

5

Through his eyes: Remembering old Singapore through the poems of Edwin Thumboo

11

MGS memories of 11 Mount Sophia

18

重温“丽的呼声”昔日多姿多彩的时光

24

Saya dan Bulan Bahasa

biblioasia



NLB National Library
Singapore



Contents

FEATURES



05
Through his eyes:
Remembering old
Singapore through the
poems of Edwin Thumboo
— **Stephanie Pee**

11
MGS memories of
11 Mount Sophia
— **Barbara Quek**

18
重温“丽的呼声”
昔日多姿多彩的时光
— **Leong Hui Chuan**



24
Saya dan Bulan Bahasa
— **Muhammad Ariff Ahmad**

30
In the family:
Family history resources
in the National Library
— **Bonny Tan**

36
新加坡民信业的起源、
运作与历史
— **Lee Meiyu**

NL NOTES

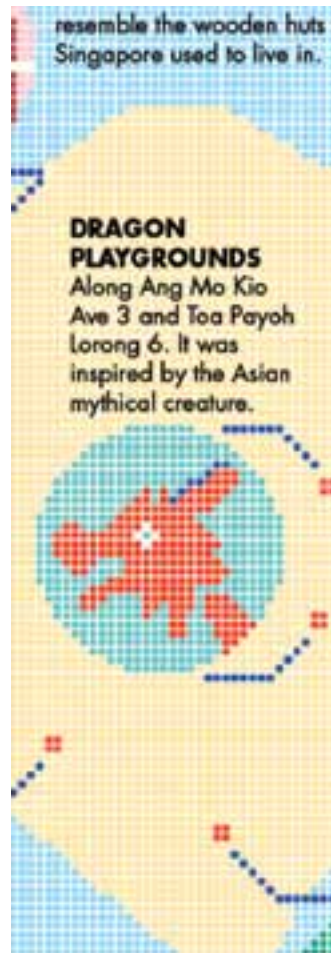


42
NLB-Saudi Arabia Cultural
Mission collaboration
— **Saudi Arabia
Cultural Mission**

44
iremembermagazines: our
love affair with magazines
— **Barbara Quek**

46
Uniquely Singaporean memories
— **Stephanie Pee**

BOOKMARKS



03
Director's Column
— **Ngian Lek Choh**

04
Giving your past a present –
the gift of remembering
— **Gene Tan**

10
PictureSG

Front Cover
Hock Lam Street in
1977. This popular spot
for hawker food was
the inspiration behind
Edwin Thumboo's
poem "The Sneeze"
(p. 7). Expunged in the
late 1970s, the Funan
DigitalLife Mall now
stands on this site.
*Source: MICA Collection,
courtesy of National
Archives of Singapore.*

Errata

The caption of the photograph in the
previous issue of *BiblioAsia* (July 2012,
vol. 8 issue 2), p. 14, should read: "The Union
Building and the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank
in the late 1920s". We are sorry for the error.

Editorial & Production

Managing Editor
Barbara Quek

Editorial Support

Ang Seow Leng, Gracie Lee,
Janice Loo, Lim Siew Kim,
Mary Peh, Masamah Ahmad
Mazelan Anuar, Sharon Koh,
Vicky Gao

Contributors

Barbara Quek, Bonny Tan,
Gene Tan, Lee Meiyu,
Leong Hui Chuan,
Muhammad Ariff Ahmad,
Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission,
Stephanie Pee

Design and Print

Relay Room
Times Printers

**Please direct all
correspondence to:**
National Library Board
100 Victoria Street #14-01
National Library Building
Singapore 188064
Tel: +65 6332 3255
Fax: +65 6332 3611
Email: ref@nlb.gov.sg
Website: www.nlb.gov.sg

BiblioAsia is available online at:
<http://nl.sg> and <http://libguides.nlb.sg>

Director's Column

Memories are powerful reminders of who we are as individuals, members of a family, and citizens of a nation. Passed down through generations, such recollections are integral to the preservation of a family's own heritage and legacy.

When recorded and archived, they serve as remembrances of a country's past and history. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong illustrated this in his National Day Rally speech on 26 Aug 2012, when he shared personal anecdotes from his youth, and spoke on the importance of accumulating and collecting individual experiences for the telling of the Singapore Story. These memories form the soul of a nation and are the emotional ties that bind and celebrate us as one people.

It is on this poignant note that this issue of *BiblioAsia* invites us on a walk down memory lane, drawing together personal and collective memories and stories woven in text and images.

The lead feature *Through his eyes: Remembering old Singapore through the poems of Edwin Thumboo* goes back in time to a memorable past of Hock Lam Street, Bras Basah and Bukit Batok captured in literature. Documenting many once-familiar landmarks in Singapore's social history, these place poems by Singapore's pre-eminent poet "anchor our memories and identities" as a nation and a people.

MGS memories of 11 Mount Sophia takes us on a nostalgic tour of the Methodist Girls' School (MGS), which turned 125 this year, through the reminiscences and anecdotes of former principals and students whose lives have been profoundly shaped by their experiences at MGS. The article allows us to revisit the scene as MGS students, staff and alumnae bid farewell to their old school site atop Mount Sophia.

The memories of former Rediffusion co-host, Mr Koh Eng Soon, transport us to a bygone era when the private radio station was a source of popular entertainment for many Singaporeans. Faithful listeners would tune in every day to the dialect programmes, especially the radio dramas and storytelling. The station closed in April 2012 after a 63-year run, and might have vanished from the air waves had it not been saved by a former Rediffusion deejay.

In *Saya dan Bulan Babasa* (The Malay Language Month and I), Malay language expert and Cultural Medallion recipient Muhammad Ariff Ahmad fondly recalls his experiences and active participation in the Malay Language Month since its inception in 1959. The National Library will be organising an exhibition in December to show the impact that Ariff has had on the local literary scene.

In the family highlights the variety of resources available in the National Library to trace one's family history. These include directories, *Who's who* listings, clan association publications, school yearbooks, and news archives. Such materials supplement one's own family resources such as photographs, birth certificates, letters, wills and other memorabilia.

We highlight two exhibitions in this issue, *Money by mail to China: Dreams and struggles of early migrants*, and *Iremember magazines*. Also on display at the library is the exhibition on *Raffles' letters: Intrigues behind the founding of Singapore* (www.facebook.com/SirStamfordRaffles), a rare collection of letters from the Bute Collection (Scotland) and the National Library, which we featured in the previous issue of *BiblioAsia*. Come by and view some of these unique gems, many of which are on display for the first time to the public.

We hope this issue on memories will warm your hearts and inspire you to share your personal stories and recollections of yesteryear. You are welcome to contribute your memories to the Singapore Memory Project – a national initiative to collect 5 million memories by Singapore's 50th year of independence in 2015.

Happy reading!

Ms Ngian Lek Choh
Director, National Library

Produced by National Library Board.
© National Library Board
Printed in Singapore, Oct - Dec 2012
ISSN 0219-8126 (PRINT)
ISSN 1793-9968 (ONLINE)
All rights reserved.

BiblioAsia is published and copyrighted in 2012 by the National Library Board, Singapore for all contents, designs, drawings and photographs printed in the Republic of Singapore.

BiblioAsia is published by National Library Board, Singapore with permission from the copyright owner. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, for any reason or by any

means, whether re-drawn, enlarged or otherwise altered including mechanical, photocopy, digital storage and retrieval or otherwise, without the prior permission in writing from both the copyright owner and the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. The text, layout and designs presented in this book, as well as the book in its entirety, are protected by the copyright laws of the Republic of Singapore and similar laws in other countries. Commercial production of works based in whole or in part upon the designs, drawings and photographs contained in this book is strictly forbidden without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

While every effort has been made in the collection, preparation and presentation of the material in this book, no responsibility can be taken for how this information is used by the reader, for any change that may occur after publication or for any error or omission on the part of the National Library Board, Singapore. Neither the respective copyrights owners or authors or the publishers accepts responsibility for any loss suffered by any person who acts or refrains from acting on any matter as a result of reliance upon any information contained in this book.

Scanning, uploading and/or distribution of this book, or any designs or drawings or photographs contained herein, in whole or part

(whether re-drawn, re-photographed or otherwise altered) via the Internet, CD, DVD, E-zine, photocopied hand-outs, or any other means (whether offered for free or for a fee) without the expressed written permission from both the copyright owner and the publisher is illegal and punishable by the laws of the Republic of Singapore and similar laws in other countries.

The copyright owner and publisher of this book appreciate your honesty and integrity and ask that you do not participate in or encourage piracy of copyrighted material. Be sure to purchase (or download) only authorized material. We thank you for your support.



Share your memory at
www.singaporememory.sg

Giving Your Past a Present

The Gift of Remembering

“If I had just passed these people on the streets, I would probably just brush past them without ever knowing the depth of the lives they have had and the stories they could tell.”

Ruth was sharing her experience interviewing residents of the soon-to-be-relocated Rochor Centre. They were recounting how they continue to have communal dinners with their neighbours – a demonstration of the *bona fide* kampong spirit that some find so elusive in today’s Singapore.

Ruth is a student from the Victoria Junior College and part of the Memory Corps – volunteers of the Singapore Memory Project. She and I were interviewed by a major news agency on our thoughts about the identity of Singapore and Singaporeans.

Through Ruth and many other fresh-eyed volunteers who have participated in the Singapore Memory Project, we have come to realise that the power of memories lies in them not being solitary pursuits. Rather, memories and especially the stories that enliven them when shared, generate conversations that otherwise would not have happened. In the case of Ruth and many youth volunteers who documented the stories of older Singaporeans, many of whom can recount but are not as adept in writing them down, these dialogues help connect both generations through vivid narratives.

The Singapore Memory Project is a whole-of-nation initiative that aims to collect 5 million memories of Singapore by 2015. Since it was highlighted by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the National Day Rally in August 2011, we have begun in earnest to experiment with myriad channels to collect those memories.

Experiences shared by Ruth are a humbling reminder of their enduring value to the project team, which is to bring back the magic of conversations, to bond Singaporeans through shared experiences – and ultimately to achieve the ideals of nation building.

What was also very illuminating from Ruth’s experience is that she was drawn into an era before her time, one that her generation would find almost alien.

Capturing memories to pass on to those not of one’s time is akin to “giving the past a present” – the tagline of the Singapore Memory Project. One of the most powerful gifts that can be given to a nation’s future is the memory of how she was built. The people of Singapore have a perfect opportunity to present this gift to present and future generations of Singaporeans as those who witnessed Singapore’s nation-building journey are still around for us to capture their first hand experiences.

Some of the most moving memories received so far are those documenting loving accounts of parents’ and grandparents’ lives. A particular gentleman detailed his parents’ 50-year old love story that reads almost like a parallel history of Singapore.

This generation of Singaporeans will pass on, so it is the opportunity now for Ruth and others to construct a memory of Singapore through the eyes of its people.

Gene Tan

Director, Singapore Memory Project



Through his eyes: Remembering old Singapore through the poems of Edwin Thumboo

Stephanie Pee

Singapore's landscape is one that has undergone many changes through the ages, and has come a long way from rural *kampongs* and swamplands. In less than 50 years, the tiny red dot on the world map has traded in zinc roofs for concrete apartments and quiet shops for towering skyscrapers. As we struggle to keep pace with change, development and modernity, we also race to document, remember and hold onto what Singapore was – and by proxy, ourselves.

Courtesy of Edwin Thumboo.

Literature, like places, is also a recorder of history and a documentarian (however reliable) of passing time. As Mr S. Dhanabalan said, “literature is the keeper of a nation’s history for it deals with people’s lives, their small and big moments. It records their dreams, challenges, joy and pain through novels, plays and poems. Poets like Edwin Thumboo record for us permanently the people in our society and their history, their small everyday actions and the big life-changing moments, both public and personal.”¹

Remembering old Singapore and holding onto the spirit of old times are integral to Professor Edwin Thumboo’s poetry. Thumboo is one of Singapore’s most prominent poets and his works – in particular, his place poems – afford us glimpses into Singapore’s history.

Having lived through Singapore’s pre- and post-independence days, Thumboo’s poetry brings to life our nation’s past and struggles, the atmosphere of days gone by and also showcases her progress and changing physical landscape.

Even for a nation as young as Singapore, enough time has passed that attachment to particular places are formed. Places and spaces are important markers for a people – places provide a common ground within which a community interacts and shapes its identity, and are “closely intertwined with individual and collective biographies.”² In other words, we imbue the spaces we inhabit with meaning and memories, thus building invisible landscapes upon physical ones. As Yeoh and Kong mention, “places thus have a ‘depth’ which goes beyond the invisible landscape: they contain layers of

¹ Speech by Mr S. Dhanabalan at the launch of “Edwin Thumboo, Time Travelling, A Poetry Exhibition”, 29 September 2012.

² Yeoh, B. & Kong, L. (1996). The notion of place in the construction of history, nostalgia and heritage in Singapore. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 17 (1), 52-65.

meaning derived from different biographies and histories. Place meanings are further strengthened when levels of personal biography and collective history are compounded.”³

The passage of time is marked by our changing city. Singapore’s journey from *kampongs*, to multi-storeyed public housing, from old “mama” shops to massive shopping malls showcases our past, present and hopes for the future. Most Singaporeans have seen these changes happen throughout their lifetime. Ironically, this rapid change has given rise to a groundswell of nostalgia in all sorts of ways – many shops, homes, cafes and hotel spaces now boast retro interior design (a choice vintage sofa here, an old-fashioned typewriter there); fashion is part of this rising trend (as seen in how the 1960s style made a comeback in renewed forms). “Nostalgia is likely when social change is rapid enough to be detectable in one lifetime at the same time,

Singaporeans can bond and strengthen unity. These old places are, literally, common ground.

Old places make an otherwise invisible history visible – not only in terms of the political and social history of a place, but in terms of a community’s shared and personal histories. The places that we give meaning to, are not always necessarily gazetted buildings or monuments – they are homes, playgrounds, streets, even foodstalls, places that are ordinary.

Former Senior Minister S. Rajaratnam once said “a nation must have memory to give it a sense of cohesion, continuity and identity. The longer the past, the greater the awareness of a nation’s identity...A sense of common history is what provides the links to hold together a people who came from the four corners of the earth.”⁶ Places are visual markers of our common history, our shared identities, and when places like these are filled with meaning and memories, they give our culture new dimension – they give it soul. These shared experiences transcend the things (such as race or religion) that threaten to divide; they remind us of the ties that bind.

Places and identity

Perhaps then this seemingly rising obsession with all things old in Singapore is symptomatic of a people who are still trying to make sense of their own identities – as individuals and as a country. As familiar buildings disappear and new ones replace them, we experience a sense of loss – a loss of identity that “is attached to places that evoke shared memories...identity [that is] derived from places that are important to everyday living.”⁷

The rise of nostalgia in Singapore, especially among its younger generations, can be construed as part fad, but also part search for the Singaporean identity. Thumboo’s works then offer the younger generations an interesting glimpse into the past and how it used to be – the past is given shape and form, but the reader is allowed to explore and develop his or her own conclusions and interpretations. Physical spaces that have history and meaning inscribed onto them are limited in the narratives they showcase.

Threatened with a sense of rootlessness, searching for a personal, cultural and national identity and assailed by the media and all the choice offerings of globalisation, it is no wonder that the younger generations are looking back. This perceived identity crisis of younger Singaporeans is nothing new – a 1999 survey found that an alarming high proportion of Singaporean students preferred to be Caucasian or Japanese.⁸

The subject of national identity is one that is close to Thumboo’s heart – having



Hock Lam Street with the Central Fire Station in the background, 1950s.
Source: George Tricker Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

there must be available evidences of the past... to remind one of how things used to be.”⁴ Places and buildings are one of the most visible evidence and links to the past – and they help to anchor our memories and identities.

Places as anchors

In an interview with iremembersg (the blog of the Singapore Memory Project), Jaime Koh of The History Workroom said that “...the growing sense of nostalgia is a result of the too-rapid changes in modern societies. Things change so fast that there is hardly any time to cultivate any sort of bonds or sentiments. The past, then, becomes an anchor that provides some sort of stability in the rapidly changing society.”⁵ The past – and places – act as a focal point for the community and is a way in which

³ Yeoh & Kong, 1996, pp. 52-65.

⁴ Yeoh & Kong, 1996, p. 57.

⁵ Pee, S. (2012, September 18). *Interview with The History Room*. Accessed October 2, 2012, from iremembersg at <http://www.iremember.sg/?p=2418>

⁶ Yeoh & Kong, 1996, p. 58.

⁷ Tan, Y. L. (2001, May 2). Don't demolish identity markers. *The Sunday Times*. Retrieved October 4, 2012, from Factiva database.

⁸ Richardson, M. (1999, December 20). Singapore identity crisis? Youths would rather be white or Japanese. *International Herald Tribune*. Retrieved October 4, 2012, from Factiva database.

lived through Singapore's pre- and post-independence days, he understands what it took for the country to make it from third world to first. He acknowledges that while every Singaporean's ethnic background is different, it is the common experiences we share despite our racial or religious differences that will make us truly Singaporean: "While we document and enliven our heritage as Chinese, Malays, Indians and Eurasians, we concurrently search for their cross-cultural contact, content and context that have marked, and continue to mark our rising into a nation. We have moved, and continue to move. Increasingly, the label, Malay, Chinese, Indian and Eurasian Singaporean, reverses its term putting Singaporean first. This reconfiguration is a source of essential strength, much needed in an age of rampant globalisation, which tends to reduce national identity, as a concept and reality plays a crucial role in establishing and consolidating our sense of self and of nation."⁹ A substantial part of our national identity is gleaned from our shared history, and not remembering where we came from will have repercussions on our common identity.

Edwin Thumboo's poetry as documentation

Think of old spaces as time machines – visiting, seeing, being in them teleports us back to the past and we are reminded of what things used to be like; they are visual markers of where we came from. They are "prodigious (but not unproblematic) recorders of the passage of history. Not only do social and cultural changes necessarily occur in places, they are often inscribed and transmitted in places."¹⁰ But the history ascribed to a place, especially personal histories, is fluid – what is remembered, what is passed down to future generations is dependent on what "particular historical 'truths'" are important and emphasised. This means that the history and meaning of a place is wont to change. Radical change, such as demolition of places (Hock Lam Street and the National Library at Stamford Road) may "obscure or obliterate" place histories. It might be difficult to decipher the truth in physical spaces, but in contrast to this notion, Thumboo says that "we should put the truth of experience into language."¹¹

People attribute different memories and meanings to the same spaces. The National Library Building at Victoria Street for instance, might represent days spent with friends, studying for exams, first loves, and so on. However, this same space that is known for "browsing, research and perhaps, as a venue for casual meet-ups, it is for Thumboo and his contemporaries a hard-won fruit of

Old places make an otherwise invisible history visible – not only in terms of the political and social history of a place, but in terms of a community's shared and personal histories.

their generation's labour for independence in more hostile climes. The National Library, as a landmark, is a triumphant testimony to the virtues of life-long learning for his generation and it provides an intellectual armour against a past weakened by the shackles of a none-too-distant colonial administration."¹²

Thumboo's poem, "The Sneeze", was written about hawkers along Hock Lam Street, where Funan DigitalLife Mall now stands. His playful poem brings to life the hustle and bustle (and suspicious hygiene) of Hock Lam Street. Younger generations might not know Hock Lam Street, but through Thumboo's poem, we are able to peer through the veil of time and experience Hock Lam Street for ourselves:

That hawker there,
Selling mee and kway-teow
Is prosperous, round
Quick moving
With practised grace
He blows his nose,
Tweaks it dexterously, secures complete evacuation
Then proceeds to comply with the slogans,
The injunctions on the need to
Keep Singapore clean—
Keep Singapore germ-free
Keep Singapore...

Besides the sample of old Singapore life, Thumboo succinctly highlights a slice of nation building – where Singapore was striving for better health standards and campaigns to educate the public were everywhere. In the poem, the hawker, too, interprets and acts on these public campaign in his own charming way – "By wiping his fingers thoroughly on his apron./He is not going to dirty the drains,/Clutter the spittoons./he obeys the law,/Deals with his cold seriously." In the name of progress, it might not have been possible to preserve or save Hock Lam Street, but Thumboo's poem has immortalised Hock Lam Street, and penned it for posterity.

Thumboo's "place poems are rich emblems of public memory and private reminiscences, they are also relics of Singapore's colonial heritage and timeless reminders of the struggles as well as successes our Republic has witnessed in the pre-and post-independence years."¹³

In writing about these places from his personal memory, places that have been lost, Professor Thumboo has provided a focal point for these places – and all the memories associ-

⁹ Speech by Professor Edwin Thumboo at the launch of "Edwin Thumboo, Time Travelling, A Poetry Exhibition", 29 September 2012.

¹⁰ Yeoh & Kong, 1996, p. 56.

¹¹ Speech by Professor Edwin Thumboo, 2012.

¹² Heng, M. (2012). Introduction. In *Singapore word maps: A chapbook of Edwin Thumboo's new and selected place poems* (p. 8). Singapore: National Library Board.

¹³ Heng, 2012, p. 7.

ated with them – to flourish. His poems act as time capsules, or even, a time-travel machine, bringing the reader from past to present. He transports his readers back to a time that they both might remember:

Bras Basah

Where the first Rendezvous brooded
By a row of old shophouses, since sadly slain,
A special road began. A point of colonial
Confluence: Dhoby Ghaut, the YMCA with
Manicured tennis lawns for Memsahibs who
Then took tea and scones. Across a Shell kiosk
Where Papa parked his Austin Seven, then off
To Hock Hoe's for piston rods and Radex.

Think of the names: Dhoby Ghaut, Prinsep St,
The three Cathays, a name the Lokes made
Famous: resplendent building, our tallest then;
Fantastic camera shop; and that popular Store
Where Rudy's wife, petite, temporarily demure,
Quietly assessed her customers as she held her
Intelligence above show-cases. Two doors away,
Heng, increasingly called Mr, sold German cameras
To Japanese sailors, was en route to a partnership...



Cathay Building, 1942. Source: MICA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

Central to his writing are all the emotional ties and sense of belonging that come with a place. In “Bras Basah” he continues to set the scene of the area with nuances and insights: “And the bookshops full of stuff”, “And the Rendezvous after school; affordable/ The man with the mole, ladle in hand...”, “Simon Ong’s Family shop of fishing tackle...” and “a Woodsville tram,/ Full of St Andrew boys, swings around the corner,/ Tires squealing”. In this sense, his works do what preservation of physical buildings cannot – in essence,

he recreates the Bras Basah of his memories, replete with the sights, the sounds, the sense of place that is Bras Basah.

His poems give voice to the nostalgic laden, time-worn, reader. “A sense of place with all its multifarious meanings, is thus an integral element in the conceptions of history, nostalgia and heritage. As a concrete localised setting, place provides the receptacle for the outworkings of history...[it is also] intimately drawn into individual interpretations [and] social constructions...”¹⁴ Thus, in place of an actual location, Thumboo’s poetry provides the reader with a means through which to work out their own understanding of place, it gives the reader a space – within himself – to work out his own identity and history.

