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FOOD, CULTURE & SOCIETY

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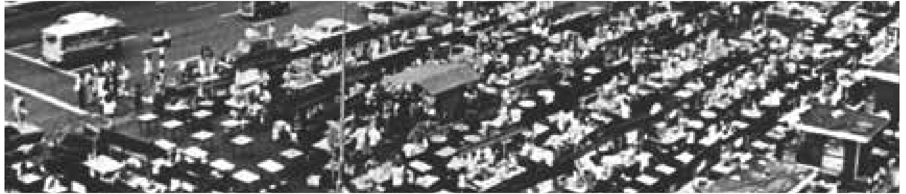

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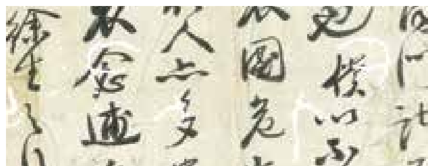

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Director's Column

IN 2012, THE DUTCH ARTISTS LERNERT AND SANDER — known for their irreverent sense of humour — created a new perfume by blending 1,400 fragrances — in essence every perfume released the previous year — into one potent concoction. The end result was a fragrance packed with the overwhelming cocktail of scents that permeates the perfumes and cosmetics floor of any major department store.

The fragrance was called "Everything".

In this issue, we explore cuisines in Singapore originating from elsewhere that have been similarly infused with local influences to become distinctively Singaporean in identity. The evolution of food in Singapore reflects the hopes, longings and assimilation of travellers from faraway lands who eventually became residents.

For even as expatriate colonial housewives attempted to reproduce a sense of home through the recipes of the legendary Mrs Beeton cookbooks in Janice Loo's article "Mrs Beeton in Malaya", local cookbooks gradually introduced Malayan foods into the colonial diet. Bonny Tan highlights a series of colonial cookbooks — the Y.W.C.A cookery books — in the National Library's collection that were inclusive in their incorporation of Western, Chinese and Indian recipes.

In "Spicy Nation: From India to Singapore", Malarvele Ilangovan traces the evolution of Indian food that followed the Indian diaspora to Singapore, picking up Southeast Asian influences and nuances that have resulted in distinctively multi-ethnic concoctions that are still Indian at their core.

Amanda Lee Koe's article "Into the Melting Pot: Food as Culture" is perhaps the best example of this mixing of cultures, memories and values — *yu sheng*, though still disputed as a Singaporean invention, is described as a communal dance of feasting and invocation to the God of Wealth.

This sense of how food binds us with unbreakable ties can almost be vicariously tasted in Ang Seow Leng's personal account of her family's love story with Teochew food and her despair that most of it will be lost in translation in years to come as ties to our dialect heritage weakens with each passing generation.

Equally enchanting as the origins of food are the beginnings of our food establishments. I am particularly fascinated by the People's Restaurants described by Ho Chi Tim in "Communal Feeding in Post-war Singapore". These restaurants were set up between 1946 and 1948 as part of a government communal feeding programme. Three and a half million meals later, the scheme was able to pressurise commercial restaurants of the day into raising the standards and value of the meals they served.

Perhaps the bonafide People's Restaurants of Singapore are the hawker centres — which began their lives along the streets and in alleys as villains and a general menace to society. Lim Tin Seng charts the intriguing journey from their origins as street hawkers to the much-loved culinary darlings they are today in "Hawkers: From Public Nuisance to National Icons." It is ironic that a livelihood that the authorities once tried to root out and control has become an endangered artisanal profession that society now seeks to nurture and grow.

I hope you will be as enthralled as I am by the complex relationships and interactions between different peoples and the mix of culinary heritage they brought to Singapore. May the resulting complex repertoire of foods — and by extension cultures — we enjoy in Singapore outlast the march of time and not succumb to the bland homogeneity of an "Everything" concoction.

Gene Tan
Director, National Library

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On the Cover

People grabbing a quick meal from roadside hawkers along the Singapore River in 1970. *A.J. Hawker collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Errata

In the article "You've Got Mail!" in *BiblioAsia* (p. 53, Vol. 9, Iss. 2) we erroneously spelt the name of the Postmaster-General as Bala Supramaniam. It should have been M. Bala Subramanion. We apologise for this error.

COMMUNAL FEEDING IN POST-WAR SINGAPORE

The colonial government's communal feeding programme was a novel response to chronic food shortages and malnutrition in the aftermath of the Japanese Occupation, and laid the foundation for the basis of social welfare schemes in Singapore.

Ho Chi Tim was a Lee Kong Chian Research Fellow at the National Library in 2012. He graduated with a BA and MA from the Department of History, National University of Singapore. He is presently a Ph.D candidate with the Department of History, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. His dissertation examines the historical development of social welfare in colonial Singapore.

(ABOVE) Children playing outside a Children's Social Centre in 1951. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

Between June 1946 and August 1948, Singapore's colonial government operated a novel communal feeding programme. Supervised by the Singapore Department of Social Welfare, the programme aimed to provide one nutritious meal a day for Singaporeans at affordable prices. Targeted at mainly workers, the meals were provided by the so-called People's Restaurants located in different parts of the city.

Over two years, the feeding programme expanded to include a catering service, financial support for the creation of private canteens and a children's feeding scheme. Though short-lived, the impact of the programme was wide-ranging. It eased considerable pressure on the colonial government at a time when food was scarce, helped established a new social welfare department, and laid the foundations for a post-war social welfare landscape in Singapore.

ORIGINS OF THE FOOD PROGRAMME

The return of the British after World War II did not bring immediate relief to Singapore and its people. The delayed return of the British after the sudden surrender of the Japanese resulted in a gaping void. The Malayan Anti-Japanese People's Army (MPAJA) poured out of the jungles and attempted to establish its authority in Singapore and Malaya — often violently. Political challenges aside, a critical shortage of rice in Southeast Asia also threatened to undermine British authority by worsening malnutrition and a rampant black market.

The communal feeding programme can be attributed to the recommendations of the Wages and Cost of Living Committee. In May 1946, an inquiry to review the wages of the clerical and working class was commissioned in response to the rising costs of living, particularly the cost of food. After witnessing the desperate conditions of workers, the committee recommended several interim measures, such as temporary cash allowances, capping of food prices, the setting up of canteens by government departments and employers with the means to do so, and opening "in all large urban areas" public restaurants "on the lines of British Restaurants in the United Kingdom."[1] The committee also recommended that the canteens and restaurants "should not be operated under contract but should be run directly by a division of the Welfare Department."[2]

The British concept of subsidised state feeding originated in the early 20th century. An emerging social consciousness encouraged the expansion of the state feeding programme, from initially prisoners and the poor to include school-going children and factory workers.[3] Eventually, this led to the creation of community restaurants — known as National Kitchens during the Great War and British Restaurants during World War II.[4] State provision of food not only helped to ration limited foodstuffs, but also raised overall morale during times of war and strife.

THE PEOPLE'S RESTAURANTS

On 29 June 1946, the first People's Restaurant opened in a converted godown at Telok Ayer.[5] Tan Beng Neo, a Salvation Army volunteer, described the restaurant as an "*attap* [palm-thatched] shack with barbed wire fencing," and recalled that they managed to sell two to three thousand meals in two hours.[6] The first meal consisted of "rice, pork and vegetables, or rice and fish curry for Muslims, and a mug of iced water."[7] "Nutrition experts" from the King Edward VII College of Medicine also ensured that each meal was "not only tasty, but good."[8] For a paltry 35 cents, the customer received roughly 700 calories of rice, meat and vegetables, or a third of his daily nutritional needs, with coffee or tea.

The Social Welfare Department's first official report, *Beginnings*, describes the process of buying lunch:

IN 1946

35¢

=

700 calories worth of rice, meat, vegetables

\+

coffee/tea

> The customer enters by one of perhaps several lanes leading to a ticket box. He buys his ticket and passes on to a long serving counter where the complete meal is handed to him in a mess tin [or an enamel plate] by a server in exchange for his ticket. On his way to his table he passes other counters where he can pick up his spoon and his mug, and dip them in a sterilizer; where he can collect his iced water or his tea and coffee, and additional flavouring according to his own taste. When he has finished his meal he goes out by another door, passing on his way the washing up section, where he leaves his plate, spoon and mug, and then files past yet another counter where occasionally he will find on sale things like fruit, tinned provisions and cigarettes, which otherwise he could only get at inflated prices from profiteering street hawkers, agents for the most part of the black market.[9]

By the end of 1946, about 10 People's Restaurants were in operation at refurbished godowns, or as part of existing buildings, including one in the "boxing arena of an Amusement Park."[10] These restaurants were located in "Telok Ayer, Seng Poh Road, Queen Street, Handy Road, Happy World, Katong Kitchen/New World, Maxwell Road, and Harbour Board."[11] As the People's Restaurants were targeted at workers, it only served lunch five days a week.

FEEDING SCHEMES

Overseen by a committee that included Lim Yew Hock and Goh Keng Swee (Singapore's second chief minister and second deputy prime minister respectively), the communal feeding programme expanded to include various schemes, such as the People's Kitchens, Sponsored and Approved Restaurants, Family Restaurants and children feeding centres.

The People's Restaurants were limited to the confines of the city and could not serve factories and workshops in isolated locations. The Social Welfare Department

worked with the Labour Office to sponsor "the formation of factory canteens, with the latter arranging permits for the supply of controlled foodstuffs and the former provid[ing] the expertise and resources to get the canteens going."[12] About 60 Sponsored Restaurants were established between July and December 1946. The Social Welfare Department also attempted to work with existing restaurants and invited applications for the Approved Restaurants scheme, where successful applicants could buy controlled foodstuffs on the condition that the meal was sold at prices determined by the Department. Although close to 200 applications were received, only a very small number were deemed suitable after assessment. As such, the scheme was scrapped in favour of other feeding programmes to cater to more urgent needs.

To reach out to more people quickly and efficiently, the Social Welfare Department established centralised People's Kitchens, which could supply "any number of ready-cooked meals in bulk to any unit anywhere in the Colony...."[13] At the peak of the feeding programme in October 1946, nearly 40,000 lunches were cooked and served daily. In a mere six months, over one million meals had been served to the hungry public.[14]

The Social Welfare Department paid more attention to those who could not even afford the 35-cent meal. It was recognised early on that the 35-cent meal was not often "within the reach of the poor, the old, the unemployable and the many-progenied."[15] In December 1946, the first Family Restaurant opened at Maxwell Road, selling lunch at only 8 cents per meal. Benefiting from the bulk purchase of army foodstuffs, the Department ensured that the 8-cent meal was similar in proportion to the 35-cent version and even lowered the price of the latter to 30 cents for most of 1947.[16] Demand for the 8-cent meal was sufficiently high — all 2,500 meals were sold out on the first day — and three existing People's Restaurants were converted into Family Restaurants by the end of 1946.[17]

PUBLICISING THE FEEDING SCHEMES

These feeding schemes catered mostly to the working population and its primary objective, in the words of Percy McNeice, the Secretary for Social Welfare, was to "counteract the black market."[18] It was not enough just to provide cheap meals. The word had to be put out to the general public that nutritious food was readily available at inexpensive prices.

The day after the Wage and Cost of Living Committee announced its recommendations on 27 June 1946, the colonial government ran an announcement in *The Straits Times* about the 35-cent lunch being a "reality."[19] Both the Governor of Singapore and the Colonial Secretary sat down to lunch at the People's Restaurant at Telok Ayer on opening day, which was duly reported in *The Straits Times*.[20] In the same article, McNeice fired the opening salvo of a rather public battle with the black market. Under the sub-heading "Killing Black Market", McNeice declared that "Our main purpose is to reduce prices and to put a stop to the black market."[21]

There was an immediate reaction as rumours began circulating that the cheap meals were only possible because of government subsidies.[22] McNeice responded by giving a detailed interview to *The Straits Times*, explaining how the 35-cent meal was put together and cited the prices of the various foodstuffs purchased by the Department.[23] McNeice declared that all food purchases were made in the open market (at government controlled-prices), and even after taking into consideration the salaries of the cooks and staff, the feeding programme was still able to make a small profit. He observed that people were still paying too much for food and offered his services to any restaurateur willing to sell meals at the Department's prices.

The novelty of the communal feeding programme quickly gained traction and it pressured existing restaurants to at least provide better value for meals they served. *The Singapore Free Press* con-

At the peak of the feeding programme in October 1946, nearly 40,000 lunches were cooked and served daily. In a mere six months, over one million meals had been served to the hungry public.

(TOP) Food being distributed at a Children's Feeding Centre in 1947. *Courtesy of Ministry of Communication and Information.*

(ABOVE LEFT) Children's Feeding Centre located at Clyde Terrace in 1947. *Courtesy of Ministry of Communication and Information.*

(ABOVE RIGHT) The People's Restaurants sold affordable nutritious lunches to the masses (1947). *Courtesy of Ministry of Communication and Information.*

ducted a before-and-after survey of a particular restaurant that had consistently flouted the maximum controlled price of three dollars per meal.[24] Once the People's Restaurants started, the restaurant served visibly bigger portions, even if the price was not reduced.[25] The Sponsored Restaurants scheme also helped to spread the message that cheap meals were possible. For instance, on 19 July 1946, the owners of Singapore's leading Chinese newspaper, the *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, opened a canteen for its staff that sold meals at only 10 cents.[26]

In its first year or so, the People's Restaurants and the other feeding schemes were in the news almost every other day. Between September 1946 and May 1947, announcements called "Today's Menu" informing the public of the meal (or meals) of the day were regularly published in *The Straits Times*.[27] Editorials were mostly positive about the impact of the feeding schemes, with one claiming that "Singapore Did Not Starve" due to the Department's efforts.[28] When the Malayan Union (1946-48) started its own People's Restaurants in its territories across the border, Singapore's Social Welfare Department was actively consulted on its feeding programme,[29] sug-

PEOPLE'S RESTAURANT MENU: OCTOBER 1946

Rice, boiled chicken with white sauce, or rabbit stew, green peas, *chye huay*
Fried mee, beef or prawns, bean sprouts; bean cake, *choy sim*
Rice, vegetable omelette with tomato or paprika sauce or New England [sic]
Rice, fish fritters with tomato sauce, spinach, beetroot
Noodles and goulash or *Hokkien mee*, beef or prawns, *choy sim*, *towgay*
Noodles in Amoy or Java style
Rice; bean cake with garnishment; peanut butter, *sambal*
Rice and New England [sic] or beef stew and vegetable, omelette
Rice; Vienna sausages; bean cake and mixed vegetable stew, tomato sauce
Fried noodles, bean cake, *towgay*, *kangkong*
Rice; fish curry; or *masak asam*; salad (cucumber, *kangkong*); tomato sauce
Rice; chicken or rabbit stew or chicken *kruma*; yam beans and *chye huay*
Hokkien mee; beef soup; prawns; brown fried onions; green chilli; bean sprouts; water cress
Rice; fried liver or liver curry; *pak choy*; green peas, tomatoes; peanut butter; gravy
Fried noodles; beef stew and fried prawns; *choy sim* and *towgay*
Rice, roast chicken or turkey or chicken curry, long beans, spinach
Rice, beef and onions with garnishment, *bayam*, and green pea sprouts
Fried noodles, fried pork and prawns, *towgay*, fried onions, *koo chye*, *chew chow* and *choy sim*
Rice, steamed or fried fish; onions; tomatoes, spinach
Rice; braised pork (Chinese style) or fish; special mixed *chup chye*; cucumbers
Rice porridge (*bubor*); meat balls and salted vegetables with garnishment
Rice; beef stew and green peas or beef curry; marrow and *chye sim*

(ABOVE) Children feeding centres were renamed as Children's Social Centres and provided children with elementary education besides other activities (1952). *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

gesting that the People's Restaurants and its ancillaries may have helped Singapore and Southeast Asia avoid famine during this period.[30]

The response of the general public was more mixed. Some were pleased with the initiative and asked for similar restaurants to be opened in their vicinity; one asked for a 40-cent meal with more rice and food;[31] others voiced their suspicions about government profiteering.[32] The public also wrote several letters to the Social Welfare Department, pointing out gaps in service.

By April 1947, the Social Welfare Department felt confident enough to announce the success of its feeding schemes.[33] In June 1947, the Department introduced 50-cent lunches, in addition to the 30- or 35-cent versions, to meet increasing demand for meals with larger quantities and better ingredients as the economic situation eased.[34] The demand was a clear signal that the hungry customer with spending power wanted more than the Department's inexpensive but limited meal options.

The easing economic situation also resulted in the decline of demand for the Department's meals throughout 1947. Between June and December 1946, 1,321,115 meals were cooked and served by the People's Restaurants and People's Kitchens, while the number of meals for the whole of 1947 only reached 1,575,640, with the daily average falling from 6,000 meals in January 1947 to about 4,000 in December 1947.[35] The declining demand meant that it was no longer cost-effective to continue the feeding schemes. In August 1948, the People's Restaurants were officially closed and the other feeding schemes discontinued or scaled down.[36] Over two years, close to three and half million meals via the People's Restaurants and the People's Kitchens had been served.[37]

THE CHILDREN'S FEEDING SCHEME

The relative success of the communal feeding programme provided the colonial government with ready-made mechanisms to implement policies that were otherwise difficult to put in place. A case in point was the children's feeding scheme, a programme that actually pre-dated the various feeding schemes and the Social Welfare Department — both of which were established in June 1946.

The well-being of children was an urgent priority for the British. As a result, the Child Feeding Committee was formed, represented by both government and societal groups, to specifically address the issue of child nutrition.[38]

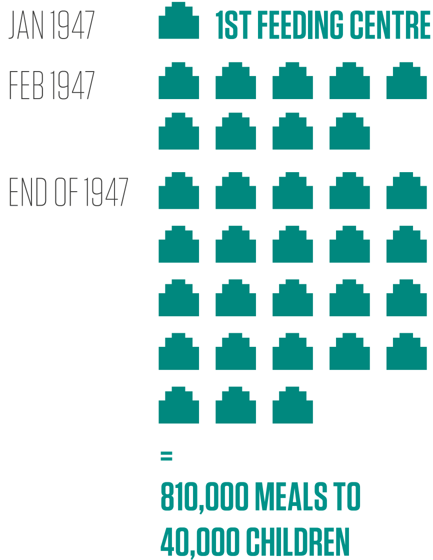
A nutrition survey conducted in late 1945 found that malnutrition among children was widespread. Emboldened by the survey results, the committee proposed to provide all children in Singapore with one nutritious meal a day. But financial and logistical limitations meant that the scheme remained small. The Education Department began trial runs in just three schools while the Medical Department implemented an infant-feeding scheme at two clinics.[39] Further expansion of the scheme depended on the availability of necessary equipment and when the scheme was more "thoroughly organi[s]ed."[40] From November 1945 to April 1946, over 32,000 meals were served to children at the medical clinics. A further 200,000 meals were served to school-going children, at an average of 2,300 meals per day.[41]

The succeeding civil government set aside $360,000 to provide free meals to children aged between two and six in 1947.[42] The first Children's Feeding Centre was opened in January 1947. Nine similar centres followed in February, and by the end of the year, 23 centres were in operation, serving a total of 810,000 meals to about 40,000 children, at a daily average of some 4,000 meals.[43]

The Prinsep Street Child Feeding Centre

In February 1947, the Singapore Free Press *ran an article offering a glimpse of a day's activities at the Prinsep Street Child Feeding Centre: "At nine o'clock in the morning children began gathering outside the gates of the Centre. At 9.30 the gates are opened by a burly Sikh who lets the children run into the Centre in small groups. The rest of the children play outside or pacify their smaller brothers and sisters until their turn comes to file into the weighing room. Each child is weighed at regular intervals before going into the dining room and the records are sent to Dr. Oliveiro, head of the Nutrition Unit of the King Edward VII College of Medicine. After being weighed the children file past a window where their cards are endorsed for each meal and they are each given a metal disc entitling them to one meal. Once they have passed the window all their orderly quietness deserts them — they race down the passage shouting to their friends and pushing to get ahead of one another at the serving counter. The metal disc [is] drop[ped] into a mug and they pick up their mess tins and mugs and make straight for the table they chose to sit at. [The] centre is something of a social club for these small children. They walk between the tables wondering with whom they will sit and the older children chat and laugh as they shovel food into the babies' mouths."*[51]

(ABOVE) Children feeding centres were set up in a bid to provide adequate nutrition for children (1952). *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*



These seemingly rosy statistics, while showing that more children were helped via the programme, tell only half the story. As the scheme lacked financial support, child feeding efforts throughout the British Military Administration (BMA) period remained small. Both military and civil governments had initially perceived the child feeding scheme as temporary. In mid-1946, meals for school-going children, already limited to a small number of schools, were so threatened that direct appeals were made to the British Prime Minister.[44] Problems continued even after the Social Welfare Department took over.

From the start, McNeice was not keen on taking over the scheme as the government could not guarantee the necessary funds. The first child feeding centre was to open in November 1946, but it only commenced operations two months later as uncertainty over funding led McNeice to put the entire scheme on hold.[45] When the funds were eventually approved, the amount provided was only enough for children aged between two and six, excluding infants and school-going children.[46] Even then, the meals could only be given to children whose families were already receiving assistance from the Social Welfare Department. Money was tight and the post-war rehabilitation of Singapore was costly. The creation of new government departments, such as the Social Welfare Department and its services, came under some scrutiny and even criticism towards the end of 1946.[47]

Despite the obstacles, the Department succeeded in establishing over 20 children feeding centres by the end of 1947, aided by the central kitchens supporting the communal feeding programme. The meals were "prepared according to the specifications provided by the Professor of Bio-Chemistry of the College of Medicine."[48] Each meal usually consisted of rice, green peas, green vegetables and *ikan bilis* (dried anchovies) and was supplemented by milk and fresh fruit.[49] The centres were slightly different from the People's and Sponsored Restaurants. Unlike the latter, the children feeding centres were managed by volunteers, mostly women. A core group, made up of the spouses of British officials and local elites, was led by Lady Dorothy Gimson, wife of the Governor of Singapore. Volunteers also came from the Chinese community, such as the Singapore Women Federation, Singapore Chinese Women Association and Singapore Women Mutual Aid Association of Victims' Families. Other volunteers also came forward in their personal capacities, offering their residences as feeding centres.[50]

All centres were visited by a team of two female medical doctors to observe and chart the children's health. The health aspect needed urgent attention. Some 4,000 children were medically examined at the start of the scheme, and most of them were found to be underweight and in poor physical condition. Almost all of them suffered from more than one medical condition, such as decayed teeth, swollen gums and anaemia.

The children who were accepted into the scheme were only the tip of a larger poverty problem. A *Singapore Free Press* correspondent also observed how several youths — who did not qualify for the scheme — would surreptitiously eat half the meals belonging to their younger siblings. A regular volunteer at the Mount Erskine centre, Lady McNeice (nee Loke Yuen Peng), wife of Percy McNeice, recalled how "the older brothers and sisters used to come along the centres and look longingly at what was being done for the younger children."[52] Lady McNeice remembered that mothers with 10 or 12 children would go to the volunteers seeking help because they did not want any more children.[53] Confronted with the daily sight of child poverty, several female volunteers, led in particular by Constance Goh (nee Wee Sai Poh), introduced family planning methods to those who sought assistance.[54] This eventually led to the establishment of the Singapore Family Planning Association in 1949.[55]

The nature and purpose of the feeding centres themselves also evolved. Volunteers at several centres introduced various social and educational activities to keep over-aged kids who did not qualify for the free meals occupied so as to not disrupt the centre.[56] Such activities were planned and managed by a committee of lady volunteers led by Lady Gimson. The committee also raised funds to pay for manpower, equipment and programmes, beyond what the Social Welfare Department could provide. From January 1948, the centres were renamed Children Social Centres, as the centres be-

(ABOVE) Christmas celebration at a Children's Social Centre in 1950. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

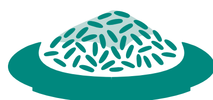
gan providing "elementary education in English and Chinese" and a host of handicraft and artwork activities.[57]

In 1948, the number of children below school-going age — the target group of the scheme — benefitting from the programme fell from over 750,000 in 1947 to below 500,000.[58] In the same year, the Social Welfare Department began winding down its communal feeding programme, which officially ended in August 1948. At the same time, the fleet of mobile canteens was also reduced, resulting in a decrease in the number of children that could be reached. Out of the over 20 feeding centres, only four allowed children to consume their meals in them, while the other centres were supplied by mobile canteens. The loss of mobile canteens made it inconvenient for mothers to bring their children to the "static" centres — some of which were quite a distance from their homes — for only a few hours.

