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Director's Column

How does one convey the idea of a city?

In her exuberant account of 19th-century Singapore, Isabella Bird wrote of a city that was full of character, thanks to the varying skin tones of its Oriental inhabitants and their exotic multi-hued costumes while deplored the pallid and detached European residents whose primary obsession was to faithfully send mail home each week. Truly, a tale of two cities depending on which side of the divide you stand.

Lee Meiuy's review of Chinese traveller Wang Dayuan's description of Singapore, almost half a millennium earlier in the 14th century, was similarly of a city straddling two divergent parts – a rich ruling royalty ensconced at Fort Canning Hill and a more depraved pirate lair that perhaps gave Singapore its infamous early reputation of crime and danger.

The destiny of early Singapore was shaped by the rock-solid faith investors had in the colony. When Raffles Hotel faced imminent bankruptcy in 1933, Gretchen Liu reminds us of the sanguine official who mustered up support from the hotel's shareholders by proclaiming: "I can only put it to you this way, that the measure of your faith in the shares which you hold in Raffles Hotel must be the measure of your faith in the colony."

The portrayal of Singapore as a city of promise is similarly conspicuous in 19th-century accounts of Singapore by Westerners. Nor Afidah Abd Rahman describes landscape paintings of early Singapore as almost "visual propaganda" – the island's richness often depicted from vantage points of hills and elevated points so that the distant squalor and mangrove swamps were scarcely seen.

Perhaps the most truthful representation of a city is seen in the work of its faithful and tireless documenters. In "Lee Kip Lin: Kampung Boy Conservateur", Bonny Tan highlights the life of architect and lecturer Lee Kip Lin, who fastidiously documented Singapore's changing landscape from the 1950s into the 80s. The resulting 17,000 slides and negatives of modern Singapore along with maps and rare photographs were generously donated to the National Library in 2009.

This time last year, I was in Hong Kong delivering a speech on preserving a nation's memories. Even as many of the Hong Kongers I met were deplored the relentless pace of development in their city, it suddenly struck me that Hong Kong has the unmistakable aura of a consummate city. Each time I walk through the streets of Wan Chai, Tsim Sha Tsui or Mong Kok, the distinct waft of old Hong Kong and the sounds and chatter of Cantonese make it impossible for me to think I am anywhere else in the world except Hong Kong.

In that light, I read Lim Tin Seng's tracing of Singapore's fast-changing landscape through planning instruments such as master and concept plans. The 1958 Ring Plan of satellite towns separated by green spaces, the waterways in the Green Blue Plan of the 1991 Concept Plan and the core of the city centre as envisioned in the original 1823 Raffles Town Plan – in each generation of planning, we see an emergent trait that eventually became dominant in our cityscape.

The idea of a place, city or otherwise, that is constantly shifting course and transforming itself is what travel writer Desiree Koh encountered in every Southeast Asian destination she has visited since the 1980s – lovingly remembered in her article on "Exploring My Own Backyard".

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PUNKAHS EVERYWHERE

One of the great travel writers of the 19th century, Isabella Bird was 47 when she visited Singapore. She had just spent several months exploring Japan and was about to embark on a journey through the Malay Peninsula. In between, she made a brief stop in Singapore and wrote about it in a letter to her sister in Edinburgh.

This extract is taken from *Traveller's Tales of Old Singapore* by Michael Wise (2008), published by Marshall Cavendish. This letter was first written by Isabella Bird in 1879 and published in *The Golden Chersonese* in 1883. Reprinted with permission.

I had scarcely finished breakfast at the hotel, a shady, straggling building, much infested by ants, when Mr. Cecil Smith, the Colonial Secretary, and his wife called, full of kind thoughts and plans of furtherance; and a little later a resident, to whom I had not even a letter of introduction, took me and my luggage to his bungalow. All the European houses seem to have very deep verandahs, large, lofty rooms, punkahs¹ everywhere, windows without glass, brick floors, and jalousies and "tatties" (blinds made of grass or finely-split bamboo) to keep out the light and the flies. This equatorial heat is neither as exhausting or depressing as the damp summer heat of Japan, though one does long "to take off one's flesh and sit in one's bones."

As Singapore is a military station, and ships of war hang about constantly, there is a great deal of fluctuating society, and the officials of the Straits Settlements Government are numerous enough to form a large society of their own. Then there is the merchant class, English, German, French, and American; and there is the usual round of gaiety, and of the amusements which make life intolerable. I think that in most of these tropical colonies the ladies exist only



Isabella Bird (1831–1904) was one of the first female explorers and travellers. *Wikimedia Commons*.

white; Bombay merchants in great white turbans, full trousers, and draperies, all white, with crimson silk girdles; Malays in red sarongs; Sikhs in pure white Madras muslin, their great height rendered nearly colossal by the classic arrangement of their draperies; and Chinamen of all classes, from the coolie in his blue or brown cotton, to the wealthy merchant in his frothy silk crepe and rich brocade, make up an irresistibly fascinating medley.

The Kling men are very fine-looking, lithe and active, and, as they clothe but little, their forms are seen to great advantage. The women are, I think, beautiful – not so much in face as in form and carriage. I am never weary of watching and admiring their inimitable grace of movement. Their faces are oval, their foreheads low, their eyes dark and liquid, their noses shapely, but disfigured by the universal adoption of jewelled nose-rings; their lips full, but not thick or coarse; their heads small, and exquisitely set on long, slender throats; their ears small, but much dragged out of shape by the wearing of two or three hoop-earrings in each; and their glossy, wavy, black hair, which grows classically low on the forehead, is gathered into a Grecian knot at the back.

My short visit has been mainly occupied with the day at the Colonial Secretary's Lodge, and in walking and driving through the streets. The city is ablaze with colour and motley with costume. The ruling race does not show to advantage. A pale-skinned man or woman, costumed in our ugly, graceless clothes, reminds one not pleasingly, artistically at least, of our dim, pale islands. Every Oriental costume from the Levant to China floats through the streets – robes of silk, satin, brocade, and white muslin, emphasised by the glitter of "barbaric gold;" and Parsees in spotless white, Jews and Arabs in dark rich silks; Klings in Turkey red and



"View of Singapore from the Sea", produced around 1848 by an unknown artist, offers a glimpse of what early travellers would have seen as they arrived in Singapore by sea. Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.



An artist's impression of clothing worn by Indian women in Singapore. This was published in *The History of Costumes* by Braun and Schneider in 1880. Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.

are long and rounded; their appearance is timid, one might almost say modest, and their walk is the poetry of movement. A tall, graceful Kling woman, draped as I have described, gliding along the pavement, her statuesque figure the perfection of graceful ease, a dark pitcher on her head, just touched by the beautiful hand, showing the finely moulded arm, is a beautiful object, classical in form, exquisite in movement, and artistic in colouring, a creation of the tropic sun. What thinks she, I wonder, if she thinks at all, of the pale European, paler for want of exercise and engrossing occupation, who steps out of her carriage in front of her, an ungraceful heap of *poufs* and frills, tottering painfully on high heels, in tight boots, her figure distorted into the shape of a Japanese sake bottle, every movement a struggle or a jerk, the clothing utterly unsuited to this or any climate, impeding motion, and affecting health, comfort, and beauty alike?

It is only the European part of Singapore which is dull and sleepy looking. No life and movement congregate round the shops. The merchants, hidden away behind jalousies in their offices, or dashing down the streets in covered buggies, make but a poor show. Their houses are mostly pale, roomy, detached bungalows, almost altogether hidden by the bountiful vegetation of the climate. In these their wives, growing paler every week, lead half-expiring lives, kept alive by the efforts of ubiquitous "punkah-wallahs;" writing for the mail, the one active occupation. At a given hour they emerge, and drive in given directions, specially round the esplanade, where for two hours at a time a double row of handsome and showy equipages move continuously in opposite directions. The number of carriages and the style of dress of their occupants are surprising, and yet people say that large fortunes are not made now-a-days in Singapore! Besides the daily drive, the ladies, the officers, and any men who may be described as of "no occupation," divert themselves with kettle-drums, dances, lawn tennis, and various other devices for killing time, and this with the mercury at 80°! Just now the Maharajah of Johore, sovereign of a small state on the nearest part of the mainland, a man much petted and decorated by the British Government for unswerving fidelity to British interests, has a house here, and his receptions and dinner parties vary the monotonous round of gaieties.

The native streets monopolise the picturesqueness of Singapore with their bizarre crowds, but more interesting still are the bazaars or continuous rows of open shops which create for themselves a perpetual twilight by hanging tatties or other screens outside the side walks, forming long

shady alleys, in which crowds of buyers and sellers chaffer over their goods, the Chinese shopkeepers asking a little more than they mean to take, and the Klings always asking double. The bustle and noise of this quarter are considerable, and the vociferation mingles with the ringing of bells and the rapid beating of drums and tom-toms, an intensely heathenish sound. And heathenish this great city is. Chinese joss-houses, Hindu temples, and Mohammedan mosques almost jostle each other, and the indescribable clamour of the temples and the din of the joss-houses are faintly pierced by the shrill cry from the minarets calling the faithful to prayer, and proclaiming the divine unity and the mission of Mahomet in one breath.

How I wish I could convey an idea, however faint, of this huge, mingled, coloured, busy, Oriental population; of the old Kling and Chinese bazaars; of the itinerant sellers of seaweed jelly, water, vegetables, soup, fruit, and cooked fish, whose unintelligible street cries are heard above the din of the crowds of coolies, boatmen, and gharriemen waiting for hire; of the far-stretching suburbs of Malay and Chinese cottages; of the sheet of water, by no means clean, round which hundreds of Bengalis are to be seen at all hours of daylight unmercifully beating on great stones the delicate laces, gauzy silks, and elaborate flounce of the European ladies; of the ceaseless rush and hum of industry, and of the resistless, overpowering, astonishing Chinese element, which is gradually turning Singapore into a Chinese city! I must conclude abruptly, or lose the mail. ♦

Note

¹ Originating from a Hindi word, a punkah is a manually operated fan consisting of a fabric-covered frame suspended from the ceiling and connected to a cord.

EXPLORING MY OWN BACKYARD

Travel writer **Desiree Koh** shares her wanderlust and love for Southeast Asia and remembers the places that have impacted her life and the way she sees the world.



Born and raised in Singapore, **Desirée Koh** is a writer and editor who spent 12 years in Chicago, studying at the Medill School of Journalism and later experiencing the other side of the world. Now back home, she enjoys discovering a city that is constantly changing and travels further afield for work and adventure. She writes on popular culture, food and sports for in-flight magazines such as *SilverKris*, *Sawasdee* and *enVoyage*, as well as local and international publications. Her most recent work was for the *Louis Vuitton City Guide: Singapore*, slated for publication in November 2014.

Myearliest travel memory is of my dad dunking me into a toddler-sized wooden barrel of warm water after a long day of building misshapen forts and castles on Tanjung Pinang beach on Bintan. I was four years old at the time, and had scraped my knees spilling and tumbling on

the sand. Although the soap stung, nothing but sweet memories remain.

My parents didn't have very much back then, but what they could spare came in the form of an annual family holiday during Chinese New Year, red-letter dates I looked forward to more than red packets. Although my *hong bao* (red packet) hoard was lighter than my cousins', I came home with exotic shells, tacky souvenirs and glowing sunburns. In addition to scoring an extra day or two off from school, I went on adventures few of my friends could only dream of experiencing in the 1980s.

We didn't make it very far beyond places like Bali, Bangkok and Pattaya, but I found these places endlessly fascinating – time zones and seasons other than hot and humid were foreign concepts to me. Those first plane rides were infinitely more exciting than anything Santa's sleigh could offer and I relished that annual rush in its entirety. I devoured everything we were served on board and emptied all the sachets of sugar and powdered creamer into my tea because I didn't want to leave a single item behind. In those days, smiling Thai Airways stewardesses would hand out fresh purple orchid corsages to female passengers. Mine would be proudly pinned to my Smurfs backpack and left there until the petals wilted and fell off (I made sure my Smurfette doll had one on as well). I wrote postcards, asked for playing cards and thanked every flight attendant on the way out as my mum taught me to, something I remain fond of doing.

The rush of takeoff, the thrill of being enveloped by blobs of clouds and the triumph



[Opposite Page] Temple-trotting in Bali in 1982.

[Above Left] Sunburned and homebound from Phuket on Thai Airways in 1984.

[Above Right] The writer with Captain Kangaroo at Australia's Gold Coast in 1988. All photos courtesy of Desirée Koh.

of landing (the bumpier the better!) were just the beginning. We have so many family pictures, yellowing with age – the result of my dad toting his trusty Yashica camera and a backpack full of 35mm Kodak film everywhere we went – but still capturing all our smiles, artfully arranged by my mum in photo albums describing each destination. Who cares that Southeast Asian airports of yore resembled bare bones budget terminals, with luggage belts that frequently wheezed and groaned under the weight of heavy bags, and air-conditioning that was mostly non-existent. My passport was alive with colourful visa stamps, and each journey was filled with a palpable sense of expectation and joy that I have not been able to replicate in my later travels as an adult.

I remember the desperation of a fruit peddler trying to sell us bananas through our coach window as we pulled away from a Balinese temple, my mum explaining that there were those far worse off than us. The floating Chao Phraya market was such a charming concept, until Bangkok became a clichéd weekend budget airline getaway. Siem Reap is unrecognisable to me now as there wasn't a single resort or proper restaurant when we went; I remember a police officer hounding my dad to buy some of his rusty medals – cash before valour. Sleepy Phuket was just beginning to build its first wooden chalets on its beaches – the only other foreigners besides us were the Germans and Scandinavians, who of course were everywhere in Southeast Asia before anyone else – and so we went because it was affordable. There were no go-go bars in Patpong, no full moon

parties, no hucksters and hustlers lurking around corners. It was the perfect setting for our small family; we went puttering in little boats (with no life jackets) to secluded islands, lazed on the beaches without sunscreen (the horrors of skin pigmentation unbeknownst to us), and ate food from streetside hawkers, salmonella be damned.

What was normal for the Koh family made me stand out at school, beyond the shenanigans I was notorious for (perhaps my roaming the classroom to play with friends in between lessons may have been an early sign of my repressed wanderlust?). When I moved from my neighbourhood primary school to a well-known one, I found myself in the company of peers who went skiing in Lake Tahoe in the US or on multi-city European tours. Although it sometimes crossed my mind that Disneyland could be fun, I didn't feel completely deprived either – no matter how new or weird my experiences in Southeast Asia, the warmth, the smiles and humility of the people and the spicy flavours always reminded me of home. The school compositions I wrote were inspired by people, food and scenes like nothing I knew of in too quickly developing Singapore, and I learnt to empathise – by the time I first encountered a rancid outhouse in Zhengzhou, China, I didn't turn back and run but bravely sallied forth.

For show-and-tell in primary four, I brought an ashtray (with a mermaid perched on one side) made of fake coral from Hua Hin and said I wanted to be a "travellogist" when I grew up (whatever that meant). I didn't know it then, but it was only when I arrived at university in Chicago and newfound American friends marvelled at my "jetsetting" ways that I realised how fortunate I was to have grown up in Singapore and traversed the riches of our region. I tried to explain that getting on a three-hour flight to Hanoi wasn't too different from taking the Amtrak train from Chicago to Boston. But

it's still the same country! they would retort, and I had to agree. Southeast Asia is unique in that it's a mosaic of individual countries with their own distinct histories, cultures and cuisines, despite their close proximity to each other. No one slurping a bowl of beef pho in Ho Chi Minh City is going to confuse that soupy dish with a plate of wok-fried soy-sauce blackened Hokkien noodles in Kuala Lumpur. The flavour profiles of both dishes are as different as night and day – as both cities are.

More than 30 years removed from that Tanjung Pinang beach and having traversed many countries across four other continents since, I know that those childhood travels to Southeast Asian countries on the cusp of progress is one of the best of many life lessons my parents have given me. For every Paris, New Orleans, Caribbean and Melbourne, there is a Chiang Mai, Ho Chi Minh City, Inle Lake and Penang that I will never get tired of. It's been uplifting watching our neighbouring countries come into their own and, together with Singapore, form one of the most exciting parts of the world right now.

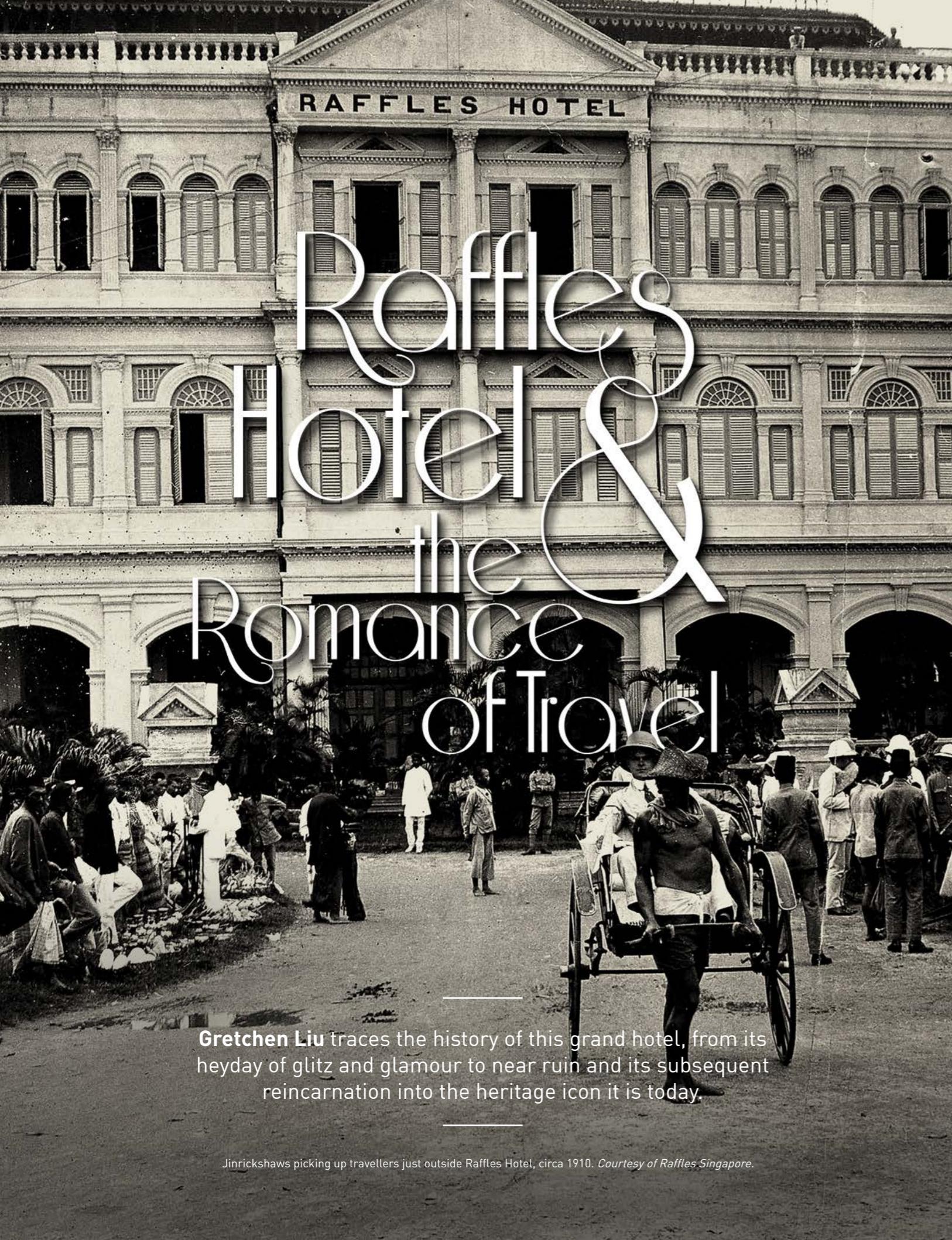
Everybody, it seems, wants a piece of Southeast Asia – there's Burmese food in Iowa, Malaysian in every London neighbourhood and Indian vendors flipping *prata* in Copenhagen's trendy Vesterbro district. At the Diageo Reserve World Class championships in July, possibly the most prestigious bartending championships ever, Singapore's Peter Chua finished top six and Bangkok's Ronnaporn Kanivichaporn held his own in the final 12 – that is how hot Southeast Asia has become, and less than a heartbeat behind trendsetting global cities. I have been incredibly lucky to enjoy front row seats to what feels like an indie film morphing into a blockbuster franchise – happening right here in my own backyard.

Aficionados of Singapore Airlines may grumble at flagging service standards in the

last decade or so, but it's not for nothing that it still trumps all other airlines in various annual "best of" polls. Despite the sometimes forced Anglo-Saxon accents over the PA system ("please fasten your seatbelts"), my heart swells with pride whenever I see SQ crew striding through an airport with poise and confidence, the women in their elegant *sarong kebaya* – it's an emblem of how we leave our mark across the globe.

My family still travels together at least once a year, and whenever we find ourselves in Chiang Mai, we invariably engage the services of our good friend Deer Sriwasat and his van. Deer knows that our days of riding elephants and visiting craft factories are far behind, and so we explore Northern Thailand, discovering little-visited temples and sussing out roadside eats. One of my favourite stops is along the highway between Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai where 90-year-old Charin Singkarat bakes 30 pies every morning using fruit and nuts harvested from her plantation. The pies are essentially Thai flavours encased in crumbly American-style crusts that she learned to make while living in Los Angeles for over 18 years. Who would have imagined that East would meet West in the backroads of Thailand's remote North?

I've always described Singapore as Asia Lite to friends from overseas, a place with all the comforts of a modern city while serving as a convenient launch point for explorations into the region. What my parents allowed me to see and experience from a young age has shaped my 12 years of living in the US, and my work as a travel writer with collaborators from around the world. More importantly, my work continues to inspire new explorations. When I meet people who marvel at the colonial grace of Malacca, are awestruck by majestic Borobudur or have been lulled by the charms of Luang Prabang, my first response is always, "I told you so."



Gretchen Liu traces the history of this grand hotel, from its heyday of glitz and glamour to near ruin and its subsequent reincarnation into the heritage icon it is today.

Jinrickshaws picking up travellers just outside Raffles Hotel, circa 1910. Courtesy of Raffles Singapore.

Gretchen Liu is a former journalist and book editor as well as the author of several illustrated books, including *Pastel Portraits: Singapore's Architectural Heritage* and *Singapore: A Pictorial History*. As the former curator of the Raffles Hotel Collection, she oversaw all of the heritage projects during the hotel's 1989–1992 restoration and for some years after that.

For over a century, Raffles Hotel has shared Singapore's prosperity and endured its vicissitudes, along the way becoming one of those rare places in the world where truth, legend, myth and mystery merge effortlessly together. The very name conjures up all that is romantic in travel. Over the years, the hotel has enjoyed several incarnations: modest start-up, grand caravanserai, fable-enrusted attraction, faded dowager, national landmark and restored beauty. The story of how Raffles Hotel became so celebrated, and how it survived when so many other hotels fell by the wayside, begins over a century ago and connects with the larger story of the "Golden Age of Travel" when, for the first time in human history, people began to circumnavigate the globe for the pleasure of taking in the sights.

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS

First, a bit of early hotel history. From its earliest days as an outpost of the East India Company, Singapore offered a convenient port of call for European travellers. By the early 1840s, a range of accommodation was offered – the Ship Hotel, London Hotel, British Hotel, Commercial Hotel, Hotel de Paris, Hamburg Hotel – their names now only surviving in the pages of early newspapers. Yet business was difficult and unpredictable because travel was arduous and rarely for pleasure: the journey from London to Singapore via the Cape of Good Hope, for example, took about 120 days.

All that changed with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which, together with the appearance of steam-powered ships, shortened distances and sped up travel. The writer Joseph Conrad, who navigated the eastern seas as a young sailor in the 1880s, summed up the astonishing efforts of the canal's opening in his novel *The End of the Tether*, writing that "like the breaking of a dam, [it] had let in upon the East a flood of new ships, new men, new methods of trade. It changed the face of the Eastern seas and the spirit of their life."

Steamships not only sped up travel, they made it far more comfortable, and luxurious for some. By the 1890s, the oceans were circumnavigated by large coal-fed liners operated by companies such as the P&O,

Straits Steamship, Messageries Maritimes, Lloyd Triestino and the Dutch KPLM. Add to these other late 19th century wonders – the telegram and telegraph, rising incomes and a growing middle class, the launch of travel as an industry by Thomas Cook – and the stage was set for the "Golden Age of Travel".

Bradshaw's, the authoritative guidebook publisher, announced not without a touch of incredulity in its 1874 edition of *Through Routes, Overland Guide and Handbook to India, Egypt, Turkey, China, Australia and New Zealand* that a traveller "may run through the Grand Tour of the Globe in an incredibly short time... he can accomplish a circuit of 23,000 to 23,500 miles in 78 to 80 days exclusively on mail steamers and trains". Passengers were advised to take "their entire stock of clothing" with 336 pounds of luggage allowed for first class. A few bottles of good port and

champagne were also recommended "in case of sickness and depression".

Singapore was becoming an important coaling station for steamships. With more ships calling, decent hotel rooms were suddenly in short supply. By the 1880s, the port offered at least eight establishments – all located within a few blocks of the Padang in old bungalows to which various makeshift extensions had been added. The lack of something more elegant – a real grand hotel, which was even then a recent invention in the West – was cause for concern in the business community. An attempt was made to form a consortium to raise funds for a modern hotel but the capital investment proved too high and potential investors too few. Instead it was the Sarkies Brothers, Hotel Proprietors (as the company was called) that stepped into the void, intent on creating, in the Sarkies' own words, "A really First Class Hotel".



The revamped lobby of Raffles Hotel still exudes the grandeur of its heyday. Courtesy of Raffles Singapore.

BUILDING A LANDMARK: RAFFLES HOTEL

In the early 1880s, two Sarkies brothers of Armenian descent, Martin and Tigran, had established themselves as hoteliers in Penang with two hotels, The Eastern and The Oriental (both hotels were later merged into one property, the Eastern & Oriental, E&O). When the Eastern Hotel landlord demanded a large increase in rent, they came to Singapore looking for an opportunity. They found it in the property at No 1 Beach Road, then known as Beach House, at the corner of Beach and Bras Basah roads. The bungalow was shabby but the grounds expansive, the location excellent, the sea view magnificent, and the landlord, Syed Mohamed Alsagoff, (see text box) supportive.

