

INTERNATIONAL ZHENG HE SOCIETY

国际郑和学会

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Annual Report of the Zheng He International Society for the period, May 2006 - June 2007

1. This Annual General Meeting that was to have taken place in May 2007 in line with the provisions of Constitution was held back due to medical reasons of our President. We are pleased to announce that our President has been awarded a Doctorate degree by the Universiti Indonesia in May this year.

2. **Membership**

The current number of membership of our Society stands at 48 members, and 14 Associate Members making a total of 62.

3. **Organisation**

At our second Committee meeting, two subcommittees were established:

- 3.1 **Membership** - under the chairmanship of Encik Jaffar b. Mohd Kassim, to approve new members, upkeep the records of members, and to attract new members
- 3.2 **Education** - under the charge of Mr Chua Leong Kian with the responsibility of exploring ways to promote understanding of the work and spirit of Zheng He.

4. **Activities**

- 4.1 **Committee Meetings** - During the course of the year, three committee meetings were held on 10 February and 14 April 2007 and 5 June 2007 to plan and organise the year's activities. We have a very strong Committee and we believe our Society is now on a firmer footing as of now.
- 4.2 **Public talk** – Our Society jointly organised with the National Library Board a public talk by Mr Liu Gang on the topic “1418 Map of the World” held in the premises of NLB. The talk attracted an audience of 70-80.
- 4.3 **Book Launch** – Our Society jointly organised with the proprietors of Select Books to launch “The Zheng He Epic” at their bookshop in Tanglin Shopping Centre on 22 Sept 2006, from 6:30 pm. The book was earlier published in Chinese. Chief Editors of the English version are Tan Ta Sen and Chia Lin

Sien. The event attracted a small gathering of about 20 persons including some non-members.

- 4.4 **Website** - Work began to upgrade our society's website www.chengho.org and at this moment, the upgraded website has come online. The website now has many new features, useful reports, news of activities and events, including NEWS FLASH to bring to attention planned forthcoming activities of the Society. An important feature is the inclusion in Bahasa of the President's Message as well as several items under 'ABOUT US'. Efforts are ongoing to include the urgently perceived need to have Hanyu material in our website. We urge members to visit our website and to give us suggestions and comments as well as giving us relevant and useful information and reports.
- 4.5 **Cheng Ho Cultural Museum** – The museum was launched by the Chief Minister of Melaka, Datuk Seri Mohd Ali b. Mohd Rustam Ali Rustam on 25 June 2006. Since then the Museum has been upgraded and now has a total of 11 galleries. Since its opening, it has drawn numerous foreign and local visitors among them like the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Abdullah b. Ahmad Badawi, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong SAR, Mr. Donald Tsang, ambassadors of China, Korea, and others. Generous donations of valuable artifacts, images, etc. from Tan Seri Lee Kim Yew, a philanthropist and Cheng Ho enthusiast in Malaysia, enabled the museum to put up a number of new exhibits. On 24th February 2007, a new gallery called Datuk Sim Mow Yu (沈慕羽) Calligraphy Gallery, was declared open by Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, Minister of Housing & Local Government and President of Malayan Chinese Association (MCA). The Museum has become a major tourist destination in Malaysia. Entrance fees to the Museum have been halved in keeping with the 2007 Visit Malaysia Year campaign.
- 4.6 **Publications** - In order to fulfil our Society's aim to encourage research on Zheng He, the English version of *Zheng He Si Shi* or *Zheng He Epic* was published late 2006 and has been made available at the subsidized rate of S\$100 exclusively to our members. Our President, Dr Tan Ta Sen, also published two books: *Cheng Ho and Malacca* (in English) and its Chinese version, *Cheng Ho Yu Melaka*. Our Vice President, Prof. Leo Suryadinata, in 2006, brought out an edited book, *Zheng He and Southeast Asia*, published by Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore. In the same year, he also published *Zheng He Yu Dongnan Ia* (in Chinese).
- 4.7 **Media Clippings** - Our Committee member, Mr Chua Leong Kian, donated his collection of print media clippings on Zheng He to the Society and will continue to contribute new materials to us. Dr Tan said that the clippings would be classified and archived.

5. Planned Activities

Two major projects have been planned – a research project on Zheng He and Southeast Asia and an essay competition that will be opened to participation locally and internationally.

- 5.1 **Research and Conference Project** - At our first Committee Meeting, it was proposed that an International Conference and Seminar be organised on the theme “Zheng He and Southeast Asia” to be held in Melaka in December 2007. The objective of the project is to encourage proper research to be conducted in order to uncover fresh evidence and information on Zheng He’s voyages especially in Southeast Asia. A subcommittee was formed under the Chairmanship of our President, Dr Tan, Dr Chia Lin Sien and Dr Liaw Yock Fang as members. However, at a subsequent subcommittee meeting, it was suggested that it would be more meaningful if researchers, individually or in small groups, be identified and invited to undertake field research in locations visited by Zheng He’s fleet. Based on the results of their research, these researchers would then be invited to present papers, if found suitable. The proposal was accepted at the third Committee Meeting that the Conference should be held some time in 2009 to coincide with Zheng He’s third Voyage and second visit to Melaka.
- 5.2 **Essay Competition** – Chairman of Education Subcommittee, Mr Chua Leong Kian proposed that our Society organise an Essay Competition with the purpose of promoting awareness of the life and work of Admiral Zheng He as well as our Society. He also agreed to organise the Essay Competition with the assistance of Mr Harsono Ng Yong Seng. A separate committee would be set up to undertake the work of organising the Competition.

