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Stories Behind Singapore Streets
A National Library exhibition

Tell It 'Slanted'
An approach to writing a memoir

A Work of Many Hands
The first Japanese translation of John's Gospel and his Epistles

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Front Cover: *Plan of the Town of Singapore* (1822), commonly known as the Jackson Plan. Courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore. All rights reserved.

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Director's Column

In February 2012, we commemorated the 70th anniversary of the fall of Singapore. The British surrender on 15 February 1942 marked the beginning of the darkest three-and-a-half years in Singapore's history. However, it was also an important event in our journey towards nationhood.

Singapore's journey from British colony to independent nation was experienced first-hand by the writer of this issue's "Spotlight", local poet and playwright Robert Yeo. In 2011, Robert published *Routes*: *A Singaporean Memoir 1940-75*, an account of the first 35 years of his life and how his experiences have shaped him. In his article here, aptly titled "Tell it 'Slanted'", Robert shares his approach to writing his memoir.

The war and the Japanese Occupation also formed part of the backdrop for Meira Chand's epic novel *A Different Sky* (2010). While the published novel starts in 1927, an early draft of the work actually included a chapter set in 1922. This unpublished chapter is now presented here in the feature "Lunch with Mr Einstein".

The book publishing industry is so well developed today, with self-publishing readily available to authors, that it is easy for us to forget how challenging it once was to take a manuscript to print. In "A Work of Many Hands", Sachiko Tanaka and Irene Lim tell an amazing tale of fate and resourcefulness that begins with a shipwreck off the Japanese coast in 1832 and ends with the eventual printing of the first Japanese translation of John's Gospel and his Epistles in Singapore in 1837.

In late 2010, the National Library was privileged to receive a donation of 65 valuable items from the family of the late Dr Wu Lien-Teh, a medical pioneer known for his efforts in containing the 1910-1911 plague in Manchuria. Among the books in the Wu Lien-Teh Collection is a copy of *Biographies of Prominent Chinese* (1925), possibly one of only two copies that currently exist in the world. Wee Tong Bao writes about Dr Wu and the collection in "A Life Less Ordinary".

Books have a significant role to play in recording and transmitting information and ideas; not only textual books but graphic novels as well. In "Comic Books as Windows into a Singapore of the 1980s and 1990s", Lim Cheng Tju examines how graphic novels, also known as comic books, offer an alternative means of understanding the past social and political conditions of Singapore. Clarence Lee follows with an article that argues for the increased use of graphic novels to teach English Language in schools, presenting the results of an experimental study that tests the effectiveness of such books in helping students learn descriptive writing skills compared with traditional texts.

I hope you will enjoy the articles in this issue of *BiblioAsia* as much as I have. Happy reading!

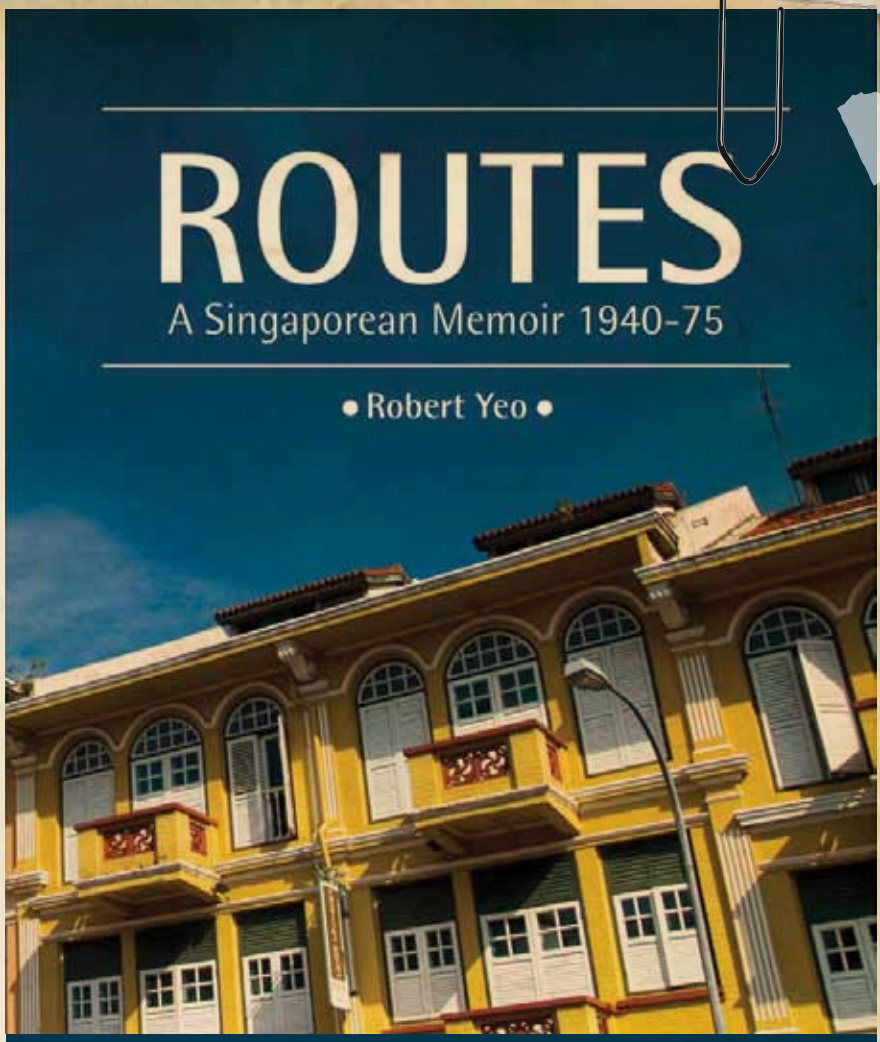
Ms Ngian Lek Choh
Director, National Library

Tell it 'Slanted'

An Approach to Writing my Memoir

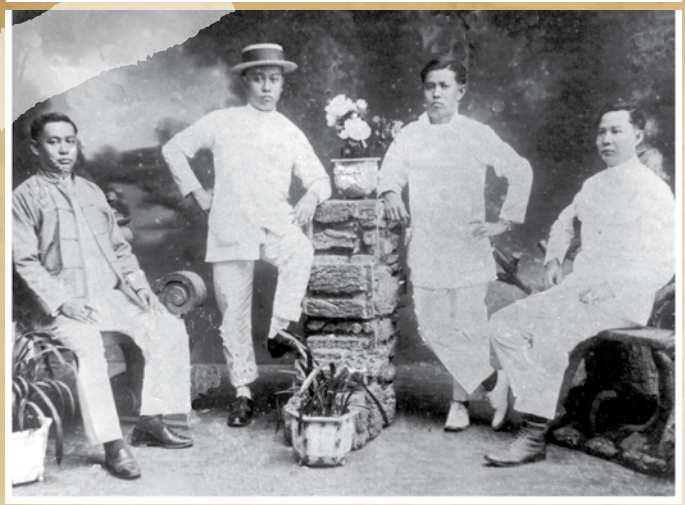
Robert **Yeo**

Poet and Playwright



In my view, one cannot write a good memoir without reading other people's memoirs and learning from them. Though I am aware of what Gore Vidal said about the difference between an autobiography and a memoir, I am going to assume in this essay that they are the same; i.e. a person writes about his personal life and at the same time involves himself as a witness to public events he/she is influenced by or had influence over. The significance of reading what others have written, then, is to see if I can do it differently.

***The question is*, "How differently?"**



A

A
The Yeo Brothers, from left: Teck Hock, Teck Kee, Teck Joon and Teck Chye.

B
My parents' marriage certificates, in Chinese, with signatures in English.

Routes and Roots

First, let me explain the title I have chosen for my memoir, *Routes*. I am told the American pronunciation is "routs" but obviously that is not what I have in mind. I wanted a pun that suggests "roots", a reference first of all to Alex Haley's 1976 groundbreaking book *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*.[1] In that book, Haley goes back to his family's early roots in Africa and discusses how the first ancestor was transported to America to work as a slave. The book focused on "roots" to mean "origins", reinforced greatly by the television series that followed the publication of the book. Yes, I am interested in my roots, in that sense, and it shows in my accounts of the lives of my parents and grandparents.

At the same time, I am keen to use the title *Routes* to refer to the physical journeys that my grandparents made. My reading of history tells me that the ancestors of the Chinese in Southeast Asian countries came mostly from South China, namely the provinces of Fujian, Guangdong and Guangzhou.

Whether the migrants came overland or by sea, some had to choose their routes while others had their routes chosen for them. From villages and ports in China in the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries, they left for Southeast Asia: Vietnam, Laos, Burma, Thailand, Malaya, Singapore, Indonesia, Borneo and the Philippines. In the case of my paternal grandparents, their route took them from South China to Sarawak and then to Singapore. For my maternal grandparents, they left South China for Malacca and then eventually settled in Singapore.

My grandparents' journeys suggest a third meaning to "routes": "Choice". Did the migrant have a choice as to where he/she would go after leaving South China? Going southeast would have brought them anywhere, to Vietnam, Thailand, Malaya or Singapore, and so on. Was he/she pushed by domestic factors like poverty or war? Or did the allure of a new life outside China beckon?

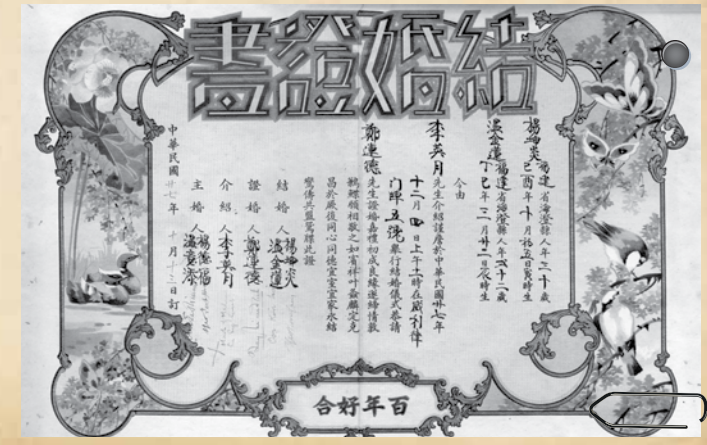
Doing It Differently

Because an autobiography traditionally starts with the author reminiscing about his/her life starting from birth, the first constraint is the adherence to sequence; he/she must observe chronology in the storytelling. He/she is acutely aware that he/she is writing about the past in "recall" mode. This is a challenge as we all know that we have selective memories.

Following a chronological method may be a less-than-exciting necessity but it enables me to grasp time. I do acknowledge that I live in the present as much as I do in the past. Quite often, they are in fluid fusion or collision. So, as art organises the chaos of my life, I have tried to artfully organise my memoir in the form of a ripple. Herein lies the difference between my memoir and most of the rest: While being linear, I can, at the same time, be circular. Whilst interrogating the past, I am still able to confront the present.

The Ripple Effect

At the core of my book is the Self; the conscious Self. I start with my experience, my earliest memory and then "ripple out" to explore how the Self is shaped by events in my community, my country and the rest of the world. I am able to do this because of the life I had lived up to 1975. Born in Singapore in January 1940



B

as a British subject, I went through the Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945, self-government in 1959, independence in 1965, studies in London, England from 1966 to 1968 and work in Bangkok, Thailand from 1970 to 1971. Given the trajectory, I feel that it was inadequate to write about myself without enquiring how my life is determined by the ripples. As well, at a certain time in 1974, I felt I was in a position of not only being passively influenced by external events but also being able to directly influence events as my playwriting career prospered.

I felt absolutely privileged that in the first half of my life so far, I had been witness to extraordinary happenings. First, how many people get a chance to witness his/her homeland's transition from a colony to a nation? On page 166 of my memoir, I quote Lee Kuan Yew when he was taking the oath as Prime Minister of Singapore on 9 August 1965: "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". Two, many people get to go to London for a variety of reasons but how many actually were there at a time of glorious tumult in a world capital — when women upped their skirts and young people downed old values, smoked hash, loved freely, and all these happening while the Beatles were redefining pop music? Third, not many people in Asia, influenced by American soft power in the arts — movies, comics, jazz — got to witness the same power humiliated militarily as they pulled out of Saigon, Vietnam on 30 April 1975, thus ending the Vietnam War. These experiences have shaped my life for the better.

My Self, of course, includes family. Given my Peranakan heritage — and such a heritage has a long history in Singapore and Malaysia — it is inevitable that I would have to include the stories of the two generations prior to mine, as well as my own. In writing about my generation, I however found it easy to link it to my parents and my paternal and maternal grandparents. Without this "flashback", how else can I do justice to the past in a filial way? On reflection, I realise that my book is a Confucian act of filial piety by the eldest son in my family: Grandfather Teck Hock was the first son in his family, my father Koon Yam was the first son in his, and I am also the first son of my father.

Whilst interrogating the past, I can still confront the present. In the moment — in the "now" — I feel free to shift to the past. It becomes apparent, as I proceed, that I am deliberately interrupting my sequential narrative by inserting relatively long perorations; for examples, see those found in pages 47–52, on my maternal grandma and her family, and pages 261–264, where I review former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's book *The Malay Dilemma*.[2] I realised, whilst signing books at the launch in August 2011, that in doing this, I was deliberately challenging the current digital generation — who is used to short sound bites — to a long read. My book, at 384 pages, and with only about 100 illustrations, is a relatively long one!

Incorporating the Epigraph, Intertextual and Collage Techniques

As a consequence of my background as an academic and writer, I incorporated the techniques of epigraph-writing, intertextuality and collage into my book. They collectively testify to my interests as both an extensive and intensive reader. As well, they demonstrate that reading has been for me always an emotional encounter and seldom a passive activity. Consider the two following instances. First, my discovery of Edward Fitzgerald's poem *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, which is recorded on pages 62–63. This was instrumental in reinforcing in me a passion for reading and writing poems. Second, my timely reading in 1970 of the incendiary book *The Malay Dilemma* by Mahathir Mohamad. I wrote then,

> *"Had I been prescient, I would have been able to predict that Dr Mahathir would bounce back from dismissal from UMNO to become eventually the Prime Minister of Malaysia in July 1981. In that position, he was able to implement many of the ideas put forward in The Malay Dilemma, including those that affect Singapore."*

The epigraphs, of which there are two in each chapter, are not merely incidental. They do several things: Convey, directly or indirectly, the intentions of my book or chapters; provide concrete evidence of my having read widely; and chart the periods in which the readings happened. The quotations and extracts from my poems, plays and fiction demonstrate my development as a writer in these genres. In addition to excerpts, I have included whole works, complete poems and a short story.

I have done the above intertextually. Intertextuality is a technique I am very partial to as it establishes dynamic, symbiotic relationships between books. For example, I quote E.M. Forster's *Howards End*[3] — where he wrote the epigraph "Only Connect" — in one of my epigraphs.

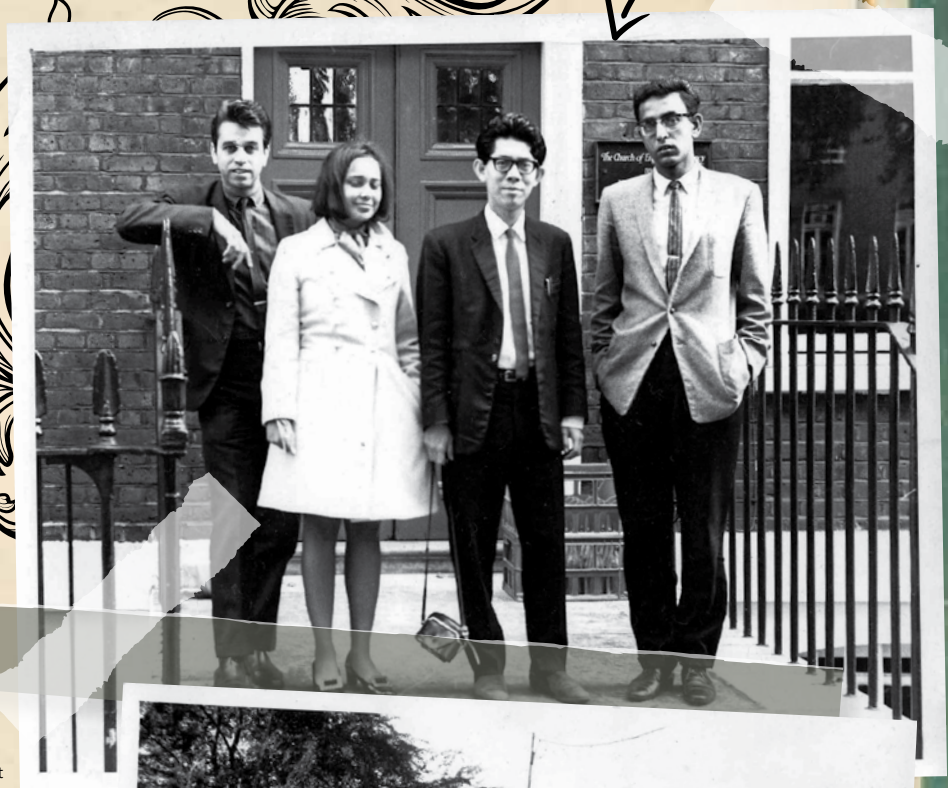
Sometimes, too, I have juxtaposed these insertions in such a way as to create a collage, leaving my reader to make the connections; see, for example, pages 370–374.

It will also be apparent, from what I have written in this section, that I have employed in *Routes* a few familiar techniques used by fiction writers. I am sure many who write autobiographical accounts would also be able to utilise the epigraph, intertext and collage as strategies. As a writer and academic for whom these aspects of literary theory are common, I guess I have an advantage.

I hope all these — including the candour of my revelations, the sensual as well as the intellectual, and the embracing, servicing use of anecdotal articles, diary entries, epigraphs, letters, fiction, poems, plays, reviews (of books and plays) and quotes from books and reports — will convey the impression of my whole person in the years from 1940 to 1975. Oh yes, the illustrations! They — over a hundred of them — interact dynamically with the text as part intimate commentary, part revelation, part interrogation; please scrutinise them carefully. As the great American poet Walt Whitman wrote after publishing the first edition of his masterpiece *Leaves of Grass*:

> *"Camerado, this is no book.*
> *Who touches this, touches a man."*

D



E

C
My favourite picture of Colette, taken on the campus of Nottingham University.