The modest 10-room Raffles Hotel opened to the public on 1 December 1887. As for the choice of name, "Raffles" was a particularly fashionable name that year: it was Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee year and to mark the event a statue of Sir Stamford Raffles had been unveiled on the Padang and the Raffles Library and Museum on Stamford Road had officially opened.

Tigran Sarkies proved to be a shrewd publicist. Two weeks before the hotel's opening he shared his prediction of a brilliant future for the hotel in an advertisement. He highlighted the hotel's location as "one of the best and healthiest in the island, facing the sea" and emphasised that "great care and attention to the comfort of boarders and visitors has been taken in every detail and those frequenting it will find every convenience and home comfort..."

Eventually four brothers – Martin, Tigran, Aviet and Arshak – were involved in the family business during its early days. Mention has been made of Martin (1852–1912), an engineer and the first to arrive in Penang and Tigran (c1861–1912) who took charge of Raffles Hotel. Aviet (1862–1923), who first looked after the business in Penang when Martin retired, relocated to Rangoon, Burma, where he opened the Strand Hotel in 1899. Arshak (1869–1931) joined in 1890 and settled in Penang to oversee the E&O. Over the years, the brothers were associated with several other hotels in the Straits Settlements, including The Crag in Penang, and Grosvenor House and the Sea View in Singapore, but Raffles Hotel was the jewel and it was Tigran who nurtured it.

During Raffles Hotel's first two decades, Tigran oversaw almost unabated construction. Three projects were completed in 1890: a pair of buildings comprising 22 suites flanking the old bungalow and the first iteration of the Billiard Room. In 1894, the Palm Court Wing was completed on the adjacent parcel of land at No 3 Beach Road, adding another 30 suites to the inventory.



The Armenians behind the success of Raffles Hotel. From left: manager Joe Constantine, brothers Tigran and Martin Sarkies (seated), and accountant Martyrose Sarkies Arathoon in 1906. Courtesy of Raffles Singapore.

The Legacy of Syed Mohamed Alsagoff

One of the key reasons why Raffles Hotel was able to survive its near closure in 1931 was the existence of a long-term lease on the land and buildings which the hotel occupied. There is an unusual story behind it. As we have seen, Raffles Hotel had opened at No 1 Beach Road, in December 1887. Its success enabled expansion into two adjacent parcels – No 3 Beach Road (Palm Court wing) and along Bras Basah Road. No 3 Beach Road was leased from the Seah family and in 1907 Tigran and Aviet Sarkies purchased the land for \$125,064.

Unfortunately, they could never hope to purchase the other two parcels because they were part of the estate of Syed Ahmed Alsagoff (d. 1875), a wealthy Arab trader who had left a large estate with many properties to his widow and children. In his will, he appointed his son Syed Mohamed Alsagoff (d. 1906) as executor. He also

stated that none of his properties could be sold until 20 years after the death of his last surviving child (which did not occur until 1961) so the Sarkies knew they could never hope to own the main properties in which they carried out their hotel business.

The lease signed in 1887 was renewed periodically. Significantly, the hotel was able to secure a generous 70-year lease on good terms from the Alsagoff estate effective from 1 January 1926. Thus, when the new company of Raffles Hotel Limited was formed in 1933, the remainder of this long lease was its most important asset.

It must be noted that Syed Mohamed was an outstanding landlord. He funded most of the early building projects and it is his name that appears on most of the original Raffles Hotel building plans that survive in the National Archives, Singapore.

THE MAIN BUILDING OPENS IN 1899

In 1899, the magnificent Main Building was constructed, replacing the original Beach House. The hotel's grand opening in November was celebrated in style and secured Raffles' status as a Grand Hotel. Beneath its elegant "Renaissance-style" exterior, the Main Building was thoroughly modern with its own generator, among Singapore's first, powering electric lights, ceiling fans and a network of call bells. The design was unconventional as the ground floor was given over to the "Grand Marble Dining Saloon capable of seating 500".

The upper two levels contained only 23 suites and were dominated by large Drawing Rooms, extending around the central atrium and across the entire front of the building. Comfortably furnished with writing tables and lounge chairs, the areas were ideal for reading, writing, socialising and enjoying cool sea breezes. Now *this* was a Grand Hotel. The façade of the Main Building soon became the "face" of the hotel, recognised worldwide, printed on luggage labels, engraved on stationery, photographed frequently and portrayed in a host of picture postcards.

The final building project was the Bras Basah wing, a further innovation in that the ground floor contained a row of shops.

The 20 suites on the two floors above were accessible only from the main entrance. Its debut in 1904 secured Raffles' status as the largest, and best, hotel in the Straits Settlements. Raffles was now at the pinnacle of its early heyday.

Tigran, ever the merchant, proudly, and often, advertised this fact: "First Class Travellers only... the Select Rendezvous of the East" (1904); "We set the pace and have our imitators" (1905); "The only Hotel of its Unique Style in the East and Renowned for its All Around Modern Comforts" (1909); "The Hotel that has made Singapore Famous to Tourists" (all this in the hotel's own brochures). Tigran and his staff cultivated the burgeoning world cruise liner business with specially arranged dinners and grand balls. "Yearly between 50,000 and 60,000 guests sign their names in the hotel books," proclaimed the compendium *Present Day Impressions of the Far East* in 1917.

In the minds of many, Raffles Hotel was now inexorably linked with Singapore as the great "Crossroads of the East". As one traveller remarked in 1912, "Singapore is the only city which everyone encircling the globe is forced to visit, at least for a day." The ritual of arrival was often described in early travel books, the first impression of lush coconut groves, mangrove swamps and coastal vil-

lages giving way to praise for the expanse of handsome buildings – Singapore's own Bund – lining the shore as the town came into view. The large steamers operated by international companies moored at the expanded Tanjong Pagar Wharves, two miles from town. Smaller steamers handling regional routes discharged passengers in the open roadstead where they were ferried to Johnston's Pier, later replaced by Clifford Pier.

Raffles' management strived to stay ahead of the competition. Refinements large and small were ongoing. A telephone system and elevator were installed around 1907. Other innovations included a dark room for amateur photographers, cinema evenings, roller skating parties in the Dining Room and lawn tennis in the gardens. The private jinrikisha (two-wheeled carriages pulled by human labour) were replaced by a motor garage with a fleet of passenger cars for hire.

Behind the scenes, the kitchens were frequently upgraded with the latest in culinary technology. Raffles even had its own slaughterhouse, located away from the hotel, and, briefly, a dairy farm. Travellers noticed: "Raffles is one of the oldest and yet one of the most modern hotels in Singapore, for every effort is made to keep pace in all directions in the matter of building fixtures, appliances," praised a writer in 1917.



The ballroom of Raffles Hotel opened in 1921 and was reputed to be the largest hotel ballroom in the east at the time. Courtesy of Raffles Singapore.

Tigran Sarkies did not live to read that praise. He set sail for England in November 1910 and two years later Singapore papers carried news of his death at St Leonard's-on-Sea in Sussex, England. He was 51. His obituary noted that he had been ill for some time so his death was not unexpected. The business of Sarkies Brothers, Hotel Proprietors, however, continued without interruption.

Aviet, now senior partner, continued to oversee Raffles from Rangoon and left the day-to-day affairs to others. Two fellow Armenians now played key roles: Joe Constantine, manager from 1903 to 1915, and Martyrose Sarkies Arathoon who joined as an accountant in 1906 and was made partner in the Sarkies Brothers business in 1918, when he essentially took charge.

The 1920s was, on the whole, a splendid decade for Raffles. The opening of the ballroom in January 1921 was timed perfectly to usher in the "roaring twenties" with an in-house band and nightly dancing. Large groups of tourists now regularly visited Singapore on round-the-world cruises. In 1925 alone, Raffles made arrangements to entertain some 3,000 tourists from six different ships. Evenings took the form of an elegant cruise dinner and dance laid out in the spacious ballroom. When it was realised that the hotel's best cutlery was being pocketed as souvenirs, inexpensive pieces were substituted.

RAFFLES FALLS ON HARD TIMES

In the early 1930s, all of Singapore's hotels fell on hard times as the effects of the great economic depression seeped into every corner of the globe. The tourist trade shrank and the spending power of the resident European population diminished. The stress was more than the remaining Sarkies brother could bear. On 9 January 1931, Arshak died in Penang at the age of 62. The newspapers paid tribute to a generous man "who had earned the regard of all who met him". Arshak was thus spared the terrible misfortunes that subsequently threatened the hotel's existence.

Four months after Arshak's death, John Little Department Store took Raffles Hotel to court for debts amounting to \$36,796. It was soon disclosed that the firm of Sarkies Brothers had liabilities totaling over \$3.5 million! The subsequent inquiry revealed the firm's cash reserves had been strained by substantial payments made to Aviet's widow to buy out her husband's 40 percent share in Sarkies Brothers. Then there were hefty loans, mainly from the Chartered Bank, the largest creditor, which had been taken out to upgrade two other Sarkies hotels – the Sea View in Singapore and the E&O Hotel



The New Year's Eve Fancy Dress Ball held at Raffles Hotel was the highlight of Singapore's social calendar until World War II. This photograph was taken in 1934. Courtesy of Raffles Singapore.

in Penang. The main drain was the E&O, which Arshak had lavishly rebuilt in 1928. Construction costs had skyrocketed and this, combined with the loss of revenue during the rebuilding, as well as a general decline in business upon completion, spelt disaster.

Although the Raffles remained profitable, there was no ready cash for wages and provisions, and there was a real danger that it would close. Fortunately, the creditors agreed for Sarkies Brothers, Hotel Proprietors to be placed in the hands of the official receiver and discussions on how to keep the hotel afloat began. Although business continued as usual, it proved "a most intricate bankruptcy" involving a tangled web of conflicting interests, 195 creditors and a host of complicated issues.

After two years of negotiations, all parties finally reached an agreement. On 28 February 1933, a new company, Raffles Hotel Limited, was incorporated to take over Raffles. (A separate, similar company was set up to take over the E&O.) When plans for Raffles' future were unveiled, the official handling the case confirmed his faith in the hotel and asked the new shareholders to do the same, saying, "I can only put it to you this

way, that the measure of your faith in the shares which you hold in Raffles Hotel must be the measure of your faith in the colony".

No Singapore hotel survived this difficult time unscathed. The Adelphi Hotel on Coleman Street was placed in receivership. Hotel van Wijk along Stamford Road, home to Dutch travellers for over 30 years and famed for its curry and draught beer, closed, as did Raffles' main rival, the Hotel de l'Europe just opposite the Padang. Rebuilt in 1907 with 120 rooms, an imposing dining room and 300 employees, the l'Europe was the Raffles' closest competitor. By 1932, the l'Europe could no longer withstand the competing pressures of poor business and an obligation by the terms of its lease to rebuild the hotel. In 1934, the government acquired the site for the new Supreme Court building.

A HOTEL FOR ALL TIMES

The many guests who arrived during the 1920s and 1930s were largely oblivious to these fluctuations in the hotel's fortunes. Important guests such as the Prince of Wales; playwright, actor and singer, Noel Coward; and actor and director, Douglas Fairbanks and

actress, Mary Pickford, who were followed to the ballroom by fans seeking autographs, added lustre to the hotel's reputation.

Charlie Chaplin and his brother Syd visited in 1932 and were photographed in the dining room by M.S. Nakajima, a Japanese photographer whose Bras Basah wing studio was frequented by the elite. Among the writers who visited, no one is more associated with this era than Somerset Maugham. His numerous visits to Singapore and Malaya in the 1920s and early 1930s resulted in two volumes of short stories, *The Casuarina Tree* and *Ah King* as well as a play, *The Letter*. When *The Casuarina Tree* was published in 1926, Maugham explained the meaning of the title – the casuarina is a grey, rugged tree found along tropical coasts that appears a bit grim beside the lush vegetation about it, thus suggesting exiled Europeans who in temperament and stamina are often ill equipped for life in the tropics.

By the mid-1930s, Raffles' fortunes were back on the mend. People resumed travelling and, with the l'Europe closed, Raffles emerged as the undisputed social centre. The hotel also benefitted from the sharp increase in the military services population – the British Army and Royal Air Force had swelled the ranks of the European community and more were expected with the completion of the new naval base in Sembawang.

Although still ranked as one of the best hotels in the East, one visitor observed, not without fondness, that Raffles was "cherished rather for its Somerset Maugham associations than for the distinction of its décor". The management responded by bestowing a new title on Raffles – "the historic hotel of Singapore". And so it was called on hotel stationery and in advertisements. In the eyes of many, Raffles was no longer just a hotel but a meeting place of world travellers, an attraction in its own right that once visited

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Raffles Hotel had become an icon that was perceived to be romantic and exotic in travel and a symbol of the fables of the East – immortalised by writers, patronised by all.

could be added to the list of sights seen and extolled. It had become an icon that was perceived to be romantic and exotic in travel and a symbol of the fables of the East – immortalised by writers, patronised by all.

With this we come to the end of the story of Raffles Hotel's early heyday – but not the end of the Raffles story. On 16 February 1942, Raffles was taken over by the invading Japanese forces and renamed Syonan Ryokan – Light of the South Hotel, and after the Japanese exited in August 1945, it was briefly occupied by the Allied forces. But the hotel emerged from the war relatively unscathed. "Like a dowager at the end of a long night, she showed a touch of genteel shabbiness but no real scars", recalled the Australian journalist Harry Gordon in 1946.

The 1950s were a happy decade. Raffles remained the haunt of the well-to-do and well-known. Buoyant conditions financed a much-needed facelift with suites and public areas modernised and air-conditioning installed. For some visitors the patina of age took on negative connotations. Oswald Wynd, in his novel *Moon of the Tiger* published in 1958, described Raffles as "alien to the time, a hangover from something that really no longer existed. Even the (war) hadn't altered the tone permanently; it had returned to being something colonial, cool

and pillared, once again consecrated to the doings of the Tuans and Memes who, as a species, were doomed".

In the 1960s, competition came from the international hotels making their appearance on Orchard Road. The first was the Hotel Singapura Intercontinental, which opened in 1963 with an American-style coffee shop and 195 rooms. As the Singapore skyline changed, the old Raffles seemed increasingly out of step with changing times, appreciated for its historic associations rather than the style of its rooms. Eventually no amount of nostalgia could smooth over the problems inherent in the antiquated buildings.

For a time the very existence of the hotel seemed threatened, but fortunately a sense of history and heritage prevailed. In 1987, its centenary year, the Raffles Hotel was declared a national monument, thus ensuring its survival and the integrity of its tropical gardens and architecture. Two years later a complete restoration and redevelopment inspired by the hotel's early heyday took place. When the new Raffles reopened on 16 September 1991, revellers raised their glasses and toasted to the Grand Old Dame's next century. ♦

This article was adapted from the book *Raffles Hotel* by Gretchen Liu, Editions Didier Millet, Singapore, 2006.

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SINGAPORE THROUGH THE EYES OF 19TH-CENTURY WESTERNERS

Nor Afidah Abd Rahman shares how the impressions the first Western travellers held of colonial Singapore were influenced by their preconceived perceptions of the exotic East.

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From the mid-18th century onwards, Western powers enthusiastically explored the “mysterious” East through military, scientific and commercial missions. Under the flags of different imperial sponsors, the underlying aim of these expeditions was to outdo each other through the accumulation of first-hand knowledge. The broad quest for local knowledge dictated the assembly of experts; in one expedition for example “there was a naturalist, conchologist, mineralogist, botanist, horticulturalist and draughtsmen”.¹ Their investigations were shared in travel accounts that fit into the standard narrative of scientific exploration.² Steam technology empowered mass travel and the mid-19th century saw more independent

travellers exploring the East.³ These travel writers stressed the experience of travel itself over methodical reporting of the lands visited. Unfortunately, these accounts, while still informative, have been coloured by the “meditations, reflection and reverie” of the Western traveller.⁴

Singapore was a natural stopover for ships because of its location at the crossroad of major East-West trade routes.⁵ Steam travel elevated Singapore from port-of-call to the coal-hole of the East. Ships criss-crossing the globe would transit at the Singapore harbour to refuel before continuing to their next stop.⁶ Passengers used this respite from the sea journey to satisfy their curiosity about Singapore and recorded these encounters in their travel diaries or journals.

THE TAMED JUNGLE...

Observations by Western travellers stimulated ideas about Singapore that endeared this faraway British settlement to the West. They fed the European market’s curiosity about exotic locations, depicting lush scenes of native lands and a nascent colony on the other side of the world.⁷ The quick jottings and candid musings about Singapore did not disappoint as these accounts frequently praised the colony’s progress. The perception of Singapore as an inhabitable jungle swarming with bandits was the predominant theme, while the taming of

the island into a flourishing port under the British barely hid the gushing approval for imperial rule:

I remained lost in the thoughts aroused in me by the unexpected sight of the commercial achievement of the English. On this shore where not 20 years ago were grouped a few wretched Malay villages, half fishermen, half pirates, where virgin forest extended to the seashore, where the tiger hidden in the jungle awaited his prey, where a pirate canoe scarcely disturbed an empty sea, has risen today to a huge town, bustling with an industrious population...safe from the tigers which have fled into the depths of the jungle as from the bandits who are kept in check by the vigilant eyes of a tireless police; and this hospitable shore has become the centre for ships of all nations.

—Jules Itier, Head of French commercial mission to China and the Indies, 1843–46⁸

The theme of imperial benevolence is also detectable in the visual records of 19th-century Singapore. The historical value of these pictures notwithstanding, the pick of settings and objects fulfils the Western notion of what was picture-worthy and constitutes arguably “a form of visual propaganda”.⁹ Visions of progress in early 19th-century paintings of Singapore were usually angled from harbours and hills.¹⁰ The choice was practical for their panoramic sweep of the bustling town. The harbour at the Singapore River echoed Raffles’ prophecy that Singapore would be an *Emporium in Imperio*,¹¹ reflected in artists’ sketches of busy clusters of ships and neat rows of warehouses from the harbour.¹² Singapore’s prosperity was also calibrated from an aerial view, with artists perching themselves on vantage positions from Government Hill, Pearl’s Hill, Prinsep Hill, Mount Wallich and Mount Palmer, to document the landscapes below. The bird-eye’s treatment “strategically omitted any traces of the mangrove swamps that dotted the landscape”,¹³ and canvassed mainly elements that portrayed Singapore as a picturesque pseudo-European¹⁴ settlement in the East.

Both harbour and hill are found in many paintings of Charles Dyce (1816–1853),¹⁵ a 19th-century amateur painter. The twin reference points are also a signature of Dyce’s contemporary, John T. Thomson (1821–1884).¹⁶ Their artwork joins the body of paintings and literature that represent the typical 19th-century Singapore construct of a little Eastern oddity made good.¹⁷

THE TAMED JUNGLE OF UNTAPPED SPOILS...

The notion of a well-governed tropical colony in the East teased the Western audience with Singapore’s economic potential. This is synchronous with the 19th-century explorers’ depiction of the tropics as lands of great abundance and fertility.¹⁸ The founding of Singapore fanned the agriculture dream that a British spice powerhouse in the East was in the making.¹⁹ Raffles kickstarted the campaign for large-scale agriculture with his Botanical Gardens project in 1822,²⁰ hoping it would catch on and transform Singapore’s jungles into thriving plantation estates. The thick and impenetrable jungles that the British inherited evoked astonishingly “rich and sensual responses” from travellers brave enough to wander into them. Their portrayals pandered to the romantic notion of an idyllic countryside that was disappearing in the West due to rapid industrialisation. Nostalgia for the countryside found its way into their wondrous renditions of Singapore’s interior:²¹

Reverting to the glimpse of the jungle which the pencil of the artist has afforded us we perceive how very beautiful are the forms which Nature assumes in those regions. The wealth of the vegetable kingdom there is endless...Everywhere, a luxuriant and hardy under-growth, and endless families of creepers, occupy the spaces between the trees, and present to the eye a sea of undulating blossoms, of brilliant hues and overpowering fragrance, or shoot aloft trunk and branches, and stretch in festoons, or depend like lamps of infinitely brilliant flowers.

—Captain Charles Bethune, from an 1840 China expedition²²

The tropical diversity and overpowering greenery²³ fuelled the promise of agriculture, muting the darker reality that the jungles were hosts to tropical diseases and other perils. Early colony residents found these dangers real enough to stay away, with many preferring to pursue gains from trade “to the exclusion of her agriculture”.²⁴ Extending the economic frontier from the town limits to the wild interiors had few takers as jungle-clearing and nurturing crops were a herculean task plagued by high outlays and slow payouts. Regardless, travel writers peddled their faith in the virgin soil, encouraging Europeans to fill the enterprise void left behind by the original inhabitants:²⁵



The energy of the European character... would turn the tables, as it were, upon Nature – pierce her solitudes, hev down her forests, and render those incalculable powers of the Earth, which hitherto run to waste, subservient to the purposes of human life.

–Captain Charles Bethune, from an 1840 China expedition²⁶

THE TAMED JUNGLE OF UNTAPPED SPOILS AND CURIOUS RACES...

The Western travellers' senses frequently turned to the natives of Singapore. The different races, each with its own unique colour²⁷ and sound,²⁸ formed a heady mix:

The city is ablaze with color and motley with costume.. Every Oriental costume from the Levant to China floats through the streets–robes of silk, satin, brocade, and white muslin,...Parsees in spotless white, Jews and Arabs in dark rich silks; Klings in Turkey red and white; Bombay merchants in great white turbans...Malays in red sarongs, Sikhs in pure white Madras muslin...; and Chinamen of all classes, from the coolie in his blue or brown cotton, to the wealthy merchant in his frothy silk crepe and rich brocade...

–Isabella Bird, author of *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*, 1879²⁹

The townsfolk perpetuated the common perception that the East was peopled by exotic races, an idea that influenced the photographic treatment of Singapore during the photography boom of the 1880s and 1890s.³⁰ The natives' outlandish attire, movements and other habits set them apart from the Europeans and created the racial divide expected of a colonial society. Implicit in accounts that paint the native races in this light is the lofty position of the Europeans within that stratified society.³¹ The distinction gets sharper when the toiling working class (locals waving the punkah fans, carrying the umbrella, preparing saddles, driving gharries, bearing torches) or else their wretched living spaces featured side-by-side with the well-off Europeans who passed their days in leisure and dinner parties.³²

The native portion of the city is entirely separate from the foreign portion. The Malays live in small, poorly-built huts and houses, each house containing many people. The native portion is very



An engraving of the port of Singapore entitled "Chinese Merchant, Malay Porter" by the official artist of the corvette *L'Astrolabe* and published in the *Voyage pittoresque autour du monde* in 1834. Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, Singapore Heritage Board.

closely-built and densely-populated, but the English officials succeed in making the natives keep the houses and streets comparatively clean. Europeans in Singapore manage to get about as much ease and pleasure out of life as is possible, and yet at the same time to make as much money as possible. Servants are so cheap that every foreigner has two or three to attend to his every want..The usual method of entertaining is by giving dinners.

–E.W. Eberle, Lieutenant, United States Navy, taken from *The Washington Post*, 1892³³

THE TAMED JUNGLE OF UNTAPPED SPOILS AND CURIOUS RACES REVISITED

Nineteenth-century travel accounts of Singapore generally celebrated the civilising effect of imperial rule. There were, however, observations that recorded some of its casualties:

But in this part of the world [Singapore], the word palanquin is applied to a kind of long chest, placed on four wheels...A courier, called a says, [sic] holds the head of the horse to direct its movements, and excite it to speed. These men are generally either miserable Bengalese or the very poorest of the Malays, and a painful sight it is to see these poor fellows who are usually emaciated, debilitated by poverty and wretchedness, running about for hours together, until they are weary and breathless. Their costume is of the simple kind; their feet and legs are naked, their chests uncovered, and their hair is concealed under a cotton

handkerchief rolled like a turban round the head: the only garment they wear is a pair of drawers, fastened round the waist and descending no further than the knees.

–Yvan, Melchior, a French physician in Singapore³⁴

Sober reflections on the abject poverty of the working class³⁵ shatter the perception that an all-round wholesome development was taking shape and beg to examine the natives beyond their peculiar traits. The bounty that lay hidden in the fertile soil was also a story shy of a happy ending. The nutmeg disaster of the 1850s and 1860s shattered the British spice dream and left many European planters in Singapore ruined:³⁶

The soil is generally very inferior, its disposition and the climate diminish the number of valuable staples capable of being advantageously cultivated... The cultivation of coffee, sugar and nutmegs has been tried largely but at a lavish and hitherto vain expenditure.³⁷

Singapore was indeed a picture of progress on the eve of the 20th century. Yet its success story unfolds in more nuanced plots than the themes found in the writings of many early Western travellers. Colonial literary and visual images produced by travellers were very much a product of Western cultural and aesthetic expectations of the East. In living up to these expectations, Western visitors to Singapore were likely to see the country more as an aesthetic construct rather than as an evolving habitat and society filled with real people.³⁸ ♦

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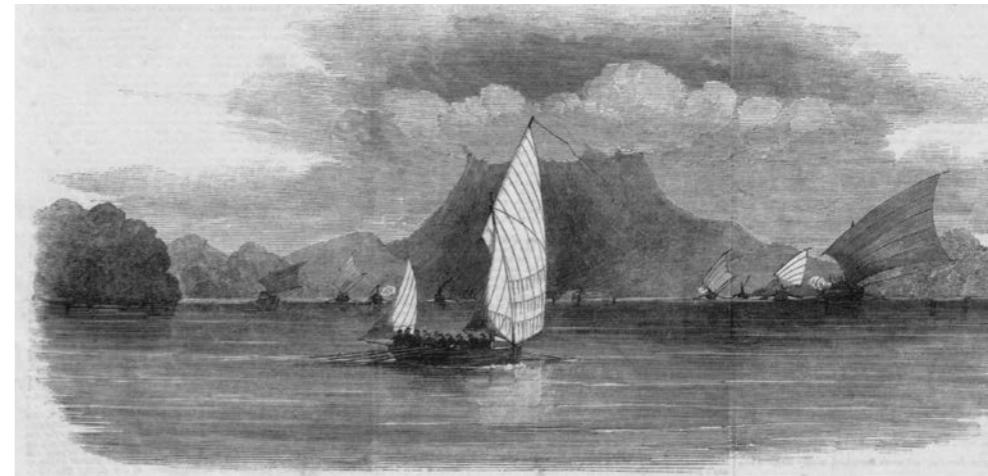
Singapore street scenes.