Nostalgia tends to sweep undesirable memories under the carpet, presenting a rose-tinted or sugar-coated version of history. Thumboo’s works remove the veil of nostalgia, the rose-stained glasses of sentiment and remember the days past with clarity, in all its dust and pain, which is seen through his poems like “Government Quarters Monk’s Hill Terrace, Newton, Singapore”, wherein he acknowledges the hardships and harsh realities of the Second World War.

In this poem he explores life under the Japanese occupation, life under “The Japanese sun floated free, confidently/ Ruling Syonan skies from that high perch.”, where he experiences a loss of innocence, and a sense of longing and yearning for time past, where “At day’s end, a boy again; too shut down/ To wish, to dream. But when I did, mostly/ Pre-war life, in Mandai, my sloping Eden...” While his childhood home at No. 42 Monk’s Hill Terrace has since been demolished, what remains through his poetry is not only the life that he once led, not just his memories and feeling of the place, but the sentiment of mourning and loss coupled with the beginnings of nationalist sentiment (“From that veranda that releasing September, that/ Union Jack again. From the papers, British power/ Restored. From the radio, patriotic songs recalling/ Pomp and power, the Land of Hope and Glory,/ Mother of the Free; not yours, not mine, not ours.”).

Thumboo not only charts the changing icons of Singapore’s cityscape (“The National Library, nr. Dhoby Ghaut, Singapore”; “The National Library, Bugis” and “Double Helix, Promenade”), he also turns his literary eye upon the everyday housing estates, documenting and capturing snapshots or slices of Singapore life in “Evening by Batok Town”: “Vigilant Bukit Batok topped by radar;/ MRT accompanying Avenue 5;/ Four-point blocks, JC, food-centre;/ A young couple

¹⁴ Yeoh & Kong, 1996, p. 61.

¹⁵ Heng, 2012, p. 9.

held by privacy/ Amidst strolling families...” But he juxtaposes the familiar with memories of what Bukit Batok used to be like, also an indication of the speed of change in Singapore and, sadly, our inclination to forget:

There was a time, quite recent,
When little Guilin had no pools.
Before that the green slope of hills
Descended into plain and swamp.
Before that an old geology. Squatters
Cleared land, directed streams, built
Ponds, a temple to guardian deities; then
The quarry-road the Indians made, re-named
Perang to meet the lurking yellow peril.
Out of such energies, such history, a town.

Yet high-rise and high-way,
The new breed in search of
Gleaming jobs, the computer-mind,
Turn memory shorter than the land’s.

Thumboo’s poem, “Bukit Panjang, Hill, Village, Town” (and also one of his longest in recent years), is one that succinctly surmises the evolution of Bukit Panjang from when it “Culled our season years before we/ Glimpsed your contours. You/ Rolled south to be the tip of Mother Asia,/ Picking up names like Bukit Batok. You/ Finally stopped for tectonic breath, at Mt/ Sophia...” to when it had “Small clusters of rubber, durian, Mango/ Tembusu, pulasan, mangosteen...”. But more than just its physical evolution, Thumboo infuses his poem with history—making references to Bukit Batok during key points in Singapore’s history, mirroring the growth of Bukit Batok with that of Singapore’s: “...your last spur is Fort Canning./ Still steady stately un-stressed, you/ Our vigilant secret dragon saw your further / Than Brit radars...” and “Trying to spot Konfrontasi: a word, a fear,/ A rant...” Thumboo’s poetry is more than a recounting of the shifting cityscape of Singapore – it is a recounting of the country’s story. This is particularly pertinent in “Bukit Panjang, Hill, Village, Town” where it

...is a sensitive portrayal of how the fast-changing landscapes in Singapore underpin the social, political and economic values that frame our nation-state’s rapid growth during the post-independence years. This four-part poem personifies the familiar landmark as a “Time-traveller; master of winds...” in its imposing geology, its cultural significance as a village in the chaotic period during the Japanese



Bukit Batok housing estate with HDB flats in the foreground, and the transmitting station in the background. Source: MICA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

occupation before it finally settles comfortably into the role of an “established” new town in the current flow of Singapore’s continuing progress as it gets “plump with amenities.” Set against the dramatic background of the restive pre- and post-colonial period, and later during the “supercharged” nation building years, the poem may well be read by researchers in the near future as one of Thumboo’s most successful blend of his public and personal voice.¹⁵

Thumboo’s poetry functions in the same vein as old places – he uses text to recreate or even preserve physical spaces familiar to us, and infuses them with emotion, history and meaning, filling it with significance. His poetry documents our progress as a nation, through the changes in its landscape, marking out particular moments through his personal memories and experiences, his own thoughts and ruminations and then leaves us to our own reflections and conclusions. Both physical spaces as well as literary ones work in tandem to help to “preserve the past, [and] ensure the future”.

REFERENCES

- Gwee, L. S. & Heng, M., (Eds.). (2012). *Edwin Thumboo—time-travelling: A select annotated bibliography*. Singapore: National Library Board.
- Heng, M. (2012). Introduction. In *Singapore word maps: A chapbook of Edwin Thumboo’s new and selected place poems*. Singapore: National Library Board.
- Pee, S. (2012, September 18). *Interview with The History Room*. Accessed October 2, 2012, from iremembersg at <http://www.iremember.sg/?p=2418>
- Richardson, M. (1999, December 20). Singapore identity crisis? Youths would rather be white or Japanese. *International Herald Tribune*. Retrieved October 4, 2012, from Factiva database.
- Speech by Mr S. Dhanabalan at the launch of “Edwin Thumboo, Time Travelling, A Poetry Exhibition”, 29 September 2012.
- Speech by Professor Edwin Thumboo at the launch of “Edwin Thumboo, Time Travelling, A Poetry Exhibition”, 29 September 2012
- Tan, Y. L. (2001, May 2). Don’t demolish identity markers. *The Sunday Times*. Retrieved October 4, 2012, from Factiva database.
- Yeoh, B. & Kong, L. (1996). The notion of place in the construction of history, nostalgia and heritage in Singapore. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 17(1), 52-65.

About the author

Stephanie Pee is an executive with the National Library Arts and the Singapore Memory Project team. She was an assistant senior editor with Marshall Cavendish before joining NLB.

PictureSg

*Digitizing Our Past, Capturing Our Present,
Tagging Our Collective Memories*

VISIT PICTURES.NL.SG
TO VIEW MORE IMAGES



Victoria Theatre and Victoria Memorial Hall, 1960s.
Source: Lee Kip Lin Collection, National Library Board.
All rights reserved. Lee Kip Lin and National Library Board, Singapore 2009.



MGS memories of 11 Mount Sophia

Barbara Quek

Founded in 1887, the Methodist Girls' School (MGS) is among the oldest and most established schools in Singapore. Today, 125 years later, it is still regarded as one of Singapore's popular and premier girls' schools. MGS occupied 11 Mount Sophia from 1928 to 1992. As this site is slated for re-development, former students and staff of the school revisited the scene for one last look, to pay tribute to their alma mater in a ceremonial send-off. Barbara Quek, a former MGS student, shares with us the history of the school and memories that left a deep imprint on many who passed through its doors.

It was a sentimental Sunday on 3 June 2012 when MGS and the Alumnae Association jointly held an Open House Day and Remembrance Ceremony to bid a final farewell to their former school site at 11 Mount Sophia.

The occasion was a bittersweet homecoming experience for the hundreds of old girls and their families who congregated in the packed hall at the basement area of the former Ellice Handy Building. Since the relocation of MGS in 1992 to 11 Blackmore Drive, succeeding

occupants of 11 Sophia included churches and other schools before it was leased to Old School (<http://www.oldschool.sg>) in 2007. This unprecedented gathering of the MGS family was prompted by the expiration of the lease for Old School at the end of June 2012. It marked the closing of a chapter in history as the site made way for redevelopment plans under the 2008 Master Plan of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA).

Above: The Maypole dance, traditionally performed on Sports Day at 11 Mount Sophia. Courtesy of Methodist Girls' School.



Old desks and chairs of bygone days (1950), a set of which is housed in the Archives Room at Blackmore Drive. Source: MICA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

Memory is a way of holding onto the things you love, the things you are, the things you never want to lose.¹

Remembering roots

Originally known as Bukit Seligi or Seligi Hill, Mount Sophia was also called Sophia Hill. Seligi is the nibong palm used locally in flooring and fishing stakes. One might casually assume that Mount Sophia Road was named after the school's founder Sophia Blackmore – much like the naming of Blackmore Drive. However, this affiliation of place to person is mere coincidence as the name "Mount Sophia" was in use prior to Sophia Blackmore's arrival in Singapore. The hill was, in fact, named in honour of Lady Sophia, the second wife of Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore, by Captain William Flint, Raffles' brother-in-law. "Sophia" was also the middle-name of Flint's daughter, Mary Sophia Anne.

The impending loss of the former school site, a significant historical landmark perched on a hilltop overlooking bustling Orchard Road, ignited debate across various social media. Former school sites conserved for heritage and commercial use, such as the former St Joseph Institution (SJI) at Bras Basah Road or Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (CHIJ) at CHIJMES, might have given some hope for a similar fate.

The school's history could be traced back to 1887 when Sophia Blackmore, an Australian missionary, came to Singapore on a personal calling to provide girls with an opportunity for education. MGS had a humble beginning as the Tamil Girls' School at a rent-free shop house at Short Street. The school began with a pioneer batch of nine Indian girls, whose busi-

nessmen fathers wanted them to be brought up as young women of worth to society. Nonya, Chinese and Eurasian girls also enrolled over time. The school relocated to Middle Road while awaiting the completion of a larger building on Short Street. Then, increased student numbers and space constraints necessitated the move to Mount Sophia where it remained until 1992. Overcrowding and new school demands eventually dictated another shift to its current campus at Blackmore Drive.

From the 1960s through to the 1990s, before the implementation of the Direct School Admission (DSA)², most MGS girls enjoyed a full 10-year stint at Mount Sophia from primary school through to secondary school. Set up as a mission school, the Christian education continues to be the hallmark of MGS. An old girl from the last batch of Senior Cambridge girls to graduate in 1941 before the Japanese Occupation remembered how she had carefully glued a "yellowed with age...cyclostyled paper"³ printed with the old pre-war school song to the last page of her old chapel book, *The Abingdon song book*. The red-covered *Hymnal for youth* (1941) was synonymous with worship service at Mount Sophia from the 1960s to the 1980s. This was replaced by a new Y-generation hymn book when the former went out of print.

Tucked away from the hustle and bustle of city streets, a tranquil hilltop haven which once overlooked Eu Tong Sen's majestic Eu Villa and the treetops of the Istana, MGS Mount Sophia was a "lovely collection of quaint old buildings, ranging from bricked bungalows and

¹ From the television show, *The Wonder Years. Welcome to The Quote Garden! Celebrating 14 years online 1998-2012*. Retrieved July 23, 2012, from <http://www.quote garden.com/memory.html>

² DSA-Sec is an admission exercise to allow participating schools to select some P6 students from other schools for admission to Secondary 1 based on their achievements and talents before the PSLE results are released. Source: Ministry of Education, Singapore. (2012). *Direct School Admission - Secondary (DSA-Sec)*. Retrieved August 10, 2012, from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/admissions/dsa-sec/>

³ Mok, W. Y. (1985). Looking back. *Fellowship: MGS Alumnae Association newsletter*, 6. Call no.: RSING 371.223095957 F

colonial structures with high ceilings, sweeping staircases and long verandahs to 1950s style classrooms with French doors covered in green glass, and bare cement floors”.⁴

Taking its pride of place at Mount Sophia is Olson Building, the oldest in the cluster, the “only one grand dame” that is “to be retained and integrated with new developments in the future”.⁵ Named after one of the school’s former principals, Mary Olson, this “old girl”, constructed in 1928, has been earmarked for conservation. Responding to queries on why the 84-year old Olson Building was so special, URA spokesman explained that it was “selected because of conservation merits such as a high-pitched tiled roof, elegant geometric masonry corbels (stone brackets), moulded concrete lattices and concrete louvred vents – all visually interesting and suited to a tropical climate”.⁶

The story of MGS at Mount Sophia is incomplete without some tribute to Nind Home, a boarding house for girls built by the Methodist Mission, and where Sophia Blackmore had worked and stayed. In a memorable speech at the dedication service for the opening of the Ellice Handy Building, the late Mrs Ellice Handy⁷ shared that the top of Mount Sophia first belonged to Nind Home, “a happy family of nearly 100 girls, sometimes more, and we came from all races...Those were happy days when there was little pressure and plenty of leisure”.⁸ Nind Home became a part of MGS but was demolished after the war in 1947 when the structure was deemed unsafe. Built in its place was the Sophia Blackmore Memorial Hall.

With the completion of the Kenyon Building named after another principal, Carrie Kenyon, in 1933, MGS started a two-session school. Before its demolition in the late 1970s, this eight-classroom block at the foot of Mount Sophia leading down to Adis Road claimed its fair share of ghost stories – especially those of haunted toilets. The sturdy monkey bars, swings and see-saws were dearly

“I remember being told that at 12 midnight one would hear ‘noise’. Never one to believe such myths and tall stories, I would stay behind in school for campfires overnight and other events past midnight without giving it much thought. One night, I actually heard feet shuffling and desks being moved! Later I was told that the low brick wall in front of the main entrance where the MGS signage stood was the site of a grave. That really kept me on my guard each time we had Girl Guide camps! This story about ghosts and burial grounds at Mount Sophia was not without some history. The Japanese took over Nind Home and made it their Headquarters during the Occupation years. During that time, MGS was used to house prisoners and it was possible that those who died were buried nearby. This might account for the strange going-on at midnight!”

MRS ANNA THAM [1951]



Constructed in 1928, Olson Building is the only building out of the six to be conserved. Courtesy of Methodist Girls’ School.

missed when it was subsequently pulled down to make way for a new multi-storey primary school complex. More memories include picking bright red saga seeds in the playfield behind this old Kenyon block.

The Japanese Occupation from 1942–1945 brought schooling to a halt. MGS was renamed Mount Sophia Girls’ School and recorded its lowest attendance of 15 students and a teaching staff of 7 in 1944.

A new horizon awaited post-war MGS in 1945 when the school was reinstated and Mrs Handy became the principal, a position she helmed from 1946 to 1957 during her 51 years of service. The appointment was a historic milestone as she was the first MGS student as well as the first Asian and Singaporean principal of the school. Hers was a tall order to see through the rebuilding of the school after bombs had destroyed some buildings. The sprawling site was scarred by war, dotted with fox holes and

⁴ MGS Alumnae Association. (2012, June 3). MGS remembers its historical campus on 11 Mt Sophia [press release].

⁵ Teo, E. (2011, October 23). Old school tenants fear end is near; tenants of arts hub concerned by short extension of lease. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved August 24, 2011, from Factiva database.

⁶ Spykerman, K., & Wee, C. F. (2012, June 17). Why Olson is special. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved August 24, 2011, from Factiva database.

⁷ Mrs Handy also authored the ‘bible cookbook’ *My Favorite Recipes* to raise money for the school. The first original edition was published in 1952. It has been revised and reprinted 10 times. The recipes reflected Singapore’s multi-racial composition.

⁸ Mrs Handy remembers. (1985). *Fellowship: MGS Alumnae Association newsletter*; 3. Call no.: RSING 371.223095957F



The "100 steps" from Mount Sophia to Handy Road.
Courtesy of Methodist Girls' School.

lined with slit trenches. Under her dedicated guidance, the Mary Nind Wing was built and housed secondary classes in 1952, followed on a year later by the Sophia Blackmore Memorial Hall. The building program was completed in 1955 with the Louise McKee Wing⁹, tuck shop extension and caretakers' quarters. Mrs Handy had lasting memories of this journeying because "MGS is very dear to me, especially this hilltop on which MGS has finally established itself after many moves in her lifetime", when "MGS was all in one place now on Mount Sophia".¹⁰

The old buildings and serene setting of those schoolgirl days occupy a special place in the hearts and minds of those who were educated there. The old prewar buildings possessed much character, as Vivien Goh recalled in an interview. A music teacher by training and profession, she studied at MGS from the mid-1950s to the 1960s. She remembered that

"The girls in my class were studious and well-behaved. We would sit there quietly, hearing loud chatter and shrieks of laughter coming from the classes down the corridor. Even so, lessons were not the main thing. MGS was mainly about friends and the ups and downs of friendship. Friendships forged through the many years we spent growing up together. Friendships founded on common experiences – sliding in our bloomers down the smooth concrete slope by Olson building... Ah Eng, the school peon, setting out bottles of Magnolia milk in pails of icy cold water every recess...quenching our thirst at the tuck-shop with the lurid yellow 5 cent drink (which contained the occasional pineapple chunk)... the whole class brushing our teeth by the drain...struggling to stay awake at chapel... bounding down the 100 steps... the fond jokes we shared about teachers and the hilarious antics by the cheekier girls in our cohort – the many shared experiences remembered and recounted over the years. MGS is about friends and the memories we share."

MS YEOH CHEE YAN [1976]

classes for the Primary 1-3 levels were held at the Kenyon building at the foot of the hill, moving up to the Olson Building for the Primary 4-5 levels and finally elevating to higher ground classrooms for Primary 6 and secondary levels at the Louise-McKee Building. Ms Sim Ee Min, a horticulturalist who studied there in the 1970s, observed that the buildings were located in a seemingly hierarchical way as to represent a progression through different academic levels. Ms Goh also remembered lessons in eurhythmics, and how MGS had nurtured her love for music, singing as well as instruments like the piano and violin. To this day, music is central to the MGS culture and the life of the school.

The memories of former school girls recall rich images of unforgettable experiences – especially the slippery concrete slope by the Olson Building, "polished smooth"¹¹ by innumerable girls who slid – and also ran – down this unique slide in their bloomers and skirts, sometimes without shoes. It was a favorite pastime at every recess that elicited squeals of laughter and occasional screams in front of the staff room. Every true-bred MGS girl who passed through the gates of MGS at Mount Sophia also

⁹ Louise McKee was an American girl who was taken ill with smallpox while on a world tour and died in Singapore in 1925. She was 23 and her father Mr H. N. McKee donated US\$5,000 to the Methodist Girls' School for a memorial. Lau, E. (2004). *The story behind MGS' Louise McKee Wing*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from <http://www.methodistmessage.com/may2004/mckee.html>

¹⁰ Lim, L. U. W., et al. (1987). *Memories, gems and sentiments: 100 years of Methodist Girls' School* (p. 70). Singapore: Methodist Girls' School. Call no.: RSING 373.5957 MEM

¹¹ Lim, (1987), p. 87.



Aerial view of a historical school site at 11 Mount Sophia. Courtesy of Methodist Girls' School.

remembers the well-trodden “Hundred Steps” behind Cathay Building. This famed flight of steep steps with no known origins was an integral feature of the school grounds. Exactly one hundred steps, they brought back happy days of “bouncing down the steps to, perhaps, a film show [at Cathay Cinema]...part and parcel of life in MGS”, even though “few passers-by know about this picturesque footpath”.¹² It was the convenient ‘backdoor’ to Handy Road and even truancy at times. When asked what were the most abiding memories of her schooldays in MGS, Kelvyna Chan from the class of 1972, now principal of Anglo-Chinese Junior College (ACJC), was quick to highlight the 100 steps leading up to Mount Sophia, because that “was my daily challenge. If I can overcome the 100 steps every morning at 7am, I can overcome anything”.¹³

Linda Lim, class of 1966, recalled physical education lessons that included practising English folk dances to recorded music and the maypole dance. She wrote a vivid account of her school days in MGS with her group of friends called the Nuttes. Excerpts from her memoirs were published in Fellowship 2010 newsletter, “Vignettes of an MGS life”, in which she shared anecdotes of primary school, recess, sports day, school plays, the kacang puteh man and toilets suspected of being haunted by the Orang Minyak, or “oily man”.

Relics remembered

Gone are the days of school life at Mount Sophia but relics of the past are vivid reminders of this precious heritage. Some of the artefacts housed within the MGS Archives Room at Blackmore Drive include a pair of old wooden speakers that were part of the public address system hanging from the front

of each classroom, the dignified school bell, an archaic desk and chair, the metal printing block on which the school song was engraved, as well as an old hefty office safe. Handicraft works and other memorabilia have been preserved and safe-kept by Mrs Anna Tham, MGS’s longest serving principal of 17 years. Though retired, she still returns to the school to tend to these treasures as well as contribute her time to mentor the girls in various CCAs.

“Old School”

Spanning approximately 140,000 sq ft, the 11 Mount Sophia site was acquired in 1996 for the development of the North-East MRT Line. This leasehold state property was creatively used by Old School which retained the original façade of the six low-rise buildings and their accompanying stairways and walkways. The Old School tenants included artist Chua Ek Kay, fashion boutique Comme des Garçons, a Paris-based Japanese label, whose owner Mr Theseus Chan had coined the much-loved place name “Old School”. It was a natural meeting venue for MGS reunions and get-togethers. Old School was given an initial two-year lease which was extended yearly to 2011, and finally to June 2012, when the area was re-zoned for residential use.

“Save Old School”

The “Save Old School” (SOS) campaign (<http://www.facebook.com/saveoldschool>) was launched by MGS alumnae Carol Tham and Lim Li-Hsien in 2011 to lobby the government to conserve the Mount Sophia campus. The Facebook site garnered 5,406 likes on Founders Day 2012. This petition to the community called for the preservation of the existing structures with its slogan “Saving old spaces and places

“The MGS motto is ‘To Master To Grow To Serve’. When I was in primary school I asked a teacher, ‘don’t we have to grow first before we can master and serve?’. As a little girl I couldn’t imagine mastering anything without first growing up. I remember receiving a glare and being told to shush. So I responded rather defiantly ‘the school just made it this way to fit into the letters MGS!’. I received the appropriate punishment of that time - the Scotch Tape Over the Mouth. Like a Scarlet Letter, quite a few of us were ‘marked’ with a scotch tape over the mouth for various misdeeds, but most of us viewed it as a small badge of honour, and we would mostly be giggling in the corner and mumbling to fellow miscreants, exchanging opinions about whose mouth was more taped.”

MRS ELAINE NG [1981]

¹² Koh, K., & Lim, S. T. (1987, July 15). Down the steps of time. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from Factiva database.

¹³ Toh, J. (2011). Common bonds. *Fellowship: MGS Alumnae Association newsletter*, 6. Call no.: RSING 371.223095957F Also available from <http://mgs.sch.edu.sg/section/101>



MGS girls enjoying a folk dance. Courtesy of Methodist Girls' School.

"Many retired teachers were met with the cheers and hugs of old students. The obvious camaraderie and smiles of alumna who attended, and the rousing singing of the school song at the end is a great testimony to the strength of school ties, and how MGS at Mount Sophia had made such an impact on the lives of old students. It is sad that things have to move on in this direction, but one hopes that the spirit of Sophia Blackmore and her vision of the Methodist Girls' School will live on despite the changes and developments that time brings in its wake."