A contributing factor for the change was financial. Feeding centres were further reduced to 16 "static" centres by the end of 1948.[59] In 1949, the Social Welfare Department made a passionate defence of the children's feeding scheme in its annual report (for the year 1948). The Legislative Council had approved funding for the scheme for only six months in 1950. The Council also requested a committee to look into the viability of the scheme.[60] The committee recommended that the scheme continue, but to replace the cooked rice meal with a supposedly more nutritious meal comprising bread, milk and fruits. Costing eight cents per meal, compared to the previous 15 cents per cooked meal, the new meal was undeniably cheaper. Perhaps unwittingly, it also indicated that the new meal merely supplemented the family diet.[61]

(ABOVE) Originally built by George Coleman in 1827 as a private home, this Palladian-style structure housed the Social Welfare Department from 1946 – 1953. For nearly 30 years (1965 – 1999) it served as the Parliament House, and after a major refurbishment in 2003, the building was renamed the Arts House. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

FROM 1946 TO 1948
1 plate
of rice & curry
went down from



THE IMPACT OF COMMUNAL FEEDING

It is difficult to conclude decisively whether the People's Restaurants and the other communal feeding schemes broke the grip of the black market. While useful, statistics are limited in providing an overall picture. Declining attendance at the People's Restaurants throughout 1947 did not necessarily mean the black market was in retreat. It could have indicated that wages on the whole were increasing, hence allowing the individual more choices. Similarly, the popularity of the People's Restaurants during the first six months of operations did not necessarily mean that fewer people patronised the black market. It could have been simply a situation where there was insufficient food, especially rice, to go around, and the people taking advantage of a cheap alternative in tandem with the black market.

Southeast Asia had been threatened by a critical shortage of rice since the beginning of 1946, which deteriorated into a full-blown crisis by August.[62] The regional rice crisis and the global food shortage do cast the publicity efforts of the Social Welfare Department and the colonial government in a different light. Such efforts visibly petered off by mid-1947 when the food crisis abated. The initial slew of positive news and announcements seemed a deliberate attempt to placate the population with semi-good news or at least reassure them with the promise of decisive state action so as to prevent industrial and social unrest.

As far as anecdotal evidence went, the feeding programme did force prices down. On the final day of the People's Restaurant scheme, the Social Welfare Department observed that a plate of rice and curry had gone from $1.50 down to 50 cents in two years.[63] The proliferation of Sponsored Restaurants — over 60 such ventures continued after the official end of the feeding programme — could be an indication of private and public support. At worst, the Social Welfare Department's feeding programme arguably kept the peace by acting as a pressure-relief valve by providing an accessible and affordable alternative source of meals during a period of severe food shortages.

The programme was lauded globally, with countries like India and China seeking advice from the Social Welfare Department and the Singapore government. One positive effect of the programme was its success in establishing a fledgling social welfare department and social welfare as a function of government. The presence of a government social welfare department arguably reversed the *laissez-faire* approach to governance that had guided the development of Singapore since 1819.

The feeding schemes marked the beginning of greater involvement by the state in Singapore, to the extent that the government assumed responsibility for

some aspects of society's welfare. The current Ministry of Social and Family Development, successor to the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, acknowledges the feeding schemes as a historical milestone.[64]

The development of the children's feeding scheme is also insightful. It faced many obstacles and probably would have failed without the female volunteers. Indeed, the colonial government, in attempting to implement a social welfare policy, had from the beginning stressed the importance of "unofficial" or non-governmental associations as they would theoretically be better placed to understand local needs.[65]

In this particular case, civil society not only played a practical role (providing otherwise unavailable resources such as labour and physical sites), but was also instrumental in influencing and shaping state policy. What started out as a relatively uncomplicated scheme to provide adequate nutrition for children evolved into a programme that provided educational and social development activities, positioning the children social centres as the forerunners to present-day childcare centres. State policy was also affected by the response of the women volunteers to the sight of wretched poverty. The Singapore Family Planning Association these women founded became the basis of state efforts to manage the population of post-colonial Singapore.[66] ●

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4. *Ibid*., pp.181, 187.
5. Tan (1983). See also Wong (2009), p.83.
6. *Ibid*.
7. "Cheap Lunch from Today", *The Straits Times*, 29 June 1946. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
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9. *Ibid*., pp.23–24.
10. *Ibid*., pp.23, 51.
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HAWKERS
FROM PUBLIC NUISANCE TO NATIONAL ICONS

From bane of the government to boon of tourism, hawkers in Singapore have come a long way from the time they were viewed by government officials as progenitors of disorder and disease.

(TOP) Hawkers at the car park beside the former Specialists' Centre at Orchard Road in 1970; known as Glutton's Square, this downtown icon lasted for over 12 years from 1966 until it was shut down in September 1978. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

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FOR ONE OF THE SMALLEST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD, Singapore has an enormous appetite. According to the annual MasterCard survey on consumer dining habits, Singaporeans were the biggest spenders for eating out in the Asia-Pacific region in 2012, spending an average S$323 each month. This was an increase of nearly 25 percent from 2011.[1] In addition, the great lengths Singaporeans go to find the best or most authentic local dishes are testament to the nation's obsession with food. They endure long queues, brave traffic jams and literally go the distance to satiate their taste buds. It is no wonder that the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) promotes the island as a food paradise, organising a series of annual food-related events, most notably the Singapore Food Festival, to boost tourist numbers.

Food and all matters culinary is an integral part of the Singaporean psyche. The city is a melting pot of multi-ethnic flavours and foods, with Malay, Indian and Chinese dishes making up the culinary landscape along with Peranakan and Eurasian cuisines. The island city is home to countless restaurants, but almost everyone agrees that the cheapest and most authentic fare is found in hawker centres.

Hawker centres, in Singapore parlance, are open-air complexes with stalls selling food at affordable prices. They are clean, accessible and are frequented by people from all walks of life. Most hawker stalls are family-run and serve one or two dishes that have been perfected over the years or prepared using family recipes passed down over the generations. As a result, hawker food is not only tasty but also rich in heritage.

However, the convenience of strolling into clean hawker centres for a delicious meal was unheard of in Singapore during the colonial period and early post-independence days. Instead, the norm was to eat by the roadside using dirty utensils and amid filthy conditions. How this was replaced by today's hawker experience marked by good food and a clean eating environment is the result of a decades-long struggle between the government and hawkers.

A PUBLIC NUISANCE

Peddling food has been part of Singapore's heritage since the early colonial period. The hawker scene then was a vibrant one, marked by rows of stalls selling an endless selection of tasty and affordable local foods ranging from Malay *kuehs* (cakes) to Chinese dishes. John Cameron in *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India* (1865) noted this scene after his visit to Singapore in the 1860s:

> There is probably no city in the world with such a motley crowd of itinerant vendors of wares, fruits, cakes, vegetables. There are Malays, generally with fruit, Chinamen with a mixture of all sorts, and Klings with cakes and different kinds of nuts. Malays and Chinamen always

> use the shoulder-stick, having equally-balanced loads suspended at either end; the Klings, on the contrary, carry their wares on the head on trays. The travelling cook shops of the Chinese are probably the most extraordinary of the things that are carried about this way. They are suspended on one of the common shoulder-sticks, and consist of a box on one side and a basket on the other, the former containing a fire and small copper cauldron for soup, the latter loaded with rice, vermicelli, cakes, jellies, and condiments….[2]

However, many considered hawkers, especially street hawkers, a public nuisance.[3] They impeded both vehicular and foot traffic and made the streets rowdy and chaotic. The authorities also regarded hawkers as a source of public disorder, fuelling the activities of secret societies and street gangs by paying money in return for protection services against intimidation and extortions from other secret societies and gangs.[4]

Perhaps the biggest concern was the threat that hawkers posed to public health. Hawkers were seen as potential agents for the outbreak of diseases such as cholera and typhoid due to their unhygienic practices. As reported by the Municipal Health Office in 1895, hawker food was "extremely liable to contamination" because they were exposed to the elements, and prepared over drains "containing all manner of filth, even human excreta."[5] This was exacerbated by infectious diseases carried by hawkers, using untreated water used to prepare the food, and the generally filthy conditions of the hawkers' lodgings where ingredients were stored. One such store was described by the Sanitation Commission in 1907 as being "overrun with cockroaches and other vermin."[6]

To resolve these issues, the colonial government decided that hawkers should be registered and licensed.[7] This would confine hawkers to selected areas in the city and prevent them from encroaching into public spaces, while making it easier for authorities to monitor their hygiene practices and deal with any public disorder caused by them.[8] A proposal for the legislation was made in 1903 but only materialised in 1906 as by-laws of the Municipal Ordinance. Unfortunately, the legislation lacked teeth and health officials did not have the full authority to shut down hawkers who violated the rule of law. In addition, the by-laws were only applicable to stall hawkers who operated at night. The rest of the hawker community, both daytime stall hawkers and itinerant hawkers, were still allowed to ply their trade freely during the day. Despite the various problems caused by hawkers, the colonial government still viewed the hawker trade as an essential part of society as it provided unemployed and unskilled workers with a source of livelihood, and the urban population easy access to cheap meals.[9] As a result, the government was reluctant to adopt a hard-line approach in suppressing them. Thus, the problems persisted and became so unbearable that it led to calls for the total abolition of hawkers.[10]

In response, the colonial government took further steps to control the growth of hawkers. First, they extended the registration and confinement of hawkers to include itinerant hawkers in 1915 and daytime stall hawkers in 1919. Second, the maximum number of hawkers' licenses issued from 1928 was capped at 6,000 to stem their growth. Third, the authorities started relocating licensed hawkers to specially built hawkers' shelters.[11] The first shelter — probably the precursor of the modern hawker centre — was built in 1922 at Finlayson Green. Thereafter, another five shelters were built at People's Park, Balestier Road, Carnie Road, Telok Ayer Market and Queen Street.[12]

Building these shelters reduced the total number of hawkers from 11,249 in 1919 to 5,513 in 1929.[13] But in reality, little progress was made in tackling hawker issues relating to hygiene and licensing and the efforts during the pre-war years were summed up by the municipal as

(TOP) A group of Chinese hawkers in 1915. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*
(CENTRE) Hawkers balancing their cooking equipment on one end of a pole, with the uncooked food on the other, were once a common sight. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

"a vain hope".[14] Indeed, as stated in the *Report of the Hawker Question* (1931), major roads in the town were still cluttered with some 4,000 unlicensed hawkers.[15] By 1950, due to the lack of a decisive policy against unlicensed hawkers as well as the high unemployment rate during the post-war years, the number of such hawkers ballooned to 20,000.[16] This magnified the various problems associated with them and once again led to calls for their complete eradication from the streets. Spearheading the condemnation was the Town Cleansing Department. It branded the unlicensed hawkers as the "biggest single retarding factor" hindering their efforts in keeping the city clean.[17] Shophouse owners, particularly coffee shops and eating shops, were also unhappy with the unlicensed hawkers. The owners complained that they faced unfair competition from the unlicensed hawkers because the latter could operate at lower costs without paying rent or license fees, and deliberately set up stalls near the entrance or opposite their shops.[18]

WRESTLING WITH THE HAWKER PROBLEM

To prevent the hawker problem from escalating, a 10-man Hawker Inquiry Commission was set up in April 1950 to investigate the social, economic and health issues caused by unlicensed hawkers and to recommend policies to resolve them.[19] In its final report released in September 1950, the commission concluded that hawkers should not be viewed as a public nuisance. Instead, peddling food was a legitimate form of employment and a necessity for the working class population as hawkers provided cheap and affordable food.[20] Nonetheless, the commission laid out a set of policy recommendations to resolve the issues arising from peddling food. It proposed the implementation of a licensing scheme so that the authorities would be able to monitor hawker activities and set conditions and regulations that would enable them to stipulate where hawkers could operate as well as monitor their hygiene levels.[21] Proper signage became mandatory and cooked food hawkers were to be subjected to medical examinations and inoculation against infectious diseases.

To facilitate the licensing scheme, the commission recommended the appointment of a group of personnel to handle the issuing of licences and a force of Hawker Inspectors (at a ratio of about one to every 2,000 to 3,000 hawkers) to ensure that hawkers adhered to conditions stipulated in their licence agreements.[22] Furthermore, the commission suggested that Hawker Inspectors receive a reasonable starting salary of $250 a month with allowance so that they would not be derailed by bribes. A Hawker Courts was advocated along with the establishment of a Hawker Advisory Board to advise on related matters such as formulation of new policies and licensing procedure as well as to investigate and report on any grievances from hawkers.[23] More importantly, the commission was of the view that hawkers should congregate and operate in hawkers' shelters rather than on the streets. This implied that the government should in the long term consider building more hawker shelters that were equipped with basic facilities such as refuse bins, hot water, clean water and gas-pipes.[24]

Despite being provided with a policy framework, the colonial administration was still unable to resolve the hawker problem. The number of illegal hawkers continued to rise, reaching over 30,000 by 1959.[25] Moreover, the hawkers continued to maintain their unhygienic food practices and operate in filthy environments. The unsanitary condition of the hawker scenes in Boon Tat Street, Upper Chin Chew Street and Beach Road was reported in *The Singapore Free Press* in 1957 as such:

> A satay hawker had a pot of gravy, into which practically every customer dipped two or three times with the same stick. The sticks had been in their mouths a number of times.

(ABOVE) Police patrolling the streets before the demolition of hawker stalls at Margaret Drive in 1962.
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

> A hawker selling a Cantonese meal of roast pork, duck, entrails and rice was squatting near a stinking drain, while cutting the food stuffs. Flies flew about him… In some shops, food was stale and others sold pieces of meat left over by customers. A mee seller wiped perspiration from his body with his hands and then handled food. Some hawkers were seen buying rotten vegetables from street urchins who had salvaged the foodstuffs from dustbins. Many hawkers spat and rubbed their hands on their mouths and then served customers.[26]

The failed attempt to resolve the hawker problems was due to numerous factors. First, the government was slow to introduce the licensing scheme. In fact, the scheme was established three years after the commission's report, and a proper Markets and Hawkers Department to manage it was not established until 1957.[27] Second, there were not enough inspectors to monitor the hawkers. In 1958, there were only 16 inspectors monitoring the 30,000 hawkers operating in Singapore.[28] Third, and perhaps the biggest factor, was that the authorities were unable to secure cooperation from the hawkers. This was mostly due to the all-out "war" the government declared on unlicensed hawkers.[29] Aided by the police, the Town Cleansing Department conducted daily raids. This caused many hawkers to resent the authorities, resulting in their defiance against the licensing policy. Many hawkers also resorted to bribing the enforcers or turning to the protection of secret societies and gangs.

Besides the hawkers, the daily raids irked both the Hawkers' Union and the public. Rallying behind the hawkers, the Hawkers' Union suggested that a better approach was not to punish the hawkers but to work with them to preserve their livelihood by building shelters so that hawkers would have an alternate site to continue their trade.[30] In the 1950s, some hawkers formed syndicates to buy land and build markets and hawkers' shelters. Some of these were located in Somerset Road, Sennett Estate, Mackenzie Road and Serangoon Road.[31] However, this bold endeavour failed to trigger a similar response from the authorities. As a result, illegal hawker stalls and the mass raids continued. It was only after Singapore became an independent nation in 1965 that a concerted government effort to resolve the hawker problem was made.

(ABOVE) A Malay hawker with his portable satay stall in 1907. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

BUILDING HAWKER CENTRES

Leading the government effort to solve the hawker problem in the post-independence years was then-Minister for Health Yong Nyuk Lin. He noted that the illegal hawker situation in Singapore "[had] gone on far too long and should be stopped".[32] Addressing Parliament in 1965, Yong acknowledged that while hawking was a legitimate livelihood, all hawkers should follow the rules and not threaten public health, traffic, and law and order. He suggested that all hawkers relocate to permanent premises. The first step was to register all the estimated 40,000 to 50,000 hawkers in Singapore so that the authorities could impose some control over them.[33] In March 1966, the Ministry of Health (MOH) introduced the Hawkers' Code. Under the code, a licence could only be issued to Singaporeans; in addition hawkers were prohibited from plying their trade along streets with high traffic volume, in car parks during the daytime, around bus stops, and near schools and other public buildings. The Hawkers Department under MOH carried out the registration exercise over a period of time. When it concluded in 1969, there were about 24,000 registered hawkers, much lower than the previously estimated figure.

The Hawkers Department then began relocating the licensed street hawkers to temporary areas that were less busy.[34] Those who plied their trades along the main roads were told to move to the back lanes, side roads, vacant lands or car parks. One of the most well-known car parks that served as a premise for hawkers was Orchard Road car park (later known as Glutton's Square). The relocation process required tact and sensitivity with Members of Parliament and grassroots leaders stepping in to address the grievances of affected hawkers.

A special squad was also set up to deal with illegal hawkers. The squad would

(TOP) Demolition of hawker stalls at St Michael's estate in progress in 1962. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

(CENTRE) The hawker centre at the top floor of Funan Shopping Centre in 1985. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

search and remove illegal hawkers from the streets by carrying out raids with auxiliary police officers. The offenders were fined before they were referred to the Ministry of Labour for job replacement. Backed by a new confidence gained from economic progress and the creation of jobs, the Hawkers Department had by this time stopped issuing new hawker's licences to able-bodied citizens, particularly those under 40. This was to encourage them to take on other jobs.[35]

The Hawker Centres Development Committee was set up in 1971 to plan for the development of hawker centres.[36] Locations that were accessible to the public and provided potential business for the hawkers were selected. Rental at the hawker centres was kept at nominal rates so that the hawkers did not have to raise their food prices after moving into these centres. The 110-stall Collyer Quay hawker centre, the 80-stall Boat Quay hawker centre and the Yung Sheng Road hawker centre at Jurong were among the first hawker centres to be built.[37]

In 1972, the new Ministry of Environment took over the Hawkers Department as well as the responsibility of developing hawker centres. It also announced a programme to build 10 new hawker centres by 1975. These new centres were located at Empress Place, Telok Ayer, North Bridge Road, Jalan Besar, Beach Road, Jurong Kechil, Ama Keng, Upper Thomson, Dunman Road and Zion Road, and these enabled the government to relocate about 7,000 street hawkers.[38] At the end of 1986, there were 113 hawker centres island-wide.[39] In the same year, the government removed the last batch of 80 streets hawkers congregating at China Square and Haw Par Villa.[40] This brought the government's long struggle to relocate street hawkers into permanent premises to a close.

IMPROVING HYGIENE STANDARDS

The new purpose-built hawker centres were equipped with proper facilities for food preparation and cooking to improve hygiene standards. To complement this effort, the Environmental Public Health Act was introduced in January 1969. The legislation contained provisions to incorporate public health practices in the licensing and control of hawkers and food establishments.[42] For instance, all stallholders were required to undergo medical examinations and immunisations. They had to seek permission to extend or make any alteration to their stalls. More importantly, they had to keep their stalls clean and ensure that their food was properly stored and safe for consumption. There was also an upward revision of penalties for offenders and stricter enforcement of public health regulations.

Despite these regulations, many hawkers still operated in filthy conditions. Many of them also continued their unhygienic practices such as smoking, spitting and handling food without washing their hands.[43] The Ministry of Environment undertook a series of public health education programmes in the 1970s and 1980s to promote good food hygiene. It also published a series of handbooks offering tips on food hygiene and food safety such as *Clean Food for Better Health* (1982) and *Food for Thought* (1989) and made it mandatory for food handlers to obtain a Food Hygiene Certificate before they could be registered.

In 1998, a grading system that indicated the cleanliness of each stall replaced the demerit point system that had been implemented a decade earlier.[44] An "A" grade implies excellence in cleanliness and food hygiene and "D" for below average standards. This is based on several criteria such as housekeeping standards, cleanliness levels, food hygiene levels and the hawker's hygiene habits. Stallholders have to display their grades prominently so that the public are aware of the cleanliness levels of their stall. This move incentivised hawkers to maintain or improve their grades.

HAWKER FARE AS HERITAGE

With the hygiene problems resolved, the government began to focus on the heritage aspects of hawkers from the late 1980s onwards. In 1984, former Deputy Prime Minister S. Rajaratnam said that "a nation must have a memory, to give it a sense of cohesion, continuity and identity".[45] Since food has always been discussed in relation to ethnicity, diaspora

The Genesis of the Modern Food Court

(ABOVE) The Food Republic at Wisma Atria boasts 23 food stations and three mini restaurants in a 23,000 square foot space. *Image courtesy of Food Republic.*

As the construction of new hawker centres came to a halt, private food operators began setting up food courts. To differentiate themselves from hawker centres, food courts were air-conditioned. The first of its kind was the well known Picnic Food Court, set up in 1985 in the basement of Scotts Shopping Centre along Scotts Road.[41] Since then, such air-conditioned food courts have sprouted in many shopping centres, business parks, tertiary institutions and hospitals.

Other than air-conditioning, there are a number of marked differences between hawker centres and food courts. In hawker centres, the stallholders are individual tenants whereas a single operator manages the food court and rents out the stalls. Invariably, the food prices in food courts are higher too. Unfortunately, in many cases, food court fare tends to be slightly characterless thanks to the mass-produced standard recipes that these vendors use compared to rough and tumble hawker centres where one might find older hawkers who have been honing their craft for several decades using carefully guarded recipes. To be fair, however, such hawkers are a dying breed, and their children are not eager to take over the long hours and sweaty work that the job demands.

Cutlery and uniforms used in food courts also tend to be standard issue, and many food court operators employ a common design theme to brand their food court chains. Major food court operators in Singapore include Food Republic, Food Junction, Kopitiam and Koufu. Food Republic at Wisma Atria for instance has a 1960s-theme complete with old furniture and stalls operating from pushcarts; another of its outlets at Suntec City Convention Centre was designed around the concept of a White Garden.

and class identity, it was one of the ways to articulate the memories and multi-ethnic identity of the nation.[46]

Singapore's vast variety of food — besides constructing and cementing a national identity — has been used by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) to promote Singapore as a food paradise to boost tourism.[47] The two biggest events organised by the STB are the Singapore Food Festival and the World Gourmet Summit. Held annually since 1994, the Singapore Food Festival is a month-long culinary event that celebrates Singapore's food heritage and the local culinary scene, with the focus on the nation's favourite hawker dishes. The World Gourmet Summit, started in 1997, is more upmarket and Western-centric, mainly showcasing the culinary creations of the best master-chefs from around the world.

As more tourists began to visit hawker centres, the government embarked on the Hawker Centres Upgrading Programme (HUP) in 2001.[48] The programme, headed by the National Environment Agency (NEA), aims to upgrade the conditions and facilities of hawker centres and markets that have deteriorated over time. The upgrading plans for hawker centres located in places with high heritage values were more elaborate. For example, the East Coast Lagoon Food Village was upgraded in 2001 with a tropical design complete with pavilions, gazebos, pitched roots, cabanas, tables and chairs on sand, and open-sided structures to allow itself to blend in with the seaside environment.[49] At the time of press, this beachfront hawker centre was given another facelift and is due to be opened in December 2013. The Bedok Food Centre was designed based on the area's history as a Malay *kampong*.[50] It has an entrance roof inspired by the Minangkabau architecture style, outdoor landscaped restrooms and lush tropical vegetation. Other hawker centres that went through similar upgrades include Newton Food Centre and Tiong Bahru Market.