D
Left to right: Vernon Seneviratne, Renee Coelho and Kathi at extreme right.

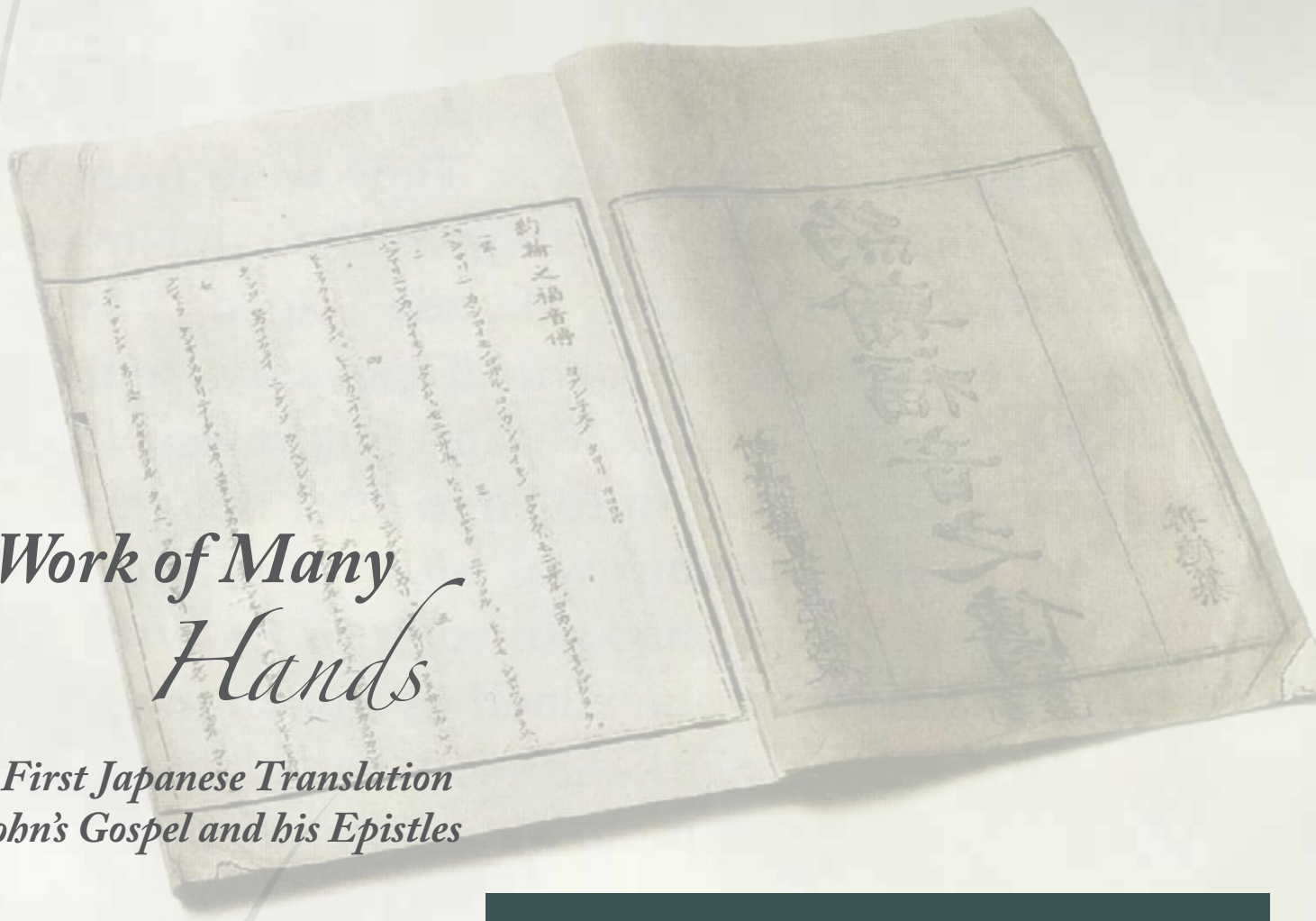
E
The Datsun car, licence plate SX2368, that I drove to Bangkok in December 1971.

ENDNOTES

1 Haley, A. (1976). *Roots: The saga of an American family*. New York: Doubleday.

2 Mohamad, M. (1970). *The Malay Dilemma*. Singapore: Asia Pacific Press.

3 Forster, E. M. (1910). *Howards End*. London: Edward Arnold.



A Work of Many Hands

The First Japanese Translation of John's Gospel and his Epistles

The first Japanese translation of John's Gospel and his Epistles was printed in 1837 in a modest printing press in Singapore; this was located at the corner of Bras Basah Road and North Bridge Road where the Raffles Hotel stands today. Tracing the production of this pioneering work — its translation, typesetting, woodcutting and eventual printing — takes us through 19th century Japan, China, U.S., England and its colony of Singapore. It required the resourcefulness and passion of individuals, persevering support and resources of mission societies, and an open socio-political climate in host countries to enable the completion of the work.

Sachiko **Tanaka**

Professor Emeritus
Sugiyama Jogakuen University

Irene **Lim**

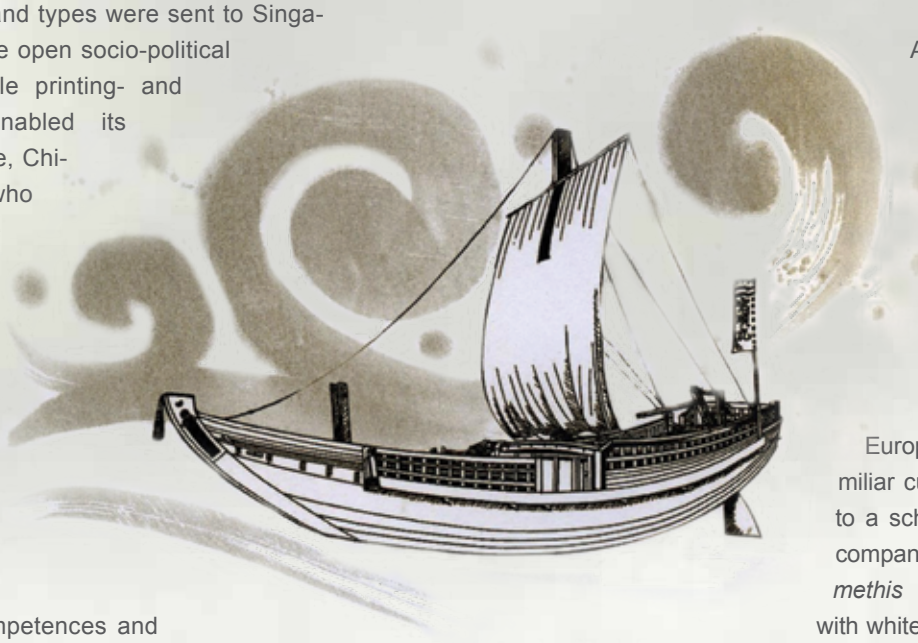
Senior Associate I
NL Heritage
National Library Board

This page
The first Japanese translation of 'The Gospel According To John' by Dr Karl Gützlaff. (Source: The Japan Bible Society).

A
The *Hojunmaru* was a typical Japanese cargo ship known as *sengoku-bune*. (Source: The Otokichi Society).

The essay begins in 19th century Japan where a Japanese crew that had set sail for Edo (now known as Tokyo) got shipwrecked and three surviving sailors finally washed-up in America. The following section details how the earnest efforts of American and English missionaries to repatriate the sailors were met with resolute hostility from a Japan which practised a closed-door policy, forcing them to live estranged in a country and culture vastly different from theirs. Meanwhile in Macao (now known as Macau, the ex-Portuguese colony near Hong Kong), the Japanese worked with a German missionary in his ambitious attempt to translate John's Gospel and his Epistles into Japanese. To print the manuscript posed another challenge, for the printing capabilities of missionary societies were in their nascent stage in the first half of the 19th century (Proudfoot, 1994, p. 9).

Since China then was hostile to foreigners and missionaries, the manuscript and types were sent to Singapore, where the more open socio-political climate and available printing- and press-capabilities enabled its printing. In Singapore, Chinese engravers who had no knowledge of Japanese were tasked to produce the woodcuts for printing the translation. With funding from an American mission society, the translation was finally printed, having by then utilised the competences and resources of several individuals of varying affiliations, and who were located in different cities.



A

Unexpected Opportunity: Stranded Japanese Sailors Help Translate John's Gospel and his Epistles

Japan adopted a closed-door policy from 1638 to 1854. The opportunity for foreigners to enter Japan or interact with Japanese culture in the early 19th century was rare, if any. To have the Bible translated into Japanese would therefore have been an insurmountable task.[1] Yet, it was an ambition that Dr Karl Gutzlaff (1803–1851), a German missionary, dared to embrace.

In November 1832, the *Hojunmaru*[2] (literally 'treasure-followship') had set sail for Edo from Toba Port, one of the major ports between Osaka and Edo, carrying freshly-harvested rice, pottery and other consumer goods in time for the new year. Most of its 14-member crew was from a small fishing village called Onoura, located not far from Toba across the Ise Bay on the Pacific Ocean coast. After several days at sea, the *Hojunmaru* was shipwrecked after encountering a fierce storm. Incredibly, the crew drifted east along the Japan Current and found land only after 14 months. By then the crew had been reduced to three (Haruna, 1879, p. 29–33).

Sometime between the end of 1833 and the early months of 1834, the three surviving crew members were washed ashore the northwest coast of the American continent, near Cape Alva, on the Olympic Peninsula in the present state of Washington (Mihama *et al*, 2006, p. 3). They were Otokichi (the youngest, about 17 years old), Kyukichi (18 years old) and Iwakichi (an experienced helmsman around 30 years old) (See note 8, Haruna, 1979, p. 255). They were discovered by and lived with the Makah tribe[3] in a what is now known as a 'long house' until May 1834, when John McLoughlin, chief factor, trader and administrator of the then Oregon Country of Hudson's Bay Company (HBC)[4] at Fort Vancouver, bought them at a high price from the tribe (Rich, 1941, p. 122).

At Fort Vancouver, the three Japanese regained their health under the care of McLoughlin, who was also a medical doctor. They found themselves surrounded by strange European faces and unfamiliar customs, and were sent to a school for the children of company workers and local *methis* (mixed blood children with white Europeans and native Indians). Methodist missionary Cyrus Shepard reported to the Boston Office of the Methodist Episcopal Church on 10 January 1835, "I have also had three Japanese under instruction … While in school, they were remarkably studious, and made very rapid improvement."[5] In Japan, the three Japanese would have attended a local temple school that taught *katakana*[6] and the use of the abacus. They would also have been taught that speaking to foreigners was forbidden and that listening to a Christian message would have meant a certain death in those days. At Fort Vancouver, the three Japanese did all of that and even joined in at mealtime prayers for they saw kindness in those who gave them shelter.

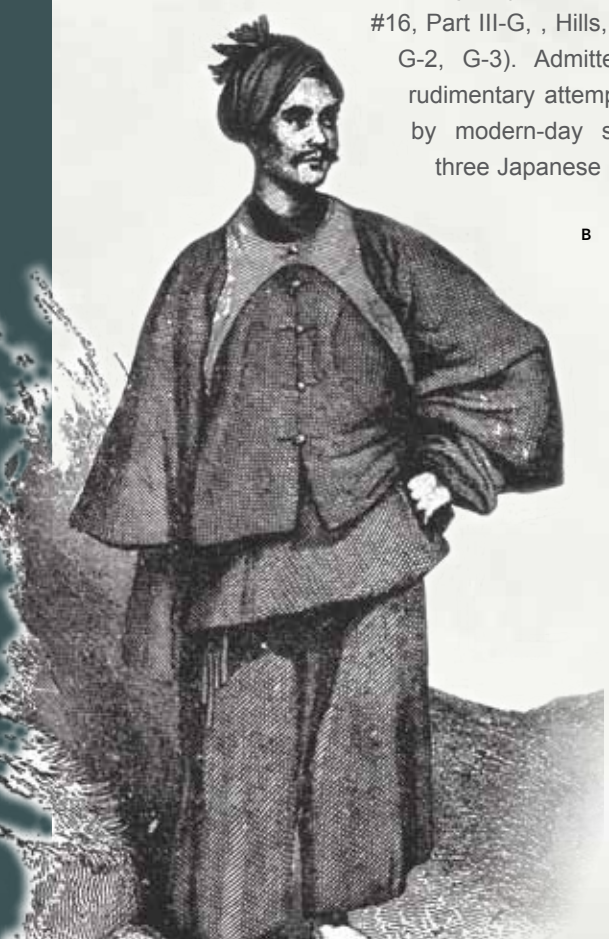
McLoughlin, as chief administrator of the British Hudson's Bay Company, cherished the hope that Japan may open its doors to Britain — Vancouver was then still a British colony — by sending the shipwrecked Japanese back to their home. So, he put them on their company ship the *Eagle* (a 194-ton brigantine captained by W. Darby) which left the Columbia River on 25 November 1834 via Honolulu and arrived at London in the beginning of June 1835.[7] She anchored on the Thames and the three Japanese were taken to see the great city of London, thus becoming the

first recorded Japanese to walk the streets of London. This was sometime between 6 June and 13 June, and they left for Macao on the *General Palmer* on 12 June or 13 June.[8]

The six-month journey via the Cape of Good Hope brought the three Japanese to Macao in late December 1835. In Macao, they were put under the care of Gutzlaff, a German missionary who was working as a Chinese interpreter of the British Board of Trade. Gutzlaff had been in Batavia (now known as Jakarta) from 1827, and while living with W. H. Medhurst, a missionary of the London Missionary Society (LMS), he first learned Chinese and Malay. However, when he saw Medhurst's English and Japanese Dictionary published in 1830,[9] Gutzlaff, being a natural linguist, became very interested in learning Japanese.

A shipwreck that left three Japanese stranded and severely homesick in a foreign land turned out to be a golden opportunity for a pioneering collaborative work. Gutzlaff enlisted the three Japanese's help in translating John's Gospel and his Epistles into Japanese. One of his letters from Macao (dated November 1836) tells of his daily schedule: 7–9 am, Chinese translation of the Old Testament; 9:30am–noon, Japanese translation of the New Testament with the help of two/three Japanese; 12–1pm, examination and correction of the above translation, etc. On Sundays, he conducted a Japanese service from noon to 1 pm.[10]

Gutzlaff also wrote to the American Bible Society in January 1837 detailing how these hours were spent: "Whilst I have the original text before me, I translate sentence by sentence asking my native assistants how they understand this; and after having ascertained that they comprehend me, they put the phraseology into good Japanese without changing the sense. One of them writes this down, and we revise it afterwards jointly…" (ABS History, Essay #16, Part III-G, , Hills, date unknown, G-2, G-3). Admittedly, it was a rudimentary attempt at translation by modern-day standards. The three Japanese must have tried hard to understand Gutzlaff's English and the new concepts of the Gospel message, and thereafter find suitable Japanese expressions for these with their limited vocabulary. After seven to eight months of intense interactions, Gutzlaff and the three Japanese completed the manuscript of the Japanese translation of John's Gospel and his Epistles.



B

B
Dr Karl Gützlaff. Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832, & 1833, with the notices of Siam, Corea, and the Loo-Choo Islands. 2nd version. 1834, London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, Stationers' Hall Court.

C
A picture of Otokichi, drawn by an unknown Japanese artist in 1849. (Source: Shiota Junan, ed. *Kaibolgiho*, National Archives of Japan).

Denied a Homeward Passage: The *Morrison* Incident of 1837[11]

There were exchanges of letters between China and London Foreign Office on the return of the three castaways from Macao to Japan. One letter dated 16 January 1836, from Robinson, the Chief Superintendent of Trade in China, included a note in *kanji* (with *katakana* reading alongside and English translation added by Gutzlaff) that gives the date, the port of departure in Japan, the name of the ship owner, crew size, and a note signed by Iwakichi, Kyukichi and Otokichi expressing earnest desire to return to Japan (Beasley, 1995, p. 23).

In March 1837, another group of four shipwrecked men from Kyushu, southern-most part of Japan, were brought to Gutzlaff. Arrangements were made for the *Morrison* (instead of waiting for the delayed *Himmaleh*) to take all the seven castaways back to Japan and at the same time ascertain if Japan was ready to open its doors to foreign trade and Christian evangelism. As it was meant to be a peaceful visit, they removed all the guns from the ship. On the evening of 3 July 1837, a group of 38 people (Mr and Mrs King of the Olyphant, and their maid, S. W. Williams, medical missionary Parker, Captain D. Ingersoll, 7 Japanese and crew members came on board (with Gutzlaff joining them at Okinawa). After giving a prayer of thanks to God, the ship left Macao for Edo the next morning.

The trip ended in failure. The *Morrison*, which was flying an American flag and a white flag as a sign of peace, was fired at by the Japanese government twice; once at Edo Bay on 31 July and another time at Kagoshima Bay on 12 August. No one on the ship knew about the Tokugawa government's order, active since 1825, that all foreign ships entering Japanese waters should be fired at no matter what. The incident stirred up heated arguments among Japanese government officials and scholars as to whether the policy of seclusion was necessary. The order, however, was not so strictly enforced from 1842 when Japan learned of what had happened to China at the end of the Opium War (1839–1842).[12]

The seven Japanese, who felt that they had literally been cast away from their homeland, began to find ways of supporting themselves — two worked for the British Office under Gutzlaff, two or three taught Japanese or helped at Williams' press[13] etc. Williams subsequently entered Japan as interpreter for Commodore Perry's Trip which opened the doors of Japan by concluding the 'Treaty of Peace and Amity between the United States and the Empire of Japan' signed 31 March 1854.[14] Otokichi, subsequently baptised as John Matthew Ottoson, also entered Japan as interpreter for Sir James Stirling,[15] who concluded the

first 'Anglo-Japanese Convention' signed 14 October 1854. At that time, Otokichi was working as the gatekeeper for Dent, Beale and Co. in Shanghai and later moved to Singapore in 1862. He was granted British citizenship on 20 December 1864[16] and died at Arthur's Seat in Siglap on 18 January 1867 at the age of 50 (Anon., 1867). He was buried the following day at Bukit Timah Christian Cemetery. His remains were subsequently moved to the Japanese Cemetery in Hougang (Leong, 2005, p. 54). Part of his ashes were brought back to Onoura in 2005 and buried at the old tomb for the *Hojunmaru* crew.[17]

Unwelcomed Outreach: Redeployment of American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions out of China, and a Japanese Typeset from America

Evangelising in China was the goal of many European missionary societies in the early 19th century; the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was one such society (Lee, 1989, p. 4). When the Manchu government issued explicit opposition to Christianity and foreign missionaries (Byrd, 1970, p. 61), many missionaries who had set their hearts on China established temporary staging posts in Southeast Asia where the political climate was relatively more open and their resident Chinese populations sizable (Milne, 1820).