MS SIM EE WAUN [1984]

in Singapore". The SOS page is filled with old photographs and anecdotal accounts. Architectural historian Lai Chee Kien of the National University of Singapore and Dr Kevin Tan, Ex-officio (past President) of the Singapore Heritage Society (SHS), noted that the MGS Mount Sophia site is "historically significant as one of the first few educational institutions for girls".¹⁴ Conservation merits that were highlighted include "historical architectural type, structural integrity and demonstration of workmanship"¹⁵ – all of which the MGS site fulfils. Architectural conservation consultant Ho Weng Hin is part of a research team commissioned by the SHS to write a book on local architectural history that will include the two-storey Sophia Blackmore Memorial Hall, with its iconic clock tower and fair-faced façade. According to him, the 1950s was an important period of Singapore's history and such buildings commemorate local history and are integral to social memories. He said that the building was significant as it was designed by a post-war pioneer local architect, Mr Seow Eu Jin. The URA has acknowledged Mount Sophia's heritage, but maintained that it is not always possible to conserve and retain all old buildings and former school sites.

Hall of Fame

All schools laud outstanding students who have done the school proud in various ways, MGS is no exception in this regard.

Among the luminaries in MGS hall of fame are personalities such as the late Madam Kwa Geok Choo, wife of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, who graduated from MGS

in 1936, playwright and Professor of Law at the National University of Singapore (NUS), Eleanor Wong, national swimmer Pat Chan and acclaimed Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) violinist Lynette Seah.

Memories live on

At 6pm on 3 June, the school flag was marched in proudly by a colour party led by Mrs Tay Poh Imm, President of the Girls' Brigade in Singapore and a teacher at the school since the 1970s. Addressing the crowd of more than 500, including one in her 90s and a few in their 80s, MGS Management Board Chairman Mrs Fang Ai Lian gave a short recollection of her school days there. Reverend Dr Tony Chi who presided at the commemorative service recalled his past connection to the school at Mount Sophia as the School Chaplain. In closing, he offered a thanksgiving prayer and said a benediction after a rousing rendition of the school anthem which was particularly meaningful and poignant that day, especially when the chorus of voices came together with:

*Down through the years our memories
will keep a loving place, of friendships
made and pleasures shared, and lessons
learnt apace...*

The school song was first sung in 1949.

Recalling the solemn and somewhat wistful end to the formalities of the day, Barbara Chee, President of the MGS Alumnae Association, reflected, "Tears were shed when the school flag was marched out and a feeling of nostalgia tinged with sadness hung in the air for a few moments". On a more positive note, she noted that these "special memories of our school days at Mount Sophia...will remain in our hearts forever regardless of what happens to the buildings in the future".¹⁶

At the reception that followed, former MGS girls met and mingled, recollected and reminisced about the yesteryear as they walked down memory lane to relive some of the best times of their school life there. Armed with cameras, many took parting shots of memorable landmarks. Class photos from the 1940s to 1992 projected in a slide show and a video clip of two alumnae flashed back scenes of the past.

MGS Mount Sophia has left a loving legacy of school life experiences. Braving the tide of changes, MGS will continue to "lift high her banner" in the march of time to live up to its motto 'to master, to grow, to serve'.

About the author

Barbara Quek is a Senior Librarian from the National Library Heritage Division. She worked in the SAFTI Military Institute Library from 1995 to 2006. Prior to that, she was an assistant editor for *Pointer* journal, editor for *Pioneer* magazine in the Ministry of Defence. She co-authored the research paper "The value of print literacy in the education of young children in Singapore" which was published in *The international journal of the book*, Volume 1 (2003).

¹⁴ Teo, E. (2011, October 23). Old girls fight to save Old School; online petition calls for URA to conserve former MGS campus. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from Factiva database.

¹⁵ *The Straits Times*, 23 Oct 2011.

¹⁶ Chee, B. (2012, June 30). *Annual Report (July 2011-June 2012)*. Report presented at the 51st Annual General Meeting of the MGS Alumnae Association, Singapore.



11 Mount Sophia through the years: Nind Home in the 1890s, Sophia Blackmore Memorial Hall and the Old School.

1 & 2: Courtesy of Methodist Girls' School, 3: Courtesy of Old School.

REFERENCES

- A school expands – thanks to religion. (1955, October 1). *The Straits Times*, p. 4. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from NewspaperSG database.
- American girl's death (1925, September 21). *The Straits Times*, p. 10. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from NewspaperSG database.
- Chee, B. (2012, June 30). *Annual report (July 2011-June 2012)*. Report presented at the 51st Annual General Meeting of the MGS Alumnae Association, Singapore.
- Cheng, T. (Ed.) (2007). *Our heritage, our treasure*. Singapore: Methodist Girls' School. Call no.: RSING 371.822095957 OUR
- Cheong, J. (2007, November 8). Old school, new ideas. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from Factiva database.
- Cornelius, V. (2004). *Mount Sophia*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from Singapore Infopedia website: http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_482_2004-12-27.html
- Hu, Fiona. (2011). Reunion class of 1970. *Fellowship: MGS Alumnae Association newsletter*, 4. Call no.: RSING 371.223095957 F. Also available from <http://mgs.sch.edu.sg/section/101>
- Koh, K., & Lim, S. T. (1987, July 15). Down the steps of time. *The Straits Times*, Section Two, p. 1. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from NewspaperSG database.
- Lau, Ernest (2004). *The story behind MGS' Louise McKee Wing*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from <http://www.methodistmessge.com/may2004/mckee.html>
- Lee, G. B. (1992, May 17). Still Handy after 40 years. *The Sunday Times*, Sunday Plus, p. 7. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from NewspaperSG database.
- Lim, L. (2010). Vignettes of an MGS life. *Fellowship: MGS Alumnae Association newsletter*, 5. Call no.: RSING 371.223095957 F. Also available from <http://mgs.sch.edu.sg/section/101>
- Lim, L. U. W., et al. (1987). *Memories, gems and sentiments: 100 years of Methodist Girls' School*. Singapore: Methodist Girls' School. Call no.: RSING 373.5957 MEM
- Methodist Girls' School. (n.d.). *History*. Retrieved July 6, 2012, from Methodist Girls' School website: <http://www.mgs.sch.edu.sg/aboutMGS-History.htm>
- Methodist Girls' School. [1932-]. *Methodist Girls' School: annual*. Singapore: Methodist Girls' School. Call no.: RCLOS 373.5957 MGS
- Methodist Girls' School. (1998). *Our treasured memories*. Singapore: Methodist Girls' School. Call no.: English 371.822095957 OUR
- MGS Alumnae Association. (2012, June 3). MGS remembers its historical campus on 11 Mt Sophia [press release].
- Not possible to conserve every former school in S'pore: URA. (2011, November 11). *Channel NewsAsia*. Retrieved July 25, 2012, from Factiva database.
- Oon, C. (2008, March 13). Remembrance of schools past. *The Straits Times*, Life! p. 6. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from NewspaperSG database.
- Oon, C. (2011, December 31). The past is just a memory. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from Factiva database.
- Qi, Y. (2012, June 3). *Remembering Old School @ Mt. Sophia*. Retrieved July 25, 2012, from Monday Flying: <http://www.mondayflying.com/2012/06/remembering-old-school-mt-sophia>
- Renuka M. (2005). *Methodist Girls' School (MGS)*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from Singapore Infopedia website: http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_591_2005-01-05.html
- Savage, V. R., & Yeoh, B. S. A. (2004). *Toponymics: A study of Singapore street names (p.270)*. Singapore: Eastern Universities Press. Call no.: RSING 915.9570014 SAV
- Save Old School. Retrieved July 25, 2012 from <http://www.facebook.com/saveoldschool>
- Sng, S. (Interviewer). (2005, May 10-November 15). *Oral history interview with Vivien Goh [CD Recording No. 002939/CF26/CF1-13]*. Singapore: National Archives of Singapore.
- Spykerman, K., & Wee, C. F. (2012, June 17). Why Olson is special. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved August 24, 2011, from Factiva database.
- Tan, A. (2011, October 23). Interim-use land yields both hits and misses. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from Factiva database.
- Tan, Y. H. (2008, December 14). Old schools, new haunts. *The Sunday Times*, Lifestyle, p. 6. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from NewspaperSG database.
- Tay, M. (2008, January 18). Guerilla store opens in Old School. *The Straits Times*, Life!, p. 4. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from NewspaperSG database.
- Teo, E. (2011, October 23). Old girls fight to save Old School; online petition calls for URA to conserve former MGS campus. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from Factiva database.
- Teo, W. G. (2012, April 14). No lease extension for arts enclave at Mt Sophia. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from Factiva database.
- The school that Sophia built. (1987, July 15). *The Straits Times*, Section Two, p.1. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from NewspaperSG database.
- Toh, E. (2010). The class of '79 celebrates. *Fellowship: MGS Alumnae Association newsletter*, 7. Call no.: RSING 371.223095957 F. Also available from <http://mgs.sch.edu.sg/section/101>
- Toh, J. (2011). Common bonds. *Fellowship: MGS Alumnae Association newsletter*, 6. Call no.: RSING 371.223095957 F. Also available from <http://mgs.sch.edu.sg/section/101>
- Wee, D. (2012, June 12). *Farewell Old School: remembering MGS at Mt Sophia*. Retrieved July 25, 2012, from life in the wee hours: <http://intheweehours.wordpress.com/2012/06/05/farewell-old-school-remembering-mgs-at-mt-sophia>
- Welcome to The Quote Garden! Celebrating 14 years online 1998-2012. Retrieved July 23, 2012, from <http://www.quotegarden.com/memory.html>



重温“丽的呼声” 昔日多姿多彩的时光

梁惠瑁

开播了63年的“丽的呼声”宣布在4月底停播，许多人都相当不舍。启播于1949年8月1日，丽的呼声可谓上个世纪50至80年代期间家喻户晓的广播电台。丽的呼声是新加坡一家私营电台，订户只需缴付月费，就能以专用的收音机听该台的广播。丽的呼声设有两个广播频道：金台的中文节目和银台的中英文节目，但节目语言以方言为主。在高峰期，订户曾多达12万户，拥有超过72万名听众。

在那个消遣选择较少的年代，收听广播节目成为人民的生活良伴，也是获取资讯和娱乐的主要管道。除了住家之外，许多咖啡店和商店都装置丽的呼声。这家电台早期的方言节目拥有独特魅力。每当广播剧和讲古节目播出时段，都吸引了大批听众。

曾是丽的呼声忠实听众的作家许永顺接受访问畅谈对丽的呼声的美好回忆。他于1965年开始搜集

新加坡的表演艺术资料，包含新闻剪报、表演特刊、杂志、唱片等，其中包括丽的呼声的资料，是了解与认识该台所不可或缺的史料。许永顺说，当他得知电台将停播时，原本打算出版一本有关丽的呼声历史的书，因为后来电台被前资深广播员张美香买下且将复播，所以暂时搁置计划。

位于克里门梭道的
丽的呼声大厦。
Courtesy of National
Museum of Singapore.



丽的呼声收音机。Courtesy of Singapore Tourism Board.

旧情的回忆

许永顺记得1960年代初，厦语讲古大师王道每晚讲金庸武侠小说《射雕英雄传》时，生动的语调非常吸引人，让人听得津津有味。王道也参加厦语“戏剧化故事”（广播剧）演出。王道饰演智勇双全的侦探以及他与陈安搭档饰演情人或夫妻，给许永顺留下非常深刻印象。同时，让他至今记忆犹新的还有粤语讲古大师李大傻以华乐乐曲《早天雷》作为节目序曲，并且把故事讲得活灵活现；以及福州讲古大师任增华讲古时发出“铿铿”敲打声的特别效果。

在许永顺的记忆里，厦语话剧组制作的“新型喜剧”以故事穿插摩登流行歌曲，印象最深刻。其他深夜广播剧，如《灯下人语》、《古今奇谈》也令人回味无穷。他清楚记得中午放学回家后，都听到华语新闻报道越南战争，以及时常播放著名歌手姚莉唱的华语歌曲。当年丽的呼声多次主办文艺歌唱比赛，他在小学补习老师的陪同下多次到丽的呼声大礼堂观赏现场比赛，歌手在钢琴的伴奏下大展歌喉，唱《三套车》、《在银色的月光下》、《伏尔加船夫曲》等等。

许永顺说，大约1960年代中期后，家里就没有装置丽的呼声。他相隔三十多年没机会收听丽的呼声节目。1999年在一位广播员的邀请下为该台录制四集《狮城鸿爪》漫谈新加坡集邮活动，让他与丽的呼声有了第一次的合作经验。2011年11月起，他以嘉宾身份参与该台节目《今夜VIP：昨夜星光灿烂》，再次与丽的呼声结缘。在这一系列二十四集节目里，重点介绍新加坡从独立到1980年代的唱片和歌星，他特别介绍了厦语话剧组的活动和唱片还有福建地方戏曲。最令许永顺高兴的是，这半年的时间他与广播员和听众建立起一份感情，对于丽的呼声面临关闭的情境感觉非常无奈与惋惜。

亲和力与影响力

丽的呼声在1980年代的魅力与影响力还是锐不可当，即使面对电视节目的竞争仍屹立不倒。提起当年丽的呼声深入民间受普罗大众欢迎的原因，许永顺总结了该电台多年来对社会群众的贡献。

（一）提供娱乐的精神粮食

在政府提倡“讲华语运动”前，早期新加坡华人以方言为常用语，因此熟悉而亲切的方言广播剧和讲古成为了人民最大的娱乐精神粮食。著名的三大方言讲古师王道、李大傻、黄正经的讲古方式更是迷倒不少听众，老少皆宜。这段期间，丽的呼声成立了各个广播剧组。福建人是新加坡最大的方言族群，因此“厦语话剧组”制作的戏剧化故事（广播剧）极受欢迎。厦语话剧组曾多次在国家剧场与维多利亚剧院呈献文艺晚会与舞台剧演出。尤其是公演的《寒夜曲》轰动一时，1970年代初该组还远赴马国的吉隆坡与檳城表演，场面人山人海。潮语话剧则分为两组，首先1960年由黄正经组成的“中庸潮语业余话剧队”播演广播剧。后来丽的为增加潮语节目，大约在1968年组成“潮语话剧组”，并由广播员余兴铭负责。早期粤语“空中小说”（广播剧）大多数是香港丽的制作过来，也吸引了不少听众，后来新加坡丽的也设立“粤语广播剧组”，由林秀仙负责。除了方言话剧组之外，丽的呼声于1954年成立“华语话剧研究组”和1966年成立“少年儿童话剧组”，所制作的节目更丰富多彩。他们先后呈献数次的舞台演出，如1969年的《鬼蜮世界》、1974年的《翻身》和《飞吧年轻的心》，获得观众热烈支持。

About the article

News of the closure of the Rediffusion at the end of April 2012 was met with dismay by many Singaporeans. Launched on 1 August 1949, Rediffusion was a private radio station in Singapore which gained popularity from the 1950s to the 1980s. It had more than 120,000 subscribers at its peak. Dialect programmes, especially radio drama and storytelling, were the main reason for its appeal.

They attracted listeners of all ages to tune in faithfully every day. Mr Koh Eng Soon, a Chinese writer and an active collector of resources on Singapore performing arts, was also a loyal listener of Rediffusion in his younger days. Until recently, Mr Koh also co-hosted a programme on Rediffusion. In this article, he shares his personal memories of Rediffusion and the impact it had on the social and recreational life of Singaporeans.

Through the staging of concerts, Rediffusion had raised money for various charitable causes. Many singing talents of the 1950s-60s were also discovered through its singing competitions. Rediffusion was a platform for nurturing the early careers of many prominent radio deejays. Shortly after the station closed down, former Rediffusion deejay Madam Chang Mei Hsiang announced her plans to revive Rediffusion after buying over its brand name and broadcasting equipment.

In 2009, Rediffusion donated some of its magazines and photographs to the National Library. Some of these are on display at the Donors Gallery at the National Library Building.



1958年丽的呼声俱乐部歌唱比赛优胜者合照。 Source: Rediffusion Donor Collection, National Library Board. All rights reserved. Rediffusion and National Library Board, 2009.

(二) 热心参与社会公益事业

为践行企业责任，丽的呼声也积极参与国家和社会慈善福利活动。该台成立以来所办的活动不胜枚举，例如：

- 1953年至1965年所主办的歌唱比赛门票所收入一万元全数捐作慈善用途
- 1960年代领头发起筹款捐助河水山火灾灾民
- 1968年为响应政府号召主办“歌星义播大会”以点唱的方式筹募国防基金
- 1970年举办“慈善、慈善、慈善晚会”款项捐助兴建同济医院新大厦基金
- 1973年举办“群星歌剧大会串”为新加坡济世之家筹款

身为传媒机构主动推行公益活动，丽的呼声所发起的慈善活动都得到大众的热烈反应。

(三) 举办艺术与流行歌曲比赛

丽的呼声1950年代至1980年代经常举办歌唱比赛，为人们提供展现才华的平台。那是个爱唱歌与爱听歌的年代。这些歌唱比赛常常能吸引千多名歌唱爱好者报名参加，带动了一股潮流。当时，参赛者在比赛中取得冠亚季军往往就有机会被唱片公司看中受邀

灌录唱片。1953年至1965年举办的比赛只限艺术歌曲，而1965年起则以流行歌曲为主。丽的呼声所办的歌唱比赛发掘好多位歌唱人才，其中在艺术歌曲比赛脱颖而出的黄清元、秦淮、魏民、陈维德、罗琼芳，以及从流行歌曲比赛得奖的张小英、方云、凌霄、林茹萍、岳雷等都是老一辈国人耳熟能详的歌手。总之，丽的呼声主办歌唱比赛不仅拉近了电台与听众的距离，同时挖掘出具有歌艺潜力的年轻人，促进新加坡乐坛的蓬勃发展。

(四) 培养广播与演艺人才

丽的呼声可以堪称为广播人才的培养摇篮。这些年来丽的呼声出现很多优秀并深受广大听众喜爱的广播员，包括陈安、张维明、刘景辉、励燕、张昭英、陈邦维、曾鹏翔、冯乃尧、余兴铭等，其中几位也担纲话剧组负责人。每当这些广播员呈献舞台活动或表演时，都受到大批听众的欢迎。丽的呼声也可以称为培养演艺人才的平台，不少知名演艺人员都是话剧组栽培的，如陈澍城、曾生莲、向云、胡敬中等等，其中陈澍城和向云目前还活跃于电视圈，他们备有扎实的语文基础及杰出的表现可要归功于他们的导师。陈澍城可是潮语讲古大师黄正经一手栽培的徒弟，而向

“艺术歌曲歌唱比赛”话当年

丽的呼声从1953年至1965年主办十三次的艺术歌曲歌唱比赛，当年参加艺术歌曲比赛获奖者好几位是大家所熟悉的：

- 黄清元唱《不到黄河心不甘》，于1957年得第二名，当年他只有十三岁。
- 陈龙玉(秦淮)于1956年得第五名，1958年、1960年和1962年都得第三名。
- 魏发周(魏民)于1958年和1962年得第一名。
- 飞云(谭伟雄)在他的一张唱片封套说“曾参加丽的呼声文艺歌唱比赛而获优”。
- 陈仰安于1959年和1961年得第一名。
- 陈仰厚于1959年也得第一名。
- 罗琼芳于1962年得第二名，1964年得第一名。
- 洪明于1964年得第三名。

在这八位人选之中，黄清元、秦淮、魏民后来都成为唱流行歌曲的歌星。飞云和洪明都灌录流行歌曲唱片。



丽的呼声主办1967年“业余华语流行歌曲比赛大决赛”前四名优胜者。

Courtesy of Koh Eng Soon. All rights reserved. Victory Records Co., 1967.

