



## ANNUAL REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

The Singapore Heritage Society was established in 1986 as a Society. It was registered under the Charities Act on 12 March 1987 and was granted Institution of Public Character status on 14 January 2009.

UEN Number:	S87SS0042J
Registered Address:	179 River Valley Road #05-06 Singapore 179033
Management Committee	The Management Committee elected at the Annual General Meeting held on 8 September 2007 is as follows:  Dr Kevin Tan (President) Dr Philip Holden (Vice-President) Mr Lim Chen Sian (Hon Secretary) Mr Alvin Tan Peng Hong (Hon Treasurer) Dr Liew Kai Khiun (Member) Dr Chua Ai Lin (Member) Ms Geraldene Lowe-Ismail (Member) Ms Dahlia Shamsuddin (Member) Ms Kelly Fu Mr Ng Ching Huei
Trustees	NIL
Banker	OCBC Bank
Auditor	JB Chua & Co 55 Lorong L Telok Kurau #03-63 Bright Centre Singapore 425500
Investment Advisor	NIL

Other Advisor(s)

NIL

### **OBJECTIVE**

The Society is dedicated to the preservation, transmission and promotion of Singapore's history, heritage and identity. The Society further aims to promote active interest in the cultural life and history of Singapore and to initiate action on research, evaluation, documentation, publication, collection, display, and preservation and restoration of skills and items of historical interest.

### **POLICIES**

#### **Finance & Funding**

The Society is funded by a combination of subscriptions from members, donations from well-wishers as well as through the sale of its publications and the provision of heritage consultancy services. It is the Society's policy that all new projects be self-financing. Throughout its history, the Society has never taken a loan from any individual or institution to finance its activities.

#### **Premises for Registered Address & Meetings**

The Society does not own any property. It's registered address at 179 River Valley Road #05-06 and its continued use of its meeting room facilities has been made possible through the generosity of W Architects Pte.

### **REVIEW FOR THE YEAR 2007–2009**

#### **Introduction**

This report covers the period September 2007 to August 2009. Between the 2007 AGM and this one, the Society also held an Annual General Meeting on 1 March 2008 at the Living Room, The Arts House. No elections were held at that meeting. The main matter to be dealt with in that meeting was the passage of constitutional amendments recommended by the Charities Unit of the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts pursuant to the Society's application for Institution of Public Character (IPC) status.

#### **Administration**

The Society has no paid staff. Since June 2006, the secretarial work of the Society has carried out by Ms Wendy Chua of Bizcomm Pte Ltd who acts as the Society's administrative secretary on a service contract. In January 2009, the Society was accorded the status of Institution of Public Character.

## Talks and Forums

Talks and forums remains the most popular of the Society's numerous events and initiatives. During the period under review, most of our talks were co-organised with the National Library Board and the Arts House. The following are a list of talks the Society organized between September 2007 and August 2009:

### **HISTORY OF MAPPING IN SINGAPORE: 1819–2002**

Mr Mok Ly Yng

3.00 pm, Saturday 8 September 2007

Visitors' Briefing Room, Ground Floor, National Library

Mok Ly Yng, known in mapping circles as the 'Mad Map Man of Singapore' regaled members of the Society and the public with a two-hour talk on the history of the mapping of Singapore. His talk was illustrated by numerous slides of early significant maps of Singapore. The Visitors' Briefing Room was filled beyond capacity and extra chairs had to be brought in for the talk. This was followed by a lively question-and-answer session, demonstrating wide-spread interest in the subject matter.

### **GRAND PRIX: THE UPPER THOMSON ROAD PREQUEL 1960S– 1970S**

Mr Eli Solomon

2.30 pm, Sunday 7 September 2008

Basement 1, Central Lending Library @ National Library

Eli Solomon, author of *Snakes & Devils* gave an anecdote-filled talk on the early history of the legendary Thomson circuit where the early Singapore Grand Prix races were held from 1961 to 1973. His animated talk was boosted with the aid of vintage racing gear and helmet and the screening of rare footage of the Grand Prix races. Twenty copies of his book, which he brought along for sale, were completely sold out.

### **EATING TOGETHER SINGAPORE: THE HAWKER CENTRE IN THE SINGAPORE STORY**

Professor Lily Kong

2.30 pm, Saturday 27 September 2008

Basement 1, Central Lending Library @ National Library

Professor Lily Kong, Vice-President at the National University of Singapore, and author of the book *Singapore Hawker Centres: People, Places, Food* spoke about how hawker centres have become an iconic part of Singapore's landscape and way of life. She mapped the development of this institution from the early days of street peddlers to the consolidated hawker centres of the 1980s and 1990s. The room was packed with about 60 persons.