A popular way of proselytising was to distribute tracts on Christian literature, which explains the efforts of mission societies in promoting literacy and expanding the use of printing presses (Proudfoot, 1994, p. 13 and Teo, 2008, p. 12). Elijah C. Bridgman (1801–1861) was the first Protestant missionary sent to China by the ABCFM, arriving in Canton in February 1830. He established a mission press and began the publication of an English monthly magazine, *The Chinese Repository*, in May 1832 with the aim "to review foreign books on China, with a view to notice the changes that have occurred, and how and when they were brought about, and to distinguish…between what is, and what is not…" (Bridgman, 1832, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 2).[18]

In October 1833, two missionaries, Ira Tracy (1806–1841) and Samuel W. Williams (1812–1884), arrived in Canton and were greeted by a hostile community where the Chinese authorities degraded "every 'barbarian' who ventured to their territory" including those who wanted to learn Chinese and/or spread Christianity (Williams, 1972, p. 54–55). As they were walking around the walled city of Canton one day, a group of Chinese physically attacked and robbed them (*ibid*., p. 68). Finding it impossible to print any books or tracts in Chinese, ABCFM transferred their Chinese xylographic printing and ten native workmen from Canton to Singapore in 1834 (Anon, 1837, p. 95) and "since March 1834, no attempts at getting books printed by Chinese in Canton have been made" (*ibid*., p. 460–463).

The ABCFM also transferred Tracy from Canton to Singapore for him to take charge of the Singapore station in July 1834 (Anon, 1835, p. 17). Williams, however, being a trained printer, stayed on in Canton with Bridgman and wrote articles and did editorial work for *The Chinese Repository*. However, in December 1835, the mission decided to transfer Williams and his office to Macao (Williams, 1972, p. 80). In Macao, Williams wrote to his father on 25 June 1836 that Kyukichi "was sent on an errand to me to-day, and finding that he could talk broken English, I asked him as many questions as I could think up …" He continued to tell him in some detail the story of the shipwreck as recounted by Kyukichi (*ibid*., p. 83–84). Gutzlaff must have sent Kyukichi to Williams with parts of the translated work — probably one or two chapters each time — so that Williams could make a block copy of it. As no Japanese font existed then, William would have had to make a copy of the manuscript using brush on thin paper. The block cutters would then trace the written block print and cut one word at a time. It was several years later, between 1844 and 1848, that Williams had a set of Japanese *katakana* type made in New York, and brought it back to Macao.[19]

Taking the Manuscript to Print: Printing Capabilities of the Mission Press in Singapore

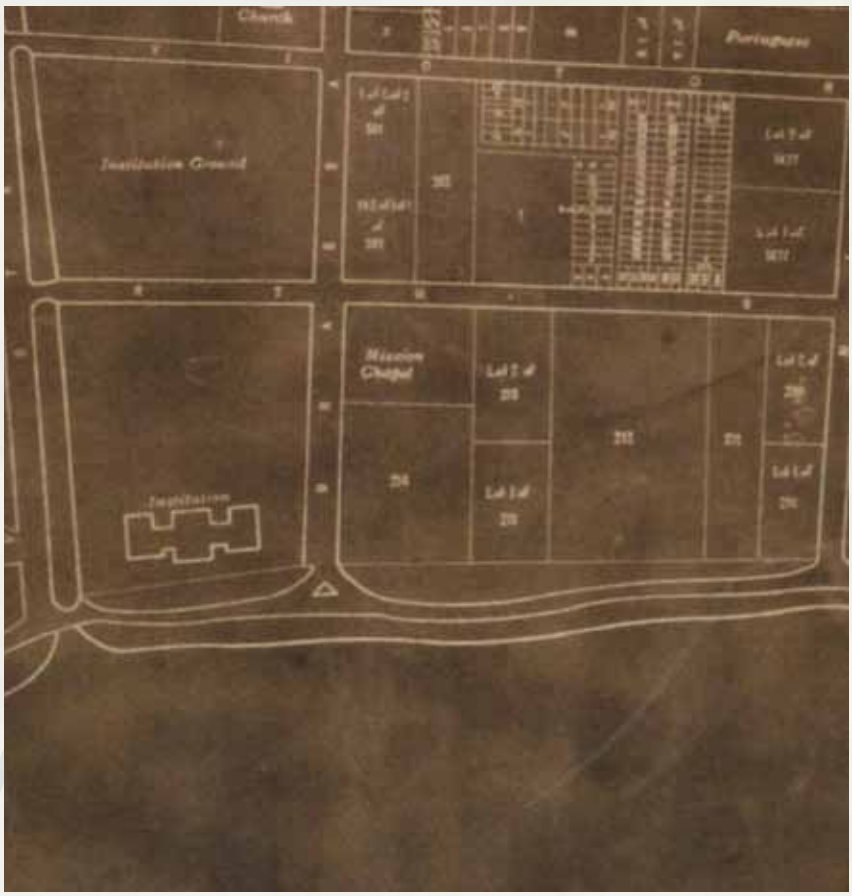
In Singapore, printing initiatives first began with the arrival of the LMS soon after its founding in 1819. The LMS was granted the lease EIC Lot 215 (located at the corner of Bras Basah Road and North Bridge Road where Raffles Hotel stands today) to set up a missionary chapel in 1819 (Byrd, 1970, p. 13. See Plan of Town of Singapore, 1854.) In 1823, the LMS established a modest printing press, initially located in the Mission Chapel grounds, with permission from Stamford Raffles who needed its services to run his administration (Byrd, 1970, p. 13 and O'Sullivan, 1984, p. 77).

It was Claudius Henry Thomsen (1782–1890), a missionary with the Malay missions of the LMS, who brought with him a small press and two workmen when he moved from Malacca to Singapore in 1822. The press consisted of a small quantity of worn-out Malay types and old English types that could produce a four-page print. It was not able to handle regular book-printing. The two workmen composed in English and Malay. One did type-cutting and the other bookbinding (Byrd, 1970, p. 13 and O'Sullivan, 1974, p. 73). Thomsen also had the help of a missionary colleague, Samuel Milton (1788–1849), who had come to Singapore earlier in October 1819 (Milne, 1820, p. 289).

While the men mentioned corresponded with the LMS in London on their printing and press needs, they also had to rely heavily on their own resourcefulness.

Thomsen subsequently built a very extensive printing works, whose mortgagor was the Anglican chaplain in Singapore, the Rev. Robert Burn (1799–1833). It comprised "three buildings, two brick ones with eight rooms each for the workmen and stores, and another wood and attap building for the printing works" (O'Sullivan, 1974, p. 79). Thomsen subsequently sold the printing press and some land to the ABCFM in 1834 before returning to England. As mentioned earlier, Tracy arrived in Singapore from Canton to manage the press under the ABCFM. It comprised "two presses, a fount of Roman type, two founts of Malay, one of Arabic, two of Javanese, one of Siamese, and one of Bugis; and apparatus for casting types for all these languages, and for book-binding" (Anon, 1835, p. 17).

This may be regarded as the founding of the ABCFM mission in Singapore. Printing in Chinese was carried out by xylographic printing, with the Mission Press known in Chinese as 新嘉坡：堅夏書院藏板. Alfred North (1807–1866), having been trained as a printer by S. W. Williams' father in America, was sent to Singapore in 1836 to supervise the mission press. In March 1836, Bridgman was able to announce that "a full printing establishment at Singapore had been purchased, consisted of two presses, of fonts of English, Arabic, Bugis, and Siamese type, and of other necessary equipment" (Latourette, 1917, p. 105, Note 120, quoting Bridgman's letter to the Board on 1 March 1836).



D

Given the printing capabilities available in Singapore, Bridgman therefore advised Gutzlaff to send his manuscript there to be cut in wood. Thus, on 3 December 1836, even before the seven Japanese castaways embarked on their homeward journey on the *Morrison*, Gutzlaff had sent the Japanese manuscript, together with his Chinese translation of the entire New Testament, Genesis and Exodus, to Singapore on the *Himmaleh*, an American merchant/Gospel ship owned by the Olyphant & Co. The ship left Macao for Celebes (now known as Sulawesi, a part of Indonesia) and Borneo island via Singapore and was expected to return by May or June with the printed books.[20]

Besides the limited printing capabilities, the language competence of the wood-carvers posed another challenge. The Chinese wood-carvers at the Mission Press had no knowledge of Japanese and thus produced the woodcuts for the manuscript based on the visual image of the Japanese characters. This is substantiated by the fact that the printed manuscript shows mistakes that would not have been made by one who had simple knowledge of Japanese. For example, ツクル ('to make') was cut asツケル, and ヒトツモ ('even one') was cut asヒトツセ.

The Missionary Herald (Anon, 1838, p. 419) lists books and tracts printed in Chinese including the oldest surviving Japanese translation of the Gospel and Epistles of John by Gutzlaff in his Chinese name: 約翰福音之傳 (120 pages, printed on Chinese paper) and 約翰上中下書 (20 pages), by 善德纂 at 新嘉坡堅夏書院藏板.[21] The entire cost of block-cutting, printing and binding was recorded as $352.82, and was paid for by the American Bible Society from the funds handled by S. W. Williams. In total, 1,525 copies of John's Gospel and his Epistles and about 1,400 copies of his letters were printed and carried by the *Himmaleh* to Macao and unloaded on the small island of Lintin on 15 August 1837 while the *Morrison* was sailing back from Japan with the disheartened Japanese seamen on board (Akiyama, 2006, p. 295–297). Though the books themselves do not identify the year of publication, some writings by the owners of the original copies suggest that they were printed in May 1837 (*ibid*, p. 311–314), though there are some traces of minor revisions made twice since then, probably by November 1839 (*ibid*., p. 320) when many of the missionaries were moved from Singapore to China.

With the opening up of China in 1843, the ABCMF closed its Singapore station and gave the land and press to the LMS. The press was managed by Benjamin Peach Keasberry (1805–1875), an LMS missionary who continued to serve in Singapore even after the LMS closed its Singapore station in 1846. After Keasberry's death, the press was sold to John Fraser and David Chalmers Neave in 1879, who later absorbed the press into their aerated-water company, Singapore and Straits Aerated Water Co. in 1883 (Makepeace, 1908, p. 265 and Anon, 1931, p.14).

Conclusion

Only 16 copies of the Japanese translation of John's Gospel are known to exist around the world — in Boston, London, Paris, Tokyo, etc.[22] Tracing the production of these has allowed us a glimpse into the socio-political conditions of several countries, and the resourcefulness and determination of Gutzlaff and his contemporary missionaries in managing the resources available to them in order to achieve their goals.

How does the 19th century pioneering translation impact us today? It is important in several ways: Christians can learn from it how the new concepts were coined in the words that could be understood by everyone without much schooling; scholars of the Japanese language can learn from it how the language has changed (its pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar); those who study the Edo Period can learn from it because it reflects the social customs and class distinctions of the era. The translation has been reprinted five times — by Nagasaki Publishing Co. in 1941 during World War 2 and by Shinkyo Press (which incorporated Nagasaki Press) in 1976, 2000, 2009 and 2011, with each reprint carrying an accompanying commentary revised with new findings by N. Akiyama.

On 6 October 2011, 120 people gathered for the 50th Memorial Service commemorating the founding of the Stone Monument (on which the names of Otokichi, Kyukichi and Iwakichi are carved) for the first Japanese translation of the Bible. The monument stands by the beach, facing west towards the Ise Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Around the time of the commemoration, a copy of the reprint was sent to the National Library Board, Singapore, to be deposited for posterity.

F

D
Plan of Town of Singapore and Environs, 1854. The Mission Press was located on the grounds of the Mission Chapel, where the Raffles Hotel stands today. (Source: Singapore Land Authority).

E
The first Japanese translation of John's Gospel and his Epistles, printed by the Mission Press in Singapore in 1837.

F
The monument in memory of First Bible Translation and Three Japanese Seamen. (Source: Sachiko Tanaka).

E

ENDNOTES

1 Christianity in any form was strictly banned from Japan for 260 years from 1613. A decree prohibiting the Christian faith that was written on the Notice Boards set up on the streets was finally lifted on 24 February 1873.

2 The *Hojunmaru* was one of the typical cargo ships in those days called *sengoku-bune* because they were built to carry around *sen* (one thousand) *koku* of rice (one *koku* being a little over five bushels). They had a huge rudder at the back and only one mast-sail, for larger ships were strictly forbidden by the Tokugawa Government. They were only fit to carry goods along the coast or in the calm inland sea.

3 *National Geographic*, Vol. 180, No. 4 (October 1991) has an extensive article on the Makah, and we can imagine how the Japanese men must have been treated for about four or five months.

4 HBC was founded in London with a Royal Charter from King Charles II on 2 May 1670. It is still one of the largest companies in Canada. See the letter written by McLoughlin (dated 28 May 1834) telling about how he rescued the three shipwrecked Japanese.

5 'Early Letter from the Northwest Mission,' *Washington Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 24, 1933, p. 54. Shepard's letter first appeared in *Zion's Herald*, Boston, 1835, p. 170

6 The Japanese language can be written in *kanji* (idiographic Chinese characters) and two kinds of syllabary: *hiragana* (the cursive phonetic syllabary) and *katakana* (the square phonetic syllabary, mostly used for writing foreign loan words today, but in the earlier days, *katakana* was taught and read by the general public, while Chinese characters were taught chiefly to the children of *samurai* (warrior) families.

7 HBC Archives, Section 3, Class I, Piece 284, gives the ships logs of the *Eagle*, 1833-35, by Captain W. Darby.

8 A letter (dated 11 June 1835) from HBC London Office to Mr. Wade says, "[the company] will send the three Japanese on board tomorrow or next day to be taken to Canton by the 'General Palmer' …." HBC Archives, A. 5/11, p. 47.

9 Medhurst borrowed Japanese books from the Dutch East India Company and studied Japanese on his own, and published by lithograph *An English and Japanese and Japanese and English Vocabulary* (Compiled from Native Works), Batavia, 1830, pp. viii, 344.

10 Akiyama (2006, p. 291) quotes the letter from Gutzlaff's Biography written in Dutch by G. R. Erdbrink, *Gutzlaff, de Apostel der Chinezen, in zijin Leven en zijne Werkzaamheid Geschetzt*, 1850, p. 53)

11 Several books have been written on this trip and readers can refer to these major references: Williams, 1837, King and Lay, 1839, Parker, 1838 and Aihara, 1954 (in Japanese).

12 The Treaty of Nanjing, concluded at the end of the Opium War (or the Anglo-Chinese War) in August 1842 between the British and the Chinese (Qing Dynasty), forced China to open five ports (Canton, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Linbou and Shanghai) for foreign trade and also surrender Hong Kong to the British.)

13 For instance, according to the general letter from the mission (dated 14 July 1839) "Mr. Williams has usually devoted two hours in the morning to the study of Japanese, after which four hours to Chinese…" (*Missionary Herald*, Vol. 36, for the year 1840: 81). Williams wrote to his father (21 January 1838) that he was learning Japanese (Williams, 1972, p. 107–108), and that he has a Japanese working at the printing office (26 January 1839, *ibid*: p. 110).

14 Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794–1858), a veteran US naval officer, was sent to Japan to open diplomatic relations between the US and Japan. He left Norfolk on 24 November 1852 and arrived in Edo Bay on 8 July 1853 via Hong Kong with four "Black Ships." He delivered President Fillmore's letter to the Emperor of Japan at Kurihama and left for China. He revisited Japan with 7 warships on 13 February 1854 and concluded the Treaty of Peace and Amity between the United States and the Emperor of Japan at Kanagawa (now called Yokohama) on 31 March 1854. For the detailed account, see the official report of the trip, *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan, Performed in the Years 1852, 1853, and 1854, under the Command of Commodore M. C. Perry, United States Navy, by Order of the Government of the United States* (1856).

15 Sir James Stirling (1791–1865), a veteran British naval officer, arrived at Nagasaki on 7 September 1854 to look for Russian warships as Britain was involved in the Crimean War (1853–1856). With Ottoson as interpreter Stirling concluded the first formal Anglo-Japanese agreement on 14 October 1854, which included an article that the ports of Nagasaki and Hakodate shall be open to the British ships. Refer to W. G. Beasley (1995) and *Illustrated London News* (13 January 1855, p. 43–45) for more detailed accounts.

16 British Citizenship No. 205 was granted to Japanese John M Ottoson as he met the conditions stated under No.30 of 1852.

17 The old record of *Ryosanji* Temple lists 14 posthumous names along with their fathers' names and the same date of their death as 12 October (*Tempo* 3), the second day after they left Toba. On the top of the page it is written in red ink, "Fourteen men listed from this column left Toba Port in the province of Shishu, but we do not know where they sank to death." The owner of the *Hojunmaru* also erected a tomb in the temple graveyard in 1832 around which all the 14 names were carved.

18 *The Chinese Repository* was terminated in December 1851, and in those 20 years there were about 20 articles written on Japan and Lewchew (Okinawa). The Editorial Notice given in the last issue (31 December 1851) says that the role of the magazine has been accomplished as the number of printing presses increased from 5 to 13, and the newspapers from 2 to 5.

19 'Japanese Type,' *Missionary Herald*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (January 1848), Home Proceedings, p. 29–30.

20 *Missionary Herald*, for the year 1837, p. 459–461. Report from Canton, dated 7 March 1837. The detailed description on the trip of the *Himmaleh*, see the Preface, Vol. 1, by King and Lay, 1839.