1965年起丽的呼声主办流行歌曲比赛，其中1966年与1968年也包括艺术歌曲组。参加这两届艺术歌曲比赛而获奖项的著名歌手有：陈维德、曾玉昭、洪明、廖平、朱月英、罗琼芳、林恩爱、艾玲。现在就比较详细的介绍这两届比赛。

1966年12月18日新马丽的呼声联合主办“第一届业余歌唱比赛大决赛”，歌手来自新加坡、马国的檳城与吉隆坡（包括怡保区）。担任评判是：丁祝三和蔡嘉宾。艺术歌曲组获奖的歌手如下：

- 第一名：陈维德(新)唱《伏尔加船夫曲》。
- 第二名：曾玉昭(新)唱《被出卖的新娘》。
- 第三名：邓元生(隆)唱《啊！多纯洁》。
- 第四名：李龙雷(檳)唱《三套车》。
- 第五名：洪明(新)唱《问鸞燕》。
- 安慰奖：
 - 李少清(隆)唱《归来吧！》。
 - 陈国祥(隆)唱《饮酒歌》。
 - 余国洪(隆)唱《追寻》。
 - 马雪红(隆)唱《我的花儿》。
 - 廖平(隆)唱《上山》。
 - 朱月英(新)唱《爱情与艺术》。
 - 陈小慧(檳)唱《轻笑》。
 - 林碧玉(檳)唱《百灵鸟，你这美妙的歌手》。
 - 翁安岩(檳)唱《教我如何不想他》。
 - 庄荣煌(檳)唱《老黑奴》。

1968年12月19日丽的呼声主办歌唱比赛大决赛，担任评判的是：丁祝三、陈毓申、林振中、龙学廷、张昭英。艺术歌曲组获奖的歌手如下：

- 第一名：曾玉昭唱《米卡埃拉叹咏调》。
- 第二名：洪金铭唱《满江红》。
- 第三名：罗琼芳唱《百灵鸟，你这美妙的歌手》。
- 第四名：林恩爱唱《岂有这样的人我不爱他》。
- 第五名：艾玲唱《中秋怨》。

在这两届优胜歌手之中，洪明和林恩爱曾灌录流行歌曲。陈维德与罗琼芳灌录了好几张艺术唱片。

(全部资料提供：许永顺)

云的启蒙老师就是广播员张昭英和曾鹏翔。过去丽的呼声确实为广播与戏剧界在培养人才方面做出了一定贡献。

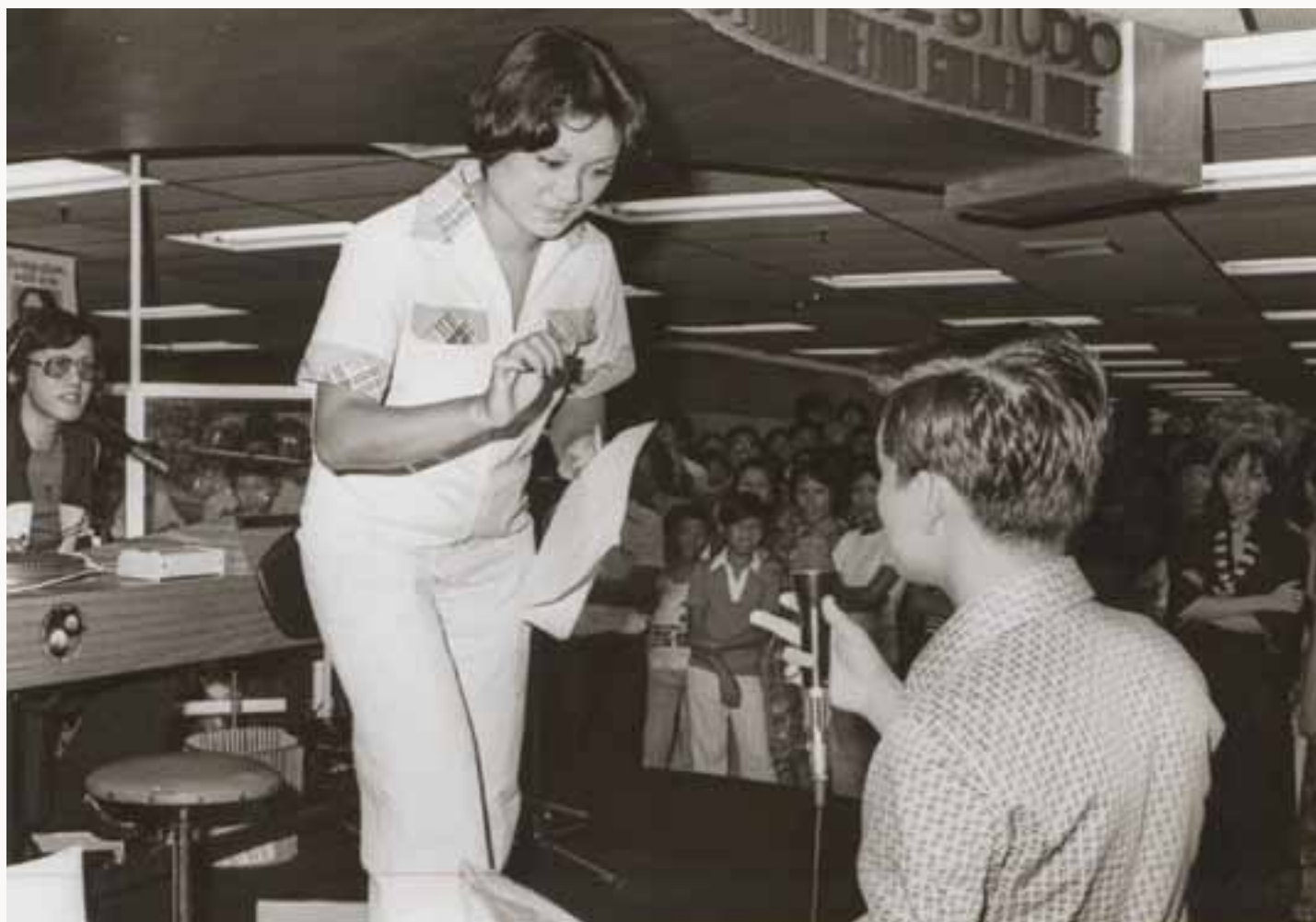
结语

好景不常，陪伴几代国人成长的丽的呼声因蒙受亏损、听众大量减少而宣布关闭，并已在2012年5月1日正式停播。但是6月15日，前资深广播员张美香宣布已收购丽的呼声的广播器材及影音资料，并且计划在近期复播。面对现今许多娱乐消遣形式的冲击，以及约十几个免费广播频道的竞争，改革后的丽的呼声能否继续生存还是未知数。许永顺希望新丽的电台能再度投入服务，并保留原有特色的方言节目，也能配合观众的需求增添新的节目内容。开创以来这63年，丽的呼声在历史上写下光辉灿烂的一页，展望未来，期待丽的呼声能重新出发，再创佳绩。

注：丽的呼声2012即将与大家见面，预知详情请浏览 www.facebook.com/rediffusionsg。



Courtesy of Koh Eng Soon. All rights reserved. 丽的呼声, 1974; All rights reserved. 丽的呼声, 1968; Lin Chen Donor Collection, National Library Board. All rights reserved. 丽的呼声青年歌咏队, 1956.



著名港星叶丽仪参与于丽的呼声户外广播, 1960s. Source: Rediffusion Donor Collection, National Library Board. All rights reserved. Rediffusion and National Library Board, 2009.

旧丽的“最后”广播员

丽的呼声在2012年5月1日正式停播之前, 该电台共有十余位老中青广播员, 他们坚持到最后一夜呈献特别“告别节目”, 最后大家齐唱周华健的《朋友》一曲, 依依不舍地向忠实听众告别。他们的声音是丽的老听众所熟悉的, 但是他们到底是谁呢?

许永顺受访时说, 这一批坚守岗位的最后广播员有: 冯静萱(金台节目总监)、全职广播员: 周海铃、白玉池、颜毓添(阿添); 非全职广播员: 思狄、谢芝炫、古庭、兆锦、黄进远、罗邦强、黄荣标(阿标)、雷宇、沈雪琪、王翠娟(阿娟)等等。

新加坡国家图书馆馆藏——丽的呼声资料介绍

新加坡国家图书馆收集了丽的呼声的一些刊物。丽的呼声定期出版的半月刊是一份收录演出概况、介绍歌星、节目时间表的杂志, 每期封面都是明星级的人物, 例如影星欧嘉慧、乐蒂等等。这些刊物当中也包括为纪念该电台庆祝周年而推出的特刊版。此外, 丽的呼声所举办的表演都印刷了特刊, 如相声表演赛、话剧组舞台剧、音乐会等, 其内容包括人物简介、剧照、曲目、节目表。

丽的呼声相关的新闻、活动报道都会刊登在华文报章。若想查阅有关资料可到新加坡国家图书馆11楼的微塑胶卷馆藏翻阅早期华文报章, 或浏览数码化的旧华文报章《星洲日报》、《联合早报》, 网址是<http://newspapers.nl.sg>。

位于新加坡国家图书馆10楼的捐赠厅也展出了部分由丽的呼声在2009年捐赠的文物, 包括唱片、杂志、照片及宣传海报。图书馆已将其文物数码化作为保存, 其中珍贵的照片包括香港著名歌星叶丽仪参与于丽的呼声户外广播、1958年丽的呼声俱乐

部歌唱比赛优胜者群体照等。公众可以到李光前参考图书馆查阅, 或上网浏览捐赠文物样本, 网址是<http://donors.nl.sg>。

除此以外, 丽的呼声的广播剧和讲古节目也是宝贵的历史资料。新加坡国家档案局保存了不少与丽的呼声相关的影音资料, 其中约5000件的影音纪录包括李大傻讲述的《西游记》以及厦语和粤语广播剧等。档案局也存有口述历史访谈, 收录广播员如陈伯汉、励燕等对主持丽的呼声节目的个人经历。有兴趣的公众可上国家档案局网站查询, 网址是<http://www.a2o.com.sg>。

感谢

感谢许永顺先生接受我们的访问及提供宝贵的意见和资料。

About the author

Leong Hui Chuan is an Associate Librarian with the National Library Heritage division. She oversees the Chinese donor collections and selects materials to be digitised for the Singapore Memory Project. She was formerly part of a project team that managed the indexing of articles and book chapters on Singapore.



Source: Rediffusion Donor Collection, National Library Board. All rights reserved. 真善美出版公司, 1951; 真善美出版公司, 1960; 真善美出版公司, 1961.

参考书目

《华侨华人百科全书·新闻出版卷》编辑委员会编(1999)。《华侨华人百科全书·新闻出版卷》。北京:中国华侨出版社。索书号:RSING q909.04951 EN

华言社社员(2003)。《言:华言社播音人语》。新加坡:新加坡南安会馆华言社。索书号:RSING 384.54 Y

黄涓(1998年2月21日)。《被遗忘的有线广播》。《联合早报》,页33。载于2012年7月4日,自http://newspapers.nl.sg。

黄溢华、卓南生(编辑)。(1979)。《从星洲日报看星洲50年1929-1979》。新加坡:[星洲日报]。索书号:RSING 959.57 SIN-[HIS]

思静(1997年5月15日)。《听广播·谈旧事 从空中小说到广播剧》。《联合早报》,页32。载于2012年7月4日,自http://newspapers.nl.sg。

区如柏(1989年5月14日)。《王道独霸厦语讲古》。《联合早报》,页8。载于2012年7月9日,自http://newspapers.nl.sg。

郭福梁、周国威(1992年1月26日)。《关于讲古的一段古》。《联合早报》,页49。载于2012年7月9日,自http://newspapers.nl.sg。

许永顺(2010)。《言论八十一》。新加坡:许永顺工作室。索书号:RSING c818.2 XYS

《一炮就响·收听率高——潮语讲古大师黄正经》。(1989年5月14日)。《联合早报》,页8。载于2012年7月9日,自http://newspapers.nl.sg。

Chan, K. B. & Tong, C. K. (Eds.). (2003). *Past times: A social history of Singapore*. Singapore: Times Editions. Call no.: RSING 959.57 PAS-[HIS]

Chan, R. (2012, April 15). Rediffusion launch pad. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved July 25, 2012, from Factiva database.

Chia, J. Y. J. (2007). *Rediffusion*. Retrieved July 4, 2012, from http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_1198_2008-10-24.html.

McDaniel, Drew O. (1994). *Broadcasting in the Malay world: radio, television, and video in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia,*

and Singapore. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub. Call no.: RSING 302.2340959 MAC

Lim, R. (2012, June 30). When storytellers ruled the airwaves. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved July 4, 2012, from Factiva database.

Recordings of popular Rediffusion programmes will be available online. (2012, April 9). *Channel NewsAsia*. Retrieved July 25, 2012, from Factiva database.

Rediffusion: Singapore. Singapore: Rediffusion, [198-]. Call no.: RSING 384.540655957 RED



Saya dan Bulan Bahasa

Muhammad Ariff Ahmad

Saya diminta menulis tentang memori saya mengenai pelibatan saya dalam kegiatan dan perayaan Bulan Bahasa di Singapura. Sepanjang ingatan saya, dengan nama Bulan Bahasa, kegiatan dan perayaan melestari dan menggunakan bahasa itu di Singapura telah dimulai semenjak tahun 1959. Hanya nama bahasa itu yang berubah-ubah sesuai dengan rasa, selesa dan kuasa yang selari dengan fenomena hidup di Singapura pada masa itu: 1959 – 1966 disebut bahasa Kebangsaan; 1966 – kini disebut bahasa Kedua; 1982 – kini disebut semula bahasa Melayu, atau bahasa ibunda.¹ Dalam tulisan ini akan saya cuba sedapat-dapatnya menyatakan pengalaman dan keterlibatan saya dalam kegiatan dan perayaan bulan-bulan bahasa itu.

Bahasa Kebangsaan 1959

Apakala Parti Tindakan Rakyat (PAP) menang pukal dalam pilihan raya umum pada Mei tahun itu, Singapura telah diberi kuasa pemerintahan sendiri dalam negeri; manakala ehwal luar negerinya masih dicengkam British.

Pada Jun 1959 Pemerintah Singapura telah mengangkat bahasa Melayu menjadi bahasa Kebangsaan Singapura, dengan pengertian bahawa bahasa Kebangsaan itu adalah bahasa pertuturan dan perhubungan antara rakyat Singapura yang terdiri daripada pelbagai etnik.

Itulah sebabnya maka lagu kebangsaan Singapura *Majulah Singapura* itu dinyanyikan dalam bahasa Kebangsaan, dan kekata perintah dalam perbarisan dan upacara tentera disebut

dalam bahasa Kebangsaan – bukan bahasa Melayu; manakala bahasa Inggeris akan terus digunakan sebagai bahasa pemerintah dan bahasa kerja.

Saya ditanya orang: apa bedanya bahasa Melayu dengan bahasa Kebangsaan? Saya jawab: bahasa Melayu itu bahasa (pertuturan) orang Melayu, bahasa interaksi antara sesama Melayu yang berlatarkan budaya Melayu; manakala bahasa Kebangsaan pula ialah bahasa (pertuturan) rakyat Singapura, bahasa interaksi bagi pelbagai etnik warga negara Singapura.

Untuk menghidupkan bahasa kebangsaan itu, berpuluh-puluh ribu orang dewasa bukan Melayu, dengan sukarela telah masuk belajar di kelas-kelas bahasa Kebangsaan yang dianjurkan

¹ *Bahasa Ibunda* ialah bahasa yang dituturkan pelbagai etnik rakyat – Melayu; Mandarin; Tamil dsb.

Lembaga Gerakan Pelajaran Dewasa (LGPD) atau yang dianjurkan oleh pertubuhan-pertubuhan masyarakat Singapura.

Kira-kira 300 orang guru Melayu yang wujud pada masa itu, tidak cukup untuk mengajar di kelas-kelas bahasa Kebangsaan itu. LGPD telah mengambil banyak mata-mata (pegawai polis), kerani, juruhebah radio dan orang Melayu awam yang mampu, menjadi tenaga pengajar di kelas-kelas yang dianjurkannya.

Teachers' Training College (TTC) telah mengadakan mengadakan kelas bahasa Kebangsaan khas bagi guru-guru bukan Melayu hingga lulus 'darjah dua' (sukatan pelajaran pemerintah). Kepada guru-guru ini diajarkan bahasa Kebangsaan, kesusasteraan dan kebudayaan Melayu. Novelet saya *Sarah Pengarang Kecil* yang diterbitkan Pustaka Melayu pada 1957 telah dijadikan teks kesusasteraan bagi peperiksaan Darjah 1 LGPD.

Saya telah ditugaskan mengajarkan kebudayaan di kelas darjah dua di TTC. Ketika mengajar bagaimana menyebut atau menulis nama orang Melayu, saya beritahu pelajar dikelas itu: orang Melayu menyebut atau menulis nama anaknya lengkap dengan bin atau bintinya, misalnya: Muhammad Ali bin Abu atau Salminah binti Kemat.

Tetapi, kata saya: ada saya jumpa pada sijil persekolahan seorang anak teman saya tertulis namanya "Sulaiman Rohanah binte". Ini, luar biasa dan tidak mengikut cara kebudayaan Melayu menyebut nama Melayu.

Tiga hari kemudiannya, saya dipanggil penolong pengetua sekolah TTC kerana beliau menerima surat aduan dari seorang guru besar sekolah menengah Inggeris yang melaporkan bahawa saya telah mengganggu pertadbiran sekolahnya.

Saya jelaskan kepada penolong pengetua sekolah apa yang sebenarnya telah saya beritahu kelas saya tentang nama Melayu itu. Beliau bersetuju dengan tindakan saya dan dijawabnya surat aduan guru besar itu; hingga sekarang tak saya dengar ungkitan kisah tersebut.

Di samping mengajar (pada pagi dan petang) di TTC, dan di beberapa kelas anjuran LGPD (pada waktu malamnya), selama dua tahun saya tulis skrip pelajaran bahasa Melayu/kebangsaan yang disampaikan kepada pendengar radio Singapura – pelajaran bahasa Melayu melalui bahagian Melayu, dan pelajaran bahasa kebangsaan melalui bahagian Cina. Selain itu, saya juga tulis makalah untuk ruangan "Belajar bahasa Kebangsaan" di majalah dua mingguan *Mentor* yang diterbitkan Singapore Teachers' Union untuk para anggotanya.

1959 – 1962

Selama lima tahun, saya tulis satu siri buku belajar bahasa Melayu/Kebangsaan yang saya namakan *Bahasa Negaraku*. Buku itu diterbitkan

Marican & Sons memenuhi kepentingan pelajar bukan-Melayu di Singapura dan di Persekutuan Tanah Melayu (PTM).

Berdasarkan rumusan Kongres Pwrsuratan Bahasa Melayu Ketiga tahun 1956 – yang diadakan di Singapura dan ditutup di Johor Bahru – sesuai dengan keputusan Kongres Persuratan Melayu Malaya Kedua (bahawa perkembangan seterusnya kesusasteraan Melayu Malaya harus dilaksanakan dalam tulisan rumi) Jawatankuasa Bersama Ejaan Malaya (PTM dan Singapura) dan Team Ejaan Indonesia untuk membaku dan menyekatakan ejaan bagi kededua wilayah bahasa serumpun itu telah dibentuk.

Jawatankuasa bersama itu telah bekerjasama selama 6 tahun (1957–1963), lalu merumuskan semacam ejaan baru yang disebut ejaan Melindo (Ejaan Melayu-Indonesia) yang dijangka akan mula digunakan di kededua wilayah bahasa serumpun itu bermula dari Januari 1964.

1962

Dewan Bahasa dan Kebudayaan (DBK) Singapura telah menganjurkan musyawarah penulis-penulis Malaya (PTM dan Singapura). Penulis-penulis empat bahasa (Melayu, Mandarin, Tamil dan Inggeris) dari seluruh Malaya telah berhimpun di DBK Singapura membincangkan tentang pewujudan dan pengembangan kesusasteraan Malaya di masa depan. Sebagai Pengerusi Lemabag Tetap Kongres (LTK) Singapura, saya telah diberi tugas mempengerusikan musyawarah seksi yang membincangkan bahasa dan kebudayaan Melayu.

1963

Penubuhan Malaysia (Persatuan Negara-Negara PTM, Singapura, Sabah dan Sarawak) pada September 1963 telah menyebabkan kegagalan pelaksanaan cadangan Jawatankuasa Ejaan Melayu/Indonesia (Melindo) itu sehingga tahun 1966 apabila Konfrontasi Indonesia terhadap Malaysia berakhir.

Setelah Konfrontasi berakhir, dengan alasan permutu (slogan) "biduk lalu kiam-bang bertaut", Jawatankuasa Ejaan Melindo bersatu semula dengan nama barunya Majlis Kebahasaan Indonesia/Malaysia (MABIM).² Tugas majlis baru itu tidak lagi setakat menyekatakan ejaan semata-mata tetapi meluas hingga ke masalah bahasa.

Namun, oleh sebab Singapura telah merdeka (keluar) dari Malaysia pada 9 Ogos 1965, maka Singapura tidak automatik menjadi anggota MABIM. Sebagai sebuah negara merdeka yang berdaulat, Singapura mempunyai dasar pemerintahan dan identitinya sendiri.

Khusus mengenai ejaan rumi Melayu moden yang sesuai digunapakai oleh penutur bahasa Melayu dan bahasa Kebangsaan di

About the article

Award-winning author and Malay language expert, Mr Muhammad Ariff Ahmad reminisces about his experience and involvement in the activities of the Malay Language Month since 1959. Inaugurated as the National Language Month, the campaign to promote the Malay language was initially targeted at the non-Malays. With the adoption of the bilingual education policy in 1966, Malay was taught as a second language in Singapore schools with the objective of preserving the culture and traditions of the Malay ethnic group. By the 1980s, the community leaders found it necessary to encourage Malays to use their mother tongue when interacting with one another.

Muhammad Ariff also shares interesting anecdotes such as the time when his novelette *Sarah pengarang kecil* was used as a textbook by the Adult Education Council; writing the lyrics to the theme song of the Malay Language Month in 1982 (which is still used today) and coming up with a suitable slogan for Malay Language Month after being inspired by a Japanese saying.

² Sekarang berubah menjadi MABBIM apabila Negara Brunei Darussalam menganggotai majlis itu.



All rights reserved. Pustaka Melayu, 1960.

Singapura, semenjak merdeka pada Ogos 1965, Kementerian Kebudayaan Singapura telah melantik suatu Jawatankuasa Ejaan Rumi Melayu Singapura.

Sebagai Pengerusi LTK, saya telah dilantik menjadi salah seorang anggota Jawatankuasa tersebut. Jawatankuasa itu telah ditugaskan untuk memikirkan, membentuk kaedah dan merumuskan penggunaan sistem ejaan baru yang dicadangkan itu.

Jawatankuasa itu telah menyemak dan memperbincangkan beberapa sistem yang pernah dipakai untuk mengeja rumi Melayu. Lakar ejaan Melindo yang tak jadi dilancarkan pada Januari 1964 telah dijadikan rujukan utama Jawatankuasa itu.

Lakar Ejaan Rumi (Melayu) baru, rumusan Jawatankuasa Ejaan Kementerian Kebudayaan telah dibentangkan di Kongres Bahasa Kebangsaan Singapura pada Ogos 1966 untuk dikaji dan dihalusi sebelum ia digunakan.

Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan 1965

Menyediakan ruang dan memberi peluang sambil menggalakkan rakyat Singapura bertutur bahasa Kebangsaan, Kementerian Kebudayaan Singapura telah menganjurkan dua peristiwa bahasa Kebangsaan.

Bekerjasama dengan LTK Singapura, Kementerian Kebudayaan telah menganjurkan Minggu Bahasa Kebangsaan dan Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan dalam tahun 1965.

Peristiwa Minggu Bahasa Kebangsaan diadakan pada Mei 1965 (semasa Singapura masih dalam Malaysia) dan peristiwa Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan disempurnakan sepanjang September tahun itu (ketika Singapura baru keluar dari Malaysia).

Kedua-dua peristiwa bahasa itu telah diselenggarakan LTK dengan sokongan dan bantuan Kementerian Kebudayaan. Kementerian Kebudayaan memberikan kemudahan-kemudahan kepada penggiat-penggiat melaksanakan acara; manakala LTK menyelaraskan acara-acara Minggu Bahasa dan Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan itu.

Persatuan-persatuan bahasa dan kebudayaan kerabat LTK, institusi-institusi pemerintah dan bukan pemerintah, kelab-kelab masyarakat telah bersama-sama menjayakan perayaan Minggu Bahasa dan Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan itu.

Sebagai Pengerusi LTK, maka peranan saya dalam kegiatan minggu dan bulan bahasa Kebangsaan itu ialah Pengerusi Panitia yang bekerjasama dengan Cikgu Suri Muhyani dari DBK Singapura menyelaraskan kegiatan dan acara kededua peristiwa bahasa itu.

Minggu dan Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan itu telah diisi dengan acara-acara:

temasya – seperti bercerita dalam bahasa Kebangsaan; menyanyikan lagu-lagu berbahasa Kebangsaan; pesta

pantun; mengeja dan menulis kekata bahasa kebangsaan; mendeklamasi sajak

peraduan – seperti peraduan teka kata; soal-jawab bahasa; bercakap petah; berbalas pantun; berdebat/bahas dalam bahasa Kebangsaan.

pembelajaran – menyebarkan pengetahuan mengenai bahasa Kebangsaan atau bahasa Melayu menerusi ceramah; seminar; simposium.

Peserta bukan Melayu melakukan acara-acara bahasa Kebangsaan; manakala peserta Melayu melakukan juga acara seni budaya Melayu.

Bahasa Ibunda (Bahasa Kedua) 1966

Mulai tahun 1966, sistem pelajaran kebangsaan Singapura telah menetapkan bahawa bahasa Inggeris digunakan sebagai bahasa penghantar pelajaran di sekolah-sekolah dan disebut sebagai bahasa pertama; manakala bahasa-bahasa Melayu, Mandarin dan Tamil yang disebut sebagai bahasa ibunda diajarkan juga kepada anak-anak etnik penutur bahasa masing-masing.