**CREATING GREATER MALAYSIA**

Professor Tan Tai Yong

2.30 pm, Sunday 12 October 2008

Possibility Room, National Library

This talk was based on Professor Tan's recently-launched book, *Creating 'Greater Malaysia': Decolonization and the Politics of Merger*. Set against the tumultuous context of the Cold War, Prof Tan discussed the mindsets of the key actors in the Singapore, Malayan and British governments in their attempts to strengthen themselves from what they perceived to be the encroaching threat of communism. The talk was attended by about 40 persons.

**WILLIAM FARQUHAR: SINGAPORE'S "FORGOTTEN FOUNDER"**

Mr Jean-Claude Fuchs

2.30 pm, Saturday, 28 February 2009

Screening Room, The Arts House

This talk was given by Jean-Claude Fuchs, a retired Frenchman who had lived in Singapore for the past two decades and who spent the last 18 months researching the life and family tree of William Farquhar (1774–1839), first Resident of Singapore. Fuchs argued that in many ways, Farquhar has been much neglected by historians and deserves a far more prominent place in Singapore history. The talk was attended by about 40 persons.

**GEDUNG KUNING**

Ms Hidayah Amin

2.00 pm, Saturday, 16 May 2009

Visitors' Briefing Room, Ground Floor, National Library

*Gedung Kuning* or the Yellow Mansion at 73 Sultan Gate is one of the most significant and important buildings in the Kampong Glam area. Much myth surrounds the building and its provenance but from 1912 to 1999, it was the home of Haji Yusoff and his descendants. Hidayah Amin, one of his great-granddaughters, shared the history of the home and the family through colourful anecdotes and personal reminiscences. About 60 persons attended the talk.

**WRITING HISTORICAL FICTION: A DIALOGUE WITH SUCHEN CHRISTINE LIM**

Suchen Christine Lim in conversation with Dr Philip Holden

2.30 pm, Saturday 6 June 2009

Visitors' Briefing Room, Ground Floor, National Library

In this unique dialogue session, Christine Suchen Lim, one of Singapore's best-known authors and its foremost historical novelist shared her thoughts on the writing of historical fiction with Dr Philip Holden and the audience. She discussed the tension between historical accuracy and the demands of a literary narrative, the intersection between private experience and public history, and the place of women's stories in re-imagining the history of Singapore.

**SINGAPORE: A 700-YEAR HISTORY – FROM EARLY EMPORIUM TO GLOBAL CITY**

Panel Discussion by Dr Jason Lim, Dr Syed Muhd Khairudin & Mr Alvin Tan

2.00 pm, Saturday 20 June 2009

The Pod, National Library

This panel discussion was convened to discuss the new book, *Singapore: A 700-Year History – From Early Emporium to Global City* by Kwa Chong Guan, Derek Heng and Tan Tai Yong. Unlike most books on Singapore's history, this book pays considerable attention to the history of pre-Raffles Singapore. The discussion, which was attended by over 130 persons was a lively discussion by the panelists with inputs and rebuttals from the authors who were also present.

**HEALTH IN COLONIAL SINGAPORE: EXPERIENCES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE**

Dr Loh Kah Seng, Dr Liew Kai Khiun & Ms Kelly Fu

2.00 pm, Saturday 18 July 2009

Imagination Room, Level 5, National Library

This talk, which had been rescheduled from the year before, focused on three aspects of healthcare in colonial Singapore: leprosy, midwives and the deadly outbreak of the Spanish Flu of 1918. The three scholars, who have been working on various aspects of the history health care in Singapore shared their findings with the audience of some 50 persons.

**MAPS & CHARTS OF SINGAPORE FROM THE ARCHIVES OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE**

Dr Peter Borschberg

2.00 pm, Saturday 15 August 2009

The Pod, National Library

Dr Peter Borschberg shared his research into the involvement of continental European powers in Southeast Asia and the maps of Singapore and its environs that were produced by European cartographers and hydrographers between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The vividly illustrated talk captivated the audience of over 150 persons.

One scheduled talk, *Under the Billiard Room: Encountering the Raffles Hotel Through Its Animals* by Dr Chee Lilian was cancelled due to the speaker being indisposed. Another talk, *Places of Suffering & Healing* by Dr Liew Kai Khiun, Ms Kelly Fu and Mr Loh Kah Seng, scheduled for 11 October 2008 was postponed due to poor response.

