

THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1995

NO. 2/95

Restricted Circulation

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE
David Ong, Lee Kip Lee, Anthony Oei
Helen Tan, Lim Geok Huay

For Members Only

FOUR WISHES

By
David Ong

Once, long ago, the Lebanese poet Kahlil Gibran, penned these lines: "Ask not what Lebanon can do for you, but what you can do for Lebanon."

Many years later, the late US President John F. Kennedy told the American people, "Do not ask what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

These days, almost every company CEO, religious leader, football team captain and such chiefs, will not hesitate to echo these famous words in one form or another to his or her people. So much so that that we are all now quite jelak of hearing this injunction either as a quotation or in one of its several variations, like, "Eh, excuse me, uh, don't ask me what I can do for you. You tell me what you can do for me first."

And so it goes on and on, becoming almost a pre-condition to a quid-pro-quo, a pre-condition to any mutual back-scratching situation.

The Annual General Meeting of our Association is now just a few days away. We have, during the past twelve months, perhaps, had a record number of new members joining the Association in a single year.

We should therefore have a fantastic turnout if everyone can come. Last year's AGM was fairly well supported and we had a pretty good attendance of members, including a cross-section of both older and younger ones.

I remember a bibik who came up to me to ask, "How come still tak clubhouse?" I answered her as politely as I could, "Association tak duit, Bik."

Then a young man came along, and not

wanting to miss out on his two cents' worth of contribution to the Association, added, "Ya la, so pokak. So many years and still no clubhouse. Donno what you all have been doing. Tak guna sekali."

"A real nasi tambar," I mused to myself. "What do you expect? Members pay \$50 only as a one time payment for life," I responded.

Then my Auntie Mary, in her sarong kebaya, sashayed up to me to query as to why we did not have a drama section because she was all set to act.

I was on the point of telling her to try "The Globe" since she was all dressed and waiting. But not wanting to be accused of being kurang ajar I placated her with "Very soon, Auntie. We'll have our drama section very, very soon."

However, realising that I owed it to myself to jaga my badan, I did not bother to say anything to her about auditions, aspirations and their relationship to ability or the absence thereof.

But that was not the end of it. The AGM was just about to be called to order when another guy approached me and asked why we had so few activities. Some dinner/talks, the Annual Dinner & Dance, and Baba Conventions in Penang, Melaka and Singapore were apparently all that we had to offer by way of activities.

Thank goodness I did not have the time to answer him as our President Dr. George Tay was already at the microphone saying "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen....." Whereupon, I hastily told this zealous young man that the "meeting sua start. Sorry, takleh chakap. I'll speak to you later." I did not. Whilst he on his part chabot even before the meeting ended.

On Saturday 25 March our President Dr. George Tay will once again be at the microphone to bid you "Good afternoon ladies and

gentlemen....."

AGM's being what they are, members have every right to quiz the General Committee on what they have done or not done; to seek clarification on the accounts; to elect new committee members and to discuss other matters of which due notice has been given to the Hon. Secretary.

Be that as it may, I have only four simple wishes for this forthcoming AGM.

Firstly, I wish that our members will come to the AGM with a spirit of co-operation and that this spirit will prevail throughout the proceedings.

Secondly, I wish that members will come to the AGM with some knowledge of the history of the Peranakan Association, and of the fact that it was originally known as the "Straits Chinese British Association" with objectives somewhat different from the "Peranakan Heritage" type of activities which we are presently focussing on.

Thirdly, I wish that members will come acknowledging that our "Rules" (Constitution) are out of date and need to be revised. For a start, it is becoming extremely difficult to run the Association with a one-off payment of \$50-00 from every new member, and with no regular monthly revenue to meet expenses which will keep on increasing if members' expectations are to be met.

Fourthly, I also wish that members will come to the AGM with some realistic, constructive and practical suggestions on how the Association can become more vibrant, interesting and relevant.

These are my four wishes. They are just a little more than the usual three wishes which genies are normally known to grant. But being very simple wishes, I do hope that they can come true. Not just for me, but for all of us.

Talking about genies, I can almost hear voices from somewhere in the distant past. Perhaps they are the voices of the people who formed the SCBA (Straits Chinese British Association) so long ago. Let me listen carefully.....

"Hullo! Hullo! Is that you, Kong-Kong? It sounds like you."

"Ask not what the Peranakan Association....."

"Okay, Okay. Chukup, Kong-Kong. Don't be corny. I know that line very well. You don't have to say it. Jelak already. WHAT CAN WE DO FOR THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION?"

"Very good."

"Thank you, Kong-Kong."

COMING PERANAKAN EVENTS

CHRISTIE'S AUCTION OF STRAITS CHINESE CERAMICS, GOLD & SILVER

Venue: Sir Henry Keppel II &
Stamford Rooms, Hyatt Regency
Singapore.