After the fight to ensure that hawkers could continue their trade, there are now concerns that Singapore's hard-won culinary heritage could wane as there may not be enough Singaporeans joining the trade to replace the first and second generation hawkers.[51] The younger generation thinks it is an unglamorous, menial and lowly job that is no longer a viable livelihood. Besides, most parents prefer their children to secure more cushy white-collar jobs instead. To retain and preserve traditional hawker food, the government has introduced initiatives such as lower stall rentals. It also resumed the construction of hawker centres, announcing that 10 new hawker centres would be built by 2016.[52]

New avenues are provided for aspiring hawkers. In 2013, Singapore's Work Development Agency launched its first official hawker training programme.[53] The programme contains training modules that introduces the basics of the hawker trade such as how to cook basic hawker staples like *roti prata* and chicken rice, maintain good food hygiene and teach innovative ways to display dishes in stalls. Furthermore, the government is considering setting up a training institute for hawkers. If this materialises, the school will hire successful hawkers to teach and transfer their skills to new hawkers.[54] While these actions have

generated a great amount of interests among Singaporeans, it remains to be seen whether they can help preserve the unique hawker culture of Singapore. ●

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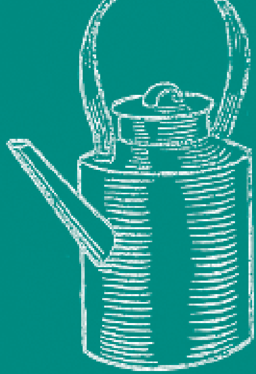
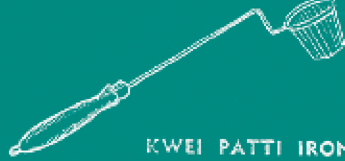
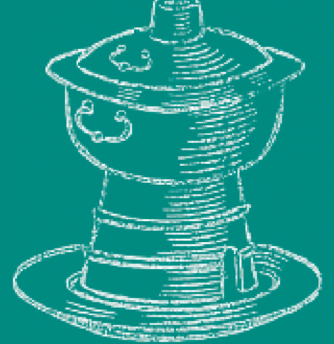
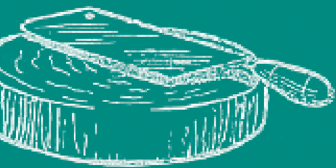
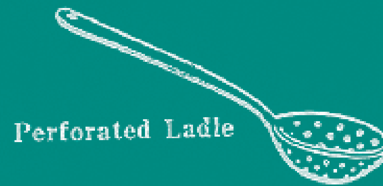
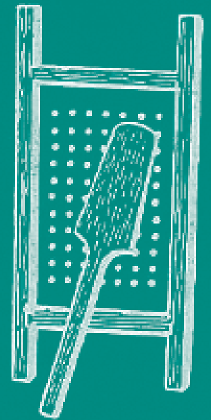






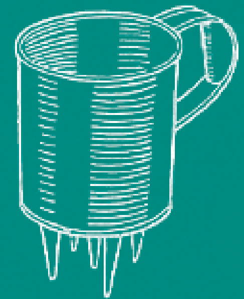


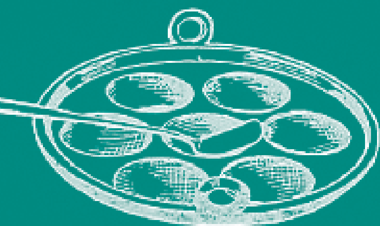


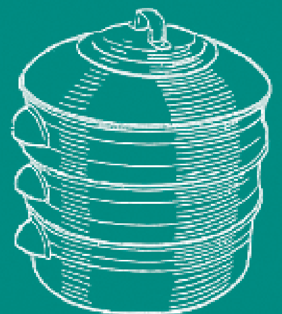


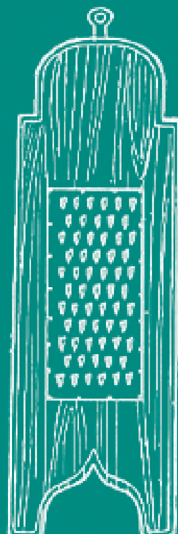
"MRS BEETON" *in* MALAYA

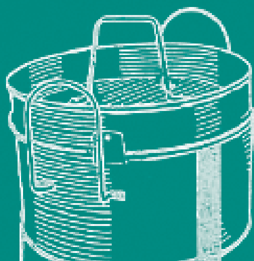
WOMEN, COOKBOOKS AND THE MAKINGS OF THE HOUSEWIFE











Cookbooks offer interesting insights into the oft-overlooked domestic space of British Malaya, shedding light on how women saw themselves and how feminine ideals from the West were propagated in the colonial era.

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Cookbooks, pamphlets, newspapers, domestic manuals and the like are rich sources of recipes, diet and nutrition advice as well as kitchen anecdotes and trivia. The non-literary and utilitarian nature of these writings belies their narrative potential as texts that contain rich socio-historical material on food-related culture. Despite their seeming inconsequentiality, details on everyday cooking and eating provide clues to wider debates about national, colonial, postcolonial, class, race and gender politics. English-language cookery texts published in early 20th century British Malaya provide a discursive space where women — whether writing, reading or practising the culinary arts — can participate in fashioning the feminine ideal.

Regarded as the paragon of progressive womanhood in the history of British domesticity, the legacy of Isabella Beeton's magnum opus, *Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1861), refigures Malayan cookery texts beyond the parochial, suggesting the influence of domestic discourses from Victorian England. Cookbooks reproduce dominant gendered ideologies as "explicit emblems of women's relegation to the domestic sphere — the world of the home."[1] Yet boundaries shift and blur when these texts also demonstrate how women, ostensibly acting in their traditional capacities as housekeeper and caregiver, could influence the well-being of the family, the wider community and beyond.

This essay examines individuals in Malaya who were privileged enough to have received English language education, who saw the value of penning down what they knew and who possessed the wherewithal to publish their writings. The primary focus is on English-language cookbooks, largely due to the relative paucity of extant vernacular cookery texts published in the same period.

THE RECIPE BOOK AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

A recipe book may seem unique to the socio-cultural context in which it was written and published, but, it speaks across time when it borrows from earlier works and draws on the conventions of its genre. In contextualising the recipe book within the history of British publishing, Margaret Beetham said: "The systematic reproduction of cooking instructions in commercial forms of print was symptomatic of a much wider process by which oral knowledges (sic) were gradually superseded by print."[2] Instructions on food preparation appeared as part of general household advice in printed books of "receipts" that predated the 19th century as well as in magazines and manuals that increasingly targeted a middle-class female readership since the 1850s.[3]

Published in 1861, *Beeton's Book of Household Management* was instrumental to the birth of the recipe book as a popular print genre by the end of the century.[4] Its subsequent publishing history contributed to the transformation of cookery into a subject with its own distinct cultural form. The recipe book thus added to an existing body of writing that mapped the domestic sphere and exposed the otherwise hidden labour performed by women. By instructing women on their expected behaviour and responsibilities in the home, these texts reified and affirmed the assumed conjunction between femininity and domesticity.

Beeton's seminal work was typical of the general household manual of the time, providing an array of advice, anecdotes, trivia, historical notes and other information usually of tangential relevance to the recipes being discussed.[5] As Beeton herself acknowledged in the preface of her book, she obtained the bulk of this material from readers' contributions to the first successful middle-class woman's magazine in Britain, *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, published by Isabella's husband, Samuel Beeton.

Her volume nevertheless contained an innovation that has since become a defining characteristic of the recipe book. Beeton "codified a previously chaotic body of knowledge"[6] by introducing a standard format for organising and presenting recipes in a systematic way. This includes the listing of ingredients (by weight) followed by the method of preparation and estimated cost for a given recipe, arranging recipes in alphabetical order and providing an index to facilitate the location of information within the dense text.[7] Furthermore, cooking methods were elaborated in a straightforward and impersonal style.

In this way, Beeton's volume delineated the practicalities of running the home with unprecedented clarity and brevity. This paved the way for "a science of domestic management, one that could be systematically taught through textbooks."[8] As a result, Beeton not only articulated the responsibilities and expected conduct of the middle-class woman as the mistress of the household but also provided detailed and precise instructions for the fulfilment of her role. Therein lies the "public normalising impulse"[9] of the cookbook, among other household manuals, in setting the criteria for the proper management of the kitchen/domestic sphere and as the arbiter of consumption.

"MRS BEETON" ARRIVES IN MALAYA

The success of Beeton's book lies in its ability to explicitly address the particular cultural anxieties of its intended audience by offering a feminine ideal to which the women could aspire. Decades after its initial publication, "Mrs Beeton" still spoke with authority and relevance to a new generation of Englishwomen setting up their homes in the far-flung lands of the British Empire.

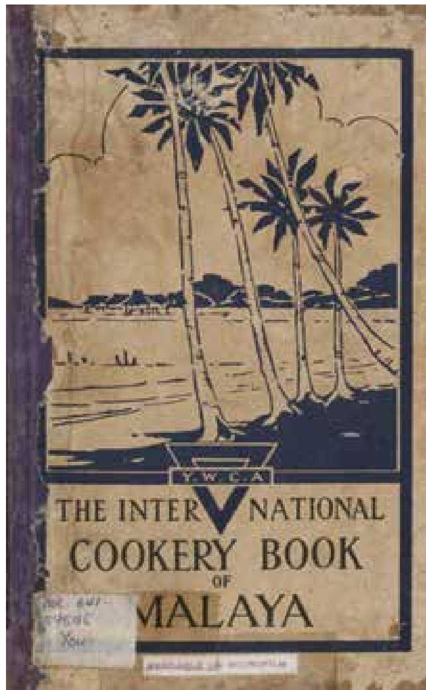
By the early 20th century, extracts of the original work had been published in booklet form under the name of "Mrs Beeton". Nearly all such spin-offs were recipe or cookery books, thus cementing the association between "Mrs Beeton" and cooking instruction.[10] "I used to spend the mornings reading, sewing, and *teaching myself to cook* [emphasis added] out of Mrs Beeton," recalled "V. St. J." of her days as a young expatriate wife re-

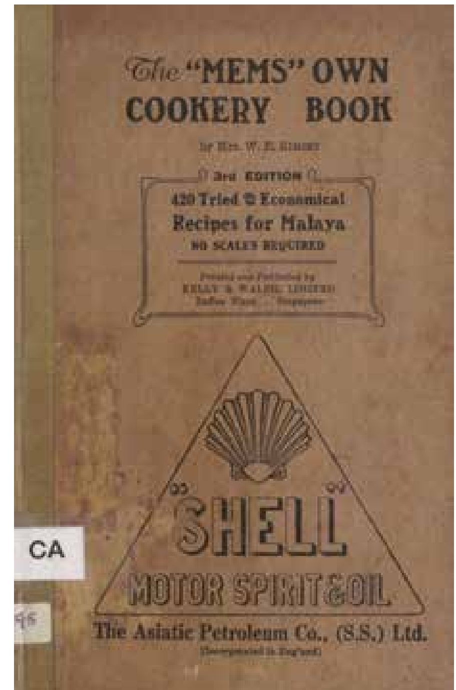
(OPPOSITE) Illustrations of kitchen equipment commonly found in a Malayan kitchen.
All rights reserved, Susie Hing, In A Malayan Kitchen, *Mun Seong Press, Singapore, 1952.*

siding in the *ulu* [remote] hinterlands of the Malayan peninsula.[11]

In Malaya, the recipe book became indispensable to the newly arrived European wife, or *memsahib*[12] (often truncated as *mem*), as a guide to reproducing home — or rather the familiar taste of it — abroad. More than a means for educating the self, the recipe book was used to instruct servants where, for example, "with the aid of "Mrs Beeton" and a little tact and courage [the *mem*] may convert a bad or indifferent cook into a quite presentable exponent of the art."[13]

Beyond the use of "Mrs Beeton" books in colonial homes, the "presence" of "Mrs Beeton" in Malaya alludes to the translation of feminine domesticity from Victorian England to the Malayan context in the form of texts that deal with cookery. While it is admittedly difficult to determine the extent of direct influence that Beeton's volume had on Malayan cookery texts, "Mrs Beeton", as a symbol of domesticity, an embodiment of the multi-layered nature and discursive potential of the recipe book, as "a practical manual, and a method for scientific education and a fantasy text"[14] offer approaches to interpreting the recipe books of Malaya.





"I think [The Y.W.C.A cookery book] is without exception the best and most helpful Malayan book of its kind I have ever opened [...] Every young wife should have it with her, and every older woman will be glad to cull hints from its leaves"

— SAVAGE BAILEY, K. (1935, AUGUST 1). AN OLD RESIDENT ON MALAYAN COOKERY. THE STRAITS TIMES, P. 22.

THE MYTH OF THE LAZY MEM

> "The housewives who come out to Malaya from Europe may be divided into two distinct groups. The first is composed of dilettante wives, who leave everything pertaining to culinary matters and the control of their households entirely to their native staffs, and who, consequently, are for ever (sic) complaining of the lack of flavour and nourishment of the food in Malaya and the absence of training and honesty of those who serve them. The other group consists of those who take an intelligent interest in the supplies and preparation of food and all which affects the comfort of their homes. [...] Has it not been said, "Home-making hearts are happiest."
> — E. M. M. (1933, April 23). "The housewives of Malaya". *The Singapore Free Press* and *Mercantile Advertiser*, p. 1.

The above observation made by an experienced *mem* implies that the fundamental purpose — in fact, the very happiness — of the English wife in Malaya resides in the conscientious care of the home. The establishment of the English home in colonial territories led to a "physical repositioning of the hitherto private into [...] the most public of realms — the British empire."[15] As will be subsequently explained, this intersection of domesticity with imperial power provided an avenue through which European women could advance the work of the British Empire in ways that were consistent with prevailing gender roles.

By maintaining domestic standards, wives were regarded as a civilising influence that preserved colonial culture and prestige against the perceived degenerative tendencies of tropical living.[16] The upkeep of the colonial household heavily depended upon the labour of a racially diverse team of servants. The responsibility of overseeing the staff fell to the *mem*, whose conduct and successful administration of the household mirrored and reproduced the unequal relations between coloniser and colonised.[17]

The domestic role of the European wife thus carried a political significance in reinforcing colonial dominance within and without. With reference to the earlier comments of E. M. M., it was the availability of domestic help — especially competent and reliable ones — that minimised *mem*'s involvement in the actual work of cooking and cleaning.[18] As a British resident in the 1930s had noted, "Flocks of silent servants see to every detail; even the housewife has only one duty, to have an interview with Cookie [the cook] once a day."[19] In light of this, colonial cookery books were part of the "cultural technologies of rule"[20] that guided the *mem* in her civilising mission and supervisory role. The domestic and imperial power of the British housewife was predicated not only on her knowledge of homemaking in colonial settings but also her ability to manage the servants.[21]

(ABOVE LEFT) *The Y.M.C.A. International Cookery Book of Malaya* was a very successful cookbook with nine editions. It was first published in 1932.

(ABOVE RIGHT) First published in 1920, *"Mems" Own* featured a recipe style that was quite different from the Beeton format.

First published in 1920, W. E. Kinsey's *The "Mems" Own Cookery Book*[22] (*"Mems" Own*) would have been much favoured by the "other group" of European housewives who took "an intelligent interest" in domestic affairs. Kinsey expressed that the book aims "to help those '*mems*' who are keen on taking advantage of the possibilities of catering in this country."[23] Boasting 420 "tried and economical" recipes based on "FIVE Years (sic) [...] practical application by the writer", Kinsey clearly presented herself as an authority on colonial cooking. As if to allay any doubts, the preface concludes with an "IMPORTANT (sic)" note declaring "*ALL* (sic) these recipes have been TRIED AND PROVED (sic) by the writer in Seremban, Negri Sembilan, F. M. S." Kinsey thus appealed to aspiring *mems* with the prospect of efficient domestic management made easier through failsafe recipes — "not one is beyond the resources of the average kitchen even in the absence of scales".[24]

The instruction for each dish weaves together ingredients, method and personal opinion in a single paragraph. No doubt a cookery book, *"Mems" Own*, however, did not adopt the Beeton format, which demonstrates how older styles of recipe writing continued alongside newer conventions. Reflecting the hybrid nature of colonial cuisine, the recipes cover quintessential English fare as well as French and Anglo-Indian dishes familiar to the British palate. The *mem* is therefore able to overcome "the extreme difficulty of fixing the menu for the next day [...] by constructing a roster of courses"[25] from Kinsey's recipes. Then, book in hand, the *mem* "can either prepare herself or instruct 'cookie' in a host of dishes which should do a great deal to remove the charge of monotony which is sometimes levelled at food in Malaya."[26]

Most of the recipes state the market price of the ingredients, the total cost of the dish and the number of servings. For example, the recipe for Bone Soup states: "Ten cents worth of good beef bones (about two *katties*) [...] Cost about 16 cents [in total]. Enough for two or three persons."[27] By placing such information at the *mem*'s disposal, Kinsey hoped that her book would "assist to combat the pernicious policy of the native cooks who not only overcharge for local commodities, but generally will not produce them, or attempt to raise non-existent difficulties."[28]

The colonial cookbook was an administrative text that conceivably helped the *mem* to regulate the daily functioning of the kitchen/domestic sphere. In practice, the establishment of imperial domesticity was marked by negotiation as opposed to the outright imposition of the *mem*'s will.[29] The colonial diet depended not only on the cook's familiarity with local ingredients and how they should be prepared, but also on the cook's intimate knowledge of his or her employers' preferences.

Mary Heathcott recounts an episode where, tired of the usual *ikan merah* (red snapper) and pomfret, her attempt to introduce a new fish encountered resistance from her cook, Ah Lee, as he protested "Fish no good" and even questioned, "Why you not buy *ikan merah*?" While Ah Lee eventually cooked the fish for lunch, Heathcott "had the ground undermined beneath [her] feet" by her family's refusal to eat the fish on account that "The cook knows. It's probably bad [...] and we'll all look much sillier with fish poisoning."[30] Heathcott pronounced this incident a "Complete rout of Mem".[31] In this particular instance, *mem* had the last laugh as she later discovers from *Malayan Fish and How to Cook Them*,[32] that the fish was, in fact, edible and of "good flavour".

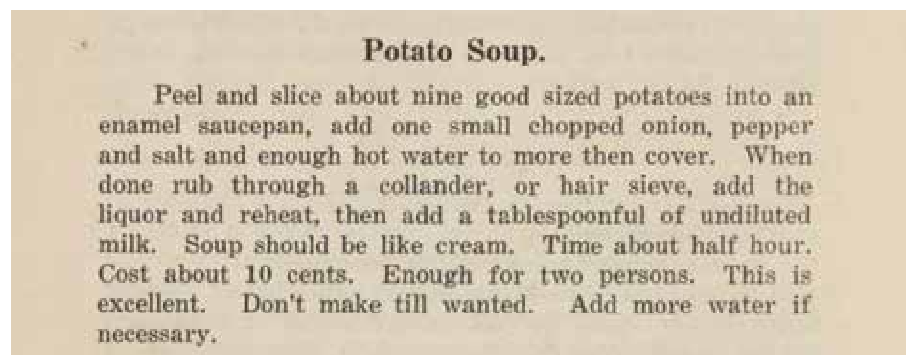
THE DOMESTICATION OF MALAYAN FOODS

Cookbooks reveal the processes through which the colonial knowledge of Malaya was constructed. The inclusion of recipes for *rundang* (a spicy meat stew, or *rendang*) and *satai* (skewered, grilled meat or *satay*) in *"Mems" Own* introduced and explicated the preparation and consumption of otherwise unfamiliar local foods, consequently normalising their presence within the colonial diet.

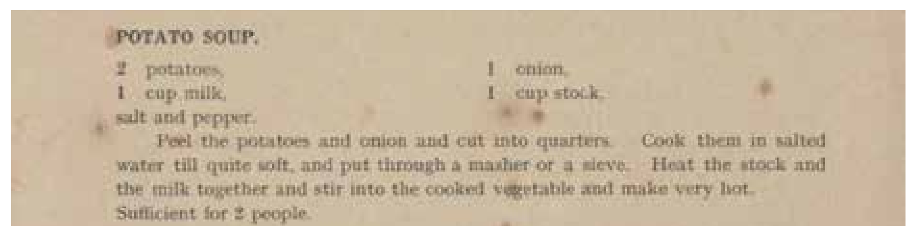
Published in 1935, the second edition of the Y.W.C.A *International Cookery Book of Malaya* by Mrs R. E. Holttum and Mrs T. W. Hinch differs markedly from Kinsey's work in ways that signal the extent to which food and nutrition in Malaya had become a subject of intellectual and practical study. As a compilation of "the numerous recipes used in the international cooking lessons conducted [...] by the [Young Women's Christian] Association,"[33] the volume is perhaps more closely identified with the teaching of domestic science than *"Mems" Own*.

In contrast to the almost exclusive focus on recipes in Kinsey's book, the Y.W.C.A volume offers comprehensive guidance that covers meal planning, purchase of ingredients and other preparatory tasks preliminary to the actual cooking. Most sections are prefaced by general remarks on cooking methods and principles; for example, a brief overview on "How to make soup"[34] precedes the section on the soup recipes. The ingredients are listed separately from the cooking process of which each step is relayed plainly and succinctly.

Placing the knowledge of local foods and the colonial diet on a scientific footing, the Y.W.C.A cookbook introduces the concept of "food values", in which an individual's energy and nutritional requirements dictate the basis for efficient and healthful eating in the tropics.[35] This is complemented by a "chemical analyses


Potato Soup.

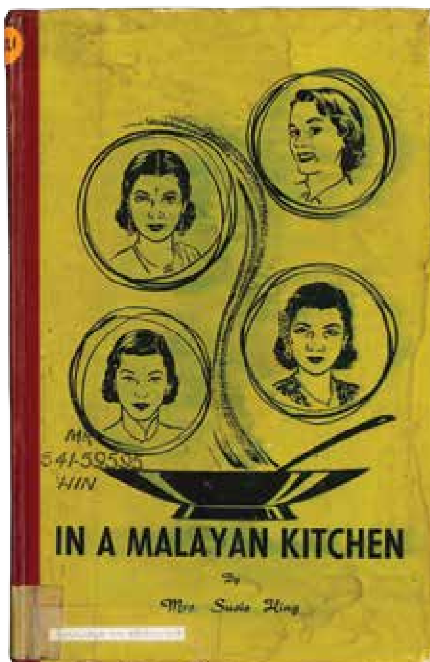
Peel and slice about nine good sized potatoes into an enamel saucepan, add one small chopped onion, pepper and salt and enough hot water to more then cover. When done rub through a collander, or hair sieve, add the liquor and reheat, then add a tablespoonful of undiluted milk. Soup should be like cream. Time about half hour. Cost about 10 cents. Enough for two persons. This is excellent. Don't make till wanted. Add more water if necessary.


POTATO SOUP.

2 potatoes. 1 onion.
1 cup milk. 1 cup stock.
salt and pepper.

Peel the potatoes and onion and cut into quarters. Cook them in salted water till quite soft, and put through a masher or a sieve. Heat the stock and the milk together and stir into the cooked vegetable and make very hot. Sufficient for 2 people.