Lee Meiyu offers us a glimpse of pre-colonial Singapore as seen through the eyes of the 14th-century Chinese traveller Wang Dayuan.

The strait runs between the two hills of the Tan-ma-hsi barbarians, which look like "dragon teeth". Through the centre runs a waterway. The fields are barren and there is little padi. The climate is hot with very heavy rains in the fourth and fifth moons. The inhabitants are addicted to piracy. In ancient times, when digging the ground, a chief came upon a jewelled head-dress. The beginning of the year is calculated from the [first] rising of the moon, when the chief put on his head-gear and wore his [ceremonial] dress to receive the congratulations [of the people]. Nowadays this custom is still continued. The natives and the Chinese dwell side-by-side. Most [of the natives] gather their hair in chignons, and wear short cotton bajus girded about with black cotton sarongs.

Indigenous products include coarse lakewood and tin. The goods used in trade are red gold, blue satin, cotton prints, Ch'u [chou-fu] porcelain, iron caldrons and suchlike things. Neither fine products nor rare objects come from here. All are obtained from intercourse with Ch'üan-chou traders.

When junks sail to the Western Ocean, the local barbarians allow them to pass unmolested but when on their return the junks reach Chi-limen [Karimon], [then] the sailors prepare their armour and padded screens as a protection against arrows for, of a certainty, some two or three hundred pirate prahus will put out to attack them for several days. Sometimes [the junks] are fortunate enough to escape with a favouring wind; otherwise the crews are butchered and the merchandise made off with in quick time.¹



Print from *Illustrated London News* showing Her Majesty's ship, *Royalist*, being chased by a fleet of Malay pirates at Endeavour Straits (near Palawan Island), drawn by Captain Bate of the *Royalist*. The highland in the background is Malampaya Table (1852). Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

TALES OF THE



Lot's Wife and W. W. Ker's house on Bukit Chermin in 1845 or 1848. Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.

DRAGON'S TOOTH STRAIT

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Piracy, pillage, ancient rituals and barbarians – hardly a picture associated with the soaring skyscrapers and success of modern Singapore. Yet, this is how Wang Dayuan (汪大淵), the intrepid 14th-century traveller from Quanzhou (泉州), China, describes Dragon's Tooth Strait (龙牙门) or Longyamen, a place now identified as the western entrance of Keppel Harbour in former times.²

Dragon's Tooth Strait refers to a sailing route commonly used by traders travelling from Europe and the Middle East to China and vice versa. It is situated between Labrador Point and Fort Siloso. The term Dragon's Tooth refers to a prominent rock that once overlooked the entrance of the waterway. Also known as Batu Berlayar and Lot's Wife,³ the rock was demolished in the mid-19th century to widen the waterway for the passing of steamships.⁴

Apart from the Dragon's Tooth Strait, Singapore was mentioned twice more in Wang's well-known 1350 publication, *Description of the Barbarians of the Isles in Brief* (《島夷志略》) or *. The other two entries are about Banzu (Fort Canning Hill) and an attack by the people of Siam. Banzu is described as such:*

This locality is the hill behind Longyamen. It resembles a truncated coil. It rises to a hollow summit [surrounded by] interconnected terraces, so that the people's dwellings encircle it. The soil is poor and grain scarce. The climate is irregular, for there is heavy rain in summer, when it is rather cool. By custom and disposition [the people] are honest. They wear their hair short, with turbans of gold-brocaded satin and red oiled-cloths [covering] their bodies. They boil sea-water to obtain salt and ferment rice to make spirits called *ming-chia*. They are under a chieftain. Indigenous products include very fine hornbill casques, lakewood of moderate quality and cotton. The goods used in trading are green cottons, lengths of

iron, cotton prints of local manufacture, *ch'ih chin*,⁵ porcelain ware, iron pots and suchlike.⁷

Thirteenth- to 14th-century gold ornaments, coins and porcelains found during archaeological digs at Fort Canning Hill suggest the presence of an affluent community in the area. When compared to findings in sites near the mouth of the Singapore River, it is clear that the objects discovered at Fort Canning Hill are generally of finer quality.⁸ This supports Wang's 14th-century descriptions of two communities of different economic status living on the same island of Singapore: one community "addicted" to piracy and the other rich enough to wear "gold-brocaded satin".

In another write-up under the entry "Siam", an attack on Temasek (old Singapore) is described:

In recent years, they [Xian "people of Shan/Siam"] came with 70-odd junks and raided Dan-ma-xi (Temasek) and attacked the city moat. [The town] resisted for a month, the place having closed the gates and defending itself,

and they not daring to assault it. It happened just then that an Imperial envoy was passing by [Dan-ma-xi], so the men of Xian drew off and hid, after plundering Xi-li.⁹

Historian Dr John N. Miksic believes the old city walls documented by John Crawfurd – a British East India Company diplomat and administrator who later became the second Resident of Singapore – on his morning stroll around the Fort Canning Hill area to the Singapore River in 1821 were the former boundaries of the city supposedly targeted by Siam. The walls were said to be 2.5 metres tall with a stream running next to it, although no signs of a gate has ever been found.¹⁰ If this is true, it would mean that the settlement at Banzu was the city attacked by Siam in Wang's account.

Miksic also believes *banzu* is a transliteration of the Malay word *pancur*, meaning "spring of water". When the British arrived in Singapore, the locals told them about the forbidden spring behind Fort Canning Hill where the consorts and wife of the king bathed. The British later used the spring as a freshwater supply source for ships visiting Singapore. As demand for freshwater rose after 1830, a series of wells were dug around the foot of the hill to increase water supply and the spring dried up.¹¹

The three entries documented by Wang Dayuan depicted 14th-century Singapore as home to both a pirate lair and a rich community – possibly the ruling royalty – living on the same island. Archaeological findings and comparisons with other ancient texts from Malay, Portuguese and Dutch sources of the time have verified the accuracy of Wang's descriptions.¹²

Wang's detailed observations also reveal the different attires worn by locals as well as the goods traded, indicating that 14th-century Singapore was, if not a bustling port city by then, a strategically located island with two distinctly different settlements at Longyamen and Banzu respectively. Suffice it to say, the reputation that Singapore enjoyed at the time was enough to attract the attention of Siam who launched their attack on the island with its fleet of 70-odd junks. The settlement at Banzu must have been a well-fortified town to be able to withstand the month-long siege.

Early texts such as Wang Dayuan's travel accounts are important in the study of Singapore's pre-colonial history. The Bugis, Siamese, Malay, Arabs and Chinese were active in Southeast Asia's waters long before the European powers (Portuguese, Dutch and British) were involved in the power struggle for the region's trade and hegemony. Fortunately, Chinese sources

have been relatively well-documented and maintained, thus ensuring the survival of important ancient texts and offering us a glimpse into Singapore's past. ♦

Map of the environs of ancient Singapore. Based on descriptions in the *Dao Yi Zhi Lue*, the *Sejarah Melayu*, and on remains still visible at the beginning of the 19th century.¹³ All rights reserved. *The Golden Khersonese: Studies in the historical geography of the Malay Peninsula before A.D. 1500*, 1961, Wheatley, P., University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur

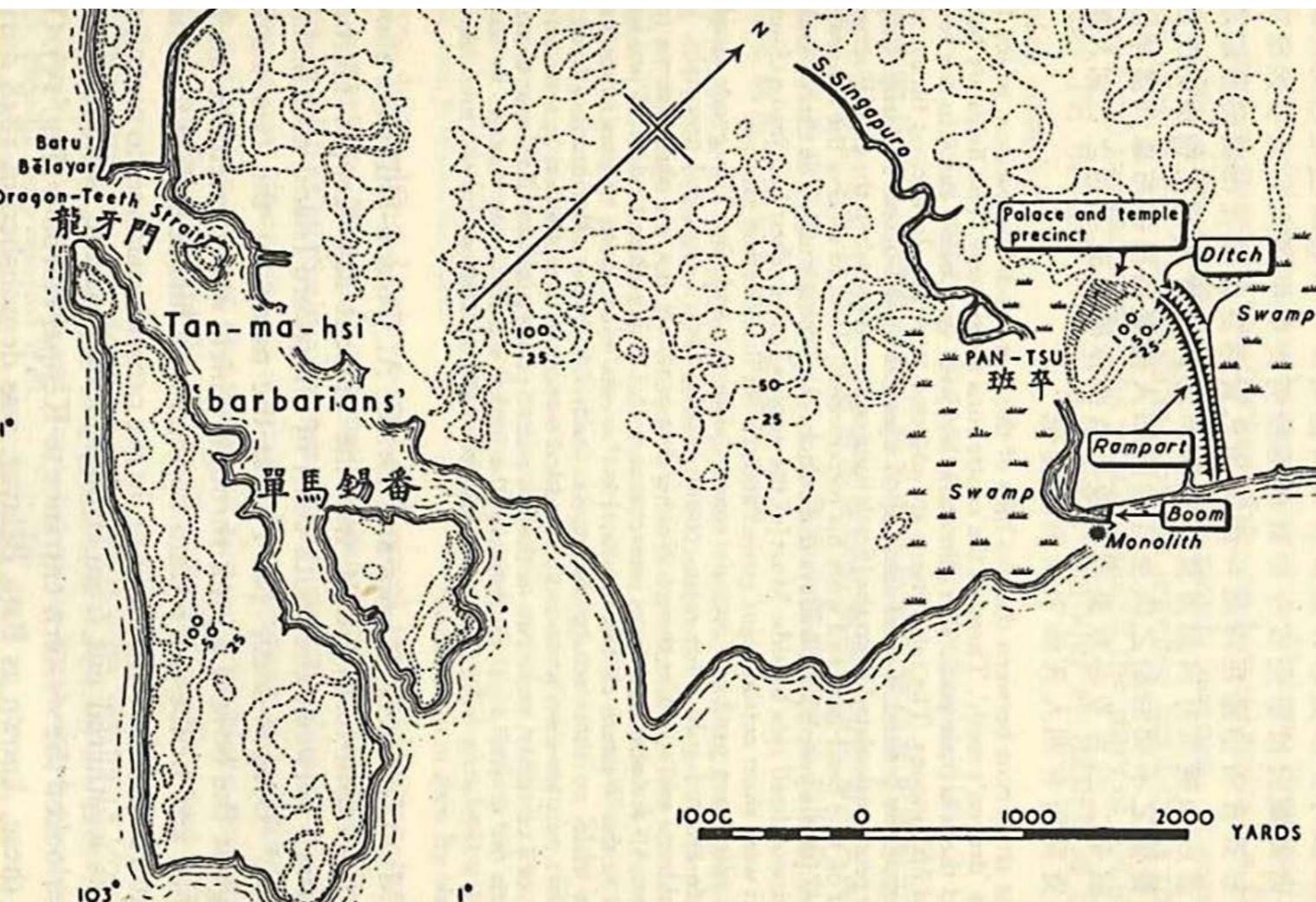
WHO WAS WANG DAYUAN?

Wang Dayuan, also known as Huan-zhang (换章), was born around 1311 in Nanchang (南昌), a prosperous port in Jiangxi (江西) Province, Quanzhou, China.¹⁴ He was the first Chinese to write extensively about Southeast Asia based on his personal experiences and published them in *Dao Yi Zhi Lue* (《岛夷志略》 or *Description of the Barbarians of the Isles in Brief*). Before Wang's book, there were several travel accounts written by others. However, these accounts were either based on hearsay or not as extensively documented as Wang's list of 99 locations.¹⁵ Furthermore, Wang's book contains the earliest surviving eyewitness account of ancient Singapore.¹⁶ These factors make *Dao Yi Zhi Lue* a valuable source on the pre-colonial history of Southeast Asia and Singapore.

Wang's book was originally published in 1349 as an appendix in a local gazetteer *Qing Yuan Xu Zhi* (《清源续志》 or *A Continuation of the History and Topography of Quanzhou*) by Wu Jian (吴鉴). In the preface, Wu stated that Wang travelled overseas twice and the account was a result of Wang tidying his notes written during the course of his two trips.¹⁷ Scholars have placed the years of the trips around 1330 and 1337 respectively.¹⁸

In his own postscript, Wang stated that the 1349 edition was known as *Dao Yi Zhi* (《岛夷志》 or *Description of the Barbarians of the Isles*). Another preface written by Zhang Zhu (张翥) relates that the account was re-published as a standalone travel account in 1350 in Nanchang, China. This particular edition is known as *Dao Yi Zhi Lue*.¹⁹

Construction of the new harbour in the 1880s, which was renamed Keppel Harbour in 1900. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.



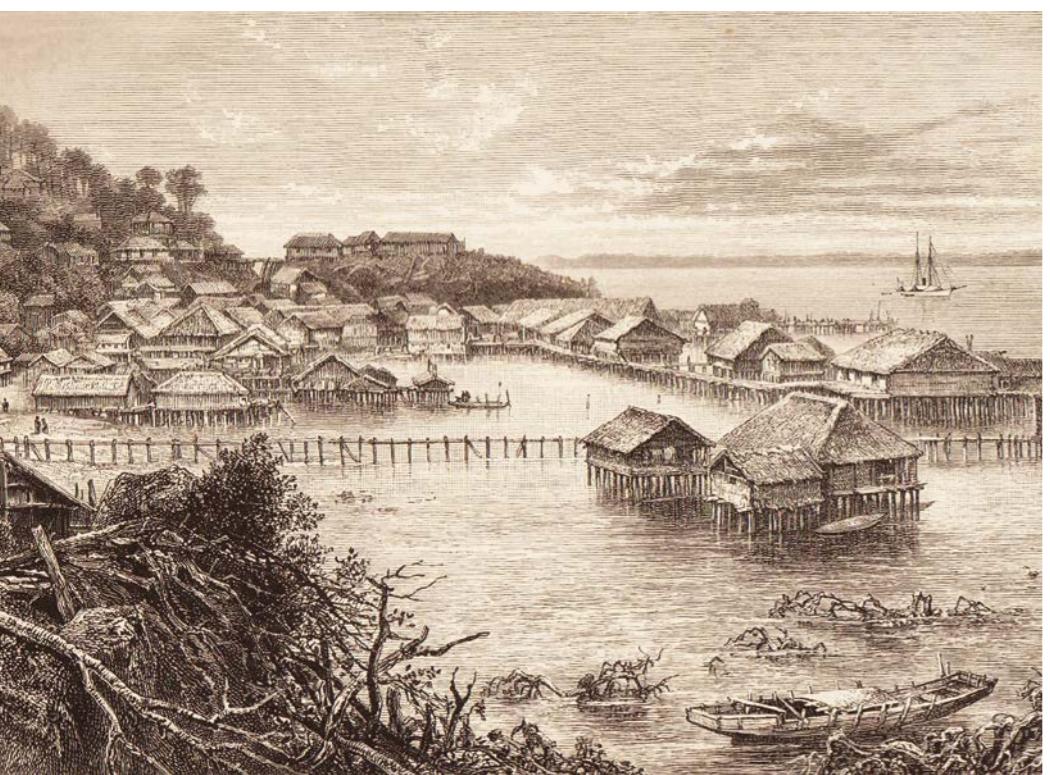
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Writing from the Periphery DOROTHY CATOR IN BRITISH NORTH BORNEO



Sandakan, formerly known as Elopura (1889). Courtesy of the Sabah Museum.

Janice Loo explains how the travel writings by women such as Dorothy Cator reveal the complex relationships between colonisers and the colonised.

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The journey was slow as the vessel steered carefully through treacherous waters riddled with corals and submerged islands. Gradually, the bay, "one of the finest harbours in the world",¹ came into view; its entrance guarded by "fine red sandstone cliffs backed with forest-clad hills rising to a height of about 800 feet."² Dick and Dorothy Cator had at last reached Sandakan, the capital of British North Borneo [present-day Sabah, Malaysia], where the newly wedded couple were to be based for more than two years between 1893 and 1896.³

Formerly known as Elopura, or "Beautiful City", Sandakan was a modest settlement perched on the edge of the British Empire adjacent to the Dutch East Indies. Singapore, the nearest centre of commerce and point of telegraphic communication with Europe, was literally 1,000 miles away.⁴ From this remote outpost, the pair made excursions off the coast to Taganak as well as deeper inland to the Gomanton Caves and Penungah, the furthest government station. Cator accompanied her husband, a magistrate in the British North Borneo Government, when official duties took him into the interior. It was from their encounters and interactions with indigenous communities in the famous "head-hunting country"⁵ that the title of her travelogue was derived.

At a glance, *Everyday Life Among the Head-hunters and Other Experiences*

East to West (1905) offered the standard fare in colonialist representations of the tropics. Descriptions of landscapes, flora and fauna, commercial products (sago, sugarcane, edible birds' nests, tobacco, timber) and local cultures (Chinese, Malays, Sulus, Dayaks, Dusuns, Bajows, Muruts) blended with anecdotes, impressions and musings to form a lively narrative made even more compelling by the author's indefatigable wit.

Although Cator identified with British imperialism, her account of North Borneo questioned the dominant discourses on gender and race that structured colonial society. While suggesting rhetorical alternatives, Cator's writings did not amount to counter-hegemonic resistance against the status quo but rather contained "moments of outbreak [and] discursive freedoms [...] when imperial and patriarchal conventions, though seldom disappearing, lose their hermeneutic force."⁶

WRITING POWER

Imperial dominance, in terms of cultural hegemony, was enacted in colonial travel writing, where the coloniser – epitomised by the "figure of the settler-colonial white man"⁷ – possessed and exercised "the capacity to build and sustain some truths about land and people, and to denigrate and marginalise them."⁸ Women, however, faced difficulties in adopting the same authoritative and imperialist narrative voice because of their interstitial position as the "inferior sex within the superior race,"⁹ betwixt power and the lack thereof.¹⁰

This can explain for the vacillations between self-assuredness and diffidence in Cator's attitude towards her writing, as seen in the "Introduction" of her book:

As I have travelled where no other white woman has ever been, and lived among practically unknown tribes both in Borneo and Africa, I have often been asked to write a book; but till now I have wisely refused, as I have no idea how it ought to be done. I have a hazy notion that I ought to know all about prehistoric and glacial periods, whereas they convey nothing to my mind; and the subject of composed and decomposed porphyrite rocks and metamorphic states is unintelligible gibberish to me: so if this ever appears in print, please don't expect too much.¹¹

Cator's claim to narrative authority, based on self-identification as a white woman with original, first-hand knowledge of unexplored territories and undiscovered

cultures, was undermined by her own confessed ignorance of how to systematically document what she knew. Cator acknowledged the epistemological superiority of science (incidentally a male domain), yet her tongue-in-cheek disparagement of its language as "unintelligible gibberish" seemed to indicate otherwise. Notwithstanding her self-deprecation, her ability to quote obscure geological terms could be seen as a subtle act of showing off while maintaining a cloak of modesty. Cator's negotiation of her feminine subjectivity at the intersection of gender and race in the colonial context produced some degree of ambivalence, self-contradiction and inconsistency in her writing.

WOMAN FOR EMPIRE

Female identification with imperialism typically echoed and endorsed masculine imperial rhetoric, which was rooted in white superiority and its "civilising" impulse. By invoking Eurocentric reasoning and Orientalist tropes (the "savage" native, the "enterprising" Chinese) recurrently deployed in the hegemonic (masculine) rhetoric of imperial domination, Cator took on the position of British (male) colonialism in an act of appropriation that signified both subversion and submission.¹²

Cator portrayed the different ethnic communities in North Borneo within the



The writer, Dorothy Cator. *Everyday Life Among the Head-Hunters* (1905).

overarching paradigm of a "Pax Britannica", emphasising the unprecedented peace and security afforded by firm but benevolent British governance. She described the Chinese as "a most industrious, law-abiding people *if only they are governed properly* [emphasis added]"¹³; the Dayaks "make splendid soldiers and best of friends, as they are faithful and trustworthy [...] Held *in with an iron hand* [emphasis added] they are very valuable [otherwise] they are worse than wild beasts"¹⁴; the Bajows, "a dark-skinned, wild sea-gypsy race roving from place to place – pirates *until the English*



This illustration of head-hunting Dayaks was featured in the *Illustrated London News* in October 1887. Courtesy of the Sabah Museum.

arrived [emphasis added], and the terror of the whole coast, but now living peaceable, quiet lives"¹⁵; likewise, the Dusuns "have settled down wonderfully quietly under British rule, and [gave] very little trouble."¹⁶ Recounting petty disputes that her husband helped resolve, Cator remarked that "the people's unquestioning confidence in the justice of an Englishman is very touching,"¹⁷ thus vindicating her conviction in the integrity and fairness of British rule.

Cator further underscored the superiority of British imperialism by representing the conduct of other European powers in diametric contrast as inhumane and unjust. She denounced the Spanish as "very bad colonists, cruel masters, who hate and are hated by the natives over whom they rule"¹⁸; the Dutch as being "inclined to look upon [the natives] as not merely a lower race than themselves, but lower than their animals" and they were responsible for the "most brutal cases of cruelty on the estates which [her husband] Dick and the other magistrates had to inquire into."¹⁹ This affirmed the conventional rationalisation for British intervention in terms of a moral obligation to rescue and extend protection to populations "outside the pale of civilisation."²⁰

Interestingly, Cator referenced narratives of feminine dominance in the domestic sphere, specifically the absolute superiority of the mistress to her servant, to justify colonial rule:

Black races [referring to the natives] were, of course, never meant to be in the same position as white ones, any more than a kitchenmaid of a house, however excellent she may be, is made to be the equal of her mistress. They were meant to serve, not to rule; and it is entirely our faults when they fail in positions of authority in which we have placed them, for which and to which they were neither qualified nor born, *but they wouldn't have been given legs unless they were meant to stand on them* [emphasis added].²¹

Cator assumed the paternalist (or rather, maternalist) and patronising stance of the well-meaning colonial parent who claimed full responsibility for the failings of her native charges; this implied that it was native incompetence that necessitated colonial supervision. However, there appears to be an abrupt twist in the last sentence; the idiom "standing on your two feet" suggests that the native had the capacity to be independent and self-reliant. On that note, Cator's endorsement of British imperialism and its ideological underpinnings nevertheless does not preclude other ruminations



A Murut hunter. Courtesy of the Sabah Museum.



The writer crossing a swamp in British North Borneo. *Everyday Life Among the Head-Hunters* (1905).

and self-reflexive critique that potentially disrupt the hegemonic discourse.

TALKING BACK

Empire conjured a romantic image of bold and industrious "pioneer men taming wild terrains into productivity and profitability"²² that stressed ideal white masculinity as "physical, responsible, productive and hard-working."²³ Women were excluded from this vision; Cator likened colonial society in Sandakan to "all other European communities in the Far East, where it is an understood thing that only the men should work and the ladies sleep and amuse themselves."²⁴ The fairer sex was presumed to make no active contribution to the imperial endeavour.

In response to the opinion of one governor that North Borneo was "no place for ladies,"²⁵ Cator had begged to differ, explaining that "every lady by her mere presence ought to help to keep up the standard of a place."²⁶ By recreating British domestic and social life on the imperial frontier, women (specifically, wives) were regarded as bearers of white civilisation who kept their men from "going native"²⁷, thereby preserving colonial respectability and prestige.²⁸ Cator not only defended the role of women (albeit in a way that reinforced patriarchal discourses of femininity) but went further by countering that "it was certainly no place for boys."²⁹ "Boy" connoted male immaturity, inexperience and the proclivity for trouble and mischief – qualities that were inimical to empire-making. "We had among us the riff-raff of the world," Cator complained, "and boys sent out without any religion or reverence for anything above themselves..."³⁰

While Cator was not against imperialism, she was intensely critical of the haphazard and careless manner in which colonial rule was imposed:

It is a great pity that men and even boys, totally ignorant of native life and customs, are sent to rule, or rather to experiment on them, for it is nothing else but learning by blunder after blunder – a bitter experience to the native, if not to them – the things which belong to the peace of the country they have been sent to govern. Cases of this kind are constant, and might so easily be avoided. No one at home would dream of turning into their schoolrooms governesses who had not only never seen children, but had had no training in the art of teaching; and yet that is what we are doing constantly in out-of-the-way parts of the world, [emphasis added] because at the moment there is no one with any experience to send. Inexperience does such incalculable harm that one can't help feeling how far better it would be to leave the natives alone till the necessary experience has been gained, even if it should risk an intertribal war [emphasis added].³¹

Here, Cator drew an analogy using a different figure of feminine authority, the English governess, to the effect of exposing the severe shortcomings in colonial governance that could conceivably cast doubts on the idea of British superiority. Yet, imperial rhetoric remained intact as Cator continued to believe in the necessity of British intervention – it was a matter of having qualified administrators. Moreover,



View of Mount Kinabalu (background) from the Tempasuk River (1889). Courtesy of the Sabah Museum.

it was assumed that North Borneo would revert to a state of violence and anarchy in the absence of its white civilisers.

