniques. Singaporean chefs have created interesting fusion dishes that merge local and European foods using modified Asian culinary techniques, and have

played with flavours and ingredients to deliver new tastes. Examples are *risotto* with lemongrass, and yam jelly with edamame foam which demonstrates the fusion of Chinese, Japanese and European ingredients (Chaney and Ryan 2012, 312). In an article for the *Financial Times,* Shoba Narayan similarly noted that "a new cuisine style is transforming Singapore", led by talented Singaporean chefs like Sam Leong, Galvin Lim at Au Jardin, and Yong Bing Ngen of The Majestic. With their vision and imagination, cuisines are being reinvented and redefined. Chef Milind Sovani, for example, comes up with fusion Indian creations by borrowing from different cultures. The result is dishes like *naan* made into mini-pizza, *foie gras* with star anise, and lobster with lemon-chilli marinade made using Kerala *moily* sauce (a coconut-based sauce) (*FT.com* 2009).

Global city, cosmopolitan identity, multi-ethnic history: Provocations to the globalisation of food

What prompted this globalisation of food in Singapore, and what dynamics have been at play that facilitated the widespread acceptance of foreign cuisines in the country? The ambitions of a global city and the cosmopolitanism that comes with it are deeply implicated. Characteristic of such a city is the existence of a large expatriate community and the presence of unceasing flows of migrants, alongside a population that is well-travelled and open to media flows and influences. While significant, the roots of this openness run deeper, drawing from a historical sense of a diverse society that takes cultural flows and exchanges as a given, borne of the self-definition as a multi-ethnic society and an entrepôt. These conditions have predisposed its people to welcome a range of cuisines and to celebrate the diversity of foods. Finally, the affluence of the country has generated a foodie culture that translates into food business opportunities. I elaborate on these conditions below.

Migrant flows, expatriate communities

The city-state's development over the past four decades making it the commercial hub of Southeast Asia and a thriving financial centre of global repute has attracted expatriates from all over the world who have settled in Singapore to pursue work and business opportunities (MAS 2014). Singapore has a large expatriate community which has introduced foreign cuisines to the island and significantly influenced the food industry to provide food choices to satisfy their palates. Today, the expatriate population in Singapore numbers more than one million, with many working as professionals and managers (Henderson 2014, 907). Each nationality naturally introduced its own cuisine, thus expanding Singapore's food scene. Japanese business expansion into the financial sectors and rubber industry during Singapore's early years brought increasing numbers of Japanese workers into Singapore. In the 1910s, large Japanese banks and trading companies sent employees to Singapore. These new arrivals were wealthy immigrants who could afford to live around Orchard Road. There was also another class of Japanese immigrants who came to work as labourers on plantations in Singapore and were therefore poorer. Between 1912 and 1920, Japanese restaurants were set up to cater to these Japanese expatriates and migrant workers. However, the real boom in Japanese cuisine in Singapore only occurred from the 1980s onwards, due to the dramatic increase in the Japanese population in Singapore and interest in Japanese culture. In the 1980s, there were approximately 8,000 Japanese in Singapore; by 1996, this had tripled to 24,000

(Thang 1999; Tanimura 2006, 17-19, 31). Today, the Japanese expatriate community is one of the largest here. As a result, the number of Japanese restaurants in Singapore has risen from around 70 during the 1980s (Ng 2001, 8-9) to over 600 as of 2009 (Yamanaka 2009). Similarly, Korean restaurants mushroomed in Singapore when Korean construction companies sent hundreds of Korean expatriates to the country in the 1990s (*The Straits Times* 2005).

Enterprising immigrants also set up their own restaurants in Singapore to cater to fellow expatriates and Singaporeans, thus helping to popularise their home cuisines in Singapore. For example, Italians Salvatore Carecci of Pasta Fresca da Salvatore and Paolo Scarpa of the Da Paolo Group, together with his family, helped widen the appeal of Italian cuisine in Singapore through their long-running restaurants. Michael Ma, the Laotian-Chinese owner of IndoChine, came to Singapore originally as a finance professional, but instead became a culinary entrepreneur by starting his restaurant chain offering Vietnamese/ Laotian fare in 1999. His elevation of lndoChinese food into an exotic cuisine presented in classy post-modern settings has proven to be a hit with the expatriate community and locals alike (Carruthers 2012).

However, it is not only the entry of skilled expatriates that has contributed to the globalisation of food in Singapore. The increase in number of low-skilled migrants and labourers into Singapore has also played a critical part. More Thai migrants from northeast Thailand have come to work as construction workers or domestic helpers in Singapore (Chua 2003) and have contributed to the growth of Thai eateries in areas like Golden Mile Complex, which are patronised by more adventurous Singaporeans who value the authenticity and affordability of Thai food there. Similarly, Burmese expatriates and migrants have helped acquaint Singaporeans with their local cuisine. There are around 200,000 Burmese expatriates in Singapore. In addition to Burmese professionals, there is also a community of blue-collar Burmese workers in Singapore (*Makansutra* 2012). Given the adequate demand, Burmese eateries and minimarts have thus appeared in Singapore, particularly at Peninsula Plaza and Excelsior Shopping Centre.

A well-travelled people

As Singapore has prospered, Singaporeans have become more well-travelled; this has in turn boosted the popularity of foreign cuisines in Singapore. The increase in number of specialty restaurants, offering ethnic cuisines in the late 1980s and early 1990s, can be attributed to the fact that Singaporeans were beginning to enjoy greater affluence and could travel overseas more frequently (MacLaurin and MacLaurin 2000, 76). Increased exposure to the cuisines of other countries in this way has widened the demand and market for foreign foods in Singapore. For example, Chua (2003) noted that the rise in popularity of Thai food in Singapore was related to the growth in the number of Singaporeans visiting Thailand. After becoming familiar with and enjoying Thai food in its native country, returning Singaporeans were glad to be able to continue consuming it at Thai restaurants in Singapore.

Popular culture and media influence

Singaporeans' interest in foreign foods has often also been aroused through exposure to foreign culture via the media and popular culture. For example, Japanese drama series like *Oshin* which was broadcast on television in Singapore in the 1980s was hugely popular and drew a large audience (Chua 2000, 140). Growing interest in Japanese culture through such popular culture motivated Singaporeans to find out more about

Japanese cuisine. Other television programmes like *Japan Hour*, which aired on Channel News Asia, also focused more attention on Japanese food culture. The show introduced viewers in Singapore to regional Japanese specialties from different parts of the country. Even Japanese comic books and cartoons helped generate interest in Japanese food culture among Singaporeans. Tanimura (2006, 89-91) relates personal experiences of how a Singaporean friend came to know of Doriyaki (a Japanese confection consisting of red bean paste between two small pancakes) as it is a favourite food of the well-known cartoon character Doraemon; and how another learnt about Japanese food by reading "Oishinbo", a *manga* (comic) about Japanese cooking.

Similarly, Korean culture is very popular in Singapore, with many Singaporeans being fans of Korean dramas, K-Pop entertainment, and Korean fashion. Interest in all things Korean has naturally generated interest in Korean cuisine as well and seen Singaporeans welcome Korean foods. Some Korean restaurants even merge live K-Pop entertainment with dining so customers can enjoy both elements of Korean culture (*The Straits Times* 2012). Media and popular culture have therefore helped familiarise Singaporeans with foreign cuisines and contributed to advancing the globalisation of food in Singapore.

Multi-ethnic community, cosmopolitan identity

In Singapore, food is used in the construction of a cosmopolitan identity at both the individual and national levels, helping to fuel the acceptance of foreign cuisines and the development of the international food business in Singapore. At the individual level, Singaporeans associate the consumption of foreign foods with cosmopolitan attitudes, and the ability to appreciate foreign cuisines is considered desirable (Duffy and Yang 2012, 69). Consuming foreign foods has therefore become a way for Singaporeans to identify with and construct a modern cosmopolitan identity for themselves. Varying definitions of the term "cosmopolitan" exist. To be cosmopolitan entails an "openness to otherness and difference" (Young et al. 2006, 1688) or having an international orientation. A cosmopolitan individual is "someone who can claim to be a 'citizen of the world'" (Robbins 1998, 248). Being cosmopolitan therefore connotes a certain level of sophistication and worldliness (Chua 2003). In seeking to belong to this cosmopolitan class, many Singaporeans seek the consumption of foreign cuisines to demonstrate that they have the sophistication to appreciate other cuisines. It is almost a way for individuals to express or project the superiority of their cultural refinement and knowledge. In particular, the consumption of "exotic" cuisines that are viewed as novel or unusual can especially make people feel cosmopolitan.

The appetite and desire for foreign foods is not only reflected in Singaporeans' patronage of foreign restaurants, but at the retail level as well, in the demand for foreign foodstuffs. With improvements in international distribution and food preservation technologies, supermarkets in Singapore have been able to import a variety of overseas foods which were originally targeting expatriate consumers, but have also found a market among local Singaporeans (Duruz 2006, 103). For example, Japanese supermarkets and grocery shops in Singapore brought in Japanese goods and ingredients for the expatriate Japanese community, but as Ng (2001, 9) pointed out, they also enjoy business from Singaporeans. Cold Storage, a chain of supermarkets, began by importing foodstuffs sought after by expatriate Europeans seeking a taste of home, such as Dutch, Swiss, English and Danish cheeses, pickles, jams, custards and fresh produce from many countries. Duruz (2006,103, 105) writes that Cold Storage offered "meanings of Western cosmopolitanism" to the expatriate community and notes that over the years,

the "cosmopolitan eating" that it fosters was not limited to expatriates but attracted Singaporean customers as well.

At the national level, cosmopolitanism has even become part of the government's strategy for developing Singapore and strengthening its global profile and competitive economic position. In the past decade or so, the government has worked towards a vision of Singapore as a cosmopolitan city (Bishop 2011, 642), employing a "two-pronged approach .... The first is to make Singapore a place for cosmopolitans and the second is to create cosmopolitan Singaporeans" (Tan and Yeoh, 2006, 148). The latter refers to the development of Singaporeans who possess skills that are marketable worldwide and who have an international outlook, a characterisation forwarded by former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong (Goh 1999; Chua 2003). But it is the former – creating Singapore into a place for cosmopolitans – in which food has come to play a significant role. The desire to ensure that Singapore is a place for cosmopolitans has led the government to position food as one of the perks of living in Singapore in order to attract the foreign elite. As Bell and Valentine (1997) note, entrepreneurial cities understand that showcasing culinary diversity is a kind of urban boosterism and in doing so, can increase their attractiveness as a place to live and work.

With Singapore's street food scene and mid-end restaurant industry already fairly developed, the country has focused efforts on nurturing culinary cosmopolitanism and developing the finer gourmet segment, with the aim of making Singapore a globalised gourmet hub. In this regard, the development of international fine dining at two new hotel and casino complexes—the Marina Bay Sands (MBS) and Resorts World Sentosa (RWS)—provide an example of the culinary cosmopolitanism that is transforming Singapore in exciting and diverse ways. Eleven internationally renowned chefs opened restaurants at MBS and RWS, though most had since closed down for various reasons. They include legendary Michelin-decorated French chef Joel Robuchon, Guy Savoy from Paris, Kunio Tokuoka from Kyoto, Santi Santamaria from Catalonia, American chef Mario Bartali, Australian chef Scott Webster, and Wolfgang Puck (*The Wall Street Journal* 2010). Collectively, their restaurants bring cuisines from all over the globe—French gourmet fare, Spanish cuisine, Japanese *kaiseki*, Italian gastronomy, and many others. The Singapore government has aided the development of foreign cuisine restaurants by providing a favourable business environment of low tax rates, low import taxes and stable government. Other factors cited by foreign restaurateurs that encouraged them to set up businesses in Singapore were the presence of a large expatriate population, high levels of disposable income, and the use of English as the main language (*The Wall Street Journal* 2010; Maclaurin and Maclaurin 2000: 76). In these various ways, Singapore has been able to harness food as "a badge of sophistication, reach and power" (Duffy and Yang 2012: 64) to project a cosmopolitan image of the city, and as a magnet to attract cosmopolitans to Singapore. Food has thus played a notable role in representing Singapore as a vibrant global city in order to attract foreign talent and strengthen its economy.

In one sense, the predisposition to this cosmopolitan identity was already laid in the foundations of the city-state's multi-ethnic and diverse population. Chaney and Ryan (2012) suggest that Singaporeans are accepting of foreign cuisines because their own local foodways have a tradition of sharing. Nyonya cuisine, for instance, relies on ingredients from Malay, Chinese and Indian cooking. Malay dishes like *nasi briyani* reflect Middle Eastern and Indian influences (Brown and Backenheimer 2006; Chaney and

Ryan 2012:312). This history of openness to other cuisines, and cultural acceptance of "borrowing" or exchanging flavours between different foodways may thus explain why Singaporeans are quick to embrace foreign cuisines and try new fusion foods.

Foodie culture

Another factor that has fuelled the globalisation of food in Singapore and acceptance of foreign cuisines is Singapore's "foodie culture", a characteristic made possible by the overall affluence of society. Duffy and Yang (2012, 59) observe that it has become "axiomatic of the Singaporean identity that they are a nation of foodies", to which Henderson (2014: 904) agrees by pointing out that the keen appreciation of food seems to be a common trait among Singaporeans. Locals are preoccupied with food, and a former Minister for Trade and Industry even remarked at the amount of time Singaporeans spend eating and constantly thinking about food, declaring this fixation with food to be "an inseparable part of our culture" (STB 2004). Singaporeans will queue for hours at stalls and go to great lengths just to procure the foods they desire. Food is almost like a national pastime and locals enjoy looking for new foods and eating places to try out (Wang 2006, 53; Duffy and Yang 2012, 59). So strong is the passion for food that foodies may think nothing of travelling across the island or even to Malaysia to hunt down good food (Wang 2006, 54). Food is also a very popular and frequent topic of conversation among Singaporeans, with people often sharing tips on where to find the best food places. Clearly, food is an important facet of Singaporeans' cultural identity, with Singaporeans united by a common love of food. Theoretical perspectives on the functions of food support these observations made in the context of Singapore of the social-cultural role of food. Chang (2013, 1) writes that food "is more than nourishment, it offers pleasure and entertainment and serves a social purpose". Goode (1992, 234) mentions that food can be used in such a way as to "define inclusion" and encourage "solidarity". Similarly, Mintz and Du Bois (2002, 109) state that "like all culturally defined material substances used in the creation and maintenance of social relationships, food serves ... to solidify group membership", though at the same time, they note that food may also be used as a divisive force to exclude others.

As a result of Singapore's strong foodie culture, Singaporeans are very receptive to trying out and accepting new cuisines, and they often come to appreciate these new flavours. In one interview, a Brazilian restaurateur commented that Singaporeans' fondness for trying new things translated into good business for her Brazilian restaurant. Singapore was therefore a good place for her restaurant to operate due to the strong demand (Duffy and Yang 2012, 70). The success of many restaurants offering foreign cuisines in Singapore may further attest to this. Singaporeans are also quick to catch on to the latest food fads, such as US-style doughnuts, Taiwanese bubble tea or French macaroons (Duffy and Yang 2012, 59). The national enthusiasm for food is both reflected in and fostered by the plethora of media dedicated to food from local television programmes that search for the best eateries, newspaper articles featuring new dining places or foods, social media applications that rate restaurants, and online food reviews posted by bloggers (Wang 2006, 53; Henderson 2014, 911). Food is so much a part of the national psyche that it is even used in linguistic expressions; for example, *rojak*—the Malay word for "mixture" which is also the name of a local salad—is used to describe any kind of mix, such as the ethnic mix of Singapore's population (Tarulevicz 2013, 3). Singapore's dining-out culture has also likely helped the globalisation of food in Singapore. Dining out is very common due to higher incomes, increasingly busy lifestyles, the wide variety of dining options available, and the treatment of dining out as a source of pleasure and entertainment (Tarulevicz 2011, 242; Ng 2001, 9; Henderson 2014, 907). To Singaporeans,

it is a chance to spend time socialising with friends and family; in this way, food acts as a force that binds the community together (Henderson 2014, 908). Ultimately, the inclination to dine outside the home means that Singaporeans are more likely to be exposed to foreign cuisines and to acquire an appreciation for them.

Globalisation of Singapore food

The travel of Singapore foods: From Toronto to Tokyo, from Seoul to Sydney

Globalisation is not unidirectional. It involves multi-directional flows and influences, though worries about more dominant flows are evident in the concerns expressed over cultural homogenisation, which, in the context of food, has led to fears about the development of a uniform "global palate" and "global cuisine" (Symons 1993; Ritzer 1995; Richards 2002). An examination of the globalisation of Singapore food suggests that, just as foreign cuisines from other parts of the world have spread to Singapore, Singapore food has also been making its way to countries abroad. Though these outward flows do not have the global reach of, say, Western fast food joints, they nevertheless demonstrate the dangers of excessive claims about "an ominous homogenisation of the world—where sameness is ubiquitously imposed, and the difference is steadily suppressed or eliminated" (Cheng 2011, 198, in Kikomr 2012).

Singapore cuisine is enjoying growing popularity beyond its shores and gaining greater awareness overseas. Dishes like *laksa*, chilli crab, *char kway teow*, and chicken rice are turning up in places like London, New York, Toronto, Mumbai, Chennai, Tokyo, Seoul, Shanghai and even Moscow, gradually becoming recognised and associated with Singapore by foreigners. Food products like *kaya*, *popiah* skin, curry pastes and seasonings from Singapore are also making their way to the shelves of foreign retail outlets and supermarkets overseas. Food festivals featuring Singapore cuisine are being held in various countries abroad, thus helping to introduce Singapore favourites to residents there. This spread of Singapore food overseas has occurred through the efforts of various agents—chiefly the Singapore government which plans and implements various food events, initiatives and policies to promote Singapore foods internationally, Singapore food manufacturers that export Singapore food products, Singapore restaurants opened by entrepreneurial individuals or businesses, and foreign hotels that seasonally promote Singapore food. Below, I elaborate on the initiatives undertaken by each agent in greater detail and the kinds of Singapore foods that they have helped introduce to the world. In the process, the economic and political roles that food plays become apparent.

Government initiatives: Food as tourism resource and culinary soft power

The Singapore government has actively promoted Singapore food overseas through a range of policies, programmes and events. Food is a valuable tourism resource (Hjalager and Richards 2002) that can effectively be used to increase visitorship to a destination (Fox 2007; du Rand et al. 2003). As Chang (2013, 9) notes, cuisine can serve as a way of differentiating a country from other destinations that compete for tourism arrivals and dollars. Tourism growth in turn contributes to economic growth, and this is significantly so in the case of Singapore. In 2014, the total contribution of tourism and travel to GDP in Singapore amounted to a notable S$39.7 billion (or 10.9% of GDP) (WTTC 2014). Food therefore plays an economic role and contributes to economic development by boosting tourism. It is a critical determinant of tourists' choice of destination,

as seen in a 2014 survey in which more than one-third of leisure travellers in the Asia-Pacific region (APAC) said food and drink is the determining factor in where they choose to vacation (*PR Newswire and Hilton Worldwide* 2014). Singapore government bodies have thus sought to raise the profile of Singapore cuisine overseas to encourage more tourists to visit the country.

Singapore Food Festival and overseas food events

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) established an internal Food and Beverage Division specially to develop culinary tourism, reflecting the importance that Singapore places on cuisine as a key theme for tourism marketing (Horng and Tsai 2012, 283). In 1994, STB launched the first Singapore Food Festival. The festival is an annual event showcasing Singapore's local cuisine, and it continues to run in various countries across the world, allowing participants to savour the taste of a tantalising spectrum of Singapore foods. In India, where the festival has been held in large cities like Mumbai and Chennai, participants get the opportunity to try chilli crab, *popiah* (Chinese-style fresh spring rolls), Hainanese chicken rice, *mee goreng* (fried noodles with Malay and Indian flavours and Chinese influence) and *tahu goreng* (fried tofu stuffed with vegetables) (*The Hindu* 1998; *Hindustan Times* 2013). In Japan, the festival also featured Hainanese chicken rice and Singapore's signature cocktail, the Singapore Sling (*CNA* 2006). In London, temporary kitchens were installed at Covent Garden Market for the festival so people could sample fresh *satay*, ice *kacang* (sweetened shaved ice dessert) and the ever-popular Hainanese chicken rice (*CNA* 2005b). Overall, the government's efforts in promoting Singapore food overseas to attract tourist traffic seems to have paid off as Singapore was voted the third favourite culinary destination by leisure travellers in APAC in 2014 (*PR Newswire and Hilton Worldwide* 2014). Promoting a national cuisine, as Singapore is doing, also helps a country gain "urban soft power" (Farrer 2010, i). As Barthes (1997 [1961]) highlights, food can fulfil a political purpose and "is always bound to the values of power" (Duffy and Yang 2012, 63). Specifically, by building its culinary reputation, Singapore seeks to raise its global profile, using its food as a cultural bridge so foreigners develop positive associations with the country.

In addition to STB, other government agencies have joined in to promote Singapore foods overseas. The main players are International Enterprise (IE) Singapore and SPRING Singapore, which have since merged to form Enterprise Singapore. One interesting initiative borne out of the joint efforts of these government bodies has been a mobile pop-up kitchen launched in 2011 called Singapore Takeout, which looks like a shipping container and travels the globe showcasing Singapore's culinary offerings. The aim of Singapore Takeout is to promote Singapore cuisine in some of the major cities in the world—London, Paris, New York, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Moscow, Sydney, Delhi and Dubai (*Business Times Singapore*, 2011b; *The Asian Age* 2012)—and market Singapore as a key gastronomic destination. It brings celebrated Singapore chefs like Benjamin Seck to these cities where they prepare dishes like cabbage and carrot *popiah* paired with vinegar and sweet chilli dip, prawn curry, *laksa* and other Nyonya specialties (*Mail Today* 2012). They also conduct cooking demonstrations. As Ranita Sundra, a Director at STB shared, the Singapore Takeout global tour seeks to establish Singapore as "a must-visit for foodies" and "Asia's most innovative culinary capital" (*Business Times Singapore* 2011b). To further raise the profile of Singapore cuisine overseas, the government has organised the Global Chef Exchange. This initiative is a culinary immersion programme which invites influential chefs from all over the world to Singapore to become familiarised with the local culinary culture. The programme hopes to inspire these chefs to create Singapore -style dishes back home and thus help to spread Singapore cuisine in more countries abroad

(*CNA* 2012). STB has sent delegations to other prominent international culinary events as well to strengthen awareness of Singapore cuisine on the world stage. For example, it sent an entourage of talented Singapore chefs to the World of Flavors conference in the United States, a prestigious professional forum on world cuisines, where they were able to showcase Singapore cuisine to other participants from across the globe (*Business Times Singapore* 2011a).

Supporting Singapore food exports

Singaporean food companies involved in food manufacturing have received much support from IE Singapore in expanding into overseas markets. The Singapore government recognises the economic potential of its domestic food exports, which nearly doubled from S$2.4 billion in 2006 to S$4.2 billion in 2012 (SingStat 2013), and the value in raising the profile of Singapore food brands and cuisine in markets abroad. IE Singapore aims to help Singapore food products reach the shelves of more foreign supermarkets and restaurants, and for Singapore cuisine to attract mainstream consumers in markets overseas, particularly those beyond Asia and where demand is growing such as the United States, Europe and the Middle East (*Singapore Government News* 2009). It has done so by building global business networks and inter-country alliances, and providing services to help local enterprises export, develop business capabilities, find overseas partners and penetrate new markets (IE Singapore 2008). Prima Taste is one local food company that has benefitted from IE Singapore's support. The company now sells food mixes such as *laksa*, Hainanese chicken rice and Singapore chilli crab in supermarkets and eateries in around 25 countries, and has seen healthy growth in export sales (*The Straits Times* 2009). Tee Yih Jia, another Singapore food manufacturer, has managed to distribute its pastry products, like *roti prata* and spring rolls, in major US cities with the help of IE Singapore (Today 2006). Similarly, Singapore convenience foods and sauces from Asian Home Gourmet and Tai Hua are available in the Canadian market. IE Singapore also enabled Singapore foods to enter the mainstream UK market by securing an entire aisle at London department store Selfridges for the sale of Singapore food products, such as pineapple tarts from local bakery Bengawan Solo and Hainanese chicken rice mix by sauce manufacturer Chng Kee (*The Straits Times* 2009).

Venturing abroad:
Singapore restaurants overseas

Another avenue through which Singapore cuisine has spread to other countries is the opening of Singapore restaurants or food franchises in overseas locations. In some cases, these outlets are opened by established food and beverage (F&B) players with the aid of IE Singapore. In other instances, they are initiated by entrepreneurial individuals or businesses of their own accord, without government assistance. An example of the former is when IE Singapore helped Imperial Treasure Restaurant Group, Ya Kun International, and Kriston Food & Beverage open eateries in Tokyo in a prominent retail complex with high customer traffic. IE Singapore managed to ink a deal with the Development Bank of Japan to facilitate the entry of Singapore firms, including Singapore food companies, into the Japanese market. The opening of these eateries helped bring authentic foods found in Singapore like chicken rice, *laksa, kaya* toast, and baked *naan* served with *masala* (Indian spices and curry) to Japanese consumers (*Bernama* 2006; *Business Times Singapore* 2006). Expansion has been rapid. Ya Kun, for instance, established 26 *kaya* toast outlets in six countries within five years (*The Straits Times* 2009). Prima Taste has developed its arm of restaurant franchises in eight cities abroad including Colombo, Ho Chi Minh, Beijing, Shanghai, and Surabaya, familiarising locals there with Singapore foods like *bak kut teh* and *satay*.

There are also enterprising Singaporean individuals or businesses who have set up restaurants by themselves overseas. Chef Chris Yeo left Singapore to open four Asian-style restaurants in the United States which offer Singapore dishes like *roti prata* and *laksa* (*The Straits Times* 2009). Boston's first Singaporean restaurant, called Merlion, was opened by Alfred Chua and serves hawker favourites such as *kway chap* (a mix of pork belly, eggs, tofu and rice noodles in a dark sauce), oyster pancake, *lor mee* and *rojak*. It is not only frequented by Singaporean patrons, but American customers as well (*The Boston Globe* 1995). In Australia, Dumpling Republic—a Singapore cuisine venture—opened its first restaurant on the Gold Coast in 2013 (*The Gold Coast Bulletin* 2013), where Singaporean chef Sim Kim Kwee and his team prepare dishes like steamed dumplings and *wonton* soup (dumpling soup). At Ginger & Spice Singapore Restaurant in Sydney, one can find *char kway teow*, *ngoh hiang* (fried pork rolls wrapped with beancurd skin), and *assam* fish (fish in tamarind sauce) (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 2007). Other eateries in Australia have made Singapore dishes like *laksa* very popular among Australians. Similarly, Singapore cuisine is making its mark in China, where a growing number of restaurants in cities like Shanghai offer favourites like *chai tow kway, laksa,* and chilli crab (*Shanghai Daily* 2011; *CNA* 2005a). In Chengdu, Singaporean company Old Chang Kee has introduced curry puffs and other local Singapore snacks since opening an eatery there in 2008 (*The Straits Times* 2008). Homegrown restaurant Jumbo Seafood has penetrated the South Korean and Japanese markets through joint partnerships and agreements, thus helping to introduce Singapore's famous chilli crab in these countries. It signed a memorandum of understanding with a key restaurant association in South Korea in 2007 to pave the way for partnership opportunities, and it opened restaurants in Tokyo and Osaka in collaboration with other Singapore business owners (*The Korea Herald* 2007; *The Straits Times* 2009).