**Movie Screening**

**THE PIRATE & THE EMPEROR'S SHIP & AH KEW THE DIGGER**

Singapore premier of two films by Khoo Eng Yow

1–3 May 2009

The Screening Room, The Arts House

Through the introduction of Dr Lai Chee Kien, the Society got to know Malaysian film-maker Khoo Eng Yow, who hails from Taiping. An engineer by training, Khoo's interest in photography led him to become a full-time professional film editor and film maker. These two movies were screened in Singapore for the first time in a collaborative screening organized by the Society and the Arts House. Unfortunately, the response for the movies was rather poor with between 15

and 40 persons in each screening. Each screening was followed by a question and answer session with Khoo, as well as Lee Eng Kew (Ah Kew) who were present throughout the period.

## Exhibitions

### VIGNETTES IN TIME: SINGAPORE MAPS & HISTORY THROUGH THE CENTURIES

curated by Lim Chen Sian

1 August to 31 October 2009

Level 10, The National Library

This landmark exhibition is jointly organized by the Singapore Heritage Society and the National Library and features the collections of Mr Lim Shao Bin, Mr Lim Chen Sian and the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library. The idea for the exhibition came from Mr Lim Shao Bin who broached the idea of doing 'something interesting' for the 190<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Raffles' landing. This is the largest-ever map exhibition ever held in Singapore and more than 80% of its 135 maps and ancillary material are originals rather than facsimiles. The Lim Shao Bin collection includes the never before seen secret papers of General Utsunomiya's *Operation Nanpo*, a sophisticated plan to take over Singapore dating back to 1910. Also unique among the exhibits is the earliest pair of sketches/images of Singapore, dating back to 7 February 1819. These were only recently discovered by Australian researcher Marcus Langdon, and are being shown in public anywhere in the world, for the first time. These sketches predate ALL known maps and images of Singapore. The exhibition is part of the National Library's 4<sup>th</sup> Heritage Roadshow, *I Remember*, which was declared open by Acting Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, RAdm (NS) Lui Tuck Yew. This exhibition, so ably and excellently curated by Mr Lim Chen Sian and Mr Lim Shao Bin has received numerous accolades from many distinguished visitors and leaders.

## Walks, Tours etc

### CONSTRUCTED LANDSCAPES: SINGAPORE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

A Curator's Tour by Dr Lai Chee Kien

2.00 pm, Saturday, 4 April 2009

The NUS Museum, National University of Singapore

This exhibition, curated by SHS member, Dr Lai Chee Kien, features the works from the collection of the NUS Museum. It focuses on Singapore and explores the artistic interactions with the land as personal and collective memory, as well as renditions of physical space, cultural imagination and practice. The special curator's tour attracted some 25 participants.

### TOUR TO XIAMEN: QUANZHOU HISTORY & CULTURE TOUR

10-16 June 2008

This tour was organized by Exco member, Ng Ching Huei for members of the Society and their friends. The week-long tour took participants to Xiamen (Amoy), Jinjang, Nanan, Quanzhou, and Hui Ann. Through the kindness of Mr Tan Dib Jin, grandson of the late Tan Kah Kee, the group was also privileged to visit the Lim Boon Keng Pavilion, the Lin Yutang Memorial Hall and the Lu Xun Memorial Hall, and Tan Kah Kee's home. A total of 13 persons made up the tour contingent.

## **MERDEKA MONUMENTS: TOUR TO KUALA LUMPUR**

11–15 June 2009

The idea for this tour came from an exhibition on the same theme and a book with the same title by Dr Lai Chee Kien. Dr Lai was persuaded to help organize a tour of 8 of the 9 remaining monuments built just as Malaya/Malaysia was becoming independent. These included the National Monument, National Clock, Parliament House, Chin Woo Stadium, Stadium Negara, Merdeka Stadium, Masjid Negara, Muzium Negara, and the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. The group of 19 persons travelled up to Kuala Lumpur by bus and were accommodated in the Heritage Wing of the Federal Hotel on Jalan Bukit Bintang. Besides touring the historic buildings, members also met up with their counterparts from Badan Warisan where Dr Lai gave a talk on the Merdeka Monuments.

### **Miscellaneous**

#### **20TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER**

The Society celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a buffet-style dinner at the function room of the Victoria Theatre on 22 September 2007. The function was organized on the Society's behalf by Ms Kelly Fu and Dr Liew Kai Khiun. Over 100 persons turned up for the dinner which was punctuated by a presentation of special awards to three pioneers and stalwarts of the Society: William Lim, Sharon Siddique and Geraldene Lowe-Ismail. Thomson Surveyor Wine – hitherto unavailable in Singapore – was specially air-flown into Singapore thanks to the generous sponsorship of Dr Kwok Kian Woon and Mr David Hall-Jones (owner of the vineyard and descendant of John Turnbull Thomson, after whom the wine is named).