(ABOVE) Note the stylistic differences for the same potato soup recipe between *"Mems" Own* and the *Y.W.C.A cookbook*. *(Top: Kinsey, 1929, p.10; Bottom: Holttum & Hinch, 1935, p. 52.)*



of Malayan foods", in which over 90 local products, including *blachan* (dried shrimp paste), shark's fin and edible bird's nest, are reduced to their caloric content and nutritional composition.[36]

This unravelling of the exotic and unknown is further augmented by a glossary of Malay and English names for local market produce. Moreover, the recipes are divided into European, Chinese, Indian and Malay sections — corresponding to the colonial scheme of racial classification. As knowledge is integral to power, cookbooks are conceivably part of the colonialist attempts to bolster a coherent understanding of Malaya through mastery over "even the most mundane aspects of imperial life."[37] The women who compiled these cookbooks are thus implicated in the making of the empire.

In her study of European wives in British Malaya, Janice Brownfoot notes that *mems*, freed from household chores, devoted their time to charitable and voluntary welfare work through all-female organisations such as the Y.W.C.A. Brownfoot argues that the formation of these groups indicated women's recognition of shared feminine interests that cut across racial and class lines.[38] Instructing non-European women on cookery and other domestic skills allowed the *mem* to mobilise her knowledge towards uplifting the welfare of the colonial populace, thus exercising her civilising influence. Brownfoot describes the Y.W.C.A as at once both conservative and progressive because, despite its emphasis on the importance of traditional domestic duties and feminine skills, it exposed Asian women to Western ideas and methods.[39]

The Y.W.C.A cookbook not only attests to the work accomplished by the Association but also uncovers the kind of community network and collaboration that made such an assemblage of information possible. While *"Mems" Own* was based on the experience of an individual housewife, the original Y.W.C.A cookbook and its subsequent editions were put together with contributions and feedback from "readers of all nationalities."[40]

In fact, the preface of the book acknowledges the "help of Chinese and Indian friends"[41] whose names are duly appended to their respective recipes. The impression of egalitarian participation and cultural exchange is tempered by how it was, after all, a pair of expatriate wives who undertook the critical work of collecting, editing, organising, representing and finally, returning the information in cookbook form to Malaya, as a gift from its "civiliser".[42]

BECOMING "MRS BEETON" OF MALAYA

> "Perhaps one day some lady living in Malaya will give her time and patience to research in Malayan cookery, and if she has a flair for cooking herself, be able to write down the information in those measures and method-descriptions that we know as recipes."
> — Holttum & Hinch (1935), p. 196.

Holttum and Hinch would have been pleased to learn of Che Azizah binte Ja'affar who, in November 1950, was "compiling a cookery book with international recipes giving exact quantities of all ingredients for each dish."[43] Che Azizah was "very interested in cookery" and sought to give traditional Malay dishes "a new twist" with the infusion of Western techniques where, for example, she baked *otak-otak* (a concoction of fish paste and spices) in a pastry case instead of coconut leaves.[44] Desiring "more education [...] and more economic independence"[45] for Malay women, she ran a domestic science school in Johor and was personally involved in "teaching her pupils how to run their homes on modern, hygienic lines, [and] how to provide meals which are delicious and nutritious."[46] For her efforts, Che Azizah was described as "perhaps [...] another Mrs Beeton [for she was] not only a good cook but a very progressively minded woman as well."[47]

It is intriguing how Asian women, particularly those who were trained in domestic science and became its proponents, could be viewed as having adopted attributes associated with Western notions of feminine modernity. "MRS BEETON' IN ACTION (sic)" ran the caption of a photograph in *The Straits Times* that showed Esther Chen, author of two books on Chinese cooking, teaching in the kitchen of the Y.W.C.A in 1954. The writer highlighted the presence of several European women in the beginners' class, however, "no European woman has yet graduated to the advanced classes..."[48]

Che Azizah was one among several who gained recognition for their culinary expertise to the extent of being dubbed "Mrs Beeton", which suggests comparability with those whom they emulated. Such cultural appropriation symbolised both submission and subversion.[49] Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery but successful mimicry at the same time undermined the myth of colonial superiority.[50]

The cookbook offered Asian women, as it did for European women, "a textual apparatus which enabled [...] some claim to legitimation and public spaces."[51] Published in 1956, Susie Hing's *In a Malayan Kitchen* provides recipes for "dishes as varied and as colourful as our Malayan people"[52], thus expressing a nascent national consciousness at a time of decolonisation and political awakening.

In her introduction to the book, Hing casts ethnic pluralism in a positive light as "one of the most attractive things about living in Malaya [...], affording as it does many opportunities to absorb something from each and everyone."[53] The variety of food is not only a boon to those interested in cookery but, more importantly, it "provides [...] opportunities through mankind's common factor, the appetite, for barriers to be broken down and understanding to develop."[54]

Unlike the Y.W.C.A volume, the recipes in Hing's book are presented together in one chapter regardless of their ethnic affiliations. For example, the recipes for Java *nasi goreng* (fried rice) and Cantonese-style fried rice are listed in the same category, "Dishes", in the index. In fact, both recipes are featured on the same page. This manner of mapping the culinary di-

(TOP) *In a Malayan Kitchen* by Mrs Susie Hing was published in 1956 and did not segregate recipes along ethnic lines.

versity of Malaya encourages the reader to readily perceive commonalities between the cuisine of her community and that of others. Hing's cookbook thus points to how women, through the food they prepare, create opportunities in which they and their families, and by extension, their communities, could experience — albeit superficially — the everyday lives of fellow Malayans.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As has been shown, cookbooks can be read beyond their literal content to explore meanings embedded in the structure, tone, language and other aspects of textuality. The cookbook has emerged as a cultural form that not only reaffirmed the association between domesticity and femininity but is also identified with female self-expression. The cookbook is an amalgamation of ideas and inspirations derived from women (and men) of different generations, ethnicities and even social strata as recipes are recurrently exchanged and reproduced.

Insofar as cookbooks appear to document reality, they possess an element of fantasy in prescribing a feminine ideal that may not concur with the real-life experiences of its readers. Cookbooks allow women to maintain a self-image that conforms to convention, while at the same time offer an opportunity to envision themselves in positions of authority and influence. Even if women merely perused the recipes and daydreamed about cooking, cookbooks nonetheless have the potential to transform how women perceived themselves and their identities.[55] ●

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37. Procida (2003), p. 138.
38. Brownfoot (1984), p. 199.
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SPICY NATION: FROM INDIA TO

Indian cuisine is a hot favourite of Singaporeans. (TOP TO BOTTOM) Indian *rojak*, *mee goreng*, *roti prata (Eleanor Foong, ImipolexG, weesen via Flickr)*, fish head curry and *masala* prawns *(courtesy of Muthu's curry)*.

SINGAPORE

From fish head curry to Indian *rojak*, Indian food in Singapore has evolved over time, drawing influences from the various local cultures, and finding its place in the hearts of Singaporeans.

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> "The discovery of a new dish does more for the happiness of man than the discovery of a star."
> — Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

Indian cuisine is one of the most diverse in the world. India's rich culinary heritage is closely linked with its ancient culture, traditions and mosaic of religious beliefs. Each region in India, despite using almost the same basic spices and herbs, employs a range of cooking techniques to produce unique and tantalising dishes found nowhere else in the world.

A SPICE FOR EVERY NEED

Spices are the heart and soul of Indian cuisine; the use of spices has been an ancient tradition "recorded in Sanskrit texts 3,000 years ago."[1] The secret of Indian cuisine lies in the artful combination of spices, finding the right balance of each spice and tempering them skilfully in order to give each dish its distinct full-bodied flavour and aroma.

Spices are also believed to have medicinal properties. India's ancient Ayurvedic medicine offers a "holistic form of healing"[2] that lists the five basic tastes: sweet, sour, salty, pungent and bitter. Spices such as asafoetida, anise, cinnamon, cumin, turmeric, clove, fennel, cardamom, nutmeg, fenugreek seeds, mustard seeds, saffron, coriander, curry leaves, bay leaves along with chilli, ginger, onion and garlic (many of which are grown in India) are commonly used to relieve indigestion, infections, the common cold, arthritic pains, and even to keep cholesterol levels in check and protect against heart disease. Spices are so important to India that a dedicated Spices Board was established in 1986 with 32 members and its headquarters in Cochin, Kerala.[3]

Apart from using spices individually, *masala*, basically a mix of spices, is used to add flavour even to the simplest of dishes.[4] *Masala* comes in various combi-

nations, from dry mixtures to wet pastes, from the more common North Indian *garam masala* — typically a mix of peppercorns, cumin, clove, cinnamon and cardamom pods — to a fiery South Indian coconut-based *masala*. These *masala* concoctions can range in taste from mild to searingly hot.

Curry, Curry Leaves and Curry Powder

Native to India and Sri Lanka, the curry leaf is an important herb in South Indian cooking. This small, fragrant and dark green leaf has a distinctive peppery flavour that adds robustness to any dish. Curry leaves are chopped or used whole and added to hot oil for tempering, and used as garnishes in salads, curries, marinades and soups to improve the taste. As observed by Wendy Hutton in Singapore Food, *the Indians say there is "no substitute for these small, dark green leaves from the* karuvapillai *tree." The use of curry leaves is even mentioned in early Tamil literature dating back to the 1st to 4th century CE.*

Intriguingly, what we commonly understand as "curry" originates from a Tamil word for spiced sauces. More specifically, it refers to "a mixture of spices including cumin, coriander, turmeric, fennel, fenugreek, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom and often garlic, with chilli [as the] the dominant spice." Curry powder is actually something that the British created for commercial reasons and in fact never existed in India until the 18th century.

A curry could have plenty of gravy from the use of coconut milk, yoghurt or pulverised dhal, *or legumes to thin out the spice mixture. Dry curries, on the other hand, tend to be more intense in flavour as most of the liquid used in their preparation has been allowed to evaporate.*

NORTH INDIAN DELIGHTS

Although influenced by different religions and traditions, as well as varying regional climates, India's culinary delights can generally be categorised into northern and southern cuisines.

The Moghuls who ruled northern India for 300 years were Muslims, and this region has many Indian restaurants that do not serve pork. The Moghuls introduced the Persian style of cooking to Indian cuisine, which is why North Indian food is milder and less restrained in its use of spices. Mughali dishes, such as creamy *korma* curries and fragrant rice dishes like *briyani* and *pulao* use exotic spices, and dried fruits and nuts.[5] It is in also in the north, at the Himalayan foothills of Jammu and Kashmir and Dera Dun, where basmati rice, the long grain rice also called the "the king of rice", is grown.[6] This aromatic rice is used in the cooking of *briyani* and complements most Indian food.

Another popular dish in North India is *tandoori* chicken, traditionally cooked in a *tandoor* (clay oven). It is simply prepared with yogurt and spices yet this tantalising dish is a favourite with many diners. A popular Kashmiri dish, *roghan josh* is lamb marinated in yogurt and spices. *Mishani* is a seven-course lamb dish that is widely served in Kashmiri weddings and it is an item most sought after in wedding menus.

Punjab, also known as the breadbox of India, is famous for its assortment of leavened and unleavened bread, such as *naan*, *chapati* bread, and *tandoori rotis*. Interestingly, it was the Moghuls from Persia who introduced *naan* ("bread" in Persian) to northern India.

FIERY SOUTH INDIAN FOOD

The time-honoured food traditions of South India continue till this day and it is not unusual to see South Indians sitting cross-legged on a floor mat eating off a stainless steel plate (*thali*) or a fresh banana leaf. South Indian dishes are often spicier than their North Indian counterparts, and often include coconut (used to make chutneys and curries) and rice, which is a staple food in the south. South Indian dishes do not use as much ghee (clarified butter) and yoghurt as North Indian ones. Many spices, such as fenugreek, dried red chillies, mustard seeds and peppercorn, used in South Indian cooking lend the cuisine its fiery reputation. Common South Indian dishes include *dosa* or *thosai* (crispy savoury pancakes), *idli* (steamed rice cakes), *sambhar* (lentil curry) and *vadai* (fritters).

INDIAN SWEETS

Whether in the north or south, sweets, most of which are highly calorific and contain lashings of sugar and ghee, are traditionally served after meals. *Payasam* (in Tamil) or *kheer* (in Hindi), made of rice or wheat vermicelli, is commonly eaten during festive occasions and weddings. The *payasam* served at Ambalappuzha Temple (see text box) in Kerala is especially famous among Hindu devotees.[7] Other traditional Indian sweets include *gulab jamun*, *mysore pak*, *halwa* and *laddoo*. *Gulab jamun* are little balls of milk powder and plain flour deep fried and drenched in sugary syrup, and usually served at North Indian weddings. *Mysore pak* — made of ghee, gram flour and sugar — hails from Mysore, in the southern state of Karnataka. It is often referred to as a royal sweet as it was concocted in the kitchen of Mysore Palace for the king. There are several variations of *halwa* with either semolina, wheat flour, mung bean or carrot as its base while *laddoo* are bright orange ball-shaped confections offered as a *prasad* (gift) to guests at weddings and religious occasions.

(ABOVE) An assortment of spices that make up curry powder. *Hildgrim, via Flickr.*

(ABOVE) *Gulab jamun* is a popular sweet dessert. *Image via iStock.*

THE ORIGINS OF VEGETARIANISM

The roots of vegetarianism in India can be traced to religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. Many consider "Indian cuisine … to be the cradle of vegetarian culinary art."[8] Gujeratis, who are mostly vegetarian, have perfected the art of vegetarian cooking. Using the simplest ingredients, they transform the most basic dishes into mouthwatering delicacies. Typically, a Gujerati meal begins with cumin-spiked buttermilk, followed by hot fluffy *roti* (unleavened bread), accompanied by a variety of lentils, vegetables, curds and pickles.

The South Indians also offer an astonishing variety of vegetarian dishes. Both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have a "strong vegetarian bent to their cuisine."[9] In Kerala, during an ancient harvest festival called the Onam festival, as many as 24 vegetarian dishes are served at just one sitting. Indian cooks take great pride in creating exciting vegetarian dishes out of exotic greens like snake gourd, ridge gourd and the pod-like drumstick or *murungakai* in Tamil, as well as more prosaic leafy vegetables, lentils, dried beans of all kinds, and unripened jackfruit and plantains.

INDIAN VEGETARIAN RESTAURANTS

Multicultural Singapore is a paradise for food. Among the many local cuisines available here, Indian food is one of the favourites. The early Tamil immigrants opened their first Indian vegetarian eatery, Ananda Bhavan Vegetarian Restaurant, in 1924 along Selegie Road to satiate the appetites of homesick Indians. Known as the "most authentic old world restaurant,"[10] the original Selegie Road outlet has since closed but there are five branches, the largest of which is located along Serangoon Road. Its signature dishes cover a wide range of traditional dishes such as *thosai*, *idli*, *chapati* (bread made from whole wheat flour) and *puri* (deep fried bread).

Komala Vilas, another vegetarian restaurant, opened in 1934, and has been proclaimed by some as the most popular vegetarian restaurant in Singapore. The restaurant owner, Mr Gunasekaran, says the reason why Komala Vilas has remained popular is because it has successfully retained its traditional flavours all these years without any compromise. His late father Mr Rajoo, whose hometown is in Thanjaur (renowned for its good food) in Tamil Nadu, South India, was the founder of Komala Vilas. "Komala" was the name of his boss's wife and "vilas" means home. So Komala Vilas means a home for good Indian vegetarian food.

Komala Vilas' speciality is the *masala thosai*; so popular that even non-Indians love it. It is a crisp, savoury, thin pancake eaten with potatoes spiced with *masala*. Other accompaniments include *sambhar* (lentil curry) and coconut chutney. The restaurant hardly advertises and it has been through word of mouth that Komala Vilas has expanded to three locations and is now a household name in Singapore.

When Mr Gunasekaran noticed more and more people ordering *masala thosai*, he added more varieties. The menu has since expanded from simple *thosai* to other South Indian dishes like, *idli*, variations of *thosai* (crisp thin Indian pancake), *rava thosai*, (*thosai* made with semolina flour) pepper *thosai*, *utthappam*, (thick pancake)

A Legendary Dessert

According to Hindu legend, Lord Krishna transformed into an old sage one day and challenged the arrogant king of the region of Kerala to a chess game. The wager for the game was rice. Eventually, the king lost the game as well as his kingdom's precious rice reserves. Lord Krishna revealed his true identity and told the king that instead of giving him his rice, he should instead serve payasam *— a dessert porridge made of rice, ghee, milk and brown sugar, and garnished with raisins and cashew nuts — to pilgrims who visited the Ambalappuzha Temple in Kerala. At many Indian vegetarian restaurants today, a variation of* payasam *made of broken bits of wheat vermicelli instead of rice is served as a sweet ending to the meal.*

(TOP AND CENTRE) The interior and exterior of Komala Vilas in 1986. The restaurant has since been renovated and has five branches. *Courtesy of ISEAS Library, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore and Sharon Siddiique.*

vadai (a savoury snack made from dal, lentil or gram flour and deep fried), as well as North Indian meals with an assortment of chutneys. Its subsidiary, Komalas, run by Mr Gunasekaran's brother, employs a fast food concept to vegetarian food.

SINGAPOREAN INDIAN FARE

Some of the most renowned Indian restaurants in Singapore are Samy's Curry, which opened in the 1950s, Muthu's Curry in 1969 and Banana Leaf Apolo in 1974. These three restaurants are known in particular for their mouthwatering and eye-poppingly hot fish head curry. Few people are aware that fish head curry is actually a Singaporean concoction. Eating the fish head is not something common among ethnic Indians, as only those who could not afford to buy the whole fish would eat the head. On the other hand, the Chinese had long ago discovered the delectable sweetness of the flesh from the head and cheeks of a fish; the Teochews for instance eat steamed fish head with ginger and pickled vegetables. Enterprising Indian restaurateurs must have noticed this peculiar habit and decided to experiment cooking fish head with curry spices instead, leading to the birth of this fusion dish.[11] No one could have imagined its popularity.

The genesis of fish head curry can be traced to an Indian migrant, Mr M.J. Gomez, who originally came from Kerala. He "began humbly with an eating shop in Mt Sophia which was, back in 1952, a relatively quiet little suburban backwater behind the Cathay cinema. The most famous dish, prepared by Gomez, was fish head curry, a culinary delight reputedly unknown in Singapore before his arrival."[12] Mr Gomez used the huge heads of *ikan merah* and grouper in a piping hot and spicy curry dish complemented by chunks of eggplant and lady's fingers, and flavoured with onions, garlic, ginger, turmeric, chilli and curry leaves. Fish head aficionados know that the tastiest part of the fish head are the fleshy pockets at the side of the head, where the meat is the sweetest and most textured.[13]

The Gomez eatery eventually closed, but with the opening of Muthu's Curry in 1969, the fish head curry craze was revived. From a small coffee shop in Klang Road, the restaurant now has three outlets at Race Course Road, Suntec City and Dempsey Road. Today, fish head curry is one of Singapore's most iconic foods. This single dish from Muthu's Curry has won numerous accolades such as "Best Local Dish" by the Singapore Tourism Board, "Best Fish Head Curry" by *Makansutra* and "Best Local Food — Fish Head Curry" by *Singapore Tatler* from 2010 to 2013.[14]

Nasi briyani is another favourite Indian dish in Singapore. Islamic Restaurant along North Bridge Road is one of the oldest culinary institutions in Singapore, started by the late Mr M. Abdul Rahman in 1921. Prior to the opening of his restaurant, he had been the "head chef for the Alsagoffs" serving the renowned *briyani* to foreign guests of this prominent Arab family in Singapore. This dish eventually became the signature dish for Islamic Restaurant. Patronised by many of Singapore's leaders such as former presidents Yusoff Ishak and S.R. Nathan, Islamic Restaurant is still a favourite haunt of foreign politicians like Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak."[15]

Another example of a hybrid Indian dish is *mee goreng*, which is yellow wheat noodles fried with chillies, potato cubes, bean sprouts, tomato ketchup and spices. It may have been adapted from Chinese fried noodles, *char kway teow*, to suit the Indian palate. The Tamil-Muslim Chulia community originally from Madras (present-day Chennai) popularised the dish, and this is why it is associated with the Indian-Muslim community in Singapore.[16] Indian *rojak* is another "fusion" food unique to Singapore (in Malaysia it is referred to as *pasembor*). Apparently, the Tamil-Muslims who came from Thakkali in Tamil Nadu were inspired by *mee siam* gravy and decided to adapt it by using mashed sweet potatoes as a thickener. This spicy and sweet gravy is served as a dipping sauce for deep-fried chunks of tofu, potatoes, tem-

(ABOVE) Opened in 1969, Muthu's Curry is renowned for its signature dish, fish head curry. *Courtesy of Muthu's Curry*.

The Ubiquitous Roti Prata

Roti prata is the most popular and common Indian food in Singapore. Indian migrants brought this griddle-toasted flatbread to Singapore and "by the 1920s, this dish was established throughout the Malayan peninsula."[18] It is thought to have originated from Madras where it is known as parota. *Some believe that it originated from Punjab where it is called* prontha *or* parontay. *In South India and Bengal, it is called* parotta, porotta *or* barotta, *while in Sri Lanka, it is known as* kothu parotta. *In Mauritius and Maldives, it is called farata and in Myanmar as* palata. *Across the causeway in Malaysia, it is known as* roti canai. *While some believe* "canai" *refers to "Chennai", others say* "canai" *is derived from the Malay word for the process of kneading and shaping the dough.*[19]

Roti prata *is a crisp and flaky flatbread that is often eaten with a Hyderabadi-style mutton rib curry cooked with lentils called* dalcha. *Over time, Singapore has evolved into a* prata *paradise with many innovative incarnations of prata available in Indian-Muslim stalls as well as restaurants.* Prata shops like *Thasevi Food in Jalan Kayu and The Roti Prata House in Upper Thomson among others offer numerous varieties, from egg* prata *and chicken floss* prata *to combination flavours like cheese and mushroom, cheese and pineapple, cheese and chicken and even ice cream. There is also a* prata *buffet available at Clay Oven restaurant in Dempsey Road. The humble* roti prata *is even listed at number 45 on the World's 50 Most Delicious Foods readers' poll compiled by CNN Go in 2011.*[20]

peh, hard-boiled eggs and flour fritters. *Sup kambing*, or mutton soup, is another Indian-Muslim fusion dish that takes its cue from Chinese cuisine. Soup is almost never served in Indian households, but in this hybrid dish, chunks of mutton is slow-cooked in a robust, peppery soup and served with cubes of crusty French loaf.

Indian food is one of the world's oldest cuisines with a long and rich tradition. With the spread of the Indian diaspora to Singapore, Indian cuisine here has evolved, picking up Southeast Asian ingredients and nuances in flavour. Authentic Indian restaurants abound in Singapore, but of more interest to culinary historians is the impact of Indian food on the local food scene and the interesting amalgamation of Indian and regional flavours that result in uniquely Singaporean dishes. In this sense, food can be seen as a physical manifestation of Singapore's multicultural society, where the influence of one cuisine upon another results in something quite extraordinary.[17]●

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(ABOVE) *Roti prata* is now an integral part of Singapore's cuisine. *rpslee, via Flickr.*

INTO THE MELTING POT FOOD AS CULTURE

Through the lens of that unique Lunar New Year creation *yu sheng*, find out how the simplest dishes can be canvases upon which cultural and national identities are inscribed.

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ACCORDING TO CHINESE FOLKLORE, THE FOUR corners of the sky collapsed onto itself after a fierce battle between the gods of water and fire. The Chinese Goddess Nuwa tempered five-coloured stones to mend the sky, then cut off the feet of a great but luckless turtle, whose formidable appendages were used as struts to hold up the firmament.

Her work done, Nuwa grew restless and a little lonely, so on the first day, she created chickens to keep her company. On the second day, she created dogs, followed by sheep on the third, pigs on the fourth, cows on the fifth and horses on the sixth. On the seventh day, Nuwa folded up the sleeves of her robes and fashioned human beings from yellow clay, sculpting each one carefully. She was fatigued — and a little impatient — after creating hundreds of such figures in this manner, so she dipped a rope in the clay and flicked it so that blobs of clay landed everywhere. The handcrafted figures became nobles, while the blobs turned into commoners.