Marketing Singapore foods: Hotel promotions

Hotels overseas hold promotions of Singapore food from time to time, and though relatively smaller in scale, these events are another way in which Singapore cuisine is being introduced overseas. Singapore's rich and diverse culinary offerings have a wide appeal that would satisfy a range of consumers. With Singapore's foods becoming better known, hotels likely realise that Singapore food promotions would be well-received and be met with healthy demand. As tourism traffic to Singapore grows, more travellers become familiar with Singapore cuisine and those who enjoy it will probably take advantage of opportunities to taste Singapore food again in their home country. For example, the JW Marriot Hotel Mumbai held a Singaporean food promotion, specially flying in a chef from Singapore to prepare Singapore-Chinese dishes like braised duck and claypot chicken (*Daily News & Analysis,* 16 Aug 2008). Several hotels under the Copthorne Hotel chain in London and Britain offer popular Singapore dishes like *hor fan*, *nasi padang*, and *laksa* (*The Straits Times* 1998). Even in Dubai, the Park Regis Kris Kin Hotel recreated Singapore delicacies as part of a seasonal promotion. It invited a Singapore celebrity chef to work with its own chef to design a menu featuring dishes like chicken rice and *rojak* (*Islamic Finance News* 2011). The InterContinental Eros, New Delhi, holds an annual Singapore food promotion that brings many Singapore hawker favourites to guests—oyster omelette, radish cake, *otak otak*, barbeque duck and chicken rice, mutton *rendang,* chicken *satay* and others (The Pioneer 2009). Closer to home, the Regent Kuala Lumpur similarly held a Singapore food fair during which guest Singapore chef Calvin Ow dished up hawker delights like satay *bihun* (rice noodles served with a chilli-based peanut sauce), prawn noodles, fried

carrot cake, and seafood *char kway teow* (*Weekend Mail* 2006). Such hotel promotions have therefore contributed to growing awareness of Singapore cuisine overseas, whether in Europe, the Middle East, South Asia or the closer neighbouring region.

Conclusions: Changing foodways

Foodways—"what we eat, as well as how and why and under what circumstances we eat" (Edge 2007: 8), or the patterns and practices related to the production and consumption of food—are not static. Cuisines are not fixed things (Cook et al. 2000, 113); rather, they are "dynamic phenomena" which "evolve and interact" (Henderson 2014, 904, 906). Indeed, in Singapore, globalisation has changed and continues to alter foodways—foreign foods have become part of the Singaporean foodscape and diet, new forms of cuisine have emerged from the interaction of different cuisines, and culinary practices and technologies continue to evolve. In addition, localisation practices have led to some modifications to foreign cuisines introduced in Singapore. The first wave of migration to early Singapore already demonstrated how foodways can change. It brought the mix of cuisines from different migrant ethnicities that laid the foundation for Singapore's now diverse, varied and hybrid cuisine. In more recent times, Singapore's ambition to be a global city has meant a great openness to flows of people, goods, services and ideas from all over the world. With this has come some Westernisation of taste buds among Singaporeans (Henderson 2014, 907) and more changes to foodways in Singapore. Western fast food and international food franchises have become very popular in Singapore. Such foods have become ubiquitous and are regularly consumed by many Singaporeans. A 2004 National Nutritional Survey showed that respondents consumed fast food around once every two weeks (Health Promotion Board 2004). Even in hawker centres which are thought to offer a close representation of common local foods that Singaporeans eat regularly, one can usually find a few stalls offering Western cuisine such as fish and chips, steak, pasta and burgers. Towards the gastronomic end of the spectrum, higher-end restaurants and chefs exposed to the influence of Western cuisine have merged Western and Asian culinary elements to create fusion or New Asia Cuisine, or a style that has also been called a "culinary global third culture" (Scarpato and Daniele 2003).

Besides Western-style foods, other foreign cuisines are also becoming less "foreign" to Singaporeans and are being incorporated into local foodways through increased consumption and the localisation of flavours. Evidence of such changes into the traditional foodways of Singaporeans can be seen in everyday food spaces—food courts not only offer the staples of Chinese, Malay and Indian options, but often include Japanese, Thai, Korean and Western cuisines as well. Foreign foods once viewed by locals as alien, exclusive or exotic when first introduced into Singapore have become familiar foods and more easily accessible to the average Singaporean. Japanese food like *sushi*, for example, was initially perceived as an exotic food consumed exclusively by Japanese expatriates, or wealthier and more adventurous locals due to its high price. Over time, however, the price of *sushi* has become more affordable, enabling more of the local masses to consume *sushi* on a more frequent basis (Ng 2001). In addition, the types and flavours of *sushi* in Singapore have been adjusted to fit the preferences of locals, increasing more Singaporeans' acceptance of the food. As not all Singaporeans are receptive to *sushi* containing raw fish, Japanese eateries in Singapore tend to offer more types of *sushi* made with cooked ingredients.

Furthermore, they add a twist to traditional sushi by incorporating Singapore-inspired flavours or creating unconventional combinations, such as *otak-otak sushi*, *maki* with *achar* (fruit and vegetable pickle in spiced oil—an appetiser common in Singapore) filling, and *sushi* with corn mayonnaise (Ng 2001, 16). Similarly, Thai food was previously considered a very exotic and special cuisine when it first entered Singapore's food scene, but high tourism levels between Singapore and Thailand and the increased influx of Thai migrant labourers have somewhat diminished its lofty exoticism in Singapore. It is now seen as a commonly available food in Singapore and the increased number of Thai eateries targeting the mid-end market, like ThaiExpress, have enabled more Singaporeans to consume Thai cuisine. Overall, the changes in foodways have therefore involved two aspects—the foodways of Singaporeans have altered to include the consumption of more foreign cuisines, and original traditional cuisines from foreign countries have also undergone some modifications following their introduction into Singapore.

That foodways are fluid and temporal has led sociologist Allison James (1996, 78) to question whether food in a globalised world can still be used as a distinguishing marker of cultural identity. The fact is that cross-cultural consumption frequently occurs as people belonging to one group consume foods from across different cultures. For example, to say that Singaporeans eat mostly Chinese, Malay and Indian foods, or that Singapore food consists of mainly Chinese, Malay and Indian elements, does not capture the fact that the traditional foodways have altered over time to include global influences and that the food scene has been internationalised to include a wealth of culinary and dining options from all over the world which locals themselves often indulge in. Neither does it acknowledge the essentialisation of "Chinese", "Malay" and "Indian", failing to recognise the multiplicities that these categories hide.

On the other hand, proponents of the cultural homogenisation thesis argue that culinary globalisation will lead (indeed, has led) to the standardisation of local food cultures and tastes, ultimately resulting in the erosion of traditional foodways. This frequently debated perspective has invited its own detractors who believe that globalisation does not necessarily produce uniformity among local cultures. Instead, they argue that people adapt global culture to suit their local culture (Metcalf 2002; Allison 2000; Watson 1997; Barber 1992; Tanimura 2006, 75-76). Robertson's notion of "glocalisation" reframes the idea of globalisation as an opposing force of the local. To him, "the local is essentially included within the global" and globalisation involves both homo and heterogenisation (Robertson 1995; Tanimura 2006, 76). He and other authors have pointed out that food is often modified to fit local cultures and palates. McDonald's, a symbol of globalisation, is a commonly cited example used to illustrate this point. Its localisation strategy sees it regularly feature items that incorporate local flavours and ingredients. In Singapore, for example, McDonald's launched its *Shiok Shiok* Satay Burgers, based on the flavour of the Singaporean dish *satay*, served with peanut sauce. Other Western fast food chains have similarly introduced localised or "Singaporeanised" versions of items on the menu. Burger King came up with a *Rendang* Burger, and Pizza Hut has promoted *Satay* pizza, Curry Chicken pizza, and Sweet and Sour pizza (*The Straits Times* 1994).

Still, a key concern is whether the external forces of globalisation will "dilute" Singapore's traditional foodways and cause local foods to become less significant. Henderson (2014, 92-93) argues that this is unlikely, given that traditional foods are "too deeply embedded in Singapore society and culture to disappear", but recognising that they will keep evolving as the country modernises and progresses. While globalisation has indeed

led to the proliferation of foreign cuisines in Singapore, she observes that this has not overshadowed the prominence of its local cuisine, and that both international and local foods can "co-exist and coalesce" (Henderson 2014, 904). Global food franchises and restaurants offering cuisines from all over the world may be enriching Singapore's dining scene, but have not yet diminished the relevance and importance of Singapore's traditional local foods. Rather, they co-exist with the local, and have added variety and vibrancy to Singapore's food scene. While foreign foodways have influenced Singapore's food culture, there is a limit to the extent of this influence. Chua (2000, 144) notes that while foreign cuisines are more widely consumed in Singapore especially as a leisure activity, internationalised foreign foods "have seldom, if at all, been incorporated and domesticated into the family kitchens and dining tables of Singaporeans". At home, traditional cuisine and local foods still largely make up the daily meals of Singaporeans. Perhaps because food represents familiarity and continuity (Henderson 2014, 913), Singaporean families usually choose to have local dishes for everyday meals in the home. While traditional foodways in Singapore look set to stay, there are still real challenges they face. There is concern that the quality of local foods served commercially is declining due to the use of "short cut" strategies of food preparation techniques and lower quality ingredients. The hawker trade, which produces some of the best local favourite dishes, is suffering. Retiring hawkers have no one to pass their skills to as young Singaporeans are not interested in entering a low-paying trade that requires hard work. Migrant workers are taking their places, but there have been complaints that they cannot reproduce Singapore dishes to the same standards of authenticity and quality (Henderson 2011; 2014, 912). Thus, more attention has recently been directed to preserving Singapore's traditional foodways, especially local street food, to ensure its continued longevity and to protect Singapore's food heritage.

At the same time, the globalisation of Singapore food—or—spread of Singapore cuisine overseas —is occurring. Local favourites like chicken rice, *satay* and *laksa* have made their way to numerous cities around the world. The international profile of Singapore food is growing through various efforts. Government initiatives play an important part. The government realises that food is a vital tourism resource that can increase visitorship to the country and increase economic revenue in the tourism sector, as well as build its culinary soft power. It also recognises the value of domestic food exports to the country's economy.

Though disappearance of local favourites in local eating outlets does not seem imminent, it would be ironic—not to mention sad—should the day arrive when local foods so commonly available today in hawker centres and coffee shops are largely replaced in such settings by foreign imports, even as they become available mainly on special celebratory occasions in local commemorative and heritage events or as part of overseas "travelling shows" and exports. Amidst the globalisation of food, the commitment to support and retain local foods through continued production and consumption within the home and beyond it signals appreciation of their symbolism and meaning, reminding Singaporeans of "who they are, and where and how they are to be located in the world" (James 1996, 92, cited in Lim 2011, 89). □

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The Singapore Story through 60 objects

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The main and section text is written by the author while objects selected and the accompanying captions are edited by the author, based on recommendations and curatorial captions contributed by curators, archivists and other colleagues at Asian Civilisations Museum and Peranakan Museum, Asian Film Archive, Indian Heritage Centre, Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, National Archives of Singapore, National Gallery Singapore, National Heritage Board, National Library Singapore, National Museum of Singapore, Singapore Art Museum and Singapore Botanic Gardens. See acknowledgements for full list of contributors.

As we reflect on the bicentennial of modern Singapore this year, we should not forget another significant milestone in our nation's history: Singapore's achievement of internal self-government in June 1959. This year marks its 60th anniversary.

To commemorate 60 years of self-rule, this graphic spread presents 60 objects from Singapore's various National Collections which, when taken together, provide a sweeping overview of the story of Singapore from the late first millennium, through the colonial period to the present.

The objects presented here are curated along five key sections:

A) Networks through Time,
B) Colonial,
C) Community and Faith,
D) Art Historical, and
E) Self-Government and Independence.

The narrative does not follow a simple chronology of key milestones in Singapore's history, but instead opts for a more complex, networked, hybrid approach blending chronology, geography, cultures and major themes.

In choosing the objects to be included, I have been guided by the following criteria: a) that these be objects in collections owned by publicly-funded national institutions in Singapore; b) that these be masterpieces of art, or pieces of historical and socio-cultural significance, with a particular focus on pieces representative of significant collections of objects in public holdings; c) that the graphic spread as a whole is community-inclusive, by which I mean representing all ethnic communities and faiths in Singapore, with a particular effort made in representing the voices of women; d) that the spread be genre-inclusive, by which I mean representing a diverse variety of object types and art genres; e) that the spread places Singapore in the larger global, Asian and Southeast Asian context, emphasising that Singapore, and Singapore's history, does not exist in a vacuum, but has always been open to and impacted by developments in the regional and global spheres; and finally, f) that the objects chosen are on physical display, as far as possible, in the permanent galleries of the institutions from which they come.

This story of Singapore told through 60 objects is thus unique, in that it is global, cross-cultural, multi-faith and inclusive, by which I mean it includes collections beyond the National Collection held by the National Heritage Board and displayed at the National Museums and Art Galleries. The narrative presented here also reaches back further than the now widely-accepted 700-year timeline of Singapore history. The goal of this spread is ultimately to defamiliarise; to allow our readers to see that Singapore history is rich and multi-dimensional, and that as a nation and a people, we possess a wonderful treasure trove in our museums, archives and libraries that we should preserve, cherish and celebrate.

A) Networks through Time

Situated at the midway point between China and India, Southeast Asia has been at the crossroads of maritime trade since the late first millennium. The Tang Shipwreck, excavated off the island of Sumatra, is testament to large-scale intra-Asian maritime trade taking place at least from the 9th century. At the same time, archaeological digs at Fort Canning and around the Singapore River provide evidence that Singapore in the 14th century was already a thriving trading settlement. There are also corroborating accounts in the *Sejarah Melayu (The Malay Annals)* of a Kingdom of Singapura paying tribute to the Majapahit Empire.

From the 15th century, Southeast Asia takes centrestage in a global tussle among the European imperial powers to secure a monopoly on spices, and thereafter, on luxury goods from the East, in particular Chinese export porcelain and Indian trade textiles such as those in the (former) Hollander Collection of Indian Trade Cloth. Singapore's heritage as a cosmopolitan, East-West Asian port city has its antecedents in earlier port cities like Malacca (Melaka), Batavia (Jakarta), Manila, Canton (Guangzhou) and the cities of the former Coromandel Coast (corresponding in geography to today's Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh states), from which these luxury goods from the East were exported to the rest of the world.

Amidst this theatre of trade, war and colonialism came (English) East India Company operative, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, whose failed bid to secure the island of Java as a British colony became the impetus for his renewed search for a permanent British settlement in the lands (and seas) of the Johor-Riau-Lingga Sultanate.

1 **Green Décor Hu Ewer with snake-shaped long handle and dragon head lid, North China, Tang Dynasty (618–907).**

Tang Shipwreck Collection,
collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

This large ewer is one of the finest ceramics found in the Tang Shipwreck and is the only one of its kind in the world. The incised lozenge motif with leafy fronds is an Iranian design seen on other objects in the wreck, which suggests that much of the cargo was destined for the Middle East. The overall form of the ewer is based on objects made in metal, as is evident from the rim surrounding the base, and the thinness of the handle.

The Tang Shipwreck cargo contains more than 70,000 pieces of ceramics, gold, silver and other items, of which some 55,000 pieces are presently in the National Collection. The ship carrying this cargo was an Arab or Persian dhow; the ship had been built using techniques still used today in the Gulf, particularly in Oman. The collection is cross-cultural in nature, since it consists of a Chinese cargo bound for the Middle East, borne in a Middle Eastern ship that sunk in Southeast Asia, very near Singapore.

2 **Inscribed sandstone known as the "Singapore Stone", Singapore, 10th–14th century.**

Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

When the British arrived in Singapore in 1819, they found relics dating back to the 14th century. One of these was a sandstone boulder at the mouth of the Singapore River, near the present-day Fullerton Hotel. The sandstone monolith was about 3m high and 3m wide, upon which a raised rim enclosed 50 lines of inscriptions on an area 1.5m high and 2.1m wide. It was split into two nearly equal parts, which faced each other at an angle of about 40 degrees. According to the *Sejarah Melayu,* the boulder had been hurled from nearby Fort Canning Hill by a strongman known as Badang.

In 1843, the British blew up the boulder to build military quarters. All that remains in Singapore is the fragment on display here, which is known as the Singapore Stone. Two other fragments were sent to the Calcutta Museum in 1848, but their exact whereabouts are unknown.

The stone has been dated from the 10th to 14th centuries. Scholars have different views on the date and language of the script—the inscription is written in Kawi script and contains some Sanskrit words, but it has never been fully deciphered.

3 **Javanese style gold jewellery discovered at Bukit Larangan (Fort Canning Hill), also known as the "Majapahit Gold", Singapore, 14th century.**

Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

These are Javanese-style gold jewellery found at Bukit Larangan, which is the old name for Fort Canning Hill. The armlet bears a repoussé plaque of the Javanese *kala,* a protective symbol which traditionally adorns the top of main entrances of temples, and is still found in many parts of Indonesia. The armlet also has flexible chains, some of which were already broken when it was discovered. The earrings, each with a socket joint and wire hinge, are set with diamonds.

These were found at Fort Canning Hill in 1928 by labourers excavating for a reservoir. The site engineer recorded that the ornaments were lying just beneath the top of the pre-colonial soil strata, indicating their existence before the British arrived in 1819. The East Javanese style of these solid gold ornaments is a reminder that in the 14th century, the island of Singapore was under the political and cultural ambit of the East Java-based empire of Majapahit.

4 **Celadon dish, Longquan kilns, China, Yuan Dynasty, 14th century.**

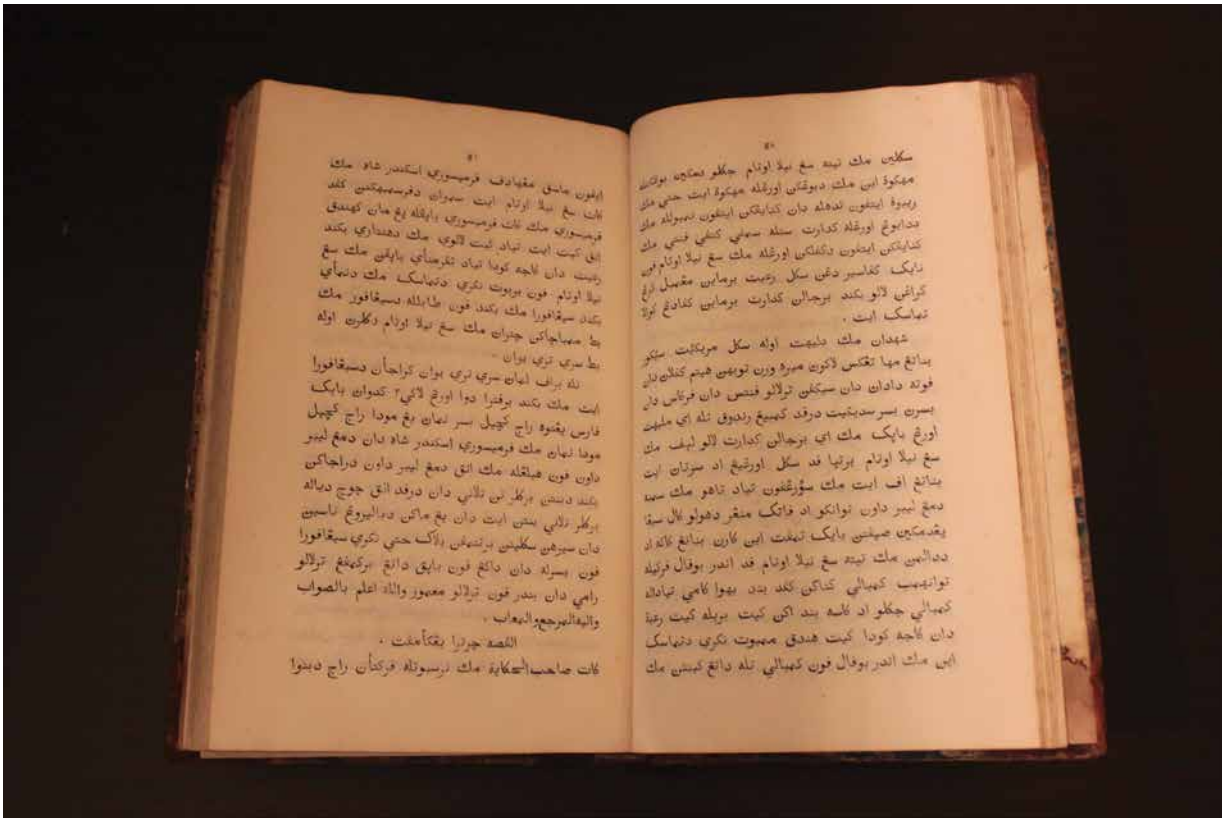
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

This celadon dish comes from a 14th century shipwreck discovered at Nipah Island, near the Raffles Lighthouse, in the 1980s. Pieces from the wreck were accessioned into the National Museum of Singapore's collection. The dish provides evidence of 14th century trade taking place in the Singapore Straits, most likely between Yuan China and the Majapahit empire.

Archaeological excavations at Fort Canning in the 1980s, at Empress Place in the 1990s and more recently in 2015 at the Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall, have unearthed thousands of Chinese and other porcelain shards dating back to the Yuan Dynasty (14th century), indicating that the area around the Singapore River and Bukit Larangan already played host to a thriving port settlement, and providing a strong basis for Singapore having a trading history of 700 years.

5 ***Sejarah Melayu,* Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, Singapore, c. 1840.**

The Rare Materials Collection,
collection of National Library, Singapore.



Edited by scholar, Munsyi Abdulllah (Abdullah Abdul Kadir) and printed in Singapore in the 19th century (c.1840), *Sejarah Melayu* is the first printed Jawi (Malay in modified Arabic script) version of a 17th century court text, *Sulalat al-Salatin* (Genealogy of Kings). The *Sulalat al-Salatin* has been rated as a paragon of 'good Malay' with its narrative style, vivid and realistic descriptions, liveliness and literary embellishments.

In the preface, Abdullah shared that he wanted to make the text accessible especially to students and 'spread the knowledge of Malay language'. The Trustees of the Singapore Institution (present-day Raffles Institution), endorsed the printing of the book. Abdullah's text is referred to as the 'short version' amongst scholars as it spans 34 chapters tracing the divine origins of Sang Nila Utama, the rise and fall of the Melaka sultanate, and concluding with the death of Tun Ali Hati, the *Bendahara* of the 4th Melaka Sultanate. It tells of Malay kings who departed from Palembang to Bentan and Singapore before founding Melaka. The pages shown above describe the founding of Singapura by Sang Nila Utama.

6 **Tombstone, Malacca, mid-15th century, stone.**

Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

Melaka in the 15th century, under the reign of the Melaka Sultanate, was the pre-eminent port and trading city in Southeast Asia. Its wealth and power rivalled even distant Venice, so much so that Portuguese explorer, Tomé Pires, noted that "whoever is Lord of Malacca has his hand on the throat of Venice".

This tombstone dates to the heyday of Melaka's economic and political power in the pre-colonial period, before its capture by the Portuguese in 1511. It is inscribed with Quranic verses and dedicated to a ship's captain from Gujarat (in western India), who died in 1459. Gujarati traders were so important to Melaka that one of the four harbour masters was dedicated just to managing their trade. The tombstone was found by British engineers in the walls of the Portuguese fortress in Melaka and were among the first objects accessioned into the collection of Raffles Library and Museum in Singapore.

One of the most significant legacies of Melaka was the adoption of Islam as the state religion and its eventual transmission to almost the entire Malay World. Another important legacy was the codification of laws, ritual and culture, even down to details in dress and language in the Malay world. Following the fall of Melaka to the Portuguese, its last Sultan would flee to Johor-Riau to establish a new Sultanate.

7 **VOC dish, Japan, Arita, late 17th century, porcelain.**

Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

The Portuguese arrived in Asia from 1509 onwards, establishing trading settlements in Goa, Melaka, Macau and Nagasaki. By the mid-1600s, the Dutch would eclipse the Portuguese, taking over Melaka and Nagasaki, and establishing their Eastern headquarters at Batavia (today's Jakarta). The Dutch Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (VOC), or "United East India Company" reigned supreme in Southeast Asia for 200 years until they were challenged by the British East India Company in the early 1800s from their headquarters in Singapore. From Batavia, the VOC would re-export luxury goods from China and Japan, such as this porcelain export-ware dish.

The underglaze-blue decoration of this dish centres on the VOC monogram, which is circled by the long tails of two phoenixes. Alternating panels on the rim of peonies and bamboo are a characteristic of kraakware, the earliest form of Chinese export-ware to be made for the West. Porcelain ware was commissioned from kilns in Arita, Japan, by the VOC in a period where production in China was disrupted by rebellions at the end of the Ming dynasty. These dishes were then exported via the port city of Nagasaki, where they would be taken to Batavia for onward exporting to Europe. Monogrammed dishes such as these were reserved for use by officers of the Company and were therefore not frequently ordered.

8 **Ritual Hanging, Coromandel Coast, India, early 18th century, cotton; painted mordant and resist dye.**

The former Hollander Collection of Indian Trade Cloth, Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

Large quantities of Indian textiles produced in various centres in Gujarat, the Deccan and Coromandel Coast were traded across Southeast Asia until the end of the 19th century. They represented strong maritime trade links between India and Southeast Asia, and in this instance, between the port cities of the Coromandel Coast (the coastline of today's Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh states) and Southeast Asia. Alongside these textiles and other goods came people to the port cities of Southeast Asia, including Singapore. The majority of Singapore's historic Indian community came from coastal regions in India and Ceylon (today's Sri Lanka).

Among their functions, Indian trade cloth served as attire for royalty, diplomatic gifts, displays on festive occasions, and clothing for the populace at rites of passage and other ceremonies. These trade cloths had a strong influence on the development of Southeast Asian textiles. It is believed that local makers began producing cloth, possibly borrowing patterns and motifs from earlier Indian examples, to make up for the shortage of the Indian ones that began to decline in numbers as European nations began producing their own textiles in the 19th century, taking over the global market.

This hanging or canopy is dyed using the mordant and resist dyeing technique on cotton cloth. It features a central motif of a large lotus-like pattern with ribbon, leaves and floral designs. Mordant-dyeing describes a process of using a mordant as a fixing agent to bond the dye to the cloth. Resist-dyeing uses either molten wax or moist mud as resists to prevent the dye from colouring those areas. These two techniques may be used separately or in combination during the dyeing process.

