Na kaza, greza kung stradu

The Kristang language in colonial Singapore, 1875–1926

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Kristang is the critically endangered heritage language of the Portuguese-Eurasian community in Singapore. Using newly-identified mentions of Kristang in the Singapore National Library Board's NewspaperSG digitised collection, I present a preliminary sketch of a hitherto-undocumented and previously poorly understood part of Kristang's history in Singapore between the 1880s and the late 1920s, demonstrating that, in addition to the use of Kristang in religious functions, there existed a vibrant Kristang theatre scene involving multiple Eurasian theatre troupes performing in Kristang. This in turn has allowed for a more coherent understanding of Kristang's historical domains of use and the place of the language and speech community in multilingual colonial Singapore, especially in terms of its relationship with the various hybridised theatrical forms developing throughout Southeast Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century, and a revised understanding of Kristang's history in Singapore overall.

Keywords: Kristang, Singapore, bangsawan, language archives, language revitalization, Eurasian drama, Eurasian theatre

1. Introduction to Kristang, and Kristang in Singapore

Papia Kristang, also known as Malacca Creole Portuguese, Cristão, Portugis di Melaka and by a number of other names (iso 639–3: mcm), is an endangered creole language once widely spoken across archipelagic southeast Asia in the early 17th century, now reduced to two primary communities of speakers in Melaka, Malaysia and Singapore, with additional communities in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Seremban in Malaysia, Perth in Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada, and elsewhere (Baxter 1988: 1, 17; 1996; Gunn 2003: 257; Pillai 2015: 79–80). Kristang is

https://doi.org/10.1075/le.19003.won
Language Ecology 3:2 (2019), pp. 157–188. issn 2452-1949 | e-issn 2452-2147

strongly associated with the community known as the Portuguese-Eurasians in most, if not all of these locations, and is considered the heritage language of this community, of which I am a member.

Both the language and the community are thought to have had their genesis in intermarriages between arriving Portuguese colonists and local Malay residents in Melaka starting from the 16th century, following the conquest of Melaka in 1511 by an invading Portuguese force led by Afonso de Albuquerque (Baxter 1996: 309–10; Pereira 2006: 13; Baxter 2010: 121). By the time of the arrival of the Dutch in the region in the 17th century, varieties of creole Portuguese had become so common "that in the administrative sphere Dutch was obviously the official language, but in the informal sphere, and in many homes, Creole Portuguese was the most widely used" (Vande Walle 2013: 117). Even by the time of the final Dutch handover of Melaka to the British in 1823, most Portuguese-Eurasians in the city still evidently spoke some variety of creole Portuguese as a home language, with a census of Melaka four years later, for example, observing that "Siranies or native Portugueze…speak a language peculiar to themselves which may be denominated as Creole Portuguese as the original has been greatly corrupted" (Dickinson 1941: 260–1).

Most contemporary researchers agree that the Singapore Portuguese-Eurasian community likely began as an "offshoot" of the Melaka community following sustained Portuguese-Eurasian immigration to Singapore in the 1820s after the city was opened up for trade by the British (Holm 1989: 292; de Silva Jayasuriya 2008: 4); it also therefore seems likely that Kristang began to maintain a sustained presence in Singapore from roughly around this period in the early 19th century, as the Eurasian community in Singapore expanded rapidly, with the earliest documentation of the language by Portuguese linguist Adolfo Coelho, who documented the variety spoken by the priest Santa Anna de Cunha (see Section 3) (Coelho 1886: 718–723). However, the language also likely began a slow but permanent decline under the British in both Melaka and Singapore, as many Kristang speakers shifted toward English and British middle-class prestige norms (Baxter 1988: 12–14; Pereira 2016), an identity commonly known as "Upper Ten" (Sarkissian 2005: 152). By the time Singapore achieved independence from the British in 1965, Kristang had already been fading from both public and Eurasian community consciousness, with English instead coming to be associated with the single, unitary pan-Eurasian identity encompassing Portuguese-Eurasians, Dutch-Eurasians, British-Eurasians and other people of mixed European and Asian descent initially developed by the colonial British administration that was then further supported by the nascent Singapore state in its project of nation-building and identity formation (Rappa 2000; Wee 2002). Despite several attempts at language revival starting from the early 1990s, including Kristang classes held at the Singapore Eurasian Association (EA), the launch of a Kristang-English dictionary in 2004 and a youth-led revitalization movement, Kodrah

Kristang (Scully and Zuzarte 2004; Pereira 2016, 2018; Wong fc), the decline of Kristang in Singapore has continued, with Scully (2000) herself, for example, a fluent Kristang speaker, claiming in a Singapore Oral History Centre interview that "only about a couple of speakers" of Kristang still existed in Singapore.

2. Prior challenges to developing a more holistic understanding of Kristang's history in Singapore

Up till this point, the narrative sketched above had been generally the one accepted and promoted by both community members and researchers involved in the Singapore Eurasian community who are aware of Kristang's existence. However, even a cursory examination of this narrative reveals many questions, most notably:

- the community's general relationship with Kristang during the period when it existed in Singapore in what was previously assumed to be a relatively healthy state based on prior evidence (roughly the 1880s to the 1940s), and how Kristang was maintained in this state and in which domains
- how Kristang went from being a major home language in the Portuguese-Eurasian community that "everybody knows" was spoken by Portuguese-Eurasians (Anak Singapura 1934), to a language "going the way of Latin" (Lee and Murugan 1988) in just over half a century

Attempts to approach either of these questions beyond the realm of speculation were previously stymied by multiple difficulties generated by contextual characteristics particular to Kristang in Singapore, including:

