

Opening speech by Guest-of-Honour, Mr Baey Yam Keng, Member of Parliament for Tanjong Pagar GRC and Deputy Chairman of MICA Government Parliamentary Committee, at the official opening of the joint travelling exhibition “Nanqiao Jigong: The Extraordinary Story of Nanyang Drivers and Mechanics Who Returned to China During the Sino-Japanese War” on Tuesday, 20 October 2009, 10.45am at the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Auditorium

1. I am pleased to officiate the opening of the Singapore leg of the travelling exhibition “Nanqiao Jigong: The Extraordinary Story of Nanyang Drivers and Mechanics Who Returned to China During the Sino-Japanese War”, which was jointly curated by the National Archives of Singapore, the State Archives Administration of China and the Yunnan Provincial Archives.

2. The Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI) Auditorium (嘉庚堂) is a fitting venue for today’s occasion as 72 years ago the SCCCI, through Tan Kah Kee, played a significant role in rallying local and regional support for China during the Sino-Japanese war. Today, the SCCCI being a key representative organisation of the local Chinese business community since 1906 is a significant record source of such community memories and NAS played an important role in conserving and preserving these SCCCI records.

3. With today’s opening, this exhibition has indeed come full circle, having traversed the lands that are linked by the subject of this historical exhibition. Prior to this opening, the idea for this exhibition was first discussed in Singapore, in mid-2008, preview for the exhibition took place in Yunnan and the China leg of the exhibition opened in Beijing last month.

4. This joint exhibition has not only enriched our mutual understanding of this historical event but through the exchange and sharing of subject information between the archives, the exhibition also saw to the return of precious memories of our shared past to Singapore. Such an outcome illustrates that cultural sharing goes beyond the sharing of artefacts and artworks such as the Wu Guanzhong’s

paintings. Such sharing can be equally valuable even in the form of oral memories and experiences.

5. As its title suggests, the story of the exhibition is not solely about the contributions of the Singapore Chinese community but instead Nanyang Chinese from all over Southeast Asia. Through this exhibition, memories of the Nanyang Chinese community's selfless acts that are not widely known to the masses are now shared and brought to light. I am happy to note that NAS as the Chairman of the Southeast Asian Regional Branch of the International Council of Archives (SARBICA), is playing an active role to explore travelling this joint exhibition to Southeast Asian countries through its SARBICA counterparts.

6. The successful opening of this joint exhibition is a testament to the close-knit partnerships that NAS has forged both internationally and locally. It not only marks another successful cooperation between NAS and its Chinese counterparts but also the strong working relationship that it has established with a partner of the local heritage eco-system. Undoubtedly, this exhibition has also sparked greater synergies between NAS and its partners. As we shall witness in a moment, NAS will be embarking on a collaborative project on oral history with the Yunnan Provincial Archives as well as sealing an agreement on archival preservation with the SCCC. These are initiatives that I believe NAS will continue to grow with the view to expand into other new ventures in future.

7. It gives me great pleasure now to declare this exhibition open.

National Archives of Singapore