Bahasa ibunda yang disebut juga bahasa kedua, diajarkan di sekolah sebagai mata pelajaran wajib. Selain mendidik pelajar untuk menjadikan para lulusannya rakyat Singapura yang dwibahasa, pengajaran bahasa ibunda itu bertujuan untuk melestarikan budaya dan tradisi etnik penutur bahasa-bahasa tersebut.

Kongres Bahasa Kebangsaan 1966

Memenuhi kepentingan bahasa Kebangsaan dan bahasa ibunda Melayu, dengan kerjasama Kementerian Kebudayaan dan bantuan Yayasan Asia, LTK telah menganjurkan Kongres Bahasa Kebangsaan Singapura pada 15 – 19 Ogos 1966. Beberapa pemerhati dari Malaysia dan Brunei telah hadir menyertai kongres tersebut.

Kongres telah membincangkan lakar Ejaan Melayu Baru Singapura yang dibentangkan Jawatankuasa Ejaan Rumi Singapura 1965; namun, memandangkan bahawa MABIM pun sedang menghalusi ejaan bersama bagi kededua wilayah itu, maka Kongres mengambil sikap tidak segera membuat keputusan tentang ejaan itu – sikap yang diambil ialah “tunggu dan tengok”.

Kongres telah membincangkan juga tentang perkembangan bahasa dan sastera Melayu di Singapura. Beberapa kertas kerja mengenai bahasa Melayu baku; pelajaran bahasa dan kesusasteraan Melayu di kelas menengah telah dibincangkan.

Saya telah mengemukakan kertas kerja mengenai pengajaran kesusasteraan di kelas-

³ Rumusan mengenai pengajaran kesusasteraan Melayu di kelas-kelas menengah – kemudian diteruskan ke Sekolah Menengah Sang Nila Utama dan Tun Sri Lanang sehingga 1979 apabila pelajaran sastera tidak lagi diajarkan melalui pelajaran Bahasa Ibunda semenjak 1979.



Yang Di-Pertuan Negara Yusof Ishak dan Menteri Hal Ehwat Luar Negara S Rajaratnam semasa pelancaran Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan di Dewan Peringatan Victoria, 1965. Source: Yusof Ishak Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

kelas menengah Melayu (yang ditumpangkan di 10 buah sekolah Menengah Inggeris).³

1977

Kementerian Pelajaran Singapura telah mengarahkan supaya pengajaran bahasa ibunda Melayu di sekolah-sekolah Singapura, menggunakan Ejaan Rumi Baru (ejaan baku) kaedah Malaysia yang ditetapkan MABBIM mulai awal semester persekolahan tahun 1977 setelah 5 tahun mantap dipakai di Malaysia.

Terdapat beberapa ejaan yang dipertahankan kedua-dua pihak – Indonesia dan Malaysia – yang tidak dapat disekatakan, sama ada kerana sentimen atau kerana keyakinan terhadap kebenaran pendapat mereka, lantas ejaan yang mereka yakini itu disetujui digunapakai di wilayah masing-masing.*

Ketetapan itu telah diputuskan rumusan KPBM3 1956 yang berkata: bersetuju (terus menggunakan) hal-hal yang tidak disetujui.

Singapura pula mengambil sikap apabila tertembung dengan kelainan yang demikian itu, maka Singapura akan menggunakan apa-apa yang dipakai Malaysia.

1981

Setelah empat tahun menggunakan ejaan baku, Kementerian Kebudayaan telah menubuhkan Jawatankuasa Penyelaras Ejaan Rumi Melayu pada Mei tahun itu, menggantikan

Jawatankuasa Ejaan 1965. Jawatankuasa baru ini dipengerusikan seorang Setiausaha Parlimen. Setiausaha Parlimen yang mula-mula dilantik menjadi Pengerusi Jawatankuasa itu ialah Encik Wan Hussin Haji Zoohri.

Selain memikul tugas memantau dan memastikan bahawa ejaan baku digunakan dengan betul di Singapura, Jawatankuasa itu telah juga menimbangkan kata-kata istilah yang sesuai dan juga mengenai penggunaan bahasa Melayu yang betul.

Bulan Bahasa Melayu 1982

Majlis Pusat Pertubuhan-Pertubuhan Budaya Melayu Singapura telah menubuhkan Jawatankuasa Bulan Bahasa Melayu pada April tahun itu. Diberi nama Bulan Bahasa Melayu kerana kempen itu dikhususkan untuk masyarakat Melayu sendiri.

Jawatankuasa yang dipengerusikan Presiden Majlis Pusat, Haji Mohd Yusof Ahmad itu dianggotai Persatuan Persuratan Pemuda Pemudi Melayu (4PM), Taman Bacaan Pemuda Pemudi Melayu Singapura, Angkatan Sasterawan 50 (Asas 50), Kesatuan Guru-Guru Melayu Singapura (KGMS) dan Angkatan Pelukis Aneka Daya (APAD).

Encik Yusnorf ialah Setiausaha Jawatankuasa itu dan Encik Mohd Raman Daud adalah Penolong Setiausahanya. Setiausaha Parlimen Perdagangan dan

* Malaysia mengeja

bahwa
banteras
beza
kerana
sastera

Indonesia mengeja

bahwa
berantas
beda
karena
sastra



Source: Abdul Ghani Hamid Donor Collection, National Library Board. All rights reserved. Jawatankuasa Bulan Bahasa, Jawatankuasa Bahasa Melayu Singapura, 1988.



Timbalan Perdana Menteri Encik Goh Chok Tong semasa pelancaran Bulan Bahasa 1988 di auditorium PUB. Source: MICA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

Perusahaan merangkap Hal Ehwal Masyarakat, Haji Sidek Saniff dan Setiausaha Parlimen Kesihatan dan Kebudayaan, Encik Wan Hussin Haji Zoohri telah dilantik sebagai Penaung Jawatankuasa itu. Manakala Anggota Parlimen Kampung Kembangan, yang juga Setiausaha MENDAKI⁴ Haji Mansor Haji Sukaimi dan saya (Haji Muhammad Ariff Ahmad) telah dilantik sebagai Penasihat kepada Jawatankuasa tersebut.

Mencari permutu untuk kempen bulan bahasa Melayu (yang pertama) yang dilaksanakan dalam bulan Ogos tahun itu, saya sarankan kalimah ajakan yang sederhana “gunakanlah bahasa Melayu”. Saya terilham oleh kalimah Jepun yang menggalakkan penduduk Syonan-to menggunakan Nipon-Go. Kata kalimah itu: *manabé, tsukaé Nipon-Go wo* (pelajari, gunakanlah bahasa Nippon). Saya tidak bermaksud memerintah supaya mereka belajar; tetapi mengajak mereka menggunakan bahasa ibunda kerana pada masa itu (dekad 1980an) bilangan orang Melayu yang mula segan berbahasa Melayu bertambah.

Kempen penggunaan bahasa Melayu itu telah diisi dengan acara peraduan-peraduan bercakap petah; mendeklamasikan sajak; menulis sajak dan cerpen; mengeja cepat dan tepat, yang ditumpukan kepada para pelajar. Majlis-majlis ceramah, simposium, seminar dan pameran buku diadakan juga sebagai sumber penyebaran ilmu untuk menambah pengetahuan tentang bahasa Melayu.

Melalui ucapan saya, selaku tetamu terhormat, ketika merasmikan pameran buku-buku Melayu di Perpustakaan Toa Payoh pada 14 Ogos 1982 dulu, telah saya sarankan bahawa sebuah Jawatankuasa Bertindak untuk memastikan pengamalan Bahasa Melayu yang berterusan di kalangan masyarakat Melayu di

sini, perlu dibentuk Majlis Pusat. Jawatankuasa Bertindak itu bolehlah bekerjasama dengan Jawatankuasa Penyelaras Ejaan Melayu yang dilantik Kementerian Kebudayaan, Kesatuan Guru-Guru Melayu Singapura dan Dewan Perniagaan Melayu Singapura. Saya sokong kuat ura-ura Majlis Pusat menubuhkan Jawatankuasa tetap yang berfungsi untuk mengembang dan menatarkan bahasa Melayu di kalangan orang Melayu, seperti yang diumumkan Presiden Majlis Pusat ketika merasmikan Bulan Bahasa Melayu itu.

1983

Tugas Jawatankuasa Penyelaras Ejaan telah diperluas hingga mencakup bidang bahasa, menyentuh aspek peristilahan; tatabahasa dan sebutan baku. Maka namanya dipinda menjadi Jawatankuasa Bahasa Melayu Singapura (JBMS). Lama juga kegiatan berbulan bahasa “mengambil rehat”. Enam tahun lamanya, kita tidak berbulan bahasa.

Bulan Bahasa Melayu 1988 dan seterusnya

Menurut urutannya, Bulan Bahasa Melayu yang dilaksanakan pada kali ini, sebenarnya, ialah perayaan Bulan Bahasa Melayu yang kedua. Namun, oleh kerana perayaan itu diselenggarakan JBMS yang dipengerusikan Setiausaha Parlimen Kanan Kementerian Pelajaran (sekarang: Pendidikan) Haji Sidek Saniff; dan akan menjadi projek berterusan yang akan diselenggarakan tiap dua tahun sekali, maka Bulan Bahasa Melayu Singapura (BBMS) 1988 itu ditandai dengan nama BBMS pertama.

8 Julai 1988, saya tulis di kolom “bahasa jiwa bangsa” *Berita Harian*:

“menjelang Bulan Bahasa yang akan diadakan selama sebulan (13 Ogos hingga 19 September 1988) yang

⁴ MENDAKI ialah Majlis Pendidikan Anah-Anak Islam.

mendukung cita-cita ‘bahasa menjunjung budaya’ dengan slogan ‘gunakan bahasa Melayu yang betul’. Baik sekali rasanya, jika mulai dari sekarang kita berhati-hati menggunakan bahasa Melayu yang betul.

Kita mulakan dengan penggunaan bahasa Melayu yang betul di kalangan wirawan Bulan Bahasa itu sendiri. Mudah-mudahan dengan sikap berbahasa yang baik dan dengan contoh penggunaan bahasa Melayu yang betul, para wirawan itu akan menyedarkan para pengguna bahasa kita (masyarakat umum) untuk menggunakan bahasa yang betul lagi baik.”

Permutu BBMS kali ini merupakan penataran permutu BBMS Majlis Pusat 1982 yang mengajak orang Melayu menggunakan bahasa Melayu. JBMS bukan sahaja mahukan orang berbahasa Melayu (apabila bertemu sesama Melayu; lebih-lebih lagi dalam pertemuan rasmi, misalnya dalam mesyuarat dan majlis-majlis), bahkan mahukan mereka bertutur dalam bahasa yang betul.

Sebagai mercutanda BBM itu, Pengerusi JBMS telah meminta saya menuliskan senikata lagu BBMS yang muziknya telah disediakan oleh Cikgu Abdullah Lamat. Nampaknya lagu itu masih dinyanyikan hingga sekarang, meskipun kedengaran macam ada perubahan kecil telah dilakukan ke atas lagu itu.

BBMS 1988 itu telah diisi dengan majlis-majlis ceramah; dialog mengenai ilmu bahasa; peraduan bahas dan mengarang; deklamasi sajak dan pesta pantun, diramaikan juga dengan persembahan seni budaya Melayu.

BBMS 1990 dilaksanakan bersekali dengan Bulan Budaya Melayu. Dalam rencana menyambut 25 tahun Kemerdekaan Singapura, selaras dengan cita-cita *bahasa menjunjung budaya*, JBMS bekerjasama dengan Majlis Pusat melaksanakan bulan bahasa dan bulan budaya, dengan JBMS menyelenggarakan bulan bahasa dan Majlis Pusat menyelenggarakan bulan budaya.

BBMS 1990 mula memperkenalkan sebutan baku bahasa Melayu (menyebut kekata sebagaimana dieja) menerusi majlis-majlis dialog dan ceramahnya. Usaha Jawatankuasa Bahasa Melayu semakin fokus kepada sebutan baku.

Memandangkan tugas Jawatankuasa Bahasa itu semakin luas, dalam beberapa mesyuaratnya telah saya sarankan supaya nama JBMS dipinda menjadi Majlis Bahasa Melayu Singapura (MBMS).



Menteri Penerangan, Perhubungan dan Kesenian & Menteri Bertanggungjawab Bagi Ehwat Masyarakat Islam, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim di pelancaran Bulan Bahasa 2012 di Bangunan Perpustakaan Negara. Courtesy of Juffri Supaat.

BBMS 1992 telah dilaksanakan dengan tema ‘Ke Arah Penyempurnaan Bahasa Melayu Baku’. Sayangnya, pada masa itu, apabila kita menyebut bahasa Melayu Baku, yang difahami umum ialah sebutan bakunya sahaja; padahal yang dikatakan bahasa baku termasuklah tatabahasanya, ejaannya, peristilahannya, dan sebutannya. Sebutan itu hanya satu sahaja daripada aspek bahasa.

Dalam Simposium Sebutan Baku yang dianjurkan JBMS pada November 1992, nama Majlis Bahasa Melayu Singapura diisytiharkan dan dirasmikan menggantikan nama JBMS. Pada tahun itu, Majlis Bahasa Melayu telah menganjurkan seminar besar-besaran mengenai sebutan baku. Pakar-pakar sebutan baku dari Malaysia telah diundang memimpin bengkel sebutan baku bagi guru-guru bahasa Melayu di Singapura.⁵

MBMS telah merubah musiman bulan bahasa. Kini dilaksanakan pada tiap tahun genap bagi kegiatan-kegiatan bahasa, manakala tahun ganjil bagi kegiatan-kegiatan kesusasteraan. Pada tahun-tahun kesusasteraan disampaikan anugerah dan hadiah sastera.

Dua anugerah, Anugerah Tun Seri Lanang dan Anumerta Tun Sri Lanang, disampaikan kepada para sasterawan yang dianggap layak menerimanya. Penganugerahan itu dimulai dari tahun 1993. Saya telah menerima Anugerah Tun Sri Lanang pada 1993; Masuri SN pada 1995; Abd Ghani Hamid pada 1997; Suratman Markasan pada 1999 dan diikuti lain-lain sasterawan yang diiktiraf.

⁵ Pelajar bahasa ibunda Melayu di sekolah-sekolah sudah mula dilatih menggunakan sebutan baku semenjak tahun 1988.

RUJUKAN

- Acara2 Bulan Bahasa siap utk Sabtu ini. (1982, August 13). *Berita Harian*, p. 3. Microfilm no. NL12694.
- Bulan Bahasa: Mengisi makna ‘bahasa menunjukkan bangsa’. (1988, July 24). *Berita Harian*, p. 4. Microfilm no. NL16235.
- Bulan Bahasa ‘88: buku cenderamata: 13 Ogos - 17 Sep ‘88*. (1988). Singapura: Jawatankuasa Bulan Bahasa, Jawatankuasa Bahasa Melayu Singapura. Call no.: RCLOS 499.28 BUL DG: AGH (LL)
- Bulan Bahasa ‘90: 2-23 Mac ‘90, Singapura: buku cenderamata*. (1990). Singapura: Jawatankuasa Bulan Bahasa 1990, Jawatankuasa Bahasa Melayu Singapura. Call no.: RCLOS 499.28 BUL
- Bulan Bahasa ‘92 Singapura: 1-29 Februari 1992: [buku cenderamata]*. (1992). Singapura: Jawatankuasa Bulan Bahasa 1992, Jawatankuasa Bahasa Melayu Singapura. Call no.: RSING 499.28 BUL
- Cenderamata Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan, 23hb. April - 25hb Mei, 1965*. (1965). Singapura: Dewan Bahasa dan Kebudayaan Kebangsaan. Call no.: RCLOS 499.28 CHE
- Kongres Bahasa Kebangsaan Singapura: kertaskerja*. (1966). Singapura: [Lembaga Tetap Kongres]. Call no.: RSEA 499.28 KON
- Singapore. Ministry of Culture. *Jawatankuasa Besar (1965). Cenderamata Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan, 12hb November -11hb Disember, 1965*. Singapura: Dewan Bahasa dan Kebudayaan Kebangsaan. Call no.: RSING 499.23 SIN

About the author

Award-winning writer, editor and former lecturer Muhammad Ariff Ahmad is a prominent expert and activist of the Malay language and culture in Singapore. A founding member of the esteemed Malay literary club, Asas ‘50, he has been honoured at national and regional levels, receiving Singapore’s Cultural Medallion in 1987 and the Southeast Asian Write award in 1993.

In the family: Family history resources in the National Library

Bonny Tan

When tracing our family history, we embark on a meandering voyage to an unknown destination, each step often painfully slow because of the seemingly impossible mountain of resources to sift through or the dead-ends faced. However, the experience can be rewarding despite its challenges when guided with the right tools. The National Library has various resources to help the researcher complete the journey of discovering one's roots.

Grandfathers' stories

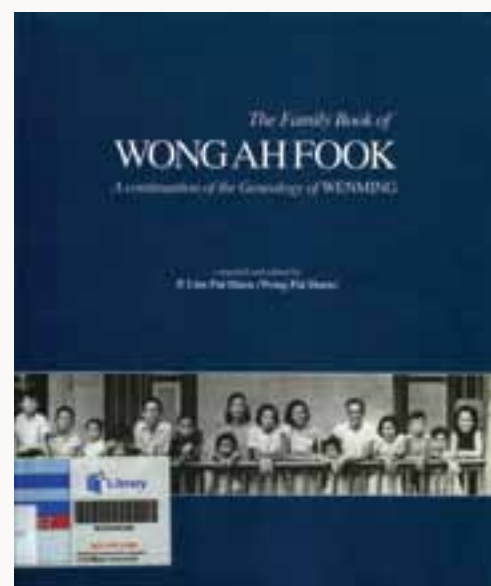
The best place to begin exploring one's family history is one's own family, both immediate and extended. Talking to elderly relatives is an intimate process that reveals lost names, fleshes out characters and unravels hidden stories. It is not always easy to interview those who are most familiar to us. Techniques in interviewing relatives and fishing for treasured nuggets in family histories are explained in publications such as Verde's *Touching tomorrow* (2000) which sees the process of the oral interview as a gift for the whole family. As families share, they invariably uncover photographs, memorabilia and letters. These become touchstones, triggering memories in others or carrying new information, often of a more personal nature.

Keeping familial records, photographs and ephemera organised is just as important as developing a strategy for research. The process is often tedious and an art in itself. One useful guide for newcomers is Taylor's *Preserving your family* (2001) which outlines, in detail, the process of restoring and organising old photographs.

Chatting with aged relatives, leafing through old letters and documents, analysing photographs and examining family heirlooms can open doors to hidden branches of one's family tree.

Beginning with the end

A name with a birth or death date is the first step in fleshing out details of a member in the family tree.¹ Sometimes starting with the end may prove more profitable than trying to trace the beginning. Often a deceased who has just passed away is still remembered by surviving family members who can recall events and details associated with the individual. A simple obituary in the newspaper or community



All rights reserved. P. Lim P. H. And Lim S. G., 2005.

newsletter can reveal a slew of other names and relationships, of sons and daughters, grandsons and nephews. More established patriarchs (or matriarchs) may have eulogies published.

Persistence and creativity are important keys for dredging up information of our ancestors. Vernacular names are often mispronounced and their spellings confused. Even with a searchable database, variant names, acronyms, and spellings should be attempted before giving up the search. Etchings of names on headstones are important clues that can move the research forward. Birth dates, places of birth, aliases or commendations are often gleaned from gravestones. There are publications which have transcribed details of the tombstones of the early colonialists.² Burial registers and exhumation records are also invaluable sources of information. Donated by Kuan Swee Huat, the Hokkien Huay Kuan Exhumation Records, spanning 1948-1951 and 1936-1965 list some

¹ Primary sources, particularly birth, marriage and death certificates provide links to the family tree. These records can be obtained from the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA), the Registry of Marriages (ROM), and the National Archives of Singapore (NAS). The public can apply for a birth and death extract from eXtracts Online at <https://www.psi.gov.sg/NASApp/tmf/TMFServlet?app=ICA-RBD-eXtracts-pub&isNew=true&Reload=true>

² They include Harfield's *Early cemeteries in Singapore* and the *Fort Canning Cemetery, Singapore* along with Stallwood's *Old cemetery on Fort Canning*.

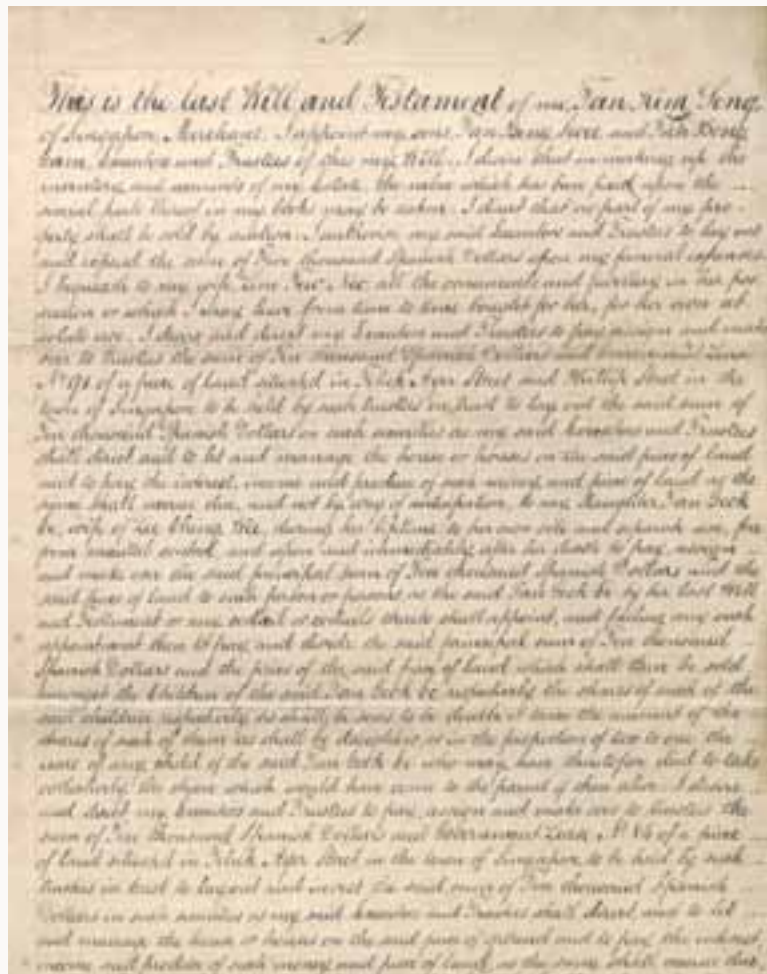
10,000 Chinese graves exhumed from Redhill around the 1960s. They carry information such as the date of exhumation and burial, name, sex, dialect group of the deceased, and names of their descendants.

Legal papers such as petitions, writs of summons, power of attorney, property ownership, wills and testaments such as those in the collections of Koh Seow Chuan,³ can throw much light on a family's genealogy. The handwritten will and testament of well-known philanthropist Tan Kim Seng dated 1862, for example, revealed not only the wealth of the deceased, but also his descendants and beneficiaries, many of whom were well-known in their own capacity.