- its current status as moribund (Lewis, Simons and Fennig 2015), with almost all speakers encountered by the author, even in the course of revitalization efforts, unable to recall occasions or domains when the language was spoken over a consistent period of time, even at home, and having not spoken the language in some cases in over thirty to forty years, meaning that access to personal oral histories and family legacies is often scattered and/or limited;
- the dispersed nature of the Eurasian community in Singapore as a result of the 20th century coalescence of a more general or pan-Eurasian identity and the post-independence legislative policies mentioned in Section 2, with no sizeable Eurasian (and therefore Kristang-speaking) enclaves still extant in the country, meaning that there is no sizeable geographically proximate body of Kristang speakers as there remains in Melaka in the form of the Portuguese Settlement (Sarkissian 1995), and no community-maintained archives or sites

of collective meaning-making and knowledge construction that would otherwise be able to shed light on the questions mentioned above;
- the relatively sudden "disappearance" of exogenous Eurasian culture-at-large beyond issues of language (Benjamin 1976; Pereira 2018: 234–235) to an extent that necessitated an EA-led "repackaging" of the Eurasian identity in the early 1990s (Pereira 2018: 236; Yeoh, Acedera and Rootham 2018: 8), with many younger Portuguese-Eurasians claiming to be "not really immersed in any Eurasian culture" (Yeoh, Acedera and Rootham 2018: 8), underscoring the decline of general awareness and knowledge of community- and even family-specific traditions and histories that may have previously existed and would have supported attempts to answer the questions above;
- Kristang mostly having been a spoken language for the majority of its history, meaning that it had been rarely written down prior to the late 20th century, leaving researchers with few primary sources actually written in Kristang (though see, for example, Baxter (2018), for some examples of these sources);
- Kristang's lack of prestige both inside and outside the community, having been commonly associated with the lower sub-identity within the community known as the "Lower Sixes", who were stigmatized as a "lower class, largely illiterate body of people…who mostly worked as fishermen or fishmongers", as opposed to the more British middle-class-leaning and English-speaking "Upper Tens" (Sarkissian 2005: 152), again meaning that Kristang had been rarely written down due to perceptions of it having little to no value;
- various beliefs about Kristang's value, even among researchers, including that Kristang was a "patois" or "crude" form of Standard Portuguese (e.g. Shelley 1984: 13:04–13:38; Davenport 2004), a "potpourri of vulgarisms and expletives" (Rappa 2013: 144), or that it was simply "synonymous with Portuguese" (Boss and Nunis 2016: 13), again contributing to a lack of interest in either developing Kristang as a literary language or documenting it for posterity;
- an almost complete lack of official or state-sponsored documentation, records and statistics related to Kristang by both the colonial British administration between 1819 and 1965, and the government of independent Singapore after 1965, with neither "Portuguese-Eurasian" nor "Kristang speaker" identified as formative ethnolinguistic categories worth distinguishing in census and survey data (per Jain and Wee (2018)'s discussion of such formative categories, and likely due to the other aforementioned factors regarding Kristang's perceived lack of value).

These challenges together meant that it was previously difficult locating historical information about Kristang's sociolinguistic development within Singapore,

despite clear evidence and agreement in the literature of a significant Kristang-speaking community having existed on the island since at least the early 19th century. Discussing the early 20th-century Lusitanian Club and its Eurasian founders Joaquim Frank Aroozoo and John Joaquim de Mello, for example, Teixeira (1958) claims that at the Club,

> all the young men would foregather and indulge in their favourite games and pastimes…and amateur dramatics. Using "Cristão" habitually, they quite naturally produced all their plays and sketches in "Cristão" – the Melaka Portuguese dialect or patois. The dramatic fare they presented was light and topical in nature, consisting chiefly of comic sketches…For serious dramatics they turned to Shakespeare's plays…[and] were able between them to produce a creditable version in Portuguese of one Shakespearean play after another – "Romeo and Juliet", "As You Like It", "Twelfth Night", "Hamlet" among them. (Teixeira 1958: 399–400)

However, no trace of any of these performances – scripts, ticket stubs, costumes, publicity collateral – has ever been found, nor did Teixeira (1958) claim to have seen any or provide dates or other sources he had consulted. Similarly, Eurasian legislative councillor Edwin Tessensohn, for example, was again noted to have "encouraged the formation of the Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company of Singapore", but "there is hardly any record of the Company's productions, [though] it is probable that it would have staged plays in Kristang, with music and singing on the side" (Tessensohn 2001: 35). Indeed, barely any trace of this period in the community had previously been passed down, so much so that there are barely even attestations to any Eurasian theatrical scene in previous modern critical compendia and work related to the Eurasians such as Braga-Blake and Oehlers (1992) and Pereira (2016), nor in celebrations and festivals held by the Eurasian Association or Kodrah Kristang, to say nothing of general awareness within the community.

Coupled together with the precarious state of the language in Singapore, previous published academic work by this author, for example, had therefore focused more on issues relating to revitalization and direct application of existing research to revitalization efforts (e.g. Wong 2017, fc), considering that language revitalization seemed to be (and continues to appear as) the more urgent and pressing issue. However, such a focus on revitalization inadvertently proved fortuitous when, after delivering a number of public talks about Kristang in late 2017, I was advised at one of these by members of the Singapore Heritage Society to re-consider the potential offered by the publicly accessible national archive and data repository NewspaperSG, which contains digitised versions of old newspapers published in Singapore dating back to 1839. Searching for mentions of "Portuguese language" instead of "Kristang" in the NewspaperSG archive yielded a treasure trove of results that completely upended any hazy, speculative assumptions that we had previously about

Kristang's history and status in Singapore within the community. In particular, a wealth of data from the NewspaperSG archive mentioning events and activities being conducted in "local Portuguese" or "patois Portuguese" strongly indicates that Kristang previously held established positions within the domains of the church and the theatre, and, moreover, possessed a significant presence in Singapore for at least its first hundred years of existence on the island after the 1820s. This in turn enabled a much fuller picture of this presence to be constructed in two particular domains: the church and the theatre.