This seventh day falls on *zhengyue*, the first month of the Chinese calendar and is known as *renri* (literally Human Day) — the birthday of mankind. *Renri* also coincides with the seventh day of the Chinese Lunar New Year.

On *renri,* Singaporeans and Malaysians of Chinese descent celebrate their universal birthday by eating *yu sheng* — more popularly known as *yee sang* in Malaysia — a peculiarly local practice of eating raw fish salad (see text box) that traces its history back to the 1960s.

A LUCKY DISH OF FISH

Fortune or luck is a great arbiter in Chinese culture and the Chinese are unabashed in their pointed preference for material wealth. The longing for instant prosperity and wealth is underscored in the *lo hei* exercise, with its broad tossing and sweeping gestures.

One of Singapore's most renowned cooks, Chef Sin Leong, recalls how upset his diners were when in the early days the dish of *yu sheng* was tossed by the chefs in the kitchen before it was served. "They said we were taking away their good fortune, so they would rather toss it themselves!"

The performatory ritual of ushering in wealth is only symbolical; more importantly, eating in ritual contexts can also reaffirm relationships with other people.[1] The communal partaking of *yu sheng* is perhaps the closest thing the Chinese, known for their usually reserved na-

tures, ever come to "dancing like no one is watching" as a family over food.

FOOD AS A FORM OF CULTURE

The department of anthropology at Oregon State University defines culture as "learned patterns of behaviour and thought that help a group adapt to its surroundings".[2] Culinary culture is central to diasporic identification, with the focus on the place of food in society, more specifically in the enduring habits, rituals and daily practices that are collectively used to create and sustain a shared sense of cultural identity.

To this end, restaurateur, chef and F&B consultant, David Yip, hopes to reinvigorate cultural identity across the Chinese dialect groups in Singapore with his epicurean club Jumping Tables, a sporadic and informal culinary gathering that features respected chefs whipping up time-honoured recipes the traditional way. Yip invites a number of chefs — from humble eateries to established restaurants — to cook at these gatherings.

One of the chefs Yip was most eager to feature at Jumping Tables was Chef Sin Leong, one of the founding chefs of Red Star restaurant in Chin Swee Road and owner of the now defunct Sin Leong Restaurant, a local institution in Cantonese cuisine that first opened in 1971. When Sin, 86, agreed to participate in Jumping Tables, Yip and his guests could barely contain their excitement.

Before the meal commenced, Chef Sin insisted that the guests visit the altar he keeps in his kitchen, where his mentor, the late Master Luo Cheng, smiles out of an ornate frame, amid offerings of orchid blooms and clouds of incense. Hailing from Shanghai, China, Master Luo groomed Singapore's four most prominent Chinese chefs in the 1970s. His protégés, Sin Leong, Hooi Kok Wai, Tham Yui Kai and Lau Yoke Pui, were later crowned as Singapore's "Four Heavenly Culinary Kings".

Under the tutelage of Master Luo, the four young junior chefs toiled in the kitchen under his stern eye and exacting standards at the famed Cathay Restaurant (at the old Cathay Building). Opened in 1940, it initially served European fare, but underwent a revamp in 1951 under Master Luo to become the finest Chinese restaurant in Singapore, specialising in Cantonese cuisine. The Cathay Restaurant closed in December 1964 and reopened under a new management at the renovated Cathay Building in 2007.

Chef Hooi, the founder of the famed Dragon Phoenix restaurant — located today at Novotel Clarke Quay at River Valley Road — remembers Master Luo as being very strict, not only making them sharpen their culinary skills but also inculcating in them good work ethics. "[Master Luo] believed that besides skills, good chefs must be equipped with a high standard of social responsibility because they feed so many people." Once the four apprentices had attained a certain level of culinary proficiency, Master Luo told them to go forth to spread the art of Cantonese cuisine.

The four took their teacher's word seriously and each opened a restaurant: Sin opened Sin Leong Restaurant, Hoi started Dragon Phoenix, Tham opened Lai Wah

The Art of Yu Sheng

Typically, diners gather around a large platter filled with slivers of raw fish, usually ikan parang *(wolf herring), shredded green and white radish and carrot, pickled ginger, pomelo segments, chopped peanuts, deep-fried flour crisps and sesame seeds, among other ingredients. Someone usually takes the lead, calling out certain auspicious phrases in Mandarin — all of which invariably invoke wealth and long life — as the various ingredients and dressings (including pepper, plum sauce and oil) are thrown into the mix. Then all hell breaks loose.*

Amid raucous cries of lo hei *— a Cantonese term referring to the action of lifting one's chopsticks and tossing the raw fish salad — diners will dig into the dish, raising their chopsticks as high as they can and mixing the ingredients while trying to keep everything on the plate.*

In Chinese culinary symbolism, 鱼(yu, meaning fish) is frequently conflated with its homophone 裕 (yu) meaning "abundance", whilst 生 (sheng, meaning raw) can be taken as its homophone 升 (sheng), meaning "to rise". When coupled, yu sheng *is a symbol of a rise in abundance — be it prosperity, vigour, personal growth or happiness.*

Like a layered Tang dynasty poem where each noun is a palimpsest for something more pertinent, many Chinese dishes and their ingredients are specially selected for their ability to engender good fortune. Even the humble deep-fried bits, in the hue and shape of "golden pillows", belie a greater hope of 满地黄金 man di huang jin, that is, floors full of gold. Traditionally, the addition of each ingredient to yu sheng *is accompanied by the recitation of a specific 成语* (chen yu)*, a four-character idiom.*

Yu sheng *is not for the shy and retiring. The partaking of the dish is as much about the ritual as the consumption. During the ensuing melee, diners might find themselves losing a chopstick, pelted in the eye by a peanut shrapnel, or worse, have their new clothes stained by plum sauce.*

Yu sheng *has become a Lunar New Year staple and it has become so popular that restaurants in Singapore serve it throughout the 15-day Lunar New Year period — not just on the seventh day. In the spirit of gastronomic creativity (and conspicuous consumption), the traditional translucent slivers of* ikan parang *have been replaced with salmon, lobster and abalone.*

(ABOVE) *Lo hei*, or *yu sheng*, is a noisy, messy affair and a staple of Chinese New Year celebrations. *Image courtesy of Urban Achiever (www.urbanachiever.com).*

restaurant (in Bendemeer Road) and Lau launched Red Star. The four decided it was important their restaurants did not cannibalise one another's menus. Each would have their own signature dishes, "They were like brothers," Chris Hooi, the son of Chef Hooi, who now helms Dragon Phoenix, says. This bond was no doubt forged through their years of slaving over hot stoves together in the kitchen.

Beyond this, the four decided they would meet every week to discuss fresh ideas for new recipes. These gastronomic brainstorming sessions resulted in iconic Singaporean dishes such as chilli crabs and deep-fried yam ring as well as the modern version of *yu sheng*.

Master Luo's fervent wish to extend the popularity of Cantonese cuisine and his four apprentices' desire to execute this wish was almost evangelical in intent. When examined through the lens of the early immigrants — who were motivated by pride and desire to revalidate their racial and cultural identities, as well as that of generations to come, despite being physically far removed from the motherland — Master Luo's zeal for his native Cantonese cuisine is better understood. For Luo and his protégés, it was likely that the preparation, cooking and serving of Cantonese cuisine became the nexus of their diasporic Chinese identity.

Mankekar argues, much in the same vein, that Indian customers do not visit ethnic markets in the Bay Area in San Francisco merely to shop for groceries, but to engage with representations of their (sometimes imagined) homeland.[3]

INVENTED TRADITIONS AND NATIONALISM

People from the province of Canton (Guangdong) have been eating raw fish with sliced ginger and spring onions drizzled in lime as a porridge accompaniment since the 1920s. When these Cantonese immigrants brought their cuisine over to Singapore, changes were made to the original recipe. Perhaps the changes — that embellished the plain slivers of fish with creative additions such as fried dough crisps and plum sauce — were a result of the immigrants' exposure to the cuisine of their newly adopted home.

In 2012, a minor tussle over who rightfully invented *yu sheng* broke out — a professor from Singapore offhandedly suggested on a social media platform that *yu sheng*, among other intangible practices such as Singlish, belonged to the UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.[4] The list, which includes traditional social practices, rituals and festivals passed on from one generation to another, was established by UNESCO to help countries protect and preserve their heritage.

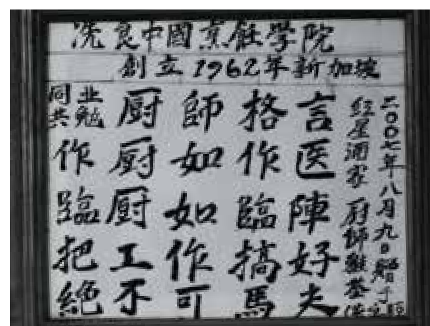
Singaporeans claimed that *yu sheng* was invented by the "Four Heavenly Culinary Kings" in 1963, debuting at Dragon Phoenix as well as Lai Wah restaurants during the Lunar New Year of 1964. Chef Hooi recalls, "(We) concocted a unique sweet-sour sauce, added crushed peanuts and sesame seeds to the fish (inspired by a local salad called *rojak*), and assembled other colourful ingredients to symbolise prosperity in Chinese culture. To make the carrot strips thinner, I purchased the first rotating carrot shredder at Tangs on Orchard Road."

On the other hand, Malaysians insisted that *yu sheng* originated in a restaurant in Seremban, in the state of Negeri Sembilan. The national papers each weighed in with their own "food experts", with the Malaysian national broadsheet *The Star* concluding that the dish originated in Malaysia, but was better promoted in Singapore.

Previous food fights between Singapore and Malaysia had taken place in 2009, when "Malaysian Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen claimed that *bak kut teh* (a herbal pork rib soup) and Hainanese chicken rice, among other dishes, were authentically Malaysian, drawing many Singaporeans' ire".[5]

Malaysians and Singaporeans are certainly not alone in claiming authorship of famous dishes. The sticky sweet *baklava*, for instance, is claimed by more ethnic groups than *yu sheng* — the Greeks, the Turkish, the Iranians, the Bulgarians, the Uzbeks, and even the Chinese all claim to have created it.[6] The pastry, filled with chopped nuts and sweetened with syrup, has been the subject of fierce nationalist debates involving individuals from passionate Greek-Cypriot *baklava* makers to the Turkish State Minister.[7]

As food often plays a major role in the invention of national identities, food fights of the sort described here may point to an already shaky national identity. Wilk's analysis[8] of the rise of Belizean cuisine in the Central American state



(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) Chef Sin Leong casting a watchful eye over proceedings in his kitchen. The wise words of Chef Sin Leong. The altar of Master Luo. (2013). *Images courtesy of Urban Achiever (www.urbanachiever.com).*

emphasises the point that "both nation and cuisine are more intrinsically imagined than in most contexts". Belizean cuisine — with dishes like *escabeche* (onion soup) and *panades* (fried maize shells with beans or fish) — was developed in response to the perceived need for a culture of nationhood after independence in 1981. In his analysis Wilk contrasts bland, imported meals of the 1970s with Belizean "local food" of the 1990s, where the latter performed the role of "an important imagined tradition of Belizean authenticity".

The periodic tussles between Singapore and Malaysia over the origins of their "national dishes" perhaps underscore the latent anxiety that exists between the two countries over who is the rightful owner of certain dishes — and by extension the progenitor of their associated food culture. It is easy to concede that — having been brought together as Malaya first under British rule from 1824 (after the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty) to 1957, followed by Singapore's short-lived merger with Malaysia from 1963 to 1965 — there would have been organic similarities in the way the transplanted cuisines of the early migrants would have been prepared and evolved over the years. But there is more to the issue than meets the eye.

Beyond specific nationalist and ethnic anxieties, perhaps another primary distinction to make of the *yu sheng-lo hei* conundrum is one of etymology versus semiotics: Is the tussle over *yu sheng* — the dish of raw fish salad and its constituents, variations of which had long been in existence in China's Canton province, or is it over *lo hei* — the performatory ritual of tossing slivers of raw fish and its accompaniments in a communal social setting? Where does one end and the other begin?

THE GASTRONOMIC MEMORY OF DIASPORA

In a nation that has often been accused — by foreigners and locals — of not having a strong local culture, questions on how and what we eat, as well as when and by whom our national dishes were invented can be particularly pressing. The city-state is after all marketed by the Singapore Tourism Board to the world as a food and shopping haven. Singapore's latest tourism tagline is "Shiok!"[9], a succinct Singlish term that translates loosely to "extreme pleasure", derived from "*syok*" the Malay word for "nice".

If food can legitimately be positioned as culture, then Singaporeans are certainly not bereft of it; in fact the culture of food defines its people — Calvin Trillin in *The New Yorker* said, "Culinarily, [Singaporeans] are among the most homesick people I have ever met."[10] Singapore has been built on the backs of migrants who each brought their bloodlines, languages, customs and signature dishes into a melting pot of cultures, yet still maintaining their own individual ethnic identities — articulated most clearly through food. This is why, perhaps, dishes like *yu sheng*, which have clear cultural roots as well as rituals that bring together extended families in a salute of chopsticks, can be viewed as true emblems of food culture and heritage.

In this mutating world, Singaporeans need to cultivate concern about their food heritage: how did dishes thought to be unique to the Singapore experience evolve? Who invented them and when? We should not be satisfied with the mere gustatory act of eating a delectable dish of *rojak* (fruits and vegetables tossed in prawn paste) or *char kway teow* (fried rice noodles in dark, sweet sauce). For in dishes such as *yu sheng*, meticulously prepared, served and performed by specific communities — even while revamped with new ingredients for a contemporary palate — the trauma, exile and nostalgia of the diasporic communities[11] are both ingested and externalised.

Food comes to Singaporeans naturally — we are passionate about it, we join snaking queues for ambrosial *laksa* (noodles in spicy coconut broth), we seek out obscure corners of the island for the best fish-head curry, and our conversations are frequently peppered with musings about all things related to food.

Casting an anthropological lens on the food we enjoy allows us to understand ourselves more deeply even as our eyes sweep over chilli crab, *chendol* and *mee rebus*. What we are consuming is not just crustacean and chillies, coconut milk and palm sugar, or noodles with piquant gravy, but unwritten parts of the histories of our diasporas, hidden in the woven intricacy of a *ketupat* (Malay rice cake), the folds of a *zongzi* (Chinese dumpling) and the artful blend of spices in a curry, passed down through generations in recipes and memory-laden flavours. And when we bend our heads to eat, we suddenly realise that we are drinking from the bowl of our culture's belly. ●

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(ABOVE) Young boys having a meal at a roadside hawker stall. *From the Edwin A. Brown Collection*. *All rights reserved, Celia Mary Ferguson and National Library Board, Singapore 2008*

ON THE DINING TABLE

CHANGING PALATES THROUGH THE DECADES

What we eat is often shaped not only by culture and tradition but also society and government policies. Through one family's changing palate, find out how all these factors have influenced what appears on the dinner table.

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WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, MY GRANDFATHER'S elderly cousin would visit us during important festive occasions. The womenfolk in the family would gather to make steamed rice dumplings or 桃粿 (*tao guo*, literally peach dumplings) to use as prayer offerings. I still remember the booming voice of my grandfather's cousin as her large palms deftly shaped the pink-hued rice dumplings, pressing them into a wooden mould. Nowadays, no one seems to have the time to gather around the kitchen and cook while chatting in the Teochew dialect. These days, my uncles simply buy the *tao guo*; it just tastes different and part of the fun is gone.

During the annual Dragon Boat festival, my grandmother would spend days painstakingly preparing the ingredients required for making the pyramid-shaped rice dumplings called 肉粽 (*rou zong*). It was a tedious process making them: cooking red beans and grinding them into a paste; boiling dried chestnuts and removing the skins; chopping and stir-frying dried prawns, dried mushrooms and fatty pork with coriander powder and other spices; washing bamboo leaves, strings and glutinous rice; and cleaning caul fat membrane and stuffing it with a generous dollop of the red bean paste. The ingredients were then assembled and neatly wrapped in bamboo leaves before being steamed to perfection in bamboo baskets. Nowadays, many families prefer to purchase ready-made dumplings from shops.

In recent years, there has been no lack of news lamenting the closure of many Singapore food establishments. Most recently, in May 2013 — after 58 years of operation — the shutters came down on the iconic Mong Hing Teochew Restaurant in Beach Road. Exhausting and time-consuming food preparation, ageing cooks, the lack of successors, and the rising cost of manpower and ingredients are frequently cited as reasons for these closures.

This essay examines the ethnological aspect of food and its impact on the food my grandparents, parents and my family have consumed over the decades and offers perspectives on how our family's eating habits have evolved over the course of three generations.

MY GRANDPARENTS' GENERATION: 1930s–1950s

My maternal grandmother arrived in Singapore from Guandong province in China during the late 1930s. As a young bride, she lived with her husband and mother-in-law who were farmers. Life settled into a routine of waking up before dawn to feed the pigs and chickens, tending to the vegetable plots, and cooking three meals a day. My great grandmother would harvest the vegetables and sell them at a nearby makeshift market.

Breakfast was usually a bowl of steaming watery porridge served with some fried eggs and preserved olives; lunch comprised stir-fried vegetables and pork; while dinner was more stir-fried vegetables, along with fried or steamed fish. This was the typical fare of my grandmother's generation. My paternal grandparents were fortunate enough to live along the banks bordering the Straits of Johor (on the Singapore side), where they enjoyed easy access to fresh seafood. As a result, freshly steamed fish and seafood, seasoned simply with salt, featured frequently at mealtimes. One of our relatives made her homemade fish sauce as a seasoning, and it was also common for families to ferment their own rice wine for cooking. In those days, sumptuous dishes that required elaborate preparation or expensive and seasonal ingredients were only eaten during festivals and celebrations.

In Singapore, my maternal grandmother was exposed to new forms of cuisine as well as cultures. When she saw her first bowl of *chendol*, she thought it was disgusting how people could wolf down green worms swimming in a pool of dirty brown water. She later realised that those "worms" were actually strips of jelly made from rice flour mixed with the juice of the fragrant *pandan* (screwpine) leaf and green food colouring, and the liquid they were floating in was a delicious concoction of coconut milk and *gula melaka* (palm sugar).

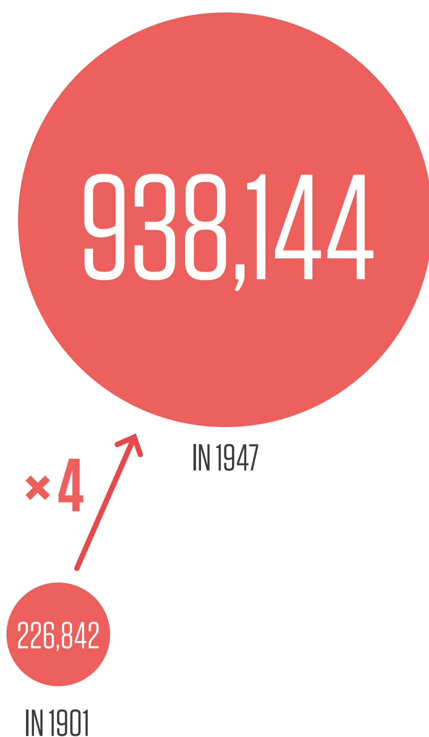
According to Saw Swee Hock, a professorial fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, there was a fourfold increase in Singapore's population from 226,842 in 1901 to 938,144 in 1947. The growth rate gathered slight momentum after a lull period in the late 19th century, showing a 3 percent increase between 1901 and 1911 and a 3.3 percent increase between 1911 and 1921. During the Great Depression, however, there was a drop of 2.9 percent due to restrictions imposed on immigrants from China and India. However, between 1931 and 1947, the growth rate rebounded to 3.2 percent.[1] My grandparents were part of this final wave of immigrants.

Neville wrote that during the postwar period, the Chinese population dominated the influx of new immigrants and several dialect groups lived in enclaves, particularly within the central city area. The Teochew community established themselves mainly on the south bank of the Singapore River. Many were employed as coolies (labourers), hauling goods between the riverside warehouses and *tongkangs* (local wooden boats) crowding the river. Some Teochews specialised in certain sectors of the inter-island boat trade, particularly between Singapore, west Borneo and south-Thailand where substantial Teochew trading communities were found.[2] There were also others, like my grandparents and relatives, who were farmers and fishermen living in Teochew-dominated areas of Singapore like Sembawang, Upper Thomson and Punggol.

From the immediate postwar years up till the late 1960s, my grandparents lived in close proximity to their extended families and ate more or less the same meals every day. During festive seasons, food and invitations to more elaborate feasts were exchanged. Occasionally they would have their meals at makeshift stalls set up by streetside hawkers, choosing cooked food they were accustomed to. As unemployment rates in newly independent Singapore was high and jobs were scarce, many people chose to become hawkers; it was definitely one of the easier ways to earn a living during those difficult times.

According to the 1950 *Hawker Inquiry Commission Report*, Cantonese, Teochew and Hokkien hawkers made up the largest percentage of hawkers at 30, 30 and 20 percent respectively.[3] However, in the post-war years, itinerant hawkers were seen as a general nuisance to the public, obstructing roads, incessantly calling out to customers, creating trouble with their gang affiliations, and posing a serious

SINGAPORE'S POPULATION GROWTH 1901 – 1947



The Teochew Migrants

The Teochew migrants who arrived in Singapore from the 19th century onwards came from the Chaoshan (潮汕) region in the eastern Guangdong province of China, near the border of Fujian. This dialect group includes people from the Chaozhou (潮州), Shantou (汕头) and Jieyang (揭阳) cities.

As the majority of Teochews live by the sea or near waterways, Teochew cuisine often comprises the freshest fish and seafood. The dishes use minimal seasoning in order to enhance the natural taste of the food.