The Straits Times and *The Singapore Free Press* are fully searchable on NewspaperSG, an online archive of Singapore news. Dating back to the mid-19th century, these newspapers carry announcements of births, marriages and deaths, with more details for well-known people. Passenger lists are also published sometimes, giving information on a person's destination, place of embarkation and the ship's name. Another useful source of information comes from notices of exhumation published in these dailies. Other language newspapers such as *Berita Harian*, *Nanyang Siang Pau*, *Sin Chew Jit Poh* and *Tamil Murasu* are also available through this portal although they were published much later and may have less to offer. Available on microfilm are other dailies such as the *Malaya Tribune*, the *Singapore Herald* and the *Singapore Standard* which are alternative sources of news.

Whole donations of records, photographs and books with connections to well-known families such as the Wong Ah Fook Collection, the Wang Tso and Hsiu Chin Collection and the Wu Lien-Teh Collection are also gems to family historians of these pedigree families. The collection of Wong Ah Fook (1837-1918) donated by his great-granddaughter Datin Patricia Lim includes genealogies, wills, archival records, photographs, account books, press cuttings, maps and publications related to the family's history. Mr Wang Tso and his wife Madam Chen Hsiu Chin were prominent members in the educational field in the 1950s to 1960s, particularly of Chinese institutions such as the Pay Fong High School, the Yock Eng High School and the Nanyang University. Their collection, donated by their daughter Mrs Lee-Wang Cheng Yeng, has over 2,000 documents, comprising mainly letters and personal documents of Mr and Mrs Wang. The recently donated collection of Wu Lien-Teh, a renowned physician in both Malaya and China, has unique photographs and original works by both Wu and his first wife, Ruth.⁴

The *jiapu* (家谱) is a clan's history or lineage, recording important aspects such as the origin



Will and Testament of Tan Kim Seng. Source: Koh Seow Chuan Donor Collection, National Library Board. All rights reserved. Koh Seow Chuan and National Library Board, Singapore, 2005.

of the family name, the locality of the ancestry, the clan's migration history, birth and marriage records, honours and achievements. The *jiapu* is the window to the family tree and its branches in Chinese families. One can search the *jiapus* available at the National Library or call the respective *huiguan* (会馆) or clan associations to check on their genealogical records.

A life worked out

Another approach to family history research is through a person's profession, career or trade. The *Buku Merah* or *Straits Times* directory is a key reference for deriving details of business leaders and was an early *Who's who* list in Singapore. The earliest extant print of the directory in the library dates back to 1846.⁶ Besides a list of residents with their full names, professional titles and addresses, the publication also identifies firms by trade and industry and the heads of these entities.

There are several *Who's who* listings for Malaya and Singapore which range from as early as 1918 to the present-day, giving details of Singapore's and Malaya's elite such as birth dates, positions held, accomplishments and places of residence. The later *Who's who* extends

³ Koh Seow Chuan, a retired architect and founder of DP Architects, donated his rich collection of documents and records to NLB.

⁴ The March 2012 issue of *BiblioAsia* has a profile of Wu Lien-Teh and highlights of his collection.

⁵ *Zupu* (族谱) and *zongpu* (宗谱) are terms that are used interchangeably with *jiapu*.

⁶ *Singapore almanack and directory*. (1846-1869). Singapore: Straits Times Press. Call no.: RRARE 382.09595 STR. Microfilm no.: NL2363



All rights reserved. City Who's Who, 1982.

beyond business and community leaders to include civil servants and industry leaders. The 1948 directory of *Who's who* by Menon gives an alphabetical list of names, with place of origin, education, positions held before the war, social and community work and even recreational interests and hobbies. Photographs in black and white accompany some profiles. The *Who's who* of Singapore and Malaysia of the 1970s and the 1980s include a list of lecturers in tertiary institutions and private doctors besides civil servants, merchants, managers and royalty.

Life in the community

The middle-class was privileged with time and money and often joined clubs, societies, hobby groups and communities. Newsletters and commemoratives from these organisations sometimes carry reports of individual contributions. The 90th anniversary commemorative of the scouts⁷ in Singapore is an example of a community publication which profiles key contributors. Some social clubs such as the Singapore Cricket Club (1852), the Swiss Club (1871), the Singapore Recreation Club (1883), and the Singapore Island Country Club (1891) date back to the 19th century. Unfortunately, although these early club commemoratives provide useful information on the happenings and people in their organisations, newsletters and magazines from the 19th century are scant. Nevertheless, looking up articles produced by these clubs or referring to their older members

may prove useful as in the examples of the Peranakan Association and the Association of British Malaya.

Although our ancestors often came with little but the clothes on their backs, some succeeded, through sheer perseverance and good luck. A number have given their wealth and time back to community and religious institutions. The philanthropist who donated generously to community causes would have had his name engraved on temple steeles or remembered in clan association records. The bibliography on the publications of the Singapore Chinese Clan Associations⁸ references holdings on clan associations that are in the National Library, the National Archives, the Nanyang Technological University, the National University of Singapore, among other institutions. Churches also published newsletters on the contributions of ordinary people. They include the *Methodist Message*⁹, *St Andrews' Outlook*¹⁰ and the *Diocesan Digest*.¹¹

School records are another rich resource. These include school magazines, commemorative and souvenir publications. Besides class photographs of teachers and students, these publications also highlight the academic, sporting and leadership accomplishments of their students. The National Library has school magazines mainly from the 1960s onwards, an example of which is the *Cedar Magazine*. A school with a long history like the Raffles Institution, has magazines dating back to the 1880s.¹² Many established schools also have their own archives or may even have uploaded some school records and photographs online. Schools affiliated with religious groups such as churches, temples and mosques often have descriptive accounts of school events and their participants in their respective religious publications.

Gateway to genealogy research

The National Library has several reference publications that provide pointers on resources and approaches to constructing family trees. For instance, Foy's *Family history for beginners* (2011) gives concrete yet simple steps to genealogical research while Smolenyak's *Who do you think you are?* (2009) shows examples of actual family trees and how to go about piecing one. Skulnick's and Moorhead's *500 brickwall solutions to genealogy problems* (2003) along with its sister edition *More brickwall solutions to genealogy problems* (2004) written for family historians who faced brickwalls in their research, offers strategies on overcoming deadends. For a local perspective, the National Library has its own compilations and guides of materials in its holdings, ranging from the introductory resource guide entitled *Tracing your family history* (2003) which gives a good

⁷ Tan's *Scouting in Singapore: 1920 – 2000*.

⁸ The Singapore Chinese Clan Associations resource guide is available at <http://libguides.nl.sg/ChineseClans>

⁹ For example the *Methodist Message*, previously titled the *Malayan Message*, gives interesting accounts of individuals and their accomplishments, positions held at church, contributions made and sometimes even a profile.

¹⁰ This is the annual newsletter of the Presbyterian church in Southeast Asia dating from 1912.

¹¹ A newsletter of the Anglican Church in Singapore that began at the turn of the 20th century.

¹² The library has copies of *The Rafflesian* from 1887 and of *St Andrews' School Up and On* from 1928 onwards. All early versions are accessible through microfilm. The centenary and souvenir publications of these schools also provide rich details. These are available on shelf.



Old magazines of Singapore schools are among the resources used in tracing people and events. All rights reserved. National Library Board, 2012.

survey of key resources, to the more extensive *Sources on family history* (2008) by Kartini Saparudin which covers resource materials by genre and by key racial groups. Ng Hui Ling has also compiled an extensive library guide on Chinese genealogy research.¹³

The internet can be a bountiful resource for the family historian. Books such as Marelli's *@ home with your ancestors.com* (2007) and *Family history on the net* (2007) offer useful genealogy-related links and websites.

A popular first-stop for genealogy research on the web is FamilySearch,¹⁴ one of the largest genealogy services in the world, with millions of family history records available free online. FamilySearch is a service provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They also run over 4,500 family history centres in 70 countries including a chapter on Singapore, which may be worth a visit. Unfortunately much of the rich family history found on the net is mainly for non-Asians. However, there are some websites that serve the local community. One such site is the portal of the National Archives of Singapore at <http://www.a2o.com.sg>. It is a gateway to the records, photographs, maps and private collections of the archives in Singapore. To get the most out of its extensive records, a visit to the National Archives is a definite must as a number of its records are not available online

in full-text. Another key organisation is the newly formed Genealogy Society Singapore¹⁵ which has helped a number of Singaporeans to trace their roots all the way back to Xiamen and Hainan.

Ghosts in the attic

Every family has skeletons and secrets – an illegitimate son, an adopted child, a criminal record, poverty or insanity. Yet these members may prove most vital to the building of one's family tree. It is from these family members that records may be uncovered as documentation is often required for cases of adoption and insanity, or appeals for financial support.

Each family has tales of bravado, tragedy and bliss waiting to be shared and retold. There are publications that guide researchers on publishing their family stories. They include Titford's *Writing up your family history* (2003) and Carmack's *You can write your family history* (2003).

Published family histories are the nuts and bolts of genealogical research. Particularly useful for their insights into Malayan families are family histories such as Lim's *Myth and reality* (1988) and Ong's *Chew Boon Lay* (2002), which includes four charts on their extensive family tree. The Shepherdson family made headlines when they published their genealogy

¹³ The *Genealogy research* resources is available at <http://libguides.nl.sg/genealogy>

¹⁴ FamilySearch is accessible at <http://www.familysearch.org>

¹⁵ This organisation's website can be accessed online at <http://www.singaporegenealogy.org>

仁記山旧塚調查表

PARTICULARS OF GRAVES AT REDHILL CEMETERY.

NAME	SEX	DATE BURIED	籍貫	DESCENDENTS
名	性別	埋葬日期	籍貫	墓碑上子孫姓名
良娘	女	光緒丙申年	南靖	孝女, 秋娘,
傑	男	光緒廿一年荔月	安溪	—
鐵	男	光緒乙酉年	何厝	—
生	男	民國壬戌年	東山	孝男, 文堂, 文貴,
初	男	光緒十五年	龍溪	—
得	男	光緒廿七年	白礁	—
進	男	光緒十九年	板橋	—
漏	男	己未年正月	霞東	男, 添才, 福德, 女, 吉吉,
粒	男	光緒十一年五月八	永春	男, 天送,

Extract from the RedHill Cemetery Records. From the Kuan Swee Huat Donor Collection. All rights reserved. Kuan Swee Huat and the National Library Board Singapore, 2010.

Journey to the Straits (2003) that spanned three centuries from their earliest known ancestor who travelled beyond the British shores to Southeast Asia. They were even featured in an exhibition on family history research at the National Library. The family followed up with another book *The great genealogical search* (2010) which records their research experience from traditional repositories such as archives and libraries as well as modern tools, in particular the internet and DNA matching. A member of the Shepherdson family also published her personal adventure of tracing one's family in *Looking back* (2006). These three publications demonstrate the various approaches of tracing one's family history, proven techniques and experiences, and how the interplay of memories and records reconstructed the lives of people.

The Shepherdson story is an example of family history coming full-circle, where the

research bore fruit in the form of more books and records to serve other family historians. Although the process of researching and documenting a family tree may seem never-ending, one can be encouraged by fellow sojourners and those who have found their roots through the resources at the National Library.

Acknowledgements

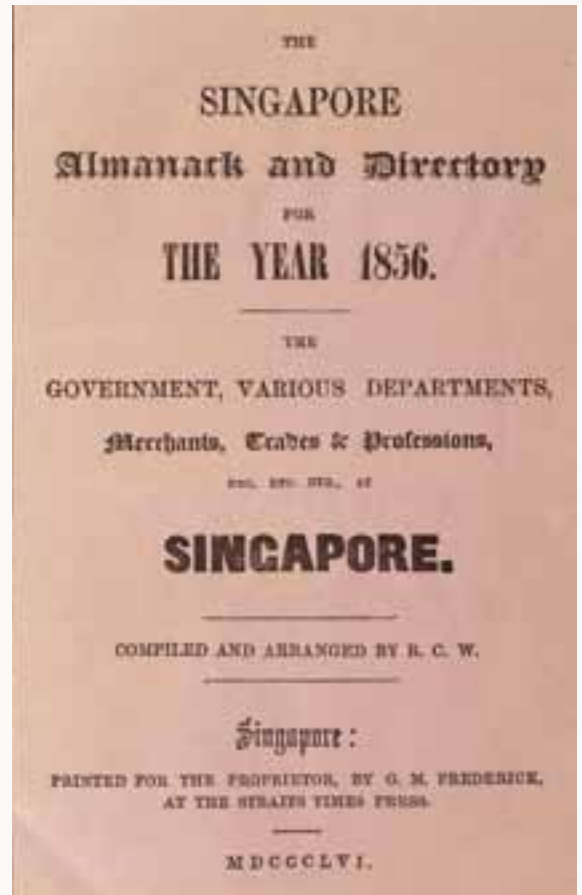
The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Mr Lai Yeen Pong, Consultant, National Library Board, and Miss Alicia Yeo, Manager, National Library Group, in reviewing this paper.

About the author

Bonny Tan is a Senior Librarian with the National Library Heritage division. She is the compiler of *A Baba bibliography* (2007) and *An orientalist's treasure trove of Malaya and beyond: Catalogue of Gibson-Hill Collection at the National Library Singapore* (2008) and is a regular contributor to *BiblioAsia* and Singapore Infopedia, NLB's online encyclopaedia on Singapore.

REFERENCES

- 福建会馆。(1948)。《福建会馆磷记山, 老山, 羔丕山地租部, 民国三十七年四月份立》。未出版手稿。Call no.: RRARE 333.5095957 FJH Microfilm no.: NL30213
- 黄美萍, 钟伟耀, 林永美 (编者)。(2007)。《新加坡宗乡会馆出版书刊目录 = *A bibliography on the publications of Singapore Chinese Clan Associations*》。新加坡: 新加坡国家图书馆管理局。Call no.: 016.95957 BIB-[LIB]. Also available from <http://libguides.nl.sg/ChineseClans>
- 新加坡福建会馆。(1963)。《新加坡福建会馆仁记山逐日迁冢纪录底, 自一九六三年五月十八日起至[一九六三年六月十七日], No. 4230 至8250》。未出版手稿。Call no.: RRARE 929.5095957 XJP. Microfilm no.: NL30216
- 新加坡福建会馆。(1965)。《新加坡福建会馆磷记山逐日迁冢纪录底, 自一九六三年七月十九日至[一九六五年三月十三日], No.12251 to [16915]》。未出版手稿。Call no.: RRARE 929.5095957 XJP. Microfilm no.: NL30217
- 500 brickwall solutions to genealogy problems*. (2003). Toronto: Moorshead Magazines. Call no.: R 929.1072 FIV
- Carmack, S. D. (2003). *You can write your family history*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books. Call no.: 808.06692 CAR
- Church of England, Diocese of Singapore. (194-). *Diocesan digest: The Diocese of Singapore*. Singapore: Church of England, Diocese of Singapore. Call no.: RSING 283.5957 DD
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2012). *FamilySearch*. Retrieved June 19, 2012, from <http://www.familysearch.org>
- Family history on the net*. (2007). Newbury: Countryside Books. Call no.: R 929.102854678 FHON
- Foy, K. (2011). *Family history for beginners*. Stroud, Gloucester: History Press. Call no.: R 929.1072 FOY
- Genealogy Society Singapore. (2012). *Genealogy Society Singapore*. Retrieved June 19, 2012, from <http://www.singaporegenealogy.org>
- Hameedah M. I. & Ong, E. C. (2003). *Tracing your family history*. Retrieved June 19, 2012, from <http://infopedia.nl.sg/Research/details/GenealogyPathfinder.html>
- Harfield, A. G. (1979). *Fort Canning Cemetery, Singapore*. [s.l.: s. n.]: British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia. Call no.: RCL05 929.5095957 HAR. Microfilm no.: NL17974
- Harfield, A. G. (1988). *Early cemeteries in Singapore*. London: British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia. Call no.: RSING 929.5095957 HAR
- Lim, P. H. P. (1998). *Myth and reality: Researching the Huang genealogies*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Call no.: RSING 929.108995105957 LIM
- Lim, P. H. P. (2005). *The family book of Wong Ah Fook: A continuation of the genealogy of Wenming*. Singapore: P. Lim P. H. And Lim S. G. Call no.: RCL05 929.2095957 FAM. Microfilm no.: NL 31380
- Marelli, D. (2007). *@home with your ancestors.com: How to research family history using the internet*. Oxford: How To Books. Call no.: 929.102854678 MAR
- Methodist Church. (1952-). *The Methodist Message*. Singapore: Methodist Church. Call no.: RSING 287.05 MM
- National Archives of Singapore. (2005). a2o. Retrieved June 19, 2012, from <http://www.a2o.com.sg>
- Ng, H. L. (2011). *Genealogy research resources*. Retrieved June 16, 2012, from <http://libguides.nl.sg/genealogy>
- Ong C. I. (Compiler), Chew, K. C. & Chew, E. (Eds.). (2002). *Chew Boon Lay: A family traces its history: A family album*. Singapore: Ong Chwee Im. Call no.: SING 929.2095957 CHE
- Ong, C. I. (2006). *The journey from White Rock: The Ong Chong Chew family tree*. Singapore: Ong Chwee Im. Call no.: RSING 929.2095957 ONG
- The Peranakan Association newsletter*. (1995-). Singapore: The Peranakan Association. Call no.: RSING 305.895105957 PAN
- Presbyterian Church in Malaya. (1912-). *Saint Andrew's outlook: Annual record of the Presbyterian Church in Malaya, Sumatra, Burma and Siam*. Singapore: Presbyterian Church in Malaya. Microfiche no.: MFC NL0009/102 and MFC NL0036/010
- Saparudin, K. (2008). *Sources on family history: A select bibliography*. Singapore: National Library Singapore. Call no.: RSING 016.9292095957 LEE. Also available from <http://sgebooks.nl.sg/detail/77a2f622-b771-4759-ae1d-b93a517009f3.aspx>
- Schweizer-Iten, H. (1981). *One hundred years of the Swiss Club and the Swiss community in Singapore, 1871-1971*. Singapore: The Swiss Club. Call no.: RSING 367.95957 SCH
- Scully-Shepherdson, M. (2006). *Looking back: A family history discovered and remembered*. Singapore: Martha Scully-Shepherdson. Call no.: RSING 929.2095957 SCU
- Shepherdson, K. L. & Shepherdson, P. J. (2003). *Journey to the Straits: The Shepherdson story*. Singapore: Shepherdson Family. Call no.: RSING 929.2095957 SHE
- Shepherdson, K. L., Shepherdson, P. J. & D'Almeida, K. (2010). *The great genealogical search: A remarkable story of how one family traced its roots in the East Indies and discovered its British ancestry*. Singapore: Straits Consultancy & Pub. Call no.: RSING 929.107205957 SHE
- Skulnick, M. & Moorshead, V. (2004). *More brickwall solutions to genealogy problems*. Toronto: Family Chronicle Magazine. Call no.: R 929.1072 MOR
- Smolenyak, M. (2009). *Who do you think you are?: The essential guide to tracing your family history*. New York: Viking. Call no.: 929.1072 SMO
- Stallwood, H. Q. (1912, June). *The old cemetery on Fort Canning, Singapore:*



All rights reserved. The British Library and the National Library Board, Singapore.

- with a plan and four plates*. Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 61, pp. 77 – 126. Call no.: RRARE 959.5 JMBRAS
- Tan, K. (2002). *Scouting in Singapore: 1920 – 2000*. Singapore: Singapore Scout Association and National Archives of Singapore. Call no.: SING 369.43095957 TAN
- Taylor, M. A. (2001). *Preserving your family photographs: How to organize, present, and restore your precious family images*. Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books. Call no.: 771.46 TAY
- Titford, J. (2003). *Writing up your family history: A do-it-yourself guide*. Newbury, Berkshire: Countryside Books. Call no.: 808.0669291 TIT
- Verde, M. L. (2000). *Touching tomorrow: How to interview your loved ones to capture a lifetime of memories on video or audio*. New York: Fireside. Call no.: RCL05 929.1 LOV
- Who's who in Singapore 1981/82*. (1982). Singapore: City Who's Who. Call no.: RSING 920.05057 WWS



一名写信人笔录客人所言。如不识字，海外华人可以请写信人代写家书。为了顾客的方便，有些民信局还免费提供这类服务。
Source: MICA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

新加坡民信业的起源、运作与历史

李梅瑜

新加坡国家图书馆于2012年9月13日至2013年1月27日在馆内7楼举办《家书抵万金：新加坡侨批文化展》。展览内容分为两个部分。

第一部分介绍新加坡民信业的历史；第二部分则通过19世纪末到1970年代，由新加坡寄往中国和中国的回信，探讨新加坡华人的早期历史。部分展出信件由许少全先生赠予国家图书馆。这篇文章摘自第一部分，特转载在此以供读者阅读。

定义

民信局，也称银信局是专门提供递送侨批服务的商业机构。侨批，是海外华人寄给国内家眷的书信和汇款的合称，又称银信。所以，民信局的存在就如今天的银行和邮局二合一后的机构。这种行业曾盛行于银行和邮局体系尚未完善的时代，也曾在战后发展成新加坡最繁荣的行业。但不久后却因种种原因而式微，所扮演的历史角色也逐渐被日趋完善的金融与邮政业所取代。

起源

民信局的诞生是因为海外华侨需要汇钱和寄家书回乡，却无奈于没有任何官方渠道能够提供类似的服务。因此民信局是社会需求的产物，而这种社会需求的产生与华人的移民史息息相关。

早在公元前300年已有华人移居东南亚¹的记载。²在宋朝鼓励海外贸易（约十三世纪）和明朝的官方航海政策（约十五世纪）下曾进入一段繁忙期。十八世纪至十九世纪的四、五十年代，暹罗成为中国海外造船业的中心，也让中国船商穿梭于东南亚的海上贸易。³东南亚各处曾多次排华事件。所以当莱佛士将新加坡设为欢迎各国船商的自由港时，新加坡不单为华人提供了另一个商业机会，还相对保证了自身的安全与经济方面的保障。另外，英殖民政府鼓励大量的劳工移民以进行内陆开垦或其他劳役工作。而与此同时，中国政治局势动荡不安，又促使华侨远走海外，寻找生计，新加坡因此成功吸引了许多华人到来。

后来新加坡的华人以福建、广东、潮州、客家和海南籍居多。他们大部分都是单枪匹马南下讨生

活，有者在中国家乡留有家眷，有者则在此落地生根、娶妻生子，但总会定期汇家用和回中国探亲。尤其当时中国内部经济与政治情况不稳定，华侨汇款回家偿还债务或抚养家小的需要变得更加迫切。

由于早期资讯与金融系统尚未发达，海外华侨寄往家乡的侨批一开始是通过熟识的同乡带回。随着旅居海外的华侨人数增加，提供这类服务或专门办理侨批的民间渠道以“水客”和“民信局”的形式相继出现。而新加坡因其地理优势，周边地区的侨批往往都经此地中转，使新加坡成为东南亚侨批的区域中转中心。