3. Sermons in Classical and Local Portuguese: Kristang in the Portuguese Mission in Singapore

Among the new arrivals in Singapore in 1825, from Macao, was Catholic priest Francisco da Silva Pinto e Maia, who initiated the Portuguese Mission in Singapore, initially preaching in the house of Eurasian pioneer Dr Jose d'Almeida along Beach Road. Pinto e Maia died in 1850; however, he left money for the building of a church, which was completed in 1853 as the Church of São Jose under his successor, Vincente de Santa Catarina (Boss and Nunis 2016: 30–3). This church quickly became known as St Joseph's Church at Victoria Street.[1] Also built under the auspices of the mission in 1879 was St Anthony's Mission School[2] at Middle Road, by the priest José Pedro Santa Anna de Cunha, a native of Goa. It was already known that both Portuguese Mission institutions, together with other such institutions such as St Joseph's Institution and the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, catered to the rapidly growing Eurasian population around Victoria Street and therefore likely served as a hub for Eurasian and therefore Kristang speaker activity. Indeed, both Teixeira (1963: 165), who later compiles a history of the mission in his capacity as parish priest, and a contemporary newspaper article from 1979 detailing the history of St Anthony's Mission School claim that most students at the school were "mostly from families who had come [to Singapore] from Malacca, Eurasian descendants of the Portuguese who spoke a patois known as "Cristang"" (Chandy 1979). However, archived newspaper articles from the same time period in the NewspaperSG database further confirm this assumption and shed new light on the language ecology that had developed in the Portuguese Mission area up till the 1890s.

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1. This church is still referred to as St Joseph's Church at Victoria Street or St Joseph's Church (Victoria Street) so as to ensure it is not confused with a second St Joseph's Church in Singapore, built at Bukit Timah Road (referred to as St Joseph's Church (Bukit Timah)).

2. Today's St Anthony's Primary School and St Anthony's Canossian Convent Primary and Secondary schools in Singapore are descended from this school.

For most Portuguese-Eurasians, English appears not to be a mother tongue by either Singapore state standards or conventional academic understandings of the term, even up till the late 1880s. The Straits Times (1877c), for example, commenting on English language teaching in St Joseph's Institution, observed that "a sound knowledge of the English language is a matter of great importance to the Eurasian youth community, while it is no less true that such knowledge, as a matter of fact, is extremely rare". Meanwhile, The Straits Times (1877a) notes that

> the great majority of Eurasian clerks cannot be trusted to write the simplest business letter, and when they do write their own affairs, the result is generally the extraordinary and most laughable jumble of Her Majesty's English.

This, of course, appears not to be a "problem" confined to simply the Eurasians. As The Straits Observer (1875) claims,

> the Malays, the Chinese, or the Portuguese with which the printing offices have been flooded, in the majority can barely speak a word of English, and from their antecedents and their belongings, their training, their mode of life, understanding nothing about what they are doing.

However, even by schooling measures, available evidence strongly suggests that English did not have the level of domain penetration that it does, for example, possess today within the community. The Singapore Weekly Herald (1889), reporting on the prize-giving day at St Anthony's School and the speech of school principal Father Nicolau Pinto, observes that in Pinto's speech, he reiterated that

> it was very hard for the children of Portuguese parents to acquire the English language when that language was not spoken in their homes, but notwithstanding this draw back, 94 per cent of the children had passed.

One year later, on the same occasion at the same school, Pinto again comments that

> the percentage gained in the Government Examination this year [for English] had reached the proportion of 98 per cent, and taking into consideration the fact that the pupils in almost every instance spoke a foreign language while in their own houses, he considered the result attained highly creditable.
>
> (The Straits Times 1890)

One language that was likely spoken in most Portuguese-Eurasian households was Malay. Thirteen years earlier, B. (1877), an anonymous contributor to *The Straits Times Overland Journal*, writes in a letter to the editor that

> The Eurasians complain that a better English education should be imparted in the school…English is drilled into the pupils all day long at school, but Malay is the language spoken at home, and the boys have as much difficulty in acquiring the English tongue as they would German or French. It is to them a foreign language to all intents and purposes.

Yet, in considering B. (1877)'s comments, it also therefore seems strange to presume that Pinto himself should be referring to or considering Malay as a "foreign language" in his claim that "pupils in almost every instance spoke a foreign language while in their own houses" (The Straits Times 1890). Kristang, or "(local) Portuguese", as it would have been considered in that time, would have been a far more likely candidate – the Portuguese(-Eurasians) were still considered at least partially European at the time (Turtle 1876), and their language, too, would still therefore likely be classed as one of the "foreign" languages spoken by the Eurasian students attending St Anthony's.