21 Under the 'Report of the Mission for the Year 1837' on the print by blocks for Chinese printing it reads: "Blocks have been prepared for the Life of Christ, of Moses, Joseph, Daniel, John, and Paul, and two or three other tracts by Mr. Gutzlaff; for a revised edition of Milne's Village Sermons, Medhurst's Harmony of Gospels, the Gospels and Epistles of John in Japanese ..." (p. 419).

Harvard-Yenching Missionary Writings in Chinese Microfilms, compiled by M. Poon (Jan. 2006), also lists the title, translator's name, the place and the year of publication (retrieved October 7, 2011 from http://chinsci.bokee.com/viewdiary.15361461.html).

22 Nine copies exist outside Japan: ABCFM in Boston (3 copies, one of them used to belong to Ira Tracy, one to S. W. Williams), Harvard University Library, American Bible Society (2 copies), British Bible Society, British Library and Paris National Library. Seven copies exist in Japan: Tokyo Theological Seminary, Doshisha University (Kyoto), Japan Bible Society (2 copies), Meiji Gakuin University, Tenri Library (Nara) and one owned by an individual. The original copies of *John's Epistles* in Japanese exist only at two places: British Library and Paris National Library.

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Lunch with Mr Einstein

Meira **Chand**

Novelist

***Originally in a very early draft of* A Different Sky, *this unpublished chapter was excised as the writer decided to start the book in 1927 instead of 1922, which is the date Einstein visited Singapore. The novel covers the thirty years before Singapore achieved full independence. Beginning in the island's first communist riot in 1927, the novel follows the lives of three families caught up in tumultuous times. The names of the characters are intact and revealed here is a childhood glimpse of Mei Lan and Cynthia from* A Different Sky.**

Singapore, November 1922

The main thing to remember, Becky Cohen whispered, was that Mr Einstein had fiddled with time. He had reinvented it, slowing it down, speeding it up, even making it turn corners. The children were crouched behind the banisters at the top of the stairs, peering down into the room below where the great man was at lunch. Ceiling fans turned lazily above the guests, all there to meet Mr Einstein. Beyond the open windows a view of lush Singapore greenery was seen.

'How can time turn corners?' Cynthia asked, perplexed.

'My father says Mr Einstein thinks the past, the future and the present are like a lot of roads all running together.' Becky turned to give Cynthia a withering look. Cynthia bit her lip, she had not wanted to come to Becky's house, but her mother insisted an invitation from the Cohens' should not be refused.

'They are so rich they have electricity and toilets flushed by water,' her mother said. Cynthia knew she had only been invited as a token Eurasian. Becky's guest list had originally included representatives from all Singapore's ethnic communities, but in the end only three girls came to meet Mr Einstein: Cynthia, Beng Neo and Mei Lan.

Becky's guest list had originally included representatives from all Singapore's ethnic communities, but in the end only three girls came to meet Mr Einstein: Cynthia, Beng Neo and Mei Lan.

A table had been set up on a landing where the girls had eaten a light lunch. The clink of crystal and cutlery and the hum of adult conversation rose up to them from below. At one point they had been taken down to meet Mr Einstein, and said the things they had been instructed to say. The scientist's hand was clammy, sweat moistened his cheeks and his tie was knotted off centre. Yet, he bent towards them attentively, shaking their hands, as if they were grown women.

'Ah,' he smiled, his words thick with furry accent. 'Remember, you are modern women, the hope of a new world.' He did not give the feeling of being famous. His bushy hair stood on end, and bristles pushed out of his ears.

'My father says he is the most important man in the world today. You are lucky I chose you to meet him,' Becky informed them archly, when they returned to the landing.

Beng Neo had been late, and before she arrived Becky told them she had only invited the girl because her mother said her friends should not all be rich. Mr Cohen, who prided himself on his liberal views about racial mixing and had a circle of cosmopolitan friends, had suggested his daughter invite some classmates from school to meet the scientist. Even if they were only ten years old and did not understand the importance of Mr Einstein, later in life they could say that they had met him. Becky fixed her gaze upon Cynthia.

'Papa says I must be kind to all communities and classes. You Eurasians look like Indians, except for your funny light eyes?' Becky commented. Cynthia could find no answer, and hung her head in shame.

'What about me?' Mei Lan asked with a secret smile. Her tone implied it must be awful to be as poor and pitied as Beng Neo, whose school fees were paid by the Salvation Army, or patronised like Eurasian Cynthia, whose blood was such a cocktail of parts she had no people to call her own. She knew Becky would not dare to speak with such insolence to someone whose house had seventeen windows on the road facing side. Her grandfather was the famous Kapitan China, Lim Hock An, with whom, even if he were a Chinese, the Governor sometimes conferred.

'Why sitting in sun? Wanting skin like dried fruit, *lah*? Like me, *lah*?' Ah Siew roused from a doze. The sun fell through the open window, heating up in a fiery patch on the landing. The *amah* pulled a bamboo chick over the window, and then padded across the floor to crouch down beside her charge. From there she smiled reassuringly at Cynthia, lips open upon her protruding teeth. Mei Lan never went anywhere without Ah Siew who had reared her from the day she was born. It was said that when she first started school, Ah Siew had sat in the classroom with Mei Lan until her fear of the place abated.

Outside the window a black myna bird perched in a frangipani tree, yellow beak and legs bright against the white blossoms. The sky above was blue. The world seemed as always, and the tick of the grandfather clock on the landing told Cynthia time moved just as before, in spite of Mr Einstein. She peered down again at the assembly below. The scientist was an insignificant man with a thick moustache and wild grey hair. He had already spilt soup on his tie and dabbed at it with a napkin dipped in a glass of water. He seemed out of place in his crumpled linen suit amongst the smartly dressed people about the table, heaped with crystal, flowers and silverware. There was a look of bemusement on his face.

'Why is he here in Singapore?' Cynthia managed to ask. Mei Lan and Becky seldom spoke to her in school, preferring to mix with their own kind. The strangeness of being so close to them now weighed upon Cynthia. Words formed on her tongue with difficulty; her dress appeared faded and she saw now the ribbing of her socks did not match.

'He has come to get money to build a Hebrew university in Jerusalem,' Becky replied, turning upon her in annoyance.

After lunch they would all proceed to the great house of Sir Manasseh Meyer, doyen of the Jewish community, who was giving a reception for Mr Einstein. All the best people in Singapore had been invited.

'Two hundred or more,' Becky confirmed as they continued to press their faces to the banisters, observing the party downstairs. 'But Papa says, the *hoi polloi* will not be there.'

Cynthia looked at Becky in alarm, afraid to ask the meaning of this strange word. Becky spoke like an adult. She knew words nobody else understood and used them at school to impress the teachers. Below them it appeared Mr Einstein was about to give a speech; he pushed back his chair and rose to his feet. As his English was poor the scientist was in need of an interpreter, and Mr Cohen had undertaken this task. His deep baritone echoed behind the words of the scientist whose voice was as uncontrollable as his hair, plunging up or down, sometimes trailing off in mid-sentence as if he found himself on a cliff edge.

'I can still remember the deep impression the magnetic compass made upon me. I was four years old, ill in bed, and my father brought this novelty to me for distraction. Here was a needle, isolated and unreachable, totally enclosed, yet caught in the grip of an invisible power that made it strive determinedly towards the north…'

Cynthia saw the compass in her mind, the needle like a man lost in a dark forest of tall trees, with only courage to guide him on the journey ahead. The image lay inside her, like something important she had learned. Yet, downstairs, the guests nodded politely as the scientist spoke, expressions bland, and resumed their conversations the moment Mr Einstein sat down.

Cynthia saw the compass in her mind, the needle like a man lost in a dark forest of tall trees, with only courage to guide him on the journey ahead. The image lay inside her, like something important she had learned. Yet, downstairs, the guests nodded politely as the scientist spoke, expressions bland, and resumed their conversations the moment Mr Einstein sat down.

Whenever she could without it seeming too apparent Cynthia looked about Becky's house; she had never seen anywhere like it. Her own home housed only the most essential of comforts. The place was filled with her mother's many lodgers and an overwhelming smell of disinfectant. Here there was the scent of pink lilies filling bowls of silver or cut glass. Ornate furniture, paintings and rugs were everywhere.

Becky had showed them her bedroom with its kidney-shaped dressing table, on her bed sat a row of dolls with porcelain faces. Their rosebud mouths pursed in disapproval as Cynthia stood before them, and she backed away. A faint lavender scent filled the air. At home her room was bare but for a rickety bed, a tallboy and bookcase with a few battered books her mother had bought at second-hand bookshops. As she turned to leave she glimpsed herself in the mirror, a thin-faced, dark-skinned imp with green eyes.

'What is *hoi polloi*?' Beng Neo asked suddenly. From her strained tone it was obvious Beng Neo had taken all this while to pluck up courage to ask the question.

'People who are not select.' Becky looked critically at Beng Neo whose limp dress, worn and inadequately ironed, had obviously been washed at home like her school uniform.

Downstairs Mr Einstein's speech was over; people were already standing up to prepare for the short journey to Sir Manasseh Meyer's house. Becky's mother, in a silk gown with lace trim and a wide straw hat with white tulle flowers, came to the bottom of the stairs and called to the girls to come down.

'And don't forget to put on your hats.'

Becky's hat was of green straw and rosebuds, and Mei Lan wore a smart boater with pink ribbons. Beng Neo and Cynthia had no hats.

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At last the convoy of cars and rickshaws reached Belle Vue, Sir Manasseh's great house on the hill. Although the adults were driven in cars, the children rode in rickshaws. The runners breathed heavily as they laboured up the slope, and past Sir Manasseh's private synagogue. By the time they reached their destination Mr Einstein had already arrived and been welcomed by Sir Manasseh Meyer. The girls vacated their rickshaw at the gate, before which stood two uniformed watchmen. On entering the gardens of Belle Vue, they found Mr Cohen waiting to introduce them to their host.

The green of the garden lay before Cynthia in a close-cropped carpet of *lalang* grass. There was a fine view of the sea over the red rooftops of colonial bungalows and luxuriant banks of trees. Paths emblazoned with magenta bougainvillaea bordered European statuary, while in the distance the deep natural harbour of Singapore was lavishly strewn with ships. Behind her Sir Manasseh's great house reared up, and on an adjacent hill at a higher level was Fort Canning, burial ground of Malay Kings, home to Sir Stamford Raffles and other long ago governors.

Cynthia drew a breath in wonder, she had stepped into an unknown world and the power of the place reduced her.

Unlike Mr Einstein, Sir Manasseh Meyer, although immensely wealthy, was not much known in the world beyond the region of South East Asia. Yet he appeared to Cynthia to have the firmer sense of destiny. In spite of the heat he wore a dark serge suit and a firmly knotted tie beneath his grey pointed beard. A black skullcap sat upon his head. Although the sun glinted on his gold-rimmed spectacles, there was a guarded look to his thin shrewd face. He held himself upright and smiled without emotion. Mr Einstein, in his creased linen suit, stained tie and wild hair made a strange contrast, shambling over the lawn beside him. Sir Manasseh appeared the famous one, and Mr Einstein might be mistaken for a railway clerk, Cynthia decided.

Crossing the lawn behind the adults they passed a pond of carp. The fish swam languidly in the sunlit water, their skins like rich brocade. Deep down in their secret world they moved as if oblivious of the life above. Cynthia stared down at the sinuous circling bodies, and remembered a recent visit to the beach and the blissful freedom of her bare limbs as she swam in the warm ocean. Already, the garden was full of smartly dressed Europeans who stepped back respectfully as the scientist passed. All the women wore elaborate hats; a sea of tulle and silk flowers appeared to swirl through the garden. Cynthia stared down again into the water and wished she were a fish. Already, Becky walked purposely ahead with Mei Lan, her *amah* following closely behind, and Cynthia knew she would make no further effort to tolerate her or Beng Neo. She waited by the pond until Beng Neo caught up, and took her hand in encouragement as they trailed behind Becky, acutely aware of their miserable status. Beng Neo's attendance at school was irregular. Her mother frequently forbade her to go if the work at home was too much. Beng Neo had nine living brothers, although once there had been thirteen. As the eldest child and the only girl, it was her duty, she said, to look after her brothers. The only reason she was allowed in school was to keep an eye on smaller siblings.

'I am only a girl,' she insisted, hanging her head in wretchedness when teachers questioned her absence. During her days of non-attendance Beng Neo was always to be seen hovering about the school gate, one small brother strapped to her back with a winding cloth, another sucking his thumb and clasping her hand. She would ask everyone what work they had done that day. No one else was so bitten with learning.

Tables were set up in the garden with snacks of the different ethnic communities, as well as tea stalls with cakes, sandwiches and lemonade. At times it seemed more people were clustered about the tables than about the famous scientist. Few of the guests knew much about the life work of the scientist. They knew only that the small man in a crumpled suit, his tie off centre, a button now hanging loose on his waistcoat, was a world famous celebrity, and few European celebrities ventured as far from home as Singapore.

Because of the interest in the food tables the crowd about Mr Einstein had thinned. Only those who were truly interested in science had forgone their tea. In the heat Mr Einstein's smile had taken on a fixed appearance and he mopped his brow with a handkerchief. Beside him now Sir Manasseh frowned disapprovingly as he listened to one of the uniformed watchmen who had hurried up to him, and was pointing repeatedly towards the gate.

A thin bespectacled Indian waited anxiously there, his eyes fixed upon the scientist. At an exasperated nod from Sir Manasseh, the Indian was finally allowed to enter the garden and approach Mr Einstein. He moved forward self-consciously, a strange unkempt figure amongst the smart Europeans. His shabby jacket was tight at the shoulders and short in the sleeves, and incongruously worn over a muslin *dhoti* and open sandals. People turned to watch the dark skinned intruder, who walked as if he feared his left foot might entangle with his right and bring him down shamefully before the assembly.

When finally he stood before Mr Einstein, speech seemed to dry on his tongue. He hesitated and then unexpectedly prostrated himself at the scientist's feet, his hands gripping Mr Einstein's stout shoes. The knot of interested spectators about Mr Einstein gave a shocked gasp, the scientist stooped down in embarrassment, insisting the Indian get back on his feet. Upright once more, the man grasped Mr Einstein's hands in his own and shook them ceaselessly. A ripple of disapproval passed through the crowd.

There was something about Mr Einstein that made Cynthia understand why the Indian might want to shake his hands so strenuously, although she could not say what this might be. The Indian was speaking rapidly and Mr Einstein was nodding and smiling. Cynthia moved nearer, and was amazed to see tears in the Indian's eyes. He still clasped the scientist's hands, and Mr Einstein was now explaining something about insects.

'…just as a beetle moving on a large globe does not realise it is actually moving on a curved trajectory, we too are unaware of the fact that the space we live in is curved.'

The Indian mumbled an answer and Mr Einstein nodded and chuckled as if at some private joke.

'You must be one of the few people here who has understood something of my theory,' Einstein's face creased in a smile, he patted the Indian's shoulder. Beside him Sir Manasseh Meyer was becoming impatient and Becky's father stepped forward to break up the strange conversation.

'Everyone is waiting for Mr Einstein,' Mr Cohen frowned.

The Indian drew back, nodding apologetically. Without further acknowledgement, the group of Europeans turned away. Only Mr Einstein passed the Indian a glance of humorous conspiracy, as if he would rather have stayed to talk with him than face Sir Manasseh Meyer's reception. Then, he too turned to accompany his host towards the great ballroom of the house. There, speeches would be made and questions could be asked of the scientist about his work.

Cynthia watched Mr Einstein walk away with a growing sense of desolation. There was no sign of Beng Neo who was now lost in the crowd. No sign either of Becky and Mei Lan who must already be consuming cake and lemonade somewhere in the house. Only the Indian still stood at the gate, his eyes fixed on the retreating form of the scientist. Cynthia wondered why, when Mr Einstein had so clearly taken to him, the Indian could not have joined the reception. People now jostled about her as they streamed towards the open French doors of Sir Manasseh Meyer's ballroom. Someone bumped against her, pushing her off balance, strange voices hummed around her. Looking up, she saw a wave of flowery hats rolling over her, high above. A ripple of panic rose through her; a cloying smell of perfume and perspiration hemmed her in. A man bent to pat her head as if she was a dog.

'What are you doing here, lassie?' he asked, bending down to her. Behind his stained teeth she saw his thick wet tongue. A woman beside him in a hat of pink feathers and mauve flowers gave an impatient laugh.

'One of the servant's children must have wandered out. Come along, she'll find her way back to the kitchen door.'

Eventually, the crowd passed by and Cynthia was left alone. The food she had eaten at lunch repeated on her, and her head ached. She wanted to go home and thought of her mother's soft dark skin, the elegant coil of her chignon, the lavender scent of her embrace and bit her lip so that the tears would not come; she could see nobody like her mother in the garden, nobody like herself, except the Indian man still standing at the gate.

The horrid things Becky had said washed about inside her. Everything that had seemed to fit so neatly within her only hours before seemed suddenly out of place. The sun high above speared the gold fish in the pond, but something seemed to oppress her. Her throat grew tight and tears pricked her eyes. In her head she heard Mr Einstein's voice again, speaking about the compass, 'Here was a needle, isolated and unreachable, totally enclosed, yet caught in the grip of an invisible power that made it strive determinedly towards the north…' Now, it was not a tall thin man in a forest she saw, but Mr Einstein, beset like Gulliver in a Lilliputian land, by people who underestimated him.

All at once she turned and began to run towards the gate where the Indian still waited, a group of nearby people looked at her askance. Then, someone came up behind her and caught her firmly by the arm.

'Now not time for going home. Lemonade and cake is waiting. No listen to things people say, *lah*. You always be you. Cannot change. Must make yourself strong, *lah*. Like me.' Old Ah Siew crouched down and put a stringy arm about Cynthia who turned into the *amah's* slack breast and wept.

Now, it was not a tall thin man in a forest she saw, but Mr Einstein, beset like Gulliver in a Lilliputian land, by people who underestimated him.

