

Director's Note

Kueh pie tee is a favourite dish of many Singaporeans. It is especially popular during *popiah* parties. After all, the filling is the same, only the packaging is different. But while you might happily scarf down one or five, have you ever wondered where the name *kueh pie tee* comes from? Christopher Tan did and we are grateful for his curiosity because that led him to do a lot of detective work, resulting in our delectable cover story.

The year 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and that makes it a good time as any to look back at the Japanese Occupation. Hannah Yeo's story on opium propaganda sheds light on how Imperial Japan used the Opium War to justify the invasion of Malaya, while John Bray looks at how four Japanese Anglicans used their position and influence to help local Anglicans during the Occupation.

We have yet another anniversary coming up: the Central Provident Fund scheme turns 70 in 2025. When it was first proposed by the Singapore Progressive Party in 1951, it faced competition from an alternative pension scheme proposed by the colonial government. Lim Tin Seng takes a deep dive into how something we take for granted today had an eventful start.

We also cast our eyes on the aesthetics of the written word. Jawi is a beautiful script adapted from Arabic. The work of Ustaz Syed Abdul Rahman Al-Attas – whose calligraphy can be found in local publications, the Sultan Mosque and in other major buildings of the Malay world – is testimony to mankind's eternal quest to marry form and function. Nurul Wahidah Mohd Tambee celebrates the artistic legacy of this talented calligrapher.

Going back a little further in time, we have an illuminating piece on Somerset Maugham. T.A. Morton explains how some of his short stories were based on actual events he had heard about when he visited Singapore in the 1920s. She also reveals the reactions of the people whose lives he had immortalised. Spoiler alert: They were not pleased at being depicted as snobs, racists, alcoholics and murderers.

We have other equally riveting stories in this issue. There is a piece on Sembawang featured in old maps by Makeswary Periasamy, a history of the Nominated Member of Parliament scheme by Benjamin Ho and John Choo, and Timothy Pwee's study of the *chingay* over the last two centuries and how it has evolved into the parade we are familiar with today. Last but not least, Kwa Chong Guan remembers the late historian Dr John Bastin, whose research enriched our understanding of Stamford Raffles (and his friends and contemporaries).

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Alicia Yeo
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On the cover

Also known as "top hats", *kueh pie tee* contain *popiah* filling. *Courtesy of Christopher Tan.*

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