The strongest evidence for one of these languages being Kristang then comes from a pair of 1892 articles from *The Daily Advertiser* discussing the linguistic choices made by Father Jose Joaquim Baptista, who arrived at the Mission in 1891, in his sermons. On July 4, *The Daily Advertiser* observes that the previous day's sermon by Baptista was delivered

> in classical Portuguese, a *lingua* we are requested to draw the attention of the good Father, is too difficult to be understood by the average Portuguese of this place who form the bulk of the congregation. (The Daily Advertiser 1892e)

One week later, on July 11, the same newspaper then observes that on the previous day,

> Father Baptista preached in patois Portuguese, which, we are glad to hear, was quite intelligible to the listeners. (The Daily Advertiser 1892g)

The clarity established by these two articles could not be more immediate, indicating that the majority of the congregation could only comprehend "patois Portuguese" and not "classical Portuguese", with the intelligibility of the former much higher than the latter to the congregation and community of the Portuguese Mission. This in turn suggests that there was a clear and visible distinction between "classical Portuguese" and "patois Portuguese" for at least some members of the congregation and community in the Portuguese Mission in Singapore in 1892, and that this was a distinction observable to both the congregation and the journalist covering the two Masses in which this distinction was observed (the feasts of St Peter and Paul on July 3 and the feast of St John the Baptist in July 10), as well as the general readership of the *Daily Advertiser*, since neither linguistic label is

explained and is simply taken for granted as understood (The Daily Advertiser 1892g, e).

A second separate mention of "patois Portuguese" further expands this preliminary picture of the sociolinguistic situation at the time within the Portuguese Mission community, where in 1892, it also appears that new priests arriving at the Mission were expected to be able to speak Kristang – and were trained to do so if they could not:

> Father Esteves, the European Portuguese priest, arrived this morning from Macao via Hongkong by the P. & O. mail steamer *Verona*. He will remain in Singapore about a fortnight, and will then go to Malacca where he will be in charge of the chapel at Tranquerah and will also learn the patois Portuguese. He will return to Singapore about the beginning of next year to act as Vicar General in place of the Very Revd. Father Baptista
>
> (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1892d)

Finally, it appears that Father Baptista appears to have attempted to start a Standard Portuguese class earlier in the same year. The Straits Times (1892) tellingly notes the class is "making progress" but is "open to any one who wishes to acquire an efficient knowledge of the Portuguese language", suggesting that the class was not filled to capacity and that interest in acquisition of Standard Portuguese was relatively low, but that also awareness of the differences between Standard Portuguese and "patois Portuguese" was relatively strong.

4. "A performance in local Portuguese": Kristang-language theatre

Aside from the use of Kristang at home and in the church, the Portuguese Mission also appears to have encouraged the development of Eurasian theatre, leading to the eventual appearance of a Kristang-language theatre scene in the 1890s.

Edwin Tessensohn's Mutual Improvement Society, founded in April 1877 following calls for Eurasians to take "political and public position[s]" (The Straits Observer 1876; The Straits Times 1877b) appears to have encouraged the earliest attempt at a nascent Singapore Eurasian theatre scene when it evolved into the Eurasian Amateur Dramatic and Musical Society (EADMS) sometime between late 1877 and early 1878, when it reappeared with its new name but with its purpose still centered on providing "such wholesome entertainment as would act as an antidote for the pernicious influences of billiard-rooms and other public houses, and to raise the status of the Eurasians generally to a better level" (A Eurasian 1893b). This society ran performances, as well as public lectures, between 1877 to at least 1883 (with the initiative "abandoned" by 1893, according

to A Eurasian (1893a)), with all performances discovered so far apparently being run in the Singapore Town Hall (The Straits Times 1877e, d, 1878c; Scheerder 1879; The Straits Times 1883). Also active at this time was the St Joseph's Amateur Dramatic Society (SJADS) based at St Joseph's Institution (SJI), which ran performances at SJI between at least December 1890 and 1893 (The Daily Advertiser 1890b; The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1890; The Daily Advertiser 1893f) (see Appendix 1). Though the language of performance used in both societies' performances is not known, both societies featured a significant number of Eurasian performers, some of whose names recur in later Kristang-language performances, and appear to be forerunners of the eventual wave of Kristang performing troupes that would appear in the succeeding years.

Outside of these troupes, a second, possibly more informal venue for performance comprised the Carnival celebrations among the Eurasian community in the immediate vicinity of the Mission starting from the early 1880s. That the community ever even celebrated Carnival on such a large scale also appears to have vanished from collective community memory. Yet as early as 1881, The Straits Times (1881) observes that

> The Portuguese residents of the place have been holding a carnival during the past three days, ending at 12 o'clock last night. Besides individual masquers, of which there were a considerable number, parties of six, eight, and ten, went about from house to house, got up in absurd dances of every pattern, and regaled crowds of listeners with songs and dances.

Similar mentions of such Carnival celebrations are present at intervals between 1886 and 1899 (The Straits Times 1886, 1889; The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1895, 1896; The Straits Times 1897; The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1898; The Straits Telegraph 1899), with The Straits Times (1886) commenting that Carnival "is always celebrated by the Eurasian community here". In 1889, we find the first mention of a possibly Kristang-language play being performed during Carnival: *The Farroh Sabba* is performed by the Cordiano Carnival troupe, and elicits "roars of laughter from the Portuguese talking audience" (The Straits Times 1889). Two other troupes, the Adolphinen Minstrels and the Red Indian Company also perform "Portuguese" songs in March 1892 (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1892a).