Teochew cuisine is made up of four broad categories: braised food, such as braised duck and braised pork belly; seafood dishes such as freshly steamed white pomfret, steamed fishcakes and steamed mullet; pickled food like chye poh *(salted radish) and* dang cai *(brown pickled cabbage); and lastly, dishes cooked with seasoning and sauces such as fish sauce, salted plums, kumquat oil and Teochew* gong cai *(a form of pickled mustard greens).*

(ABOVE) Located at Clemenceau Avenue, the Teochew style grand mansion of Tan Yeok Nee is the last of its kind still standing (1910). *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

threat to health with their unhygienic food preparation and storage. Still, there was a demand as these hawkers provided their customers with easy access to reasonably priced cooked food, and it was a means of livelihood for themselves. The problem, however, was one of legislation. The report found that only between a quarter and a third of the hawkers were licensed, while the "remainder [were] breaking the law everyday merely in the course of earning their living."[4]

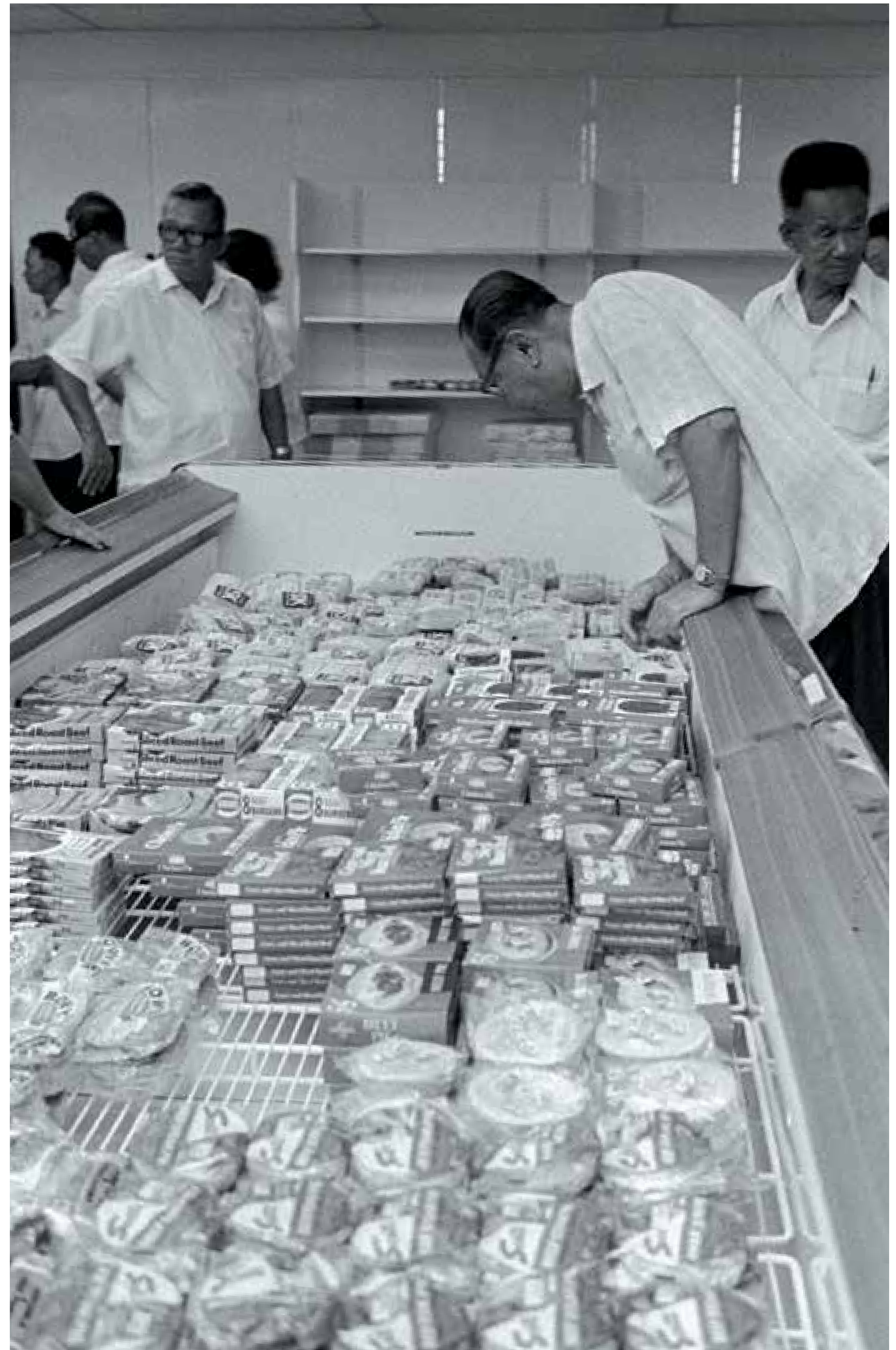
MY PARENT'S GENERATION: POST-INDEPENDENCE SINGAPORE

After Singapore's independence in 1965, a series of broad and sweeping changes were made by the government across all sectors, many of which were felt by the masses from the 1970s to the 1990s. The Housing Development Board (HDB) was set up in 1960 and in the decades that followed, more and more families were resettled from *kampongs* (villages) to public housing blocks. Communal cooking activities were no longer possible as kitchens shrank in size, families became smaller and their relatives and friends were scattered all over Singapore. As more women became educated and joined the workforce, they also became less inclined to spend time on domestic affairs.

As a young wife in the 1970s, my mother enjoyed collecting recipes from newspapers and magazines, attending cooking classes at community centres, watching cooking programmes on television and buying cookbooks. My mother was able to try her hand at cooking dishes from cuisines other than Teochew and, thanks to new kitchen equipment, such as the refrigerator, gas stove, cake mixer and blender, was able to reduce the time she spent in the kitchen preparing ingredients and cooking. The introduction of supermarkets also widened the selection of ingredients available; and imported items started making their way to the supermarket shelves.

Over time, all this had a huge impact on what we ate. Our hot porridge breakfasts gave way to the more convenient combination of bread, butter and jam, and our mealtimes saw more variety on the table as Mum grew adventurous and experimented with new dishes. However, during important festivals and celebrations, we would still indulge in grandmother's and mother's traditional Teochew cooking. The success of the Speak Mandarin campaign, which was introduced in 1979, eroded our ability to converse in fluent Teochew. Today, my siblings and I are less well-versed in the Teochew dialect, and as a result, cooking instructions issued to us in this Chinese dialect by our grandmother are sometimes lost in translation. Occasionally, grandmother would share Teochew food aphorisms such as 三四桃李奈 and 七八油甘柿 (meaning "peaches, apricots and plums ripen during March and April" and "Indian gooseberries and persimmons are ready to be eaten in July and August") and dispense practical advice such as 稚鸡, 硕鹅, 老鸭母 (meaning "young chicken, mature goose and old duck are the best stages of their growth for cooking").

After 1971, when the Singapore economy became more stable, the government was able to focus on reining in unlicensed cooked food hawkers and relocating them from the streets and alleys to centralised hawker centres that were installed with piped water, sewers and garbage disposal facilities. By the early 1980s, all of the hawkers in Singapore had been resettled in hawker centres.[5] With increasing affluence, more families could afford to eat out. Hawker centres, with their affordable prices and variety of food, became favou-



(ABOVE) Shoppers at the new National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) supermarket at Toa Payoh, which opened on 22 July, 1973. *MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

rite places for people to have their meals, and have since become an indispensible part of Singapore's culinary landscape.

In 1986, statistics showed that 30 percent of people aged between 15 and 64 years ate breakfast outside the home, while 54 percent and 12 percent ate out for lunch and dinner respectively.[6]

As early as 1979, it was reported that the changing lifestyles of Singaporeans had led to an increase of diseases that were linked to unhealthy eating habits and harmful lifestyles.[7] A household expenditure survey conducted between 1987 and 1988 reported that "hawker foods accounted for almost 80 percent of an average household's cooked food budget."[8] In 1992, Dr Aline Wong, then-Minister of State (Health), encouraged Singaporeans to eat more homecooked meals as it was perceived to be healthier.[9]

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The Ministry of Health launched studies of the food consumed by Singaporeans. One of the earliest projects was conducted by the Institute of Science and Forensic Medicine under the Ministry of Health in 1992. The following year, 200 commonly available foods at hawker centres were subjected to chemical analysis by laboratories commissioned by the Food and Nutrition Department. A series of booklets on food and nutrition was published and distributed to the public, covering subjects such as healthy eating at childcare centres, serving healthy food to students, healthier menu choices for workplace canteen operators, coffeeshops and restaurants, and a guide to making sensible food choices at hawker centres.

Over the years, changes in lifestyle, national campaigns, and new ways of storing, processing and cooking food have contributed to changes in our diets. The author of *Soya & Spice*, Jo Marion Seow, lamented that some food "[has] gone the way of the dinosaurs", citing the example of the cheap preserved or pickled side dish known as *zahb khiam* in Teochew, which was commonly eaten with porridge.[10]

Certain common hawker dishes have also been gradually disappearing from the culinary horizon. Local food blogger Dr Leslie Tay has noted a steady decline in the standards of *char kway teow* (fried rice noodles) as the dish has come to be regarded as "unhealthy and the fear of contracting Hepatitis A from eating partially cooked cockles has put another nail in the coffin."[11] He has also remarked that Teochew eateries no longer use the meaty Asian carp in traditional fish head steamboat. These days, the "muddy" tasting freshwater fish has been replaced by more popular varieties such as pomfret and grouper.[12] Mass produced pre-cooked ingredients manufactured by factories and supplied to hawkers have also contributed to this loss of food heritage; culinary skills among hawkers have been eroded by these shortcuts and many people complain that the old-style dishes just do not taste the same anymore.

MY GENERATION

The loss in food heritage is also felt in the home. My family does not consciously partake of traditional Teochew cuisine at home anymore. Everyday dishes are not uniquely Teochew, except for special occasions such as festivals and celebrations when our family buys Teochew confectionaries or steamed *kueh* (cakes).

In 2013, four students from the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information at Nanyang Technological University worked on a project that aimed to raise awareness of the origins of Singapore's food heritage through interviews with hawkers of signature local dishes. The findings of the study — sponsored by the National Heritage Board and supported by the Singapore Memory Project — can be found on the website, Tastes of Yesteryear at http://www.tastesofyesteryear.com/.

Deborah Lupton is of the view that "food consumption habits are not simply tied to biological needs but serve to mark boundaries between social classes, geographical regions, nations, cultures, genders, life cycle stages, religions and occupations, to distinguish rituals, traditions, festivals, seasons and times of day."[13] Where food can be culturally reproduced from generation to generation, it is a denominator that distinguishes one group from another. The act of preparing food is "part of [an] individual's incorporation into a culture, of making it 'their own', which then culminates in the act of eating ... [and] sharing the act of eating brings people into the same community".[14]

In this respect, food helps strengthen group identity. Therefore, what we eat, how we eat, and how we feel about it reflects our perception of ourselves in relation to others. Cwiertka also observed that "not only do global brands spread worldwide [diminish] the diversity of local cuisines, but new hybrid cuisines

(TOP AND MIDDLE) Posters from a government campaign to encourage healthier eating among the population in the 1980s. *Ministry of Health Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

are created and new identities embraced through the acceptance and rejection of new commodities and new forms of consumption."[15]

With the plethora of different cuisines competing for attention today, it is impossible to retain the exact ingredients and time-honoured cooking methods that our forefathers used. Like all cuisines, Chinese dishes too have evolved, incorporating ingredients that were previously alien to its form, like peppers, peanuts, tomatoes and corn.[16] The art of eating is a constantly evolving repertoire of recipes old, new and invented. Each dish will enjoy a "shelf life" depending on its popularity and acceptance. Over time, a new concoction may be accepted as a signature dish by members of a particular ethnic or dialect group who will come to embrace the dish as their own.

Lenore Manderson sums it up by writing that the changes in mode of production may affect food resources while offering new items, thus leading to dietary changes. The "marking, enactment and elaboration of key cultural and life-cycle events through the use of food further determine dietary variation seasonally and throughout the life span … and the allocation of food within the domestic sphere and in the larger community; the style and elaborateness or simplicity of the preparation and presentation of food, and the particular responsibilities of individuals in these activities … all provide a key to social life and to the role and status of members of a given society."[17]

THE CHALLENGE OF PRESERVING OUR FOOD HERITAGE

My grandparents came from a homogeneous community where everyone spoke the same language and shared the same cultural practices and values. When they migrated to Singapore, they discovered new languages, cultures and food, while still living among people from the same dialect group. In contrast, my parent's generation interacted more with people from other ethnic and dialect groups through school or work, gaining an understanding of other cultures and their practices.

Today, changes in lifestyle, a greater awareness of nutrition and health, and the accessibility to delicious food from all over the world all threaten the culinary heritage of our forebears. People rarely have the time to cook at home and sit down to a leisurely meal of homemade dishes. The days of communal cooking in a large kitchen with lots of people chatting animatedly while hands are busy chopping, cutting and frying are long gone. It is quite different cooking alone in a small kitchen after a hard day at the office, or relying on a domestic helper to prepare the family meals. Without constant pointers from elderly folks on the significance of certain dishes, or gentle reminders on the right cooking methods or techniques, it will be impossible to replicate the dishes of an earlier generation. The onslaught of Western food and the assimilation of other cultures coupled with the unavailability of certain ingredients from yesteryear present further challenges to preserving Singapore's food heritage.

When given an option, will the younger members in my family choose a simple dish of Teochew caramelised yam cubes over the assortment of potato crisps in exotic flavours spilling over from supermarket shelves? There is growing nostalgia over the gradual loss of traditional food and authentic hawker fare, and both individuals and the government are trying to take steps to preserve Singapore's culinary heritage. It will be a shame if one day, my family's memories of traditional Teochew food become something that can only be found in books at the library or at the museums. ●

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In Cookery We Trust

The YWCA Cookery Book (1932–1964)

"I value my copy [of the Y.W.C.A. Cookery Book of Malaya] as a social study of living conditions in Asia, quite apart from its practical kitchen uses."
— JULIE PRITCHARD[1]

First published in 1932, the *Y.W.C.A. Cookery Book of Malaya* has been updated and republished nine times — the last in 1962. More than an ordinary record of recipes, this influential cookbook is a treatise on the changing culinary styles as well as evolving domestic practices and eating habits of Singaporeans over three decades.

The Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) was founded in 1855 during the Industrial Revolution in England. Exactly 20 years later in Singapore, a young missionary named Sophia Cooke gathered a group of young Chinese ladies from the school she founded[2] and formed a branch of the YWCA.[3] Her vision of these members "trusting in God and of helping themselves without forgetting others"[4] still remains a vital guiding principle of the YWCA today.

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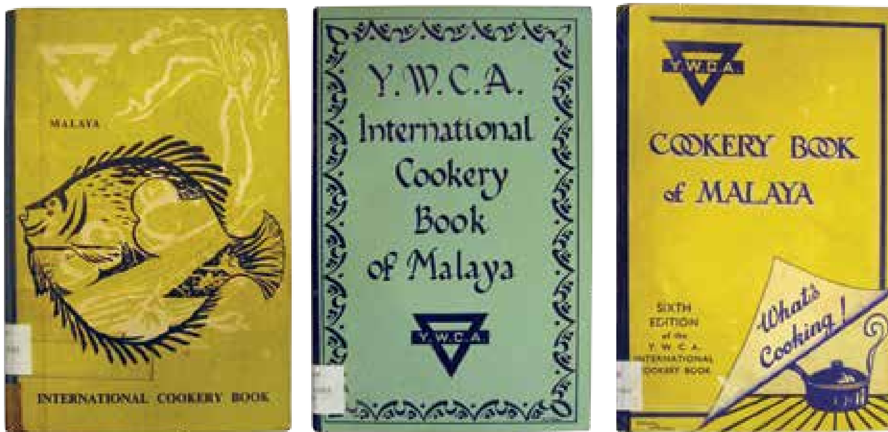
COOKERY CLASSES

In the early 19th century, cooking classes became a central activity in the YWCA in Singapore, following new understanding in Britain of nutritional needs and a push toward training women to prepare balanced yet tasteful meals.[5] Initially only lessons in preparing Western meals[6] were offered but by the 1920s local dishes were common fare.[7] In 1933, YWCA members conducted a series of cookery demonstrations at the Kuala Lumpur Electrical department showrooms. These were believed to be the first public cookery demonstrations organised in Malaya, and the daily morning course attracted more than a hundred participants.

Participants were exposed to dishes beyond those they were familiar with, whether British or Malayan and included meals from India and the United States.[8] In these classes, expatriate ladies were introduced to Asian flavours and cooking styles while the Malayan women learnt both the techniques of Western cooking as well as concepts of good nutrition.[9] More than an exchange of ideas, these classes became a nurturing environment where Malayan women could fraternise with the wives of British colonials and American missionaries.[10] It was also a place where local women began to take centre stage as cooking instructors, first for local dishes and later in teaching the various cuisines that Singaporeans are now so familiar with.

(ABOVE) Local ladies at a 1939 YWCA cooking class where the YWCA cookbook would have been used. *Courtesy of Chua Ai Lin*.



"[T]he few books that deal with Asiatic cooking limit themselves to giving recipes for this or that dish, without explaining anything about the principles involved, or the effects of the various ingredients used."

— FURTADO

THE Y.W.C.A COOKBOOK

At the YWCA Malayan Conference in Ipoh in 1931, the publication of a cookery book was mooted in a bid to preserve the numerous recipes taught at the YWCA's cookery classes throughout Malaya. One thousand copies of *The Y.W.C.A. Cookery Book of Malaya* were printed in 1932; these flew off the shelves so quickly that a reprint was commissioned the following year. Subsequently in 1935, an expanded and "very considerably altered"[11] second edition was released. This new edition distinguished itself from earlier cookery books as it went beyond listing recipes and instructing new expatriate wives on how to deal with local cooks.

Furtado, who contributed an article to *The Y.W.C.A. Cookery Book*, notes that "[t]he few books that deal with Asiatic cooking limit themselves to giving recipes for this or that dish, without explaining anything about the principles involved, or the effects of the various ingredients used".[12] This new cookbook was revolutionary in the sense that it introduced articles on the nutritional values of food[13] and shared practical tips, many written by experts in their fields. For example, R.E. Holttum, who was then the Director of the Botanic Gardens, contributed a useful article on the cultivation of salad vegetables[14] while W. Birtwistle, who was then the Officer in charge of Fisheries, described an extensive number of local fish in an article that is accompanied by clear line drawings.[15] Additionally, Holttum's market-list provides the local names of ingredients while Furtado's general notes on Indo-Malayan cookery explain the key Malayan terms for food items. The cookbook also addressed a growing interest in nutrition, hygienic food preparation and specialised recipes, such as those for children.

Local dishes were first included in the second edition, and the editors drew from the expertise of Chinese and Indian contributors for their recipes. Many were wives of Christian men of influence while others had conducted cooking classes at the YWCA.[16] The editors also sought insights from doctors and nurses for the sections devoted to the nutritional needs of invalids and children. This edition drew its arrangement of recipes and its "clear description of cookery principles" from *Mrs Lucas's French Cookery Book*, which was published in 1929.[17]

THE COOKBOOK EDITORS

The editors of the second edition of the cookbook were Ursula Holttum and Gertrude Hinch (the wives of R.E. Holttum and T.W. Hinch respectively). Their contributions to the community are an indication of how the lives of these expatriate and local women were intertwined. Both editors were active in the YWCA committee where Ursula served as treasurer and Gertrude as Malaya's representative for the International YWCA.

Cooking for these women was not merely a leisurely or educational pastime; it was essential for survival during the Pacific War. In 1941, as meat became scarce, Ursula published a booklet, *How to Cook Malayan Vegetables*. The book launch was accompanied by several radio talk shows[18] where she gave instructions on the cooking of local vegetables that many European housewives were unfamiliar with. Her knowledge complemented her husband's article on the growing of salad vegetables in the 1935 edition of *The Y.W.C.A. Cookery Book*. Holltum shared Ursula's conviction that eating right would help reduce the negative effects of a poor diet, especially in those dark times.[19]

The fifth edition of *The Y.W.C.A. International Cookery Book of Malaya* — fondly known as the "Blue Triangle Cookery Book"[20] by the Association's cookery class students — was released in 1948, this time under the editorship of Morag Llewellyn. Armed with a diploma in domestic science from the University of London,[21] she arrived with her husband, Alun Ewart Llewellyn, in Malaya in 1934. Alun managed collieries in Malaysia until they left Malaya for good in 1966, by which time Morag had overseen the updating and republishing of the cookbook five more times into its ninth edition in 1962.[22]

POSTWAR FOOD AND COOKING

The fifth edition of the cookbook coincided with the postwar period from 1945 onwards. After the Japanese surrender in Singapore, the British returned to a situation plagued by high unemployment, unrest and chronic food shortages. Food rationing during this period led to innovations such as the use of coconut cream as a milk substitute and *gula melaka*[23] (palm sugar) in place of refined white sugar to flavour food. As a result, recipes for local cakes and sweets as well as dishes using coconut milk made their way into *The Y.W.C.A. Cookery Book* during this period.

Recipes of local sweets such as *kueh pisang* (steamed banana cakes), *kueh koya* (baked green bean cookies) and *spiku* (a Malay layered cake) were featured. The book also had a new section entitled "Javanese recipes" with recipes for curries and *sambals* that incorporated local spices and products from the ever-useful coconut. Interestingly, the section "Vegetarian Cookery" by T.H. Silcock,

(ABOVE) These cookbooks reflect the changes in domestic science and social norms among women in Malaya spanning the pre- and post-war periods.

first written in 1939, was reduced because some ingredients were not available soon after the war.[24]

The fifth edition also included many more articles on food preparation to meet the urgent need for "culinary and nutritional information" in post-war Malaya, such as steps in identifying and cooking vegetables, storing and cooking rice, and preparing and cooking fish and meats.[25] A practical section on planning meals and making a timetable was followed by different methods of cooking described in English and translated into Malay by Dato Seciawangsa Mahmud bin Mat.

Large sections of the book remained unchanged for the next four editions with only "a few alterations appropriate to the present affluent conditions in Malaya".[26] What changed considerably, however, was the book's standing: By the 1960s, the publication had found its way beyond Malaya "having been taken there or sent as gifts by people living in Malaya".[27] It was no longer just an important reference for homemakers but had become a textbook for domestic science classes in Singapore and the Federation of Malaya.

Morag, the five-time editor of the cookbook, had wanted to improve the 1962 edition with more information on Malayan fruits, include vegetarian recipes from the Buddhist community and rework the glossary of Malay names.[28] Unfortunately, she never succeeded in publishing the 10th edition as her husband was diagnosed with cancer and the family left for England in 1966.

As a publication spanning the pre-war and post-war periods of Malaya's development, the various editions of *The Y.W.C.A. International Cookery Book of Malaya* mirror the changes in domestic science and the evolution of social norms among the women of Malaya during these tumultuous times. This collection of cookbooks, held in the National Library of Singapore, contain a wealth of information for researchers wanting to learn more about the domestic culinary habits of Malayan households and the lifestyles of women, both local and foreign, between 1932 and 1964. ●

The author acknowledges with thanks Ai Ling Devadas, Editor of the Singapore Food History website, for reviewing the article and Chua Ai Lin for allowing the use of her personal photograph.

ENDNOTES

1. Pritchard, J. (1948, July 22). Vitamins, Mullagtany and Malay dishes. *The Straits Times, p. 9. Microfilm number NL 5337*
2. The school is known today as St Margaret's School.
3. The YWCA of the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States initially had its headquarters in Singapore but this seemed to have moved to Kuala Lumpur after the 1920s. (Hope, O. 1928, December 17. Women of Far East. *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser, p. 13. Microfilm number NL 1734*
4. (1969). *Young Women's Christian Association*. Singapore: Young Women's Christian Association. (p. 17)
5. Feminine notes — bad cooking and physical deterioration. (1908, November 25). *The Straits Times, p. 10*
6. For example a notice for the fourth cookery class at the YWCCA indicates that classes were for "pastry making from lard, snow pie, pineapple soufflé, potato and tomato savoury, butter-cheese cakes, banana cheese cakes, duchess cakes. (Untitled (1918, March 7). *The Straits Times, p. 6. Microfilm number NL441)*
7. Untitled (1926, March 25). *The Straits Times, p. 9.* Microfilm number NL 540
8. The preface to the 1935 edition of the cookbook notes that "American friends have contributed largely with recipes which they find acceptable and usable in this country."
9. Though how 'ordinary' these women were needs to be studied further as many of the Asian women who attended were likely the English-educated Straits Chinese *nyonyas from presumably well-to-do families.*
10. C-G's wife learns Chinese cooking (1949, May 23). *The Straits Times, p. 5. Microfilm number NL 2496*
11. The Preface of (1935). *The Y.W.C.A. of Malaya International Cookery Book*. Kuala Lumpur: Y.W.C.A. of Malaya.
12. *Ibid, 1935.*
13. *Ibid, 1935. This was written by J. L. Rosedale, then Professor of Biochemistry, King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore.*
14. *Ibid, 1935.*
15. *Ibid, 1935.*
16. As almost every recipe credits its author, it is apparent they include the likes of respected expatriates such as Rose T. Handy, Mrs Celeste B. Amstutz, Mrs Eklund, Mrs Zehnder and locals such as Muhammad Raza, Cheka Davies, Mrs Loh Hung Loon and Mrs. C. H. Wang.
17. Lucas, E. (1929). *Mrs Lucas's French Cookery Book. London: Christopher's.*
18. The booklet was published by the Department of Information and Publicity. (Radio talk on how to cook local vegetables [1941, April 3]. *The Straits Times, p. 10.* Microfilm number NL 3612
19. Richard Eric Holttum 1895–1990. In J. Laing, & H. Halter, *The school on the hill — 300 years of Friends' School Saffron Walden 1702–2002 (p. 80–81). Essex: Friends' School. Retrieved August 28, 2011 from* http://www.friends.org.uk/history/tercentbook/tercentbook.html)
20. The "Blue Triangle" is a reference to the YWCA logo prominent on the cover of each edition of the book
21. Cookery classes for Kuala Lumpur (1936, February 13). *The Straits Times, p. 4. Microfilm number NL1508*
22. It is uncertain when the last edition of this publication was printed. The latest copy in the library's holding is the 1963 edition which was published in 1964.
23. Wong, H.S. (2009). *Wartime kitchen: Food and eating in Singapore, 1942–1950*. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet and National Museum of Singapore, pp. 65, 68, 88, 89.
24. (1948). *The Y.W.C.A. of Malaya International Cookery Book*. Kuala Lumpur: Y.W.C.A. of Malaya.
25. *Ibid, 1948.*
26. *Ibid*, 1951.
27. *Ibid*, 1962.
28. *Ibid.*

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1900–1901，康有为在南洋——读邱菽园后人王清建先生藏康有为致邱菽园信函及其他历史文献

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

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

In 2013, Professor Zhang Renfeng, descendent of Qing dynasty reformer and Commercial Press publisher Zhang Yuanji, came across a treasure trove of historical materials kept by Mr Ong Ching Kien, a descendent of literary scholar and poet, Khoo Seok Wan. These materials include several unpublished personal correspondences between Kang Youwei, eminent Qing Dynasty scholar-cum-leader of the 1898 Reform Movement, and Khoo Seok Wan. These letters are a vital primary resource in the research of China's modern history as well as the Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia. Previously unknown ties between Khoo Seok Wan and Zhang Yuanji were also discovered.