#### **SYMPOSIUM: MAKERS & KEEPERS OF SINGAPORE HISTORY**

This symposium was jointly-organised by the Society and the Asia Research Institute on 10 November 2008. The full-day symposium brought together the 'who's who' of Singapore history, as well as young, up-and-coming scholars. There were four panels – 'The Keepers of the Archives'; 'Side Gates: Alternative Archives'; 'The Prime Movers'; and 'Ordinary People and Subalterns' – featuring a total of 17 papers and presentations. The symposium was a great success with over 80 members of the public attending as observers. The programme was devised by Dr Loh Kah Seng and Dr Liew Kai Khiun provided the administrative links and tie-up with the Institute. The proceedings will be compiled, edited and published as book under the editorship of Drs Liew and Loh.

#### **PRO MUSICA 2009: AN EVENING OF OPERA ARIAS & ENSEMBLES**

This event came to be organized by the Society as a result of a series of interviews the Society's members – Dinesh Naidu, Ho Weng Hin and Tan Kar Lin – conducted with veteran architect, Datuk Seri Lim Chong Keat. Among his multifarious activities, Lim is also cultural advisor to the Flanders Opera Studio and OperaPlus. Over the past few years, he organized a series of international master classes for promising young opera

singers in Penang. Lim proposed that the Society could host this event and that funds raised might go towards the Society's coffers. Furthermore, the event was being underwritten by Architects Team 3 (which Lim founded in 1969) as part of its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

The concert was held at the DBS Auditorium and featured soprano Sabine Conzen (Belgium); mezzo-soprano Ines Madiera (Portugal); baritone Andrew Ashwin (UK) and pianist Hein Boterberg (Belgium) and played to a house of approximately 380 persons. The concert was preceded by a talk entitled, 'Architectural Acoustics, Music and the DBS Auditorium' by Datuk Seri Lim Chong Keat and Mr Kok Siew Hoong, original architects for the DBS Building and Auditorium. This talk was supported by the Singapore Institute of Architects who awarded their members 5 CPD points for attendance. The reception for \$100 and \$50 ticket holders was sponsored and hosted by Architects Team 3. Coordinating the whole event on behalf of the Society were President Kevin Tan and Ms Wendy Chua, our administrative secretary.

#### **NOMINEE TO URA'S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE AWARDS SELECTION PANEL**

The Society nominated Dinesh Naidu to represent the Society on this Panel for 2008–2009. For the 2009 judging, Dinesh was replaced by the Society's Vice-President, Dr Philip Holden as he had to be out of the country. Upon the expiry of Dinesh's term as our representative on the panel, the Society nominated Ho Weng Hin as our representative to the Panel.

#### **TOUR OF ISTANA GROUNDS – JAPANESE ASSOCIATION**

On 3 August 2008, President Kevin Tan led a group of history enthusiasts from the Japanese Association on a tour of the Istana and its grounds. This tour was at the special request of the Association.

#### **DOCENT TRAINING SESSION: FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM**

At the request of the Friends of the Museum, Society President Kevin Tan gave a talk at the docent training session at the National Museum of Singapore on 3 February 2009. The talk was on the 'History of Water and Singapore'.

#### **FREE ADVERTISEMENT: POPULAR EDUCATION GUIDE**

Thanks to the support and generosity of Mr Eric Berthier of Popular Bookstores, the Society received a free half-page advertisement in the 2008 edition of the *Popular Education Guide*, distributed free to all Popular privilege card holders.

#### **INTERVIEW BY HONG KONG GROUP**

President Kevin Tan was interviewed by a team from the Hongkong University and the Hongkong Development Bureau on 31 October 2008, on Singapore's conservation policy and efforts.



#### **WORKSHOP FOR RAFFLES ACADEMY**

At the request of two Raffles Institution teachers in charge of the history programme in Raffles Academy, President Kevin Tan and Secretary Alvin Tan gave workshop to the boys of the Academy on the writing of Singapore history and on the writing of a new history of Raffles Institution. The talk took place at Raffles Institution on Saturday 22 August 2009. The request was made through Dr Liew Kai Khiun.

#### **IMPERFECT COPIES OF 700 YEARS OF SINGAPORE**

Due to a very minor printing glitch, the entire first batch of 3,000 copies of the book *700 Years of Singapore – From Early Emporium to Global City* was rejected by its publisher, National Archives of Singapore. When the Society came to know of this, and after determining that the defect was indeed very minor – a small crease on one or two pages of each book – efforts were made to procure the rejected copies for resale to students at a discounted price. The Society subsequently purchased 1,500 copies of the book at \$3.00 each and a further 1,500 copies at \$2.00 each from the printer, Oxford Graphic Printers Pte Ltd. The Society also got clearance from the National Archives to resell these imperfect copies to students of Kwa Chong Guan and Tan Tai Yong at the University at a price below that offered in the bookstores for the ‘perfect’ copies. On 18 August 2009, the first batch of 390 copies were sold to Kwa Chong Guan’s students for \$15.00 a copy.