Then, between April 1892 and October 1893, Singapore experiences a veritable onslaught of Kristang-language theatre, kick-starting a succession of performances put on by a number of different troupes until the 1920s. As *The Daily Advertiser* reports in August of 1892:

> During the course of the present year, the Eurasians in Singapore have had enough of enjoyment by being present at the several different entertainments given here. The first Company that appeared on the stage in the lower rooms of St. Anthony's School was the "Eastern Star Minstrels". Then the Adolphinen Minstrels gave their first performance in the old Kling Theatre Hall, Victoria Street, followed shortly after by the Regina Theatrical Company, whose performance was given in the new Theatre Hall at Jalan Besar; and, about a week after, the Senegambian Minstrels made their first appearance also on the stage in the lower rooms of St. Anthony's School. Besides these, the Straits Eurasian Theatrical Company appeared for two successive nights on the stage of the Jalan Besar Theatrical Hall in the "history of Prince Camaralzaman, &c". Then the Adolphinen Minstrels gave their 2nd performance (Indra Shaba) in the same hall where they appeared the 1st time. (The Daily Advertiser 1892a)

It appears that in April 1892, Father Baptista at the Portuguese Mission hit upon the idea of inviting Carnival performers and "inducing members…of his congregation to form themselves into a minstrelsy" and stage performances to fund St Anthony's School (The Daily Advertiser 1892i). This connection between Carnival performers and the subsequent minstrel troupes is elsewhere further strongly suggested by the Adolphinen Minstrels, who are first mentioned in newspapers in December 1891 and thereafter as one of the groups performing at the Carnival in March 1892, (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1891a, 1892a) before being noted as giving their "first performance" on July 2 of that year (The Daily Advertiser 1892a). This performance is delivered

> in the Kling Theatre Hall, Victoria St, before a large audience. The play was rendered in patois Portuguese, and it was the story of an African magician and a Prince, a play which was not clearly intelligible to the uninitiated. The actors were all striplings of the Eurasian community, and considering that this was their debut in public as caterers for the amusement of their relatives and friends, we think they have succeeded very well in their acting. (…) The gross receipts amounted to $180, and deducting expenses, there will be a net balance of $100, which, it is said, will be handed over to the Tamil Church of Our Lady of Lourdes. (The Daily Advertiser 1892f)

Notably, the report of this play, the earliest to be explicitly identified as being performed in "patois Portuguese", is published on the same day as the first of the two seminal *Daily Advertiser* articles listed above that contrast Standard Portuguese with Kristang (The Daily Advertiser 1892g, e). Also mentioned as explicitly being performed in "local Portuguese" or "patois Portuguese" that year, in quick succession, are the Regina Theatrical Company's *Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers* on July 16 and September 3, both times at the theatre hall at Kampong Kapur (The Daily Advertiser 1892d, h), and The Straits Eurasian Theatrical Company's *The History*

of Camaralzaman, Prince of the Isle of the Children of Khaledan, and of Badoura, Princess of China in 2 parts on July 29 and 30 at the Malay Theatre at Jalan Besar (The Daily Advertiser 1892j, k). Meanwhile, the Adolphinen Minstrels stage a second performance, *Indra Sabha*, on August 6 at the Kling Theatre Hall at Victoria St, though this is only identified being performed in "Portuguese" (The Daily Advertiser 1892l, m). In total, between 1892 and 1926, archived newspapers in the NewspaperSG database together with aforementioned sources such as Teixeira (1958) report at least 32 performances that are explicitly advertised or described as being staged in "local Portuguese" or "patois Portuguese", with an additional 9 performances advertised or described as being performed in "Portuguese" (see Appendix 2).

Many of the performances are described as utilizing scripts based on translations from other languages created by members of the troupe in question themselves. For example, the 1904 performance of *The Merchant of Venice* is translated by F.A.C. Pestana (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1904d), the 1918 performance of *The Water of Life* by Cordiano J. Gomes (The Straits Times 1918), and the 1922 performance of *Prince Alfonso and Miss Roza* by Z.J. Monteiro (The Malaya Tribune 1922a). Though no scripts or collateral for any of these performances have yet been found, source material for these translated Kristang-language performances appears to be varied simply from the titles of the performances themselves, including the Mahabharata (*Shakuntala*, *Harischandra*), the Qissa-i-Sanjan (*Situmgar*), the Bible (*Jacob and His Twelve Sons*), One Thousand and One Nights (*Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers*, *The History of Prince Camaralzaman*, *Prince Zayn Alasnam and the Sultan of the Genii*, *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp*), and the works of William Shakespeare (*The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*) and possibly Alfredo Catalani (*Leandro and Lizarda*).

Besides the aforementioned venues at Kampong Kapur and Jalan Besar, virtually all performances from 1910 onwards were staged at the Theatre Royal at North Bridge Rd, opened on June 13, 1908 by businessman Cheong Koon Seng and *bangsawan* pioneer Bai Kassim (The Straits Times 1908; van der Putten 2014: 281), and later known as the Star Opera Theatre after it was taken over by the Star Opera Company from December 1909 (van der Putten 2014: 280–1). Sadly, nothing remains of this building after it was "expunged" in the 1960s (Imran bin Tajudeen 2007: 11) to make way for the Blanco Court shopping centre (Lee 1998: 7). The site is presently occupied by Raffles Hospital, opened in 2002 and which "retain[s] the main superstructure of its predecessor" (Thulaja 2004). At these locations, a sizeable number of the performances 2 were evidently put on for charitable purposes: in addition to the aforementioned St Anthony's Bread Fund, supported by performances like the 1904 performances of *The Merchant*