9 **Canton "Hong" Bowl, China, c. 1785, porcelain.**

Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

Porcelain bowls of this type that depict the *hongs* (行) or trading companies of Western merchants at the port city of Canton (today's Guangzhou) were produced by Chinese artisans for export to Western markets by way of Canton. This piece is a fine example that not only vividly conveys the beautiful scene at Canton, but also documents the trade between China and the West during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Canton is important in the history of global trade because for about 100 years between the mid-1700s and mid-1800s, it was the sole source of Chinese luxury goods such as tea, silks, lacquer and porcelain. The Dutch and British established their ports of Batavia and Singapore in Southeast Asia respectively to take advantage of the Canton trade. These ports functioned as entrepôts for the re-export of Chinese luxury goods to the West.

In 1842, the first Opium War erupted near the port of Canton. In the aftermath and the decades to come, China was forced to sign a series of Unequal Treaties that saw many of its coastal ports—such as Amoy (Xiamen), Foochow (Fuzhou), Shanghai, Hong Kong, and of course, Canton—open up for international trade. It is from these "treaty ports" that Singapore's Chinese population of Hokkiens, Cantonese, Teochew, Hokchiew, Hakka (and others) arrived in the 1800s and 1900s.

10 ***The History of Java,* first edition [two volumes], Thomas Stamford Raffles, London, 1817.**

John Bastin Collection, National Library, Singapore.

Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles was a British civil servant and statesman best known for setting up a British trading settlement in Singapore in 1819. After the capture of Java by the British in 1811, Raffles was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the island, a position he held until 1815. While in Java, Raffles with the help of European and Javanese scholars and informants, whom he did not always acknowledge, commissioned surveys of the island's monumental Hindu-Buddhist monuments, including Borobudur and Prambanan. He also built up a collection of Javanese cultural material such as *wayang kulit* puppets and *gamelan* instruments.

Collecting of these materials was made possible through purchases, acts of gifting and war booty, the latter as a result of the Raffles-sanctioned attack on the Yogyakarta palace in 1812.

Over several months in England, Raffles would organise all the materials he had amassed during his time in Java into a survey and history of the island state, first published in 1817 as *The History of Java*. That same year, in recognition for his work on Java, Raffles was conferred a Knighthood by the Prince Regent (the future King George IV of Great Britain).

B) Colonial

The British settlement and colony of Singapore was established by treaty between Raffles, Sultan Hussein Shah and Temenggong Abdul Rahman. The signing of this treaty resulted in the division of the larger Johor-Riau-Lingga Sultanate, a powerful maritime kingdom, of which Singapore was once part of. William Farquhar, who was appointed as the first Resident, spent more time than Raffles in Singapore, and did more for the fledgling colony in his initial years. Singapore thrived through free trade and drew a cosmopolitan resident population from all across Asia and beyond.

In the course of the century and half that the British were in Singapore and Southeast Asia, they invested in surveying and collecting the region's natural history and cultural heritage, amassing large quantities of artefacts, specimens and drawings that were deposited at the former Raffles Library and Museum (today's National Museum of Singapore), established in 1887. The museum also plays host today to the much older William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings, commissioned by Farquhar himself in the early 1800s.

Southeast Asia during the colonial period of 19th to mid-20th centuries was divided and occupied by various European imperial powers: primarily the British in Singapore, Malaya, Burma (today's Myanmar) and North Borneo; the Dutch in the former Netherlands East Indies (today's Indonesia); the Spanish in the Philippines and the French in the former Indochina (today's Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos). The uneasy tension between colonial power and local agency is captured vividly in signature works of major Southeast Asian artists at the turn of the 19th century. This tension would fuel independence movements in the region post-World War II.

But for the time being, Singapore prospered as the foremost trading port in Southeast Asia. The advent of steam-ship and eventually air travel also established Singapore as a pre-eminent tourism destination in Asia, with the Raffles Hotel symbolising the grandeur and opulence of the East. The 1940s and '50s saw Singapore endure the atrocities of the war, the Japanese Occupation, and the aftermath. It was conferred City status in 1951.

11 **Record of the 1819 Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, Singapore, 1841, ink on paper.**

Collection of the National Archives of Singapore.

The Treaty of Friendship and Alliance was signed on 6 February 1819 by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, representing the British East India Company (EIC) and Singapore's Malay rulers, Sultan Hussein and the Temenggong Abdul Rahman. The treaty granted the British EIC the exclusive right to establish a 'factory', or trading post on Singapore island in exchange for monetary compensation and British military protection for the Malay rulers. Singapore's modern legal development has been traced to this treaty which is regarded as the first agreement signed that marked the start of the British era.

Under the terms of the treaty, the British trading post (covering roughly the area from Kampong Glam to Chinatown) would be jointly administered by the British and the Malay rulers. The rest of Singapore and its surrounding islands and waters outside the trading post remained under the sovereign control of the Malay rulers. The treaty's 7th article concerning the administration of local justice noted that the method of doing so would "in a great measure depend on the Laws and Usages of the various tribes who may be expected to settle in the vicinity of the English Factory". The pragmatic concession to balance English practices with local customs set a precedent and became a hallmark of British administration in colonial Singapore.

The treaty was written in English and Jawi with text in both languages presented side by side. The document on display is an 1841 copy of the treaty in English. It is part of the Straits Settlements Records collection originally deposited by the British Colonial Government's Colonial Secretary's Office at the Raffles Museum and Library in 1938. This collection was subsequently transferred to the National Archives of Singapore when the institution was established in 1968.

12 ***Portrait of Sir Thomas Stamford Bingley Raffles*, John Adamson, Singapore and England, 1912, oil on canvas.**

Collection of National Museum of Singapore.

This portrait depicts Raffles in the style of a "scholar-gentleman" and administrator. He looks youthful, confident and knowledgeable, and is surrounded by symbols of his scholarly work: the manuscript paper in his hand, a writing desk with paper, ink and quill, and Buddhist sculptures from Java. There is also a romanticised landscape of Java in the background.

The original portrait by George Francis Joseph was made after Raffles returned to England from Java in 1816, where he had been Lieutenant-Governor. In England, Raffles worked on his monumental volume, *The History of Java*. Its publication in 1817 led to him being knighted and the book was a success in London. The original portrait, commissioned to commemorate his knighthood, hangs today in the National Portrait Gallery in London.

This well-executed copy by John Adamson was commissioned by the colonial government in Singapore and presented for display at the Victoria Memorial Hall in 1912. It hung beside other portraits of individuals important to colonial Singapore. This included a copy of a portrait of Rajah James Brooke—the "White Rajah" of Sarawak, with the original similarly hanging in the National Portrait Gallery in London.

13 **Silver epergne presented to William Farquhar, Singapore and England, 1824, silver.**

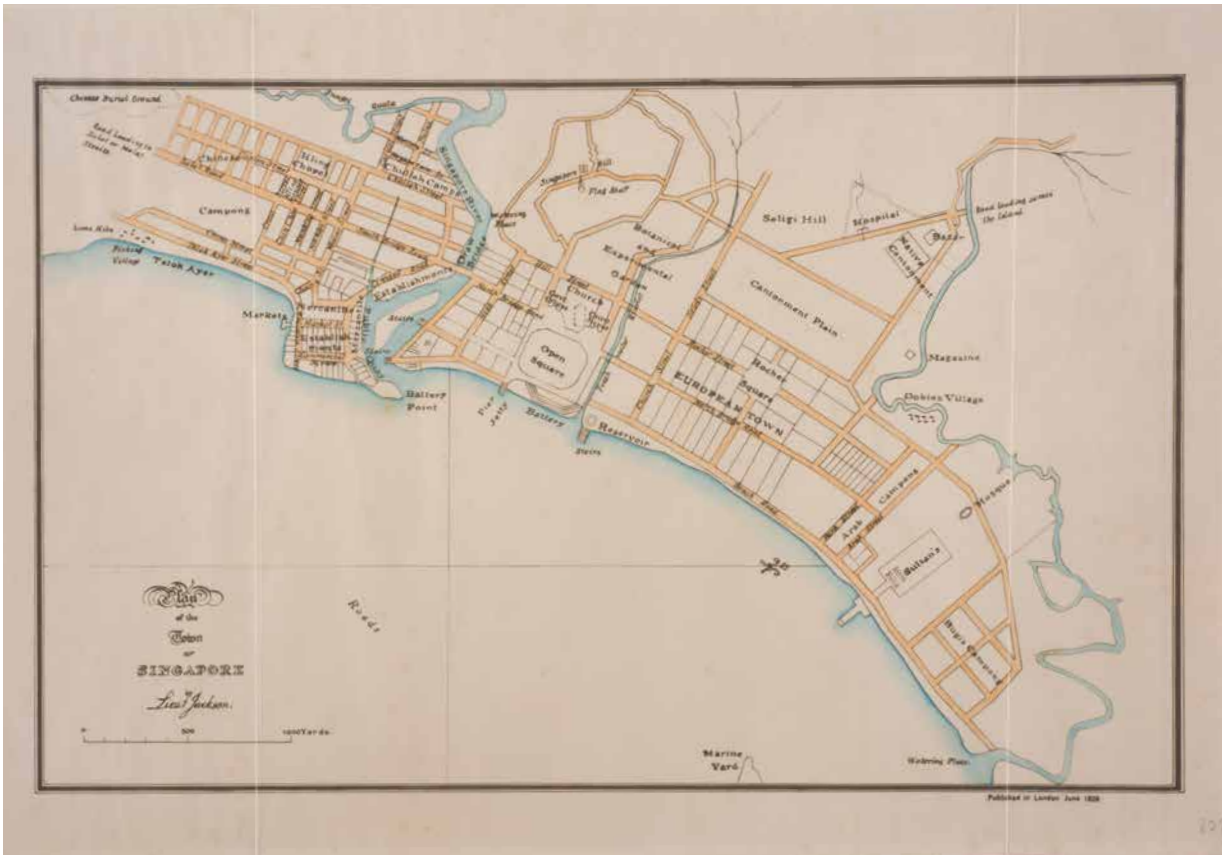
Collection of National Museum of Singapore.

This silver epergne was presented to William Farquhar, the first British Resident of Singapore. It was a parting gift from the Chinese community when he left the island in 1823. The epergne was an ornamental centre piece for the table. It had three branches to hold candles and a centre crystal bowl for fruit. It was made by a famous London silversmith, Rundell, Bridge & Rundell. Such epergnes decorated the dinner tables of well-to-do families in England and signifies Farquhar's popularity with the Asian communities in Singapore in the 1820s.

Farquhar was summarily dismissed by Raffles in 1824 following disagreements as to how the fledgling colony of Singapore was administered. He is today recognised as having had an extremely significant role in the founding and initial administration of the colony.

14 **'Plan of the Town of Singapore', also known as the "Jackson Plan", Singapore, 1828, lithograph.**

Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.



This is a lithograph of the original steel engraving published in 1828, which was prepared by Lieutenant Philip Jackson based on the plan that he drew up in 1822. Under Jackson's plan, the different migrant communities in Singapore—such as the Europeans, Chinese, Indians, Arabs and Bugis—were placed in separate ethnic enclaves. However, the various ethnic enclaves were never very strictly segregated. Muslim mosques and Hindu temples were constructed in Chinatown, while Kampong Bugis had become Kampong Java by the 1830s.

This print was published in John Crawfurd's *Journal of an Embassy* to the *Courts of Siam* and *Cochin-China* in 1828. John Crawfurd followed William Farquhar as the second (and final) British Resident of Singapore. After Crawfurd, the position of Resident was replaced with that of the Governor of the Straits Settlements, as Singapore, Melaka and Penang were grouped together to form the Straits Settlements from 1826.

15 ***The Esplanade from Scandal Point*, John Turnbull Thomson, Singapore, 1851, oil on canvas.**

Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

This is an oil painting by John Turnbull Thomson, who served as the first government surveyor in Singapore from 1841 to 1853. A self-trained artist, he produced a number of paintings which have become an important record of the early settlement.

This painting shows a view of the Padang (open square or field) from Scandal Point, the Saluting Battery (a small knoll above the original shoreline since levelled) situated at the edge of Connaught Drive, southeast of St. Andrew's Church (St. Andrew's Cathedral today). The Padang was the heart of social life in 19th century Singapore and is depicted here in its most bustling state in the late afternoon with different communities dressed in their respective costumes.

The painting creates the impression that Singapore was an idyllic multicultural society. However, the representation of Europeans on an elevated plane—on horseback or in horse-drawn carriages—while Asians are either standing or seated on the field, subtly suggests that it was the Europeans who held the authority in the settlement.

16 ***Portrait of Sir Frank Athelstane Swettenham,***
John Singer Sargent, Singapore, Malaysia, England, 1904.

Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

John Singer Sargent was the most celebrated portraitist of his time. This portrait, commissioned by the Straits Association, commemorated Sir Frank Swettenham's long service as Resident-General of the Federated Malay States and Governor of the Straits Settlements.

Swettenham is portrayed as a strong leader exuding power and authority. He is dressed in an immaculate white uniform and stood beside a gilded armchair covered in Malay silk brocade. Visible above him, on the left, is the lower half of a globe on a gilt stand, showing a segment of the Malay States.

17 **Black-capped Kingfisher, Malacca, early 19th century, watercolour on paper.**

William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings, gift of G. K. Goh, collection of National Museum of Singapore.

The William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings consists of 477 watercolours of flora and fauna indigenous to Malacca, Singapore and the Malayan Peninsula. It was commissioned by Major William Farquhar between 1819 and 1823, when he was the first Resident of Singapore.

This extensive collection is one of a kind in the environmental history of the Malay peninsula during the early 1800s. The drawings were designed to be scientifically accurate, with each of the drawings sporting the scientific name of the specimen depicted, alongside the common name in Jawi Malay and English. It is generally accepted that they were painted by Chinese artists of the Canton school of export painting. The collection had been handed down in its entirety to the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. It was put up for auction in 1993, and acquired by Singaporean benefactor, Goh Geok Khim, who then donated it to the National Museum of Singapore.

The black-capped kingfisher is depicted with its wings fully spread, about to land or take off from the branch it sits on. It is a common bird in Singapore, often first observed as a quick flash of blue diving into Singapore's waterways for a meal.

18 **Juvenile Malayan Tapir gaining adult colours (*Tapirus Indicus*), Sumatra, collected 1913, photo by Tan Heok Hui.**

The former Raffles Library and Museum Natural History Collection, collection of Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum.

The Raffles Library and Museum Collection consists of historical documents, natural history specimens and objects amassed during the colonial period and held at the former Raffles Library and Museum (today's National Museum of Singapore). In the course of 1970s to the 1990s, the former Raffles Library and Museum Collection was split, with the natural history collection going to the present-day Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, the Southeast Asian ethnographic collection going to the present-day Asian Civilisations Museum, the art collection going to the Singapore Art Museum, and the historical and documentary collection going to the National Archives of Singapore and the present-day National Museum of Singapore. The intent of splitting the collection at the time was because the Singapore Government wished the National Museum of Singapore to function as a social history museum highlighting Singapore's history and multi-cultural fabric.

This juvenile Malayan Tapir was captured just as it was about to take on its adult colours, which explains a faint black and white layer over the typical spotted pelt of the tapir's young. The scientific name *Tapirus indicus* Desmarest was given to the Malayan Tapir in September 1819, just months after modern Singapore's founding. In the earlier part of the 19th century, Raffles and Farquhar were fighting over the credit for discovering the tapir. Raffles even went as far as to try to block Farquhar's account of the tapir from being published.

Unfortunately, back in 1818, Raffles had hired French naturalists to collect specimens for him. At some point, one of the naturalists, Desmarest copied and sent parts of Farquhar's as yet unpublished account to the renowned French zoologist Georges-Frédéric Cuvier. Using this plagiarised information, Cuvier published a short account of the tapir in March 1819. Using Cuvier's account, Desmarest then also published his own account, but goes a step further to coin a scientific name for the tapir, adding his name "Desmarest" to it for posterity.

19 **Kris, Palembang, Sumatra, 19th century, *suasa*, wood, copper, gold.**

The former Raffles Library and Museum Ethnographic Collection, collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

Krises have deep symbolic and ritual meaning in Malay and Indonesian culture. A kris' blade is typically wavy, and the number of waves can range from three to more than thirty. Given the pre-Islamic roots of the kris itself, it is widely believed that the wavy form of the blade resembles that of a *naga*, or snake, in Malay-Javanese mythology.

The kris' hilt is the means by which one determines the style of the kris. Malay, Bugis and Sumatran kris often sport far more stylised and abstract hilts, recalling the form of deities and demons but without the features. This kris from the Raffles Library and Museum Ethnographic Collection comes from the city of Palembang in Sumatra. Old museum records say it once belonged to Sultan Pengeran Syed Ali of Palembang.

The wavy blade is made from *suasa*, an alloy of copper, silver and gold. The image of a lion near the hilt is a symbol of power and royalty. The hilt and copper finger guard were probably later additions to the weapon. The kris entered the Raffles Library and Museum in 1912 and is part of a larger and significant collection of kris from the region, mostly collected during the colonial period. The presence of a large kris collection also reminds visitors that Singapore has always been a part of the region and continues to have strong cultural links to its immediate neighbours Malaysia and Indonesia.

20 ***Boschbrand (Forest Fire),* Raden Saleh, Indonesia, 1849, oil on canvas.**

Collection of National Gallery Singapore.
This work of art has been adopted by the
Yong Hon Kong Foundation.

Raden Saleh (1807 or 1811–1880) is regarded as one of the most important 19th century artists from Java. Hailed as the "father of modern Indonesian painting", he is known for his Orientalist landscape and animal hunt paintings that are full of energy and emotion. He was born in Semarang to an aristocratic Javanese family and grew up in a very privileged household. Later, he would move to Europe, where he continued to perfect his art and where he attracted patronage from the European elite.

Forest Fire is an immense composition showing animals chased by flames to the edge of a precipice. This relentless and tragic tale of life and death is powerfully narrated through the vivid depiction of the animals and the dramatic use of light and dark on a monumental scale. Painted during the last years of Raden Saleh's long sojourn in Europe, and the largest known example of the artist's oeuvre, the work manifests his technical mastery of the oil medium, realism, and the language of European Romanticism. The painting was gifted by Raden Saleh to King Willem III of the Netherlands. Just a year earlier in 1848, the king had bestowed the title of "Schilder des Konings" ('King's Painter") upon him.

Contemporary readings of Raden Saleh's oeuvre tend to point out the uneasy tension between his being Javanese, and his specialising in painting what are essentially romanticised European imaginings of Asian landscapes.

21 ***España y Filipinas (Spain and the Philippines),***
Juan Luna, the Philippines, 1884, oil on canvas.

Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Juan Luna (1857–1899) was born in Badoc, the Philippines. He began his studies in art practice in Manila but moved to Europe later to further his practice. During his lifetime, the Philippines was wreaked by revolution and struggles for independence from Spain. Luna himself would fight for Philippine independence in his later years.

España y Filipinas is an allegorical painting, using two female figures to represent the colonial relationship between Spain and the Philippines. Juan Luna was an accomplished academic painter, and this painting shows his mastery of 19th century visual conventions. The work was painted at the height of Luna's career, following public acclaim for his monumental canvas, *Spoliarium*. There are multiple versions of this painting, with this version having been made for Luna's friend, the nationalist intellectual Pedro Paterno. While Spain is clearly the dominant figure, shown as guiding the Philippines and pointing to the way forward, the two figures are nonetheless relatively similar in stature and dignity, suggesting that the composition is intended to represent a benevolent and idealised image of the colonial project. The work therefore represents the reformist aspirations of certain 19th century Filipino intellectuals towards a more equitable and less exploitative colonial relationship with Spain. A later allegory by Luna on the same subject—inspired by the Paterno version—was commissioned by the Spanish Ministry of Overseas Affairs and shown at the 888 Universal Exposition in Barcelona, indicating that the artwork also played an active public role in colonial propaganda.

22 ***Harmony in Green: The Two Sisters,* Lê Phổ, Vietnam, 1938, gouache on silk.**

Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Born in Hanoi, Lê Phổ (b.1907), considered one of the masters of 20th century Vietnamese painting, was among the first batch of students who graduated from Ecole des Beaux Arts de I'Indochine in 1930. The Ecole, founded by French painter Victor Tardieu, encouraged its students to explore Western techniques of painting while experimenting with local Vietnamese materials such as silk and lacquer. In 1937, Lê Phổ moved to Paris and held his first solo exhibition there the following year. He stayed on in the city until his death in 2001.

Lê Phổ was best known for his refined and elegant portraits of Vietnamese women, often stylised in an elongated manner. This painting of two women is a prime example of Lê Phổ's art, showing an appealing synthesis of East and West. By the end of the 1930s, Lê Phổ had travelled in both China and Europe, absorbing different cultural influences. Among the European painters he viewed, Lê Phổ preferred artists of the mediaeval and early Renaissance periods, whose delicate, linear style is reflected in the treatment of the figures in *Harmony in Green*. The draped scarves, which trail around the figures, may show the impact of Tang court paintings. The use of the silk material as a painting surface allowed the artist to create a soft, luminous colour harmony.

23 **Raffles Hotel uniform top, Singapore, 1930s.**

Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

The Raffles Hotel began life as a large old bungalow known as Beach House in the early 1830s, built by Robert Scott. Over the years, Beach House was leased out to families and changed ownership several times before the lease was acquired by the Sarkies Brothers in September 1887. The Sarkies Brothers were Armenians with roots in the Persian city of Isfahan (in present-day Iran). They had made their way to the East Indies (Southeast Asia) via the city of Calcutta (today's Kolkata) in then-British India.

Raffles Hotel opened its doors for operations on 1 December 1887. Under the Sarkies, Raffles Hotel grew into a grand oriental hotel, with new buildings added to accommodate rising demand for luxury travel. By the 1910s, the Sarkies Brothers were at the pinnacle of their success, having established some of the most profitable and successful hotels in Southeast Asia, including the Eastern & Oriental Hotel in Penang and the Strand Hotel in Yangon.

Over time, the hotel consistently improved with the use of modern systems and needs (such as an elevator, tennis lawn etc). This uniform top which has the word "ROOM" sewn on the left side, would have been worn by a room service staff at the hotel in the colonial days, judging from the buttons on the uniform which has the words "Raffles Hotel, Malaya" engraved on them.

24 **Changi Prison cell door, Singapore, 1930s, metal.**

Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

Changi Prison was built in the 1930s as a civilian prison for a few hundred prisoners. It was the last prison built by the British colonial government, and is best known for being an internment camp during World War II. During the Japanese Occupation, the prison became overcrowded. The Japanese used the prison, which was built to house only 600 prisoners, to intern a few thousand combatant and civilian prisoners of war. Governor Shenton Thomas and his wife, Lady Daisy Thomas, were among the internees held there.

The prison was also known for being the site where many trade unionists, suspected communists and political prisoners were held in the 1950s and 1960s following riots and civil unrest in the decade leading up to Singapore's independence. Most of the prison, except for the 180-metre stretch of wall, two turrets and the entrance gate, were demolished in 2004 to make way for a new Changi Prison Complex. The wall, turrets and entrance gate were gazetted as a national monument in 2016.

25 **The Mace of the City of Singapore, Singapore, 1953, gold.**

Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

Prominent Chinese philanthropist Loke Wan Tho, founder of Cathay Organisation, presented this mace to the city of Singapore. The occasion was the granting of city status to Singapore by King George VI in 1951. The mace was made by Messrs Hamilton & Inches, Goldsmiths of Edinburgh, and designed by British sculptor Charles d'Orville Pilkington Jackson.

The design motifs were suggested by a committee consisting of Loke, university professors, and the staff of Raffles Library and Museum, which later became the National Museum of Singapore. The silver figures of a Chinese, Malay, Indian and European, linked by a garland of flowers, symbolise Singapore's multi-ethnic population. They stand atop a castle bearing the city's arms. Other motifs reference Singapore's ecology, culture and trade. Completed in 1953, the mace combines both ornamentation and political symbolism with the aim of creating a new sense of loyalty and pride for the people of Singapore at that time.

C) Community & Faith

Multi-culturalism is a core facet of Singaporean identity and society. As a pre-eminent trading port in Southeast Asia, Singapore attracted, in the course of its history, ethnic and religious communities from all over Asia and Europe. Aside from the Malay, Chinese, Indian, Eurasian and various Peranakan communities—these ethnicities being themselves convenient amalgamations of many different sub-ethnicities—Singapore also welcomed Arabs, Jews, Armenians and Europeans.

Another important core facet of Singaporean identity and society is religious harmony, with Singapore being the most religiously diverse nation in the world. Singapore's Inter-religious Organisation today recognises 10 world religions in Singapore—the Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism.

This section attempts to capture and present the cultural and religious diversity of Singapore, with all ethnicities and faiths represented as far as possible. Alongside masterpieces of sacred art, material culture features strongly, with film culture being represented by the Cathay-Keris Malay Classics Collection, which was inscribed into the UNESCO Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Register (2014). In the spirit of inclusiveness, particular effort has also been made to feature the stories of women in the community.

26 **Betel box, Riau-Lingga archipelago, mid-19th century, leather, lacquer, gold.**

Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

The custom of chewing *sirih*, or betel, is an ancient one. It is widespread in Asia, with almost all countries of South and Southeast Asia having once practised or still practising this custom regularly. The word *sirih* refers to the betel leaf, which is chewed with the *pinang,* or areca nut. Slices of *pinang* are folded carefully in a *sirih* and enhanced in flavour with cloves, slaked lime and occasionally tobacco. The quid is then popped into one's mouth and chewed.

The different parts of the *sireh*—lead, nut, spice, lime and tobacco—were often housed in an elaborate container such as this one. The distinctive shape of this betel container (*kotak sirih*) is typical of the form. One of such containers is presented as part of the gifts in the proposal ceremony, or as part of the gift exchange between bride and groom that kicks off wedding proceedings. The technique of tooling thin slivers of gold onto leather mimics the traditional technique of gold embroidery on velvet. The box is decorated with panels of scrolling leaves and flowers, a pattern known as the *sulur bayung* arrangement. The neatly ordered composition of leaves that curl in signifies ideals of humility and modesty.

Old museum records attribute the red leather *sirih* box as having been purchased from Tungku Aisa binti Tungku Yahaia Lingga from Sultan Gate, Singapore, in 1938. This means that the betel container once belonged to a princess of the Johor-Riau-Lingga royal family, who had resided in the vicinity of Istana Kampung Gelam (today's Malay Heritage Centre).

27 ***Cheongsam* that belonged to Singapore's war heroine, Elizabeth Choy, Singapore, 1953.**

Collection of National Museum of Singapore, gift of Elizabeth Choy.

This *cheongsam* with elegant floral prints was worn by Singapore's World War II heroine, the late Elizabeth Choy, when she attended Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's coronation on 2 June 1953 in England. Choy endured torture following her arrest in 1943 by the Japanese *kempeitai* (military police) on suspicion of aiding the British. She was detained at the former YMCA at Orchard Road, and finally released after 200 days. The clothes she wore during her detention have also been donated to the National Museum of Singapore.

The *cheongsam* was the favoured formal dress of Elizabeth Choy. As a mode of dress for Chinese women, it was popularised in Shanghai during the 1920s and '30s, when the city was an influential fashion capital. Then, the *cheongsam* itself was the standard dress for many Chinese women in China's cities, as well as in the cities with large Chinese communities such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. In style, it is believed to have evolved from a long robe worn by Manchu women during the Qing dynasty in China.