STORIES BEHIND Singapore Streets

While most official street and place names tell us stories of who they were named after and reflect the town planning of the authority or land owners who chose the names, colloquial street and place names were more references than names. Instead of commemorating pioneers or remembering their fathers using street and place names spelt in English, colloquial street and place names coined by locals, who tended to be illiterate, were oral references to the commercial activities or landmarks of these places.

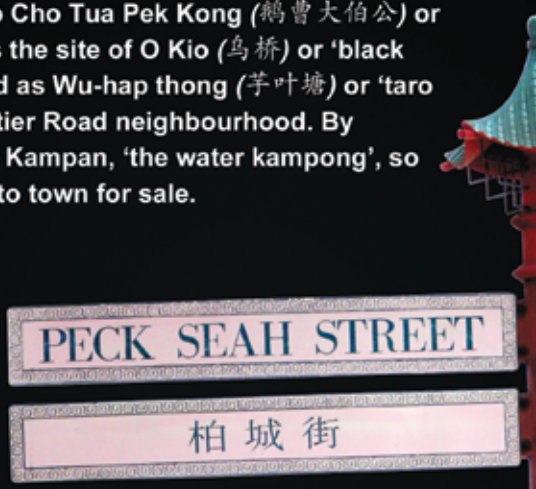
Colloquial street and places names were documented as early as the late 19th century by H. W. Firmstone and H. T. Haughton. Both authors provided colloquial names in Hokkien, Cantonese, Malay and Tamil. The meanings of these names sometimes coincided, but when they did not, they reflected the different ways in which local ethnic communities lived and worked together.

There are numerous examples of street and places names with multiple colloquial variants. For instance, Albert Street was identified by the activities that took place there. The Hokkien and Cantonese referred to it as Boh Mua Lu Koi and Mo ma-yau kai *(磨麻油街)* respectively, both of which translated into 'the street where sesamum oil is expressed'. To the Indian community, however, it was Thimiri Thidal, 'the place where people tread on fire', a reference to the annual fire-walking ceremony held on the street around October/November.

In the same way, Havelock Road was known to both the Malay and Indian communities as the street where arrack, an alcoholic drink, was distilled. The street was known as Jalan Masak Arak and Masak Arak Sadakku respectively.

Local communities also identified streets by the landmarks found there. The Hokkien community identified Balestier Road as the site of Go Cho Tua Pek Kong *(鹅曹大伯公)* or 'Rochor temple' of the deity Tua Pek Kong, as well as the site of O Kio *(乌桥)* or 'black bridge'. The Cantonese community identified the road as Wu-hap thong *(芋叶塘)* or 'taro pond', a reference to the taro fields around the Balestier Road neighbourhood. By comparison, the road was known in Tamil as Thannir Kampan, 'the water kampong', so named because water was conveyed from this place to town for sale.

- Tan Teng Teng, Curator



Stories Behind Singapore Streets Exhibition

Visit the exhibition to learn about the fascinating tales behind streets named after personalities, places, flora and fauna, and gain fascinating insights into the history of Singapore through the naming of streets over the years.

Venue | Promenade, Levels 7 and 8 of the National Library Building
Dates | 12 January - 29 June 2012
Times | 10.00am to 9.00pm (except public holidays)

Comic Books

As Windows into a Singapore of the 1980s and 1990s

Lim Cheng Tju

Country Editor (Singapore)
International Journal of Comic Art

Since the 1980s, the writing of Singapore's postwar history has been dominated by the stories of Big Men and the political struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. John Drysdale's **Struggle for Success** *(1984) and Dennis Bloodworth's* **The Tiger and the Trojan Horse** *(1986), were narratives of the Singapore Story produced in the 1980s, while former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew published his memoirs in the late 1990s. The latest of such ventures was* **Men in White** *(2009).*

However, there have been recent attempts to re-examine the postwar period through social and cultural lenses. Rather than being dependent on British Colonial Office records and state archival papers, works on the history of popular culture such as films (*Latent Images: Films in Singapore* by Jan Uhde and Yvonne Ng Uhde; *Singapore Cinema* by Raphael Millet) and rock music (*Legends of the Golden Venus* and *Apache Over Singapore*, both by Joseph Pereira) focus on the medium itself and they ask the question: what does a movie or a throwaway pop song tell us about ourselves and the past?[1] Even the National Museum of Singapore in 2010 mounted an exhibition on "Singapore 1960", using cultural artifacts and social memories to give us a sense of what lives were like back then.

Insight into the past can certainly be gained through music, movies, literature, and art. In 2006, the National Library held an exhibition commemorating the 40th anniversary of the original 1966 Six Men Woodcut Show, featuring the print works of artists Lim Yew Kuan, See Cheen Tee, Foo Chee San, Tan Tee Chie, Choo Keng Kwang and Lim Mu Hue.[2] Looking at these prints with their depictions of street hawkers, night street scenes and the Singapore River 40 years later, one was able to glimpse the socio-economic conditions of 1960s Singapore.

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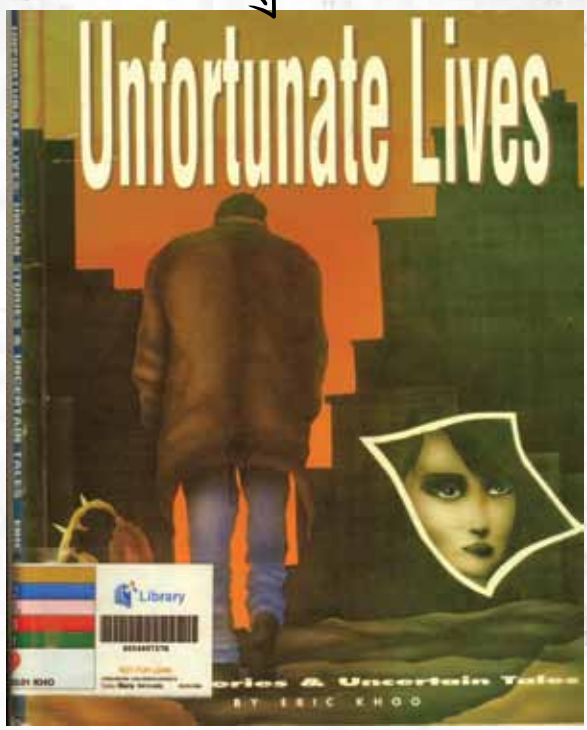

Singapore comic books and graphic novels have been around since the late 1980s. They are another primary source we can review to glean a vision of the recent past. Last year, Malaysian-born comic artist Sonny Liew was a recipient of the Young Artist Award, the first time the award was given to a comic artist. This year, local comic artist Troy Chin received the same award. This signals a turning point for the medium as it is now being taken more seriously by the state.

By looking at two comic books (one produced in the 1980s and the other in the 1990s) and the context behind their creation, we can learn a lot about these two decades.

1980s — *Unfortunate Lives*

The first Singapore graphic novel comprising short stories was Eric Khoo's *Unfortunate Lives: Urban Stories, Uncertain Tales* (1989), intended to be the first by the comics imprint of Times Books International.

The graphic novel was positioned as part of a cultural bloom in the arts in the late 1980s. The introduction of the book described the cultural scene as "artists, musicians, writers and producers creating works, stories, new myths about our people and our environment and lifestyle. They have been exploring the history and sociology of this young country; the tensions and conflicts of life in a new age — in ways that have never before been so visible in the public media."

Seen in this light, *Unfortunate Lives* was part of the cultural spring of the mid to late 1980s. In 1986, *BigO* magazine organised the first alternative music gig, "No Surrender" at Anywhere, a pub at Tanglin Shopping Centre. In 1988, Kuo Pao Kun's *Mama Looking For Her Cat*, Singapore's first multilingual play, was staged.[3] Two years later, Kuo founded The Substation.

It is now known that Khoo was inspired by the urban realism of the works of Japanese manga artist Yoshihiro Tatsumi, who is the godfather of alternative comics in Japan. Khoo faced writer's block after being given the contract for the book *Unfortunate Lives*. He had to rush it out for the annual book fair in September, but the pages remained blank. After he read Tatsumi's comics, *Good-Bye and Other Stories* (Catalan Communications, 1988), Khoo was so inspired by the gritty realism of Tatsumi's works that he wrote all the stories for *Unfortunate Lives* in a matter of weeks. Khoo, now more well-known as a film director than a comic artist, was able to repay the debt he owed his *sensei* when he released his first animated feature, *Tatsumi*, based on the artist's autobiographical graphic novel *A Drifting Life* as well as five of his short stories.

The nine short stories in *Unfortunate Lives* are bleak, drawn from the headlines of the day. "Victims of Society" retells the Adrian Lim murders of the early 1980s. "Prisoners of the Night" has a romanticised view of how young girls end up as prostitutes. The tension between art and commerce is played out in "Lost Romantics". But the best stories are "The Canvas Environment", "Memories of Youth", and "State of Oppression".[4]

"The Canvas Environment", a dark tale about a lonely youth, pits itself against the optimism of Singapore in the 1980s. In 1984, the country celebrated 25 years of self-government. History and academic books published then had the word "success" in their titles, such as the abovementioned *Struggle for Success* and *Management of Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore,* a report card on Singapore's progress put out by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in 1989.

In "The Canvas Environment", a sensitive boy grows up to be a taxi driver by day and a tortured artist by night. No one understands him or his art. He shuts himself away from society

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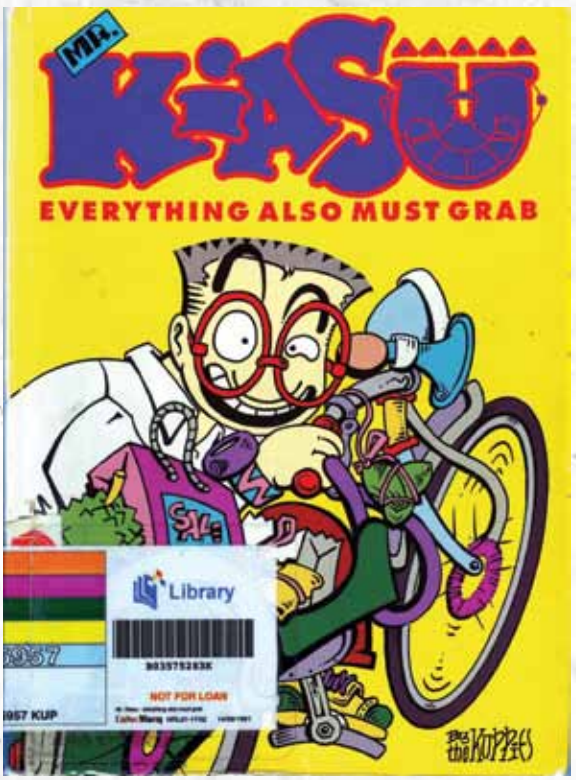
and avoids the few childhood friends he has. In the end, he "escapes" into a canvas he is drawing, to be with the dream girl who exists only in his mind.

The characters Khoo favours in his stories are marginal figures, people who are downtrodden in life. He wrote on the back cover of *Unfortunate Lives*:

"The human personality has never ceased to fascinate me with all its complexities and charms. I am concerned about the welfare of the individual, the little man who awakens each morning to find solace in his life. These are the characters I care for and cherish … The dreamers and those who long for what they have lost."

In Khoo's stories, in order to survive, one either has to escape from reality into art like in "The Canvas Environment" or into the past like the protagonist of "Memories of Youth". In the latter story, a middle-aged man is fired from his mundane job. He visits his old neighbourhood and meets his younger self and is reminded of the dreams he once had and the disappointment that his life has become.



Such bleakness begs the question: why the pessimism when things were turning around for the arts and the nation was in good shape? The answer lies in the last story of *Unfortunate Lives*, "State of Oppression". One of the shortest stories in the book, it narrates, in the form of letters, the life of an old woman who has been detained without trial for 40 years in a South African country. Imprisoned for her political beliefs, she refuses to give in to the oppression of the state. In Khoo's drawing, the character looks Chinese.

When Khoo studied at the United World College in the early 1980s, his art teacher was Teo Eng Seng, who influenced him a lot. In 1987, Teo's sister, Teo Soh Lung, was arrested as one of the "Marxist Conspirators". Khoo wrote a story about her detention but changed the setting of the story to South Africa.[5]

Khoo did not draw many comics after this. He went on to become an internationally-acclaimed filmmaker, with works like *Mee Pok Man* and *Be With Me*. But many of the stories he told in his films and the characters he created on screen had their origins in the hard luck tales of *Unfortunate Lives*.

In his introduction to Joe Sacco's *Palestine* (Fantagraphics Books, 2002), Edward Said, the late cultural critic, said: "I don't remember when exactly I read my first comic book, but I do remember exactly how liberated and subversive I felt as a result." Comic books have that effect and lend themselves to social criticism and satire.

1990s — *Mr Kiasu*

Kiasu, according to the *Coxford Singlish Dictionary*, is Hokkien for to be "afraid of losing".[6] Being kiasu often leads Singaporeans to behave ungraciously, such as rushing into Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) trains without waiting for other passengers to exit. Despite the fact that Singaporeans are not proud of such behaviour, it is also something good-naturedly laughed about. It took three young men who met during their national service days to bring this to national attention and allow Singaporeans to recognise this unpleasant trait in themselves.

One year after Khoo's *Unfortunate Lives* premiered at the Singapore Book Fair, Johnny Lau, James Suresh and Lim Yu Cheng released the first *Mr Kiasu* book, "Everything I Also Want", at the same event to great success. The first print run was 3,000 and the book sold out within weeks.[7]

One of the main reasons for the success of the comic was that its creators struck a chord with the 1990s zeitgeist. The early 1990s was a time when money was easily made at the stock and property markets in Singapore. The mood was one of much optimism both locally and internationally. The Berlin Wall had come down. The "evil empire" that was the Soviet Union had collapsed. The international coalition force led by the United States had successfully ended Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait. In Singapore, the economy had rebounded after the 1985 recession. Lee Kuan Yew had handed over the reins of power to Goh Chok Tong. It was a smooth transition and we were all ready for The Next Lap.

Mr Kiasu epitomised the typical Singaporean of the early 1990s. Short, stumpy and bespectacled (looking somewhat like its artist, Lim Yu Cheng), Mr Kiasu was brash, obnoxious and a diehard bargain hunter always on the lookout for discounts, free samples, and the best deals.

The character of Mr Kiasu was meant to make fun of Singaporeans' fear of losing out and their desire to be Number One in everything. His creators were aware that mainstream publishers did not want to publish their first book because the character projected an unflattering image of Singaporeans. But the other reason why they went into self-publishing was that they feared losing control of their character.[8] In other words, they were

being kiasu themselves. The Kuppies, as Mr Kiasu's creators called themselves, promoted this negative trait of Singaporeans and ended up being very well-off. Such a trend reflected the heady economic climate of the 1990s.

The Mr Kiasu character expanded into a brand with merchandising galore — there was a radio show, magazines, a regular strip in *The Sunday Times*, McDonald's meals, a TV show, a CD, and a musical. In 1993, Mr Kiasu recorded an annual turnover of $800,000 from merchandising. A year later, Kiasu Corners were set up at 7-Eleven stores islandwide.[9] By that time, the Kuppies had signed up to 40 licences for their character.[10]

But there was already a backlash. In 1993, *The Straits Times* held an essay competition for National Day and many readers wrote in to condemn kiasu behaviour. Forum letters to *The Straits Times* also said that McDonald's Kiasu Burgers left a bad taste in the mouth because of the way they mocked society.[11]

But the going remained good for the Kuppies. Up to 1998, a new *Mr Kiasu* book was released almost every year like clockwork. They were bestsellers, which put paid to the argument that Singaporeans hated Mr Kiasu; how could they when they were still lapping it up? The bestsellers in a country reflect its national character. We were buying and consuming ghost stories and *Mr Kiasu* books, which said something about what we wanted for entertainment. Mr Kiasu was a product of its time and its demise had everything to do with the times. The 1997 Asian financial crisis was a wake-up call that the good times were over. The following year, *The Straits Times* reported that the Mr Kiasu merchandising company had gone into debt.

The eighth and final book of the *Mr Kiasu* series, "Everything Also Act Blur", was released in 1998. The death knell was heard in a parliamentary speech made by then Minister for Education Teo Chee Hean: "Let the icon of the Kiasu Singaporean fade into 20th century history, and in its place emerge the Active Singapore — the Singaporean of the 21st century."[12]

So how does the *Mr Kiasu* series read after all these years? One thing that will strike you is that Mr Kiasu is not as hateful as the media then made him out to be. He is rather

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Display of comics collection at a public library.

The National Library Board started building its comics collection in 1999 with the opening of the Library@Orchard on the top floor of Ngee Ann City. The idea for starting such a collection came out of a desire to offer something different at the new library in the heart of Orchard Road, and capturing the youth market was a key consideration. Following the successful introduction of comics in the Library@Orchard, comics collections were rolled out at other public libraries islandwide and the genre has steadily risen in popularity among library users.

From 2006 to 2010, manga series such as *Ranma* by Rumiko Takahashi and *Zatch Bell!* by Makoto Raiku, and *Case Closed* by Gosho Aoyama dominated the top 30 most-read lists in the earlier years together with a smattering of English titles such as *Garfield* and *Hellboy*. However, in 2009 and 2010, English-language comics such as *The Amazing Spider-Man*, *The Mighty Avengers*, and game-based adaptations like *World of Warcraft* began appearing in the lists of popular comics.

Besides building its print collection, the National Library Board has also been offering comics electronically through databases such as I-Manga and OverDrive, which are available from its eResources website (http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg). Although the Library@Orchard closed in 2007, comics have become a staple of the National Library Board's collection.

-- Sebastian Song, Lynn Koh, Roy See and Reena Kandoth, National Library Board

likeable, if irritating. He doesn't win all the time and his kiasu-ness often lands him in trouble. Of course, he doesn't learn, which makes him truly a comic book character. The books score high points in their digs at the way Singaporeans behave. The second *Mr Kiasu* book published in 1991, "Everything Also Must Grab", made fun of the people who refused to give up their seats to the elderly on MRT trains — the "sleeping beauty", the "absorbed" newspaper reader and the fake old man (Mr Kiasu disguises himself as one to ensure that he need not give up his seat on the train). Today we still see such antisocial behaviour on MRT trains.