of Venice by the Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1904b, d), the 1892 staging of *The History of Camaralzaman* by the Straits Eurasian Theatrical Company, for example, is in aid of St Patrick's Fund (The Daily Advertiser 1892k), while the Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company's 1916 staging of *Leandro and Lizarda* and 1917 staging of *Romeo and Juliet* were put on for the World War I Red Cross and Transport of the Wounded Fund (The Malaya Tribune 1916a, 1917). Meanwhile, in addition to the aforementioned Edwin Tessensohn in his capacity as a Straits Settlement Legislative Councillor (The Malaya Tribune 1923b; The Straits Times 1923b), a large number of plays from both tables are also patronized by a number of other prominent individuals: colonial governors and deputy governors, including Clementi Smith for *The Miser* in 1891 (The Straits Times 1891b), William Edward Maxwell for *Situmgar* in 1893 (The Daily Advertiser 1893e), Henry Edward McCallum (in his capacity as Governor of Natal) for *Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers* in 1905 (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1905a), and Arthur Young and Frederick Seton James for *Romeo and Juliet* in 1917 (The Malaya Tribune 1917; The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1917a); McCallum again in his capacity as commandant of the Singapore Volunteer Artillery for *Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers* in September 1892 (The Daily Advertiser 18920); the Datok Menteri Besar of Johor for *Leandro and Lizarda* in 1910 (The Straits Times 1910c); businessmen and philanthropists Cheang Hong Lim for *The Merchant of Venice* in 1893 (The Daily Advertiser 1893b) and Tan Jiak Kim for the same in 1904 (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1904d); and several Portuguese consuls, as well as consuls from Italy, France, China and a number of other nations for various performances (e.g. The Malaya Tribune 1917, 1919a, 1922b).

It is likely that this Kristang-language theatre scene evolved from the same cultural milieu involving Parsee theatrical troupes that also gave rise to the bangsawan theatre movement across archipelagic Southeast Asia and the Komedie Stamboel (1891–1901) on neighbouring Java in particular (Cohen 2001, 2004, 2006). Both the existence of travelling performances at Carnival celebrations in the late 1880s and early 1890s and Father Baptista's initial idea to use performances to raise funds for the Portuguese Mission in 1892 may well have been inspired by "the wave of popular entertainment sweeping the urban settlements of the Malay world from the 1870s", already in existence for around twenty years (van der Putten 2014: 271). This wave, in turn, was likely initiated by the arrival of Parsee theatrical troupes that had been touring Southeast Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century, where "a host of forms sprang up in rough imitation of the Parsi theatre, substituting the Hindi language of the original with local tongues" (Cohen 2001: 320). The Kristang-language theatre scene in the 1890s was therefore probably one of these forms descended from Parsi theatre influence.

Indeed, all of the Regina Theatrical Company's performances (1892–1905) are all described as being staged at the Parsee Theatre at Kampong Kapur. Though there do not seem to have been any permanent theatre buildings in Singapore beyond the Town Hall until the late 1900s (van der Putten 2014: 273), it is possible that this is one of the Parsee-associated makeshift theatres specifically mentioned by van der Putten (2014): either "a make-shift theatre at Jalan Besar near the Kampung Kapur bridge" where the separate Parsee Elphinstone Dramatic Company plays in 1892 (271), or Mamat Pushi's theatre in Jalan Besar, "a spacious wooden construction with a zinc roof and praised for its ventilation" (273). Meanwhile, links to the *bangsawan* movement are strongly signalled by the fact that the May 7, 1903 performance of *Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers* by a group of "Eurasian amateurs" is noted to be at the invitation of Bai Kassim, explicitly identified as the "proprietor of the Indra Zanibar Co" (The Straits Times 1903). The two 1904 performances of *The Merchant Venice* by the Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company are also staged in the Wayang Kassim [Theatre] (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1904b, d), with Bai Kassim himself providing "the stage and costumes free" to the troupe for the first performance (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1904a).[3] The two most common plays, *Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers* (5 performances in total in 1892, 1903 and 1905) and *The Merchant of Venice* (3 performances in total in 1893 and 1904), have also been noted by other scholars to have been recurring staples of both bangsawan (Mohd. Effindi Samsuddin and Rahmah Bujang 2013: 131) and Komedie Stamboel (Cohen 2001: 338) performances, with the latter even performing *Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers* in Singapore (in Malay) on February 19, 1894 to generally positive reviews (The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser 1894; Cohen 2004: 239).

5. Conclusion

The vast array of opportunities for further research that the newly-uncovered material presented in Section 3 and 4 offers is beyond the scope of this paper, especially considering that new information regarding Kristang in Singapore in this period is still being uncovered (with, for example, ongoing renovation works at St Joseph's Church at Victoria Street proceeding until 2023 preventing full

3. No further mentions of Bai Kassim's involvement with any of the other troupes have been yet discovered, but it seems plausible he may have played a role in the development of at least the Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company and the varied scripts they took on, considering also that he was noted to be "varied in the choice of cultural origin of the plays [he staged]" (van der Putten 2014: 276).

access to the material archives contained within the church). However, it is clear that Kristang or "patois Portuguese" was a living language in Singapore, definitively since the late 1880s, and likely since the 1820s, when the first waves of Eurasian immigrants from Melaka arrived on the island. The data in Section 3 and 4 suggests that Kristang had developed a speaker population visible and significant enough to warrant sustained presence in both the church and the theatre. To have achieved this, a Kristang-speaking community would have needed to have been present on the island for at least some time prior to the early 1890s; as seen above, since Portuguese-Eurasian identity demonstrably correlated with knowledge of the language, the existing hypothesis that Kristang arrived with the first Eurasian settlers from Melaka in the 1820s, and that these Eurasian settlers were therefore Kristang speakers, is justifiably (though of course not conclusively) corroborated, if not strengthened. Meanwhile, this also presents a more comprehensive picture of why and how Kristang managed to achieve visibility in Singapore to the extent reported by Anak Singapura (1934).