The easy availability of *cheongsams* from Cantonese and Shanghainese tailors in Singapore contributed to the popularity of the dress here, with most working women in Singapore having at least one *cheongsam* in the 1950s and '60s. Many working women adopted the *cheongsam* as their work attire because it projected modern and progressive values that they subscribed to as modern women.

28 **Chettiar marriage necklace (*Thali / Kazhuththu Uru*), Chettinad, Tamil Nadu, South India, 19th century.**

Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

The Chettiars are a South Indian community in Singapore originating from Chettinad in Tamil Nadu. They are usually referred to as 'Nattukottai Chettiars' to distinguish them from other groups of Chettiars. The term "chettiar" is a caste label referring to "merchant", and the Chettiars were traditionally merchants and traders in precious stones. They later moved into banking and moneylending activities. Their presence as financiers in Southeast Asia grew with the expansion of British colonialism. Many Chettiars emigrated from India to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Burma (now Myanmar) and Malaya (now Malaysia and Singapore).

The early Chettiar immigrants to Singapore contributed much to the economic development of the thriving settlement by providing credit and banking services. The majority of them operated their businesses from the shophouses situated along Market Street.

This large-sized *thali* (marriage necklace) is used exclusively by the Nagarathar Chettiar community of Tamil Nadu. This type of necklaces usually comprises 35 pieces and are strung by 21 lengths of twisted strings smeared with turmeric. The central pendant, also called *ethanam*, has four sharp spikes representing the four *vedas* (knowledge). This is surmounted by an image of Subrahmanya standing with his parents, Shiva and Parvati, who are seated on a *nandi* (bull). In weddings, the groom would tie this necklace around the bride's neck after the exchange of vows. The *kazhuththu uru* is a ceremonial *thali* that is worn during the wedding and special occasions, such as for the celebration of the husband's 60th birthday.

29a ***Kebaya,* Straits Settlements and Indonesian Archipelago, late 19th–early 20th century.**

Collection of the Peranakan Museum,
gift of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee.

The *sarong kebaya* (29a) was the fashionable dress of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. While it is most often associated with Nyonya women today, it was prevalently worn by women of all ethnicities in the early to mid-1900s. This item comprises two individual pieces.

The *kebaya* is an open tunic with long sleeves, a collarless neck and front opening. It is a hip-length garment and is gently shaped to flatter the figure. It is fastened in the front by a set of three leaf-shaped or jewelled brooches (*kerosang*), usually connected by a chain. This *kebaya* is made from white translucent voile and decorated with lace, which is sewn onto the edges of the plain fabric. Such forms of *kebayas* were commonly worn from the 1920s onwards among Nyonyas in the Straits Settlements.

29b ***Sarong Lien Metzelaar*, Java, Indonesia, late 19th–early 20th century.**

Collection of the Peranakan Museum.

Eurasian women in the Dutch East Indies were perhaps the first to wear white cotton *kebayas* trimmed with handmade European lace in the day. Being of a translucent material, this garment would have been worn with an inner, possibly long-sleeved undershirt.

The *sarong* (29b) is wrapped around the waist and functions as a skirt. This *kain sarong* (sarong cloth) features an array of motifs which includes humans, fans, flowers and umbrellas. It is made of *Batik Belanda* or *batik* made by the Dutch Eurasians in Indonesia. The maker of the *batik* was Lien Metzelaar, a young Dutch Eurasian lady whose atelier was active in the city of Pekalongan between 1880 to 1920. *Metzelaar batik* is distinguished by a signature motif of seven leaves on a straight branch alternating with four flowers on the border of the *kain*.

30 **Production still, *Sumpah Pontianak* (1958, Cathay-Keris Films), directed by B.N. Rao.**

Courtesy of Asian Film Archive and Wong Han Min.

Pontianak (1957) by Cathay-Keris marked the birth of Malay horror films as a genre during the golden era of Singapore cinema. The first multi-lingual film, *Pontianak*, was initially released in both Bahasa Melayu and Mandarin, and later dubbed into Cantonese and English for overseas audiences. Its success at the box office inspired the creation of many other horror films about other figures from Malay mythology. *Pontianak*, of which no existing films has been found as yet, was followed by two equally successful sequels, *Dendam Pontianak (Revenge of the Pontianak)* in 1957 and *Sumpah Pontianak (Curse of the Pontianak)* in 1958. As the first two films are regarded to be lost, the production still featured here comes from *Sumpah Pontianak*.

The *Pontianak* trilogy was also a cross-cultural production. The Cathay-Keris film studio was founded and helmed by Chinese business magnate and philanthropist Loke Wan Tho and Chinese Managing Director Ho Ah Loke; the films were directed by successful Indian film director, Balakrishna Narayana Rao, or B. N. Rao, and starred movie star Maria Menado. Menado's real name was Liesbet Dotulong and she was an extremely popular actress in Malaya and Singapore in the 1950s and '60s. Her role in the *Pontianak* trilogy catapulted her to fame.

The surviving 91 films of the Cathay-Keris Malay Classics Collection have been preserved by the Asian Film Archive since 2007. This collection was successfully inscribed by the Asian Film Archive's nomination into UNESCO's Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Register in 2014 and is currently the only Singapore inscription in the Memory of the World Register. The Memory of the World Register is the UNESCO World Heritage Site equivalent for documentary heritage.

31 **Somaskanda, Shiva with Parvati and their son Skanda, Tamil Nadu, south India, Chola period, c. 1200, bronze.**

Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

The Cholas were a powerful dynasty that ruled parts of India from the 3rd century BCE to the 13th century CE. At their zenith, they ruled all of southern India and Sri Lanka. From the earliest centuries CE, southern India had traded with the Mediterranean world, and during the Chola dynasty, with China and Southeast Asia. It was a prosperous period, and extensive patronage resulted in the building of many temples. Among the most remarkable works of art are bronze temple sculptures made for processions.

Darshan—to see and be seen by the deity—is one of the fundamental principles of Hindu worship. Originally, this could only happen within the inner sanctum of a temple, where many devotees of low position were excluded. Around the 6th century, a new concept emerged: images of deities were paraded outside the temple during festivals, where they could be seen by all. This led to the production of many portable bronze sculptures.

This sculpture of a seated Shiva and his consort Parvati (also known as Uma) accompanied by their infant son Skanda is visualised in the Tamil Hindu tradition as a representation of an ideal divine 'family'. *Somaskanda,* means "with Uma and Skanda", and is the most important image of Shiva in southern India after the *linga*, his abstract form. This is because the faithful can obtain individual blessings from Shiva when he is in the presence of Uma. In Indian art, this image only appears in the south. This exquisite sculpture was made for festival processions, hence the loops on the base to attach poles for carrying it. The manner in which the pedestals fit into each other is unusual as the convention is a single pedestal for the trio.

32 **Sculpture of Walking Buddha, Sukhothai, north-central Thailand, bronze 15th–16th centuries.**

Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

This image of the Walking Buddha or *cankrama* ('walking back and forth') is a classic image of the Sukhothai Kingdom (1200-1350), which is today idealised in the Thai psyche as a golden age where Buddhism, the land, and its people flourished under the rule of benevolent Buddhist kings. Buddha is depicted in mid-stride, his right foot forward, and right hand in *abhaya mudra* (gesture of fearlessness, a hand gesture where the right hand is held upright with the palm facing outward). The left arm curves to accentuate the sense of fluid movement. The robe is barely visible except for fine outlines, and a flowing hemline. The *ushnisha,* or bump on the head which symbolises his enlightenment, rises to a flamed *cintamani* or top-knot.

Images of the Buddha were made for temples by donors in the belief that they would acquire merit for their next life. This image has been interpreted in various ways. It is thought to refer to Buddha's return from Tavatimsa Heaven where he preached the doctrine to his mother, and is also associated with meditation and magical powers, as found in stucco reliefs at temples in Sukhothai and the twin town of Si Satchanalai. The origins of the Walking Buddha remain unclear and the dating of several images continues to be questioned. More recently it was proposed that the city of Sukhothai was not abandoned in 1438 with the rise of Ayutthaya, but instead flourished until 1786 and that many architectural images of the Walking Buddha were probably produced during the 18th century.

33 **Shrine with Sumatinatha, the fifth Jain Tirthankara, Gujarat or Kathyawar, India, 13th century, bronze inlaid with silver and copper.**

Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

Jains revere twenty-four *Jinas*, who have attained a state of bliss and transcendence. *Jina* means "liberator" or "conqueror". They help all creatures to liberate their souls from the confines of the body. *Jinas* are also called "river crossers" or "forders" (*tirthankaras*), because they have been released from the eternal cycle of rebirth.

This shrine contains a central image of Sumatinatha, the fifth Jain Tirthankara, identified by geese on the throne. He is believed to possess miraculous powers to fulfil the wishes of pilgrims. He is surrounded by the other twenty-three *Jinas*. The naked *Jinas* indicate that the patrons of the temple for which this shrine was made were devoted to the Digambara sect. An inscription dates this to Singh-Samvat 150, which translates as 1263 AD. The Singh-Samvat dating system was used exclusively in Gujarat and the Kathyawar peninsula until the 14th century.

Jains arrived in Singapore in the early 1900s from India. Today they number around 700, with 95% of the community originating from Gujarat. The Singapore Jain Religious Society was established in 1972 with its premises at 18 Jalan Yasin.

34 **Qur'an, Yemen, dated AH 1184 (1770), ink colours on paper, leather binding.**

Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

This Qur'an from Yemen has a tan morocco binding with a stamped medallion. Its manuscript has 13 lines of text where the first, middle and last lines are written in red Muhaqqaq script and the other ten lines are in black Naskh script. The Muhaqqaq and Naskh scripts are part of the six classical cursive scripts.

For Muslims, the Qur'an is the visual embodiment of the Word of God and is hence considered sacred. The pious desire to beautify the Word of God was a central factor in the development of calligraphy in the Islamic world. One interesting aspect of Islamic art is that the form of expression can be found in a variety of media—thus you can find calligraphy in manuscripts or as large inscriptions done in stone for buildings. Every page of this Qur'an has colourful, decorated headers and frames, and gold is used for chapter titles.

In Singapore, a large part of the Arab community has origins in the Hadhramawt region of Yemen. They arrived in Singapore from the early 19th century, when the Hadhramawt region was a British Protectorate. They were involved in the retail and wholesale trade, the Hajj industry and real estate development. A special group among the Hadhrami families are the *sayyids* who trace their descent from the Prophet Muhammad himself.

35 **Miniature New Testament, Armenia, or Armenian diaspora, early 18th century, leather binding, paper with ink, colours and gold leaf.**

Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum,
gift of Paula, Lady Brown.

This miniature manuscript is written in Armenian. It contains the four gospels, supplemented by decoration in the form of illustrations, rubricated initials and borders, some in gold leaf. The most elaborate illustrations depict the four evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, with the latter three represented by animals. The presence of the four gospels and absence of the Old Testament indicate that it is the New Testament rather than a complete Bible. Though mostly intact, the original title pages and binding have been replaced. It was probably made in Armenia or by Armenian communities in Western Asia in the early 18th century.

Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion in the early 4th century. The religion reached there at an early date; persecutions against Christians in 110, 230, and 287 were recorded by the Roman historians Eusebius and Tertullian. The first Bibles were translated into Armenian in the early 5th century by Mesrop Mashtots, who invented the Armenian alphabet in 406 AD, but miniature Bibles similar to this manuscript did not appear until the early 17th century.

The Armenian community in Singapore has always been small, with no more than 100 members living here at any one time. It includes prominent members such as the Sarkies Brothers and Agnes Joaquim (best known for successfully cross-breeding two species of orchid into a new hybrid, the Vanda Ms Joaquim, which was later chosen to be Singapore's national flower). The oldest Christian Church in Singapore is the Armenian Apostolic Church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator, completed in 1836. Armenians in Singapore and Southeast Asia have origins in Isfahan, in Persia (today's Iran).

36 **Chesed-El Synagogue, Singapore, c. early 20th century, photograph.**

Collection of National Museum of Singapore.

Chesed-El Synagogue on Oxley Rise is one of two synagogues in Singapore, the other being Maghain Aboth Synagogue on Waterloo Street. Completed in 1905, it was designed by R. A. J. Bidwell of the architectural firm, Swan & MacLaren. Designed in the late Renaissance style, its façade is ornate with floral plasterwork, continuous corniches and heavy ornamentation. The synagogue is fronted by a three-arched porte-cochère (carriage porch), as can be seen in the photograph here. Classical architectural features such as arches and Corinthian columns, as well as large arched windows, are repeated throughout the building.

The first Jews arrived in Singapore not long after Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles. Most of them were Sephardic Jews from Baghdad and were businessmen involved in trade. The first synagogue was built at Boat Quay at Synagogue Street, though the synagogue itself doesn't stand there anymore. As the community grew, a larger Maghain Aboth synagogue was built at Waterloo Street.

Chesed-El was built by local Jewish leader Manasseh Meyer to cater to a further expanding Jewish community. It was built on his sprawling, private Belle Vue estate. Chesed-El means "Bountiful Mercy and Goodness of God" in Hebrew. Chesed-El and Maghain Aboth Synagogues were both gazetted as national monuments in 1998. Managed by the Jewish Welfare Board today, they are open for certain festivals and for community activities throughout the year.

37 **Hanging ornament, Punjab, North India, 19th century.**

Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

Detail of ornament.

This dome-shaped hanging ornament is decorated with ornate patterns and floral vine motifs. It also features seated figures depicting the 10 Sikh gurus with the central and largest one being that of Guru Nanak Dev, with a sunburst halo encircling his head. The remaining nine gurus appear in the circumference of the *chhatri*, facing him. The *chhatri* is often seen as a symbol of nobility and the divine. It would have been hung over the holy book as a sign of respect or used during a religious ceremony. This is still relevant in the modern-day context where the priest will place the Guru Granth Sahib (the 11th and Eternal Guru) underneath with the *granthi* (reader) holding a *chauri* (fly whisk) as a sign of respect.

The Sikhs come from the Punjab area in northwest India. It is generally believed that the first Sikhs who came to Singapore were sepoys in the employ of the British East India Company. Historically, the Sikhs were generally associated with police and security work. The term "Sikh" originally referred to the followers of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, though today it refers to those who follow the teachings of the 10 Sikh gurus.

Most male Sikhs adopt the term "Singh" (lion) as part of their name, while most female Sikhs have the name "Kaur" (princess). The Khalsa order is the major religious order in Sikhism. Khalsa Sikhs who have undergone the initiation ceremony must keep and wear the five Sikh symbols, namely unshorn hair, a wooden comb, a steel bracelet, a sword and cotton underwear.

38 **Repousséd silver box showing Zoroastrian scenes, Bombay, 19th century, silver.**

Collection of Indian Heritage Centre.

Parsi silver shops in Bombay and Gujarat supplied the Parsi community with ritual articles. In addition, silver items were imported from southern China as well. This box comprises four silver panels lined with an aromatic wood and a silver hinged cover; the silver is repousséd and chased with scenes relating to the Zoroastrian Parsis.

Depicted here are the deity Ahura Mazda and priests attending the sacred fire as well as a king-like figure shown sheltered under an umbrella accompanied by attendants carrying fly whisks. The use of the umbrella to denote kingship and the presence of the flywhisk is an Indian rather than a Persian practice. Inside, the box is split into two compartments by a silver partition. The base is plain, hammered silver.

Like the Jewish community, the Parsi community arrived in Singapore early in its history as a British colonial settlement. One of the most well-known Parsi merchants was Cursetjee Fromurzee, who, together with Englishman John M. Little, founded the department store, Little, Cursetjee & Co. (later John Little & Co.) at Raffles Place.

Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest religions in the world, originating in ancient Persia. The largest community of Parsis resides in the Indian port city of Mumbai, with Hong Kong also playing host to a large community in East Asia.

39 **Seated Wenchang (Daoist God of Literature), Dehua, Fujian province, China, early 17th century, porcelain.**

Gift of Frank and Pamela Hickley, collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

This is Wen Chang, the Daoist God of Literature. He is seated on a rock with a *ruyi* sceptre in his right hand, which symbolises blessing, power and health. The beautifully fluid drapery was finished with deeply carved folds, which emphasise the simple but voluminous style of the high official's robe. His portly stature is indicated by the rank badges that were worn by court officials of the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties.

Wen Chang is thought to have lived in the Tang (618–906) or Jin (1115–1234) dynasties before he was subsequently deified. He was worshipped by scholars hoping for fortuitous examination results. Today, school children in Singapore put letters at his feet listing the examination subjects and results that they hope to achieve.

Dehua, located on the southeast coast of Fujian province, is well known for its production of white porcelain, known to Europeans as 'blanc de Chine'. The earliest Dehua porcelain was produced as early as the 14th century but the production and quality of these porcelain peaked around the 17th and 18th centuries.

40 **Mortar and pestle belonging to the late Shirin Fozdar, Singapore, late 20th century, brass.**

Gift of Shirin Fozdar,
collection of Indian Heritage Centre.

Born in India in 1905 to Persian parents of the Baha'i Faith, Shirin Fozdar was a staunch advocate of women's rights. She arrived in Singapore in 1950 with her husband, K. M. Fozdar. The Fozdars were among the first to bring the Baha'i Faith to Singapore. By 1952, there were enough Baha'is in Singapore to form the first Local Spirituality Assembly.

In 1953, Shirin was the force behind Singapore's first girls' club at Joo Chiat Welfare Centre. The club taught women English and arithmetic. She also played an important part in the formation of the Muslim Syariah court in 1958. She was elected the Honorary Secretary of the Singapore Council of Women (SCW) in April 1952. In her role as the Honorary Secretary of SCW she also played a key role in the drafting and establishment of the Women's Charter in 1961.

This is a mortar and pestle used by Shirin Fozdar. Mortars and pestles have been used since ancient times for the preparation of spices, food and medicine. In Singapore, mortars and pestles are used by all ethnic communities and is a fundamental implement used in the preparation of a variety of local Singaporean food.

D) Art Historical

A proper art history of Singapore in the context of the Southeast Asian and larger Asian region would require its own full graphic spread of 60 objects. As such, this section zooms in on Singapore alone, featuring primarily Singaporean artists—one artist from the Singaporean diaspora in the United Kingdom, one pioneer Singaporean art collector, and one Chinese artist who loved Singapore.

An art history of modern Singapore generally commences with the Nanyang Artists, a seminal group of Singaporean painters represented by the quartet of Liu Kang, Chen Chong Swee, Chen Wen Hsi and Cheong Soo Pieng, and the enigmatic Georgette Chen. They were distinguished by their strong affiliation with the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and by their works, which fused elements of East and West in a distinctive "Nanyang" (Southern Seas) style.

The Nanyang Artists were influenced in turn by major Chinese artists of the early 20th century such as the likes of Xu Beihong, Qi Baishi, Pu Ru, Ren Bonian, Wu Changshuo. A significant collection of these latter artists' works was built up in the 1930s to 1950s by a pioneering local merchant and philanthropist, the late Dr Tan Tsze Chor, also known as the "pepper king". Part of the collection, known as the Xiang Xue Zhuang Collection, was generously given to the state by Tan's family in the 2000s. Around the same period, modern Chinese painter, Wu Guanzhong, regarded as one of the most important modern Chinese painters today, also bequeathed a large gift of his artworks to the National Collection, as a gesture of his strong affection for Singapore.

From the 1960s onwards, Singapore saw the emergence of major artists in various genres such as ceramics, sculpture, painting, print-making and performance art, many of whom have been awarded the Cultural Medallion—the nation's highest distinction for artists and cultural professionals.

A distinct break occurred in the late 1980s with the radical and controversial The Artists' Village (TAV)—an artist colony, collective and movement established by contemporary artist Tang Da Wu, which counted amongst its ranks ground-breaking artists such as Amanda Heng, Chng Seok Tin and the late Lee Wen. TAV, still active today, derives its notoriety from a ban on performance art in Singapore following a performance by artist Josef Ng in 1994 which saw him snipping his pubic hair in public. TAV's complex multi-faceted work defied categorisation and would prefigure today's new generation of local installation and multi-media artists.

In the meantime, the 1990s and 2000s saw significant investment by the government into the arts and culture scene, with the aim of turning around the perception of Singapore as a "cultural desert" and re-positioning Singapore as a "Renaissance City". The investment in the arts has borne fruit in terms of an extremely vibrant and active arts and heritage scene, with young Singaporean artists gaining prominence on the international stage.

41 ***A Pair of Horses*, Xu Beihong, China, c. 1940, Chinese ink and colour on paper.**

Xiang Xue Zhuang Collection, in memory of Dr Tan Tsze Chor, collection of Asian Civilisations Museum.

The late Dr Tan Tsze Chor was one of a small group of collectors and businessmen in Singapore who were strong supporters of the arts, and were inspired by ancient examples of the Chinese literati class of painter-calligrapher-cum-collectors. He named his collection and studio Xiang Xue Zhuang 香雪庄. The collection was known for its works from the masters of Chinese painting (in particular Xu Beihong, Ren Bonian and painters of the Shanghai School), ancient paintings and calligraphy from the Song to the Qing dynasties, transitional period (17th century) blue and white ceramics, Yixing wares, inkstones and Qi Baishi inkseals. The collection at the Asian Civilisations Museum consists of more than 100 of these paintings and scholarly objects, generously donated by the Tan family since 2000.

This painting of a pair of horses by Xu Beihong is one of the highlights of the collection. Although Xu Beihong was celebrated for his paintings of horses, he once said that he painted so many of them only because people liked them. They were indeed well received in Singapore in 1939 as many paintings of horses were said to be executed then. Xu's horses came to represent the indomitable spirit of China in the face of the Japanese invasions during late 1930s and early 1940s. This symbolism was apt as Xu was a patriot who raised money for the anti-Japanese movement through the sale of his works. Xu's horses are awe-inspiring and show his mature handling of the brush. The musculature of the horses in every pose as well as their dignity and elegance, are accurately defined in just a few key strokes.

42 ***Artist and Model*, Liu Kang, Singapore, 1954, oil on canvas.**

Gift of Shell Companies in Singapore, collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Cheong Soo Pieng, Chen Chong Swee, Chen Wen Hsi and Liu Kang are some of the artists most commonly associated within the development of a distinctive 'Nanyang style' in art. Having all moved to Singapore from China during the 1930s and '40s and sharing similar backgrounds in foundational art training in China, they were close contemporaries who were driven by a desire to develop their artistic styles and techniques to best capture their new surroundings in tropical Southeast Asia.

This desire led the four artists to plan a trip to Indonesia in 1952 in search of artistic inspiration. There, they travelled across the country for two months including an extended period in Bali. Having been inspired by the culture and the vibrant colours of Indonesia, the subsequent works they produced for an exhibition in 1953 displayed a clear intention to capture Southeast Asian subjects using both Western oil painting and Eastern ink painting traditions—a unique synthesis which would later come to be considered as a key characteristic of the Nanyang Style. Important works of all four artists are held in the collection of National Gallery Singapore today. For the purpose of this spread, the author has selected Liu Kang's *Artist and Model*, which depicts fellow artist Chen Wen Hsi sketching a woman during their trip to Indonesia, to represent this group of artists.

Born in Fujian Province, China, in 1911, Liu Kang attended the Xinhua Art Academy of Shanghai, where he learnt both Eastern and Western painting techniques. In 1928, he went to Paris where he was further exposed to art movements such as Fauvism and Post-Impressionism. Not only is he considered one of Singapore's key artists, he was also a leading figure in the Society of Chinese Artists and the Singapore Art Society. In 1970, he was awarded the Public Service Star for his contributions in the field of art.

Artist and Model was done in a style that would come to typify Liu's paintings following his arrival in Singapore in 1942. In this work, Liu eliminated the use of shadow and perspectival depth. Instead, he emphasised clearly defined forms with thick outlines and solid colours. With the resultant work recalling the visual aesthetic of *batik* painting, it is not surprising to learn that Liu was experimenting with the technique of *batik* painting having been inspired by his artist friend Chuah Thean Teng (based in Penang, Malaysia) during the 1950s.

43 ***Self-Portrait*, Georgette Chen, Singapore, c. 1946, oil on canvas.**

Gift of Lee Foundation,
collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Georgette Chen played a critical role in the development of the Nanyang style. Born in China in 1906, Georgette Chen spent her formative years in Shanghai, New York and Paris, where she found success as an artist following formal training in art academies and regular exhibitions. After a brief stay in Penang from 1951-1953, Chen eventually settled in Singapore in 1954 where she taught at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts till her retirement in 1980. In recognition of her contributions to Singapore art, Chen was awarded the Cultural Medallion in 1982.

Painted possibly a few years after her works were selected for exhibition at the prestigious Salon d'Automne in Paris, Chen's *Self Portrait* reveals her strong and confident personality. Her piercing gaze engages the viewer in a direct conversation. Like her other portraiture works, she composed *Self Portrait* with an economy of means—soft dabs of colour to delineate the contours of her face and differentiate the shades of her facial complexion.

44 ***National Language Class*, Chua Mia Tee, Singapore, 1959, oil on canvas.**

Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Born in 1931 in China, Chua Mia Tee is regarded for his realist portraitures and depictions of Singapore's changing urban and cultural landscape. Chua moved to Singapore in 1937, when he and his family fled the Sino-Japanese war. In 1947, he was a student at Chung Cheng High School, but left mid-way to pursue an art education at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), where he eventually graduated from in 1952. During his time at NAFA, Chua was the student of then-director Lim Hak Tai as well as Cheong Soo Pieng and See Hiang To. He sought to establish his practice through his pursuit of the 'real,' an interest that was cultivated by his encounters with European classical realism, Russian and Chinese social realist art. He was one of the founding members of the Equator Art Society (EAS) in 1956 and took part in its annual exhibitions until its dissolution in 1972.

One of Chua's most iconic images, *National Language Class* captures an important stage of Singapore's history. Painted in 1959 when Chua was a member of the Equator Art Society, this work is charged with nationalist sentiment and commemorates Singapore's long-awaited attainment of self-governance in the same year. *National Language Class* depicts a group of Chinese students learning Malay, the newly-designated national language of Singapore.

45 ***Zhangjiajie*, Wu Guanzhong, China, 1997, Chinese ink and colour on paper.**

Gift of the artist,
collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Wu Guanzhong is one of the most significant artists of 20th century China. Born in Yixing, Jiangsu Province, in 1919, Wu studied at the China Art Academy of Hangzhou in 1936. He was trained in oil and ink painting, and graduated from the academy in 1942. From 1946 to 1950, he travelled to Paris to study at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts on a government scholarship. In 2008, Wu donated to Singapore's National Collection 113 oil and ink paintings. This was the largest group donation Wu has made to a public institution. Singapore's collection of Wu Guanzhong now totals 129 pieces and spans through five decades of his artistic career.

Zhangjiajie (张家界) is the largest artwork by Wu Guanzhong in our National Collection. It depicts a majestic view of the towering jagged sandstone columns unique to this protected forest park, set behind a flowing river. Specks of magenta, orange and yellow-green cover the coarse sharp edges of the mountains, suggesting the arrival of either spring or autumn.