The theme of the competition would be on “Zheng He: the Man and his Mission”. There would be four categories in the competition – primary, secondary, university and open. Essays could be submitted in Bahasa, Hanyu or English. The total prize money would be \$5,000/-. Prizes could include a free trip/overnight stay in Melaka including a visit with free entry to the Cultural Museum. It was decided that judges should include well-known historians, authors with works on Zheng He, and knowledgeable individuals.

- 5.3 **Zheng He Fund** - A proposal was received from Mr Kitson Ng that our Society set up a Zheng He Fund to strengthen our Society and to raise awareness of Zheng He. It was agreed that the aims of the Fund could be the following: (a) to promote World Peace; (b) to research and the study of Zheng He; and (c) to undertake charitable efforts toward improving health and education.

A subcommittee meeting was subsequently held and its report was tabled at the 3rd Committee Meeting. It was then decided that it would be premature to

set up such a Fund. Rather, efforts should be made to raise funds for the Society in order to enable more activities to be undertaken including the important work of research on Zheng He's work especially in Southeast Asia. The Fund would be set up when the Society has gained greater credibility perhaps in three years from now. (Please see Section 6 on Future Development of Our Society for more details).

It was agreed that our Society should set up a Panel of Advisors and to seek Patrons as well as honorary members. Efforts should be made to identify and get patrons, advisors and honorary members. It was agreed that a manager, either part or full-time, be employed with an appropriate salary to manage the Fund as well as the affairs of the Society.

6. Future Development of Our Society

In the past, our activities have been too academically oriented. We have confined ourselves to a small academic circle. With the donations committed to supporting our Society, it is now time to broaden the scope of our activities and sphere of influence in order to contribute more meaningfully to society.

- 6.1 **Research** - We will continue to foster studies on Zheng He and his contribution to the world especially in the region of *Nanyang* (Southeast Asia). For this purpose, we will recruit two highly respected researchers, one from China and the other from Singapore. The focus of our research will be on Southeast Asia.

To achieve this purpose, and as an important output of our research efforts, an International Conference on Zheng He Heritage Outside of China to be held in end 2009 in Singapore and Melaka has been proposed. We plan to have some 30 papers to be presented at the conference (see 5.1 above).

Apart from the above, a databank on materials related to Zheng He studies will be set up in Singapore. The personal collections of Prof. Zheng He Shen and Prof. Zheng Yi Jun together with those of Dr Tan Ta Sen will form the initial collection of our Society. We envisage that this collection will grow to become the most complete library for Zheng He studies in the world.

- 6.2 **Wider Scope and Reach** - We intend to widen our scope of activities to reach a broader audience in keeping with Zheng He's contributions, which are multi-faceted and trans-continental. The following objectives will be considered:

6.2.1 To involve enterprises and individuals from the maritime industry to participate in and contribute to the work of our Society. Zheng He should become a symbol for the powerful maritime community.

6.2.2 To undertake research and other activities to reach out to multi-ethnic, multi-national domains as Zheng He's heritage is spread beyond continents and among many ethnic groups. We hope to help establish country-based Zheng He organisations initially in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines.

6.2.3 As Zheng He's contribution is based on the promotion of peace and harmony, we also plan to make contributions to the promotion of social harmony and charitable activities not only in Singapore but also to cover all regions visited by Admiral Zheng He. It is suggested that our motto be: Toward multi-national, multi-ethnic and cross continental ideals to promote world peace and harmony

7. Financial Report

The financial report for the year ending 31 December 2006 was prepared by Mr Ong Chu Meng, our Hon. Treasurer. The following should be noted:

- 5.1 During the year, generous donations to the Society were received from Dr Tan, Mr Ong Chu Meng and Mr Kitson Ng.
- 5.2 We are pleased to report that our President, Dr Tan, has generously agreed to donate a sum of \$200,000/- together with a thousand copies of the *Zheng He Epic* valued at \$200 per copy to the Society. In addition, Mr Kitson Ng agreed to donate \$100,000/- to the Society. Mr Chua Leong Kian also agreed to help raise a sum of \$100,000/- to meet the target of at least \$500,000/-. Mr Ong Chu Meng, our honorary treasurer, will look into how the funds would be managed.
- 5.3 Our Financial Statement for the year ending 31 December 2006 was completed and duly submitted the IRAS.

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Dr. Tan Ta Sen
10 June 2007