

From Singapore to Singaporean

The Bicentennial Experience

for our Dialect Uncles and Aunties



If you had not already known, now you should know that in the dialect congregation we have quite a number of history buffs. On 20th Nov 2019, they were keen participants on a

climb of Fort Canning Hill for the Bicentennial Experience of the historical milestones of Singapore as she celebrates her 200th Anniversary, counting from the year 1819 when Sir Stamford Raffles landed on our shores.

Ok, the dialect folk, comprised of mostly seniors, did not actually climb the hill on foot with climbing gear. 😊 They must be thankful to be blessed with a comfortable bus ride (with air-con and cushioned seats to boot) that took them to the doorstep of Fort Canning Centre where the special exhibition with the theme **“From Singapore to Singaporean: The Bicentennial Experience”** was held.

While the exhibition is publicised as a bicentennial celebration, which means relating to 200th anniversary, it actually “reflects on our history over a span of 700 years” – going back to the time of Sang Nila Utama, a 13th Century Palembang prince.



If you think that our senior citizens would be bored by lifeless pictures and fine texts needing magnifying glass to pore over, you are very wrong. The whole indoor exhibition (characterised as “**Time**

Traveller”) is all high-tech: A visual and aural feast of special light and sound effects with strobe lights, whole-floor revolving platform and panoramic screens on which the history of Singapore is projected for the audience to enjoy a great sensory experience. We saw a large group of kids with their teachers. They were obviously delighting in the experience.

If you think that Singapore history is boring, because you consider her as only a young nation, you are wrong. The whole highly visual presentation of the history spans 5 Acts (or parts), each Act being presented in a different exhibition hall specially designed for the show.

In the 1st Act, there are actors on a rolling stage synchronising their performance to the audio-visual projection about the 13th Century Singapura Kingdom on the screen directly behind them. In the 2nd Act, we meet Sir Stamford Raffles on the deck of a ship and learn about his comrades such as William Farquhar. In the 3rd Act, we see rapid economic development (the good) bringing forth challenging social problems (the bad). In the 4th Act, we feel the pain of the British withdrawal and 3 years of Japanese

Occupation (including the infamous Sook Ching operation). In the 5th Act, we feel the pride in taking charge of our own destiny on the road to independence.

Oh no ... it rained in the exhibition hall during the 5th Act!



😊😊 Everyone had an umbrella, and no one was complaining. The “artificial rain” that came pouring down was actually a creative design of the exhibition for us to reflect on how Singaporeans as a people did not flinch but stayed cheerful when real rain

poured down on everyone during our 1968 National Day ceremony as we saw in the screen presentation. After the “rain” was “fine weather” and we put away our umbrellas. What an experiential symbolism of Singaporeans’ perseverance!



At the entrance with the Palembang prince



Waiting area for groups to enter exhibition halls



School Holiday Outing for: Grandmother (dialect regular), grandfather, granddaughter, grandson



Getting to know each other



After the Bicentennial Experience: “Jin Jia Ho!”

700 years very creatively wrapped up in a lively and entertaining package!



Even if we just absorbed a fraction of the historical information, we now have the bragging right to say, “I have been there for the Bicentennial Experience!”

The Bicentennial Experience was certainly a strong appetizer that made us feel hungry enough to relish a good lunch with an additional side tour of the traditional fashion market in Chinatown Complex. Thereafter, we made our way back to church, inserting a short detour through Orchard Road for a preview of this year’s Christmas decoration.

A wonderful excursion indeed!

John Lee