On the other hand, there were instances in which imperial rhetoric was exposed as sheer hypocrisy. The constructed differences that separated coloniser from colonised and legitimised the supremacy of the former over the latter was questioned when it came to the indigenous practice of head-hunting as Cator exclaimed:

"I don't want to stand up for head-hunting, it isn't nice! We civilised nations call it murder, and it is murder. But who are we to throw stones? [Emphasis added] Aren't the means we take to satisfy our unquenchable thirst for gain, murder? [...] And in our murder are any good qualities necessary? None! But fighting brings out the noblest parts of a savage, and in their home-life love and content reign; but civilised murder means misery and discontent, and homes turned into hell. If we took a being from some other planet and made him look at the two pictures, Barbarism and Civilisation, side by side – Paganism and Christianity – I don't think his verdict as to who wanted the most teaching would be the same as ours."³²

Despite occupying a marginal position in the masculine space of the British Empire, the voices of women writing in colonial contexts, as exemplified by Cator, could be

- 7 Dipesh Chakrabarty. (2000). *Provincialising Europe. Postcolonial thought and historical difference* (p. 5). Princeton: Princeton University Press, quoted in Levine, P. (2004). Introduction: why gender and empire? (p. 6). In Levine, P. (Ed.). *Gender and empire*. New York: Oxford University Press.
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- 10 Doran (1998, June), p. 176.
- 11 Cator (1905), 'Introduction'.
- 12 Morgan (1996), p. 19.
- 13 Cator (1905), p. 52.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 60–61.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- 22 Levine (2004), p. 7.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 Cator (1905), p. 16.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 Meaning to adopt local ways, for example, in dress, language, mannerisms, diet and so on.
- 28 Brownfoot, J. N. (1984). *Memsahibs in colonial Malaya: a study of European wives in a British colony and protectorate 1900–1940* (pp. 189–190). In Callan, H. & Ardener, S. (Eds.). *The incorporated wife*. London: Croon Helm.
- 29 Cator (1905), p. 15.
- 30 *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- 32 *Ibid.*, pp. 105–106.

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- Ibid.*, p. 14.
- Background information on the Cators was sorely lacking in *Everyday life among the head-hunters* as the author generally omitted names of persons, dates and other biographical details. The following profile of Dick Cator in North Borneo was gleaned from the 1890 to 1895 editions of *The Singapore and Straits Directory*. Dick Cator began his stint in the British North Borneo Government in 1889/90 as a 3rd Class Magistrate at Province Alcock. By 1891, he had transferred to Sandakan, becoming a cadet in the East Coast District and a 3rd Class Magistrate at the Police Court & Court of Requests, Sandakan. He was appointed Acting Assistant Government Secretary in 1892. The next year he returned home to fetch Dorothy. The pair married in London and immediately left for North Borneo. By 1894, Dick was Secretary to the Governor and promoted to 2nd Class Magistrate. He continued to be Secretary in 1895 but relinquished his position as Magistrate. Dorothy Cator was listed in the "Ladies' Directory" of British North Borneo for the years 1894 and 1895. The Cators ceased to be listed in the *Directory* from 1896 onwards.
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Since Independence, Singapore has witnessed many dramatic changes to its urban landscape. The overcrowded city centre of the 1960s characterised by slums, filthy drains, congested roads and ageing infrastructure has been replaced by a modern business and financial hub. The streets are safe and clean, and lined with buildings that provide a vibrant mix of retail and entertainment activities. Beyond the city limits lies an impressive network of self-sufficient towns. Not only do these towns provide good quality homes and ample recreational space for residents, they are also connected to the city and each other by an efficient transportation system.

The changes to Singapore's urban landscape have been shaped by a land use strategy that has been evolving for the past five decades in tandem with the nation's changing needs. These changes have been systematic and implemented under the guidance of the Concept Plan – the country's strategic land use and transportation plan. By examining Singapore's previous concept plans as well as their objectives and directions, the article will assess the impact of this planning instrument in transforming the country's physical landscape.

RAFFLES TOWN PLAN AND THE 1958 MASTER PLAN

Land use planning in Singapore is not a recent concept. In fact, the first town plan of Singapore was drawn up by surveyor Lieutenant Philip Jackson in 1823. Widely referred to as the Raffles Town Plan, it was based on instructions by Stamford Raffles to the town committee in November 1822.¹ The aim of the town plan was to ensure "an economical and proper allotment of the ground intended to form the site of the principal town".² To this end, the plan parcelled the proposed town area, located within a 2- to 3-kilometre radius from the Singapore River, into distinctive districts for the seat of government, merchants and each of the major ethnic communities, namely the Chinese, Malays, Indians and Europeans.³

The Raffles Town Plan largely dictated the physical development of the city centre until the 1870s. However, the effectiveness of the colonial plan began to erode as it succumbed to the pressure of the settle-

Planning a Nation The Concept Plan

Singapore's towering skyscrapers and its evolving landscape is by no means accidental. **Lim Tin Seng** walks us through the country's various Concept Plans, each carefully put together in response to the city's changing needs.

ment's ballooning population – 10,683 in 1834 to 137,722 by the end of 1881.⁴ In the absence of an updated town plan and proper controls, the city centre was described in the press as a "pig sty" by the turn of the century.⁵ It was severely overcrowded, disorganised and polluted, compounded by huge pockets of slums and hampered by congested roads.⁶

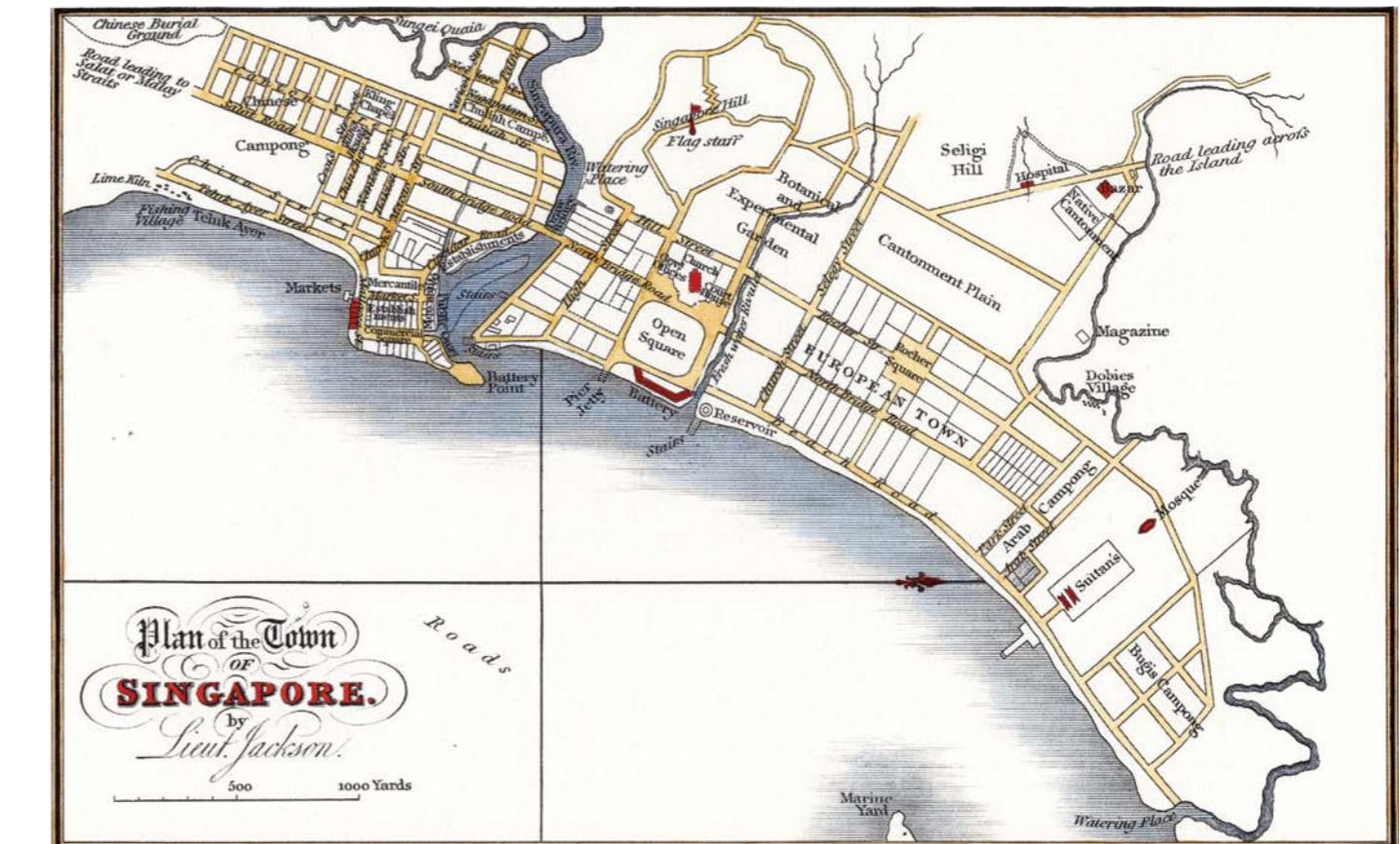
As the population explosion continued throughout the pre-war and immediate post-war years – almost reaching 1 million by the end of 1947 – it became clear to the colonial government that something had to be done to address the deteriorating living conditions in the city.⁷ The Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) was set up in 1927 to alleviate the overcrowding and housing problems in the city area by building low- to medium-rise flats, but the attempt met with little success.⁸ The lack of housing fuelled the growth of the squatter population that rose to about 150,000 (15 percent of the total population) in 1953.⁹ To prevent the problem from escalating further, the colonial government decided to re-introduce the idea of a planned environment to regulate the physical development of the city centre.¹⁰

In 1951, following an amendment to the Singapore Improvement Ordinance, the SIT was tasked with conducting an island-wide survey of Singapore to prepare a master

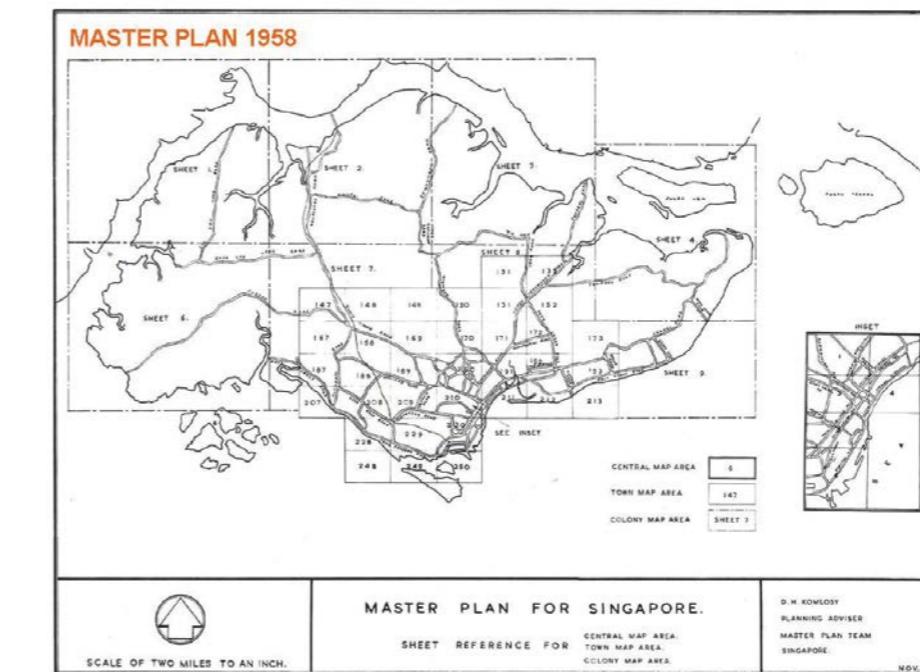
plan to guide its physical growth for the next 20 years.¹¹ The statutory master plan, completed in 1955 and approved in 1958, was Singapore's first long-term land use plan since the Raffles Town Plan.¹² Using survey data on population, land use, traffic, employment and industrial development, the 1958 Master Plan provided a general framework for the orderly physical development of Singapore and the optimal use of land.¹³ It set regulations for land use through zoning and controlled the intensity of development on land sites through density for residential use and plot ratio for non-residential use.¹⁴

The Master Plan also catered land for schools, infrastructural facilities and recreational use, including a green belt to limit the expansion of the city.¹⁵ Most importantly, it accounted for the creation of new satellite towns such as Woodlands, Bulim (now a sub-zone of Jurong West) and Yio Chu Kang that were located away from the city centre.¹⁶ This concept was an idea borrowed from the Greater London Plan of 1944 and sought to tackle the acute overcrowding and housing problems by moving people away from the city centre to outlying areas.¹⁷

Despite the comprehensive planning, the 1958 Master Plan was fundamentally a static concept, providing for limited and predictable change and for a city of finite size.¹⁸ The land use changes it proposed



(Above) Plan of the Town of Singapore, 1823, by Lt. Philip Jackson, which is also known as the Raffles Town Plan. Jackson, L. (1822). *Plan of the town of Singapore*. London: J & C Walker. (Left) Map 2: 1958 Master Plan © Urban Redevelopment Authority. All rights reserved.



were based on the assumption that urban growth would be slow and steady, premised on a projected population of 2 million by 1972.¹⁹ The plan also assumed that the private rather than the public sector would lead the physical development of the city after Singapore achieved full internal self-government in 1959.²⁰ With such a rigid and limited scope, the 1958 Master Plan was unable to respond to the country's land use pattern which changed dramatically after the newly elected People's Action Party (PAP) government introduced a series of large-scale housing and industrial projects.²¹ Recognising the ineffectiveness of the Master Plan, the government decided to review the plan's planning strategies with the intention of replacing them with a more responsive instrument to facilitate long-term planning in land use.²²

FROM STATIC TO STRATEGIC: THE CONCEPT PLAN

To find a new approach, the government sought the help of the United Nations (UN), which sent two teams in 1962 and 1963 respectively to review the effectiveness of the 1958 Master Plan. Both teams agreed that the 1958 plan was conceptually too conservative and recommended that it should be replaced, and that the process of planning be institutionalised and co-ordinated in action programmes for greater efficiency.²³ The culmination of the UN review process was the launch of the State and City Planning (SCP) project to prepare for a new long-range comprehensive land use plan to guide the physical development of the country. The resulting plan, which was one of the 13 "ideas" plans produced subsequently, would later be unveiled in 1971 as the first Concept Plan of Singapore.²⁴

Unlike the 1958 Master Plan, the Concept Plan is a strategic long-range land use and transportation plan that provides broad directions to guide Singapore's physical development. It expresses the government's long-term planning intentions for the nation's territory as a whole.²⁵

To ensure the directions set in the Concept Plan are relevant and responsive to the changing needs of the nation, it was agreed that the non-statutory document would be reviewed every 10 years.²⁶ The preparation of the Concept Plan was a collective effort that involved other government agencies as well as the public so that the planning would take all major land use demands – such as housing, industry and commerce, recreation and nature areas, transport and utility infrastructure – into consideration.²⁷

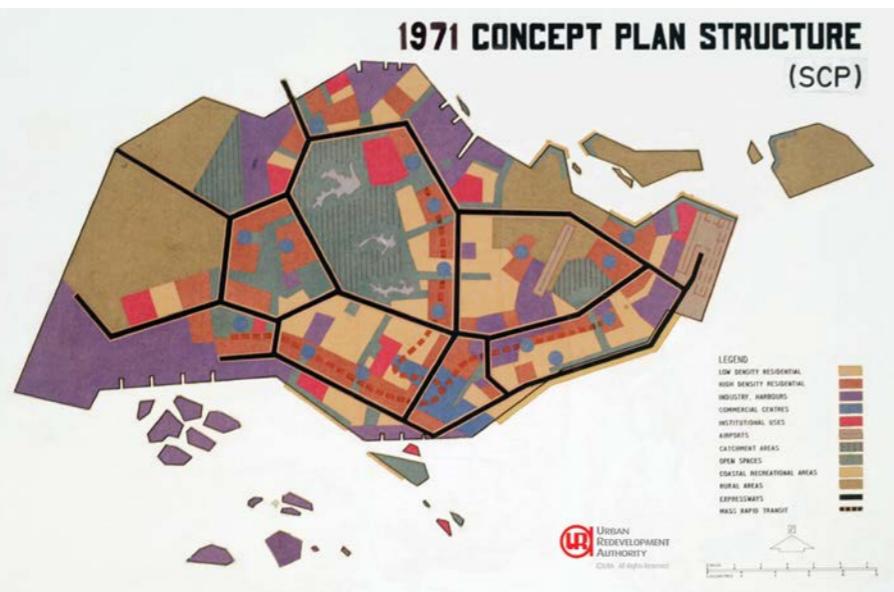
In retrospect, the Concept Plan was vastly different from the planning approach of the Master Plan as the latter only concentrated on sectoral needs, particularly housing.²⁸ From the very beginning, the SCP project was made up of a number of departments – with the Planning Department as its nucleus, comprising staff from the Urban Renewal Department, the Housing and Development Board and the Public Works Department. In addition, the SCP team worked closely with the United Nations Development Programme, bringing in planning practices and expertise that were conducive to the drafting of the first Concept Plan.²⁹

Interestingly, the injection of the Concept Plan into Singapore's land planning strategy has not rendered the Master Plan irrelevant. As the Concept Plan is a planning instrument that provides the backdrop for the preparation of the Master Plan, the latter remains an integral stage in overall land planning. The Master Plan functions as the statutory tool that guides the physical development of Singapore by translating the broad long-term strategies of the Concept Plan into detailed plans showing the permissible land use and development density for every parcel of land.³⁰ To ensure that the planning principles in the Master Plan do not stay static, it is reviewed every five years.³¹

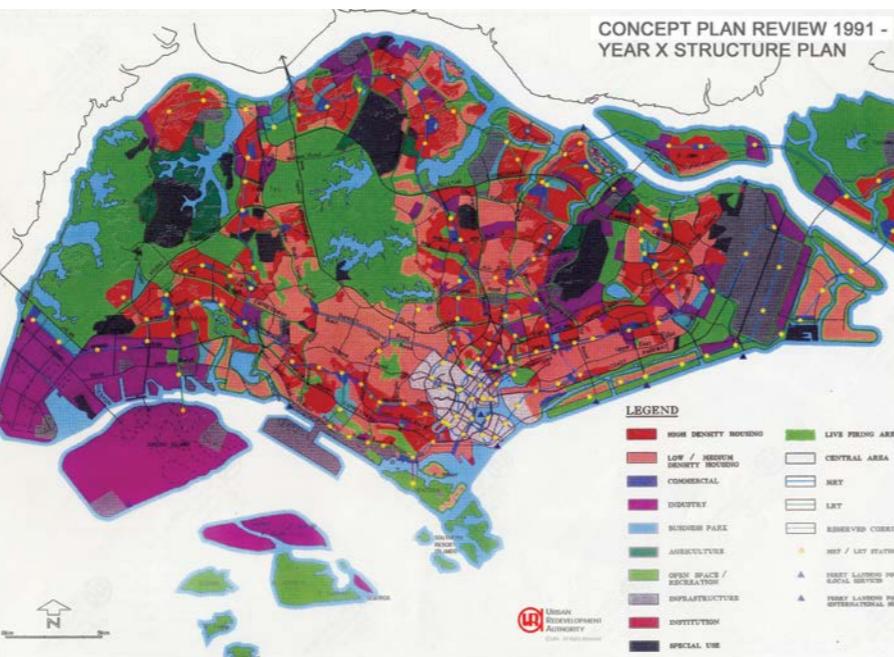
Based on the planning directions set out in the Concept Plan and Master Plan, land for development is then released through the Government Land Sales (GLS) programme. Singapore's built heritage is not forgotten in this strategy as conservation plans are also drawn up to preserve the city's overall urban design.³² All these different stages of planning and implementation ensure that the country's limited land resources are optimised to the fullest and the urban environment made attractive.³³

THE 1971 CONCEPT PLAN

The Concept Plan has been revised several times since its introduction in 1971. In each revision, an overall strategy was adopted to ensure that the country's land use plans meet the changing needs of the nation. New features were added based on these



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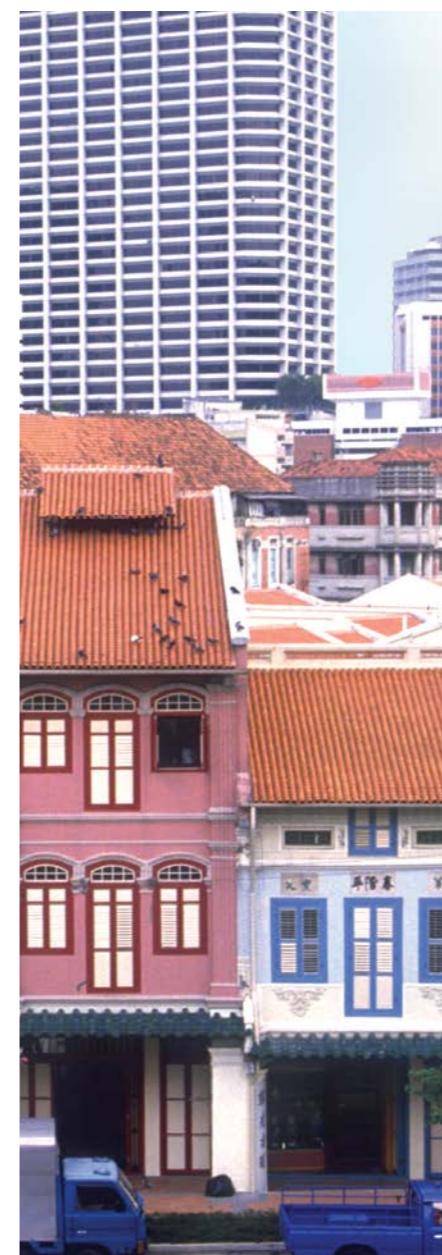


1991 Concept Plan © Urban Redevelopment Authority. All rights reserved.

strategies, which in turn had a profound effect on Singapore's physical landscape. For instance, the 1971 Concept Plan was drafted with the infrastructure needs of a new nation in mind. As such, the plan was instrumental in laying the foundation of Singapore's transportation infrastructure.³⁴ Key transport developments such as Changi Airport, the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system and the island-wide network of expressways were the outcomes of strategies outlined in the 1971 Concept Plan.³⁵ Apart from serving the needs of an industrialised economy, these developments also facilitated the "Ring Plan" structure.³⁶

The Ring Plan was the 1971 Concept Plan's strategy to move the population,

projected to hit 4 million by 1991, out of the overcrowded central area to outlying satellite towns. This is similar to the satellite town concept proposed in the 1958 Master Plan, albeit on a grander scale. The Ring Plan is a ring of high-density satellite residential towns encircling the central water catchment area.³⁷ Populated with mostly medium-density and high-density public housing, the plan was for the towns to be linked to each other as well as to the Jurong Industrial Estate and the city area by the MRT and expressways. At the same time, the satellite towns were to be separated from each other by a system of parks and green spaces – another key feature of Singapore's present landscape.³⁸ The central area was



Shophouses in the Tanjong Pagar area were among the first heritage structures to be restored in 1987. MITA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

designed to be a strong financial business district to attract foreign capital as well as local investments and expedite Singapore's industrialisation programme.³⁹

THE 1991 CONCEPT PLAN

The 1971 Concept Plan was subsequently reviewed and replaced by the 1991 Concept Plan. The new Concept Plan came at a very different period in Singapore's history; by this time many problems linked with the colonial era, such as housing and unemployment, had been effectively ironed out. Moreover, the country was on the verge of reaching developed status with one of the strongest economies and highest GDP per capita in

Asia.⁴⁰ With this change in socio-economic status, the vision of the 1991 Concept Plan was to turn Singapore into a Tropical City of Excellence that balanced work, play, culture and commerce by Year X beyond 2010.⁴¹

To realise this higher quality of living, the Concept Plan introduced a "Green Blue Plan", which identified a connected network of parks, natural green spaces and waterways to create more leisure and recreational opportunities for the people.⁴² It also proposed conservation efforts to safeguard Singapore's built heritage in the city centre and measures to promote the arts and culture.⁴³ In fact, the museum precinct around the foot of Fort Canning, the National Library building on Victoria Street and the network of public libraries around the island are all results of the 1991 Concept Plan.⁴⁴

To meet the needs of the changing economic structure, particularly to facilitate the growth of high-technology industries, the 1991 Concept Plan called for the creation of technological corridors. Comprising business parks, science parks and academic institutions, these corridors were designed to provide researchers with integrated working, living and leisure environments. Situated near existing tertiary institutions, these corridors aim to facilitate the exchange of ideas and innovation among researchers at all levels.⁴⁵ The establishment of Science Park and One-North in the western part of Singapore near the National University of Singapore and Singapore Polytechnic are the outcomes of this proposal.⁴⁶ Besides technological corridors, the Concept Plan catered for other value-added industries, proposing for the amalgamation of the southern islands off Jurong to support the development of a petrochemical industry.⁵⁰ It also planned for a new downtown to be created in Marina South to expand the business district.⁵¹

The 1991 Concept Plan also included the creation of 10 new satellite towns to accommodate a population that was projected to hit 3.23 million by 2000. It also revised the 1971 Ring Plan to a "Constellation Plan". Based on a policy of decentralisation, this housing strategy was to "fan" the commercial centres out to the heartlands so that jobs could be brought closer to homes and alleviate congestion in the city centre. The plan called for the development of regional and sub-regional commercial centres that would be served by new expressways and MRT lines.⁵² This led to the development of the Woodlands, Tampines and Jurong East regional centres respectively in the northern, eastern and western parts of Singapore as well as the introduction of the North-East MRT line and the Paya Lebar Expressway.⁵³

PRESERVING HERITAGE

One of the most enduring impacts of the nation's town planning efforts was the launch of the conservation programme in the 1980s. Prior to that, the lack of an articulated conservation plan had resulted in the demolition of many buildings with historical and architectural significance such as Bukit Rose in Bukit Timah, the Old China Building and the Old Arcade in the name of progress.⁴⁵ As noted in the 1991 Concept Plan, the aim of conservation is to preserve the nation's built heritage so that historic buildings can be used as physical landmarks that illustrate Singapore's rich, multi-ethnic background.⁴⁶ The first shophouses to be conserved and restored were in Tanjong Pagar in 1987. Thereafter, over 7,000 heritage buildings and structures in more than 100 locations were gazetted for conservation. These buildings were selected based on their architectural significance and rarity; cultural, social, religious and historical significance; contribution to the environment and identity; and economic impact.⁴⁷