Wu Guanzhong first visited this area in the late 1970s while he was exploring the Hunan province, in search of beauty and capturing it in outdoor paintings and sketches. He encountered several villagers who all recommended him to visit a scenic landscape that is worthy of painting and would surely wow the world. Following the given directions, Wu stumbled into this earthly paradise. In 1982, the area was recognised as China's first national forest park and named Zhangjiajie National Forest Park. A decade later, in 1992, the park was officially recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

46 ***Irrawaddy*, Kim Lim, Singapore/ UK, 1979, pinewood.**

Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Kim Lim was born in Singapore in 1936 and spent much of her early childhood in Penang and Malacca. Her father was Lim Koon Teck, a well-known magistrate in Penang and through her mother's side (Betty Seow), she is a descendant of Tan Kim Cheng, son of Singapore pioneer Tan Tock Seng. At the age of eighteen, Kim Lim went to London to pursue her career as an artist. She spent two years at St. Martin's School of Art (1954-56) concentrating on woodcarving. Then, she transferred to the Slade School of Art where she developed a strong interest in printmaking. She exhibited widely after graduating from the Slade in 1960.

Kim Lim's early period early period is enumerated by works that were very much influenced by her formal study of art at St. Martin's and later at the Slade, alongside travels through Europe and Asia with her artist-husband William Turnbull. These works, developed mostly between 1960 and 1979, are primarily executed in the medium of wood, fiberglass and steel.

This period was also marked by a significant high point, as Kim was included in the 'Hayward Annual' at the Hayward Gallery in 1977. A year prior, in 1976, she also found a place alongside her peers in Singapore, primarily those who were part of the Modern Arts Society and practising along the lines of abstraction, at the inaugural exhibition that surveyed currents in Singapore art at the former National Museum Art Gallery. In 1974, she was also invited for a solo-show at the then influential Alpha Gallery that had developed a reputation for being at the centre of debates on minimalism in Southeast Asia. Kim passed away in 1997.

47 ***Interplay Between Traditions and Contemporary Forms: #2 Jawi and Arabic Forms*,**
Iskander Jalil, Singapore, 2002,
ceramic/stoneware with oxide/ glazes.

Collection of Singapore Art Museum.

Born in 1940 in Singapore, Iskandar Jalil is acknowledged as one of Singapore's most significant artists in the practice of ceramic art. Iskandar was originally trained as a mathematics and science teacher. His turning point came when the Colombo Plan scholarship enabled him to study at the Tajimi City Pottery Design and Technical Centre in Japan in 1972, which cultivated in the artist, deeply-held attitudes and techniques for dealing with the discipline.

Travel has also offered Iskandar another source of aesthetic ideas, colours and motifs. His use of Jawi script as well as floral, geometrical and calligraphic motifs that appear on the surfaces of his ceramic works reveal influences from across Southeast Asia and Japan. Material culture from the region such as *batik* textiles and Jawi script have also been translated by Iskandar into patterns that are both meaningful and aesthetic. In 1988, Isakandar was awarded the Cultural Medallion, Singapore's highest accolade for artistic excellence and contributions to the arts.

48 ***Tiger's Whip*, Tang Da Wu, Singapore, 1991, mixed media.**

Collection of Singapore Art Museum.

Tang Da Wu, born in 1943, is widely regarded as the central figure in the development of 'alternative' art in Singapore. A graduate from Goldsmith College, University of London with a Master of Art, he led a group of younger artists to establish The Artists Village in Singapore in 1988, where performance, installation and painting took place.

Since the late 1990s, Tang has been working on community projects that deal with memory, history as well as environmental issues. In 1999, Tang was awarded the Arts and Culture Prize at the 10th Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize and in 2007, he was one of four artists who represented Singapore at the Venice Biennale.

Tiger's Whip, an installation and performance piece, was first presented to the Singapore public in 1991 in Chinatown with the intention of highlighting the plight of the endangered tigers, which are hunted for their penises as Chinese superstition makes them out to be a powerful aphrodisiac. The work shows the clash of such a belief with the reality of extinction.

49 ***The Cloud of Unknowing*, Ho Tzu Nyen, Singapore, 2011, single-channel HD video projection and 13-channel sound files.**

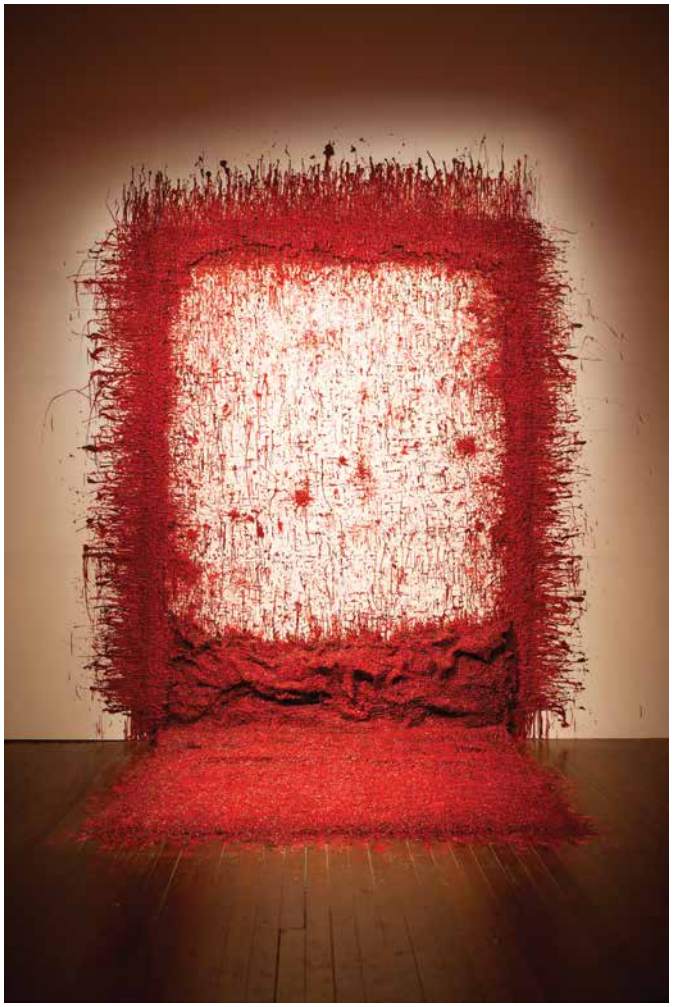
Collection of Singapore Art Museum.

Ho Tzu Nyen, born in 1976, is a Singaporean artist who works primarily in the medium of film and multi-media installations. *The Cloud of Unknowing* is an installation that was commissioned for the Singapore Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition. In this video installation, Ho takes as his central subject the cloud, and explores its symbolic and aesthetic representation across cultures, history and geography.

Shot within a block of public housing in Singapore, *The Cloud of Unknowing* revolves around eight characters and their encounters with a cloud or cloud-like figure. *The Cloud of Unknowing* portrays the characters in a moment of revelation, and here the reference made by the artwork's title is elucidated. *The Cloud of Unknowing* is also the title of a medieval text presumed to be written by a cloistered monk on the experience and trials of meditative contemplation upon the divine, where the cloud paradoxically represents both the moment of uncertainty and connection with divinity.

50 ***Status*, Jane Lee, Singapore, 2009, mixed media.**

Collection of Singapore Art Museum.



Born in Singapore in 1963, Jane Lee graduated from LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts with a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts and a Diploma in Fashion. Amongst other awards, she was the recipient of the inaugural Singapore Art Exhibition Art Prize in 2007. Since 2002, she has exhibited widely in the region, including at international platforms such as Singapore Biennale in 2008.

Status examines the genre of painting by means of pushing the limits of materials and techniques by highlighting the creation process. The work, which is monumental, crosses the boundaries of painting, sculpture and installation, defying traditional categorisation. With the paint seemingly escaping from its frame and pooling at the bottom of the work, it compels the viewer to examine it from several angles, and also to re-think the practice of painting in this new era of art-making. *Status* was the centrepiece at Lee's 2009 solo exhibition.

E) Self-Government & Independence

The State of Singapore Constitution of 21 November 1958 articulated the structure of government for a self-governing Singapore, with the post of governor replaced by the office of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara, and with a fully-elected Legislative Assembly. Self-government was actualised on 5 June 1959, with the late Lee Kuan Yew sworn in as Singapore's first Prime Minister, alongside his first cabinet. To mark this significant milestone, a new national flag and anthem were adopted.

In 1963, Singapore ceased being a colony of Great Britain by merging with Malaya, Sarawak and Sabah to form the Federation of Malaysia. Barely two years later, Singapore would leave the federation, with the Proclamation of the Republic of Singapore on 9 August 1965 declaring Singapore its own independent republic.

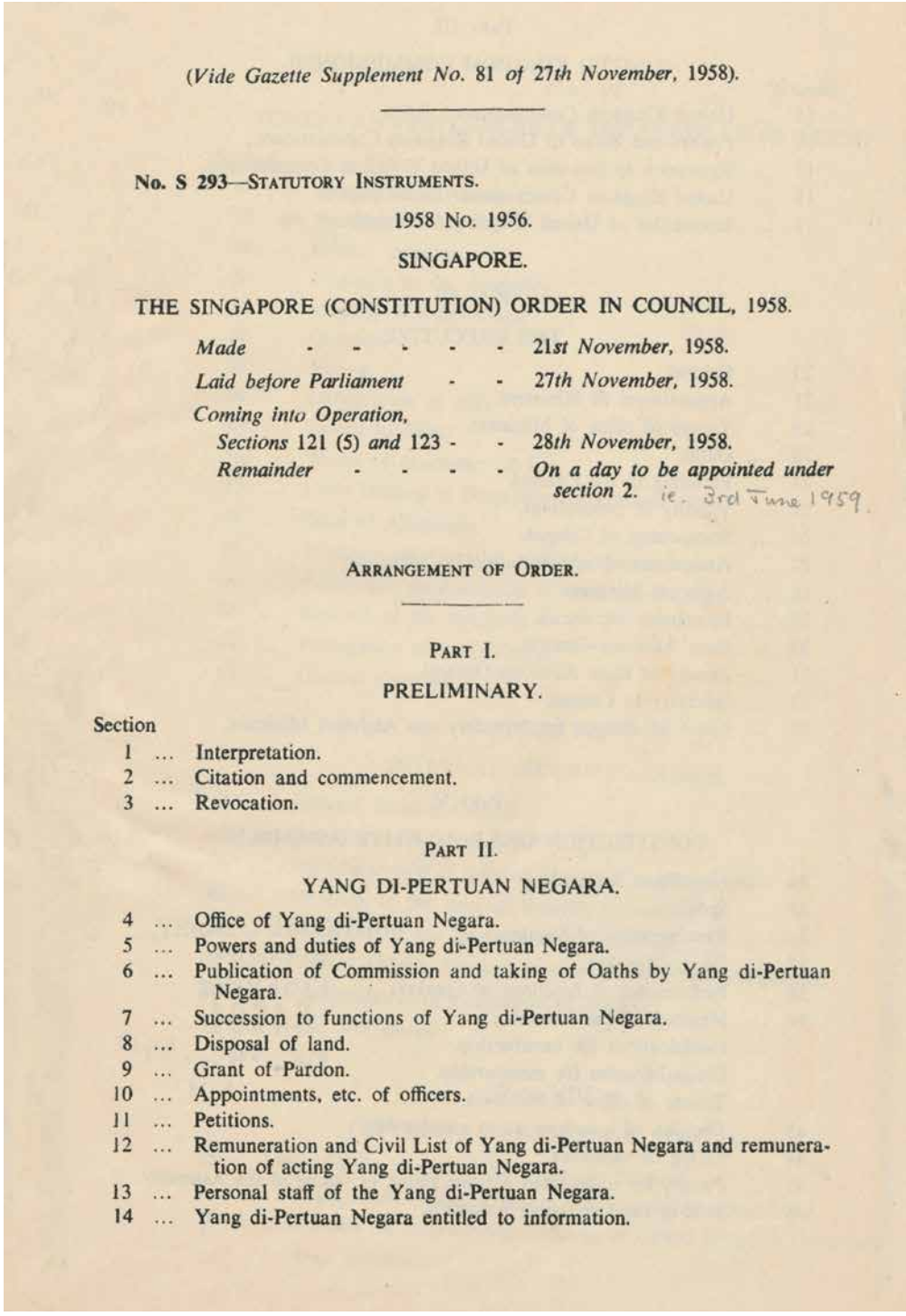
Singapore's post-independence years saw significant economic growth grounded in a burgeoning manufacturing and electronics sector. Heritage brands such as Tiger Balm and Singapore's blossoming into the "Garden City" of Asia contributed to a more vibrant lifestyle and tourism scene.

In the 1980s, economic growth was accompanied by advances in the socio-cultural space, with Singapore investing in what continues to be one of the most extensive and radical public housing programmes in the world. The inclusion of a humble bus ticket from this period as the final object in the graphic spread makes a poignant statement on the great strides post-independence Singapore has made, from being a post-colonial, developing nation to today's global, first-world metropolis.

Singapore in the 1990s and 2000s continued to sustain its growth and build on its global positioning through espousing free trade and continually diversifying its economy while enhancing its urban, social and environmental landscape and infrastructure. It is considered one of the most dynamic and liveable cities in the world today.

51 **Singapore (Constitution) Order in Council, 21 November 1958, Singapore.**

Collection of National Library, Singapore.



(*Vide Gazette Supplement No.* 81 *of* 27*th November*, 1958).

No. S 293—STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS.

1958 No. 1956.

SINGAPORE.

THE SINGAPORE (CONSTITUTION) ORDER IN COUNCIL, 1958.

Made - - - - -	21*st November*, 1958.
Laid before Parliament - -	27*th November*, 1958.
Coming into Operation,	
Sections 121 (5) *and* 123 - -	28*th November*, 1958.
Remainder - - - -	*On a day to be appointed under section* 2. ie. 3rd June 1959

ARRANGEMENT OF ORDER.

PART I.

PRELIMINARY.

Section

1 ... Interpretation.
2 ... Citation and commencement.
3 ... Revocation.

PART II.

YANG DI-PERTUAN NEGARA.

4 ... Office of Yang di-Pertuan Negara.
5 ... Powers and duties of Yang di-Pertuan Negara.
6 ... Publication of Commission and taking of Oaths by Yang di-Pertuan Negara.
7 ... Succession to functions of Yang di-Pertuan Negara.
8 ... Disposal of land.
9 ... Grant of Pardon.
10 ... Appointments, etc. of officers.
11 ... Petitions.
12 ... Remuneration and Civil List of Yang di-Pertuan Negara and remuneration of acting Yang di-Pertuan Negara.
13 ... Personal staff of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara.
14 ... Yang di-Pertuan Negara entitled to information.

Singapore's 1958 constitution was the culmination of three constitutional talks in 1956, 1957, and 1958—the first led by Singapore's first Chief Minister David Marshall, and the latter two by his successor, Lim Yew Hock. The Chief Ministers led all-party missions to London to negotiate the terms of a new constitution. The first mission ended in failure over internal security arrangements, but the second and third missions were successful, providing for a new constitution to be written to establish the State of Singapore.

The 1958 constitution provided for self-government for Singapore through a fully elected 51-seat Legislative Assembly and replaced the governor with the Yang di-Pertuan Negara as head of state, and the Chief Minister with the Prime Minister.

Following the victory of the People's Action Party in the May 1959 elections, Lee Kuan Yew was sworn in as Singapore's first Prime Minister. The British were still in charge of Singapore's defence and foreign affairs. Internal security was managed by an Internal Security Council comprising representatives from Singapore, Britain and the Federation of Malaya.

The first local Yang di-Pertuan Negara was Yusof bin Ishak who was appointed in December 1959. He later became Singapore's first President when it gained independence as a Republic in 1965.

52 ***Lee Kuan Yew's swearing-in as Prime Minister of Singapore on 5 June 1959*, Lai Kui Fang, 1992, Singapore, oil on canvas.**

Collection of National Museum of Singapore.

Lee Kuan Yew and his first cabinet were sworn in on 5 June 1959, marking the date Singapore's self-government was actualised. With no photographic records of the event, this painting of the swearing-in of Lee Kuan Yew as Prime Minister of Singapore in 1959 provides a suggestion of what that historic moment could have looked like. It shows a close-up of Lee and William Goode—the last Governor of Singapore—as well as an aide-de-camp on the left background.

Lai Kui Fang is a distinguished Singaporean portrait painter who studied on a French Government scholarship at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts. In 1968, he was conferred the Knight of the French Order of Arts and Letters, which was upgraded in 1975 to Officer of Arts, the highest honour bestowed by the French government in the artistic fields. He paints in the European classical tradition and has been commissioned to paint portraits of multiple political leaders in Singapore.

53 **Vinyl record titled *Majulah Singapura*, Singapore, c. 1960s.**

Collection of National Museum of Singapore.

Zubir Said is among Singapore's most prominent music composers and songwriters. He has composed over 1,500 songs, comprising film songs, popular songs and national songs. He is best known as the composer of the national anthem of Singapore, *Majulah Singapura*.

He was active as a composer from the 1930s to the 1950s. In 1949, as the Malay film industry was beginning to flourish, Zubir Said joined Shaw Brothers, taking on the role as an orchestra conductor with Malay Film Productions Ltd, one of the production arms of Shaw Brothers. In the early 1950s, he switched to work for Cathay Keris and was its music director for 14 years until his retirement in 1964. He composed background music and wrote songs for selected scenes, using his vast knowledge of European and Asian scores, in particular Malay melodies. He composed musical scores and songs for some of the most iconic and memorable films in Singapore's film history like *Sumpah Pontianak, Sri Mersing, Chuchu Datok Merah,* and worked with popular artistes including P. Ramlee, R. Ismail and Nona Asiah.

The City Council and Mayor of Singapore made a recommendation to the City Council for Zubir Said to compose a song to mark the official opening of Victoria Theatre following renovation works. He wrote *Majulah Singapura*—which means "Onward Singapore" in Malay. This was performed for the first time by the Singapore Chamber Ensemble at the refurbished Victoria Theatre in 1958. *Majulah Singapura* was subsequently selected and declared the national anthem of Singapore on 11 November 1959, with some slight amendments to the lyrics. It was formally presented to the people as a state national anthem on 3 December 1959, the same day Yusok bin Ishak was inaugurated as the Yang di-Pertuan Negara.

54 **Singapore flag, Singapore, 1960-1980.**

Collection of National Museum of Singapore.

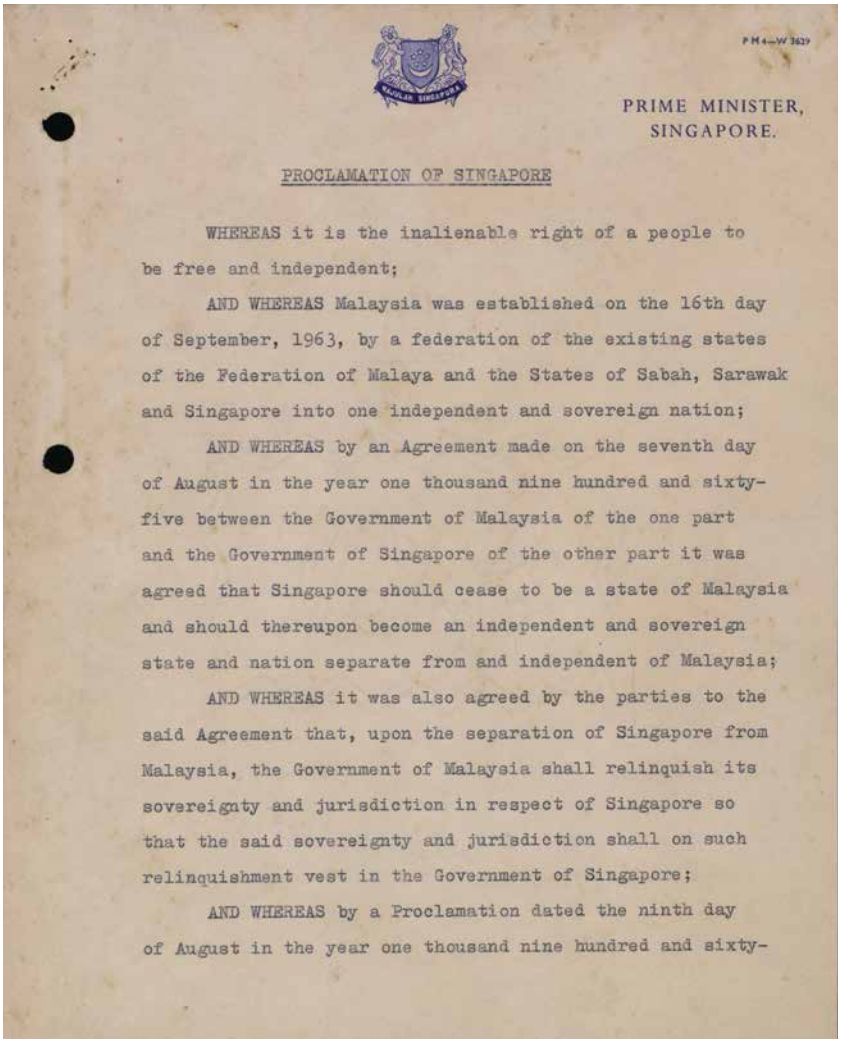
The national flag is Singapore's most visible symbol of statehood, symbolising its sovereignty, pride and honour. The creation of a new national flag was therefore a vital task for Singapore's newly elected cabinet in 1959. Deputy Prime Minister Dr Toh Chin Chye was placed in charge of a committee to create a new flag to replace the British Union Jack, which had flown over the island for nearly 140 years from 1819 to 1959.

Dr Toh had firm ideas about the design of the flag. To ensure that the flag would not be confused with those of other nations, Dr Toh studied the flags of countries represented in the United Nations and showed the cabinet various designs for their consideration. After careful deliberations, the Legislative Assembly endorsed the red and white flag on 18 November 1959, together with the state crest and national anthem. The national flag was unveiled on 3 December 1959 at the installation of the first Malayan-born Yang di-Pertuan Negara (Head of State), Yusof bin Ishak. The ceremony was held in the City Hall chambers. The flag was publicly unveiled for the first time on the City Hall steps. The flag was later adopted officially as Singapore's national flag upon her independence in 1965.

The flag consists of two equal horizontal sections, red above white. In the upper left section are a white crescent moon, and five white stars forming a circle. Each feature of the flag has its own distinctive meaning and significance. Red symbolises universal brotherhood and equality of man. White signifies pervading and everlasting purity and virtue. The crescent moon represents a young nation on the ascendant. The five stars stand for the nation's ideals of democracy, peace, progress, justice and equality.

55 **Proclamation of the Republic of Singapore, Singapore, 9 August 1965.**

Collection of the National Archives of Singapore.



PRIME MINISTER,
SINGAPORE.

PROCLAMATION OF SINGAPORE

WHEREAS it is the inalienable right of a people to be free and independent;

AND WHEREAS Malaysia was established on the 16th day of September, 1963, by a federation of the existing states of the Federation of Malaya and the States of Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore into one independent and sovereign nation;

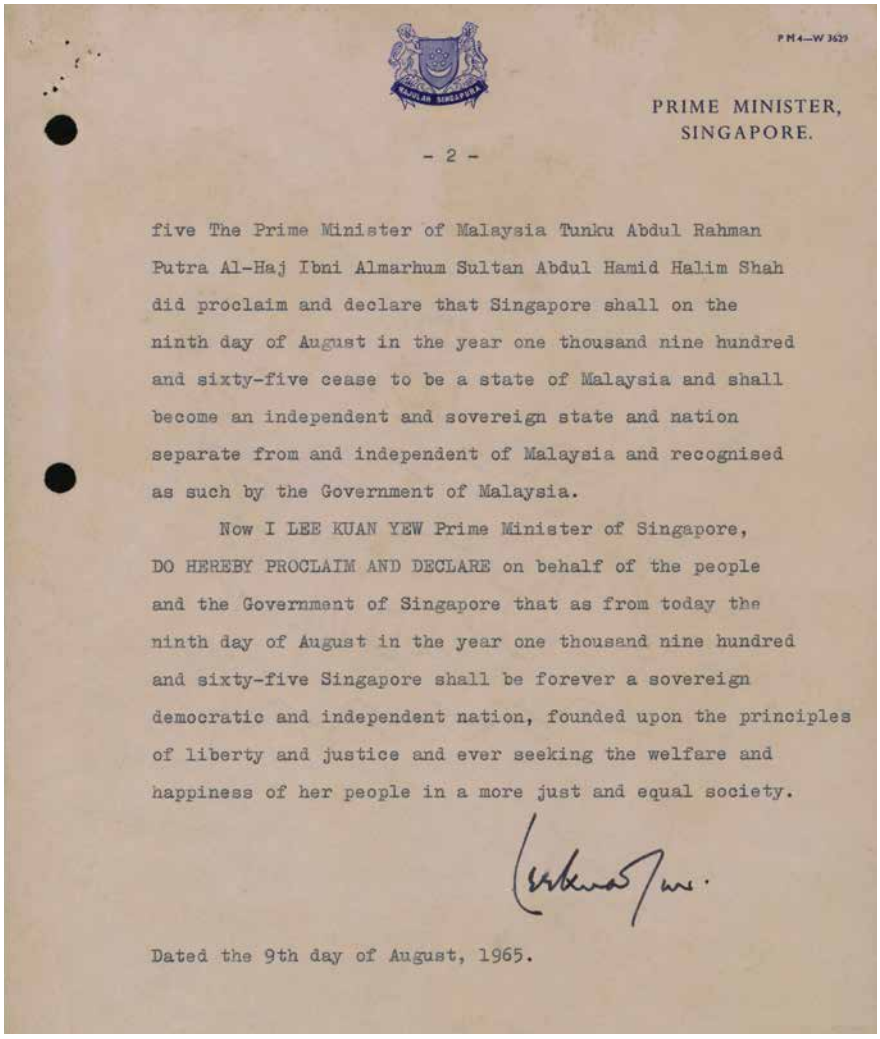
AND WHEREAS by an Agreement made on the seventh day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five between the Government of Malaysia of the one part and the Government of Singapore of the other part it was agreed that Singapore should cease to be a state of Malaysia and should thereupon become an independent and sovereign state and nation separate from and independent of Malaysia;

AND WHEREAS it was also agreed by the parties to the said Agreement that, upon the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, the Government of Malaysia shall relinquish its sovereignty and jurisdiction in respect of Singapore so that the said sovereignty and jurisdiction shall on such relinquishment vest in the Government of Singapore;

AND WHEREAS by a Proclamation dated the ninth day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-

This landmark document proclaims Singapore's separation from Malaysia and its beginnings as an independent and sovereign republic. It was drafted by Minister for Law Edmund Barker and signed by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. It announced the constitutional change set in motion by the separation agreement and eventually effected through legislation passed in both the Malaysian and Singapore parliaments.

The secrecy and hurried nature of the separation is reflected in the plain presentation of the Proclamation of Singapore. Rust stains show that the document had been stapled together, and the holes punched on the side show that the paper had been filed in a way similar to other working documents.



PM 4—W 3629

PRIME MINISTER,
SINGAPORE.