Future research will seek to consider this period in greater detail, looking to unpack and determine the exact nature of the complex relationship between Kristang and other languages in the community at this period, especially English, considering that the children of many Eurasian families were learning the latter in schools in the late 1880s. Meanwhile, the "heyday" of bangsawan as "prime commercial entertainment" appears to have occurred in the 1920s and 1930s (Mohd. Effindi Samsuddin and Rahmah Bujang 2013: 124). However, Kristang-language theatre was in decline by 1924, with the final two known performances in 1926 either being definitively cancelled (*Arjuna*) or leaving no trace of actually being performed (*Sam Poh*). The exact factors precipitating this decline remain to be seen. Also conspicuous by their absence are any mentions of any of the Lusitanian Club plays mentioned by Teixeira (1958) in newspapers of the time, with the exact relationship between the Club and the other troupes mentioned in this paper still unclear. The surviving newspaper articles, of course, still offer a wealth of information about troupe members, ticket prices, locations, patrons and audiences; and, perhaps most intriguingly, so too would any transcripts of Kristang sermons or scripts that generated performances that so captivated Singapore newspapers between 1892 and 1926 – if any of these should, by some chance, be found.

Acknowledgements

Yo mistih falah mutu grandi merseh to the friendly staff of the National Library Board Singapore, NewspaperSG and the National Archives of Singapore for their valuable assistance in the course of the research for this paper, as well as to the two anonymous reviewers who provided critical and useful feedback on an earlier draft.

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Appendix 1. Performances of the Eurasian Amateur Dramatic and Musical Society (EADMS) and St Joseph's Amateur Dramatic Society (SJADS) between 1877 and 1893

S/N	Troupe	Performance	Date	Source(s)	Remarks
1	EADMS	Untitled	3 Dec 1877 (Mon)	The Straits Times (1877e)	Performed
2	EADMS	Untitled	23 Jul 1878 (Tue)	The Straits Times (1878a, 1878b)	Advertised; unclear if performed
3	EADMS	Untitled	3 Feb 1883 (Sat)	The Straits Times (1883)	Advertised; postponed from 2 Feb 1883 (Fri); unclear if performed
4	SJADS	*The Malediction*	20 Dec 1890 (Sat)	The Daily Advertiser (1890a); The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1890)	Advertised and performed
5	SJADS	*The Malediction*	27 Dec 1890 (Sat)	The Daily Advertiser (1890b)	Advertised; unclear if performed
6	SJADS	*The Malediction*	31 Jan 1891 (Sat)	The Daily Advertiser (1891)	Advertised; probably performed
7	SJADS	*The Malediction*	4 Feb 1891 (Wed)	The Straits Times (1891a)	Advertised; unclear if performed
8	SJADS	*The Miser*	21 Dec 1891 (Mon)	The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1891b, 1891c); The Straits Times (1891b); The Daily Advertiser (1892b)	Advertised and performed
9	SJADS	*The Miser*	19 Mar 1892 (Sat)	The Daily Advertiser (1892c, 1892b); The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1892c, 1892b)	Advertised and performed
10	SJADS	*The Illustrious Stranger*	12 Oct 1893 (Thu)	The Daily Advertiser (1893f)	Performed

Appendix 2. Kristang-language performances in Singapore between 1889 and 1926

S/N	Group	Performance	Date	Language	Source(s)	Remarks
1	Cordiano Carnival Minstrels	*The Farroh Sabba*	Mar 1889	'Portuguese'	The Straits Times (1889)	Advertised and performed
2	Adolphinen Minstrels	Untitled play	23 Apr 1892 (Sat)	'patois Portuguese'	The Daily Advertiser (1892f, 1892m)	Advertised and performed
3	Regina Theatrical Company	*Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers*	16 Jul 1892 (Sat)	'local Portuguese'	The Daily Advertiser (1892d, 1892h)	Advertised and performed
4	Straits Eurasian Theatrical Company	*The History of Camaralzaman* Part I	29 Jul 1892 (Fri)	'local Portuguese (patois)'	The Daily Advertiser (1892j, 1892k)	Advertised and performed
5	Straits Eurasian Theatrical Company	*The History of Camaralzaman* Part II	30 Jul 1892 (Sat)	'local Portuguese (patois)'	The Daily Advertiser (1892j, 1892k)	Advertised and performed
6	Adolphinen Minstrels	*Indra Sabha*	6 Aug 1892 (Sat)	'Portuguese'	The Daily Advertiser (1892l, 1892m)	Advertised and performed
7	Regina Theatrical Company	*Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers*	3 Sep 1892 (Sat)	'local Portuguese'	The Daily Advertiser (1892n, 18920)	Advertised and performed
8	Angelic Troupe	*The Merchant of Venice*	7 Jan 1893 (Sat)	'local Portuguese'	The Daily Advertiser (1892p, 1893a, 1893b)	Advertised and performed; originally scheduled for 4 Jan 1893
9	Angelic Troupe	*The Merchant Venice*	10 Feb 1893 (Fri)	Not identified but described as repetition of #8, so likely 'local Portuguese'	The Daily Advertiser (1893c, 1893d)	Advertised and performed
10	Adolphinen Minstrels	*Situmgar* or *Twelve o'clock*	9 Sep 1893 (Sat)	'local Portuguese language'	The Daily Advertiser (1893e)	Advertised; unclear if performed