THE 2001 CONCEPT PLAN

The focus of the 2001 Concept Plan was to turn Singapore into a thriving world-class city in the 21st century by creating a "live-work-play environment, a dynamic city for business, leisure and entertainment", as well as "a deep sense of identity by creating a distinctive and delightful city".⁵⁴ Projecting the population to hit 5.5 million by 2051 – which in reality had already reached 5.39 million in 2013 due to liberal immigration policies⁵⁵ – the 2001 Concept Plan promised a wider choice of housing options and types, whether high-rise or otherwise, to meet different lifestyle needs and aspirations as well as to inject vibrancy into the central area.⁵⁶ It also proposed extending existing MRT lines by constructing an extensive rail network based on an orbital and radial concept.⁵⁷ This proposal led to the introduction of the Circle Line, Downtown Line and upcoming Thomson and Eastern Region Lines.⁵⁸

A Parks and Waterbodies Plan was introduced along with the Concept Plan, proposing initiatives such as the enlargement of existing parks, better distribution of parks throughout the island, greater access to nature areas, development of four new waterfront parks and expansion of the park connector network. The plan resulted in the Sengkang Riverside Park and Woodlands Regional Park.⁵⁹ It also led to the Southern

Ridges trail, the expansion of the park connector network to over 200 kilometres and the creation of rooftop, vertical and balcony gardens to enhance the greening of buildings and streetscapes.⁶⁰

2013 LAND USE PLAN

The most recent review of the Concept Plan was carried out in 2011. However, the process was extended to take into account a public feedback exercise led by the National Population & Talent Division (NPTD).⁶¹ Findings from the Concept Plan review were later released as part of the 2013 Land Use Plan, a document by the Ministry of National Development outlining the land use strategies to provide the physical capacity to sustain a high-quality living environment for a possible population range of 6.5 to 6.9 million by 2030 (as projected in the 2013 Population White Paper, the result of the NPTD's population discussion).⁶²

The key findings included: the creation of more people-centric homes; incorporation of the principles of community and inter-generational bonding in the design of public housing; better community facilities and infrastructure; expanding existing public transportation and park connector systems; strengthening the nation's green infrastructure; and protecting the country's built heritage.⁶³ These findings serve as the backdrop for a number of initiatives in the Land Use Plan. For example, the "Remaking Our Heartland" programme hopes to redevelop older estates such as East Coast, Yishun and Queenstown with more people-centric homes and multi-generational facilities, while the "City in the Garden" vision will see the creation of more parks and a 150-kilometre Round-Island-Route that will link the major built and natural heritage landmarks of Singapore.⁶⁴

MORE CONCEPT PLANS AHEAD

It is clear that the government will continue to use the Concept Plans to express its long-term planning intentions. Through a collective consultative process with relevant government agencies and the public, the Concept Plan of the future will continue to chart the land use and infrastructure development of Singapore, create solutions to safeguard the environment, sustain the economy and improve the quality of living for future generations. The Concept Plans will also be reviewed regularly so that they can remain flexible and responsive in order to meet the changing needs of the nation.♦

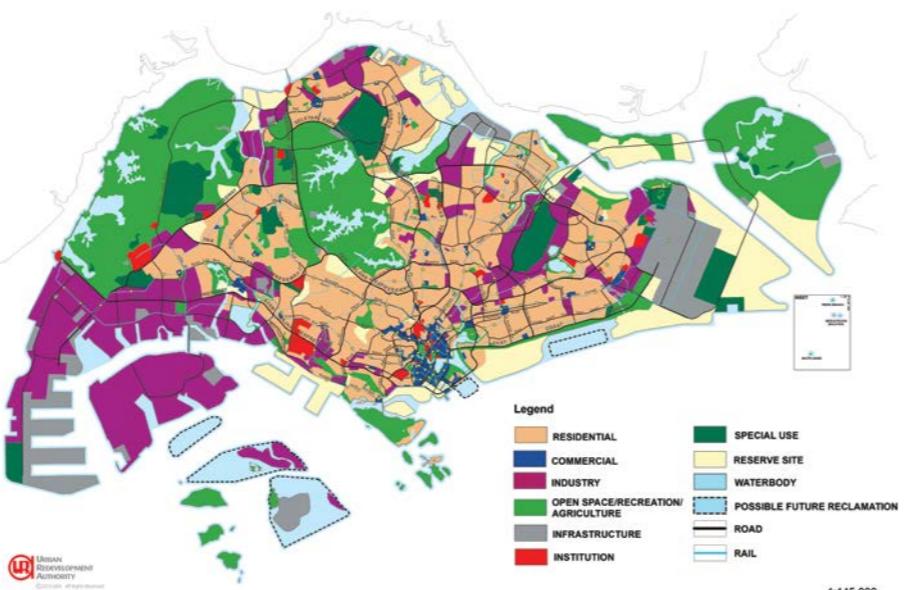


The development of Marina Bay downtown was first proposed in the 1991 Concept Plan. Courtesy of Gardens by the Bay.

MARINA BAY DOWNTOWN: A VISION FROM 1991

Spanning 360 hectares, Marina Bay downtown is the extension of Singapore's central business district along Shenton Way. It is a waterfront business district similar to London's Canary Wharf and Shanghai's Pudong.⁶⁵ Most people think of the glittering Marina Bay area as a 21st century addition to the skyline when in actual fact the new downtown plan was first proposed in the 1991 Concept Plan, and the massive land reclamation project to create Marina Bay actually started in the 1970s.⁶⁶ Marina Bay is different from other urban areas in Singapore in

that it encourages a mix of commercial, residential and entertainment activities in land usage. This is to ensure vibrancy in the area around the clock. To facilitate this, "white" site zoning was introduced to demarcate sites for mixed-use development.⁶⁷ This different planning approach is clearly reflected in the skyline of Marina Bay as its glass and steel financial buildings stand side-by-side with high-rise luxury apartments while overlooking green spaces such as Gardens by the Bay and the entertainment and dining hub of Marina Bay Sands.



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OVER ORCHARD

Orchard Road as we know it today is a far cry from its quiet beginnings as a plantation and residential area. **Fiona Tan** takes us back in time to revisit some of Orchard's most distinctive landmarks.

Fiona Tan is an Assistant Archivist (Outreach) with the National Archives of Singapore. Fairly new to the occupation but not the institution, she firmly believes that archival research often yields unexpected finds for those who persevere. She continues to promote the quirky and curious nature of the archives through her work. She thanks Eric Chin, Irene Lim, June Pok, Janelle Chua, Denise Ng and Noor Fadilah Yusof for their inputs to this article.



Orchard Road, named after the fruit orchards and nutmeg plantations that were wiped out by plant diseases in the late 1860s, continued to be lined by other surviving trees well into the early 1900s, as seen in this image. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.



The overhead link between the two buildings that comprise Orchard Gateway today harkens back to the railway bridge (1903–1932) that was once found in Orchard Road. It is a reminder that we can find resemblances of the past in Orchard Road's present if we look hard enough – perhaps some consolation to Tan Wee Him (see quote below) and his like-minded peers. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

I think Orchard Road has been transformed into a very commercialised district. You really can't find a place for some quietness... Of course in terms of shopping, I think it is now, even better than Oxford Street in London...

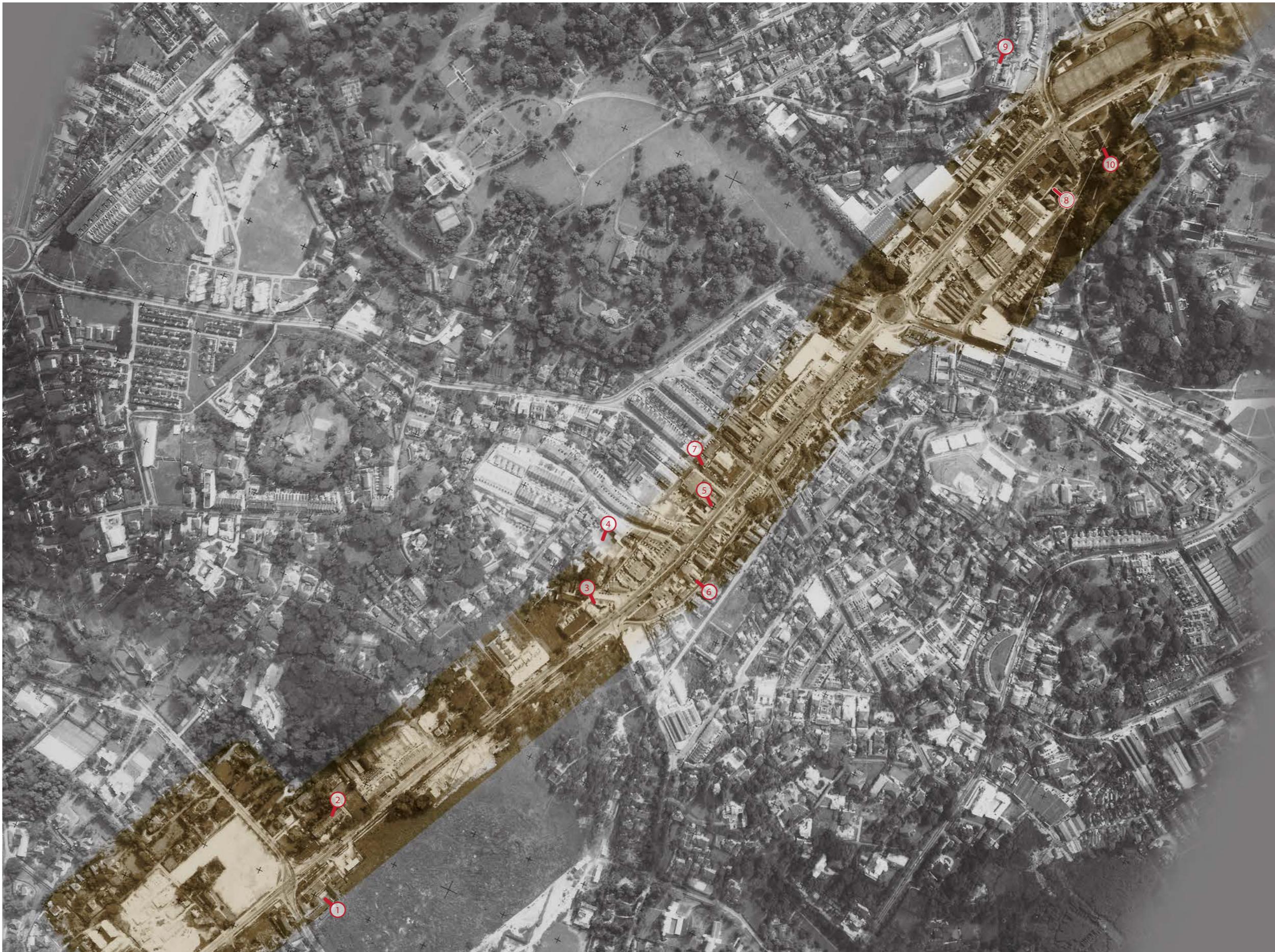
Of course, it speaks well and good for our economy. But maybe a bit of our soul is lost in the name of progress. Perhaps, we cannot hold back progress. But perhaps, every time when we move forward, we have to think a bit of the past and try to maintain perhaps a resemblance of something of the past, not just this little bronze or plaque that you find on the pedestrian walkway, what tree or what it used to be... For example, as I said, Fitzpatrick's [supermarket], the electronic door. Or perhaps, you know not many people knew Orchard Cinema was the first location of the first escalator in Singapore. That signifies the first step of progress, you see. I think these are moments that our people need to know. So that we can remember our past, and then appreciate today, and look forward to the changes ahead.

Tan Wee Him, who spent his formative years in the 1950s and 1960s in Orchard Road.
Courtesy of an interview with the Oral History Centre.¹

It is hard to imagine the Orchard Road of yesteryear, as Tan Wee Him reminds us, when looking at the multiple transformations it has undergone over time. Originally a hilly suburban fringe sandwiched between the main commercial town area and Tanglin, Orchard Road is now arguably Singapore's most iconic street. The bustling street lined with shiny megamalls is almost unrecognisable from the cluster of spice plantations and fruit orchards it was in the early 19th century, and later, for a large part of the 20th century, a suburban residential and commercial street lined with low-rise shophouses.

irememberOrchard is an exhibition that traces the transformation of Orchard Road through personal recollections and stories. Through archival photographs, oral history interviews from the Oral History Centre (OHC), memories collected by the Singapore Memory Project (SMP) as well as stories recounted in published sources and newspapers, the exhibition uncovers the many layers of Orchard Road through time and space. The exhibition, which runs from 23 October 2014 to April 2015 at the new library@Orchard at Orchard Gateway, is testimony that places are a tapestry of overlapping stories, with the past never fully fading away.

The specific stretch of Orchard Road covered in the aerial map (see overleaf) – which is a composite of three separate aerial photographs taken in 1957 – stretches from Tanglin Circus on the bottom left and ends at the Young Men's Christian Association building on the top right. This article only highlights 10 of the landmarks along Orchard Road. Visitors who want to enjoy the full experience should visit the exhibition, where a 3.5m by 3.5m version of the map, accompanying display panels and a Kinect station that allows visitors to download more information, will transport people back into the Orchard Road of times past.

**LEGEND**

1. Orchard Road Police Station
2. C. K. Tang
3. Heeren Building
4. Singapore Chinese Girls' School
5. Cold Storage
6. Pavilion
7. Koek Road hawkers
8. Amber Mansions
9. Cathay Building
10. Young Men's Christian Association

Note: This image is a composite of three aerial photographs of the South Central region taken by the Royal Air Force, dated 14 February 1957. Orchard Road – from Young Men's Christian Association building (top right) to Tanjong Katong (bottom left) – is highlighted. Graphics with thanks to Kingsmen Pte Ltd.

Landmarks identified based on 1957 *Singapore Street Directory and Guide*, (Singapore: Survey Dept, 1957) and *Over Singapore: 50 years ago: An aerial view in the 1950s* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet in association with NAS, 2007) by Brenda Yeoh & Theresa Wong.

01 ORCHARD ROAD POLICE STATION

Rebuilt in 1922 as quarters for policemen, the police station was a familiar landmark at the junction of Orchard Road, Scotts Road and Paterson Road. One interesting feature of the police station was its five chimneys at the rear of the building where the kitchen was once located.² Orchard Road Police station was the 'E' Division Headquarters and thus responsible for a precinct with a population of approximately 230,000, comprising the areas of Bukit Batok, Bukit Timah, Tanglin, Ulu Pandan, Cairnhill, River Valley, Kim Seng, Havelock, Bukit Ho Swee, and parts of Boon Lay and Jurong. The building was demolished in 1982 and the site is now occupied by ION Orchard.³

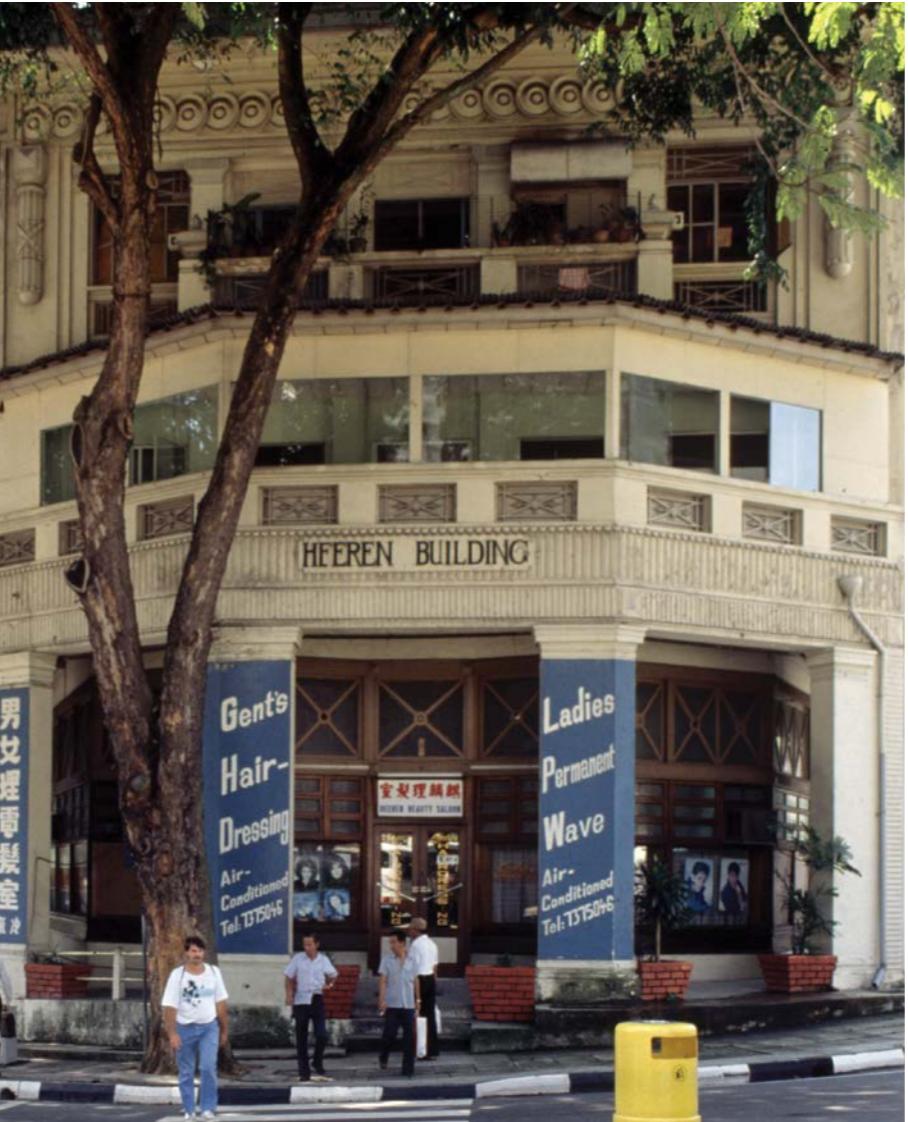
Orchard Road Police Station in the 1950s. *Singapore Police Force collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*



02 C. K. TANG

Now a household name, C. K. Tang started out in a nondescript shophouse in River Valley Road before moving to Orchard Road in 1958. Founder Tang Choon Keng ignored superstition and selected a location opposite the Tai San Ting Teochew cemetery, setting up what would become an Oriental landmark in Orchard Road.⁵ Designed by Ang Eng Leng, the building's unique green-tiled sloping roofs and red doors were said to be modelled after the Imperial Palace in the Forbidden City in Beijing.⁶ The green roof tiles were produced in Kuala Lumpur, while the carvings adorning the eaves were made by Teochew craftsmen in Singapore.⁷ Elements of this design still remain in the new Tangs building today and the adjacent Marriott Hotel (formerly Dynasty Hotel), both of which were completed in 1982.

C. K. Tang in the 1960s. It was demolished in 1982, replaced with an enlarged Tangs and Dynasty Hotel (now Marriott Hotel).⁴ Courtesy of Bill Johnston.



03 HEEREN BUILDING

Located at the junction of Orchard Road and Cairnhill Road, Heeren Building was designed by Keys and Dowdeswell, a Shanghai architectural firm also responsible for Capitol Cinema and Fullerton Hotel.⁸ A more modest three-storey building in the firm's typical pseudo-Classical style, the Heeren featured long cantilevered balconies and a strong cornice as prominent elements, similar to Capitol Cinema.⁹ It was a familiar sight and home to many beloved establishments such as the Heeren beauty salon, Beethoven Music House and even a fur shop! Tan Wee Him recalls:

Now, Heeren Building is another old colonial building, three or four storeys. Right at the corner is a barber shop, facing the traffic light junction. And that row, in the old Heeren Building, facing Orchard Road side, has a record shop. And at the corner is a first shop called Ali Joo, where every time people want to go Europe or England, the rich and famous will go there and buy their fur coat.¹⁰

In 1990, the old Heeren Building was demolished for a road realignment project.¹¹ In 1997, a \$300-million 28-storey shopping and office complex known as the Heeren opened on part of the same site, taking over the row of pre-war shophouses linking the old Heeren Building to the former Yen San Building.¹²

The distinctive architecture of the old Heeren Building as well as anchor tenants such as the beauty salon, which had been there since the pre-war period, were familiar sights along Orchard Road up till the 1980s. *Singapore Tourist Promotion Board collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

04 SINGAPORE CHINESE GIRLS' SCHOOL

The Singapore Chinese Girls' School, formerly located at Hill Street, officially opened their premises at 37 Emerald Hill Road on 6 February 1926.¹³ The two-storey building – which cost 60,000 Straits dollars to build – offered 12 classrooms, an assembly hall, a staff room and principal's office, with gardens planted with the fruit trees Orchard Road was known for.¹⁴ Started in 1899 by two prominent Straits-born Chinese community leaders – Lim Boon Keng and Song Ong Siang – it was the colony's first English school for Chinese girls, who were taught subjects such as Malay, music, sewing and cookery.¹⁵ The school remained on Emerald Hill for 70 years before relocating to its present Dunearn Road site in 1994.¹⁶ In 1997, the school's Emerald Hill building was added to the National Heritage's Board's list of significant historical sites.¹⁷

Singapore Chinese Girls' School students putting up a gymnastics display at the school's Games Day in 1964, at their Emerald Hill premises. *Yusof Ishak collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

05

COLD STORAGE

Cold Storage, a standalone building at the time, was a landmark in Orchard Road from 1905 onwards.¹⁸ In addition to catering to the local demand for frozen meat and imported groceries, Cold Storage was also known for its eateries, such as the Magnolia Snack Bar. Tan Wee Him recalls his student years in the 1960s:

In the good old days, the snack bar was a popular haunt for students... Magnolia Snack Bar is supposed to be the in-place where you go for a milkshake, or the popular fish and chips for \$1.80... [The milkshake] would easily cost around 80 cents... they gave you a tall glass and it also come with the aluminium mixer that contains the other half of the milkshake. So you actually got something more than you bargained for, for maybe 80, 90



06

PAVILION

Formerly known as the Palladium (1913–1925), the Pavilion cinema was a pioneer in screening films along Orchard Road. Described as an architectural “reproduction of the Stoll houses in England”, its similarities with the grand theatres built by Sir Oswald Stoll in England in the early 20th century did not end there.²¹ The films screened at the Pavilion catered mainly to British tastes. As English expat George Yuille Caldwell, a frequent patron of the Pavilion in the late 1950s and early 1960s, recalls:

On the whole, it was more convenient for the expats to go to the Pavilion Cinema... I think it had two angular pediments on the street front and probably a sign saying “Pavilion Cinema”...



Such was the view that greeted the person who stepped out of the Pavilion cinema and looked towards Cold Storage (the building on left) in 1957. William Wee collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

07

KOEK ROAD HAWKERS

Located in the vicinity of Orchard Road Market, Koek Road and Koek Lane were home to many hawkers and the site of many mouth-watering memories for people who remember this street food haunt. Pakirisamy Rajagopal fondly recollects the variety of food available there in the 1950s:

So the favourite joint that I used to go to is Koek Road where you have your *kolo mee*, your *char kway teow*, your *mee goreng*, your soup *kambing*, name whatever you want. [T]he roadside stalls will open up after 6pm. Whereas the coffeeshop stalls are open from morning to nighttime...

And in the same stretch of the old dirty looking coffee shop, there was a dirty little monsoon drain with a platform over it, 30 huge rats running around. The Teck Kee Pau, which is now in Bukit Timah Road, originated from there...



08

AMBER MANSIONS

A mixed-use development that combined shops and residences in a large complex, Amber Mansions was developed in 1922 by the prominent Jewish businessman, J. A. Elias.²⁹ Forming what notable architect Tay Kheng Soon called a “design trinity” with MacDonald House and the old Malayan Motors Showroom,³⁰ Amber Mansions was designed by Swan and Maclarens in a decorative style typical of Art Deco buildings in the 1920s.³¹ Its distinctive arched front adorned the junction of Orchard Road and Penang Lane for more than 60 years until it was demolished to make way for Dhoby Ghaut MRT station in 1984.³²

Home to tenants such as the Municipal Gas Department, the British Council, High Street Provision Store (pictured here c. 1960s), University Bookstore, Fosters steakhouse and City Development Limited,²⁸ Amber Mansions is a reminder of Orchard Road’s early 20th century incarnation as a suburban residential area. R. Browne collection, courtesy of National Archive of Singapore.



The *kway teowman*, the *hokkien mee chap*, [wore] just a singlet. [He] would be having a little towel... – I remember the white towel...[with] the name Good Morning – he would have it round his neck; he would sit down and fry the *hokkien mee*. His was the best *hokkien mee* of the whole of Singapore at that time.²⁴

As early as 1933, Municipal Commissioners had prohibited itinerant hawkers from overcrowding Koek Road and Koek Lane.²⁵ However, patrons were spoilt for choice and often unconcerned with the finer points of hawker licensing and other legal details, despite the occasional complaint of road obstruction.²⁶ That compromise lasted till the mid-1970s when the Koek Road and Koek Lane hawkers, itinerant or otherwise, were relocated, some to the new Cuppage Centre.²⁷

Itinerant hawkers at what was known as “Koek’s Bazaar” in 1905. Koek Road and Koek Lane became a favourite haunt for foodies in search of Singapore’s hawker delights. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

09

CATHAY BUILDING

Designed by Frank Brewer, Cathay Building stood out at the foot of Mount Sophia. Comprising residences, a hotel, restaurant and cinema, the 16-storey Cathay Building was the first skyscraper and the tallest building in Singapore until 1954.³³ The cinema opened on 3 October 1939, while the other wings followed in 1941.³⁴ In the immediate post-war years, this was where Cathay Organisation's director Loke Wan Tho rebuilt his film empire during what turned out to be the golden years of Singapore film production and distribution, and Cathay Cinema became the filmgoer's cinema of choice.³⁵ Cathay Building was demolished in 2003, replaced with a new seven-storey complex with cinemas and retail outlets; its façade, however, was maintained as it was gazetted in February 2003.³⁶ The Cathay, as it is now known, re-opened in 2006.³⁷

(Right) Cathay was a popular haunt for filmgoers, offering both European blockbusters and local productions in the 1950s and 1960s. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.



