



POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' SEMINAR

A STUDY OF CHUA BOON HEAN (1905-1995)

蔡文玄研究

Miss Soo-ei YAP PhD Student, Department of History

As part of the nationwide celebrations of Singapore's 50th anniversary of independence in 2015, the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth celebrated the achievements of several local literary pioneers including Chua Boon Hean (蔡文玄), who was more popularly remembered as Liu Bei-an (柳北岸) in Singapore. At times, he was also referred to as the father of Chua Lam (蔡瀾) whose career like that of his son, highlighted the Singapore, Hong Kong and China connections, not uncommon in the history of Chinese diasporic community during the 20th century.

Chua Boon Hean (1905-1995) was a man of many talents: he's highly respected as a Singapore Chinese poet, but he was also the right-hand man of Runme Shaw and Run Run Shaw who vetted and recommended film scripts submitted to the Shaw Brothers for production or distribution through their numerous chain of cinemas and production studios in Singapore and Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s. Chua's role as a "gatekeeper" was thus significant insomuch that his understanding of the film audience's taste and preference for genres with mass appeal, ultimately contributed to the success of Shaw's film empire throughout Southeast Asia.

Chua was also an editor for Screen Voice Pictorial (電影圈) and The Amusement (娛樂報). He was script-writer for Shaw's early foray into Malay film production in Singapore in the 1950s, as well as a mentor to rising Malay film star cum director P. Ramlee, who was recruited by Shaw for their newly established Malay Film Productions (MFP) Limited in 1950s. After his retirement from the Shaw Brothers in the 1970s, Chua also attempted to write stories for the nascent television industry in Singapore.

Borrowing the concept of "subjective visions" which could be traced in works by both sociologists and historians, a study of Chua Boon Hean seeks to examine how the various forms of cultural production which Chua was involved in, intersected with broader issues of nationhood, Chinese diasporic networks as well as identity formation. In doing so, this research argues for the important role played by intellectuals over "big men and major events" in shaping the enduring Chinese identity over time.

Date	October 18, 2018 (Thursday)
Time	2:30 pm
Venue	AAB1153, Academic and Administration Building, Baptist University Road, Kowloon Tong
Language	English

ALL ARE WELCOME