S/N	Group	Performance	Date	Language	Source(s)	Remarks
11	'A number of Eurasian amateurs'	*Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers*	7 May 1903 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Straits Times (1903)	Advertised; unclear if performed
12	Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company	*The Merchant of Venice*	12 May 1904 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1904a, 1904b)	Advertised and performed
13	Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company	*The Merchant of Venice*	2 Jun 1904 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1904c, 1904d)	Advertised and performed
14	Regina Theatrical Company	*Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers*	15 Jun 1905 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1905a, 1905b)	Advertised and performed
15	Regina Theatrical Company	*Ali Baba and the 40 Robbers*	22 Jun 1905 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1905c)	Advertised; unclear if performed
16	Singapore Lusitanian Club	*Hamlet*	late 1900s	'Cristão'	Teixeira (1958: 399–400)	Performed
17	Singapore Lusitanian Club	*Twelfth Night*	late 1900s	'Cristão'	Teixeira (1958: 399–400)	Performed
18	Singapore Lusitanian Club	*As You Like It*	late 1900s	'Cristão'	Teixeira (1958: 399–400)	Performed
19	Wilhelmina Theatrical Company	*Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp*	9 Jun 1910 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1910a)	Advertised; unclear if performed
20	Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company	*Leandro and Lizarda*	11 Aug 1910 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Straits Times (1910b, 1910a)	Advertised and performed
21	Star of Hope Amateurs	*The Enchanted Horse*	15 Sep 1910 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1910b)	Advertised; unclear if performed

S/N	Group	Performance	Date	Language	Source(s)	Remarks
22	St Joseph's Dramatic & Mutual Improvement Association	*Jacob and His Twelve Sons*	1 Dec 1910 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Straits Times (1910d)	Advertised; unclear if performed
23	Star of Hope Amateurs	*Prince Zayn Alasnam and the Sultan of the Genii* or *The Beauty of Perfection*	16 Feb 1911 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1911)	Advertised; unclear if performed
24	Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company	*Leandro and Lizarda*	8 Dec 1916 (Fri)	'local Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1916a, 1916b)	Advertised and performed
25	Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company	*Romeo and Juliet*	15 Nov 1917 (Thu)	'Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1917); The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1917b)	Advertised and performed
26	Star of Hope Amateurs	*The Water of Life*	14 Feb 1918 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Straits Times (1918)	Advertised; unclear if performed
27	Star of Hope Amateurs	*The Four Brothers*	31 Jul 1919 (Thu)	'Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1919a); The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser (1919)	Advertised and performed
28	Black Brigade Amateurs	*Harischandra*	2 Oct 1919 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1919b); The Straits Times (1919a)	Advertised; unclear if performed
29	Star of Hope Amateurs	*The Three Princesses*	30 Oct 1919 (Thu)	'local Portuguese', 'Portuguese'	The Straits Times (1919b, 1919c)	Advertised and performed
30	Black Brigade Amateurs	*The Prince of Romance*	13 Oct 1921 (Thu)	'Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1921); The Straits Times (1921)	Advertised and performed

S/N	Group	Performance	Date	Language	Source(s)	Remarks
31	Star of Hope Amateurs	*Prince Alfonso and Miss Roza*	4 Oct 1922 (Wed)	'local Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1922a, 1922b)	Advertised and performed
32	United Dramatic Amateurs	*Antonio's Fate* or *The Lost Soul*	19 Oct 1922 (Thu)	'Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1922c, 1922d)	Advertised and performed
33	Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company	*The Sign of the Cross*	1 Feb 1923 (Thu)	Not identified but #34 staged as repetition of this performance, so likely 'local Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1923a)	Advertised and probably performed
34	Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company	*The Sign of the Cross*	5 Apr 1923 (Thu)	'local Portuguese', 'Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1923b); The Straits Times (1923b)	Advertised and performed
35	Rising Star Amateurs	*Senorita Francina* or *The Shepherdess*	31 Jan 1924 (Thu)	'Portuguese'	The Straits Times (1924a)	Advertised; unclear if performed
36	Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company	*Jacob and His Twelve Sons*	1 May 1924 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1924a, 1924b); The Straits Times (1924b)	Advertised and performed
37	Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company	*Adriano: Duke of Valencia*	12 May 1924 (Mon)	'Portuguese'	The Straits Times (1924c)	Advertised; unclear if performed
38	Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company	*Adriano: Duke of Valencia*	13 May 1924 (Tue)	'Portuguese'	The Straits Times (1924c)	Advertised; unclear if performed
39	Performers at St Anthony's Convent	*Music* or *A Token of Affection*	26 Oct 1924 (Sun)	'local Portuguese'	The Straits Times (1924d)	Performed
40	Straits United Portuguese Dramatic Amateurs	*Shakuntala*	11 Jul 1924 (Fri)	'local Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1924c)	Advertised; unclear if performed

S/N	Group	Performance	Date	Language	Source(s)	Remarks
41	Star of Hope Amateurs	*The Sam Poh* or *A Devil Alarm*	Sep 1926	'local Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1926a)	Advertised; unclear if performed
42	Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company	*Arjuna or the Ruined Merchant*	9 Sep 1926 (Thu)	'local Portuguese'	The Malaya Tribune (1926b, 1926c)	Advertised, performance cancelled

Significant (though not fully persuasive) evidence in favour of grouping at least some of the 9 plays exclusively identified as being performed in just 'Portuguese' with these other identifiably 'local Portuguese'-medium plays comes from different sources identifying the same two performances – the 1919 performance of *The Three Princesses* and the April 1923 performance of *The Sign of the Cross* – as being performed in 'Portuguese' (The Malaya Tribune 1919c, 1923b) and 'local Portuguese' (The Straits Times 1919c, 1923a).

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