10

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

Founded by Robert Pringle in 1903, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was initially located within Whitfield's Guest House (also known as Zetland House) on Armenian Street. In 1911, after securing a 999-year lease from the colonial government and two years of construction, the iconic red-and-white brick building opened.³⁸ More than just an affordable hostel, the YMCA also actively organised a wide range of sports and recreational activities, programmes and educational and enhancement classes for all age groups under its roof.³⁹ In 1982, the building was demolished, making way for a nine-storey modern facility called YMCA International House.⁴⁰

(Left) The Edwardian-style building fitted with arched windows and a double-decker portico – featured here with matching red-and-white national day decorations in the late 1960s – was a familiar sight at 1 Orchard Road until it was demolished in 1982. John C. Young collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

NAS' AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS COLLECTION

NAS has a collection of over 45,000 aerial photographs taken from 1946 to 1968, publicly accessible from its Archives Online portal. Taken by the Royal Air Force, these aerial photographs were once an important source of reconnaissance data and were used to create maps by photogrammetric methods. Capturing the period of drastic landscape changes that accompanied the political changes in the 1950s and 1960s, the aerial photographs offer a bird's eye view of Singapore.

ORAL HISTORY CENTRE (OHC)

Set up in 1979, the Oral History Centre records, documents, preserves and disseminates oral history interviews of national and historical significance. Using a rigorous methodology and approach towards interviewing, the oral history collection not only provides researchers with a detailed look into an individual's life, but also allows rich insights into social, political and economic circumstances. Comprising more than 20,000 interview hours from over 3,600 individuals, the collection allows us to listen firsthand to the voices of these eyewitnesses. ♦

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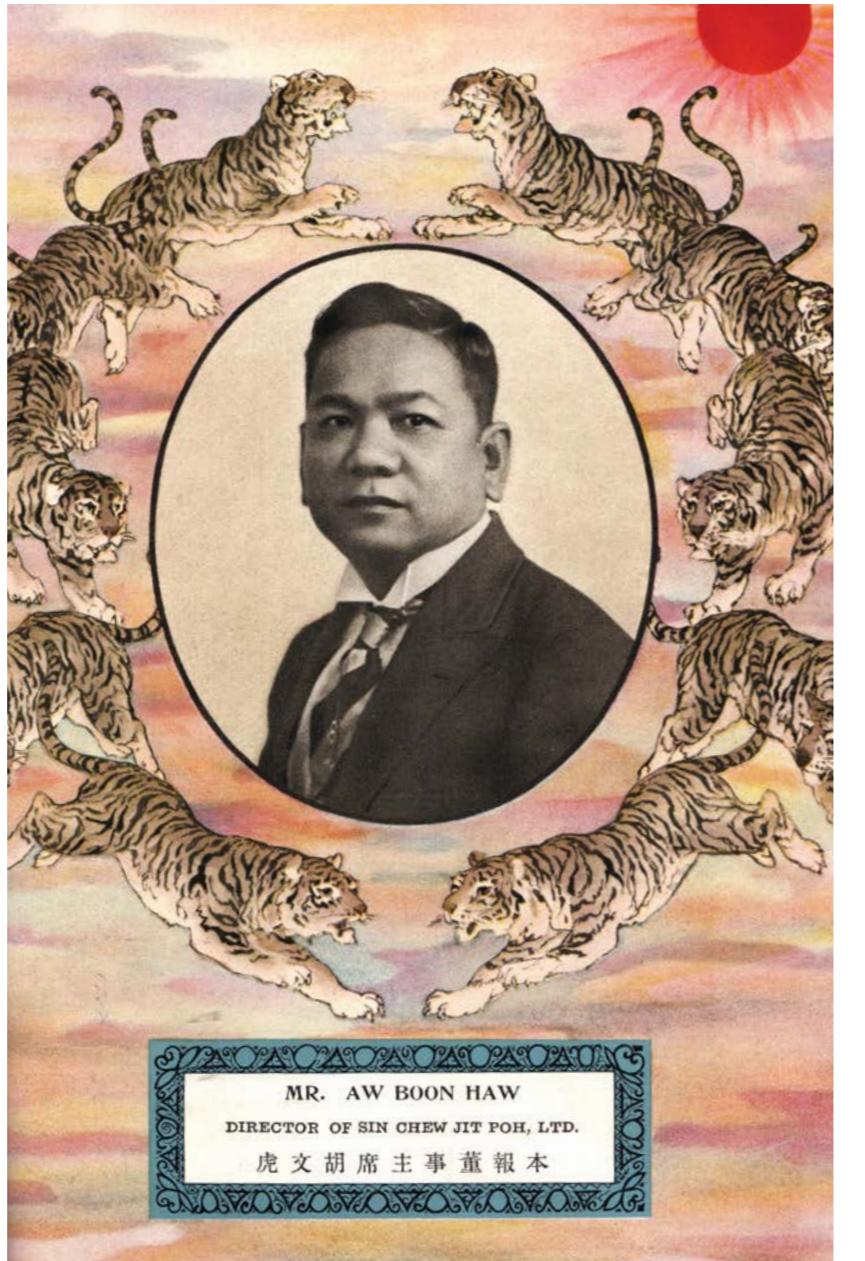
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胡文虎 及其虎标药品 在新加坡报纸 的广告研究

1916-1954

Aw Boon Haw and
His Tiger Balm
Newspaper
Advertisements
1916-1954



Sin Yee Theng (沈仪婷) was a Lee Kong Chian Research Fellow in 2011. Her PhD dissertation, *A Study of Aw Boon Haw and his Entrepreneurship: A Perspective of Cultural History* (《谱写虎标传奇：胡文虎及其企业文化史》), was jointly published by NUS Department of Chinese Studies, Singapore Char Yong (Dabu) Association and Global Publishing in 2013.

This article on Aw Boon Haw explores how he advertised Tiger Balm products in Singapore newspapers and their impact on the consumer. Aw Boon Haw is perhaps best-known for establishing the Chinese cure-all ointment, Tiger Balm. He was also responsible for the construction of Haw Par Villa. The period covered by the research is from 1916-1954. This article recounts how Aw Boon Haw shaped the image of his legendary products through storytelling and promises of health and wellness to the consumer. The article concludes that Aw's success was mainly due to his unique storytelling skills.

一、导言

近年来，广告成了学者们研究社会经济史的材料，这是由于广告数码资料库的设立所提供的帮助 (Pope, 2003)。西方学界的研究显示成药广告的蓬勃发展标志着一个社会已迈入工业时代，即现代社会 (Richards, 1990; Falk, 1994)。成药广告亦在香港的广告史中扮演着重要角色，尤其在二战以后，它们正是反映当时香港人日常生活的最佳史料 (Wong, 2000)。其实，上海比香港更早受到西方文化的冲击，有历史学者运用报纸的医药广告，研究民国初年上海的医疗文化以及社会生活方式，这些广告不仅反映了社会的日常生活与价值观，更是研究当时上海城市生活变迁之最佳史料 (黄克武, 1988)。这些广告展示了商家的广告策略与销售技巧，同时也反映出医疗卫生产品消费背后的更为深层次的问题 (杨祥银, 2008)。

综上所述，无论在近代的西方与东方社会，报纸的成药广告是研究社会经济史的最佳史料。而新加坡是中西文化交汇处，在现代化的过程中，报纸的成药广告又反映了怎样的情况？

提起新加坡的成药广告，让人想起了20世纪上半叶，享誉全球的万金油大王——胡文虎 (King, 1992) 以及他在新加坡和香港所建造的万金油花园/虎豹别墅 (Brandel & Turbeville, 1998)。20世纪30年代末，胡氏设在新加坡的虎标永安堂总厂，每年营业额达叻币一千万元以上，这样的业绩主要得归功于胡氏的善用广告，这是其他华商所望尘莫及的特长 (关楚璞, 1940)。在西方，胡文虎也被誉为第一位使用西方广告术的华商 (Boorman, 1968)。可见他的广告术是闻名遐迩的，且在其商业中扮演了关键的角色。

到了21世纪，虎标万金油仍是新加坡的超强以及最具有价值的品牌之一 (Straits Times, 20 November 2003)，且已成为新加坡的标志之一 (Fernandez, 9 August 1992)。有一部英文小说的内容虽然完全与万金油无关，却以它为书名，只因它已成了治愈创伤的象征 (Stewart, 1992)。此外，“万金油”还进入了中国人每日的生活，成了拥有特定意义的词汇 (罗竹凤, 1993)。一个品牌能如此深刻地进入一个国家和民族的集体记忆，的确让人不得不佩服胡文虎的创意。由此亦可见，他擅长为其药品塑造形象，藉此建立虎标药品的品牌，使之成为世代相传、值得信赖的老字号 (Toh, 1994)。胡氏的广告术确实有其过人之处，只是一般的文献都未曾深入分析这些报纸广告。

本研究将探讨胡文虎的虎标药品广告在新加坡广告史中的角色与贡献，他如何说故事、使用了那些现代广告的表达形式，这些又如何显示出新加坡战前与战后的社会与经济面貌。本研究的断限，起自1916年，终于1954年。这样的划分是根据胡氏最早刊登于新加坡华文报纸广告的年份，与其逝世之年份。胡氏在新加坡办报始于1929年1月15日创刊的《星洲日报》，但在那之前他已在其它中英文报纸上刊登广告，英文报纸有Straits Times, Singapore Free Press,

Malayan Saturday Post, 中文报纸则有《总汇新报》、《叻报》、《新国民日报》、《南洋商报》、《星洲日报》和《星中日报》等。

二、胡文虎的药业与事业

胡文虎 (1882-1954) 出生于缅甸仰光，是祖籍中国福建省永定县的客家人。其父胡子钦在缅甸仰光设立了永安堂国药行。因长兄早殇，仅剩他和弟弟文豹两兄弟。他在十岁时被父亲送回侨乡接受私塾教育 (吴尔芬、张侃, 2005)。四年后，再回到仰光随父专习业务及医术。1908年父亲过世后，胡氏兄弟便继承了永安堂。在两人同心合作下，业务日渐发展。后来，鉴于仰光地处偏僻，不利于业务发展，于是胡氏回中国考察，并到香港、暹罗、日本等地游历，考察各大中西药房。返回仰光后，便着手扩充药行，最后制成万金油、头痛粉、清快水、八卦丹问世。由于药效显著，因此畅销印度、缅甸和马来亚等地，并于1926年正式将虎标永安堂总行与药厂迁至新加坡 (关楚璞, 1940)。除了在马来亚及南洋各地设立分行外，又到香港设立分行；后来为了供应中国及海外市场，又于汕头设立药厂，并在中国各大城市及南洋各属广设分行。

胡文虎不仅在商业上有卓越的成就，亦特别致力于文化、教育、慈善与卫生等事

"THE TIGER LIFE ASSURANCE CO."

One day a school teacher asked the students "What is the most important thing in your home?"
The students answered: "The most important thing in our home is ENG AUN TONG'S TIGER BALM."
The teacher said "If so, are these three things—clothing, eating and dwelling—not important?"
The students replied: "Of course these three things are quite important; but when we are in ill-health, from bad to worse and from worse to death, our bodies are no longer in this world, and what do we care for clothing, eating and dwelling?"
Therefore, what we consider to be the most important is Sickness and the BEST MEDICINE FOR CURING ANY SICKNESS IS THE TIGER BALM. With this medicine we are considered to be free from any danger of disease, and thereby we can safely struggle for our living. So don't you see that TIGER BALM is more important than clothing, eating and dwelling?"

Finally a student said: "Many lives of my family were saved by the TIGER BALM. Once as soon as my younger brother was born, my mother had a Phlegmasia dolens, feeling painful at any moment throughout her body. She was almost dead until she used the TIGER BALM. Next day she was fully recovered and the baby was also perfectly well."

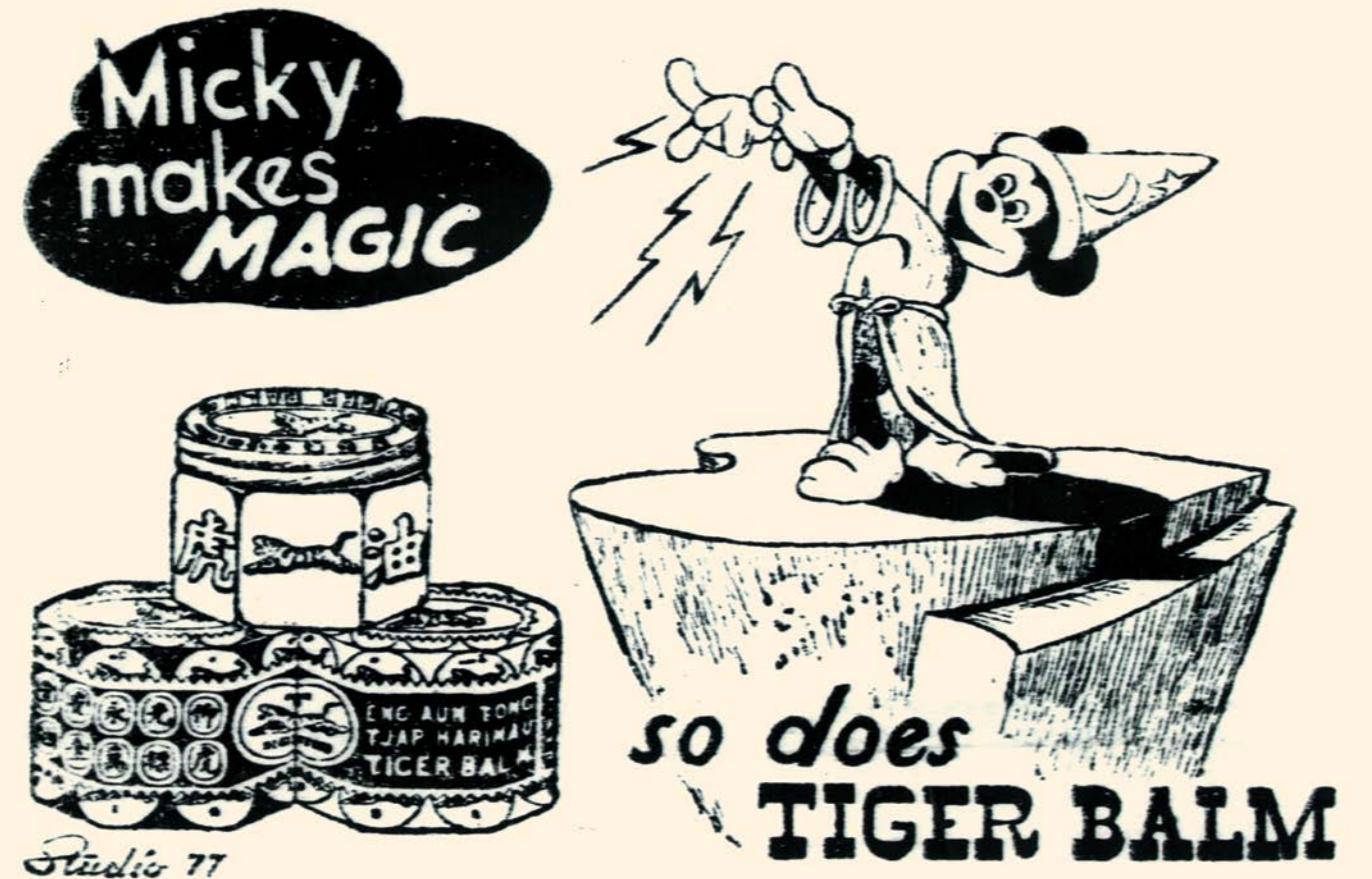
Another instance is that one night my elder brother had cholera. Just imagine how serious it is to have such disease at the time when it is not easy to get a doctor or buy any medicine! Fortunately after my brother took a little of TIGER BALM with hot water, his pain at once ceased and his life was thus saved.

In short, if any one of my family catches cold, or is hurt by fire, or has any skin disease, no matter how serious, they can all be cured by the TIGER BALM. Hence this is called "THE LIFE ASSURANCE CO. of our Home."

ENG AUN TONG—THE TIGER MEDICAL HALL
Singapore Branch Office 47, Neil Road.
Head Office in Rangoon, Burma.

(上图) Source: Malayan Saturday Post, 21 May 1927, p. 32.

(左图) 资料来源: 傅无闷主编《星洲日报二周年纪念刊》(新加坡: 星洲日报社, 1931)。



Source: *The Straits Times*, 13 August 1946, p.3.
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业。对于财富，始终秉持着“取之社会，用之社会”的宗旨，并以建立学校、创办医院、设立报馆，为服务社会的三大事业（关楚璞，1940）。1954年9月4日，因心脏病爆发而逝世，享年72岁（*Straits Times*, 6 September, 1954）。他离世时，也是一名银行家、金融家、实业家和多家报馆的老板，当时他名下的星系报业有限公司，在东南亚共有13家报馆（古玉梁，2005）。他的慈善事业遍布中国、香港、马来亚以及东南亚各地，有人估计他一生中总共捐出超过一千万元；他曾获颁大英帝国勋章（O.B.E.）和圣约翰骑士勋章（*Straits Times*, 6 September, 1954）。

三、虎标四大良药的故事

以下笔者将分析胡文虎如何藉着说故事（Storytelling）替虎标四大良药打广告：

（一）虎标万金油

广告声称它主治内外各病症，甚至给人一种“万金油等于万能”的想法：有了它就不



资料来源：《新国民日报》，1923年5月1日，第16版。

怕任何疾病的侵害，也有了健康和光明的人生（《叻报》，1923年6月7日）；发展到后来还成为“驱除瘟疫之圣药”（《叻报》，1923年12月17日）。胡文虎认为与其迷信神佛，不如使用万金油更踏实。广告还特别提到“搽食兼施”，表示当时的万金油即可外敷，又可内服。后来还出现了“虎标万金油是人类的福星，也是畜类的菩萨”的广告（《总汇新报》，1924年10月1日）。直至30年代，胡氏还在报纸上刊登了新加坡家禽饲养场研究部一位外国化学师的证明书，指出

万金油确实能防御家禽疾疫（《总汇新报》，1933年5月2日）。此外，他一再强调万金油是通过许多科学测试，所以保证绝对安全（*Singapore Free Press*, 24 September 1927; *Straits Times*, 29 September 1927; *Malayan Saturday Post*, 12 November 1927）。

渐渐地，从“万能”再衍生出“感恩”的故事：小家庭的父母为了铭感万金油救命之恩，替孩子取名为“万金子”（《叻报》，1924年8月5日）。这类“感恩”的故事，还有

八卦丹的版本（《叻报》，1924年6月28日；《总汇新报》，1924年6月28日）。

除了华文报纸的广告，胡文虎于20世纪20年代亦开始在英文报纸打广告，强调的同样是万金油的“万能”，例如：在课堂上，它成了保障学生全家大小的“人寿保险公司”，是比衣、食、住更重要的日常必需品（*Malayan Saturday Post*, 21 May 1927）。这暗示了连幼童都认识万金油是家庭中最重要的东西，这样的表达方式似乎有点夸大其词，但这何尝不是胡氏的目标——让万金油成为家喻户晓且最不可缺的日常必需品。

万金油的“万能”也体现在“跨越古今、横跨中西”这一方面。《星中日报》，1936年2月4日的广告将古代的仕女和现代的女泳将并列，以中英文强调它的疗效是经得起时间考验的。另外一则广告所描绘的则是来自全球的各族一同指着万金油，再以中英双语标出“全球人士无不公认虎标万金油为治病最有效之圣药/虎标万金油能治百病，用法简便，且又经济”（《星中日报》，1936年5月25日）。这暗示了它的功效是跨越国界的。二战后，最受欢迎的卡通人物米奇老鼠还成为万金油广告的主角。在某种程度上，这不仅反映了新加坡40年代的次文化，也显示出胡文虎对时代潮流的敏锐。

早在20年代，胡文虎就已有了“快快喝，快快好”的广告概念，或许可以这么说：胡氏的企业家精神是以讲求“快”和“灵”著称的。在头痛粉的广告中出现最多的就是对比服用前的苦与服用后的乐（《新国民日报》，1923年5月1日）。此外，广告也透露了头痛是因天气炎热所导致的，因此特别对症下药，使头痛得以迅速解决。“速度”是使头痛粉脱颖而出的关键，比中国古代名医——华陀的医术更高明（《总汇新报》，1923年5月1日）。头痛粉的快速和灵验亦挑战了中国传统医术以及缅甸的炼丹术，企图破除这两地老百姓的迷信思想。另外，还以现代办公室为场

(二) 虎标头痛粉

头痛粉讲求的是迅速的疗效。与万金油一样也标榜“万能”，针对的是一切头痛的问题。它似乎也在暗示着能解除家庭与个人的烦恼，甚至是国家和民族的苦难（《总汇新报》，1923年1月2日）。老百姓都希望身体的不适能立即停止，有健康的体魄谋求家庭的幸福，且盼望国家的苦难能早日结束，有稳定的生活谋求社会的繁荣。于是在胡文虎的说故事中，头痛粉与头脑的健康以及生活的幸福是密不可分的。

早在20年代，胡文虎就已有了“快快喝，快快好”的广告概念，或许可以这么说：胡氏的企业精神是以讲求“快”和“灵”著称的。在头痛粉的广告中出现最多的就是对比服用前的苦与服用后的乐（《新国民日报》，1923年5月1日）。此外，广告也透露了头痛是因天气炎热所导致的，因此特别对症下药，使头痛得以迅速解决。“速度”是使头痛粉脱颖而出的关键，比中国古代名医——华陀的医术更高明（《总汇新报》，1923年5月1日）。头痛粉的快速和灵验亦挑战了中国传统医术以及缅甸的炼丹术，企图破除这两地老百姓的迷信思想。另外，还以现代办公室为场

景，说明头痛粉一样能药到病除，让患病的员工迅速地回到工作岗位（《总汇新报》，1925年10月1日）。这情节已具有现代电视广告的雏形，由此可见，胡文虎的广告术是超时代的。另外，还在广告中谈广告其实只是辅助而已，最重要是药效，必须经消费者试验才会有广泛的销路；而当时虎标药品不仅行销中国各大商埠，甚至还远至美国旧金山（《叻报》，1925年6月2日）。

(三) 虎标八卦丹：

八卦丹有阴阳调和之义，它的广告所强调的是夫妻关系的和谐。见下列广告：

这则广告不仅强调八卦丹能促进夫妻间的感情，还强调其价格廉宜，能解决男女口臭的根本问题（《新国民日报》，1923年9月15日）。在之后的广告中，八卦丹还成了解决离婚案的“圣药”（《叻报》，1923年11月1日）。广告中表示这些夫妻关系间的障碍，归根结底都是由口臭所造成的，因此只要服用八卦丹，问题就能迎刃而解。演变到后来，此一好消息就连动物界（老鼠）也知晓（《总汇新报》，1924年10月11日）。这类似动物寓言的情节，甚至比迪斯尼更早出现，不得不佩服胡文虎天马行空的想象力。

實告。鄰婦止之曰。此汝口臭所致。冀博歡心。不料卒無挽回已成絕望。遂將衣服被包席捲思逃。愁容滿面。隣婦觀狀驚問。婦以夫卽背面向壁。或分頭而睡。漸而言笑疏闊。漸感情盡失。焦急萬分。因而盡懨悔妍以媚其夫。而情好分離。甚至絕跡房帷。聞聲遠避。婦見夫

资料来源：《新国民日报》，1923年9月15日，第15版。

八卦丹的传奇也延伸至其他人际关系以及各行各业：因为口臭不仅拦阻了夫妻间的感情，也阻碍了个人事业的发展，而八卦丹能解决口臭问题，因此继而能促进商业和生意兴隆（《叻报》，1923年12月28日）。这其实也在暗示着八卦丹等于幸福美满的人生，是造福人群的灵丹妙药。由此可见，其实胡文虎卖的不只是药品，而是一种生活方式和理想生活的美好愿景。

除了以上的功效外，八卦丹还宣称可帮助戒除鸦片、烟酒，并重整人生（《新国民日报》，1924年2月1日；《叻报》，1924年6月6日）。这不仅反映了当时华侨社会中还普遍存在着吸鸦片的恶习，也反映了胡文虎致力倡导禁烟运动。胡氏就曾慷慨捐助新加坡的戒烟（Singapore Free Press, 18 March 1937; Straits Times, 20 March 1934）。

综上所述，八卦丹所蕴含的“哲学”是修复健康和破裂的关系，以及重整混乱的生活次序。这说明虎标药品不仅是许诺提供实质的身体痊愈，似乎也在许诺一种心灵慰藉、幸福圆满。

（四）消风清快水：

清快水与头痛粉一样，讲求的是疗效之迅速。广告声称能快速治疗便秘、腹胀等消化不良的问题。由于20世纪上半叶新加坡的医药尚未普及，看医生对于一般民众而言是奢侈的，所以他们都依赖成药或是传统草药来解决疾病的痛苦。然而，传统中药熬制费时、成效较缓慢，因此虎标药品所标榜的快速疗效对他们而言，无疑是一大福音。清快水的广告就强调与传统医术相比，它能更迅速地解除病人的痛苦（《新国民日报》，1924年6月2日）。另外，也特别针对初到新加坡的“新客”打广告：由于不适应炎热的天气，他们常会因患病而丢命，清快水声称能帮助他们去湿解毒、清热除邪，建议他们每周服用，以保平安（《新国民日报》，1929年10月16日）。由此可见，当时从中国有大量人口涌入新加坡，而虎标药品也集中向这一新的消费群体进行宣传。

总结以上分析，可得出一个结论，胡文虎藉说故事这门艺术赋予虎标四大良药寓意，并给予消费者一些“虚假”的许诺：

平安万金油——平安，无灾无病；万能。立止头痛粉——立刻解除头痛和生活烦恼。八卦丹——促进夫妻感情和人际关系的和谐，以获得成功、圆满的人生。消风清快水——快速消除身体的不适，永葆健康。