### **Book Projects**

#### **SPACES FOR THE DEAD: A CASE FROM THE LIVING**

As was reported at the last AGM, editing for the manuscript had been completed in November 2004 by SHS President Kevin Tan. It has been difficult to raise funds to publish this book due to its ‘inauspicious’ subject matter. With the announcement of the Hi2P funding scheme by the National Heritage Board, whereby the Board may give up to 50% funding on worthwhile heritage projects, efforts will be renewed to get the book published.

#### **OUR MODERN PAST: MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN SINGAPORE 1920S TO 1970S**

This book project is progressing well. In 2005, the Society received a grant of \$60,900 from the Urban Redevelopment Authority under their Architecture and Urban Design Excellence (AUDE) grant scheme. It is expected that the first draft of the final manuscript will be ready by end of November 2009. Delays in completing the manuscript have been occasioned by a combination of personal issues on the part of two of the authors as well as in the unearthing of new archival material that entails substantial revisions.

#### **SURVIVING CHANGI: A CHESS BIOGRAPHY OF EE COLMAN**

It was reported at the last AGM that the book had been critically acclaimed after its launch. In November, the book was nominated by *The Guardian* newspaper of London as one of the best chess books of the year.

#### **THE LATE DR SEOW EU JIN'S THESIS – A HISTORY OF SINGAPORE ARCHITECTURE**

This item was reported in the last report. Since then, Assoc Prof Yong Yunn Chii, Head of the Department of Architecture at NUS has informed the Society that they Department will embark on this project on its own. The Society wishes the Department all the very best in this endeavour.

#### **BOOKS BY LEON COMBER: THROUGH THE BAMBOO WINDOW**

This item was reported in the 2007 Report of the Committee. Since then, the first volume, comprising four volumes of Comber's books has been co-published with Talisman Publishing as *Through the Bamboo Window: Chinese Life & Culture in 1950s Singapore and Malaya*. The second volume on secret societies is currently in the press. The books were edited and annotated by Kevin Tan & Ng Ching Huei. They were also copy-typed by Christian Chow, Krystal Tan, Kimberley Tan, and Winston Bay. Complimentary copies of the book were given to each of them in appreciation for their efforts.

### **Membership**

Over the past two years, our membership figures have varied between 140 and 160. This is the highest number of members we have had in our history.

### **Visitors**

On 15 February 2008, Dr Lee Kam Hing and his wife Celine, publishers of *Heritage Asia* visited Singapore and met up with SHS President Kevin Tan to brief the Society on the buyout of the magazine by MPH Ltd. They thanked the Society for their support and expressed the hope that we can continue to do so.

On 11 September 2008, Soehardi Hartono, former Executive Director of the Sumatra Heritage Trust and an old friend of the Society, visited Singapore and met up with President Kevin Tan and other members over dinner.

### **Conclusion**

As can be seen, the Society has organized a great variety of events and projects. These have not only benefited members directly, but also substantially raised the profile of the Society. All this has been possible only because of the commitment and dedication of the Society's Executive Committee members as well as the ex-Officio

members. The problem remains that most of the work is being handled by only a very small minority of the Society's members and this is likely to result in fatigue in the long run. It is our hope that more members will come forward to serve and offer their expertise and help in running the Society so that its missions of Education, Research and Advocacy in the interests of Singapore's heritage may be advanced. The Society places on record its appreciation to the out-going members of the Executive Committee and also to Ms Wendy Chua for their hard work and dedication.

#### REVIEW OF FINANCIAL STATE AND EXPLANATION OF MAJOR FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

The Society's main source of income is from the sale of its books. Membership subscriptions alone are insufficient to meet day-to-day expenses. Major expenditure items in the Accounts for 2008-2009 are in the publishing of books as well as in the organizing of tours. In all activities the Society has organized, every effort has been made to ensure that each event is self-funding.

#### FUTURE PLANS AND COMMITMENTS

The Society plans to strengthen its financial position by the establishment of a finance and business committee and the development of a business model for the publication of its books and provision of its services. Currently, the Society has no financial commitment other than day-to-day operation expenses.

#### STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Statement of accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2009 is attached.



**Dr Kevin YL Tan**

PRESIDENT

on behalf of the Executive Committee