Conclusion

If *Unfortunate Lives* represents the artistic potential of comics to reflect real lives and social concerns, issues that also characterise more recent comics like Dave Chua and Koh Hong Teng's *Gone Case* and Troy Chin's *The Resident Tourist*, then *Mr Kiasu* highlights the commercial viability of doing comics in Singapore. This viability is further underscored by the current success of Sonny Liew, who makes a more than decent living by drawing for DC and Marvel Comics, and also that of Otto Fong and his *Adventures in Science* series.

Both *Unfortunate Lives* and *Mr Kiasu* present a slice of the political and social milieu of Singapore in the late 1980s and 1990s. The Singapore Memory Project, spearheaded by the National Library Board, was launched last year to capture and document the memories of Singapore and Singaporeans. Comic books are a natural medium to do just that.

The author acknowledges with thanks the contributions of Associate Professor Ian Gordon, Department of History, National University of Singapore in reviewing this article.

ENDNOTES

1 For example, see my article on the significance of Elvis Presley in Singapore 1964. Lim, C. J. (2007, August 29). Elvis and Singapore. *Citizen Historian*. Retrieved October 26, 2011, from http://citizenhistorian.com/2007/08/29/elvis-and-singapore/

2 Disclosure: this recreation was curated by Foo Kwee Horng, Koh Nguang How, Lai Chee Kien and I. Foo, K. H., Koh, N. H., & Lim, C. T. (2006). A brief history of woodcuts in Singapore. *BiblioAsia*, 2(3), 30-34. Retrieved October 26, 2011, from http://libguides.nl.sg/content.php?pid=103087&sid=775062. The original exhibition was held at the old National Library at Stamford Road in 1966. For more information, see *Imprints of the Past: Remembering the 1966 Woodcut Exhibition* (2006), found at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library.

3 Nureza Ahmad (2004, May 10). *First multilingual play*. Retrieved October 26, 2011, from http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_132_2005-01-26.html. In 1988, the Ong Teng Cheong Advisory Council on Art and Culture completed its extended study and recommended the setting up of the National Arts Council and the building of the Esplanade.

4 In a recent exchange, Khoo said his favourite story is the Modern Man, a Twilight Zone type story where an arrogant yuppie was transported to the past, chased by dinosaurs and finally eaten by cavemen who digested and shat him out. Things can't get more literal than this.

5 Teo has written about her experiences being detained without trial in Beyond The Blue Gate (2010). Lim, C. T. (2010, June 27). *Unfortunate lives still* [Web log comment].Retrieved October 26, 2011, from http://singaporecomix.blogspot.com/2010/06/unfortunate-lives-still.html

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An Experimental Study

Using Graphic Novels to Teach English Language in Secondary Schools in Singapore

Clarence **Lee**

Novelist

This page
A page from the graphic novel *Gone Case* by Dave Chua and Koh Hong Teng. (Reproduced with permission from Dave Chua and Koh Hong Teng.)

In the classroom, books can be used as media for transmitting knowledge, studied as objects for their own value — as might happen in a literature lesson — or take pupils on a journey with their imagination. Educators have often debated about introducing new books into the classroom because they have different views as to which books fulfil those three roles well, and the debates often reveal what books are considered culturally or politically acceptable (Carter, 2008, pp. 52–55). Most educators have shunned graphic novels because they supposedly lack merit as a medium for knowledge or skills transmission or are unfit for study as artistic objects (ibid., pp. 49, 54). But do these assumptions have any rational basis? To see if this is the case in Singapore, a study was conducted in Singapore to look at the effectiveness of using graphic novels to teach descriptive writing in English Language lessons in a neighbourhood secondary school.

Graphic novels — also popularly known as comics — comprise pictures and words.

"The illustrations enrich and extend the text … readers must not only decode the words and illustrations but must also identify events between the visual sequences … Graphic novels often address the same issues that can be found in the traditional types of literature." (Bucher & Manning, 2004, p. 67)

Children and adults have been reading them for over a century because they combine words and visual images to stimulate the imagination in ways that mere words are probably unable to do.

Most educators have been using books as media to assist in the teaching of skills or content. Books such as classical novels or textbooks have always dominated education syllabi because they are safe choices as they have been used by many generations of teachers and are perceived to have more direct instructional value. The content of textbooks is similar to that which appears in national or international high-stakes examinations. Literature texts may be selected because educators believe that they are precious objects that should be studied for their cultural value or because they contain some significant moral messages. A booklist published annually by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate determines the texts taught to Secondary Three, Four and Five students in Singapore. The literature texts are often not written by Singaporeans but by more esteemed writers who are usually from the West. Although the teaching profession deals with the young on a daily basis, it is notoriously resistant to renewal. Shakespeare, for example, has remained in many education syllabi for as long as anyone can remember.

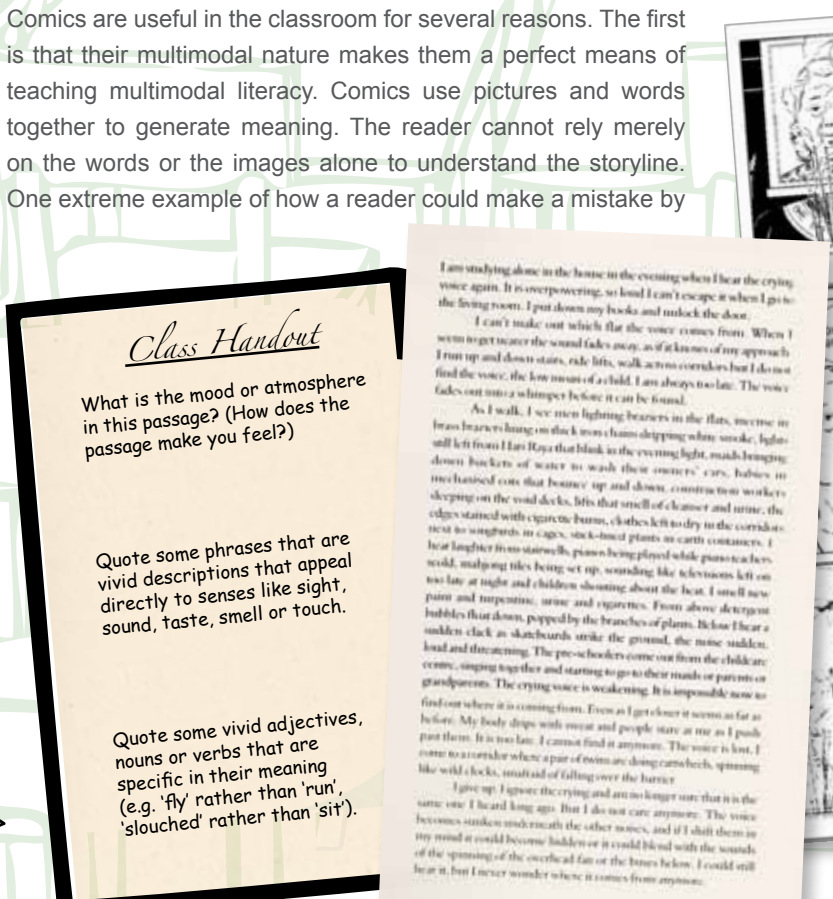
Literature Review

On the other hand, teachers tend not to use graphic novels because they are seen to be less useful for teaching. Educators perceive them as merely focusing on the supernatural and/or horror, and they are merely "expressions of the male power fantasy" or tasty morsels that will lure students away from reading other supposedly more serious genres of literature (Bucher & Manning, 2004, p. 68). Yet there are examples of graphic novels that have received critical acclaim from literary critics. *Maus*, which is Art Spiegelman's retelling of the Holocaust, has won the Pulitzer Prize; Barbara Brown, a high school teacher in America, used the book to teach race relations and to help students understand the core text in their literature syllabus, William Faulkner's *Light in August* (Carter, 2007, p. 51).

Many pupils read graphic novels (Majid & Tan, 2007) yet there seems to be a dichotomy between what they voluntarily read outside of school and the books that teachers use in class. In spite of this, many educators who are willing to go beyond the normal scope of accepted literature in the classroom have often found that using books that engage the students' imagination and interest yields positive results (Downey, 2009, p. 184). Librarians like Michele Goman, Michael R. Lavin and Stephen Weiner have shown that students are very interested in graphic novels (Carter, 2007, p. 50). Research conducted by Frey and Fisher (2004, pp. 19–25) showed the effectiveness of using graphic novels to teach low-ability ninth graders — equivalent to Secondary Three in Singapore — English in an urban American high school. Scholars such as Stephen Cary, Stephen D. Krashen and Jun Liu have conducted research that demonstrated how sequential art like graphic novels aids learners of English as a Second Language (Carter, 2007, p. 50). Many students in Singapore can be considered to belong to this category since they do not usually communicate in Standard English and often use a different language, such as Chinese, Malay or Tamil, when at home.

Examinations will change in the next few years after the 2010 English syllabus has been rolled out in schools. It clearly demands that students be taught the necessary skills for reading multimodal texts (MOE, 2008, p. 9). These are texts that combine words with images, moving images or sound. It is imperative that our students develop multimodal literacy skills because these multimodal texts are what everyone, including adults, has to deal with on a day to day basis in every aspect of our lives in both work and play (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 3). For example, most of our media is delivered via the internet, television, radio, newspapers or magazines where words always interact with pictures or sounds to produce meaning. Unfortunately, teachers in Singapore are not yet familiar with teaching multimodal literacy and school literacy practices remain based on the printed word (Kramer-Dahl, 2005, p. 233). If our students are to be expected to become independent, critical thinkers who can analyse these multimodal texts instead of taking them at face value, then we have to make the teaching of multimodal literacy explicit instead of assuming, as we have in the past, either that students will naturally develop multimodal literacy outside of school or that verbal literacy is the only important literacy.

Comics are useful in the classroom for several reasons. The first is that their multimodal nature makes them a perfect means of teaching multimodal literacy. Comics use pictures and words together to generate meaning. The reader cannot rely merely on the words or the images alone to understand the storyline. One extreme example of how a reader could make a mistake by



relying only on the words or the pictures is when the words and pictures have divergent effects. This can create a certain kind of irony and it is often used to great effect in political cartoons, which incidentally, are already part of the History 'O' Levels examination. Teaching graphic novels with a cross-curricular or interdisciplinary approach can help students make connections between their learning in multiple subjects, with English and History being just two of the more pertinent examples (Carter, 2007, p. 51).

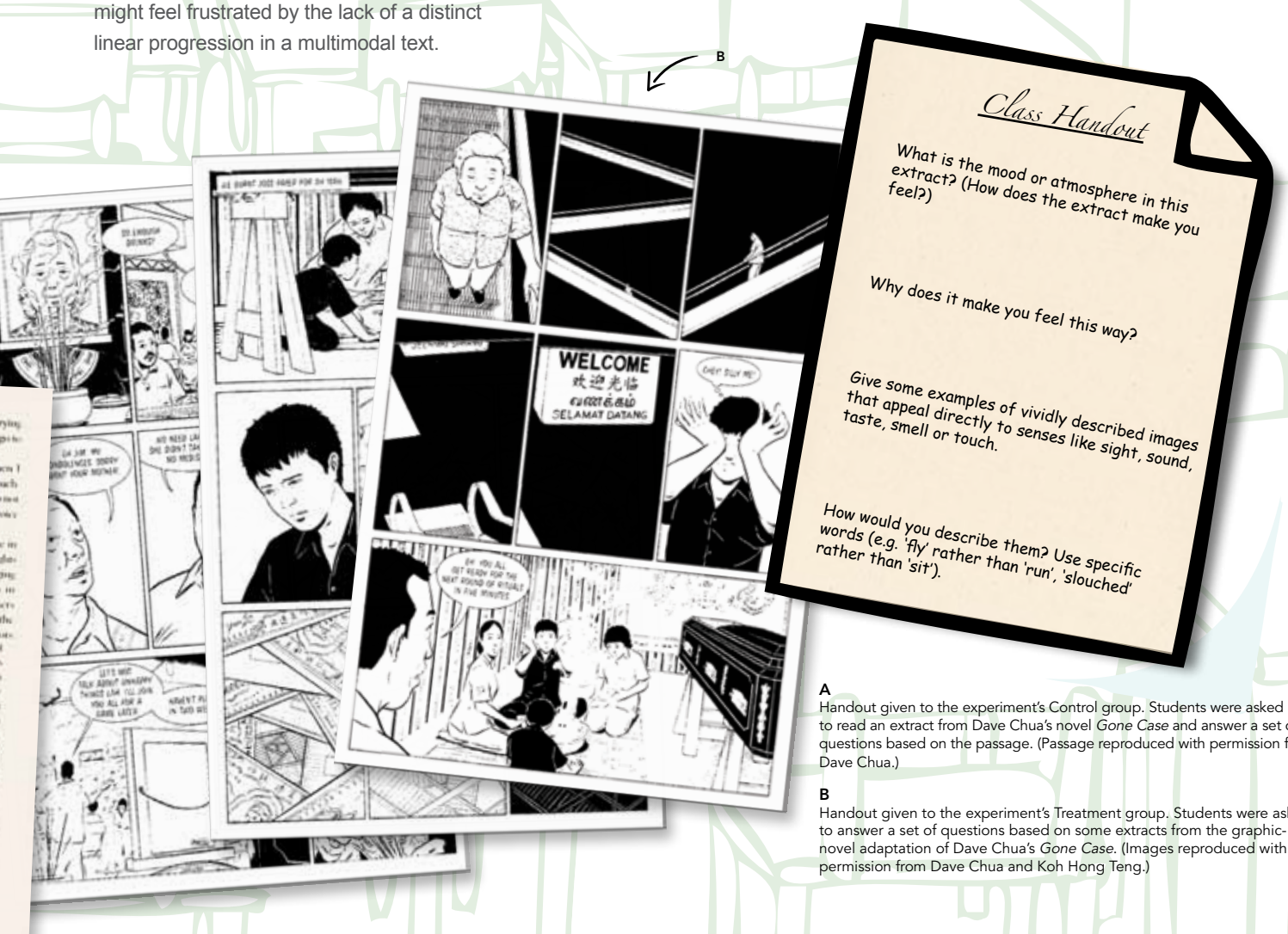
Many students already read comics as they are a part of popular culture (Majid & Tan, 2007). Texts with elements of popular culture seem less foreign to the students than the verbal texts often used in schools and can engage the interest and intellect of students better (Grainger, Goouch & Lambirth, 2005, p. 39). Popular culture in and of itself need not necessarily be a bait to lead students on to so-called legitimate works of art, though, for there is much matter for analysis in advertisements, blockbuster films, horror novels and, even the subject of our investigation, graphic novels (ibid., p. 40).

Reading comics actually requires more complex cognitive skills, since readers have to deal with the interplay of words and pictures and attempt to construct logical transitions from one panel of a comic to another (Schwarz, 2002, p. 263; Bucher & Manning, 2004, p. 68). In spite of this complexity, many young pupils who have grown up reading multimodal texts like comics and webpages might actually already possess the necessary skills to manage this complexity whereas adults who are used to traditional verbal texts might feel frustrated by the lack of a distinct linear progression in a multimodal text.

Dual-Coding Theory proposes that our brains are reliant on not just verbal processes to produce meaning but on a complex interplay between non-verbal and verbal faculties (Sadoski & Paivio, 1994). Even when reading a purely verbal text that has only words and no accompanying pictures or sounds, our brains create mental images that aid us in imagination and comprehension. The opposite is true when we view pictures without words. In other words, to neglect the training of the visual faculties of our brain with the visual images found in multimodal texts would be to forsake an important aspect of our minds that helps us decode texts that contain only words.

Furthermore, according to theories of multiple intelligences, there are many pupils who learn more readily through listening, kinesthetic action or viewing images rather than through reading verbal texts, and it is the visual learners who will benefit substantially from the use of multimodal texts like comics (Carter, 2008, pp. 48–49). Our education system has given verbal learners higher esteem for centuries, while the visual, aural and kinesthetic learners have been put at a disadvantage and scorned for their seeming incompetence and stupidity simply because they cannot learn as readily, since schools almost exclusively depend on using words to teach pupils knowledge and skills (Jacobs, 2007, pp. 19–25).

Using multimodal texts gives pupils with different strengths a chance to interact and test their theories against each other. Visual learners are often resigned to their fate as slower learners in the education system as they see their more verbally literate



A
Handout given to the experiment's Control group. Students were asked to read an extract from Dave Chua's novel *Gone Case* and answer a set of questions based on the passage. (Passage reproduced with permission from Dave Chua.)

B
Handout given to the experiment's Treatment group. Students were asked to answer a set of questions based on some extracts from the graphic-novel adaptation of Dave Chua's *Gone Case*. (Images reproduced with permission from Dave Chua and Koh Hong Teng.)

Class Handout

Rubric: How can we create vivid descriptions to create a specific mood or atmosphere (show, don't tell)?

Was the description able to 'show', rather than 'tell'? Evaluate your partner's writing using this checklist. There are a total of 12 marks. A student can score a maximum of 4 marks in each technique.

Descriptive Technique Checklist

	Strong (4m) Shows control and skill. Many strengths evident.	Maturing (3m) Strengths outweigh weaknesses.	Emerging (2m) Isolated moments of ability. Shortcomings dominate.	Struggling (1m) Isolated moments of ability. Shortcomings dominate.
Student chooses one strong sense of mood or atmosphere and sticks to it.	Exceptionally clear; focused on one mood. Every sentence contributes to the mood.	Most sentences are focused on one mood.	The mood is somewhat unclear. Most sentences don't contribute to the mood.	The descriptions don't focus on creating any sense of mood.
Student uses vivid descriptive sentences that appeal directly to senses like sight, sound, taste, smell or touch.	Student always uses descriptions that appeal to all senses.	Student mostly uses descriptions that appeal to most senses.	Student only pays attention to some senses, not all, OR the student does not use much description that appeals to the senses.	The sentences simply 'tell' us what is there but there is no detail that appeals to our senses.
Student uses vivid adjectives, nouns or verbs that are specific in their meaning (e.g. 'fly' rather than 'run', 'slouched' rather than 'sit').	Student always uses exceptionally precise words.	Student mostly uses precise words.	Some words are precise but most of them are general.	The words are too general and not precise.