- 2 -

five The Prime Minister of Malaysia Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj Ibni Almarhum Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah did proclaim and declare that Singapore shall on the ninth day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five cease to be a state of Malaysia and shall become an independent and sovereign state and nation separate from and independent of Malaysia and recognised as such by the Government of Malaysia.

Now I LEE KUAN YEW Prime Minister of Singapore, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM AND DECLARE on behalf of the people and the Government of Singapore that as from today the ninth day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five Singapore shall be forever a sovereign democratic and independent nation, founded upon the principles of liberty and justice and ever seeking the welfare and happiness of her people in a more just and equal society.

Dated the 9th day of August, 1965.

The following excerpt proclaims
Singapore's independence:

"[…] by a Proclamation dated the ninth day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five the Prime Minister of Malaysia Tunku Abdul Rahman Outra Al-Haj Ibni Almarhum Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah did proclaim and declare that Singapore shall on the ninth day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five cease to be a State of Malaysia and shall become an independent and sovereign state and nation separate from and independent of Malaysia and recognised as such by the Government of Malaysia.

Now I LEE KUAN YEW Prime Minister of Singapore, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM AND DECLARE on behalf of the people and the Government of Singapore that as from today the ninth day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five Singapore shall forever be a sovereign democratic and independent nation, founded upon the principles of justice and ever seeking the welfare and happiness of her people in a more just and equal society."

56 **Singapore Ginger (*Zingiber singapurensis*), Singapore, described in November 2014.**

Collection of the Singapore Botanic Gardens' Herbarium.

A herbarium specimen is a pressed sample of a plant that is stored for future reference. The herbarium at the Singapore Botanic Gardens is home to about 750,000 dried paper mounted plant specimens of which about 10,000 are type specimens (the ultimate points of reference for the correct application of species' names). The gardens' preserved collections were first started by James Murton in 1875 but greatly expanded from 1888 when Henry Ridley was the director. The herbarium is Singapore's major archive for botanical research specimens. It serves as an important reference centre for research on the region's plant diversity for botanists around the world.

Commonly known as the Singapore Ginger, this species was described as new to science in November 2014. It was named *Zingiber singapurense* as Singapore was where it was discovered and is the only place in world where the species is known to occur in the wild. This plant can be found in Singapore's primary forests and as there are only a few populations left, it is considered critically endangered. It is receiving special attention under the National Parks Board's Species Recovery Programme.

Established in 1859, the Singapore Botanic Gardens played an important historical role in the introduction and promotion of many plants of economic value to Southeast Asia, including the Pará rubber tree. Today, the 82-hectare Gardens is a key civic and community space, and an international tourist destination. Attracting an annual visitorship of more than five million, it is also an important institution for tropical botanical and horticultural research, education and conservation. The Gardens was inscribed as Singapore's first UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015.

57 **Setron television set, Singapore, 1960s–1970s.**

Collection of National Museum of Singapore.

This television set was produced by Setron (Singapore Electronics) Limited, which made Singapore's first locally-assembled black-and-white television set in late 1964. Setron Limited was previously a coffee trading company, Heng Guan Limited, which had to shut down as its Indonesian-based business was affected by Konfrontasi (Confrontation). Set up by local businessmen, Setron Limited was the first television assembly plant in Southeast Asia when it began manufacturing in late 1964. Setron became a household name in Singapore by the 1970s.

The Setron factory was located at the former Tanglin Halt Industrial Estate, one of the first industrial estates in Singapore. Measuring some 20 acres of land and comprising a total of 38 factory lots for cottage industries, the establishment of the Tanglin Halt Industrial Estate marked Singapore's drive into industrialisation and diversification from a declining entrepôt economy. Tanglin Halt was chosen for its close proximity to the former Malayan Railways and large labour catchment.

Managed by the Jurong Town Corporation, the former Tanglin Halt Industrial Estate was developed in the 1960s to house light and medium industries. Land was leased to budding industrialists on easy repayment terms and tax incentives were given to multinational corporations. By the end of the decade, Tanglin Halt was home to a smorgasbord of factories. Aside from Setron, there were Van Houten chocolate factory, Diethelm aluminium factory and Unitex garment factory. In fact, it was at Tanglin Halt that Setron rolled out Singapore's first black and white television in 1964. In the late 1980s, factories at the former Tanglin Halt Industrial Estate began to relocate to bigger industrial estates and clusters in order to enjoy economies of scale.

58 **Advertisement signboard for Tiger Balm Ten Thousand Golden Oil, Singapore, c. 1970s.**

Collection of National Museum of Singapore.

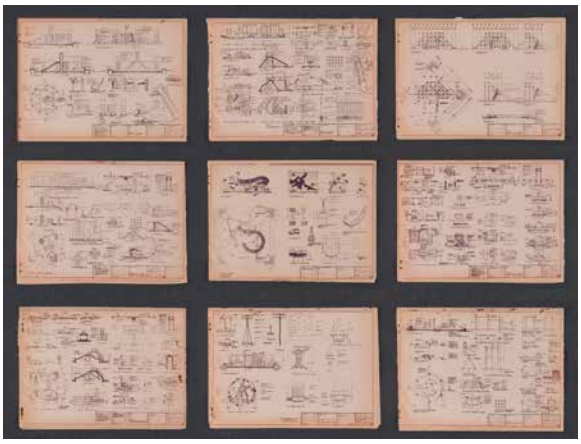
This is a metal signboard with an advertisement in Chinese for the Tiger Balm brand of pain-relieving ointment known as 'Ten Thousand Golden Oil'. The creators of Tiger Balm were brothers Aw Boon Haw and Aw Boon Par, who were born in Rangoon, Burma (today's Yangon, Myanmar). Boon Par took charge of production and developed other Tiger brand products, while Boon Haw packaged and marketed them. By 1918, the Aw family had become the richest family in Rangoon.

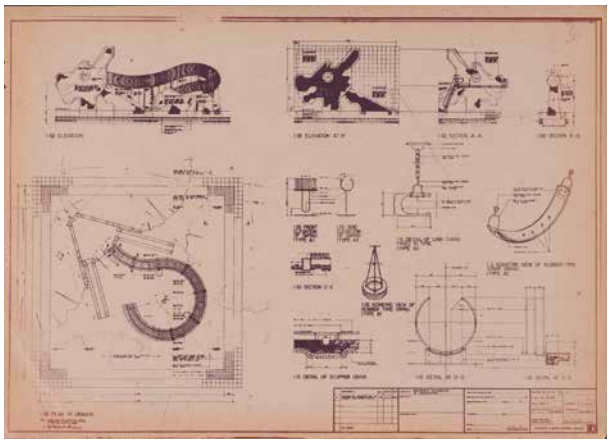
In 1932, Boon Haw built a villa for his second wife in Hong Kong. Behind the house, he built an elaborate garden that could be appreciated much like a Chinese landscape painting from the rooftop. Craftsmen well-versed in Chinese folklore were hired from Swatow, China, to build the garden. These same craftsmen then travelled to Singapore to build the Tiger Balm Gardens, or Haw Par Villa (named after the two brothers), in 1937.

Haw Par Villa was built as a residence by Boon Haw for his younger brother, Boon Par. Though it was private property, part of the garden was opened to the public as Boon Haw wanted it to be an advertisement for Tiger Balm products. The gardens were a popular leisure destination till the 1980s and were known for their larger-than-life dioramas featuring scenes taken from Chinese religion, history and mythology. These dioramas were meant to educate visitors about fundamental Chinese values and beliefs, such as filial piety, resisting temptation and evil-doing, loyalty and fidelity, as well as community service, charity, and judgement in one's afterlife. Tiger Balm continues to be a popular local heritage brand today, and Haw Par Villa still stands in its original location in Pasir Panjang.

59 **HDB playground prototype drawings, Khor Ean Ghee, Singapore, 1970–1979.**

Collection of National Museum of Singapore.





In 1960, the Housing and Development Board (HDB) was formed to replace the earlier Singapore Improvement Trust. It was tasked with building and managing low-cost public housing for the lower-income groups. HDB tackled the housing problem by redeveloping urban and rural areas and resettling people into new housing estates.

In the 1970s, HDB designed a range of playground designs for its public housing estates. The first series was animal-themed while the second wave of playgrounds featured objects and concepts easily identifiable with the local culture.

This is a set of Housing Development Board (HDB) playground prototypes from Khor Ean Ghee, who is the designer of the first playgrounds found at HDB estates such as the iconic dragon and pelican playgrounds. These playground prototypes are his personal copies. Khor worked in HDB from 1969 till 1983. When he was tasked to design playgrounds for HDB estates, the interior designer who had no training in playground designs took inspiration from our local identity. HDB built many of these locally-designed playgrounds in the 1970s and 1980s before it started to import modular playgrounds from overseas suppliers in the 1990s.

Today, many of the locally-designed playgrounds have been demolished. These HDB playgrounds are fondly remembered by many Singaporeans who had spent their childhood days there. They play a significant role in our collective memory. These playgrounds also marked a time when HDB new towns were formed with the provision of many facilities within the residents' reach. Toa Payoh's iconic Dragon Playground is one of two remaining playgrounds of such design in Singapore.

60 Singapore Bus Services (SBS) bus ticket with value of 45 cents, Singapore, 1970s–1980s.

Collection of National Museum of Singapore.

Singapore Bus Service (SBS) Limited was formed in 1973 through the merger of three existing bus companies, Amalgamated Bus Company, Associated Bus Services and United Bus. The company became a major fixture in the local public transport landscape and features highly in Singapore's transport heritage. It continues to offer public transport services to the Singaporean public today.

This is a Singapore Bus Services (SBS) bus ticket from the 1970s and '80s, with a value of 45 cents. A generation of young Singaporeans, growing up during those times, would remember these simple bus tickets fondly. Upon boarding the familiar red-and-white SBS buses, they would have had to purchase these tickets from the bus conductor, who would perforate the tickets with a ticket punch to prevent them from being reused on another journey. The value of the tickets depended on the distance travelled. These punched tickets were later replaced by printed tickets.

Printed on the back of this ticket is the Courtesy Campaign slogan and mascot. The Courtesy Campaign was launched by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in 1979 in an attempt to encourage Singaporeans to show courtesy, consideration and kindness to one and all. The campaign mascot, Singa the lion, was introduced in 1982 and it has appeared on posters, billboards and various media advertisements.

Singapore has launched numerous campaigns since the 1970s to address prevailing issues of the time. Aside from the Courtesy Campaign, other memorable campaigns from the 1970s to the 1990s include the National Productivity Movement, with Teamy the Bee as its mascot; the "Use Your Hands" Campaign to encourage students to clean up school premises; and the "Clean and Green Week" Campaign, with a friendly frog, Captain Green, as its mascot.

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Christina Soh, Manager / Library

Notes

1. According to the Pew Research Center's demographic study in 2014. https://www.pewforum.org/2014/04/04/global-religious-diversity/

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The object captions in this graphic spread consist of existing curatorial content that has been minimally edited for length by the author. This content was researched and written by curators, archivists and subject specialists at the institutions featured in this spread at various times in the history of these institutions. The content has been, in most cases, adapted from curatorial content directly provided by the institutions, existing content in collection databases, display captions in the institutions' galleries, as well as the following publications and online references created and maintained by the featured institutions.

A Shared Identity: A Case for Arts and Culture

Dr Sharon Chang

Senior Deputy Director (Research), Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and Chief Research Officer, National Arts Council

Kenneth Kwok

Assistant Chief Executive (Planning & Development), National Arts Council

"The work of our artists, especially in the form of literature and plays, can help us find the words, the language, to describe our national character and identity … [it falls] on the poet, the writer, the musician, and / or choreographer to capture the soul of the country or character of the people."

Professor Chan Heng Chee (Chan 2019)

The arts express individual identity

Our identity—what defines us and makes us different from one another—is something that operates on multiple levels. One of the ways we articulate this perception of our "I-ness" is by reference to our place within the community we belong to. This can be as small a grouping as your family (father, mother, son, daughter) or friends (the funny one), or larger ones such as those who share your race, religion, neighbourhood or, indeed, country. This nexus is not uni-directional. Over time, our interactions in these various communities will also shape our perception and expression of our I-ness.

Both international and local studies show strong support for the idea that the arts play an important role in identity articulation and formation. Artistic expressions are not only a documentation of where we have come from, but also a means to explore and articulate who we are today, and what our aspirations are for the future (Caruso 2005). By giving our identities clearer definition and shape, arts activities help to reinforce our affinity to these identities. This is especially so when they operate not only on a cognitive level, but also on an emotional one; the unique resonance of Dick Lee's "Home" for many Singaporeans beyond simply being a well-composed song is just one example.

The arts are widely recognised as a platform for us to give voice to our unique identity, whether in words, gestures or images. Australia's National Arts

Figure 1. Youth participants at a workshop run by street art collective, RSCLS, as part of National Arts Council's Noise programming, 2018. Image courtesy of National Arts Council.

Participation Survey found that 69 per cent of Australians agreed that the arts helped us to "express ourselves" (61 per cent in 2013) (Australia Council for the Arts 2017). Similarly, the NAC's biennial Population Survey on the Arts showed that the proportion of Singaporeans who agreed that the arts enabled us to "express our personal thoughts, feelings and ideas" rose from 71 per cent in 2013 to 85 per cent in 2017 (National Arts Council 2017).

The arts transmit cultural identity across generations

A 2017 study on ethnic identity in Singapore affirmed that having a strong ethnic identity was important to 64 per cent of Singaporeans (Institute of Policy Studies 2017). While language is seen as the most important signifier of this ethnic identity, the study found that a significant percentage of Singaporeans (ranging from 30-60 per cent of the different key racial groups in Singapore) believed that an appreciation of cultural art forms—from performing to visual arts—was at least somewhat important (see Figure 2). Cultural art forms are, understandably, closely associated with ethnicity because many artistic expressions are drawn from cultural traditions.

Nearly half (47 per cent) of all respondents agreed that it was at least somewhat important to transmit the enjoyment of ethnic music to their children, with the Malay (64 per cent) and Indian (66 per cent) communities ranking notably higher than the Chinese (42 per cent) community. In terms of wanting their children to be aware of ethnic arts, we see similar results: more than three-fifths of Malays (65 per cent) and Indians (67 per cent), and slightly less than half of Chinese (43 per cent) responded positively. This is perhaps unsurprising as the same study showed that only slightly more than a third of Chinese respondents (39 per cent) engaged with their own ethnic art forms sometimes, often or always, as compared to more than three-fifths of Malays (62 per cent) and Indians (62 per cent).

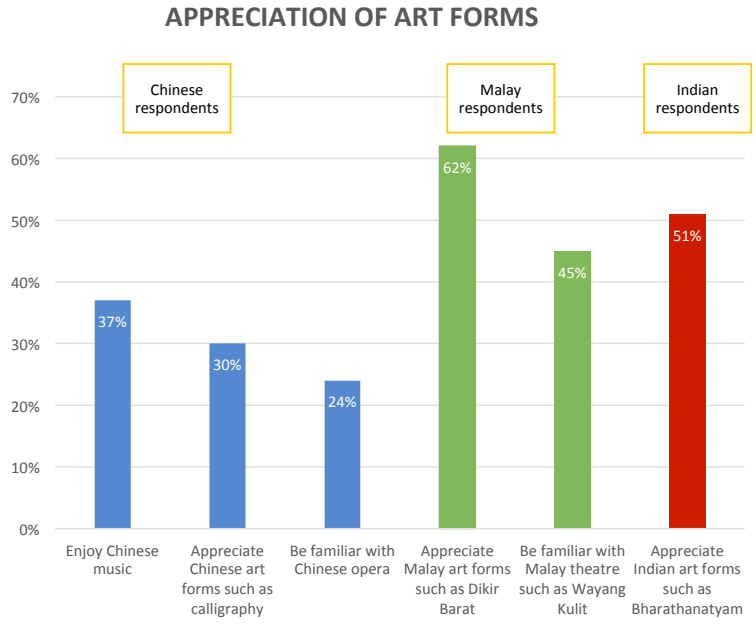

Figure 2. The Arts and Cultural Identity: percentage of respondents (by race) who agree that it is somewhat important / important to appreciate art forms. Source: Institute of Policy Studies.

The arts help forge common identity and foster pride

At the national level, the arts also play an important role as they provide platforms for shared experiences, and help to establish distinctive narratives and symbols that are specific to the country and its people. In Australia, 57 per cent agreed that the arts helped them to "shape and express Australian identity" (Australia Council for the Arts 2017). Similarly, in Canada, 87 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that arts and culture defined "what it meant to be Canadian", while 77 per cent of Canadians agreed or strongly agreed that arts and heritage experiences enabled them to feel "part of their local community." Analyses of various Canadian surveys indicate positive correlations between pride and sense of belonging. In 2013, people who said they were very proud of the country's achievements in arts and literature also had a slightly higher sense of belonging to their community, town, province and country (Statistics Canada 2013). In 2015, Canadians who rated arts, culture and leisure in their city or town as "excellent" were nearly three times more likely to report a "very strong" sense of belonging to their city or town, compared to those who rated the arts as "poor" (Angus Reid Institute 2015).

Closer to home, NAC's Population Survey on the Arts found similar sentiments among Singaporeans. In 2017, a large majority of respondents expressed that arts and culture say who we are as a society and country (78 per cent), and give us a greater sense of belonging to Singapore (78 per cent). 76 per cent of respondents also indicated that Singapore arts and culture are something that Singaporeans can be proud of. Particularly noteworthy is that the scores for all these survey questions are the same or higher in 2017 compared to the scores in 2013 and 2015, indicating an ever-growing understanding by the Singapore public of the social value of the arts.

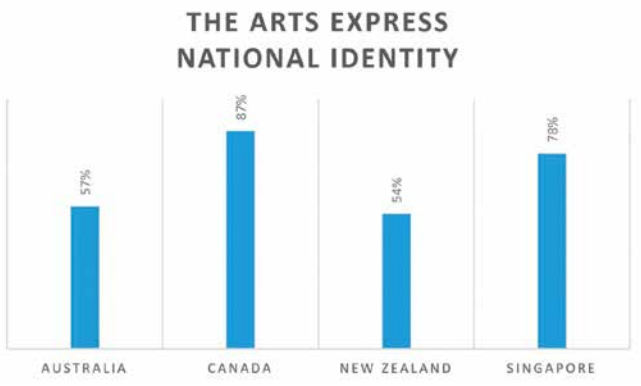

Figure 3. The Arts and National Identity: percentage of population surveyed who agree that the arts express national identity.
Sources: Australia Council for the Arts, Community Foundations of Canada, Creative New Zealand, National Arts Council Singapore.

Specifically, in Singapore's case, a large part of our national identity is seen as being part of an ethnically integrated society. At the opening of the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre in 2017, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong described Singapore as "… a multiracial, multi-religious and multi-cultural society. This diversity is a fundamental aspect of our respective identities … Ours is not a melting pot society, with every race shorn of its distinctiveness. Instead we encourage each race to preserve its unique culture and traditions, while fostering mutual appreciation and respect among all of them. Being Singaporean has never been a matter of subtraction, but of addition" (Lee 2017).

Singapore has thus endeavoured to nurture unique Singaporean versions of what it means to be Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian. In the same speech, Prime Minister Lee spoke about "a growing Singaporean identity that we all share, suffusing and linking up our distinct individual identities and ethnic cultures … the Chinese Singaporean is proud of his Chinese culture—but also increasingly conscious that his "Chineseness" is different from the Chineseness of Malaysian and Indonesian Chinese, or the Chineseness of people in China, Hong Kong or Taiwan. Indeed, we now speak of the Singaporean Chinese culture. In the same way, we can speak of a Singaporean Malay culture, and a Singaporean Indian culture."

Findings from Institute of Policy Studies (2017) on ethnic identity in Singapore indicate that there has been progress made in this direction. While a majority of respondents affirmed multiple considerations such as race, religion, and language used most frequently, as important to their overall sense of identity, it is noteworthy that country received the highest score (79 per cent). Also encouraging is that arts activities can contribute to this sense of national identity: 78 per cent of respondents to the 2017 NAC Population Survey indicated that arts and culture help draw Singaporeans closer as a community, while 89 per cent indicated that they give us a better understanding of people of different backgrounds and cultures, compared to 64 per cent in both Australia and New Zealand.

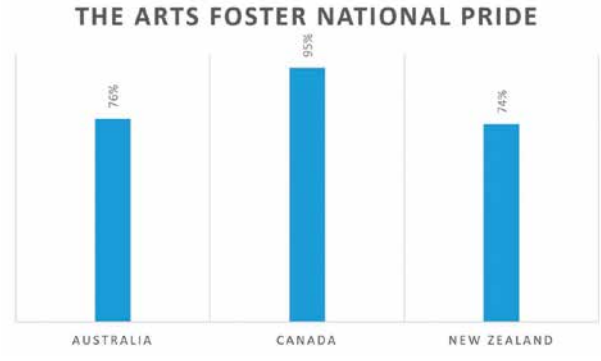

Figure 4. The Arts and National Pride: percentage of population surveyed who take pride in their country's local artists who are successful (locally or overseas).
Sources: Australia Council for the Arts, Community Foundations of Canada, Creative New Zealand.
Note: Canadian data refer to that for Ontario.

This is testimony to efforts in the arts scene in Singapore to consistently embrace multi-cultural programming, as well as inter-cultural collaborations between artists and arts groups. When the Ministry of Culture was established in 1959, its mandate was "a conscious and deliberate effort to help shape a Malayan culture" (Wong 2001, 5) through public exhibitions and cultural performances, notably the Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat or People's Variety Show, a public programme which deliberately showcased performances by artists who represented the cultural diversity of the country. Its legacy can be seen in the NAC's biannual *Arts in Your Neighbourhood* series which also brings free arts events to public spaces in the heartlands, and features a range of cultural performances. Its November 2018 edition, for example, included shows by Bhaskar's Arts Academy, Era Dance Theatre, The Singapore Chinese Orchestra, Teater KAMi, and The TENG Ensemble, as well as "When We Get Together" by the musical ensemble, Open Score Project, which brings together musicians playing instruments of different ethnic origins.

Figure 5. Multicultural performance by Open Score Project at National Arts Council's *Arts in Your Neighbourhood* November 2018 edition. Image courtesy of National Arts Council.

Future challenges and research

Relentless globalisation and pervasive use of social media will see social attitudes, particularly those that contribute to social identities, evolve continually and rapidly. Building on our nascent base of arts and identity findings, future research can focus on behavioural changes directly linked to arts and cultural exposure or activity. There is also a need to understand the evolving role of arts and culture as the relative strength of identity signifiers such as race and nationhood change over time.

A 2018 study by Channel News Asia and OnePeople.Sg showed that more Singaporeans now feel class, not race as traditionally assumed, has become the biggest social divide in Singapore. The report also highlighted that people from the more affluent classes are likelier to participate in society, including engaging in arts and cultural activities (Low 2018). Class as a significant identity marker and the issue of access is thus something arts agencies, institutions and professionals will need to be more mindful of when we talk about arts and culture providing shared experiences. To this end, research on how various aspects of diversity in and through the arts can be addressed will be critical. □

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The Imprint of 1819— Entrepôt, Place, Community in Images

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Two hundred years ago, an entrepôt was established at the mouth of Singapore River by the British East India Company (EIC) through treaties between its employees, Sir Stamford Raffles and William Farquhar, and the Malay ruler Sultan Hussein Shah, and Temenggong Abdul Rahman. This entrepôt was the latest manifestation of earlier such centres on the island dating back to the 14th century.

The entrepôt of 1819 shaped Singapore's economy for over a century, before industrialisation came to the fore as part of Singapore's nation-building process during the 1960s.

The entrepôt settlement was no more than a narrow strip of land on the island and is illustrated by the Raffles Town Plan. This foothold evolved to shape the urban contour of Singapore.

Taking the settlement as a starting point, this essay explores the texture of the entrepôt's identity through images selected from the National Museum of Singapore's collection. It covers the time period from the 1820s to about the 1960s which spans the life of the entrepôt. The images are not meant to be a comprehensive representation in view of certain gaps in the availability of pictorial sources. The historical significance of the entrepôt settlement should not be overlooked in the light of the Singapore bicentennial as it has impact on Singapore's subsequent development. Traces of the EIC era are also still evident in the presence, for example, of the Dalhousie obelisk and the Horsburgh Lighthouse and their contextual histories.

The concept of the "urban artefact" as elaborated by the Italian architect Aldo Rossi, in his book, *The Architecture of the City,* is useful as a guide. According to Rossi, an "urban artefact" refers to a building, street, and district of a city that brings out its "individuality, *locus,* design and memory" and collectively contributes to an experience of place and time. With this framework in mind, it is hoped that the images that follow can generate such an awareness through the impressions of images of scenes, peoples, and activities.

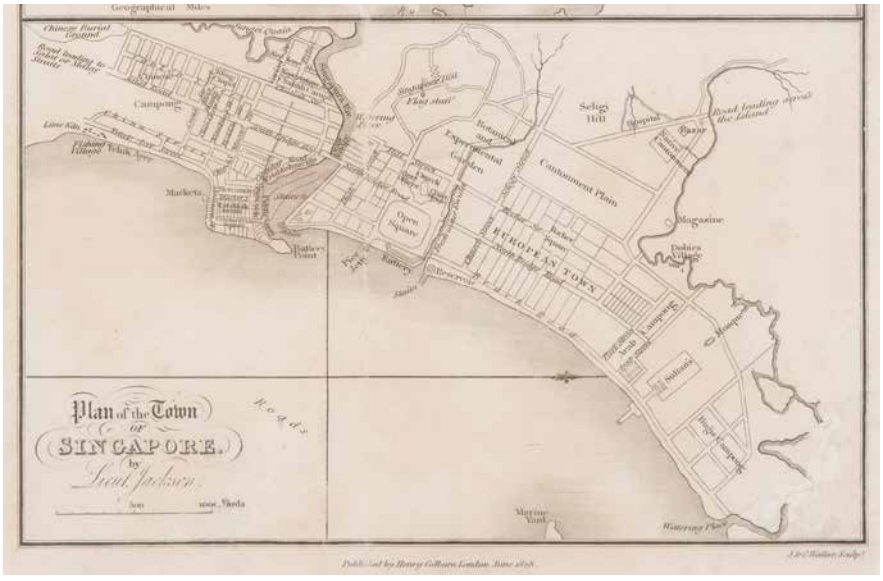

Figure 1. *Plan of the Town of Singapore*, engraving published in 1828 based on the town plan by Lieutenant Philip Jackson in 1822.

Figure 2. The Dalhousie Obelisk, Singapore, late 19th century, albumen print photograph. The Dalhousie Obelisk was built to commemorate visit of the Governor-General of India, the Marquis of Dalhousie to Singapore in 1850.

Figure 3. Horsburgh Lighthouse on Pedra Branca, 1851. Watercolour by John Turnbull Thomson. The Horsburgh Lighthouse was completed in 1851 by colonial engineer and surveyor John Turnbull Thomson, and named after the East India Company hydrographer James Horsburgh.

Entrepôt

The entrepôt based on the Singapore River was an intersection of traders and trading routes and evolved to become the preferred port of call in the region.