这些都是西方现代广告语言所惯用的手法，通过大量和多样化的广告让消费者集中关注药品正面的形象和价值观（Wong, 2000）。笔者认为胡文虎所呈现的“哲学体系”正好与当时广大消费者心中的愿望吻合，因此引起了广泛的共鸣，有效地说服他们，让他们对虎标四大良药产生信赖，相信它们能满足他们各种的需求。这也就是近日社会所谓的“说故事行销”（Story Marketing）。这些小故事不仅显示出胡氏的过人之处——丰富的创意和想象力、对时事的敏锐，亦反映了他明白人心的渴望，也有能力以通俗易懂的方式将它们表达出来。换句话说，老百姓不仅是在购买药品，也同时在购买故事背后的核心信息——即刻脱离痛苦！藉由购买一种实质的、具体的商品，而获得一种抽象的满足感与幸福感！

四、广告表达形式

除了擅长“说故事”外，胡文虎在广告中也运用了不少现代广告的表达形式。以下广告表达形式的分析是借鉴邹红梅、王省民（2006）在分析《申报》广告时所使用的其中五种方法：

（一）证言：

最典型的例子就是请政治人物或社会名人亲笔题字，利用政界名人来抬高商品的地位。这种表达形式是虎标药品广告中最常用的。胡文虎曾将国民党元老兼书法家于右任（1879–1964）所题赠的“一滴万金”墨宝拿来作广告（《南洋商报》，1928年1月30日）。在进入中国的市场时，他还特地列下了20多位的介绍人，都是当时的社会名人，其中包括了中华民国首任教育总长蔡元培（1868–1940）（《新国民日报》，1924年3月15日）。

（二）比喻：

这类广告将商品的特点与人们所熟悉的人、物进行比较，以达到耐人寻味的效果。此表达形式在早期的虎标广告中亦相当多

见。由于胡文虎本身受教育不高，而他的药品主要面向的也普罗大众，因此他很注意广告必须通俗、易懂，且生活化。1922年8月1日，《新国民日报》上就有一则广告将人间的疾病比喻为深夜时在海上航行的危险，而万金油就像灯塔一样能让人避免疾病的危险。1927年3月25日，《叻报》的广告就巧妙地将万金油比喻成保护儿童的保姆，暗示它是家庭中不可或缺的“好帮手”。

（三）故事：

巧妙地化用中国传统文，通过故事叙述与情节表现，让人潜移默化地接受关于商品或服务的信息，吸引读者的注意，在宣传产品的同时，亦让人接受中国传统文。这类广告手法，在二战后的虎标药品广告运用较多，形成了一种“复古”的现象。这很有可能是因为战后需要重建受战火波及的市场，而援引中国传统文中的典范能凝聚海内外华人一起重建百废待兴的社会。比如：1948年9月13日，《星洲日报》的广告竟然颠覆了陶渊明辞官归隐田园的原因，认为他其实是因受不了工作繁忙而腰酸背痛，而感叹到若当年他有一罐万金油在案头，就不必辞官归田了。同年11月29日，《星洲日报》的广告称赞花木兰不仅是代父从军的女英雄，还是细心周到的贤慧女子，在出征之前还买了许多的虎标良药以防不时之需。这位古代的女英雄竟然一跃成为了现代虎标的“代言人”。看来，60多年前的虎标报纸广告已有“穿越”古今的情节，想象力超群。

（四）日常生活情节：

为了说服消费者，而对日常生活中一些熟悉的情景进行细腻的描写，可显示出商品与人们现实生活之密切关系，以及它在人们心目中的重要地位。其中最好的例子是1924年11月21日，《叻报》的广告中描写的妻子为即将远行的丈夫预备了一大箱的虎标四大良药护身，以代替她来侍奉其左右，使丈夫见药如见人，传达出虎标药品是家庭幸福生活不可少的元素。

（五）情感：

为了使消费者与广告产生情感共鸣，进而影响到他们对特定品牌的偏好，而运用各种艺术形式诱发他们的感情，其中，最有震撼力的应属爱国之情。在第一次世界大战后，为了挽回利权，不让资金外流，中国



（上图）资料来源：《新国民日报》，1923年5月1日，第16版。

海内外的商家们在广告中大打爱国牌，把爱国主义与使用国货联系在一起，呼吁大家购买国货。1916年3月11日，胡文虎刊登于《总汇新报》的第一则广告就开宗明义地声明永安堂所出品的是国货，希望同胞们能“竭力支持国货，以挽利权”。广告中提到“振兴国货”，这是20世纪初期，中国与南洋侨界普遍关注的课题，也是当时广告中流行的话语（Cochran, 2000; Gerth, 2003）。胡文虎将他在仰光所生产的永安堂虎标药品定位为中国国货，企图召唤在新加坡与南洋各地华侨的爱国之情，进而建立一种情感上的联系。

以上的分析虽然只是冰山一角，然而却足以说明胡文虎善用各种现代广告语言来促销虎标药品。相比之下，同时期其他同类广告的表达方式则乏善可陈，十年如一日。例如：20、30年代，市面上曾出现一种与虎标万金油类似的西式止痛药膏——德国鹰标万安油（《总汇新报》，1933年8月16日）。

五、结论

虽然胡文虎所受的教育不多，但是他拥有洞悉人心需要的能力，且能将之具象化，并以故事和图像描绘出来。虎标四大良药以及它们的寓意，便是胡氏对老百姓疾苦与国家民族苦难的解答与“解药”。它们不仅

注释

1 <http://www.creatingthe21stcentury.org/Intro5-Why-storytelling.html>

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Lee Kip Lin Kampung Boy Conservateur



Bonny Tan is a Senior Librarian with the National Library of Singapore. She has researched the Lee Kip Lin Collection over several years since it was first donated to the National Library Board. Her published work on the Baba Bibliography and the Gibson-Hill Collection amply qualify her to write on Lee's life and his collection.

The late Lee Kip Lin was a man who wore many hats as student, educator and mentor, but is perhaps best remembered for his passion for conserving Singapore's pre-war architecture in his writings and teaching.

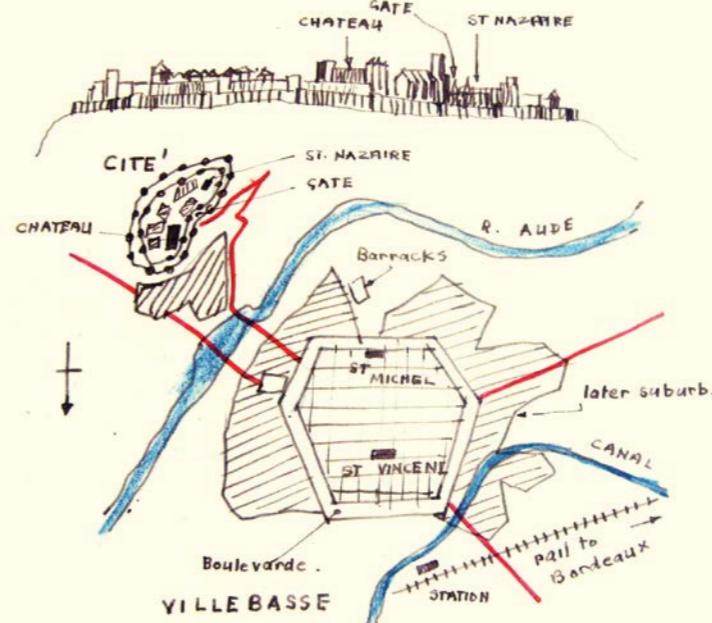
Despite his privileged upbringing and high standing in his profession as both architect and university lecturer, Lee was unassuming in his relationships with colleagues and students alike. His love for the local built landscape led him to meticulously photograph Singapore's urban environment, street after street, eventually amassing not only photographs, but a precious collection of maps, postcards and other documents about Singapore – a collection his family generously donated to the National Library Board in 2009.

LEE THE STUDENT

Born in 1925, Lee was the fourth of five children¹ and part of a distinguished Peranakan family that had a fine standing in the business community in Malaya. His paternal grandfather, Lee Keng Kiat, was manager of the Straits Steamship Company and was so highly regarded that he had a street (in Tiong Bahru) named after him. His businessman father, Lee Chim Huk, was known for his taste in the finer things in life. Always impeccably dressed and well-read, the elder Lee was likely to have influenced his son in appreciating aspects of life beyond the ordinary.² His mother, Tan Guat Poh, was the younger sister of the business vanguard and political leader, Tan Cheng Lock, and one of the few educated local women during that era.

Lee had a creative bent from childhood but he was no quiet and self-absorbed artist. Golf and boating, twin passions he inherited from his father, kept him outdoors and active. In fact, some of his early childhood drawings were of passing ships and boats³ that he observed while growing up by the sea along Singapore's East Coast.⁴ The Lee boys were given their own row boats⁵ and the family regularly took a small launch to family gatherings at their grandaunt's, Mrs Lee Choon Guan (famous for her charity work, lavish parties and her family connections) seaside holiday home in Changi.⁶ Even in adulthood, Lee maintained his own boat, which his architectural students often used on their after-school escapades.⁷

Lee Kip Lin in the early 1960s.
Courtesy of Mrs Lee Li-Ming.



CARCASSONE, FRANCE.

Lee came into his profession almost by accident. His academic records were poor because his education was disrupted by the war. As he prepared to further his studies in London in 1948, Lee's mother advised him to pursue a degree in agriculture, promising him land upon completion of his studies. But Lee's passion for sketching led him to seek a placement in architectural studies instead. Unfortunately, his lack of a foundation in science saw him rejected by 20 universities before he was finally accepted by the Brixton School of Building in London. The polytechnic gave him a good grounding in technical skills but he sought a more professional training in architecture. Not one to give up easily, Lee reapplied to London's Bartlett School of Architecture, famed for its Beaux Arts approach – a French neo-classical perspective of architecture that would later influence Lee's approach to architecture in Singapore. Lee had failed an entrance test the previous year when he was asked to sketch a building from memory and, unprepared, he submitted a poor sketch of the 1926 neo-classical College of Medicine building.⁸ In his second attempt, Lee drew the Pantheon in Rome, so well executed that it even gained the invigilator's attention.⁹

During his six-year study at Bartlett, Lee was influenced by architectural greats such as William Holford (1907–1975), a noteworthy town planner; A. E. Richardson (1880–1964), an expert in the art of architecture especially of the Renaissance period; and Hector Corfiato (1893–1963?)¹⁰, Richardson's protégé who later took over as Bartlett's Professor of Architecture. Lee had expressed regret that much of his time was spent socialising at bars rather than drinking in Europe's architectural heritage.¹¹

A TIMELINE OF LEE KIP LIN

- Born 11 February 1925, Singapore; died 9 July 2011, Singapore
- 1949–1956 • Diploma course, Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London (UCL). Final exams, Jul 1956.
- Sep 1955–Aug 1956 • Architectural Assistant, Housing Division, London County Council
- Oct 1956 • Returned to Singapore
- Dec 1956–Jan 1958 • Architectural Assistant to Wee Soo Bee
- Nov 1958 • Completed RIBA exams in Professional Practice, Singapore
- 1958–1960 • Architectural Assistant to Seow Eu Jin
- 1959 • Married Li-Ming, daughter of H. T. Ong, first Chief Justice of Malaya
- 1961 • Joined Singapore Polytechnic teaching architecture
- 1965 • Founded Lee, Lim & Partners
- 1969 • Joined the School of Architecture at the University of Singapore
- 1970 • Set up Silat Associates, which had a tie-up with Architects Team 3. Some time around 1972, Lee fully joined Architects Team 3.
- 1976 • Appointed Senior Lecturer, University of Singapore
- 1982 • Promoted to Associate Professor, University of Singapore
- 1984 • Retired from lecturing on architecture and turned to photography and writing books.

Data from NUS Design, 2011, p. 322 & Jon S. H. Lim



Lee Kip Lin (centre) with his brother Kip Lee (right) and a neighbour on a boat just off their family home in Amber Road, Katong, circa 1935. Courtesy of Mrs Lee Li-Ming.



Lee Kip Lin (right) with friends in Paris circa 1950s. Courtesy of Mrs Lee Li-Ming.



Lee and his architecture students at his Binjai Park home. Courtesy of Mrs Lee Li-Ming.



Lee Kip Lin and his wife, Ong Li-Ming, married in 1959. Courtesy of Mrs Lee Li-Ming.

LEE THE ARCHITECT

Lee returned to Singapore in October 1956, a time of political and social unrest as Malaya was actively defining its political boundaries in its bid to gain independence from Britain. With a year's experience at the Housing Division of the London County Council under his belt, Lee started work in 1957 as an Architectural Assistant to Wee Soo Bee before joining well-known architect Seow Eu Jin in 1958. The following year, in 1959, he married Li-Ming, daughter of H. T. Ong, the first Chief Justice of Malaya. Between 1960 and 1964, Lee worked with one of Singapore's key architects, Ng Keng Siang who was highly regarded for creating many of the country's landmark buildings such as the Singapore Badminton Hall (1952) at Guillemard Road and the former Asia Insurance Building (1954) in Finlayson Green (now converted into the serviced apartments Ascott Raffles Place).

In 1965, Lee established his own company, Lee, Lim and Partners, which originally included David Lim and Whang Tar Kway. One of his company's major accomplishments was winning the landmark Industrial Commercial Bank (ICB) project. The partnership dissolved soon after Lim Chin Leong's death and Lee started the firm Silat¹² Associates along with partner Lim Chong Keat, which had a tie-up with Architect Team 3 before Lee finally joined the latter.

Unfortunately, between 1960 and 1969, tumultuous times dogged the building industry. New projects for small companies were scant and sustaining an architectural firm proved financially challenging. Lee and his partners started concurrently working and lecturing, first at the newly established architectural schools at the Singapore Polytechnic and, subsequently, the University of Singapore (now the National University of Singapore, NUS). Their pay packets were often shared among the partners, but they seldom saw any returns.

LEE THE LECTURER

Lee began lecturing in architectural studies at Singapore Polytechnic in 1961, while the field was still in its infancy in Singapore. Prominent local architect Tay Kheng Soon [who designed People's Park Complex and the Golden Mile Complex¹³] was one of the pioneer students of the polytechnic's architecture faculty. This batch of students had been nicknamed "the horrors" as they had a reputation for being difficult. Lee was assigned to teach this class but cleverly won them over on the first day by offering his students sticks of Du Maurier's¹⁴ cigarettes out of an elegant vermilion box. His unorthodox, relaxed style of teaching also helped him gain the trust of these mature students.

Lee's experience in teaching ran almost concurrently with his years of practice, and he frequently made himself available to his students, seeming to find mentoring more fulfilling than running an architectural firm. In 1976, he was appointed senior lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture at NUS, having left full-time practice. Students regularly visited his home to discuss projects or to just hang out with him. His camaraderie with his students was well-known because of his unassuming nature and his fatherly concern as Tse Swee Ling recalls. Tse had not only been his student but had also been recruited into Lee's company and followed in his footsteps, lecturing at the same faculty in NUS. Not one for seeking position or limelight, Lee retired two years after he was promoted to associate professor at NUS in 1982.

LEE THE CONSERVATIONIST

Lee threw himself into the research and conservation of the local architecture he had lived and grown up with. In quick succession he published several books on the history of Singapore's built landscape – *Telok Ayer Market* (1983), *Emerald Hill: The Story of a Street in Words and Pictures* (1984) and *The Singapore House 1819–1942* (1988), a historical illustrated survey of the development of domestic architecture and its impact on Singapore house design; covering everything from English Georgian, Victorian Eclectic, Edwardian Baroque, and Modern International to the homegrown "Coarsened Classical" styles, the out-of-print book is now regarded a classic.

After Lee retired, he began systematically photographing, neighbourhood by neighbourhood and street by street, all the buildings that lined the roads in the city as well as landmarks in the outlying areas of the island. By this time, Lee had accumulated an extensive collection of heritage photographs, maps and postcards which he purchased over many years from antique dealers in London and other parts of the world. Lee battled ill health in his later years and passed away in 2011 after a bout of pneumonia. He was 86 years old when he died.

LEE KIP LIN ON STUDYING ARCHITECTURE

I took architecture by accident ... my mother ... wanted me to do agriculture and she promised me that [if I] graduated, [she would] buy a piece of land somewhere ...

I considered those [as] wasteful years [studying architecture in the UK]. Truly wasteful. I mean there I was drinking away... and Lim Chong Keat [a fellow student] was busily measuring buildings and photographing them. I took the whole thing [architectural studies] as a joke...

From an interview with Lee on 26 June 1985 by Tay Kheng Soon

PROF BOBBY WONG'S IMPRESSIONS OF LEE KIP LIN

I was assigned to teach with him ... and he said, "Don't worry, it's my first time teaching too". I asked him, "Oh, where were you practising before that?" And he said, "Team 3." So I was really thrown off [as] Team 3 at that time was really the firm. There was something very informal [about LKL] and yet at the same time, from what he said, they were fairly insightful. He came across with no airs, nothing. But someone, you know who has so much history, so much background and yet so ordinary.

I was a young architect in a hurry to do international style of architecture. He [LKL] was someone who placed great importance in imparting to many around us the importance of the geography, the culture, the land and also the social and cultural life that came with this climate and this place.

From an interview with Prof Bobby Wong on 6 June 2012 by Bonny Tan

PROFESSOR TSE SWEE LING'S IMPRESSIONS OF LEE KIP LIN

I have known him for more than 40 years, from working in "Team 3" to teaching in NUS. He's really a good boss ... whenever there was some argument, unhappiness amongst staff or whatever [in Team 3], he will always help to settle and he's very good in human relationships. And the staff respect[ed] him.

His book, *Singapore House*, it's not only about the architecture. He actually took the effort to find out about the lives of the people who lived there.

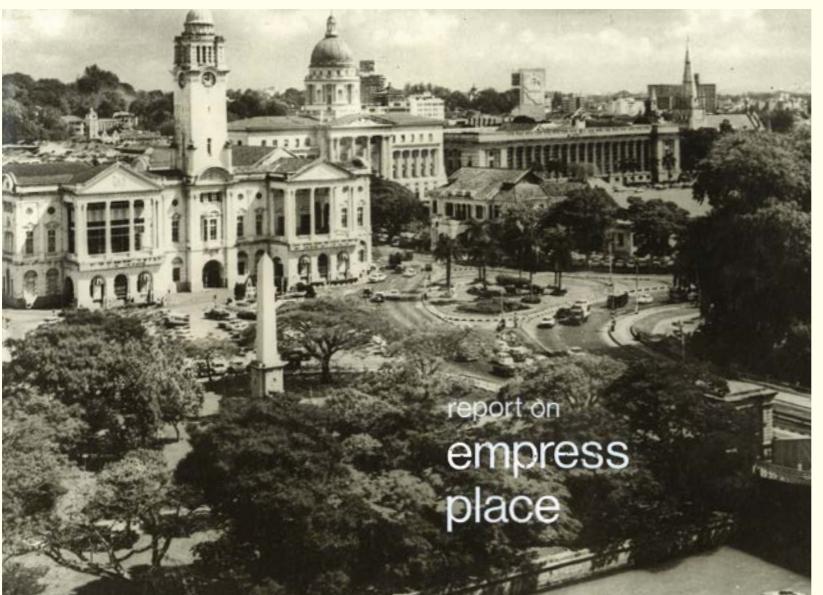
From an interview with Prof Tse Swee Ling on 6 June 2012 by Bonny Tan



The Straits of Singapore with those of Durion, Sabon and Mandol by Thomas Jefferys, Geographer to the King. From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. All rights reserved. Lee Kip Lin and National Library Board, Singapore 2009.



A navigational chart showing the Straits of Malacca and Malaya. Created by Bellin, Jacques Nicolas in 1775. From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. All rights reserved. Lee Kip Lin and National Library Board, Singapore 2009.



Report on Empress Place by Preservation of Monuments Board, 1973. A unique typescript publication in the Lee Kip Lin collection. From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. All rights reserved. Lee Kip Lin and National Library Board, Singapore 2009.

THE LEE KIP LIN COLLECTION

In October 2009, the Lee family donated his extensive collection of more than 19,000 items to the National Library Board. It includes 1,322 monographs, 291 invaluable maps of Singapore and Southeast Asia, and 630 rare photographs along with more than 17,000 slides and negatives of early and modern Singapore, including many images of buildings that Lee had photographed in Singapore during the 1980s.

The collection's strength lies in its visual documentation of the evolution of Singapore's built environment. This thread linking its diverse formats and content reveals Lee's passion for documenting Singapore's vernacular architecture, particularly its classical and colloquial features. This is evident in his disciplined and systematic research as well as the details noted in his extensive photographic collection. For every street he documented, Lee would note the address and take multiple shots of its various buildings. His wife Lee Li-Ming, recounts how, on his retirement, Lee would spend his weekends visiting various areas in Singapore, map in hand, capturing buildings along each street with his camera.

Yet the Lee Kip Lin collection is not confined to the history of Singapore's architecture. It extends into social and corporate histories, showing how Lee's complex thinking went beyond the obvious. For example he collected several books on the histories of early shipping companies such as the Blue Funnel Line and the Straits Steamship Fleet. He also collected books and documents on the histories of various churches and local religious institutions.

Lee purchased much of his heritage books, postcards and photographs from antiquarian resellers in London and had them delivered to his Amber Road home. Others were gifted directly to him by the authors.¹⁵ Much of Lee's handwritten research notes and sketches were bound and are now part of his donated collection. These include hand-copied paragraphs and sketches from some of his early studies of classical architecture as well as copied letters and records relating to significant people and places in Singapore. He regularly visited the National Archives and the National Library after his retirement, taking copious notes from hard-to-read manuscripts such as the *Straits Settlement Records* that outline the decisions and plans for streets in the early days of Singapore's urban growth.

Lee's map collection of 291 items is particularly valuable as they capture the cartographic narrative of Singapore as reflected by mapmakers over the centuries. One of the oldest maps in his collection, dated 1794¹⁶ and drawn by the geographer to King George III, Thomas Jefferys, shows details of the Malay Peninsula and Singapore's surrounding islands extending to the Carimon Islands and beyond. Interestingly the

After Lee retired, he began systematically photographing, neighbourhood by neighbourhood and street by street, all the buildings that lined the roads in the city as well as landmarks in the outlying areas of the island.

map shows not only how names of Singapore's surroundings have changed or remained the same across the centuries, but also shows this island at an awkward angle. A large channel seems to cut through Singapore with its southern portion named "Toly". This was a common error found in the earliest maps of Singapore and its interpretation is discussed at length by scholars like Gibson-Hill.¹⁷

Another 18th-century map by French cartographers reflects Singapore's ancient name, Pulo Panjang, and shows elevated views of its surroundings, including Malacca. The map collection also bears several drawings of Malacca plan sketches from the colonial architectural firm Swan and Maclaren, and copies of various maps.

A large number of Lee's maps date from the 19th century right into the pre-war era, from which the researcher can review the gradual urbanisation of Singapore, particularly his maps spanning the 1950s right into Independence in 1965. Besides revealing insights from individual maps, many of Lee's maps are topographical records of urban as well as rural developments of Singapore. Interestingly, Lee has several maps reflecting the location of plantations in Singapore. Complementing these maps is a monograph with notes derived from records and documents giving details of these plantations. The map collection, when studied alongside his monographs, photographs and postcards, form a rich and multi-layered resource for the study of Singapore's rural and urban landscapes. ♦

The Lee Kip Lin collection can be accessed on PictureSG at <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/pictures>. The publications are located in the donor collection at Level 13, but specific titles can be searched via the online OPAC and accessed directly from Level 11 counter.

Notes

- 1 He had an older brother, Lee Kip Lee who had lived with an aunt at Cairnhill during his early childhood. Thus Lee Kip Lin was effectively the only son until his older brother returned to live with the family. (Lee, 1995, p. 23)
- 2 Lee, K. L. (1995). *Amber Sands*, Chapter 1.
- 3 He could distinguish the different types of sea vessels merely through their silhouettes (Lee, 1995, p. 22-23)
- 4 Lee, 1995, p. 22-23
- 5 Lee, 1995, p. 11
- 6 Lee, 1995, p. 20
- 7 Tay, oral interview
- 8 This was the building Lee was most familiar with as he had ferried his sister to medical school regularly. The building in post-war Singapore was the Medical Faculty of the University of Malaya. (Tay, oral interview)
- 9 Lee claimed the invigilator was David Aberdeen who had recently won a competition to design the Trade Union Congress building in London. He had sensed Aberdeen observing him sketching for at least 5 minutes during the exam (Tay oral interview)
- 10 Derived from an article on Richardson, Albert Edward from a book he co authored with Hector Cofiatu. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/101-RichardsonSirAlbertEdward.html>
- 11 Tay oral interview
- 12 Silat is actually an acronym for Singapore, Lee Kip Lin and Architect Team 3 [Tay oral interview]
- 13 Tay, Suan Chiang. (2010, June 12). A happy man of many words. *The Straits Times*, Life!, p. 8
- 14 These are cigarettes out of Canada, a much sought after foreign brand in that time (Tay oral interview)
- 15 As seen in the personally signed books *The Horsburgh Lighthouse* by John Hall-Jones,
- 16 Previous references that Joannes Theodore de Bry's 1603 map of Singapore is the earliest in Lee's collection is mistaken as the referred map is a reprint of the original. Even so, this map is an 18th century reprint of the original likely to have been made some time between 1766 and 1770 (Gibson-Hill, May 1954, JMBRAS, p. 187)
- 17 Gibson-Hill, May 1954, pp. 163-214

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Designed for Use library@orchard Makes a Comeback



Sufyan Alimon is an Associate Librarian with the National Library Board. He is part of the library@orchard team and manages the Visual and People Design Collection.

Eunice Ang is an Associate Librarian with the National Library Board. She is part of the library@orchard team and manages the Fiction and Lifestyle Design Collection.

Patrons who have missed the old library@orchard at Ngee Ann City will be pleased to know that the new library@orchard opened on 23 October 2014, making it the 26th branch in the National Library Board's (NLB) network of public libraries. Apart from a prime location in the heart of the city's premier shopping district, library@orchard is the first public library with a collection focused on Lifestyle, Design and the Applied Arts. Located on the third and fourth levels of Orchard Gateway – a brand new shopping mall straddling both sides of Orchard Road and linked by a striking tubular glass bridge – the library not only serves the needs of those interested in design but also caters to the general public with its fiction and lifestyle collections. library@orchard complements the existing Central Public Library and library@desplanade, which focus on the Literary Arts and Performing Arts respectively.