Total Score: / 12
Give Your Comments:

C
Checklist given to help students evaluate each other's writing.

peers constantly perform well while they find the verbal texts used for every lesson insurmountable. With multimodal texts like comics, pupils can collaborate and pupils whose visual literacy had constantly been ignored can now play a more active role in class by helping their classmates. This sort of collaborative learning, which can include elements of peer teaching, can foster a culture of democracy in schools where pupils recognise each other's strengths and learn that they have to rely on each other (Chai et al., 2011, p. 44).

Research Methodology

The research was undertaken by teachers of Yishun Secondary School. It can be classified as an Action Research project since the researchers are the actual practitioners on the ground who are looking to improve the knowledge base of their professional community. Although research conducted by academics is more common, Action Research has a long history as a valid research methodology in the social sciences, especially in the field of education research. It has contributed much knowledge to both the communities of academics as well as those of professional practitioners (Jungck, 2001, p. 340). When conducted in the proper manner, the findings of an Action Research project do not merely have local relevance but can be generalised for wider populations (Hui & Grossman, 2008, p. 4).

Twenty-three male and 13 female Secondary Two pupils from the Express stream in Yishun Secondary School participated in this experiment. The hypothesis was that using graphic novels would have a greater effect on teaching pupils descriptive writing skills in an English Language lesson compared to using only a purely verbal text. The pupils had previously learnt the basics of descriptive writing earlier in the year that the research was conducted but not the more advanced descriptive skills that this lesson covered. A pre-test was first conducted in which the students had to write a brief response to the question, "Write a description of your neighbourhood to convey a particular mood." This was chosen as it eliminated the possibility of assessment bias since it made no assumptions about prior knowledge and no student would be at a disadvantage (Witte, 2011, p. 108).

This pre-test was marked using a 12-mark rubric with distinct numerical grades for each fulfilment of the desired skills of descriptive writing. Rubrics contain criteria and performance scales that help pupils or assessors define the important components of a performance or product. Analytic rubrics divide the criteria into separate scoring sections, whereas holistic rubrics combine the criteria to give a general grade (Witte, 2011, p. 151). In this case, an analytic rubric was used since both the pupil as well as the assessor had to be absolutely sure which particular descriptive skills were areas of weakness or strength. The rubric was designed based on those for creative writing (Witte, 2011, p. 193; Hanson, 2009, p. 106).

To satisfy the conditions for a true experimental design, we had to assign the pupils randomly to one Control and one Treatment

group, and to make the groups as equivalent as possible. Stratified random sampling of the students was conducted, dividing them into the two groups using their pre-test scores so groups would have an identical mix of students with similar scores (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 100). Therefore, it can be assumed that the samples of both groups were mechanically matched and thus equal in their proficiency in descriptive writing (ibid., p. 236).

Between the pre-test and the day of the lesson which included the post-test — which was conducted a week after the pre-test — the pupils were not taught descriptive writing so as to reduce the risk of maturation of the pupils' writing abilities. On the day of the intervention, the pupils were divided into their groups, with the Control group being taught texts from Dave Chua's novel *Gone Case* (Chua, 2002) which received the Singapore Literature Prize Commendation Award in 1996 (Lee, 2006). The Treatment group was taught with a graphic-novel adaptation of *Gone Case*, also written by Dave Chua and illustrated by Koh Hong Teng (Chua & Koh, 2010). These texts were chosen because they were closely related in terms of subject matter, namely life in Housing and Development Board neighbourhoods, which incidentally were where most of the pupils lived. The local setting did not demand the knowledge of foreign slang and it engaged the interest of the students who did not have many encounters with Singaporean literature.

Immediately after the lesson, pupils in both groups were given a post-test where they wrote brief descriptive responses to the same question given in the pre-test. They were assessed with the same rubric. A survey was conducted after the post-test to find out what the pupils thought about the lesson.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis of Pre-test and Post-test Results

Using the conventional p-value of $p \leq 0.05$, a paired t-test comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of the Treatment group shows a statistically significant gain ($p=0.002$). However, a paired t-test comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of the Control group shows no statistically significant gain ($p=0.348$) (Table 1).

The results of this independent t-test show that the mean for the improvement of the Control group was 0.118, while the mean for that of the Treatment group was 0.737. Considering that the highest possible score is only 12 marks, the difference of 0.619 or 5.16% is relatively large (Table 2).

The hypothesis predicts that the Treatment group would show a greater improvement and that is why we analysed the scores using a one-tailed p-value. Although some would argue that the p score of 0.053 is slightly above the conventionally desired 0.05, it is close enough that we can reject the null hypothesis, which is that graphic novels would have no larger effect on teaching descriptive writing compared to verbal texts. To not reject the null hypothesis in a case like this would be to commit a Type II error, which is to fail to reject a null hypothesis that is false, since "there is nothing sacred about the customary .05 significance level" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 231). The 0.053 significance level is largely due to the small sample size and a larger sample size is expected to yield a significance level below 0.05. As our results can be considered statistically significant, we can not only accept the hypothesis that using graphic novels had indeed helped in teaching the pupils in the experiment descriptive writing skills more than using only normal verbal texts but also generalise these results to infer that using graphic novels can help students learn descriptive writing better than using verbal texts.

Qualitative Analysis of Survey Responses

The responses to the survey were summarised and analysed (Table 3).

The survey shows that while students in both groups found the verbal text and the multimodal text from the graphic novel interesting, a larger proportion of students within the Treatment group, which used the graphic novel, agreed that the lesson helped them achieve the learning objectives of improving their

Table 1. Paired T-Test Results Comparing Pre-test and Post-test Scores

	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Number of Observations (Number of Pupils)	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	P (One tail)
Control	5.176	5.294	17	1.219	0.296	0.348
Treatment	5.053	5.789	19	0.991	0.227	0.002

Table 2. Independent Sample Test Results on Improvement Scores

	Mean of Improvement Scores	Number of Observations (Number of Pupils)	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	T	df	P (One tail)
Control	0.118	17	1.219	0.296			
Treatment	0.737	19	0.991	0.227	-1.660	31	0.053

descriptive writing (Questions 5, 6 and 7). The responses included, "Through pictures, I can learn better", "I like the 'Singapore flavour' in the comics" and "It helped me to use imagination to include inside the novel. I now can make my novel more interesting and real". While the survey sample is small and we cannot easily make generalisations on larger populations based on this data, we believe that it can be used to give some indication that the use of graphic novels engaged the imagination of pupils in the Treatment group and helped them improve between the pre-test and post-test more than the Control group did.

Limitations

There were a few limitations to the experiment. Only one class of pupils was available for the experiment. The sample size of 36 pupils fits the class size for most Singaporean classrooms but to generalise with this small group size is an issue. The research had to be conducted within the school's existing schedule and so a few days after the pre-test, the groups were separated and taught by different teachers — each with two years of teaching experience — in two separate classrooms at the same time. Two pupils from the Control group were absent on the day of the post-test. The survey had to be conducted a few days after the post-test due to schedule constraints. In addition, the results collected for the Treatment group contained one additional response because this pupil did not report that he had been absent during the lesson and post-test, and the anonymous nature of the survey prevented the researchers from identifying and removing his response from the consolidated responses.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that graphic novels can be a useful tool to aid learning in the Singaporean classroom. There are significant pedagogical implications. Multimodal texts like graphic novels should not replace traditional verbal texts completely, but they can be used as complements to traditional texts in education (Carter, 2007, p. 51). Considering that students need to develop literacies in reading multimodal texts, educators who wish to meet this need by using graphic novels need to know how to read graphic novels critically and learn how to choose the right resources that readers will appreciate and that will achieve learning objectives (Bucher & Manning, 2004, p. 68). Schools cannot assume that educators will be able to achieve this without training and the provision of resources in the school like a library of graphic novels.

There are implications outside of the classroom as well. Educators and public libraries have a symbiotic relationship and if public libraries stocked more graphic novels, pupils and educators

Table 3. Summary of Survey Responses

Question	Strongly Agree (Control)	Strongly Agree (Treatment)	Agree (Control)	Agree (Treatment)	Neutral (Control)	Neutral (Treatment)	Disagree (Control)	Disagree (Treatment)
The lesson materials…								
1 …helped me use my imagination to form a mental image of the story	4 (23%)	11 (55%)	10 (59%)	7 (35%)	3 (18%)	1 (5%)	0	0
2 …were interesting	3 (18%)	6 (30%)	9 (53%)	14 (70%)	5 (29%)	0	0	0
3 …made me want to read more comics/ graphic novels	3 (18%)	8 (40%)	5 (29%)	7 (35%)	5 (29%)	3 (15%)	1 (6%)	1 (5%)
4 …made me want to read more novels	2 (12%)	6 (30%)	4 (24%)	4 (20%)	10 (59%)	5 (25%)	1 (6%)	1 (5%)
After this lesson, I am better able to…								
5 …use a strong sense of mood in descriptive writing	2 (12%)	7 (35%)	10 (59%)	9 (45%)	5 (29%)	3 (15%)	0	1 (5%)
6 …use all my senses (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch) in descriptive writing	3 (18%)	7 (35%)	11 (65%)	11 (55%)	3 (18%)	1 (5%)	0	1 (5%)
7 …use vivid descriptive words with specific meanings in descriptive writing	2 (12%)	7 (35%)	12 (70%)	12 (60%)	3 (18%)	1 (5%)	0	0
	2 (12%)	7 (35%)	6 (35%)	4 (20%)	8 (47%)	5 (25%)	0	1 (5%)

Total respondents: 17 (Control group), 20 (Treatment group). Percentages are rounded to the nearest unit.

would have better access to them and be able to read them for pleasure or use them in the classroom. The lack of access to graphic novels, which tend to be relatively more expensive than verbal texts, is one difficulty that educators face when trying to include graphic novels in a curriculum. Schools and libraries can also convince parents of the educational value of graphic novels and reassure them that these can help their children cultivate good reading habits as well as multimodal literacies.

We often distrust the products of popular culture such as comics that children seek voluntarily and enjoy outside of the curriculum (these also include film and animation). These traditional assumptions about how certain genres or text types are useless for education must be reassessed. The research literature has shown that the graphic novel can be an effective medium for teaching knowledge and skills as well as a literary object for in-depth study. The research project at a Singapore school appears to confirm these findings. Part of the graphic novel's effectiveness arises from its potential for engaging the interest and imagination of the reader. With the right lesson design, any text that can bring the reader on a journey can be used. If we ignore the descriptive and narrative power of graphic novels and continue to teach pupils the way our generation and theirs have always been taught (i.e. with texts showing nothing but words), then it should be no surprise if they grow up unable to effectively decipher neither pictures nor even words.

ee ment)	Strongly Disagree (Control)	Strongly Disagree (Treatment)	Non-response (Control)	Non-response (Treatment)
	0	0	0	1 (5%)
	0	0	0	0
	1 (6%)	1 (5%)	2 (12%)	0
	0	1 (5%)	0	3 (15%)
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0
	0	3 (15%)	1 (6%)	0

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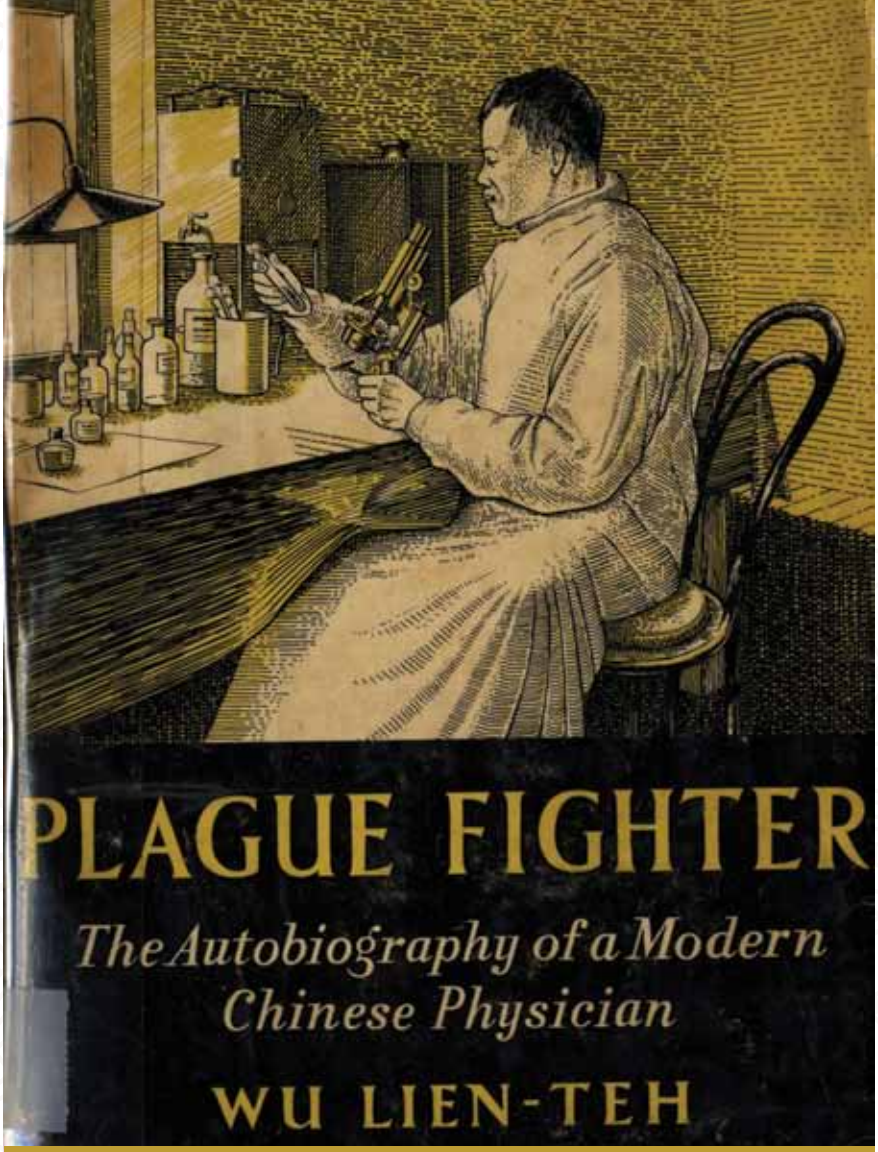
A Life Less Ordinary

Dr Wu Lien-Teh the Plague Fighter

Wee Tong Bao

Reference Librarian
NL Heritage
National Library Board



In November 2010, the family of the late Dr Wu Lien-Teh donated a collection of some 65 items to the National Library of Singapore. They include publications on his life and works as well as some 140 photographs dating back to the early 1910s. The donation also marked the 50th anniversary of Wu's death; he passed away in 1960 at the age of 81.

A
Photograph of young Dr Wu Lien-Teh which appears together with a write-up on him in the 1925 publication, *Biographies of Prominent Chinese* (Shanghai: Biographical Publishing Company Inc,p.157) .

Dr Wu Lien-Teh

Wu was born in Penang in 1879. His birth name was 'Ng Lean-Tuck' (伍连德, meaning "five united virtues", romanised according to its Cantonese pronunciation). His father, Ng Khee-Hok, was an emigrant from Taishan, Guangzhou (China) and he ran a successful goldsmith business in Penang where he married Lam Choy-Fan in 1857. They had eight children and Wu was the fourth child.

Wu received his early education at the Penang Free School. In 1896 the young Wu won the only Queen's Scholarship of that year after a competitive examination for boys in the Straits Settlements.

The scholarship enabled Wu to be admitted to Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, for medical studies. He was the first Chinese medical student at Cambridge and the second to be admitted to Cambridge, the first being Song Ong Siang.

Wu obtained First Class Honours at Cambridge and received the gold medal for clinical medicine in 1902. He won a travelling scholarship which allowed him to pursue research work in Liverpool, Paris, parts of Germany and the Malay States. During this period, he produced scholarly papers on tetanus, beri-beri, aortic worms and malaria.

A

At age 24, Wu earned his medical degree and returned to the Straits Settlements in 1903. He joined the newly established Institute for Medical Research in Kuala Lumpur for one year where he conducted research on beri-beri, then a killer disease. Thereafter, he spent the next three years (1904 to 1907) in private practice in Penang. It was also during this time that Wu became occupied with social issues of the day and got passionately involved in social reform work through the influence of another prominent doctor, Dr Lim Boon Keng.

Wu was particularly zealous in the campaign against opium addiction. At the age of 25 in 1904, he became the President and Physician-in-Chief of the Penang Anti-Opium Association which he had founded. Through this association, he raised funds to provide free lodging, food, medication and treatment for all addicts who needed help. Two years later in March 1906, Wu organised the first Anti-Opium Conference of the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States. The Conference was held in Ipoh and attended by more than 2,000 representatives from various trades and professions.

It was also through Lim that Wu met his first wife, Ruth Huang Shu Chiung, the sister of Dr Lim's wife. Ruth was the second daughter of Wong Nai-Siong, a noted Chinese scholar who played a key role in the establishment of a Foochow settlement in Sarawak. They married in 1905, making Wu and Lim brothers-in-law. Wu and Ruth had three sons: Chang-Keng, Chang-Fu and Chang-Ming. Ruth, unfortunately, fell victim to tuberculosis and passed away in 1937. Wu later married Lee Shu-Chen (Marie), with whom he raised three daughters and two sons: Yu-Lin, Yu-Chen, Chang-Sheng, and Chang-Yun and Yu-Chu.

In 1908, Wu became the Vice-Director of the Imperial Army Medical College in Tientsin, China at the invitation of Yuan Shih-Kai (who was then the Grand Councillor of China) to train doctors for the Chinese Army. He used the romanised version of his name in Mandarin "Wu Lien-Teh" from then onwards.