运作方式

民信业的运作方式与邮局和银行业的发展有关，大致可以分为三个阶段。第一阶段属于邮局和银行业不存在或不成熟时期，民间渠道以水客代为提供递送侨批的服务。

水客是帆船时代进行海内外贸易的小贩。他们从中国带些丝绸、茶叶等货物到国外出售，再从国外带回香料等物前来贩卖，以获厚利。海外华侨便托其顺带银信给家乡亲人。这些水客大多以寄宿的客店作为收集侨批的据点，而办理时分为两类。第一类是原银原信带回中国交付收款人。第二类是利用侨汇，先就地采办洋货，回国之后变卖洋货。所得的款项分发侨批汇款，并从中牟利，生意的盈亏与汇款人无关。水客必须取得收款人的回信带回给汇款人才算完成整个作业流程。这种经营模式仰赖的是水客的良好个人信用和人脉关系以及对侨居地和家乡两地环境的熟悉，从十七世纪一直延续到后来民信局经营为主的时代才慢慢式微。

第二个阶段属于民信局诞生的时代。早期的民信局营业手法与水客相似。唯一不同地是民信局会凭其经验与行内知识，委派可靠人士派送银信。如此一来，汇款人便无须担心血汗钱遭不良水客卷款而逃。除此之外，民信局也能够协助汇款人解决各种私人

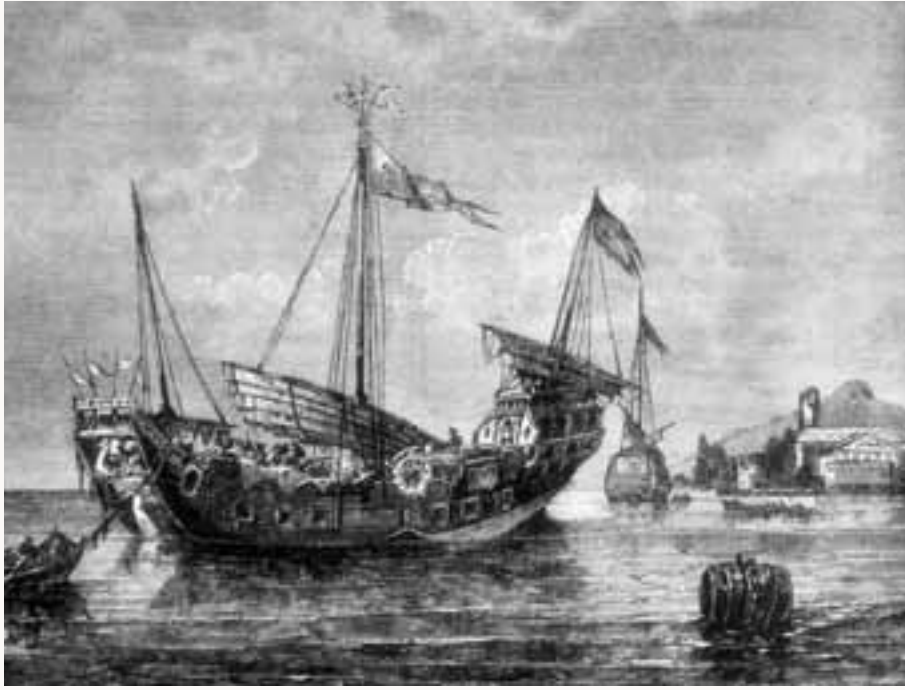
About the article

Money by mail to China: Dreams and struggles of early migrants was launched at the National Library on 13 September 2012. The exhibition, which will be on till 27 January 2013, traces the development of Chinese remittance agencies in Singapore, and showcases some of the unique remittance letters in the Koh Seow Chuan Donor Collection. The exhibition consists of two parts. The first introduces the history of Chinese remittance agencies in Singapore, and the second looks at the family history of the Chinese in Singapore through family letters sent between the late 1800s and the 1970s from Singapore to China and vice versa. Remittance agencies were once a common sight in Singapore. The first remittance agents can be traced back to the 17th century when traders known as *shui'ke* provided the service of carrying money and letters from overseas Chinese communities to China. They were later replaced by professional businesses known as remittance agencies. These were differentiated by the various dialect groups they served. The industry continued to flourish after World War II, entering into its golden age from 1945–1949. Over time, these remittance agencies lost out in the competition to banks and postal services.

¹ 这里采用的“东南亚”概念依照哈里逊在其著作《东南亚简史》所提。分为大陆上的东南亚（包括缅甸、暹罗、印度支那和马来亚）以及岛屿的东南亚（包括苏门答腊东向，再行北向西达菲律宾群岛）。

² 王康武著，张奕善译注《南洋华人简史》（台北市：水牛出版社，2002），页2。

³ 李业霖《中国帆船与早期的新加坡》，载《新加坡华族史论集》（星洲：南洋大学毕业生学会，1972），页3。



第一艘中国帆船于1821年从厦门直接到达新加坡。从此，每年西北气候风向南吹时（为十二月至三月），成群结队的中国帆船便出现于新加坡海面。这些帆船不但带来货品、商人、新客，还包括了家乡乡讯。当西北气候风向北吹时，帆船就准备回中国。新加坡华侨的侨批便是于其时被带回给亲人。一般每年只能往返二至四次。1845年后，新加坡与香港之间开辟了定期的邮轮，每月往返一次。Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

或汇款问题，提供更贴切的服务。民信业的运作方式逐渐变得更加可靠。

第三个阶段是邮电银行事业发达以后。这时期的新加坡民信局与之对应的中国国内民信局已发展成一个较为严密的组织机构，分别完成批款收集、头寸调拨、承转、派送解付四个环节。规模较大的民信局设有总行和分行，可以独立完成上述四个环节。民信局将总行设在南洋，负责前三个环节；分行则设在中国各市镇，接近华侨家乡的地方，负责最后一个环节。规模较小的民信局则与其他民信局合作完成整个运作流程。

到了二十世纪三十年代，东南亚华资银行在东南亚各主要商埠设立与民信局交叠的网络机构，参与侨批业务的经营，提高了民信业务的流转效率。此时民信局的汇款是既方便又安全了许多。信款由收款的民信局，分别通过邮局与银行寄出。国内民信局接收后，立即派人分发，既快速又有条不紊。⁴

新加坡民信业的兴旺

新加坡的民信局创办很早。据说最早一家是在源顺街(现今的直落亚逸街)一带，但确切的年份与地址已不可考。⁵1876年，英殖民政府曾开设一间华人小邮政局，并规定凡欲寄银信者，需通过此邮局办理手续。但紧接着，谣言散开，指责殖民政府企图统办邮政，增加剥削华侨的新途径。邮局开幕当天不只遭到罢市还发生了暴动事件。结果，新邮局被捣毁，警察被殴打，更有数人死于暴动。殖民政府的调查报告显示，此次谣言是由在新的民信局华人商人所造谣，并把这群商人缉拿，置于处分。⁶如果报告属实，可见当时新加坡的民信业应该已有相当的规模。

据统计，新加坡在1887年已有49家民信局。⁷新加坡民信局可分为福建帮、潮州帮、琼州帮、广东帮以及客家帮，而以前三帮的民信局较为活跃。⁸到了二十世纪三十年代，各帮民信局还成立了自己的公会组织以管理、规范和协调本帮民信业事宜。这种景象一直维持到1941年底，太平洋战争爆发为止。由于东南亚与中国之间的通讯中断，民信业因此进入停顿时期。日治时期，日本政府曾准许华侨通过台湾和日本银行汇款回中国。但汇款人数非常少，不久便取消了。⁹

1945年太平洋战争结束后，新加坡民信局恢复营业向政府商洽请求发给新执照。当时所登记的民信局共计有77家。由于战后汇率一时未定，新加坡华侨银行同年11月征得殖民政府同意后，先自行定汇率与收集侨批。紧接着，各民信局也开始全面收汇。但因官方汇率迟迟未定，汇款无法寄往中国，银行与民信局于1946年1月再次停止收汇。1946年3月，上海中央银行宣布了中国对外汇率，但所定汇率标准与实际情形相差甚远。殖民政府正式通汇后，民信局纷纷降低价格收取汇率，造成银行难与民信局竞争，华侨纷纷将侨批交给民信局寄出。

战后的1945至1948年是新加坡民信业的黄金时代。据统计，最高峰时期共计有二百余家民信局。新加坡民信业者甚至在1946年3月成立了“南洋中华汇业总会”。总会是各帮汇兑公会的最高领导机构，以扩大民信业务的联系，团结和协调各帮民信局为要义。第一届正会长是侨通行创办人林树彦先生。除新加坡民信局外，马来西亚各地同业参加者也很多。

新加坡民信业黄金时代的产生可归功于以下主要因素：

(一) 南洋侨批的枢纽

战后的新加坡依旧是东南亚侨批的重要中转站。周边地区如马来亚以及印度尼西亚等各地如没有民信局的，都要到新加坡寄批或由新加坡民信局派人定期到周边各埠收批；二是周边地区如果有设立代理局或分局也是以新加坡为中转中心；其三，距离新加坡较远，有设立民信局的华侨聚集地，与新加坡民信局建立代理或委任关系。这种合作关系不只方便邮政传递信件，还可以通过贸易来调拨侨汇头寸。¹⁰

(二) 战后侨批直线上升

战后，东南亚与中国一度中断的通讯终于恢复，再加上当时各地物价攀高，生活困苦，亲属于是急忙发信并汇款回国，了解亲人的状况，同时救济亲人。1945年十一月间，各银行和民信局规定以叻币五元三角八分兑国币一千元。一周之内，汇款数额已超过一万五千元，盈利方面则高达最少十五万元。许多商家见盈利丰厚，纷纷投入民信业。民信业因此火热起来，使其成为光复后最热门的生意。

(三) 汇款大量涌入香港

民信局向来以汇率的高低作为营业利润的由来。抗日战争时期，由于中国金融动摇，国币汇率日跌，民信局利用转换汇款方式套利：改为购汇港币，再转汇国币才拨款到国内派送。这种利用港币站稳，国币日跌的原理，进行套汇以获得可观利润的手法，到了战后

⁴ 柯木林《新加坡侨汇与民信业初探(1945-49)》(新加坡：南洋大学,1971),页4-8。

⁵ 同上，页4。

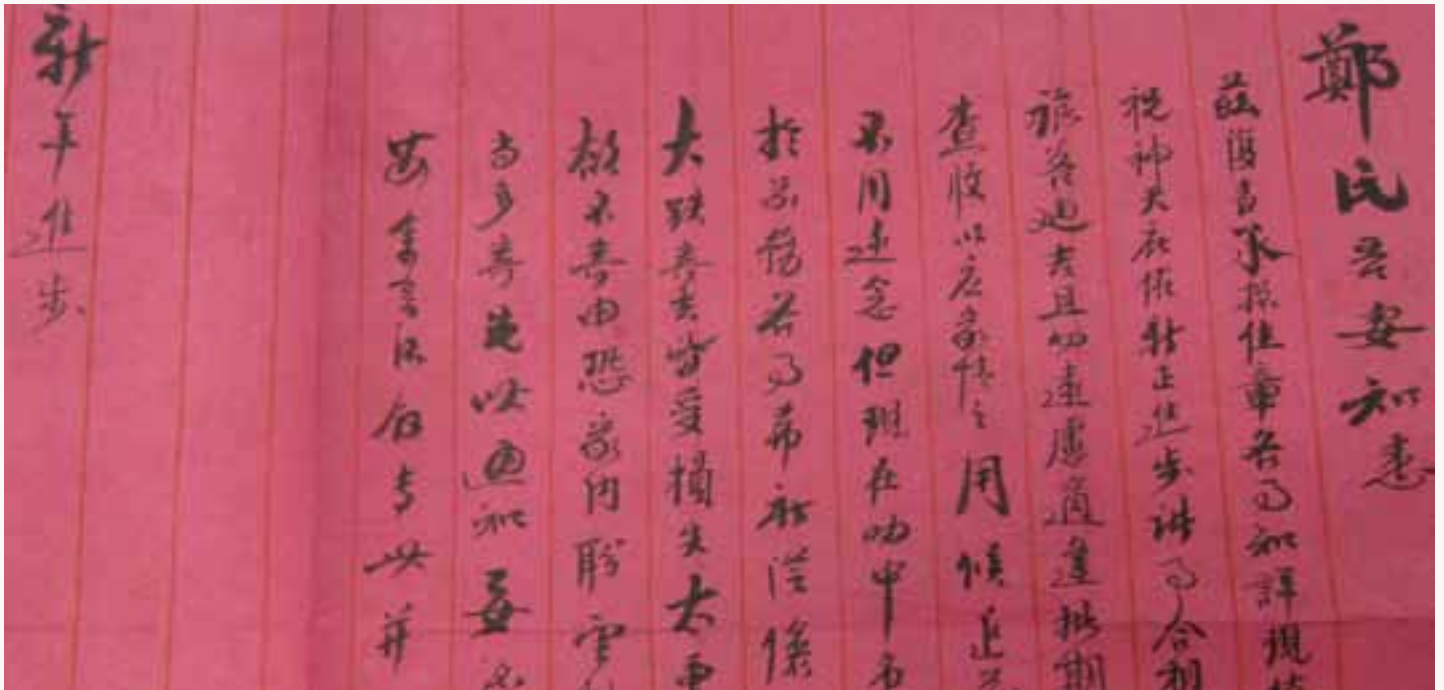
⁶ The Riot Reports. (1877, February 8). *Strait Times Overland Journal*, p. 3. Retrieved June 26, 2012, from NewspaperSG database.

⁷ 寒潭《华侨民信局小史》，载《南洋中华汇业总会年刊第一集》(新加坡：南洋中华汇业总会，1947)，页60。

⁸ 同注3，页68。

⁹ 同注3，页206。

¹⁰ 黄清海《浅谈新加坡侨批中心——新加坡中转侨批5例》，<http://www.chaorenwang.com/channel/pqwhyj/showdantai.asp?nos=1874>



侨批通常使用米白色信纸来书写。但如逢农历新年,可能用红色信纸。



信封背面除了盖印中国的邮戳,还有“花码”字的图案。“花码”字是早期华人在广泛使用阿拉伯数字书写之前所使用的数字符号,适用于直书的书写方式。

早期的信封并无一定的格式,到后来才慢慢演变成以上格式。这个信封就清楚地列明地址、款项、寄信人和收信人。

“花码”字与阿拉伯数字对照表

“花码”字	○ × 8 十 卅 卅久
阿拉伯数字	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



民信局一般集中在华人居住地区，如牛车水、海南街等。上为万益成信局摄于1963年图片。
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.



民信局一般会在五脚基上代理哪些地区的银信。图为“再和成伟记信局”。作者于2012年摄。All rights reserved. National Library Board, 2012.

可说是有过之而无不及。战后，民信局以香港为汇运中心，以叻币购汇港币，再以港币从黑市兑换国币。有些民信局甚至故意保留侨汇，等到国币黑市价低降后才付款，以猎取汇率低跌的巨利。许多民信业经营者成了暴发户。

(四) 官定汇率较之高昂

当时汇款的方式主要是通过民信局或银行。但是银行必须遵守官定汇率，而官定汇率又往往高于民信局所依据的汇率，因此不受欢迎。战后，银行的国币挂牌价可以比民信局的收汇价高出百分之十至二十。加上银行寄汇的时间一般上比民信局延缓，因此寄款者纷纷舍银行而取民信局，民信局几乎囊括全部侨汇。

新加坡民信业的衰微

民信业原本属于自由业，但殖民政府开始关注这行业的例闭和卷逃汇款等事件，以及其经济影响。起初，政府规定信局须领取执照，到后来还需有产业抵押担保，而且也更谨慎审查新设信局的申请书。到了1939年，英殖民政府为避免财资外流，规定每人每月不得超过叻币二百五十元的汇款。多则另外申请。除此之外，所有汇款必须经外汇统制官或指定银行批准才能汇出。在民信业的黄金时期（1946 - 1949），殖民政府也多次设定条例来管制民信业。这里提出在这三年内所颁布的主要条例。

1946年再次通汇后的同时，殖民政府也设置了以下条例：（一）汇款须由银行或指定民信局汇寄；（二）向对方任何一个家庭，每月最高汇款为45叻币；（三）对于任何一个家庭，仅容一人汇款；（四）汇款须用于维持家庭，不能作为其他用途。汇款人之所有汇款须由同一银行或民信局汇寄。所有汇款详情，



1946年，南洋中华汇业总会成立时的合照。Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

均交予外汇统制官。违例者，处以三年徒刑及罚款一万元。

1946至1949年之间，国币一日数贬，中国出现恶性通货膨胀。中国政府订定的外汇牌价与市场兑换的黑市行情相差太大，民信局纷纷大量抢购外汇，造成国币贬值加剧。殖民政府在1946和1948年分别颁布了两项限制民信业的法令，即（一）取消侨汇的自由兑换，使侨汇归公，以巩固国币价值；（二）不准委托没有执照的商号代理银信。但这两项法令经南洋中华汇业总会与殖民政府交涉后取消。

1948年10月，殖民政府再次颁布了《民信局须再申请领取执照》的详细条文，指明执照现分为两类。第一类执照可直接将所收银信寄回中国，但须缴付纳保证金一万元，执照费为每年二百五十元。第二类执照只能将所收银信交给持有第一类执照的民信局代为寄往中国，保证金为二千元，每年执照费一百元。所有民信局都必须坚守在七日内汇出汇款的条规，违规者将被取消执照，甚至被提控。处罚徒刑不超过三年，或罚款不超过一万元，或两者兼施。以上条例公布后，立刻引起各帮民信局的反对。南洋中华汇业总会与外汇统制官请求撤消或更改条例均无效。于是，林树彦先生成立“中华汇业股份有限公司”，为会员承担保证金，其余半数以信用担保。新加坡民信业经过一系列的外汇管制后，在营业上渐渐大不如前。¹¹

1949年10月，中华人民共和国成立，华侨对新政府持观望态度。该年殖民政府也颁布了“金融条例”，对民信业的限制更为严厉。民信业日趋衰落。到1970年代，新加坡仅剩约六十家民信局。

造成新加坡民信业衰微的主要原因，除了以上

所提到的外汇管制外，还包括：（一）华族人口结构的改变；（二）人民政府的成立。

（一）华族人口结构的改变

新加坡开埠至1931年的华族人口增加是因为移民。然而1930年移民条例改变和施行后，妇女大量南来，而男性移民因受制而减少；男女移民比例逐渐平衡，更多华侨也开始在新加坡落地生根，侨生人数增加。侨生对中国认识较浅薄，和家乡亲人的交往甚少，感情较疏，因此汇款的可能性也较小。民信业所诞生的社会根源渐渐逝去。

（二）人民政府的成立

1949年，人民政府成立以后，使用全国通行的人民币。人民币币值的稳定造成利用转换汇款套利的方法不如早前的利润来得高。新政府也制定了一系列民信业管理政策，以打击违法经营黑市侨汇。另外，华侨慑于新政府的土地政策，对于向国内投掷或购买不动产裹足不前，也造成侨汇数量再次下滑。

民信业遭受以上种种打击，从此一蹶不振。自行结束者比比皆是，幸存者业务则大不如前或转行经营其他生意。¹²到后期，银行和邮局渐渐取代了民信局的位置。

¹¹ 同注3, 页20-31。

¹² 同注3, 页33, 43。

参考书目

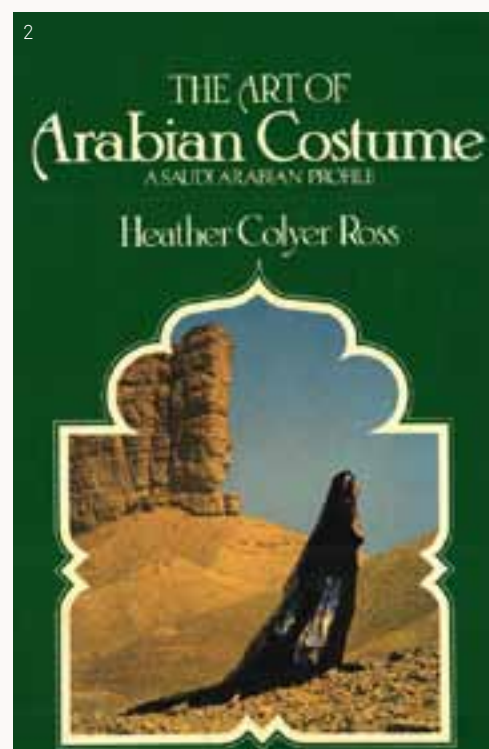
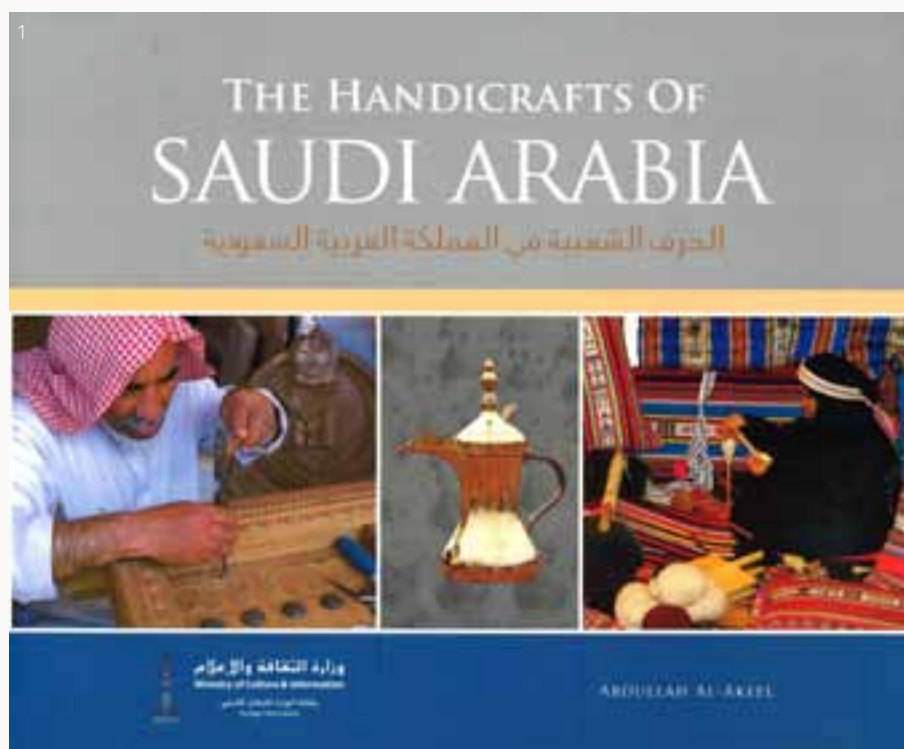
- 黄清海(2010年10月21日)。《浅谈新加坡侨批中心——新加坡中转侨批5例》。载于2012年6月26日，自<http://www.chaorenwang.com/channel/qphwyj/showdantai.asp?nos=1874>。
- 柯木林(1957)。《星马侨汇与民信业》，载许云樵等编《星马通鉴》。新加坡：世界书局，页624-633。索书号：RCLOS 959.5 DIR
- 柯木林(1971)。《新加坡侨汇与民信业初探(1945-49)》。新加坡：南洋大学。索书号：RSING 383.495957 KML
- 柯木林、吴振强编(1972)。《新加坡华族史论集》。星洲：南洋大学毕业生协会。索书号：RSING 325.251095957 KML
- 李小燕(2008)。《新加坡民信业的兴衰》，载《南洋学报》第六十二卷，页115-126。索书号：RSING 959.005 JSSS v. 62
- 许茂春(2008)。《东南亚华人与侨批》。泰国：许茂春。索书号：RSEA 959.004951 KOS
- 王虞武著，张奕善译注(2002)。《南洋华人简史》。台北市：水牛出版社。索书号：RSEA 959.004951 WGW

About the author

Lee Mei-yu is a Librarian with the National Library Heritage division. She is the curator for the *Money by mail to China: Dreams and struggles of early migrants* exhibition.