Not surprisingly, design and the creative use of space was a major consideration when the idea for library@orchard was first mooted. It is the first public library in Singapore that is based on the concept of Design Thinking, a problem-solving and solution-based methodology used by designers to create products, services and experiences. In Design Thinking, meeting the needs of the user is of prime importance, with user inputs taken into consideration at every step of the design process. Such user inputs have been incorporated as much

as possible in the design of library@orchard, resulting in a specially customised space that is tailored to the needs of the library user.

As Singapore Polytechnic (SP) is one of the pioneers of Design Thinking in Singapore, it was natural for NLB to team up with SP when it came to conceptualising the new library@orchard. As the methodology of Design Thinking is never a linear process, the team had to balance the needs of users and test the viability of several prototypes. After much discussion between the SP and NLB teams and potential users, the feedback from the exhibition prototypes was used to formulate library@orchard's design concept.

Guided by broad themes such as "Learn and Discover", "Engage" and "Escape", library@orchard has spaces dedicated for different uses – reading and exploring books in cosy cocoon-like spaces; learning and thinking by literally plucking from the tree of learning; or just sitting and pondering or sharing ideas with fellow library users. A library has to be more than just a repository of books, and to this end, library@orchard is equipped with features that allow users to enjoy a library experience like no other. Magazines, audio-visual materials and fiction titles are found on the lower level of the library, while the upper level is where the bulk of the library's collection is held.

Here are some design elements that make up the library@orchard experience.

(Above) Patrons enjoying the environment and collections at the newly opened library@orchard.



GEAR 1 USER EMPATHY: Reaching out to users to meet their unmet needs



Stakeholders from the library
Members of the public visiting the Orchard Road area

Identify and understand needs

Pragmatic Patrick
Trendy Tracey
Demanding Daphne

Spirited Stanley
Gamer Gabriel
Searching Stella

GEAR 2 INTELLIGENT SOLUTION: Diving deep to discover the wow factors for the solution



Bloggers
Architects from the Singapore Institute of Architects
General library-going public

Prototypes designed, based on user needs
Prototype Exhibition: Central Public Library, December 2012

GEAR 3 VALIDATING SOLUTION: Co-creating solutions with the users



Feedback from the exhibition prototype was consolidated and analysed to put together library@orchard's design concept:



Using the principles of Design Thinking, the National Library Board worked closely with Singapore Polytechnic and the public to develop library@orchard. Courtesy of Annusia Jaybalan.

PLUCK AND PONDER

Once you are done with your reading, head over to one of the library's tall and commanding bookshelf structures. Stretching from floor-to-ceiling, these stunning book trees are a series of shelves containing information waiting to be perused. The book trees integrate various content channels and customers are free to "pluck" books, magazines and audio-visual materials off these trees. The book trees are permanent fixtures found on the upper level of the library, next to their respective collections: Visual, Product, People and Space.

The interactive screen growing out of each book tree allows users to read about design personalities and iconic products featured for the month. Content will be strategically "planted" by library@orchard staff but customers can help to nurture these trees by "fertilising" them with their own book recommendations, a process as simple as scanning the physical copy of the book. Other users exploring the display will be able to see this same book in the user-recommended list. To download the list of book recommendations, just scan the QR code on the display with your phone and it will be downloaded onto your eBookshelf.

Communities can go one step further to take charge of planting, growing and taking care of their very own book tree. They can adopt a tree and curate their own collection of books at library@orchard and hopefully be able to nurture a community of loyal readers over time.

Hint: If you find it hard to start conversations with new people or find yourself at a loss of what to talk to people about, then these book trees are made for you. After reading the visual displays, you should be able to take part in a 10-minute conversation on the topic. Given that there are four trees and the topics are rotated monthly, users can gain an extra 40 minutes of conversation material every month!

COSY AND COOCOONED

These pod-like cocoons are built to encourage learning and discovering in an intimate setting. Each cocoon has a smooth wood panel that wraps around the seat, leaving an opening at the front. It is perfect for users who wish to immerse themselves in a book and block out distractions while reading. The five cocoons – likely to be favourite hideouts for library@orchard visitors – are scattered throughout the upper level of the library.

Hint: The cocoon with the best view is situated in between the People and Visual collections. It overlooks the park bound by Somerset, Exeter and Killiney roads. With vantage views of such beautiful lush greenery, you can easily spend a whole day reading in this cosy space.



Bookshelves in the revamped library span floor-to-ceiling.



These intimate pod-like cocoons allow undisturbed reading. There are five of such seats in the upper level.



WALK AND WANDER

library@orchard offers magazines, audio-visual materials and fiction titles on its lower level, with five design collections on the upper level: People, Space, Product, Visual and Lifestyle. Wander around the shelves and users will find that the experience of searching for books in library@orchard differs slightly from that of other public libraries.

At library@orchard, books are arranged such that it is easy to browse and explore, with the topics of each collection clearly signposted. Even the labels on the book spines have been re-designed and clearly lay out the three things users need when searching for a book: collection name, subject category and the Dewey decimal classification number. For example, if you are renovating your house and would like some design ideas, head over to the Space Design shelves and look for books under the subject category of Interior Design without having to refer to the library catalogue.

If the upper level of the library projects the vibe of a peaceful and quiet bedroom, the lower level embodies the cheerful buzz of the living room. This is where people of varying backgrounds and interests can come together to build a vibrant and creative community within the library.

Hint: In true library fashion, library@ orchard has arranged the books to form a narrative with sections on People, Space, Product, Visual and Lifestyle. It all starts with People. One of the most basic needs besides food, air and water is shelter. People naturally want a Space to occupy and make their own. Then come Products to decorate your space and Visuals to help you to decide on the products you need. After furnishing your space, you will realise that the items you have chosen actually reflect your Lifestyle.



SIT AND SPEAK

Occupying a prominent spot on the first level of library@orchard is a spacious semi-circle shaped open-plan seating area. Channelling the spirit of the agora (meaning “gathering place” in Greek), this is where users can gather in the library to sit and speak to other users. Do not worry that the librarian walking past will start shushing you as soon as you start talking. In this open space, users are encouraged to make conversation and to share their knowledge with one another at selected times. In this vein, library@orchard will host Communities – free twice-weekly self-help sessions where library users can come together to learn by using the resources available in the library.

Hint: This is the place to put those extra 40 minutes of conversation material to good use!



SWIPE AND SAVE

Get ready to stretch your muscles at this station. Located in the lower level of the library, this interactive wall can display up to 20 book titles at once. If print books are not good enough, the eBooks on this panel – known as the Kinect Glass – should do the trick. To start, mimic the pose shown on the screen with your body and start grabbing titles. Grab as many titles as you want and download them using the QR codes. A maximum of two users can use this station at the same time. To make the library a truly social experience, the Kinect Glass also doubles as a digital collaborative space for you to upload your creations. Other users can download and modify your creations, and then re-upload them onto this platform. Through remixing and reusing, the Kinect Glass encourages conversations and creative collaborations between users.

Hint: Remember to stand at least one metre away from the glass in order for it to pick up your movements.



FLIP AND FIND

Imagine a newsstand with an array of magazine titles. Now imagine that newsstand spanning floor-to-ceiling and stretching as far as the eye can see. That is what you will be looking at when you peruse the wall of magazines – filled with a dizzying selection of professional and creative titles that library@orchard has to offer. This is the first public library in Singapore to shelf its entire collection of magazines with the covers facing outward.

Hint: library@orchard holds the largest collection of design magazines of any public library, so get your lifestyle reading fix here!



LOOK AND LISTEN

Featuring a total of six screens pushing content out simultaneously, this video wall positioned at the entrance of the library welcomes visitors to library@ orchard. Virtually anything in digital format can be flashed on these screens. The screens will be used to showcase films from the library's collection or from library@orchard's partners.

Hint: If this is your first visit to library@ orchard, you may not know where to start. Make a quick stop at this wall to get a feel of the layout of the library from the digital library map or to get the latest information on happenings at library@orchard.



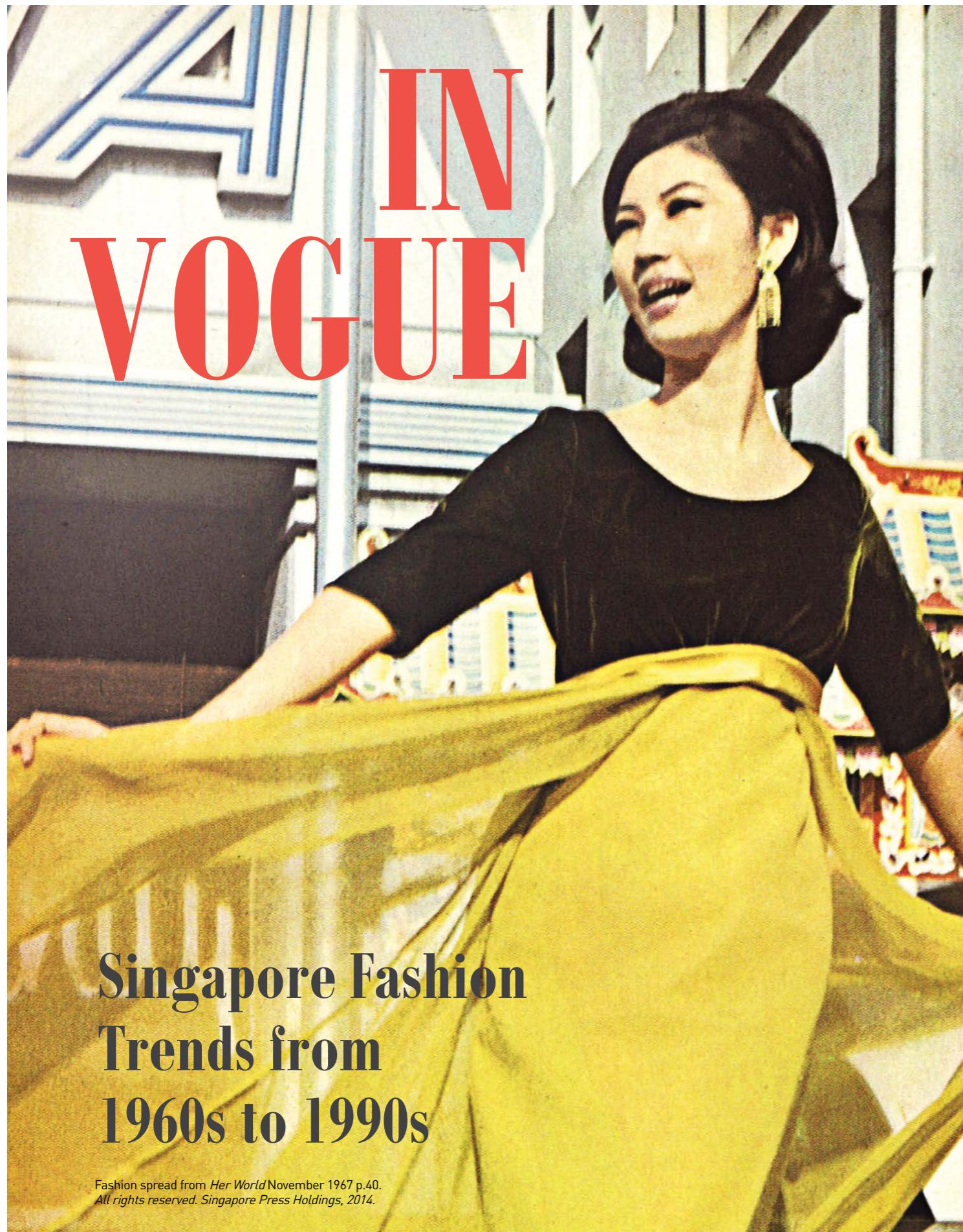
DABBLE AND DELIGHT

library@orchard is the first mall library to have three dedicated programme zones for activities and events. Delineated by glass doors, these zones can be segregated into three separate spaces or merged into one big space, making it one of the most versatile spaces in the library.

Hint: If you are curious by nature, head to library@orchard on the last Friday and Saturday of the month to catch the Resident Maker in action. Taking inspiration from the Artist-in-Residence concept, library@orchard will feature talented individuals – such as artists and designers – working at their craft in the dedicated MakerSpace. Visitors can watch as the Resident Maker potters about or interrupt and ask them questions about their work.

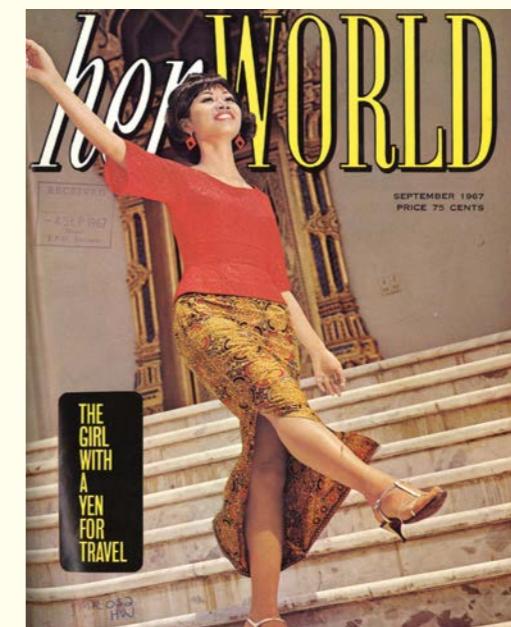
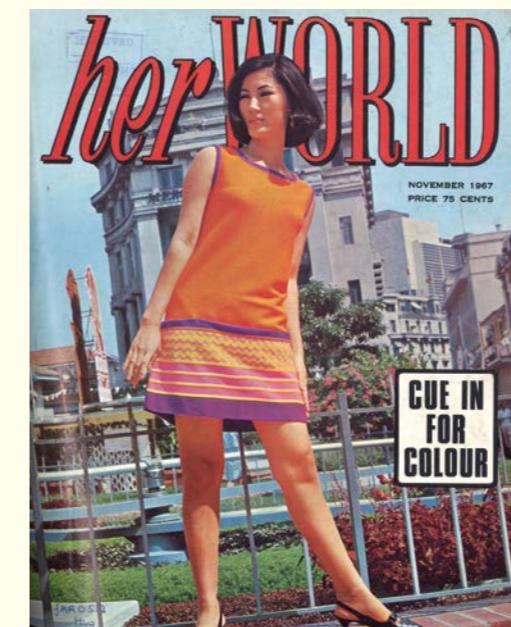
Visitors browsing through publications at the wall of magazines, which houses the largest collection of design and creative titles found in any public library in Singapore.





Jessie Yak is a Librarian with the National Library of Singapore. She manages the library's fashion and Chinese arts collections. She is a graduate of Beijing University and the University of Cambridge.

Sundari Balasubramaniam is a Librarian with the National Library of Singapore. Her responsibilities include managing and developing content as well as providing reference and research services. She also manages the library's Tamil collection.



Front covers from *Her World* November and September 1967.
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Singapore Press Holdings, 2014.

In May 2014, the Asian Fashion Exchange was held, celebrating the best of Asian fashion and designers and doubling as a platform for young emerging talent to showcase their collections. To tie in with the event, the National Library held a week-long retrospective on the fashion trends of past decades with a display of books and women's magazines.

The evolution of fashion and clothing in Singapore has been shaped by climatic, economic, political, social and cultural influences. As Singapore transformed from a fishing village into a developed nation, the clothing we wore also took shape accordingly. In the early 1900s right until the 1950s people – immigrants as well as the indigenous Malays – mostly wore traditional ethnic attire such as the Malay *baju kurong*, Indian *sari*; Peranakan or Indonesian *sarong kebaya* and Chinese *cheongsam*. Western attire among women was fairly uncommon, save for expatriates and the handful of locals who were educated abroad.

Then came the advent of television in 1963. Fashion in the 1960s became heavily influenced by the media, with styles influenced by movies and celebrities such as the Beatles. In the 1970s, dance film *Saturday Night Fever* starring John Travolta single-handedly popularised disco dressing. In

the 1980s and 90s, work and career advancement became priorities, and fashion focused on power dressing. People also became interested in sports and fitness, and apparel was designed to suit their lifestyles. Traditional costumes were still valued but took a backseat and were mainly worn during festive occasions.

There were only a handful of fashion designers in Singapore in the 1960s, one of whom was Roland Chow, who frequently contributed his elegant designs to Singapore's earliest women's magazine *Her World*. The designer scene became more active from the 1970s. In 1974, designer Tan Yoong was the first non-Japanese winner in the 5th Kanebo Japan Grand Award (haute couture section). Two years later, he won the silver award. His unique and exquisite designs cemented his reputation as one of Singapore's top designers.

Although the contemporary fashion scene today is peppered with designers like Ashley Isham, Jo Soh, Priscilla Shunmugam, Keith Png and Jonathan Seow – some of whom have established an international presence – older fashion stalwarts from earlier decades such as Tan Yoong, Thomas Wee, Celia Loe and Francis Cheong still contribute to the Singapore fashion scene.

Here are some key trends through the decades:

1960s

SWINGING MINI

The 1960s began with modest hemlines that stopped just below the knee. As a reflection of Singapore's cosmopolitan culture, local designs combined traditional ethnic elements with foreign influences as exemplified in the *cheongsam* and *kebaya* with modern or Western twists, or dresses made from *sari* fabric. The designs usually featured figure-hugging silhouettes, such as puffy skirts with cinched waists.

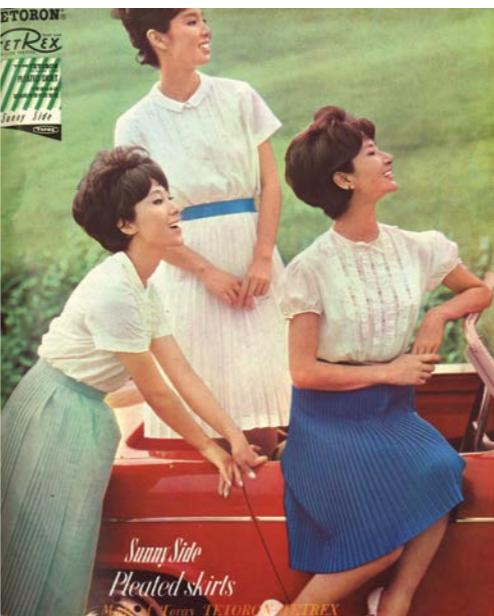
The unmanned moon landings in the early 1960s by the Soviet Union and United States stirred great excitement internationally and inspired fashion influenced by space-age elements. In 1964, fashion label Courrèges launched the Moon Girl, who donned "white kid boots, silver-sequinned pants or knee-length A-line dresses with dramatic cut-outs usually in brilliant white."

Upstart British fashion designer Mary Quant made the world sit up with "The Mini" skirt the following year, which saw hemlines raised to an unprecedented high. As hemlines moved upwards, waistlines plunged downwards, with the drop-waist design much in favour then. The head-turning mini hemline was soon accompanied by the emergence of a simple bodice devoid of any form-fitting lines – the classical A-line shift dress (also called a swing dress).

As the controversy over hemlines raged, the height of side-slits in *cheongsams* also came under scrutiny. As slits crept thigh-high to make the wearer appear sexier, some argued that these high-cut slits were inelegant and in poor taste.

For local fashion, the prevailing style of the late 1960s was clean lines, neat shapes and a trapeze silhouette, with the A-line shift dress being the defining shape of the time and the mini skirt as the phenomenon of the decade.

Knee-length A-line dresses were popular in the 1960s. *Her World* November 1967, pp.40–41. All rights reserved. Singapore Press Holdings, 2014.



An advertisement for pleated skirts.
Her World, April 1964, inside back cover. All rights reserved. Singapore Press Holdings, 2014.

1970s

SWANKY PANTS

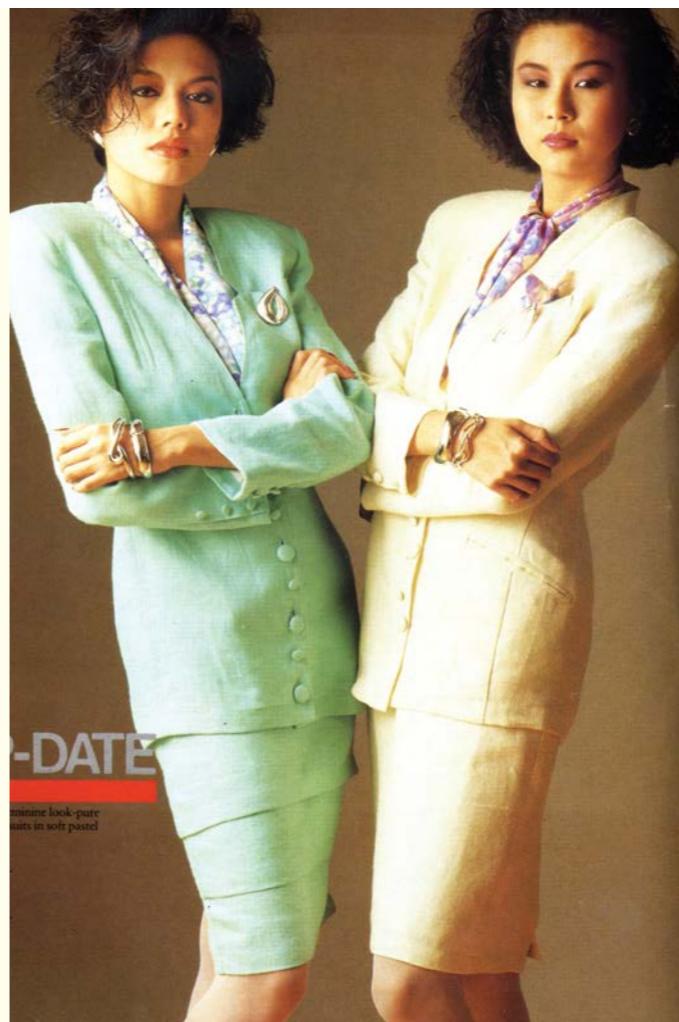
Hot pants burst into the fashion world as the next fashion statement of the 1970s. Hot pants were extremely brief shorts worn under a long shirt or dress buttoned to the waist, revealing the legs beneath.

Around the same time, hemlines went to the other extreme with the maxi dress, a long dress or skirt that reached the ankles. Influenced by the hippie culture that arose in the United States, these dresses came in vibrant floral and geometric prints and were usually made from light materials such as cotton, chiffon and polyester.

The "gypsy" look, which could be created by accessorising with ethnic tunics, capes and kaftans, was also popular during this time. Pleats, ruffles and frills were also favourite trimmings used to embellish garments during this period.

Other defining looks of the decade were bell-bottom trousers and "pantsuits". Trouser legs began to flare gradually and eventually reached the wide bell-bottom look by the mid 1970s. Thereafter they slowly morphed into straight and wide cuts, before reverting to a narrow-cut silhouette by the early 1980s.

The local fashion scene was extremely vibrant towards the end of the 1970s, with fashion shows held at upscale venues such as Grand Hyatt, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Raffles Hotel and the Mandarin Orchard. In 1979, European fashion houses Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Christian Dior each opened their first boutiques in the city-state. These laid the foundation for Singapore's fashion world to enter its golden era in the next decade.



The 1980s saw the market for office wear expand. *Her World* February 1988, p.5. All rights reserved. Singapore Press Holdings, 2014.

1980s

POWER DRESSING

The rise of Japanese fashion designers such as Hanae Mori, Kenzo Takada, Issey Miyake and Kanzai Yamamoto, who had successfully penetrated the European markets with their innovative designs, spurred Singapore to launch an exhibition of local designers' collections in Paris in 1983.

"Singapore Apparel" was a major fashion show initiated by a group of fashion designers. Subsequently the Economic Development Board (EDB), Trade Development Board (TDB) and the Textile and Garment Manufacturers Association (TGMAS) jointly organised "Singapore Apparel" as an annual event.

In the early 1980s, local designer Allan Chai distinguished himself with his clever hand-painted Chinese pictorial appliqués stitched onto Oriental-inspired outfits. Bobby Chng dominated the menswear market for the young and trendy. His sporty look with metallic trimmings injected a fresh approach to men's clothing.

The recession in the 1980s led to more career-oriented designs as jobs and careers became the main preoccupations of the day. The market for office wear expanded. Designers Esther Tay and Celia Loe created a career-wear clothing line to meet the needs of the career woman. Jacket skirt suits, smart casual and executive suits were among their popular creations.

"Yuppies", a term coined for young urban professionals in the 1980s, were a new breed of ambition-driven and materialistic young people who presented a niche market for the fashion trade. Designers began to target and create apparel that was in keeping with yuppie lifestyle aspirations and fashion sensibilities.



Flared-leg pants, such as bell-bottoms, were styles characteristic of the 1970s. *Fashionable Clothing from the Sears Catalogs*: mid 1970s, p. 42. All rights reserved, Schiffer Publishing Ltd, Pennsylvania, 2014.

With more women entering the workforce, designers began to focus on this new market. *Fashionable Clothing from the Sears Catalogs*: early 1980s, p.96. All rights reserved, Schiffer Publishing Ltd, Pennsylvania, 2014.

1990s

LESS IS MORE

The beginning of the 1990s was a period that was characterised by clean, fuss-free and comfortable and easy-care clothes for fast-paced living. Trends from the 1960s and 1970s, such as miniskirts, bell-bottom pants, tapered blouses with narrow sleeves and arm's eyes paired with platform shoes, were revived, adapted and updated for the 1990s.

Media and fashion shows played an important role in the fashion industry during this period. Clothing designs had to reflect the lifestyle of the wearer, and clothes were used to project a particular image or the social status of the buyer.

Casual and comfortable clothing began to gain popularity among young working women as, thanks to rising affluence, people began to travel more. At the same time, "casual Fridays" began making its way into offices, allowing workers to dress informally for the office on Fridays. ♦



The 1990s saw casual and comfortable clothes gaining popularity. *Her World* December 1990, p.261. All rights reserved, Singapore Press Holdings, 2014.

Casual Fridays saw workers trade in their business attire for more casual wear. *Her World* December 1990, p.32. All rights reserved, Singapore Press Holdings, 2014.

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