On 19 December 1910, Foreign Office (China) sent Wu to investigate a mysterious disease that was killing hundreds. A bacteriologist by training, he "naturally jumped at the opportunity, and after two days' preparation, proceeded to Manchuria with a senior student of (his) from the Army Medical College". [1]

In his book *A Treatise on Pneumonic Plague*, Wu recounted how the journey took him three days and nights on the South Manchurian and Chinese Eastern Railways. When he arrived late on Christmas Eve, the temperature was varying between -25 deg C and -35 deg C, "much more severe than anything (he) had known".[2]

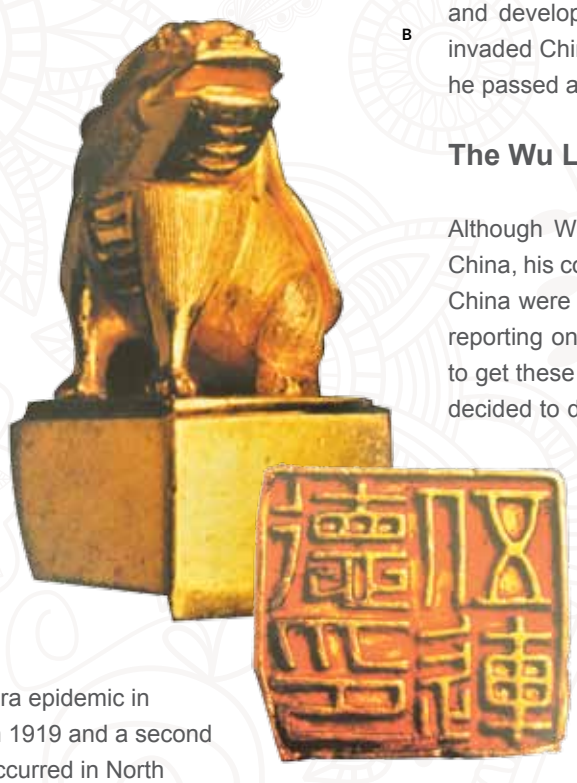
Early cases of the plague were reported in the first week of November 1910. Initially, only a few victims were identified. However, from the beginning of December, things took a sudden turn for the worse with up to fifteen deaths recorded daily.

Wu, as the Commander-in-Chief of the anti-plague organisation, had effective control over doctors, police, military and civil officials. To curb the plague from spreading, he sought an Imperial edict to cremate more than 3,000 corpses that had been lying unburied on the frozen ground. In the book *Plague Fighter: The Autobiography of a Modern Chinese Physician*, it was said that "this proved to be the turning point of the epidemic".[3]

Wu vividly remembered that the cremation took place on 31 January 1911. In his own words, "their (plague corpses) disappearance was in the eyes of the public a greater and more glorious achievement than all our other anti-plague efforts combined. From that day, the death rate steadily declined and the last case was reported on March, 1st.".[4]

The eradication of the 1910–1911 plague had a great impact on the medical future of China. In April 1911, soon after the end of

the epidemic, China held its first ever international scientific conference in Mukden, Shenyang — the International Plague Conference — which was attended by important scientists from 11 nations. In 1912, the Manchurian Plague Prevention Service was established with Wu as the Director. In 1915, the Chinese Medical Association was founded and four years later, in 1919, the Central Epidemic Bureau was established in Peking.



B

Besides quashing the 1910–1911 plague, Wu also contributed to the control of the cholera epidemic in Harbin which broke out in 1919 and a second pneumonic plague that occurred in North Manchuria and East Siberia in 1920–1921.

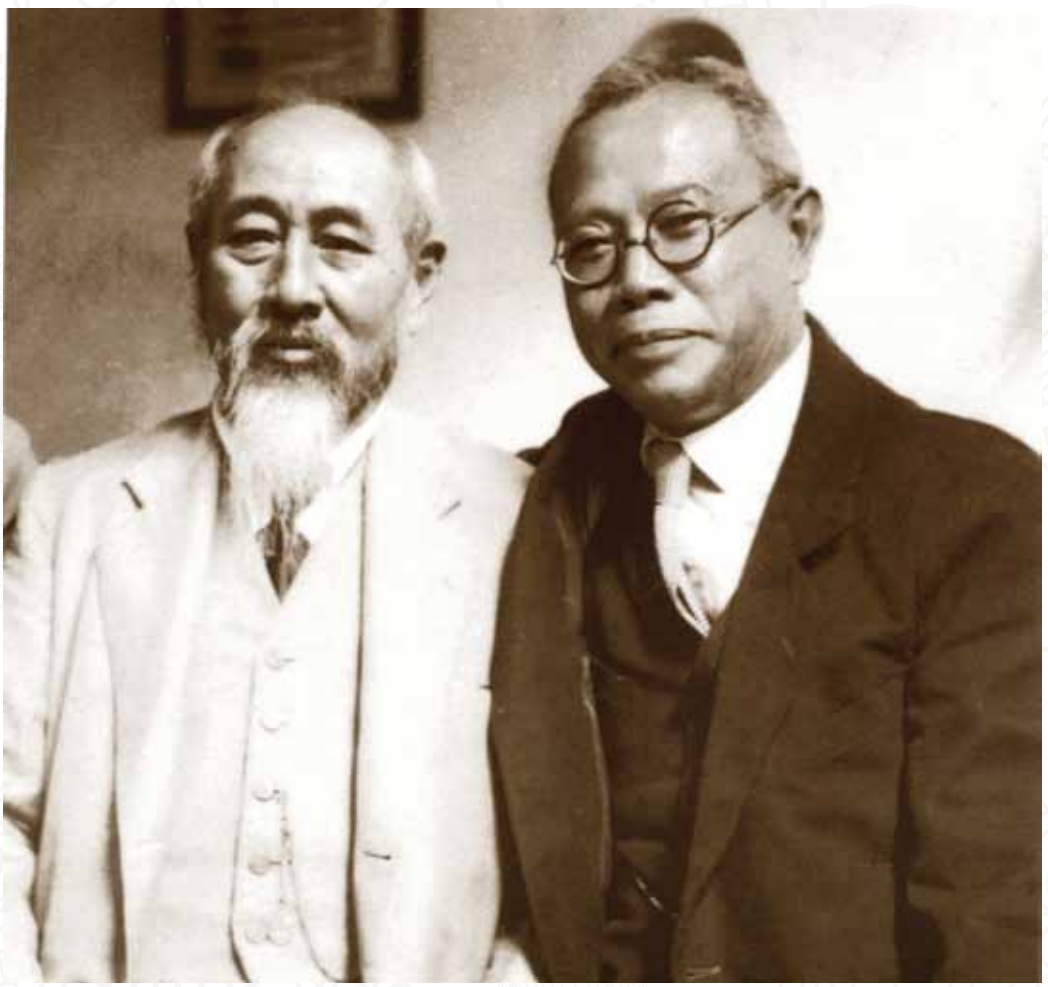
Wu's illustrious medical career in China spanned almost three decades. During this period, he represented the Chinese Government at various international conferences, both within and outside China. He also contributed much to the modernisation of China's medical services, improvements in medical education and development of quarantine control. In 1937, when Japan invaded China, Wu returned to Malaya and remained there until he passed away on 21 January 1960.

The Wu Lien-Teh Collection

Although Wu spent 23 years in Malaya since his return from China, his contributions to the development of health sciences in China were not forgotten. He received publications and articles reporting on his deeds over the years and his family continued to get these materials after he passed away. In 2010, the family decided to donate some of these materials, including Wu's own works, to the National Library of Singapore.[5]

In all, about 65 publications were donated by Wu's family. They include books, souvenir magazines, periodicals and photographs. One of the earliest publications in this donation is *Biographies of Prominent Chinese*.[6] This book, measuring 24 x 37 cm, contains 200 pages and was compiled as a result of a "growing demand for a more intimate understanding of those Chinese who contributed to the development and progress of the Chinese Republic".[7] This book was mentioned by *The Straits Times* on 15 October 2011, with the reporter writing that to-date, only two known copies exist.[8] The page that introduces Wu was reproduced in a biography by his daughter, Dr Wu Yu-Lin's *Memories of Dr Wu Lien-Teh: Plague Fighter*.[9]

There are more recent works among the donated items that honour Wu: a 1996 issue of London publication *British Medical Journal* that ran an announcement about the new book *Dr Wu Lien-Teh: The Plague Fighter*[10] and the 2006 souvenir magazine of Harbin Medical University that acknowledged his contributions.[11] In 2007,



C

B
Wu's personal seal ---- "伍连德印".

C
Wu with Dr Lim Boon Keng (left). Photograph taken in Amoy, 1936.

D
A second pneumonic plague struck North Manchuria and East Siberia, 1920-21. Wu was appointed Supreme Chief of anti-plague operations by the Governor-General of Manchuria. Photograph shows Wu (man on extreme right with no headgear) with some of his staff in Harbin, 1921.

D

preparations began for a television series in Harbin to mark the 130th anniversary of his birth.[12]

In this donation, there are also a small number of works by Wu himself. His writings often entailed years of thorough research and are still hailed as significant works in their respective fields today. Two works worth highlighting are *League of Nations, Health Organisation: A Treatise on Pneumonic Plague*[13] and *History of Chinese Medicine* 《中国医史》co-authored with Wong, K. C.[14] The first title is a firsthand account of Wu's battle against the 1910–1911 Manchuria plague. In the preface, he called the book "a labour of love".[15] The book contains in-depth research of the history, epidemiology, pathology, clinical features, infectivity, immunity and other aspects of the pneumonic plague. It took him 17 years to prepare this publication and it was duly endorsed by the United Nations.

The second title was a mammoth effort in recording the history of Chinese medicine from its early beginnings — 2690 to 1122 B.C. — till the introduction of western medicine. Wu started conceptualising this book 15 years before it was published in 1932. This epic account took two dedicated writers — Wu and Wong K. C. — to complete. The title filled a gap at that time and just four years after it was published, a second edition was released in 1936.

Among the donated items, one can also find Wu's autobiography *Plague Fighter: The Autobiography of a Modern Chinese Physician*[16] and the Chinese edition containing selective sections published in 1960.[17]

Besides Wu, his first wife Ruth was also well-educated and had published three books in the 1920s and 1930s. During her years accompanying her husband in China, Ruth decided to write on four renowned beauties in China's history: Yang Kuei Fei (Yang Gui Fei), Hsi Shih (Xi Shi), Chao Chun (Zhao Jun) and Tiao Chan (Diao Chan). However, Ruth only managed to publish books on the first three beauties before she passed away in 1937. With this donation, the National Library of Singapore received a copy of *Chao Chun: Beauty in Exile*,[18] which completes the set of early publications by Ruth. Before this, the Library only had two of the first imprints: the 1924 edition of *Yang Kuei-Fei: The Most Famous Beauty of China*[19] and *Hsi Shih: Beauty of Beauties: A Romance of Ancient China About 495–472 B.C.*[20]

Library Holdings

The donated items in this collection are assigned the location code "RCLOS" (Closed access materials). Readers who are interested in these publications can access them at Level 11 of the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, Singapore. These items can be consulted upon request at the Information Counter.

ENDNOTES

1 Wu, L. T. (1926). *A Treatise on Pneumonic Plague*. (Geneva: League of Nations Health Organization), p. v.

2 Ibid.

3 Wu, Y. L. (1995). *Memories of Dr Wu Lien-Teh: Plague Fighter.* (Singapore : World Scientific Pub.), p. 28.

4 Wu, L. T. (1926). *A Treatise on Pneumonic Plague*. (Geneva: League of Nations Health Organization), p. vii.

5 Leong, W. K. (2010). Life and works of a legendary plague fighter. *The Straits Times*, p. 31.

6 Burt, A. R., Powell, J. B. and Crow, C. (Eds.). (1925). *Biographies of Prominent Chinese* 《中华今代名人传》. Shanghai: Biographical Publishing Company Inc.

7 Burt, A. R., Powell, J. B. and Crow, C. (Eds.). (1925). *Biographies of Prominent Chinese*, Publisher's Note – unpaged.

8 Teng, A. (2011). State of the dead: Honour ancestors before it's too late. *The Straits Times*, p. D8.

9 Wu, Y. L. (1995). *Memories of Dr Wu Lien-Teh: Plague Fighter*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, p. 157.

10 *British Medical Journal* (International edition). no. 7035, vol. 315, April 1996. London: British Medical Association, p. 916.

11 马宏坤等编. (2006). 《哈尔滨医科学校80周年纪念特刊， 2006年》, trans. *Harbin Medical University 80th Anniversary souvenir magazine*, 2006.

12 德道传媒. (2009?). 哈尔滨人民纪念伍连德：暨电视剧《伍连德》项目文献集粹", trans. "Wu Lian De" TV series – dedicated to Dr Wu Lien-Teh on the 130th anniversary of his birthday.

13 Wu, L. T. (1926). *League of Nations, Health Organisation: A Treatise on Pneumonic Plague.* Geneva: Publication of the League of Nations.

14 Wong, K. C. and Wu, L. T. (1936). *History of Chinese Medicine* 《中国医史》. Shanghai: National Quarantine Service. 2nd edition.

15 Wu, L. T. (1926). *A Treatise on Pneumonic Plague.* (Geneva: League of Nations Health Organization), p. vii.

16 Wu, L. T. (1959). *Plague fighter: The autobiography of a modern Chinese physician.* Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons.

17 伍连德. (1960). 《伍连德自传》. Singapore: Singapore South Seas Society.

18 Huang, S. C. R. (1934). *Chao Chun: Beauty in exile*. Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh Limited.

19 Huang, S. C. R. (1924). *Yang Kuei-Fei: The most famous beauty of China.* Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh Limited.

20 Huang, S. C. R. (1931). *Hsi Shih: Beauty of beauties; a romance of ancient China about 495-472 B.C.* Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh Limited.

4 DAYS IN FEBRUARY

Adam Park the Last Battle

EXHIBITION

8 February – 24 June 2012
Level 10, National Library Gallery,
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Adam Park was the site of the last battle for Singapore where the British held the line against the Japanese right up to the surrender on the 15th of February 1942. Thereafter, the site was used as an internment camp, adding another layer of history to the estate. Between 2010 and 2011, the Singapore Heritage Society conducted an extensive multidisciplinary investigation of Adam Park. Visit this exhibition to discover the role of Adam Park in the defence of Singapore during World War II as well as the artefacts and findings uncovered from the archaeological excavation.

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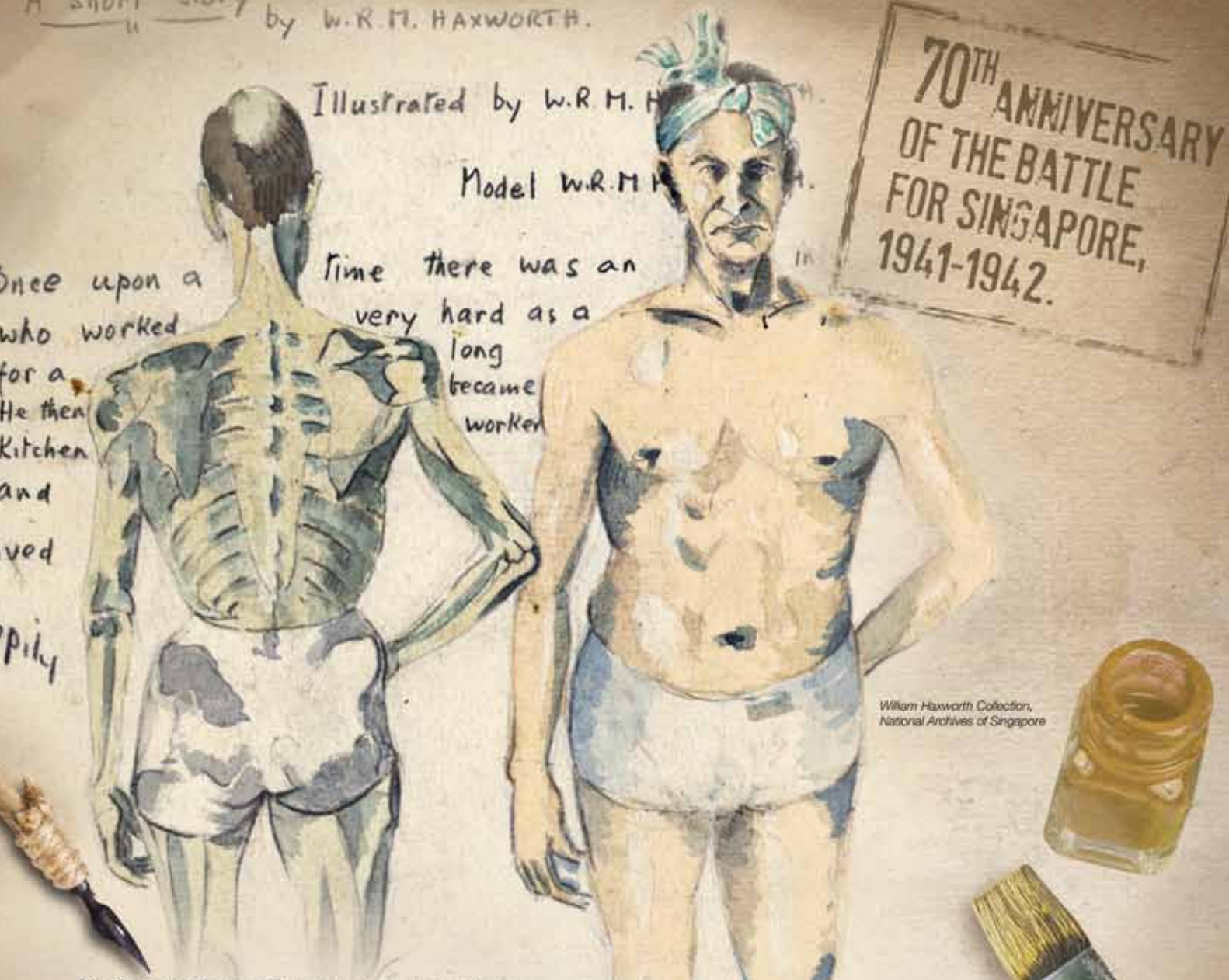

William Haxworth Collection, National Archives of Singapore

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William Haxworth, a British civil servant, was interned in Changi Prison and Sime Road Camp during the Japanese Occupation of Singapore. In his captivity, Haxworth produced over 300 pencil sketches, watercolours and ink drawings, depicting life in the internment camps with sensitivity and humour. Selected works including his original drawings from the National Archives of Singapore are presented for the first time ever in this exhibition.

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