Here, Professor Zhang Renfeng attempts to piece together the activities of Kang Youwei in Southeast Asia between 1900 and 1901, using these letters, Kang's own poems, and related historical resources.

今年初，笔者有幸在新加坡国家图书馆看到邱菽园外孙王清建先生珍藏的许多历史资料，其中有多件康有为致邱菽园信函。百年前的手迹原件，历经沧桑，保存至今，十分难得，是研究中国近代史、南洋华侨史方面非常重要的第一手资料。对笔者来说，能目睹这批史料，还更有一层特定的意义：康有为与先祖父张元济先生是同时代人，他们一同参与戊戌维新运动，在同一天受到光绪皇帝的召见，变法失败以后，虽各奔前程，但一直保持着交往；更有甚者，这批史料中，居然发现张元济与邱菽园有过文字之交，这是以往未尝知晓的事。因此，当百年前的手迹原件停留在眼前和手中时，使得笔者既敬肃有加，又感到了历史的凝重。查阅中国有关的公开出版物，仅发现汤志钧先生在1992年第二期《近代史研究》上发表过《自立军起义前后的孙、康关系及其他——新加坡丘菽园家藏资料评析》，引用过其中四封信的某些片段并做了精深的解读。除此之外，还未见他处有过公开刊登，即如近年出版收集康有为著作最为完备的《康有为全集》和《康有为往来书信集》，都没有辑入。

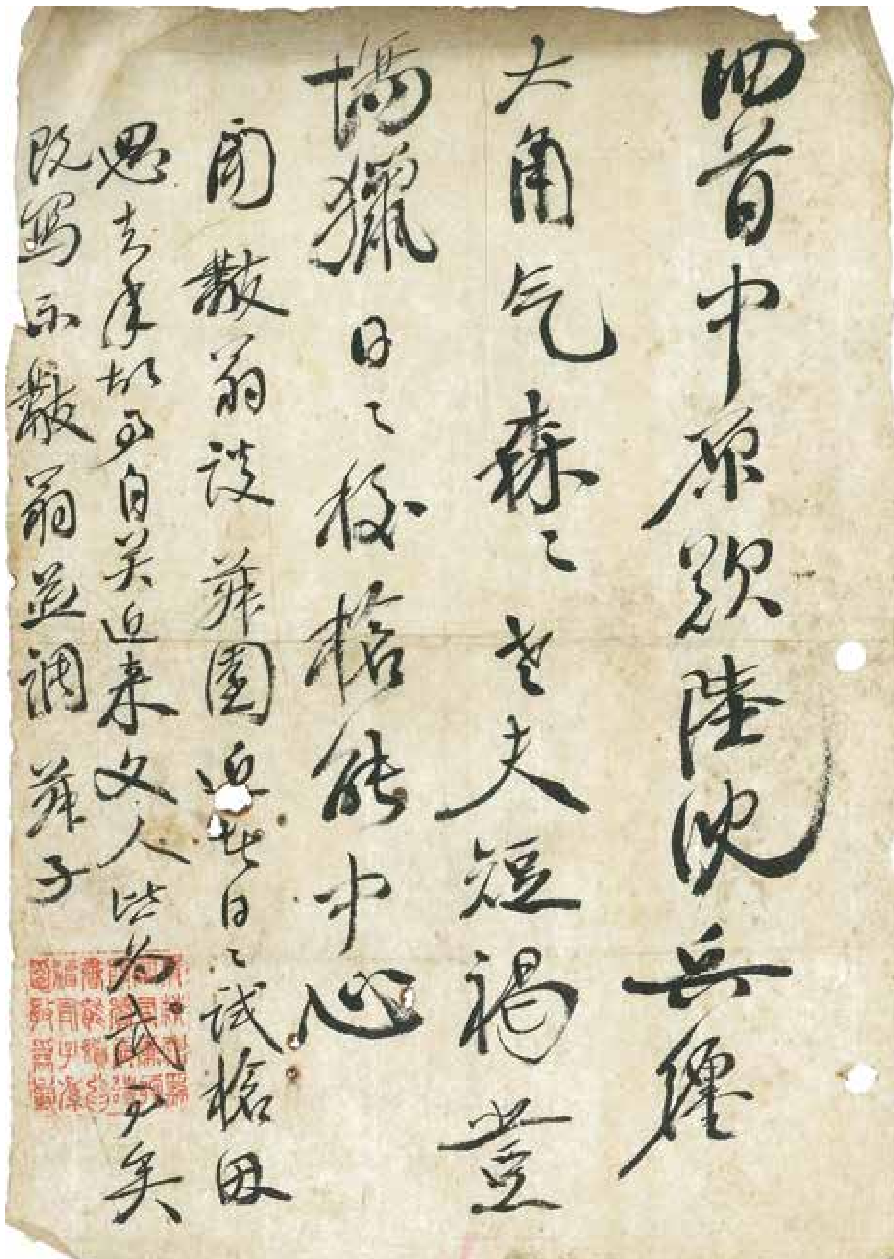
本文试图以康有为1900至1901年间致邱菽园的部分信函，辅以康氏的诗作及其他史料，初步勾勒出康有为在这段时间内在南洋的活动。

康有为、邱菽园简介

康有为（1858 – 1927），号长素，戊戌政变后易号更生、更甡、明夷等，广东南海人，自幼饱读儒家经典著作，青年时期又博览西书。1895年偕梁启超等入京会试，联合各省千余举子联名上书光绪皇帝，请求变法，即“公车上书”。是年，中进士，授工部主事。至1898年止，共上清帝6书。1898年6月，光绪下“定国是诏”，决定变法，并在6月16日召见了康有为。康提出开制度局而变法律、废八股、筹款、译书、游学等多项变法主张，遂被任命在总理衙门章京上行走，参与署理朝廷日常事务。在戊戌维新前，康已撰有《新学伪经考》、《孔子改制考》、《春秋学》、《日本政变记》等多种著作，形成了一整套独特的变法改制新思想体系。

1898年9月21日，慈禧太后再次“训政”，百日维新失败，主张变法改良的光绪被囚，康有为、梁启超逃离北京，谭嗣同、康广仁（康有为胞弟）等六君子遇害。康有为先逃往香港，10月由港赴日。次年4月赴加拿大，7月在加成立保皇会。光绪寿诞之日，举行祝寿活动，颇具声势，并联合美洲、南洋华侨商界，纷纷致电清政府，要求光绪归政，引起了慈禧的警觉。同年10月，经英国回到香港。

邱菽园，名炜萲，（1874–1941），祖籍中国福建海澄（今属厦门市），自号星洲寓公。父邱笃信，从事米业，为新加坡富商。邱菽园为光绪二十年（1894年）举人，次年上京参加会试，未得第，而恰在此年，康有为发起联名公车上书，对邱后来的思想发展产生了很大影响。他于1896年从中国内地移居香港，不久父亲病重，旋赴新加坡定居。1898年创办《天南新报》，宣传维新思想，次年与林文庆合创新加坡华人女校。邱擅长诗词、书法等中华传统文化，后来还研究清末小说和佛学。年轻时，即为南洋侨界之翘楚。



邱菽园邀康有为来新加坡

1899年，在本已动荡不安的政局中，慈禧策划了一场“己亥建储”闹剧。慈禧对光绪实行维新变法怀恨在心，蓄意废黜光绪，并先行释放出光绪病重的谣言。但此事朝野反响很大，在各种政治力量博弈之后，慈禧采取缓兵之计，1900年1月宣布立端王载漪之子溥儁为大阿哥（皇子）。这是为她和咸丰皇帝的已故的独子同治皇帝“立嗣”。一旦大阿哥地位稳固，光绪被废黜便顺理成章了。

对朝廷这一举动，海外华侨反响强烈。华侨接触世界远多于国内臣民，更多于皇城内的一批保守派。他们抱着一片赤热的爱国之心，希望中国强盛，赶上世界进步的潮流。此时，他们把希望寄托在主张改政的光绪。1899年7月保皇会成立，康有为的宣言，在侨界激起很大反响。邱菽园、林文庆联络新加坡华商于10月12日致电总理衙门，奏请皇上圣安。11月12日慈禧寿辰，南洋各埠借贺寿之名致电，称太后耄期已届，不宜过劳，应当归政颐养。《天南新报》报道邱菽园等首倡电请圣安之举，使“京师震动”，“南洋一带，如吉隆埠、八打威埠，皆起而抒依归圣主之诚，电请圣安，并请太后归政颐养。”[1] 从香港到美洲，侨商都有类似的电报。

在这样的形势背景下，邱菽园邀请康有为前往新加坡。一来，邱对康景仰备至，希望能当面倾谈爱国抱负和聆听康有为的见解主张；二来，康乃朝廷要犯，慈禧集团必欲置其死地而后快，派人出境拘捕或暗杀随时可能发生。新加坡距中国大陆较远，相对比较安全。邱菽园请英国人何东爵士送去一千元（有说二千元），发出诚挚的邀请。

康有为在香港收到该款项后，复邱菽园一信：

> 菽园囗兄孝廉执事：讲闻风义久矣。天南一柱，独持清议，天挺人豪以救中国。每读大报及得赐同门诸子书，未尝不眷然神往也。仆以不才，过蒙圣主知遇，哀国危亡，毗赞维新。遭变以来，故人亦多遗绝，而足下乃独衷念逋亡，辨其愚忠，助共张目。徐生之行，过承接待。又复轸念琐尾，馈以千金，拜登感激，不知所报。但以执事高义雄才，纯忠硕学，相知之深，相待之笃，骈筲并执，以救君国，非复为寻常语言所可谢也。顷有北客来语京师事，圣体甚安，贼臣忧病，事大可为，惟未能达之笔墨，当遣一门人来商。前日遣之陈、刘二生，过承赐接，又承为仆殷勤谋安行止。亡人叩首，只有感戴。敬布谢私，不尽所怀。专承起居。
>
> 亡人康有为再行　十月十八日
>
> 前呈诗章，想麈尊以见。谢赐金电想收。[2]

此信书于1899年11月20日。从信中可以看出，此时康、邱二人尚未谋面，故而语言十分谦逊。信末署上姓名全名，以示慎重。信中“大报”指邱氏主办的《天南新报》，“徐生”指徐勤，字君勉，广东三水人，康氏弟子，《知新报》撰述。“北客来语京师事，圣体甚安”针对慈禧集团散布光绪病重谣言事。信末最后一句，说明康有为收到邱款后即行发电致谢。

不久，康有为又有书信致邱菽园，谈国内情势，并充分肯定邱率南洋侨界发电请慈禧退位归政光绪事：

> 菽园仁兄：前日复上一书，想达典签。顷得北信，谓合肥出办商务，专为南洋电请归政一事。那拉惶袪恐惧，特丐合肥出游南洋（可预思待之之法），察民情而自白。此绝好机会消息。公真有回天之力矣。望即联各商人、各商埠，轮流致电。（另函望抄示各埠，并电告雷、广）顷湖南、北已有变动，各省随之，必有大变，惜未有饷源耳。比袁世凯出抚山东，而廖仲山 撤出军机，是为一变。然“废立”之谋，以畏人心，不敢议及。顷内地是非渐明，人心日愤，非复畴昔矣。以公办电奏事有成功大效，故飞报。即请
>
> 义安　　有为再拜　　十五日[3]

信内“比袁世凯出抚山东”，系光绪二十五年十一月（1899年12月）事，故此信当书于12月17日。此时康尚在港。信中“合肥”指李鸿章，“那拉”指慈禧。“惜未有饷源耳”语，为日后向邱菽园募款留下了伏笔。

康有为应邀于1900年1月26日离开香港赴新。

康有为初到新加坡

康有为来到新加坡，做了不少记事诗。好在他常在诗序中署上年月日，后人考订其行踪便有了依据。

1900年2月1日（光绪二十六年正月初二日）抵新加坡，寓邱菽园客云庐三层楼上。

(ABOVE) **康有为诗稿，见注5。** *All Rights Reserved, the late Khoo Seok Wan Collections, National Library Board, Singapore 2013. Courtesy of Ong Family, descendents of Khoo Seok Wan.*

2月24日（正月二十五日） 迁居恒春园。
3月26日（二月二十六日） 迁居林宅。
4月7日（三月初八日） 移居章宅。[4]

其时，中国国内“废立”闹剧锣鼓暂时收歇。康有为初到新加坡后，吟诗赏景，本文人之所好。这里有一首诗颇炙人口味，未见于康有为几种版本的诗集。

> 回首中原叹陆沉，兵缠大角气森森。
> 老夫短褐登场猎，日日校枪能中心。
> 闻澥翁谈，菽园近者日日试枪。
> 因思去年故事，自笑近来文人皆为武事矣。既写示澥翁，并调叔子。[5]

这首诗生动描述了邱菽园练武的情状，摩拳擦掌，可以反映出当时华侨们的激情。

澥翁是侨界知名人士黄乃裳，号澥丞，(1849—1924)，福建闽清人，1894年举人，参与康有为公车上书活动，与维新人士有交往，1899年到新加坡，为《星报》主笔，一生著述颇丰。

康到新后的7月，光绪三十大寿。这时八国联军已攻陷大沽口，北京紧急，消息不通。康有为在新加坡祈祷皇上“圣躬无恙”，并与梁尔煦、汤睿设香案、龙牌，望北叩首拜祝。邱菽园则鼓动大批华侨，举行全城祝寿，气氛之热闹，前所未见。这次活动在南洋华侨中有很大影响。

庚子勤王和自立军起事

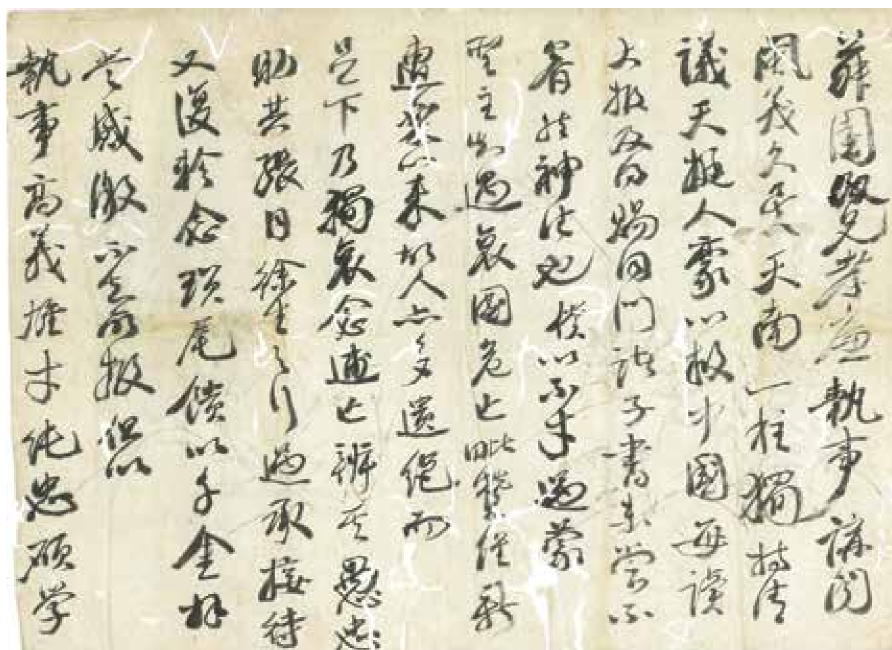
1900年，神州多故。北方义和拳运动的发展，最终被慈禧所利用。上年“废立“未能得逞，慈禧迁怒于洋人。她想利用义和团攻击洋人，其实无异以卵击石，遭致八国联军大举进犯华北，北京被陷，京城百姓生灵涂炭，慈禧挟光绪逃往西安。康有为等保皇派，为他们的精神寄托光绪皇帝的安危心忧如焚，日夜筹思保皇之策。动用洋人，主要是英国人的力量，是他们的首选。1900年8月18日（七月二十四日）康有为致陈继俨、汤睿的信这样写：

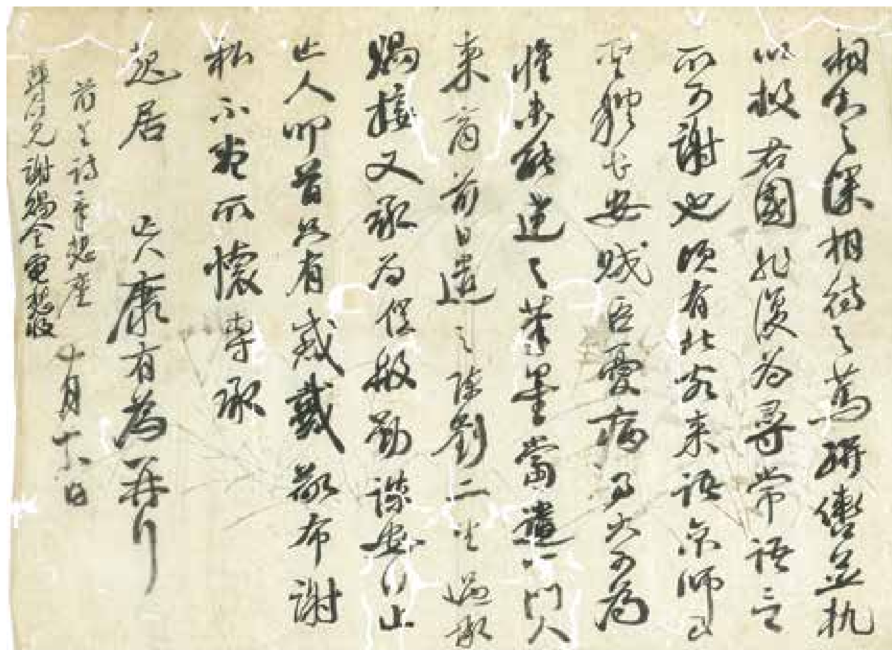
> 北京已破，情形大变，所有译旧党之人亦无用。觉顿入来可也。计贼党如徐桐、李秉衡、怀塔、立山、恩佑之流，亦复身家流播不知死生，无能为，可不必为作传矣。可告文兄，惟请文兄为我拟一电一信与各国政府，请共救上。坡督已言，各国决救上，且得我救上之法，我已请其转英政府矣。（虽已西幸，西人无能为，然西人和约要之。那拉已大悔，或从，否则必生内变。）坡督相待极厚，隔日即请茶会或游花园。以其供饮食太费事（且许久居），再三却，已得允。惟点灯、铺垫各事，彼侍者尚日来招呼耳。惟北望中原，但有悽怆。
> 仪、觉弟　　甡　　七月廿四日
> 电稿（信亦可照此意）
> 太后、端王开罪各国，殊深愤恨。望议和约时要求皇上与太后另居，亲理大政，必能与各国亲好。前与港督信，亦可增入此意。（笔者按：电稿上方尚有“皇上仁明二句，应否由文兄酌加”语）[6]

收信人陈继俨字仪侃，时在新加坡，曾为澳门《知新报》撰述；汤睿字觉顿，康有为弟子。信内“文兄”，林文庆，南洋侨界知名人士，留学英国，中英文俱佳。后来在陈嘉庚创办的厦门大学任校长多年。“上”指皇上，“坡督”指新加坡总督。“西幸”指慈禧和光绪圣驾去西安。

康有为于7月26日（七月朔）被英总督亚历山大接往马六甲海峡内丹将顿岛居住，两周后，即8月9日（七月望）又派船迎往槟榔

(TOP) 邱菽园西装照。*All Rights Reserved, the late Khoo Seok Wan Collections, National Library Board, Singapore 2013. Courtesy of Ong Family, descendents of Khoo Seok Wan.*





(ABOVE) 康有为致邱菽园书信，见注2。*All Rights Reserved, the late Khoo Seok Wan Collections, National Library Board, Singapore 2013. Courtesy of Ong Family, descendents of Khoo Seok Wan.*

屿，入住总督府[7]。此信后半段对此叙述颇具体。英方主要出于康有为的安全，直到第二年的12月17日康离开槟榔屿去印度为止，一直让他住在那里。

1900年的春夏，在长江流域和两广一带，酝酿并上演了一场以勤王为主旨的运动-——自立军事件。这是维新派人士寻求以武力推翻慈禧政权的尝试。自立军首领唐才常（1867-1900），字黻丞，又作佛尘，湖南浏阳人，年轻时与谭嗣同一起为经世致用之学，曾任《湘学报》撰述、时务学堂中文教习，主张变法维新。变法失败后，在上海主创正气会。1900年义和团起事，改良派主张乘此机会勤王，推翻慈禧统治。唐才常改正气会为自立会，组自立军。但自立军宗旨不明，人员复杂，组织散乱，更重要的是保皇派都是文人学士，非但没有领过兵，连一般的行政管理经验都很缺乏，仓促起事，失败是必然的。最终因唐才常指挥失当等直接原因，导致七月二十七日在汉口被张之洞逮捕，次日唐才常等二十余人慷慨就义。唐才常临难赋诗："七尺微躯酬故友，满腔热血浇皇宫"。[8]这里"故友"是谭嗣同。这是晚清历史上为推动社会进步，继戊戌六君子之后的又一幕悲壮史诗。

邱菽园在这一时期内，慷慨解囊，以巨资捐助自立军，主要用于军饷和购置武器。1900年6月2日康有为上母亲书曰"顷邱君已愿交十万，又愿借十万，大力可举。"[9]同日致徐勤书曰："菽再捐五万助械，难得甚。"[10]但是自立军未战即溃，不论对康还是对邱，都是莫大的打击。唐才常死难，康有为为之"痛恻肺肝"，"自戊戌八月（笔者按：指谭嗣同等六君子被害）至今，未有惨痛如此者"。[11]邱菽园也有哭唐烈士才常诗稿，"指血作点，惨淡模糊，如目睹汉难志士，哀哉至矣"。[12]