Figure 4. Singapore from the Government Bungalow, 17 November 1828. Watercolour by Marianne James. James, the wife of Bishop John Thomas James of Calcutta, painted this view from Fort Canning which shows the busy shipping around the early Singapore entrepôt settlement.

Figure 5. The Singapore River entrepôt in the 1840s. Coloured lithograph by Vincent Brooks based on a sketch by Lieutenant Edwin Augustus Porcher of the Royal Navy. A flurry of trading activity is depicted in this scene of the Singapore River with the Master Attendant's Office situated on the right.

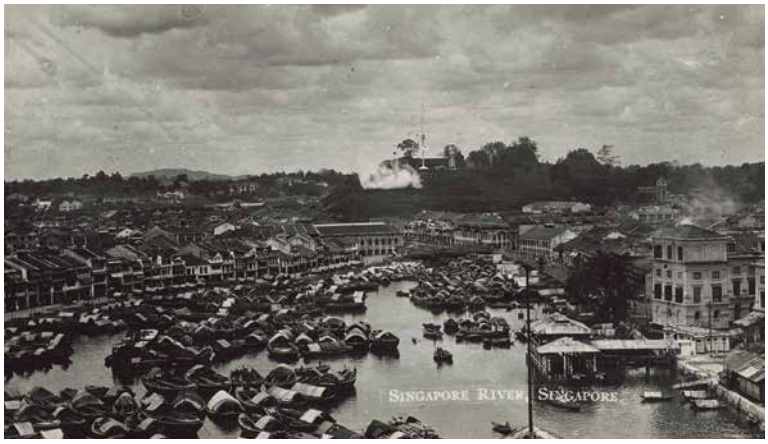

Figure 6. Singapore River, early 20th century postcard. This scene shows the river flooded with lighter boats like *tongkangs* and *twakows*, with the flagstaff visible atop Fort Canning in the background.

Figure 7. Unloading cargo from boats at the Singapore River, 1937. Vintage gelatin silver photograph by Maynard Owen Williams. National Geographic Image Collection, courtesy of National Museum of Singapore.

Figure 8. Loading and Unloading in a team of three, 1971. Photograph by Loke Hong Seng.

Although Singapore River gained prominence, the Kallang-Rochor river basin should not be discounted as it also became an active conduit of trade and settlement in a continuation of its historical roots likely going back to the 17th century.

By the late 19th century and first decades of the 20th century, the trans-shipment of Malayan rubber and tin became increasingly important to the entrepôt economy. Light industries which manufactured commodities or processed raw material were also in operation in the decades before World War II.

Figure 9. Kallang River, late 19th century photograph featured in an early 20th century postcard.

Figure 10. View of junks docked at the harbour of Rochor River, 1907. Photogravure by C. J. Kleingrothe.

In the 1960s, a new climate of state-driven industrialisation saw factories and industrial estates being built to kick-start Singapore's economy as a newly-independent nation. The images below offer a glimpse into the types of industries that sustained the transition from entrepôt economy to industrialisation during the 1950s to 1960s.

Figure 11. Seaplane at Kallang River basin, off Kallang airport, 1939. Vintage gelatin silver print photograph by J. Baylor Roberts. National Geographic Image Collection, courtesy of National Museum of Singapore.

Figure 12. Rochor River, Singapore, engraving published in 1866 based on an original work by Fedor Jagor. This print shows a Chinese junk along the river.

Figure 13. Women working in the Michelin Rubber Company's rubber warehouse, 1950s. Vintage gelatin silver photograph by J. Baylor Roberts, National Geographic Image Collection, courtesy of National Museum of Singapore.

Figure 14. Workers of Goodyear Orient Company moving bales of rubber, 1952. Vintage gelatin photograph by J. Baylor Roberts.National Geographic Image Collection, courtesy of National Museum of Singapore.

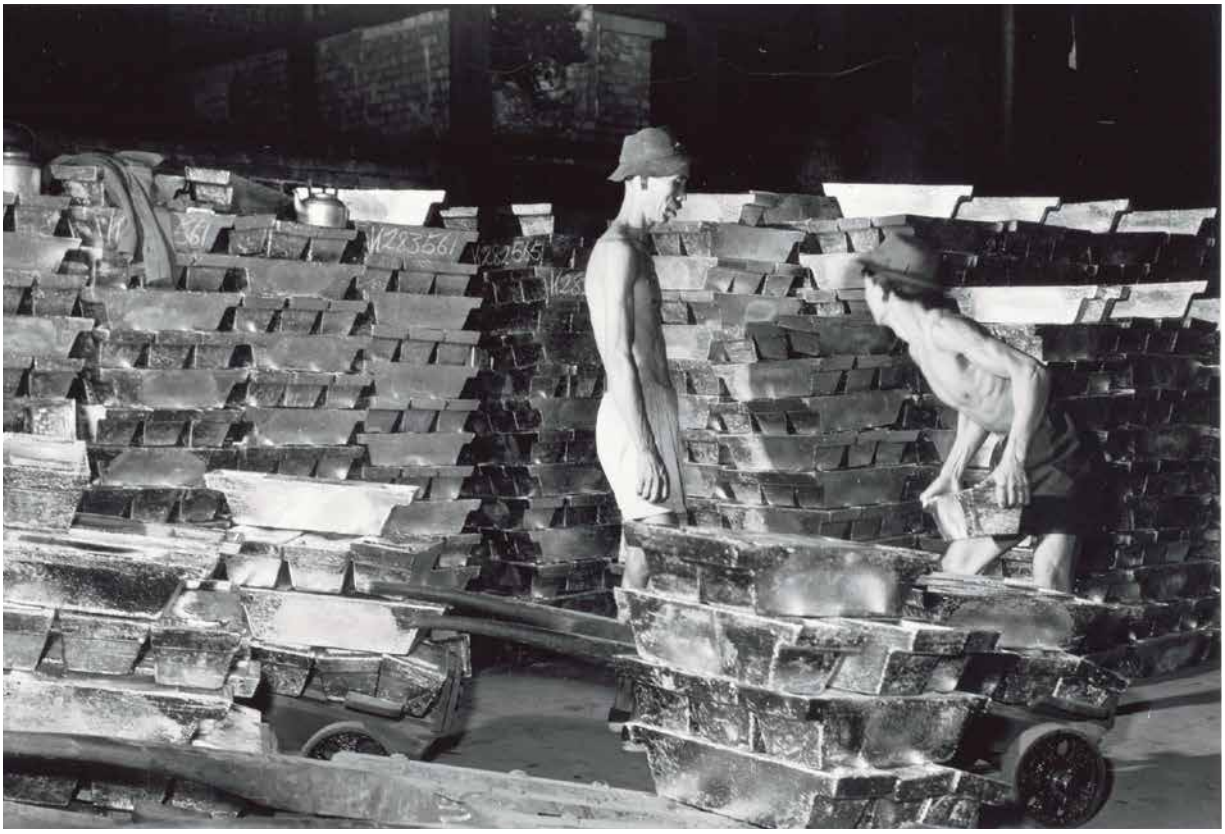

Figure 15. Workers from Straits Trading Company Ltd. stacking 100-pound (45-kilogramme) ingots of refined tin in piles ready for shipment, 1952. Vintage gelatin silver print by J. Baylor Roberts. National Geographic Image Collection, courtesy of National Museum of Singapore.

Place

A sense of place-identity may arguably be observed from 19th century postcards of Singapore. Many were locally produced. Titled "Greetings from Singapore", they depicted specific landmarks and scenes of Singapore. They functioned as travel souvenirs with short messages written on them to be sent home by the visitor or traveller.

Besides these mementos, a closer look at street photographs of the evolving city points to the character and vibrancy of place. Although these photographic representations were the outcome of the individual photographer's motivations, the

Figure 16. Government House, Raffles Museum, and the Post Office, late 19th century photographs published in an early 20th century postcard.

Figure 17. Battery Road and Cavenagh Bridge, late 19th century photographs published in an early 20th century postcard.

resulting point of view or angle guides us to see specific features and their relationship with the surroundings. For example, the John Little & Co., a prominent department store, in Raffles Place stands out and the store's ground floor opens to the square with people entering and leaving the store in front of the waiting rickshaws and motorcars.

Other images present this type of relationship between site and activity such as the boats and rickshaws off Collyer Quay; the urban traffic in Collyer Quay with its commercial offices; the General Post Office as seen from the decks of ships; and the street market in Rochor.

Figure 18. John Little & Co., 1920s, photograph.

Figure 19. Sampans at Collyer Quay, late 19th century, photograph.

Figure 20. View along Collyer Quay depicting commercial buildings in the background, 1920s, postcard.

Figure 21. The waterfront with the General Post office, 20th century, photograph.

Figure 22. A scene at Rochor market, 1930s-1940s, postcard.

Community

With the development of the entrepôt, a multi-ethnic population began to take shape. The first census in Singapore undertaken in 1824 recorded a population of over 10,000 comprising 74 Europeans, 16 Armenians, 15 Arabs, 4,580 Malays, 3,317 Chinese, 756 "natives of India", 1,925 Bugis, and others (Buckley 1965). From the start, Singapore was a meeting place of ethnicities bringing their aspirations as well as their links with their countries of origin. Street photographs depict the immigrants in the context of their everyday lives and activities.

The below scenes provide clues to attire, trades and occupations, housing, and the mood of the street. In the case of the Cross Street scene, a particular moment had brought together a crowd of Chinese and Indian pedestrians which point to their co-existence in a common space.

Other images focus on specific individuals who remain nameless but nevertheless were an integral part of street life or of domestic households, such as carriage drivers working for families.

Figure 23. A busy scene captured in China Street, located between South Bridge Road and Amoy Street, 19th century, photograph.

Figure 24. A quarrel taking place with onlookers gathering at Cross Street, 19th century, photograph.

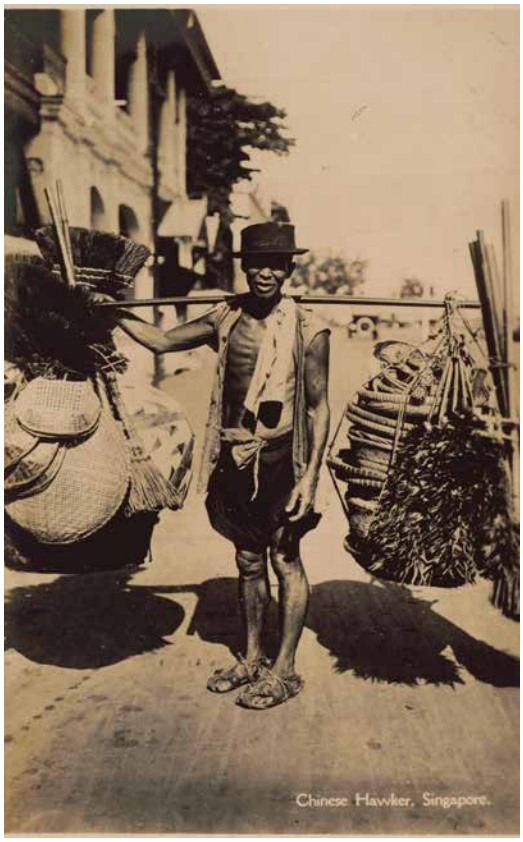

Figure 25. Chinese hawker, 20th century, postcard.

Figure 26. "Native fruit seller" and Indian sundry goods stall, early 20th century, postcard.

Figure 27. Malay *satay* hawker, 20th century, postcard.

Figure 28. Indian horse-carriage driver, 19th century, photograph.

Figure 29. Javanese horse-carriage driver with a Chinese family, 19th century, photograph.

Figure 30. Malay horse-carriage driver with European family, 19th century, photograph.

Perhaps the most telling images of migrant communities come from the paintings of the 19th century British surveyor, John Turnbull Thomson, who lived and worked in Singapore from 1841 to 1853. An 1847 painting by him shows a level of interaction among various ethnicities in the social space of the Padang. It seems as if we have stumbled upon many conversations taking place.

Figure 31. John Turnbull Thomson's painting in 1847 illustrates the various activities the different communities were engaged in at the Padang during that period. This painting can be positioned with picture postcards (Figures 32, 33, 34) derived from photographic studio depictions of local inhabitants.

Figure 32. "Types of natives", Singapore, 19th century, postcard.

Figure 33. Chinese and Indians, Singapore, 19th century, postcard.

Figure 34. "Children of different nationalities at Singapore", early 20th century postcard issued by SPG (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts).

Conclusion

In this preliminary exploration, visual images from the 1820s to the 1960s provide a first step towards unravelling the complex topic of how the island's identity was shaped by its entrepôt origin. These images depict the networks of migration, livelihoods, flows of capital, goods, and services; in short, the establishment and duration of the many points of connections between the island and the world. In this bicentennial year, focusing on the history of the entrepôt settlement and the legacies it left behind will help us understand our continuing place in the world. □

All images are from the collection of National Museum of Singapore unless otherwise stated.

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Place-making and Identity in Singapore: The Role of Integrated Planning and Our Built Heritage

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Imbuing a sense of identity and conserving memories

For a small country with a short history of nationhood, Singapore has done well in its efforts to build a sense of identity through conserving our built heritage. The history of modern Singapore's built environment chronicles the stories of settlers who came to these shores, marking the change and evolution of a nation and its identity. The heritage of our built environment goes beyond visual richness or projecting a distinct multi-ethnic society; it also forges our city's memories and imbues a sense of history.

From the early days of national monuments to the conservation of districts and historic sites, the emphasis on identity and conservation of our built heritage is an integral part of urban planning. How did conservation become integrated into planning and how has our understanding of identity evolved?

The search for identity and the journey of conservation in Singapore began with small steps, through the efforts of many dedicated individuals from the public and private sectors. This brought about the transformation of a uniquely Singapore urban landscape, characterised by historic districts and refurbished shophouses as part of an overall city design objective to create a contrast to the new skyline and provide urban relief. Yet it was also

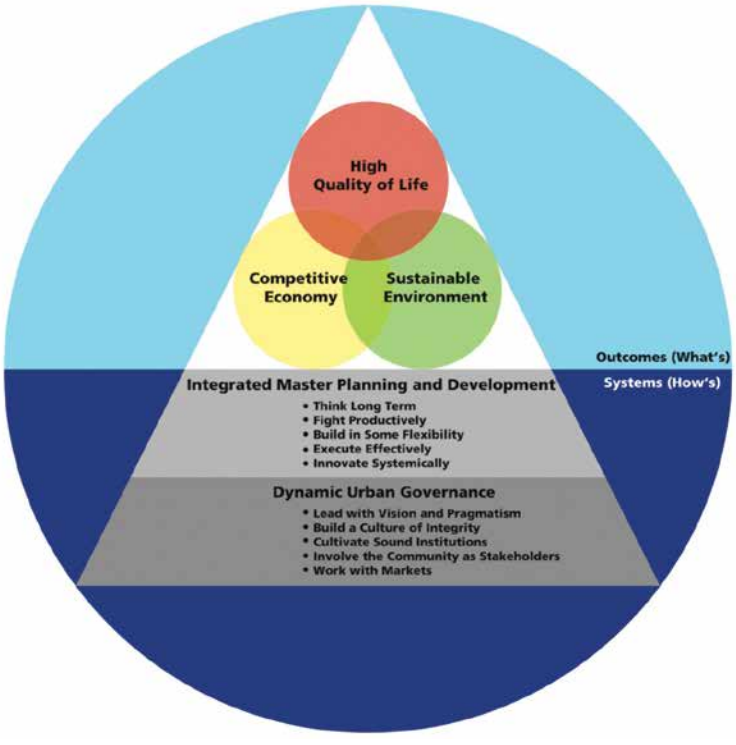

Figure 1. The Singapore Liveability Framework.

crucial that such efforts were guided by the public sector's initiatives to allow building conservation to evolve in step with pragmatism and market considerations, hence ensuring its sustainability through the years.

As encapsulated in the Singapore Liveability Framework (see Figure 1), the key principles that have sustained this effort through the years include the ability to execute developmental plans effectively, working with the free market and engaging private developers, and involving communities as stakeholders. Developed by the Centre for Liveable Cities, the framework describes successful liveable cities as those that are able to balance the trade-offs needed to achieve the outcomes of a high quality of life, a sustainable environment, and a competitive economy. This is based on strong foundations of integrated master planning and execution as well as dynamic urban governance. Within this framework, the built environment and architecture of a city provides character and identity for a sense of place and is a key factor in achieving the mentioned outcomes.

There are several milestones in the nation's conservation journey as it pursues identity-building. Firstly, there was the launch of the Conservation Master Plan in 1989, backed by strong political support in the 1980s and 1990s. Secondly, there was the formation of the Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP) and the launch of the Identity Plan in 2002. Thirdly, the role of public engagement and place-making has been growing in recent years (see Figure 2 for a timeline of milestones).

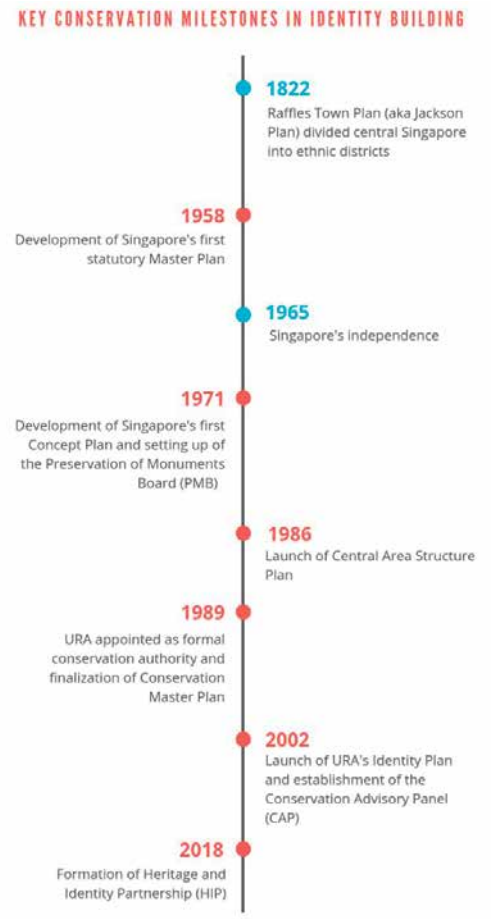

Figure 2. Timeline of conservation milestones in Singapore's identity building. Adapted from CLC Urban System Studies "Past, Present and Future: Conserving the Nation's Built Heritage".

Setting the trajectory for conservation in Singapore

To understand the origins of conservation, one needs to go back to the 1822 Raffles Town Plan (also known as the Jackson Plan), which detailed the allocation of land to ensure orderly growth and created a grid for the road network on both sides of the Singapore River. The plan also divided Singapore, primarily its central area, into ethnic districts. Each of the ethnic districts had its own unique architectural style that would come to define the settlement's urban design. This distinction in style left its mark on conservation efforts a century later, and the unique architectural elements of the shophouses would also come to feature in modern conservation.

Under Singapore's first statutory Master Plan in 1958, 32 buildings were listed as historic buildings and monuments. This was the first listing of sites for future preservation by a state agency, which was then the Singapore Improvement Trust.

At the point of Singapore's independence in 1965, the government had approached the United Nations to address the need for long-term planning, resulting in Singapore's first Concept Plan in 1971. In this plan, the case for conservation was proposed by experts and highlighted as part of the overall urban renewal efforts, despite the dominant economic imperative for urban redevelopment and resettlement of residents. The Preservation of Monuments Board (PMB) was set up in 1971 as the authority to recommend sites and monuments for protection and to respond to the growing consciousness of the value of conservation in safeguarding the history and forging the identity of a nation. One of the first tasks was to identify and place the first eight national monuments under PMB's protection. The choice to protect religious and public buildings was deliberate, as these were less contentious buildings that represented different but important parts of Singapore's religious and cultural history.

While the city was not ready for large-scale conservation, there were successful demonstration projects spearheaded by the Urban Renewal Department [now Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA)] and the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (now Singapore Tourism Board), to refurbish selected state-owned properties, including the shophouses along Cuppage Road, Murray Terrace and Emerald Hill Road. Although they were not gazetted for conservation, the foundation for conservation had been laid.

Conversations and debates began to centre on expanding the preservation of monuments to the conservation of districts. The first breakthrough came in the form of the 1986 Central Area Structure Plan, which provided an avenue and a systematic approach for integrating conservation into future land use planning (Figure 3).

After years of staging the ground, the time had come for necessary governance structures to sustain the path of conservation. In 1989, URA was appointed the formal conservation authority. Khoo Teng Chye, who was then director with the Ministry of National Development's Strategic Planning Division, summed up why URA was the most appropriate conservation authority:

"Not every development authority makes a good conservation authority. [URA] is an agency that is committed to conservation, but at the same time they are in charge of development and so the agency had to sort out the contradictions within itself

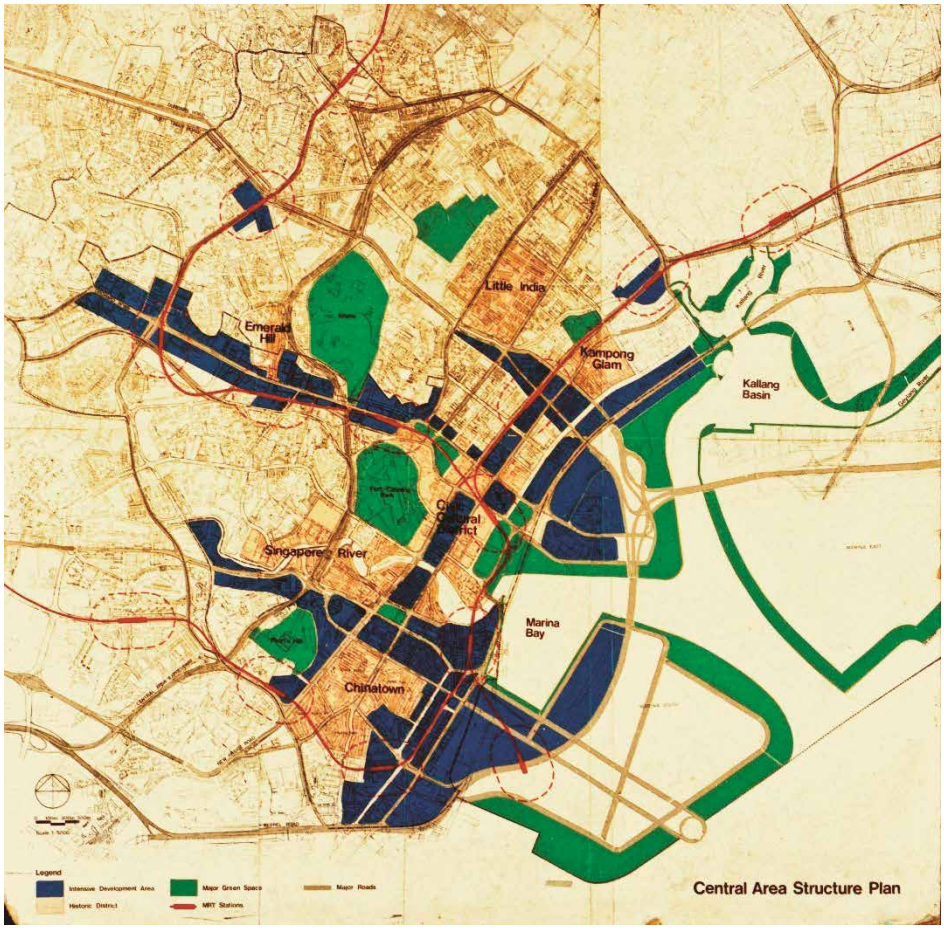

Figure 3. 1986 Central Area Structure Plan detailing conservation areas (light brown) and intensive development areas (dark blue). Image courtesy of URA.

and balance out when to demolish or preserve, and because they are strong in wanting to preserve, they will come up with good ideas about how to preserve, which is what happened."

With an amendment to the Planning Act in the same year, URA was granted the authority to designate conservation areas and to create and enforce detailed conservation guidelines. The Conservation Master Plan was finalised in 1989 and seven conservation areas were gazetted—Chinatown, Kampong Glam, Little India, Boat Quay, Clarke Quay, Emerald Hill and the Heritage Link, which were also identified in the Central Area Structure Plan of 1986. Five new areas were included—Blair Plain, Beach Road, River Valley, Jalan Besar and Geylang. This resulted in 5,200 conserved buildings by 1993. Today, the number of conserved heritage structures has grown gradually and steadily to over 7,200 buildings, 72 national monuments and 99 historic sites.

Beyond conservation: The search for identity

In the new millennium, a Concept Plan Review was initiated by URA in 2000 which led to two significant initiatives launched in 2002 for identity building and heritage conservation in Singapore.

Firstly, the Minister of National Development announced the formation of the Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP). Its two-fold role was to recommend buildings for conservation and to promote greater public education and understanding of gazetted built heritage. The panel consisted of members from varied backgrounds, including educators, developers, architects, journalists and doctors with a keen interest in conservation. Between 2002 and 2010, CAP convened 39 meetings and evaluated over 2000 buildings.

Secondly, the Identity Plan was launched by URA. It was a significant move for two reasons. The first was that the plan reflected the shift in thinking with regard to the importance of history and identity in Singapore. Since the critical mass of buildings to be conserved had been met, the attention now turned to the unique qualities of various areas around the city and how best to retain their characters and activities, including green and nature spaces. The Identity Plan was unique in that it pushed conservation and planning to consider the identities, overall charm, character and activities of each identified area. Going beyond conservation, there was a need to review the development strategy to examine what could be done to retain the charm and character of places that had evolved over time and which held a special place within the hearts of the local communities. The aim was to ensure that such places would be safeguarded in tandem with development and progress.

The second significant reason was that extensive public consultations were carried out through focus groups (known as Subject Groups). These groups comprised professionals, representatives of interest groups and laypeople who were tasked to study the proposals in the plan, conduct dialogue sessions with stakeholders and consider public feedback, so as to form recommendations such as amenities people hoped to see in the areas. The exercise engaged 35,000 visitors to the exhibition at the URA Centre and received feedback from 4,200 people.

The Identity Plan proposed 500 shophouses for conservation study, many of which were built in the 1950s to 1970s and reflective of a more modern style. As a result of this process, areas of Balestier, Joo Chiat, Tiong Bahru, Lavender, Syed Alwi and Jalan Besar were conserved with public support. Following a public consultation exercise, URA finalised the proposals to be incorporated into the 2003 Master Plan.

Creating new memories for the future: Public engagement and place-making today

Starting from the early 2000s, historic buildings had been conserved, restored and adapted for modern use. As historic districts became an integral part of the cityscape, there was also greater public awareness of the value of conservation as a process that fosters the collective memory

of a nation and a shared identity. As Lily Kong succinctly puts it, "This evolving society and community with a more involved citizenry, characterises a nation coming of age" (Kong 2011). The result is a focus on placemaking and the integration of social and historic memory into the conservation value of buildings and places, especially for community landmarks and sites. In this way, the local value of the place is able to naturally evolve into becoming more community- and place-centred, leading to distinctive identities for each district. Now, for instance, permanent and temporary road closures to facilitate community programmes and festivals are commonplace and enhance the local flavour of districts. Increasingly, these efforts are spearheaded by the private and people sectors, including community groups and organisations such as Urban Ventures at Keong Saik Road (Figure 4), One Kampong Gelam in Kampong Glam and Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association (LISHA) in Little India, working closely with URA and Land Transport Authority. This has also raised the profile of non-governmental groups involved and accords them with a growing voice and role in the forging of their own local identities through place-making efforts.