NLB-Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission collaboration

The Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission in Singapore was open in 2008 under the umbrella of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Singapore to strengthen the friendly relations between Saudi Arabia and Singapore. Since its establishment, the Cultural Mission has organised more than 10 cultural visits between the two countries and supported numerous cultural and educational events by Singapore organisations. The Cultural Mission has also facilitated joint scientific research between the universities of both countries.

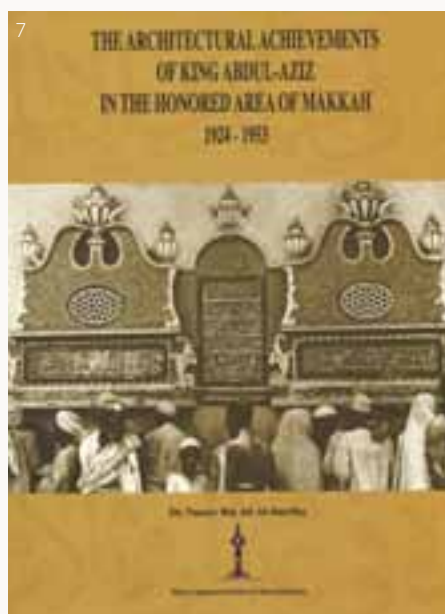
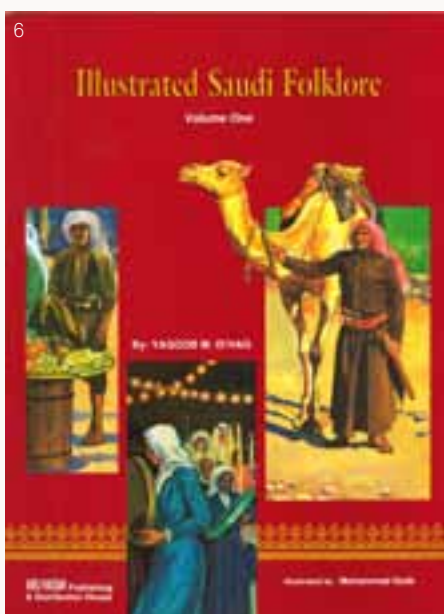
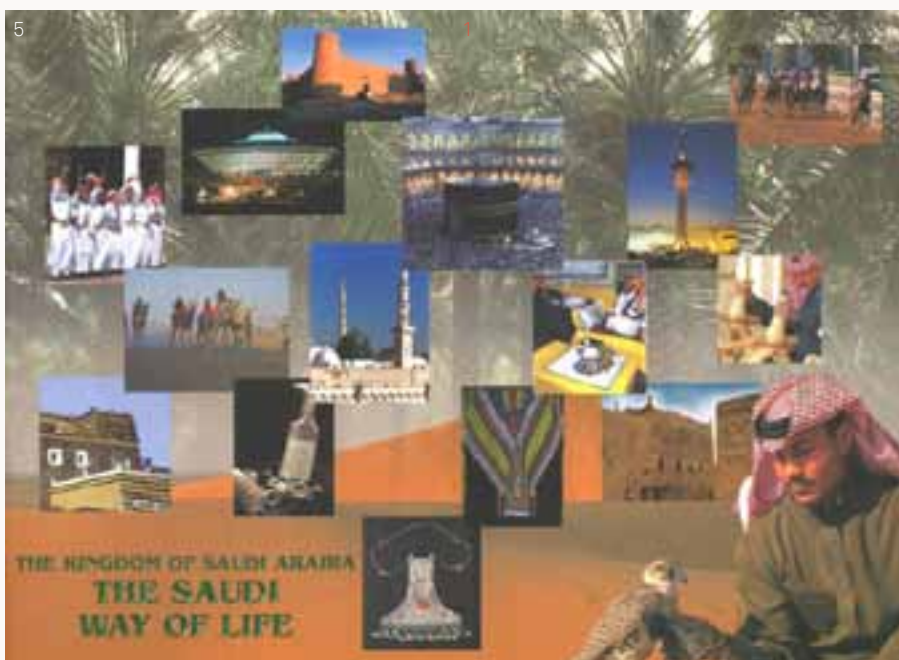
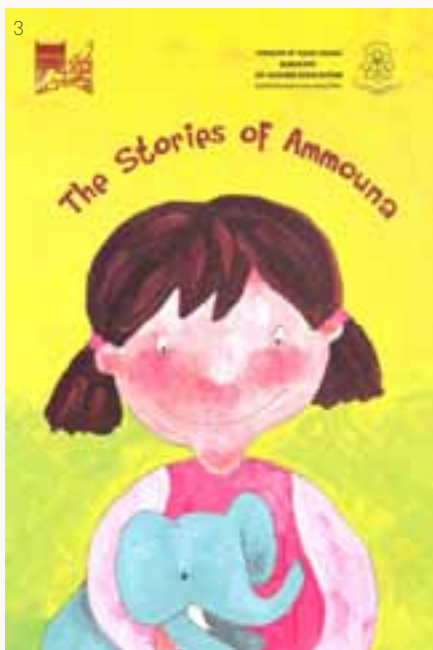


Building on these warm ties and mutual exchanges, the Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission (SACM) and the National Library Board (NLB) of Singapore signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in September 2012 to provide a framework for closer collaboration. This tie-up will see a collection of 200 publications donated to NLB by SACM. To mark the start of this partnership, a series of programmes for the public is organised to showcase the arts and culture of Saudi Arabia. The activities run from September 2012 to August 2013, and are jointly curated by the Saudi Arabia Cultural Office and NLB. This synergy serves to promote greater sharing of resources, expertise and networks for content creation on Saudi Arabia. The proposed line-up of events is planned around significant occasions such as, Saudi Arabia Day, Saudi Arabia's Student Day, the International Summit of the Book and the International Federation of

Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) World Library and Information Congress (WLIC).

Objectives of donated collection

- To show the diverse and fascinating crafts, arts, music, customs, and traditions of Saudi Arabia
- To present to readers the rich history and heritage of Saudi Arabia, including the country's pre-Islamic history
- To introduce some of the unique places and landmarks in Saudi Arabia
- To give an academic overview of the country
- To provide information on Saudi Arabia to those who wish to visit and learn more about the country



Genres and subjects in the collection

The Saudi Arabia collection covers the following genres:

1. Children's fiction

The children's fiction collection comprises books for readers of all ages, with genres ranging from fantasy to adventure. A highly acclaimed book in the collection is *Let's play* by Halla Bint Khalid who is also the first Saudi female author and illustrator.

2. Adult fiction

The collection comprises novels which include the best in literature and fantasy.

3. Autobiography and biography

These include new and bestselling works of Saudi leaders and prominent figures.

4. Arts, culture and photography

This category consists of books on the arts, history and culture of Saudi Arabia, as well as photographic works on Saudi Arabia.

5. Academic journals

The journals cover topics on Science and Technology, Medicine, Political Science, Social Science, Education, Public Administration, Environment, Islam, History, Design and Architecture, Geography, Psychology, Economics, and Language & Literature.

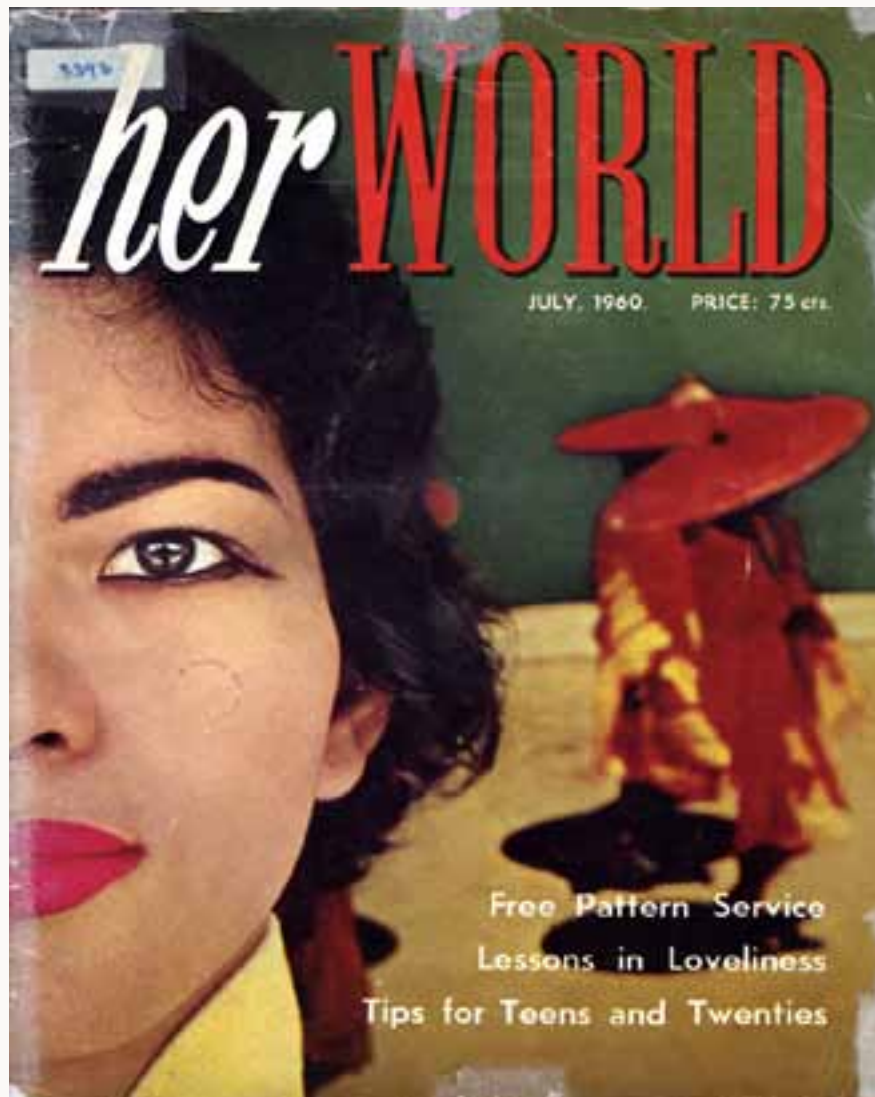
This article is contributed by the Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Singapore.

1. All rights reserved. Ministry of Culture and Information, 2009. 2. All rights reserved. [s.n.], 1981. 3. All rights reserved. Ministry of Higher Education, 2010. 4. All rights reserved. Dar Jerboa Children's Publisher, 2009. 5. All rights reserved. Ministry of Information and External Information, 2010. 6. All rights reserved. Abu Hasan Publishing and Distribution House, 1995. 7. All rights reserved. Ministry of Culture and Information, 2007.

iremembermagazines: our love affair with magazines

Barbara Quek

In this digital age, the love for print magazines still thrives as a reading format to delight readers who browse, borrow, or even buy copies of their own. Magazines appeal to readers through visuals and text, offering many hours of reading pleasure.



Debut issue of *Her World*, the first locally produced woman's magazine for Singapore readers. All rights reserved. Singapore Press Holdings, 1960.

This year alone saw the launch of new magazines in Singapore, such as *Her World Fit & Fab* (SPH Magazines), *August Woman* (Burda Singapore), *Esquire Singapore* (Mongoose Publishing), *Nylon Singapore* (MPG Media), and *EX* (Expatriate Living Publications).

The *iremembermagazines* exhibition is a celebration of magazines, taking older Singaporeans down memory lane as they revisit the magazines they used to enjoy. The exhibits also offer younger Singaporeans fascinating and surprising glimpses of what life was like in days gone by.

Drawing from the National Library Legal Deposit collection, this exhibition presents the extensive variety of magazines that were published in Singapore since the 1950s, reflecting the kaleidoscope of interests, passions, cultures, hobbies and artistic endeavours of Singaporeans through the decades. These magazines highlight too, the richness and diversity of Singapore's social and cultural history, and the multicultural and multilingual heritage of her people. The exhibits also show how magazines have evolved over the years, vividly capturing the energy and spirit of their times.

iremembermagazines is a thematic series of exhibitions on Singapore magazines. It was launched with the theme of "The First Issue", which showcases the very first issues of magazines that were published in Singapore. Some of these magazines – such as *Her World* and *Female* – have impressively stood the test of time and are still enjoyed by Singaporeans today, while others have ceased publication, changed publisher or title.

Her World, Singapore's pioneer magazine for women, was launched in July of 1960, and continues to reign as one of the most popular and recognised magazines in Singapore today. The inaugural issue on display carries features like "Family planning in Singapore" and "What my country means to me". From Burmese shampoo rituals, suggestions on how to dress right for campus, fiction short stories, recipes, tips on home décor to instructions on petcare, there was something for every woman – including mothers and teenage girls.



Magazines have come a long way from these early issues published in Singapore. All rights reserved. National Library Board, 2012.

Female is another magazine that is still loved and enjoyed by women in Singapore today. The very colourful first issue contains interesting features on health, the vibrant styles of the 1970s, a beautiful home in Frankel Estate, and articles on motherhood and issues of working women.

The perennial interest in health is reflected way back in 1956 in the first issue of the Chinese magazine 健康生活 (*Sound Health*), which provides information on healthy living, and highlights local and international health concerns, with a focus on traditional Chinese medicine.

Published in 1959, Malay magazine *Pelita* was a platform for literary and artistic expression in Malaya, and features interesting articles on local artists and their paintings.

திரைமலர் (*Thiraimalar*), first published in 1961, was a Tamil magazine that covers film news, movie reviews and write-ups on film personalities.

Subsequent displays will highlight other themes such as beauty, style & fashion, popular culture, leisure & living, and the arts.

The magazines on display in the four official languages are truly gems of Singapore's heritage, carefully preserved over the years. Do take this rare opportunity to view and enjoy this exhibition. Readers who have fond recollections of their favourite magazines can also contribute their memories to the Singapore Memory Portal at <http://www.singaporememory.sg>

Acknowledgements

The iremembermagazines: our love affair with magazines exhibition is generously sponsored by Singapore Press Holdings (SPH), and was launched on 10 September 2012 at the Central Public Library. Copyright to the magazine covers is owned by the respective publishing companies.

About the author

Barbara Quek is a Senior Librarian from the National Library Heritage Division. She worked in the SAFTI Military Institute Library from 1995 to 2006. Prior to that, she was an assistant editor for *Pointer* journal, editor for *Pioneer* magazine in the Ministry of Defence. She co-authored the research paper "The value of print literacy in the education of young children in Singapore" which was published in *The international journal of the book*, Volume 1 (2003).

Legal Deposit is a national library function practised in many countries to preserve a nation's published heritage for posterity. This statutory obligation is currently mandated under the National Library Board Act – Chapter 197 No. 5 of 1995 at Part II, Section 10. It requires all publishers (individuals and organisations, commercial and non-commercial) to deposit two copies of publications that are produced and released in Singapore for sale or public distribution. Through Legal Deposit, Singapore-published materials in all formats are collected from the past, present to the future. More information is available at <http://deposit.nl.sg>

Uniquely Singaporean memories

Stephanie Pee

What do you remember about Singapore? Are they bus tickets and transit-link cards; childhood games such as zero point, five stones or shopping at Yaohan and Oriental Emporium? When we go back to our past, we discover many shared memories of a time when wanton mee was five cents, cinemas were open-air, and bathing suits covered a lot more.



Launched in 2011, the Singapore Memory Project (SMP) aims to collect five million personal memories from Singaporeans by 2015, the year the country turns 50. The project ambitiously seeks to document the heart of a nation, curate shared experiences, and remind us that we have much more in common than we realise.

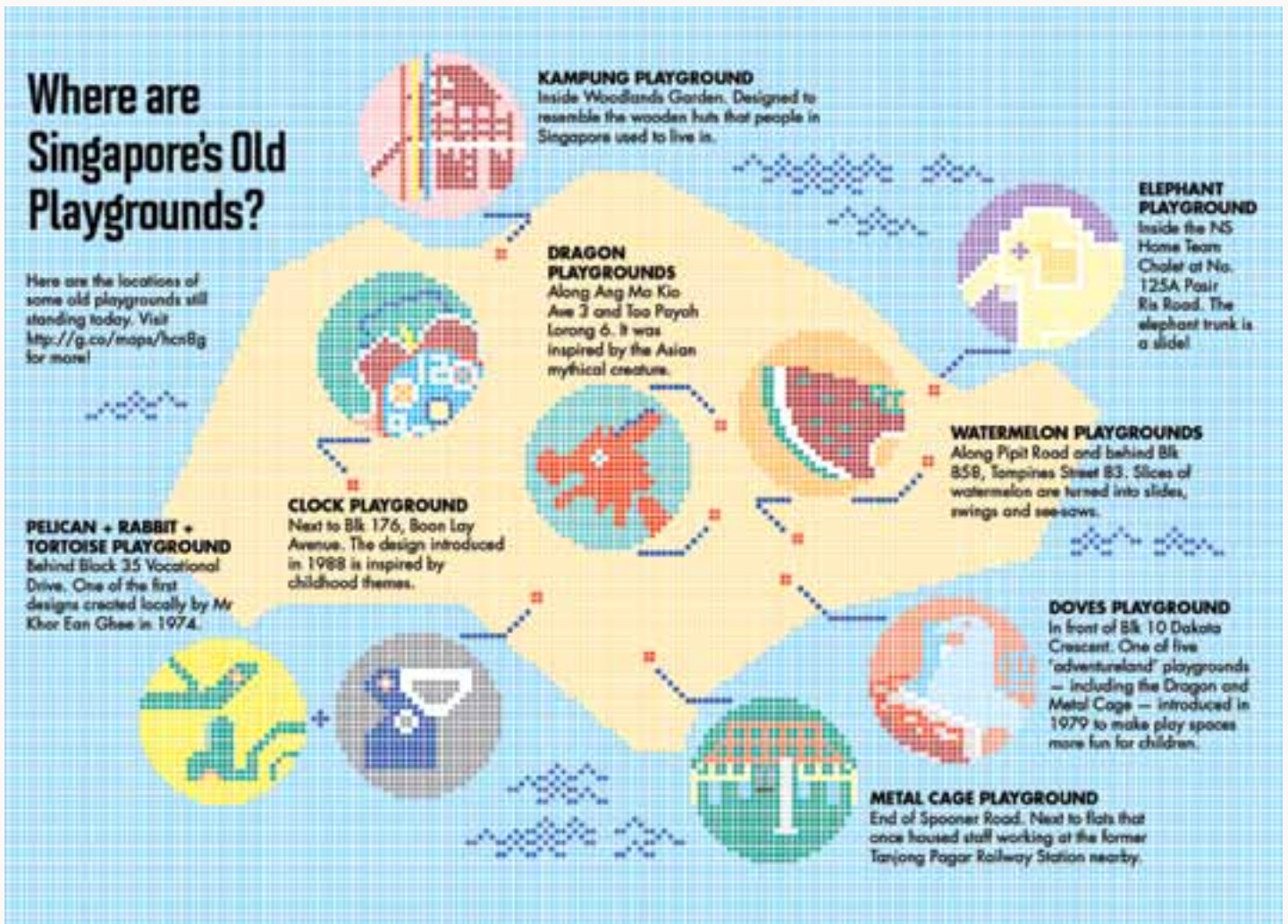
Since then, the SMP team has been collaborating with many organisations to engage communities to contribute their memories. We have worked with the Toa Payoh and Yuhua Community Centres at their community events. Many residents in these estates live there for decades and saw how their neighbourhoods have transformed. At these events, we showcase our collection of memories on the estate which help jolt the memories of residents, who then pen down or record (video or audio) their personal memories of the place. These stories are then uploaded onto the SMP online portal.

The team also runs programmes with schools, like the Nanyang Girls' High School, to collect memories from Singaporeans. We train

students to conduct interviews and link them up with individuals in a community to gather their stories. In addition, competitions such as *irememberMySchool Days*, are organised to rally students to collect and present their memories in creative ways.

In July 2012, the project group partnered Google to organise a Google Photo Walk where participants embarked on an urban trail around a designated area, taking photos of old and new buildings, in particular schools. Participants attended a photography workshop to prepare themselves before the event.

Tapping on Singapore's great love for food, the SMP team organised a food trail with three of Singapore's most prominent bloggers: Dr Leslie Tay (of *ieatishootipost*), Mr Brown and Mr Miyagi. The intrepid trio traversed the island from dawn to midnight, in search of the best of Singapore food. From tweets posted by the public, the boisterous bloggers went on a real-time food trail. The food trail videos can be viewed at the SMP FaceBook page or you can read about it from the v blog.



A map of Singapore's remaining old playgrounds in *Mosaic memories* by Justin Zhuang, Wee Ho Gai and Zakaria Zainal. All rights reserved. The Singapore Memory Project, 2012.

Local artists and talents too have been commissioned by SMP to document and present the memories of people and places in creative ways. One such work that resonated strongly with the public and garnered over 860 likes on Facebook was a free e-book on old mosaic playgrounds in Singapore. Another artistic production was the bittersweet comic *Once upon a dragon* by Dominique Fam – a graphic work that reflected on the changes in Singapore and the author's memories of the dragon playground of his childhood years. These works serve as talking points for the public and something that they can share with others.

The Singapore Memory Project is more than just events, programmes and an ambitious collection of memories – it is a reminder for people to slow down a little, look back and remember that each memory, each personal story is a part of Singapore.

About the author

Stephanie Pee is an executive with the National Library Arts and the Singapore Memory Project team. She was an assistant senior editor with Marshall Cavendish before joining NLB.

How to contribute to the Singapore Memory Project

Do you have a cache of memories just waiting to be shared? Wonder what fellow Singaporeans remember? Then be a part of our conversations over at www.singaporememory.sg!

To get in on all the action, check out the Singapore Memory portal at www.singaporememory.sg, our blog at www.iremember.sg, or download the SMP app to contribute your own memories in the form of images (up to 3MB), videos (20MB) or 20 seconds of footage.



Available for iOS only.

www.facebook.com/iremembersg
Twitter & Instagram: @iremembersg



1. Great World Amusement Park, 1950. *Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

2. Van Kleef Aquarium, 1955. *Wong Kwan Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

3. National Theatre, 1960s. *Chiang Ker Chiu Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*