唐才常事败之后的中秋节，邱菽园有信、报寄康。康从槟榔屿复信，言及汇款诸事：

> 十八日两书谨收（中秋节书收、报收）。前日承赐五百金，感领。沪电之事，已令觉详告，想收。此事念甚。苏、杭、湖、镇各路之起，待此款而动。若无应兵，则大通之兵恐无后继而败。然公款又以无寄处而不达，深恐为公信诚所收，未知楂打复电如何？若已交公信诚，则公直追之，观其交示。此为英租界地，有楂打作据，亦不悉公信诚之据之也。秦西即容纯甫，觉谓公知之。各西文乃秦西住址，恐雅往日本，故请电秦西转询雅收款（明知其不然，亦备查耳），应电秦与否，由公定之。至任雅是否往日本，亦以意推之耳。因电末有"东京"二字，然又云"详字"，则不可解也。大通布告声明会长，则容老须避否，尚不可知。但除容老外，上海无约两字电可通之处，故仍拟电容老一询消息及任雅消息耳。麻城、大通二军及各处消息，如任雅行，则必容或赵等统之。然知消息更迟而难，须再有书来，乃有通信之地。日日望报而偏无一书，焦急殊甚。想任雅仓黄之甚，岂亦不写一字来耶？乱世办事甚难，固然。闻德亦许退兵，未省，然不再有胡廷飞，难知消息矣。诚然。各国入北京弥月，而北中各况不详，亦可异也。
>
> 救国大士　　明夷　　八月廿日
>
> 又，来电稿及三书已收。前日付上之信（有讨稿）及电码想收。[13]

信中"公信诚"应为中国人办的钱庄或票号，"楂打"为英国银行，STANDARD CHARTERED BANK。可以看到，汉口事败，康对长江中游已感无望，唯有冀望于长江下游一带的苏州、杭州、湖州和镇江，但苦于消息不通，而汇款渠道又不畅。信中"容纯甫"、"容老"为容闳，（1828-1912），广东香山人，为中国早期留美学生，与维新派颇多交往，自立军起事失败后，受张之洞通缉，遂逃往香港。"雅"可能是日本人井上雅二，"任雅"是一人抑或两人，不详。

尾声

自立军失败后，保皇运动大势已去，很快分化，保皇思潮渐趋冷落。康有为对局势也已感到束手无策。从1900年秋起，在槟榔屿度过了一段沉闷的时日，同时专心学问，撰成《春秋削笔大义微言考》、《中庸注》、《孟子微》等篇章。下面一封信当书于1900年底的12月26日。

> 电想收（三号至六号书收）。八千已汇井，不得粤中电乎？井不往，高珮则易举，计智亦可代办之。当令智追井还也。董叛已成一妙机会，此七月廿一日仆所预料者，今竟发矣。南北其分乎？中国人向好穿截衣，今日遂为服口乎？武昌之迁殆不免，但望上入于联军而不入于洞贼，为今第一要局耳。
>
> 救国大士　　明夷　　十一月五日
>
> 公毂二注疏本能假来乎？昔焚之书，顷再写之。子盈可令之来，仆存衣箱望托带。（若不得，则后有来者交之）[14]
>
> 信中"洞贼"指张之洞。

结语

本文重在介绍王清建先生所珍藏的史料，从这批史料的角度可以看到康有为1900-1901年在南洋的部分活动。今天我们再读这段历史，应该有一个明确的出发点，那就是如何评价"保皇"二字。这两个字是在当时特定历史条件下产生的，决非一般的拥戴专制皇权，抵制民主革命的意思。"皇"，这里专指光绪。今天，大家有共识的是慈禧代表着顽固保守势力，而光绪倾向于改良。康有为等维新派人士，把希望寄托于光绪，是一种走政制改良、君主立宪等内部机制更新的渐进式的道路，从而使中国这个几千年皇权专制的庞然大物可以以较小的代价，不流血或少流血，启动跟上世界前进的步伐。后来革命派兴起，试图以另一种方式，即武力、激进的方式，实现同一个目标，并取得了至少是表面上的成功。

在此过程中，为了妖魔化异己者（实际上是同道者而不是革命的对象——专制政体，"保皇"二字受到了无情的批判、讽刺和鞭笞，这是对历史的不公。

笔者限于水平，只是对这批资料局部地作了一点力所能及的梳理，所阅数量有限，遑论解读，也必定存在不少讹误，敬请读者指正。笔者希望于聚集各方专业人士之智慧，把这批资料整理出来，完整地呈现给读者，以垂久远，受惠的学子将感激不尽。●

新加坡国家图书馆将于2013年11月22日至2014年5月18日，在第7层和8层的长廊举办"浪漫与革新：南侨诗宗邱菽园"展览。

此外，裕廊区域图书馆、牛车水社区图书馆，以及兀兰区域图书馆也将在以下时段轮流举办"南侨诗宗邱菽园"巡回展：

裕廊区域图书馆	2013年10月28日至12月15日
牛车水社区图书馆	2013年12月16日至2014年3月31日
兀兰区域图书馆	2014年4月1日至5月29日

The exhibition "Khoo Seok Wan: Poet and Reformist" will run from 22 November 2013 to 18 May 2014 at the Promenade, Levels 7 and 8 of the National Library. The roving exhibition, "Khoo Seok Wan: Master Poet" will run from 28 October to 15 December 2013 at Jurong Regional Library; 16 December 2013 to 31 March 2014 at Chinatown Public Library; and 1 April to 29 May 2014 at Woodlands Regional Library.

引注

1. 转引自桑兵《庚子勤王与晚清政局》，P.34，北京大学出版社2004年版
2. 原件，王清建藏
3. 原件，王清建藏
4. 参见《康有为全集》第12集，PP.201-202，中国人民大学出版社2007年版
5. 原件，王清建藏
6. 原件，王清建藏
7. 参见《康有为全集》第十二集，P.206
8. 转引自汤志钧《戊戌变法人物传稿，P.470，中华书局1982年6月第2版
9. 《康有为全集》第五集，P.182
10. 同上引书，P.184
11. 同上引书，P.250
12. 同上引书，第十二集，P.207
13. 原件，王清建藏
14. 原件，王清建藏

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While information is easily accessible from various online sources, well-researched and quality specialist knowledge found in scholarly journals, business market reports and other such resources might not be so easy to locate.

Through its eResources service (http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg), the National Library Board connects its members to over 70 databases that cover a comprehensive range of subjects from the arts to finance to health.

Here is a sampling of available databases.

Gracie Lee is a Senior Librarian with the National Library. She was involved in the development of NewspaperSG, NLB's online archive of Singapore newspapers, and is an occasional trainer for electronic databases. Her research interests include Singapore history and digital libraries.

Belinda Chan is a manager with the National Library. She helped to develop an online platform for accessing Singapore and International Standards information. Her research interest areas include current affairs and international relations.

E-books

INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES COLLECTION

This excellent e-book collection brings together the publications and research of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS). The content covers imprints that were released from 1980 to 2010, and features scholars like Wang Gungwu, Leo Suryadinata, Sharon Siddique and Saw Swee Hock.

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GALE VIRTUAL REFERENCE LIBRARY

Gale is an online library of reference books and encyclopedias on various subjects ranging from the arts to the sciences. A noteworthy gem in its collection is the well-received multi-volume work on *The Papers of Lee Kuan Yew: speeches, interviews and dialogues* compiled by the National Archives of Singapore in 2011.

Available at all libraries and from home.

Business

ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT

Provides up-to-date political and economic analysis and data on 65 countries through its country reports. The database also has a global forecasting information service on commodities, world trade and exchange rates.

Available at Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, Jurong Regional Library, Tampines Regional Library and Woodlands Regional Library.

EUROMONITOR PASSPORT (FORMERLY EUROMONITOR GLOBAL MARKET INFORMATION DATABASE)

Euromonitor Passport is a database with business intelligence on consumer markets, consumer lifestyles, countries, companies and brands. It contains in-depth research, trend analysis and statistics on consumer products such as apparel and games. It also provides data and analysis on consumer lifestyles, demographic and socio-economic trends in 206 countries.

Available at all libraries. Limited printing access.

BUSINESS MONITOR ONLINE

Provides market reports on an array of industry sectors that includes Agribusiness, Commercial Banking, Defence & Security, Freight Transport, Information Technology, Water, Insurance, Oil & Gas, Pharmaceuticals, Power, Shipping and Telecommunications. The geographical areas covered span over 190 countries. The database also offers country forecast reports, risk ratings as well as current analysis and news.

Available at Lee Kong Chian Reference Library.

MARKETLINE ADVANTAGE (FORMERLY DATAMONITOR 360)

This database provides market data on almost 50 countries in over 30 market sectors that range from leisure and arts to financial services and healthcare. In addition, the database carries country analysis, company profiles and business case studies. One can also generate statistics from its country and market data analytics databases.

Available at Lee Kong Chian Reference Library only.

SINGAPORE 1000

This database offers access to the digital versions of established publications Singapore 1000 and SME 500 that focus on performance rankings of top corporations and small and medium enterprises in Singapore. The database also has a list of the 50 Fastest Growing Companies in Singapore, a contact list and graphs showing the distribution of top companies by sales and industry.

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4. Click on the database

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1. From your laptop, select Wireless@SG from the list of wireless networks
2. Login to your Wireless@SG account
3. Go to http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg
4. Use the Browse List to locate the database
5. Click on the database

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Newspapers

TIMES DIGITAL ARCHIVE

The online historical archive of *The Times* (London) covers the period from 1785 to 1985, and some of its articles record events and personalities in or related to British colonies in the Far East, making it a useful resource for research on Singapore and Malaya under British rule. The website offers full-image replicas of the originals and allows full-text searching and filtering by categories such as illustrations, features and editorials.

Available at all libraries and from home.

FACTIVA

A popular news database that offers one of the richest and deepest archives of Singapore papers. *The Straits Times* (1989–), *The Business Times* (1984–), The New Paper (2004–), *Berita Harian* (2011–) *Lianhe Zaobao* (1999–), *Shin Min Daily* (2007–), *Today* (2004–) and *Channel NewsAsia* are some of the newspaper titles included in the collection. Factiva, under Dow Jones, aggregates content from new wires such as *Reuters* and *Associated Press*, as well as newsprint from over 200 countries in 28 languages.

Available at all libraries.

LIBRARY PRESSDISPLAY

Users can access the digital replicas of over 2,000 newspapers from 97 countries that are presented in full-colour. Newspapers in the collection include the *International Herald Tribune*, *Wall Street Journal Asia*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *South China Morning Post*, *The Australian*, *Bangkok Post*, *The Jakarta Post*, *Manila Times* and *The Star Malaysia*. Access is up to 90 days of back issues.

Available from home. Access to *The Straits Times*, *The Business Times* and *Lianhe Zaobao* are available in libraries only.

Humanities, Social Sciences & Sciences

JSTOR

JSTOR is a not-for-profit digital library established by a consortium of research and university libraries. It houses more than 1,500 scholarly journals in over 50 disciplines particularly in the areas of social sciences, humanities and history. Significant titles include the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* and its successors, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies and Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*.

Available at all libraries and from home.

SPRINGERLINK

SpringerLink is a full-text science database. It offers an extensive range of disciplines that includes chemistry, computer science, engineering, environmental sciences, food science & nutrition, life sciences, physics, psychology and behavioural science. It has over 4 million documents, 870,000 chapters and 250,000 reference entries which are published under Springer-Verlag and related publishers.

Available at all libraries and from home.

EBSCOHOST

Its two core databases, Academic Search Premier and Business Source Complete, provide full-text access to over 6,000 peer-reviewed journals. Collectively, the suite of 15 databases encompasses the subject areas of psychology, education, religion, military science, business, sports, nursing, biology, chemistry and engineering. Besides academic journals, there are also over 3,500 SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analyses and 9,000 case studies for the business student, trade journals for professionals and popular business magazines such as *Businessweek*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes* and *Fortune* for the general reader.

Available at all libraries and from home.

Arts

OXFORD ART ONLINE

A collection of key art reference works by the Oxford University Press. They include the *Grove Art Online*, the *Benezit Dictionary of Artists*, the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, *The Oxford Companion to Western Art*, and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms*. The database also offers thematic guides on popular visual arts topics such as Impressionism and Fashion, as well as brief timelines on world art.

Available at all libraries and from home.

ARTSTOR

Focuses primarily on art images and contains 1.5 million digital images on painting, photography, sculpture, decorative arts and design, archaeological and anthropological objects and other aspects of visual and material culture. The image library is built on the collections of Magnum Photos, the Museum of Modern Art, Frick Art Reference Library, Getty Research Institute and many more partners. Like JSTOR, ARTstor is a shared resource bank established by a consortium of research and universities libraries.

Available at Lee Kong Chian Reference Library only.

LITERATURE ONLINE

Literature Online is an online library of more than 350,000 works of English and American poetry, drama and prose, 300 full-text literature journals, and other criticisms and reference resources. The texts are complemented by 800 clips of poetry readings and dramatised audio-recordings of Shakespeare's 39 plays. Also available are 200 student guides that provide character lists, chapter-by-chapter summaries, and brief analyses on the style, themes and motifs of classic and contemporary literary works.

Available at Lee Kong Chian Reference Library only.

Singapore Comics Showcase

Lim Cheng Tju is an educator who also writes about history and popular culture. His articles have appeared in the *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, *Journal of Popular Culture* and *Print Quarterly*. He is the country editor (Singapore) for the *International Journal of Comic Art* and also the co-editor of *Liquid City 2*, an anthology of Southeast Asian comics published by Image Comics.

ON 31 AUGUST 1960, THE SINGAPORE FREE PRESS ran an article with the rather controversial headline: "Bad boys … comics to blame, say the teachers". Some 58 teachers from English schools had met at a closed-door meeting to debate the ill-effects of comics on teenagers. After six long hours, the meeting concluded that comics were a form of "misguided culture" and contributed towards juvenile delinquency in Singapore. The declaration was part of the government's decade-long campaign against "yellow culture" — a movement against Western decadence, pornography and gangsterism — that had been launched the previous year.

Thankfully, such prejudiced attitudes towards comics changed in the early 1990s when a series of educational comics published by Asiapac Books became bestsellers. Public libraries too recognised this popular art form, and in 1999, graphic novels were added to the collection of the former library@orchard in Ngee Ann City. In the same year, a small exhibition showcasing local political cartoons by Tan Huay Peng and Morgan Chua was held in the courtyard of the old National Library at Stamford Road.

From May to June 2013, the Singapore 24 Hour Comics Day Showcase was held at various public library branches such as Sengkang and Serangoon Public Libraries. This exhibition featured the works of young artists who participated in the 2011 and 2012 editions of the 24 Hour Comics Day.

In conjunction with the Singapore Memory Project, Chinese newspaper *Lianhe Zaobao* has organised an exhibition, "A Collection of Our Shared Memories", showcasing 90 years of comics published in the paper in celebration of its 90th anniversary. From August to November 2013, the exhibition travelled from the National Library at Victoria Street to library@Chinatown to Woodlands Regional Library and to its final pit stop at the SPH News Centre.

THE 24 HOURS COMICS DAY

The 24 Hour Comics Day started in the United States in 2004 to encourage aspiring artists to create 24 pages of comics in 24 hours. The event — in which participants gather for a full 24-hour period, give free rein to their imagination and complete a 24-page comic during the time given — has since been adopted by countries across the world. The first 24 Hour Comics Day in Singapore was held in 2010, and on 20 October 2012, the third edition was held at Bukit Merah Public Library.

The 24 Hour Comics Day Showcase in 2013 featured a total of 15 works, many of which were centered on the theme of pursuing one's dreams. In *Changing Stories*, Christal Kuna recounts a wordless but poignant coming-of-age story about life choices and a father's love and guidance. Max Loh's work *The Road Not Taken* references Robert Frost's inspirational poem of the same name, recounting the personal story of his decision to study the sciences and how, as an adult now, he is drawing comics in his free time. Jerry Teo adapted Aesop's didactic fable about the dog and wolf and questions whether it is better to live comfortably and be subjected to a human master, or to live freely and be the master of one's own destiny. *Dog and Wolf* was voted by participating artists as the best story created at the 2012 event.

Participants also used the opportunity to create comics that express their opinions about social issues. For instance Japanese art director Emiko Iwasaki's anger is palpable in her story, *Wish*, which

documents the discrimination and sexual harassment faced by women in Japan.

Wish is one of many autobiographical comics created at the Comics Day event. This genre is a recurrent one among many artists in America and has its Southeast Asian counterparts among Indonesian artists such as Tita Larasati and Sheila Rooswitha. Local artists who have adopted this genre include Koh Hong Teng and Troy Chin. Following in a similar autobiographical vein, albeit in a more lighthearted style, is Hanse Kew's *Bundle of Joy*, a simple story about his journey to fatherhood.

Other past works include humour strips, such as Clio Ding's *Kevin* and *Magical Nonsense* (2011), and adventure stories such as Benjamin Chee's *Gate of Joy* (2012), which are influenced by the Japanese manga and anime styles of cartoons. Many of the artists are still developing and finding their own voices and it is encouraging to see these talents bravely exploring their creativity in public.

A COLLECTION OF OUR SHARED MEMORIES

In 1923 and 1929 respectively, Chinese language newspapers *Nanyang Siang Pau* and *Sin Chew Jit Poh* were founded. In 1983, they merged to form *Lianhe Zaobao*, and this year, it celebrates 90 years of Chinese newspaper publishing in Singapore. Supported by the Singapore Memory Project, "A Collection of Our Shared Memories" is an exhibition tracing 90 years of cartoons published in these newspapers.

These cartoons serve as mirrors of our times, their subject matter revolving around everyday issues such as food, work, housing and transport, reflecting the socio-political changes that took place in Singapore. In the 1920s and 1930s, most of the cartoons in *Nanyang Siang Pau* and *Sin Chew Jit Poh* focused on China, which was not surprising as many of the artists as well the editor of *Sin Kwang* (the pictorial supplement of *Sin Chew Jit Poh*), Tchang Ju Chi, were migrants from China. The newspapers served as a news link between the Chinese immigrants in Singapore — most of whom were sojourners and did not intend to settle down — and their homeland.

In the 1930s, the cartoons began to cover more local topics and issues. This can be attributed to the editorship of Dai Yinglang at *Wenman Gie* (*World of Literature and Cartoons*), the arts supplement of *Nanyang Siang Pau*. Dai wanted the cartoons to document the lives of the locals, especially the poor. Influenced by the Chinese writer, Lu Xun, he believed that art should serve the people and that it could spark radical changes in thinking and in society. These works marked the early signs of discontentment with British colonial rule in Singapore.

However, with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the Chinese press and its cartoons refocused their attention on the war efforts back in China, with anti-Japanese cartoons appearing on the front page of the *Nanyang Siang Pau*. When Japan finally invaded Singapore in 1942, many Chinese writers and artists, including cartoonists, were executed during Operation Sook Ching, a military campaign aimed at ridding Singapore's Chinese community of its anti-Japanese elements. In response to this, and in memory of his fallen comrades, artist Liu Kang published *Chop Suey*, a collection of cartoons depicting Japanese atrocities in Singapore, in 1946.

CARTOONS OF THE 1950s AND 1960s

The Japanese Occupation of Singapore was a clear indication that the people could not depend on the British for protection and that they should strive towards independence. While the cartoons of the 1950s reflected the anti-colonial fervour of the times, it was not just pro-Independence cartoons that were popular. Cartoons had a part to play in shaping the culture and values of a fledgling nation that was transitioning from colonial rule to self-government. Cartoons in the 1950s were also moralistic in tone, attack-

(CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP) A sampling of comics that have appeared in *Nanyang Siang Pau*: "Let's hope that the fervour to clean up the city will last long", Xu Zhen Di, *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 25/10/1968; "Tell Daddy I'm quitting work!", Ong Sher Shin, *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 6/2/1972; "The social butterfly", *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 1/4/1950.

ing the economic problems of the day and highlighting social and moral decay.

Western culture was perceived as being synonymous with decadence, and thus, detrimental to the Malayan culture that the local politicians, artists and writers were trying to engender. This rallying call eventually crystallised into policy in 1959 when the People's Action Party came to power and declared war against this cultural and moral erosion.

By the early 1960s, cartoons had morphed into a consensus-building tool. Cartoons began to pointedly illustrate larger political interests, moving away from the fiery anti-colonial images of the 1950s to support the merger with Malaya. What the government wanted was a "peaceful revolution", as cited in a Ministry of Culture publication in 1960. In line with this, cartoons in *Sin Chew Jit Poh* promoted social cohesion, such as the learning of Malay to create a new Malayan culture and the passing of the Women's Charter that outlawed polygamy.

After Singapore and Malaysia separated in 1965, cartoons took on a stronger social character, promoting the nation-building process, reflecting social policy and economic planning, publicising birth control measures and emphasising the importance of a clean and green country. During this time, the Chinese press tapped on the talents of artists like See Cheen Tee, Lim Mu Hue and, later, Koeh Sia Yong.

CARTOONS OF THE 1970s AND 1980s

Cartoons of the 1970s marked a return to the anti-yellow culture movement. This time, they targeted hippie culture with its drugs and sexual permissiveness, and its associations with liberal Western values. Those who went abroad to study were deemed as a social threat when they returned to Singapore. Even Bruce Lee movies were seen as promoting violence, vigilantism and unhealthy behaviour and attitudes. *Sin Chew Jit Poh*'s Ong Sher Shin was at the forefront of this pro-government cartoon campaign.

However, not all cartoonists promoted the State's agenda: four *Nanyang Siang Pau* senior executives were arrested under the Internal Security Act in 1971 for allegedly playing up Chinese chauvinism and glorifying Chinese communism in the newspaper. In 1974, to prevent such incidents from recurring, the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act was enacted to regulate the management and operation of all newspapers in Singapore.

By the 1980s, Singapore was more confident of its position on the world stage and its own future. A new generation of cartoonists appeared on the scene, such as Lee Kok Hean (Li Tai Li) and Heng Kim Song. The former was one of the original members of Man Hua Bao, a group of young cartoonists who contributed to the *Sin Chew* youth supplement, *Sin Chew Youth*. In the early 1980s, they were an active group, creating cartoons about local life. When they disbanded in 1986, they were replaced by Man Hua Kuai Can, another student group that drew cartoons for the Sunday edition of *Lianhe Zaobao*.

Readers today would be more familiar with the hot-button issues that beleaguered Singapore from the 1980s onwards — falling birthrates, Chinese language issues, various financial crises, immigration controversies, the threat of SARS and avian flu, as well as daily bugbears such as the rising cost of living. As they did in the past, the cartoons mirrored the local headlines of the day.

So what has changed in the art of cartooning, particularly in Singapore newspapers, after 90 years? In its early years, most people were illiterate and cartoons served as a powerful vehicle to convey visual ideas, employing images and simple text to carry their messages. Today, cartoons have become more sophisticated, using verbal innuendo and double entendres because the increasingly educated populace can understand these textual sleights of hand. There are also more textual and visual references to mass media as well as pop culture on platforms such as television, radio, the internet, and increasingly, social media. But it is precisely because of this competition that cartoons as a genre have become less effective as a means of communication. This is perhaps one of the key reasons why the artists who take part in 24 Hour Comics Day feel less inclined to tackle social issues of the day, preferring instead to deal with personal introspection.

Both exhibitions present a past and present view of the state of cartooning/comics creation in Singapore and will hopefully inspire more people to create their own works. ●

(TOP) Held at various public libraries, visitors to the 24 Hour Comics Day (2013) exhibition were able to read the works of participating artists. *Courtesy of Pearly Ma.*

(CENTRE) A panel from Christal Kuna's submission, *Changing Stories. All rights reserved, Christal Kuna, 2012.*

ROOTS
TRACING FAMILY HISTORIES

26 JUL 2013 – 16 FEB 2014
GALLERY, LEVEL 10, NATIONAL LIBRARY BUILDING

Curious about your family history? Intrigued by the stories behind your family's heirlooms or well-loved recipes? Do you want to find out more? Visit "Roots: Tracing Family Histories", an exhibition that explores the many facets of family history and genealogy. Follow the stories of several Singaporean families as they seek to discover their roots through photographs, official documents and personal objects. You might even be inspired to start your own journey!

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