Greater public engagement and involvement in conservation planning resulted in more universal participation in the discussions on conservation plans. The National Heritage Board has also embarked on various significant initiatives such as the 2015 Heritage Survey, the formation of a Heritage Advisory Panel and Our SG Heritage Plan, which is Singapore's first master plan for the heritage and museum sector. URA and NHB have since worked closely on large-scale public engagement conservation efforts. This also runs parallel with other public efforts and initiatives such as those of the Singapore Heritage Society and heritage enthusiasts.

In August 2018, URA announced a new Heritage and Identity Partnership (HIP) to support public-private-people collaboration in shaping and promoting Singapore's built heritage and identity. HIP took on an expanded role from the Conservation Advisory Panel, which had ended its last tenure in May 2018. In addition to taking on the panel's role in providing advice to URA on conservation, HIP will contribute ideas to sustain the built heritage and memories of places as the city continues to develop. The term 'partnership' in HIP emphasises the evolving way in which the wider community is engaged, thus signaling a more community-centric approach to conservation and fostering of identity.

Figure 4. Closure of Keong Saik Road for street activities. Image courtesy of URA.

The journey continues—what's next?

Today, vibrant historic districts in Singapore have a place in the hearts of Singaporeans while modernisation has at the same time been able to keep on course. It is time to ask, what is next for conservation, especially for our post-independence buildings?

Some notable efforts in the conservation of modern buildings include the 1930s Singapore Improvement Trust's Art Deco apartments in Tiong Bahru, and the Asia Insurance Building, which was Southeast Asia's first skyscraper when it was built in 1955. Post-independence buildings like the Singapore Conference Hall and the Jurong Town Hall have also been preserved as national monuments owing to their significance as distinctive symbols of Singapore's nation-building days and formative years.

Looking ahead, it is likely that the long-term, systematic process of conserving Singapore's heritage buildings will continue with the same social and economic considerations as today. Undoubtedly, this will require appropriate training, programming and the adoption of modern technology to keep heritage conservation relevant. Guidelines from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) suggest that buildings over thirty years of age can be considered for conservation. By those standards, it is plausible to imagine the safeguarding of Toa Payoh Town Centre, built in the 1960s, the first satellite town centre designed by the Housing Development Board (HDB), or the Singapore Indoor Stadium, completed in 1989, which assumed a symbolic significance for its sheer physical size and iconic architecture characterised by a diamond-shaped roof.

Even with this ongoing conversation, there is a need to ensure continuous improvements to the existing historic districts. Further experimentation to expand pedestrianised streets and to realise car-free and people-oriented historical districts, or the revamping of back lanes as connection points to help with pedestrian overflow on crowded weekends can be looked into.

We could also perhaps consider how to better celebrate the rich heritage of our black-and-white homes across the island. Beyond Tiong Bahru and Dakota Crescent, how can Singapore's early public housing estates be conserved while at the same time taking into consideration the new housing needs of younger generations of Singaporeans? With the physical fabric of these neighbourhood districts saved, it now falls upon communities to keep these districts relevant. Innovative approaches such as the integration of commercial, social and civic sectors have been a mainstay of Singapore's approach to conservation and such approaches will continue in the future as we tackle these questions.

Conclusion

Today, the public's dialogue, engagement and active involvement in conservation and identity issues echo the early days of Singapore's conservation story, when new perspectives and emergent mindshare formed the catalyst for kick-starting the seminal initiatives and plans. Significantly, this reflects a shift in how the public can be engaged, the rising importance of public knowledge about the buildings and sites that are close to their hearts, and reveals how site history and social memory—beyond architectural significance—is a key element of redevelopment plans.

In the journey of conservation and the search for identity, there are key decision points, trade-offs, players and enabling factors that pave the way for systemic innovation to make conservation an integral part of planning and a significant part of the Singaporean consciousness. Undoubtedly, a unique built environment and the community's attachment and memories of places are reflective of the history of the nation and the love it engenders in its people, which in turn are distinguishing contributors to identity.

There are still challenges ahead. How can we balance the right trade-offs so that conservation does not stop with the buildings of each generation's collective and social memory? How can we ensure that our historic and conserved districts continue to stay relevant, vibrant and close to the hearts of Singaporeans and visitors, in tandem with the ever-changing pulse of the city?

As we approach these future challenges, we are optimistic and confident that the same spirit of innovation and foresight that have characterised our conservation efforts so far will continue and result in a unique landscape that anchors the identity of Singaporeans and distinguishes Singapore's cityscape from other places around the world. □

Acknowledgments

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Icons of the Times

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"In this forward-looking state of mind and in our enthusiasm for urban renewal, we may wake up one day to find our historic monuments either bulldozed or crumbling to dust through neglect. As new Singapore is being built, we must not let the worthwhile part of older Singapore disappear, and the time has therefore come for us to take stock of what we have of the past and seek to preserve objects and buildings that will remind us of our heritage…this piece of legislation will, we hope, assist in preserving for the benefit of our future, the buildings, monuments and sites that have been associated with people, events and periods in our history."

Minister for Law and National Development E. W. Barker, 4 November 1970, at the second reading of the Preservation of Monuments Bill

The Preservation of Sites and Monuments was established in 1971. It was then known as the Preservation of Monuments Board, tasked with identifying structures of national significance to be recommended for gazette as national monuments. In 1973, the first gazettes took place. Forty-eight years later, 72 national monuments attest to Singapore's diversity as well as to its progress. This assortment of built tangible heritage traces the transition from early beginnings; its colonial settlement to sovereign state.

While there is evidence of 14th century establishments, the island had approximately a thousand inhabitants by January 1819, mostly from riverine settlements (Turnbull 2009, 24–25). On 6 February 1819, Stamford Raffles met with Temenggong Abdul Rahman and Sultan Hussein Shah of Johor to secure the rights for the British East India Company to establish a trading post in

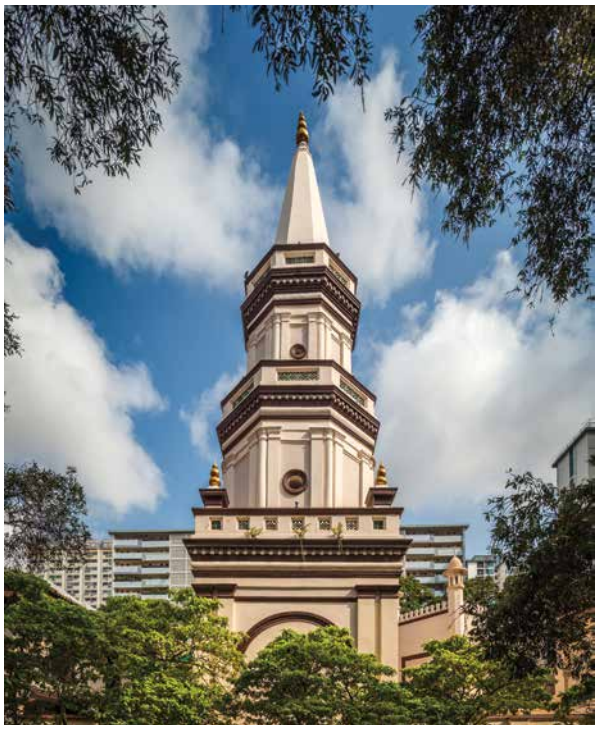

Figure 1. Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, 2012. The mosque was among the eight national monuments preserved in the first ever gazette in 1973. The others were The Armenian Church of St Gregory the Illuminator, Sri Mariamman Temple, Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, Thian Hock Keng, St Andrew's Cathedral, Former Telok Ayer Market and Former Thong Chai Medical Institution. Image courtesy of Preservation of Sites and Monuments, National Heritage Board.

Singapore in exchange for monetary compensation (Turnbull 2009, 29–30). This set the trajectory for the island in terms of infrastructural development and systems of governance that would enhance its ambitions.

The bulk of the gazetted monuments from this phase of early Singapore was constructed as a result of colonial planning, while others came to exist with the influx of communities of immigrants over time. The latter would have included the diaspora of Armenians, Chinese, Indians, Jews, and the diverse peoples such as Malays, Bugis, Javanese from the surrounding archipelagos. There would have been a natural, if not spiritual instinct to build a house of worship, on what was one of the original shorelines at Telok Ayer Street. Today, this street bears witness to that transplanted devotion of the early diaspora as well as to their respective sense of community and brotherhood. The Al-Abrar mosque (built 1850–55), Thian Hock Keng (built 1839–42), Nagore Dargah (built 1828–30), and Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church (built 1924) are all located within a few steps of one another. Perhaps we could infer that racial and religious tolerance had early roots.

Members of the Western community, including the elite who were appointed to their duties under the colonial government would have worshipped at St Andrew's Cathedral (originally built 1835–36, rebuilt 1856–64). Apart from the architectural language and tropical synthesis, a number of these buildings responded to the functional needs of the time. Singapore was a fast growing entrepôt. As a nascent port city, the notion of making it liveable as part of its burgeoning success as well as its imaging was a strategic vision. The iconic landmarks that necklaced the Padang would impress any approaches by sea to the island. The 1822 Raffles Town Plan envisioned the area along the Singapore River for public offices, and allocated land use along ethnic lines (Buckley 1965, 74–79). While the town plan was never realised in full, elements of it were to shape the urban development of Singapore. Today, these

Figure 2. Former Parliament House, 1954. Important Acts passed in parliament include the National Service (amendment) Bill introduced by Dr Goh Keng Swee in 1967, the Women's Charter introduced by Kenneth Byrne in 1961 as well as the Preservation of Monuments Act introduced by E. W. Barker, passed in 1970 and commenced in 1971. Image from Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

sectors of British town planning are landmarked by various monuments—remnants of a much more sprawling, though segregated, historic urban development.

The best of plans do fail, and due to administrative disagreement, Scottish merchant John Argyle Maxwell's house, which had been intended as his residence, ended up being rented to the government for various uses, including as courthouse and public office. Built in 1827, it stands as the oldest structure in existence today in Singapore, albeit with major alterations over time (Buckley 1965, 74–79).

In 1955, when Singapore achieved partial self-governance, the building underwent renovation and became known as the Assembly House. When Singapore became independent in 1965, it became known as the Parliament House. The first parliamentary session was opened by our first President President Yusof bin Ishak on 8 December 1965. Within the building is a room that was originally painted blue. Here, our founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, held less formal meetings with his cabinet members. It was also a space to relax in between debate sessions. Today, this building is referred to as "Old Parliament House" (since the "new" Parliament building started operating from 1999), or OPH—conveying its new and hip function as a cultural and performing centre. On the second floor lies a symbol of peace, the Tudor rose carved out of a sandstone block, from Victoria Tower in the Palace of Westminster, which had seen World War II damage. Colonial-Secretary in London, A. Lennox-Boyd, presented it to David Marshall in 1955. He expressed that the stone would be a "political symbol of the close and affectionate understanding between the British and Singapore people."

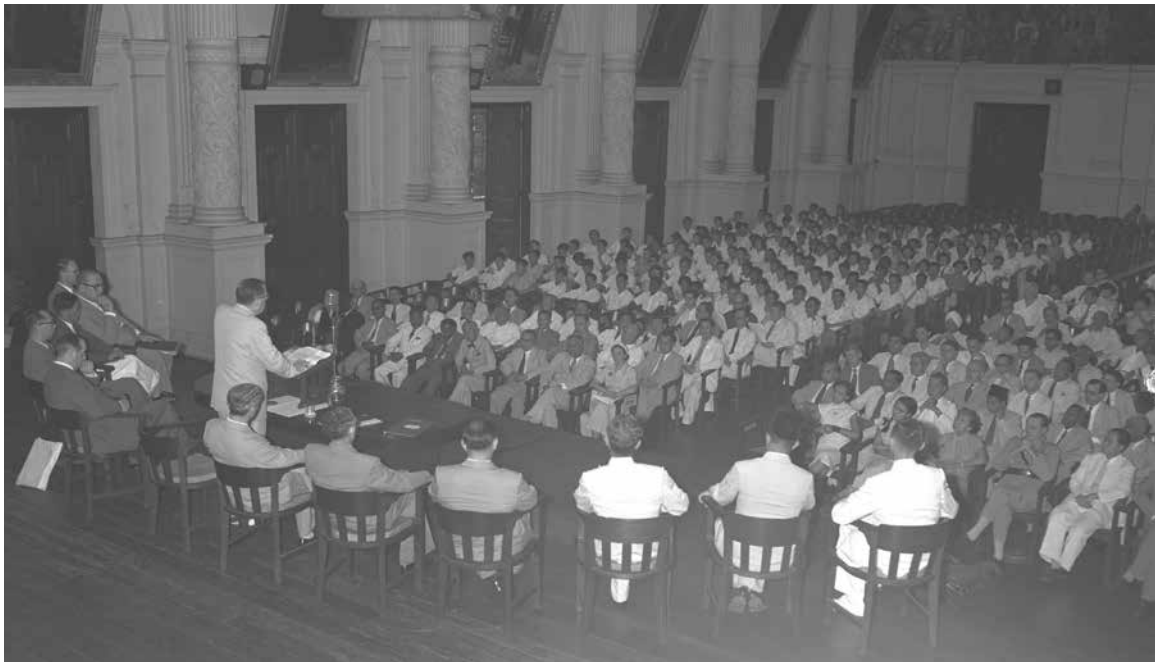

Figure 3. Victoria Concert Hall, 1953. On 11 November 1953, the Rendel Commission (nine-men team reviewing the constitution of Singapore) held its inaugural public meeting in Victoria Memorial Hall (now Victoria Concert Hall). Image from Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

A stone's throw away is the Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall (Theatre (originally the Townhall) built 1855–62, Concert Hall (originally Memorial Hall) built 1903–05). Its 54-metre[1] clock-tower is juxtaposed between its near-symmetrical wings, belying their independent origins and the 40-over years between them. The Victoria Theatre was originally the Town Hall. It was only when a decision was made to commemorate the life of Queen Victoria, who had passed away in 1901, that a foundation stone was laid during King Edward VII's coronation celebration on 10 August 1902 for a separate and additional building. Upon the completion of this Memorial Hall, the Town Hall was modified to align with the design of the new wing.

During the Japanese Occupation (1942–1945), the Victoria Theatre was the venue for Japanese cultural entertainment. Post-war, the Memorial Hall witnessed war crime trials from 1946–47. Of the many important meetings held there, there were two public meetings of the Rendel Commission in 1953 and 1955, which reviewed the Constitution of the Colony of Singapore and ultimately paved the way for Singapore's independence.

On 6 September 1958, the original version of *Majulah Singapura* debuted at a concert to celebrate the re-opening of the Victoria Theatre. In 1980, the Victoria Memorial Hall was re-opened as the Victoria Concert Hall by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, signalling its current use as the home of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra.

This neo-classical building with elaborate mouldings of fruit, floral garlands, and Latin monogrammed cartouches for "Victoria, Regina Imperatrix" witnessed key milestones in the transition to Singapore's independence.

Another monument viewed in this light is the former Government House—known as the Istana—and the office of the President of Singapore today. Government House had been the official residence of a succession of colonial governors (Tyers 1976, 156). William A.C. Goode was Singapore's last colonial governor, serving from 9 December 1957—June 1959. He became Singapore's first Yang di-Pertuan Negara (head of state) when Singapore achieved internal self-government on 3 June 1959 and was succeeded by Yusof bin Ishak, later to be Singapore's first President.

A short distance away sits the colonnaded former City Hall (built 1926-29). As the largest colonial neo-classical icon to have ever been built in Singapore at that time, it functioned as the municipal building of the colonial office. On 12 September 1945, the Japanese military surrendered to the Allied Forces in the boardroom of the building, commonly referred to as the "Surrender Chamber", ending the terrible Occupation that had begun on 15 February 1942. In 1951, when Singapore was proclaimed a city by the Royal Charter granted by King George VI, it was renamed City Hall. Years later, this was where Lee Kuan Yew established his nascent government. This was also where he employed his oratorical skills to inspire the public, punching the air with his fists and igniting the aspirations of nationhood with cries of "*Merdeka!*" (Malay, "to be independent or free").

The former City Hall and the former Supreme Court (b.1937–39) are the last two vestiges of colonial grandeur. These buildings, which contributed to the dignity of the civic district and the British-defined image of the city, are the two largest monuments standing today in the civic district. They are both clad with Shanghai plaster—a unique type of plaster finish composed of granulated granite, sand and cement. From a distance, this building surface treatment would have given the impression of an expensive building, when in fact, the *faux* stone was a very economical material, never requiring painting.

However, unlike the City Hall, the Supreme Court introduced elements of tropical design. So classical western architecture—the dome (there are in fact, three), the sculptured tympanum, loggias, pediments, balustrades and statuary—contrasts with bas-reliefs documenting colonial life in the tropics. These bas-reliefs are a departure from Greek frieze tradition, which tend to feature mythical figures or which commemorated epic battles and their respective victors.

The bas-relief panels wrap around the porch of the Supreme Court and offer visuals of the businesses that contributed to the early economies of the time: fishing, trade, agriculture and farming, rubber tapping etc. All these activities are keenly supervised by colonial figures. There is one panel that is pertinent to 2019. It features a scene of possibly Raffles or Farquhar being rowed ashore by locals. The next scene illustrates the meeting of the Temenggong and/or Sultan Hussein Shah with the British to establish a settlement on the island in 1819, with the last panel interpreting this as paving the way for trade to grow (Wee and Foo 2016, 34). We know from the documentation that the sculpting of these bas-reliefs were by Alex Wagstaff, son of a pre-war Shanghai sculptor, W.W. Wagstaff (Wee and Foo 2016, 34). He had captured the multi-racial demographic through facial features and clothing, as well as representations of people from all walks of life. Perhaps this reflected the spirit of the times, where recognising local contributions, skills, labour, and artistry facilitated a greater sense of integration. However, after the war, the spirit of the times had evolved, and the clarion calls for independence grew incessant. The former Supreme Court stands as the final grand built legacy of the British.

On the remains of Fort Fullerton sits the Former Fullerton Building (built 1928). It had been commissioned in 1919 as part of the centenary celebration of Singapore's founding (*The Straits Times* 1919; *Singapore Centenary: A Souvenir Volume* 1919). This neo-classical building's angularity allows it to fully maximise its tight footprint at the mouth of the Singapore River. An imposing structure which also functioned as the General Post Office, it was ahead of its time on many fronts. Its lower levels comprised a cavernous interior that had natural air wells for ventilation and light. It had 14 lifts and an automated mail-sorting system, complete with a conveyor belt to efficiently direct mail packages to the basement. There was also a 35-metre-long subway, linking the basement floor to the Post Office Pier at the waterfront where overseas mail could be expediently brought to shore (*The Straits Times* 1928).

Figure 4. Former Supreme Court, 2015. The 1819 Treaty of Singapore in bas-relief Shanghai plastered panels at the former Supreme Court. Image courtesy of Preservation of Sites & Monuments, National Heritage Board.

The Singapore Club, located on the upper floors of the building, was the exclusive reserve of the British upper echelon. In the lead-up to the Japanese Occupation, it served as shelter for Sir Shenton Thomas, the last governor, as Government House was affected by air raids. It was also here that A.E Percival conveyed the humiliating news of the decision to surrender to the Japanese on 15 February 1942. The rest of the building served as a makeshift hospital in the last days before the surrender. During the Occupation, the Chinese presented a cheque of $50 million here as part of the demands for recompense by the Japanese. Following Singapore's self-governance, the Deputy Prime Minister's office, as well as many important civil servants' offices, were located there. This included the Economic Development Board, which was formed in 1961 to strategise Singapore's economic development, and the Inland Revenue Department.

Figure 5. Former Fullerton Building during the 1920s. Image courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.

Figure 6. Former Fullerton Building, 2015. Projections on the façade of former Fullerton Building during Singapore's Jubilee celebration in 2015. Image courtesy of Fullerton Hotel Singapore.

Any preservation effort should aim for a comprehensive historical storyline reflective of the urban development of a city. Our monuments tell of unique as well as collective histories, referencing contexts and people of those times. Almost all of them offer public engagement opportunities and access to explore them afresh. The bicentennial offers us the opportunity to look into their past even as we move into the future. For as important as they are as national treasures, it would auger well too, if they are also venues for personal milestones for generations of Singaporeans to come. ☐

More information on National Monuments can be found on roots.sg website.

Notes

1. 53.536 m based on the approved Urban Redevelopment Authority drawings for Victoria Theatre.

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What Singapore's Bicentennial Means to the New Immigrant

Dr Meira Chand

Writer

In this bicentennial year, a walk past Raffles Hotel, or a wander down Empress Place with Raffles' statue standing imposingly against the river, immediately stirs to life the past and the shadow of colonialism. It is a shadow Singapore, the 'last bastion' of imperialism not that long ago, knows too well. It is a shadow that has impacted my life as well, born as I was at the heart of the Empire, in London, and the child of two immigrants from different sides of the globe. I am also not easy with the word "immigrant" in the title of this essay, although I know as a new citizen of Singapore that is what I am. To me there is something 'other,' something harsh and resistant that echoes through the word.

I do not want to dwell on these shadows as I walk through Empress Place, past Sir Stamford Raffles' statue. I prefer instead to concentrate on the nearby and stunningly refurbished National Gallery, the graceful Asian Civilisations Museum, and the charming Arts House, where the bold art of modern Singaporean artists is displayed on smooth lawns and where Raffles' statue was recently and brilliantly disappeared, in a trick of artistic cunning. A stone's throw away, Raffles Hotel, that great dowager duchess of abodes with its turbaned doormen and Singapore Slings, once a home away from home for a colonial elite, is being revamped to meet the demands of a vastly changed world, a world in which all the colonial chickens have finally come home to roost. To today's young Singaporeans, a large majority of whom are well-educated and -travelled and driven by a sense of rightful entitlement, Raffles and the imperialism he stood for, that cowed an earlier Singapore, is now so distant and irrelevant as to appear almost comic. Fifty years ago, who in Singapore would have had the insolent irreverence to 'disappear' Sir Stamford Raffles?

I prefer this bold new Singapore, rooted in the country's independence in 1965. It suits my needs as an ethnically mixed up polyglot, and in its atmosphere even the word "immigrant" begins to lose some of its sting. Singapore is like nowhere else in this world for me, and I have lived also in Japan and India for considerable lengths of time before arriving in Singapore in 1997, and finally becoming a citizen in 2011. In those places I lived the marginal and completely irrelevant life of the expatriate, excluded from the centre, unable to satisfactorily participate in the society around me; a diminishing position in the long term and the human scale of things.

But Singapore enfolds me so easily. The double, triple, multiple consciousness that is, and always has been, a way of life to me, is also known well to so many here. Every detail of life in Singapore reflects this unique and quintessential hybridisation. New York and London are known for their diversity and multiculturalism; different cultures live side by side, learn from and accept and appreciate each other. Yet, neither place has achieved the inimitable crossbreeding of cultural elements that Singapore has, blending ethnic and traditional multiplicity into something entirely original and new. Singapore has been doing this in varying degrees for as long as anyone can remember. It has evolved into 'the Singaporean way,' and has now produced a distinct people and culture.

My effortless adjustment as a new citizen of Singapore is an experience very different from my father's immigrant experience. In January 1919 he landed in Liverpool as a new arrival to Britain from India. One hundred years previously almost to the day, in January 1819, Sir Stamford Raffles,

making an opposite journey to my father, had arrived in Singapore. Although far from home, and tried and tested as he must have been by all manner of inconvenience, Raffles came to Singapore not as a lowly immigrant but as a colonial ruler.

In the long ago days of 1919, my father's life as an immigrant was fraught with problems on every front. He came to England to study medicine. And when a man travels into a far country he must abandon old gods, old concepts and the codes of conduct by which he has been shaped. This is the lot of the immigrant, and if he cannot do this, he can find no way to new growth. In those long-ago days Britain was not the multicultural place it is today. There were few Indians around, and my father faced prejudice in the monocultural society of that time, although he always preferred to speak of the kindnesses received. It was in London that he met and married my Swiss immigrant mother.

The harsh and marginal life my father faced as an outsider in Britain, so obviously 'other' to those about him, is sadly still largely unchanged in our modern world. In this age of mass migration, the daily news bears testimony to the fact that life for many immigrants is ever more brutal. I mention these things and my father's experience, because it reveals to me how different my own experience is as a new immigrant in Singapore.

In her poem *diaspora blues*, the Nigerian poet Ijeoma Umebinyuo (Umebinyuo 2015), writes,

so, here you are
too foreign for home
too foreign for here.
never enough for both.

In Singapore, I find the sentiment of this poem does not resonate with me as it would have with my father as an immigrant to Britain so long ago, or as it still resonates today for so many who have become exiles in the Western world, far from their homelands for their own pressing reasons.

Here in Singapore the lot of the immigrant is historically that of complete transformation, a relatively rapid melting and welding into a new image, a Singaporean image, especially since independence in 1965. With independence, the customary journey of the immigrant towards assimilation in the new country, that may take two or even three generations, became suddenly the journey to forge a new homeland, a journey that turned the exile into the native.

As a writer I can see this most relevantly in the literary community of Singapore. Whatever their ethnicity, writers in Singapore write as Singaporeans, examining their sense of self, their connection to the local world around them and their engagement with Singapore and Singaporean issues.

In many other countries, immigrant writers of different ethnicities form distinct sub-groups, for example Indian writers in the United States or the United Kingdom, and Chinese writers in Canada. In their writing there is often a conscious looking back to their homelands and roots. In Singapore, writers, regardless of their culture and whether they write in English or their own vernacular, are known as and see themselves only as Singaporean writers. They have made the long transitional journey through difficult post-colonial terrain, to the wholeness of a new and unique Singaporean identity, and Diaspora no longer concerns them to

any great degree. According to Edwin Thumboo, "the freedom from Exile is a release from having an alternative to whom and where you are. It is the prelude to relocating culture with which comes greater management of image, metaphor and symbol as they acquire a local habitation" (Thumboo 1988).

I have never suffered from the sense of exile Thumboo speaks of, because I am rather like those rootless plants that blow about in the wind; I essentially have no homeland. However, blowing about and having no roots eventually become exhausting. Singapore has given me a sense of home for possibly the first time in my life. Home is where there is comfort, acceptance, appreciation, a place in which there is the support to evolve.

In my previous life I was of British nationality, but when I first began to publish, I was known as an Indian writer in Britain, even though my connection to India was tenuous and my connection to Britain was overwhelming. When I finally, for the first time in my life, settled in India for a few years, I was immediately categorised there as English. While living in Japan over several decades, the confusion grew much worse. At one conference my nationality was listed as UK/India/Japan. It is a relief, and with much gratitude that I can now simply say, I am Singaporean. In Singapore the more ethnically mixed one is, the more, it would seem, there is to celebrate. People relate their complex ethnic lineages to me with pride. For a new settler like myself, the inclusivity that I have found to be the essence of the culture, makes Singapore in this bicentennial year not the experience of exile most immigrants must live with, but rather a sense of 'coming home.' □

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