25 Mar 10 am - Auction of Ceramics
2 pm - Auction of Gold & Silver

23&24
Mar 10 am to 6 pm - Exhibition

In conjunction with the auctions there will be a series of talks from 22 to 25 March which will offer us a unique opportunity to learn about the works of art included in the auctions.

Tickets at \$10 per participant per lecture (limited seats) are available from Billie Soh or Veronica Yong at Christie's Singapore. Tel: 2353828.

22 Mar STRAITS CHINESE PORCELAIN
6.30 pm (Nonya Ware) A Collector's Experience
by Dr. Cheah Jin Seng.

23 Mar STRAITS CHINESE GOLD & SILVER
6.30 pm by Mr. Edmond Chin.

25 Mar STRAITS CHINESE WORKS OF ART -
4.30 pm Furniture: Brown & Gold
by Ong Poh Neo

GUNONG SAYANG ASSOCIATION "MALAM PERANAKAN."

The Gunong Sayang Association will be celebrating its 85th Anniversary with a birthday bash at The Orchard Hotel Ballroom on Friday 24 March when diners will be able to catch a glimpse of their forthcoming play to be staged in

May besides being entertained by cultural dances, Dondang Sayang and a Kebaya Queen Contest.

All tickets have been sold out.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION.

Our Annual General Meeting, Notice of which you would have received, will be held on Saturday 25 Mar 1995 at 2.30 p.m. at The Bougainvillea Room, RELC International House, RELC Building, 30 Orange Grove Road, Singapore 1025 (next to Shangri-La Hotel).

Will you please make every attempt to be present as the Committee's proposal to amend the Constitution requires a quorum of 50 members.

Please advise us if you can come so that we can make suitable arrangements for refreshments.

OUR COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT IN AID OF THE NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION

The National Kidney Foundation have requested us to assist them in the sale of tickets for the charity premiere of a Peranakan play - MANIS MANIS PAIT (BITTER SWEET) - to be presented by The Gunong Sayang Association on Wednesday 10 May 1995 at 8 p.m. at The World Trade Centre Auditorium.

The guest of honour is Rear Admiral (NS) Teo Chee Hean.

Proceeds from the ticket sales will be donated to the National Kidney Foundation.

This is our first community service project and we hope that members will give their full support to this worthy cause.

Orders for tickets priced at \$70, \$50 and \$30 can now be made with our Hon. Secretary Mrs. Lim Geok Huay, Tel: 2550704 or 2564863.

Please make early reservations to beat the other fans of the GSA to the theatre door as they will be more than usually attracted by the scenario of this play, written by Baba William Gwee Thian Hock, which somewhat departs from the usual

sitcom format of the Peranakan play.

The story outlines the trials and tribulations faced by a particular Baba family during the Japanese Occupation. It depicts the Nyonyas bravely shouldering responsibilities for which they were totally unprepared and untrained, and surviving through their ordeal although not without great personal sacrifices.

NEW MEMBERS

We bid welcome to the following thirty-four new members:-

Mr Eric Chan Soo Leng
Mrs Mabel Chan
Mrs Pauline Chan
Mr Chan Tiang Kuang
Mr Chi Cheng Hock
Mr Bob Cheah Phee Bok
Mrs Lilly Cheong
Mdm Chua Gek Eng @ Gek Hong
Ms Elaine Khoo Ee Lian
Mr Khoo Teng Boon
Mdm Mary Koh
Mr Kuek Buck Hiong
Mr Vincent Kuek Buck Hee
Mr Peter Lee Peng Eng
Ms Francesca S.C. Lee
Ms Lee Siew Ying
Mr Patrick Lim Kim Tuan
Mr Christopher Ng Bang Wai
Mr Patrick T.P. Ng
Mr Anthony Oei
Mrs Ong Swee Law
Ms Joanna Ong Yi Ling
Ms Larie Poon Lee Kheow
Mr Steven Seah
Ms Anna Su
Mr Clement Tan Hye San
Ms Gladys Tan
Mr Tan Hock Seng
Mr Teo Beng Chuan
Mr Victor Teo Kim Leong
Mrs Edith Wee
Mr Roland Wee Kim Guan
Mdm Betty Wong Chee Ching
Mr Yap Thiam Huat

CONDOLENCES

We record with much sorrow the deaths of Dr. Ong Swee Law and Mr. Edward Yeo Kim Chuan and extend our deepest sympathy to their families.

ASSOCIATION NECKTIES

Association neckties are on sale and available at \$20 each from the Hon. Secretary.

RECORD ATTENDANCE AT DINNER/TALK ON PERANAKAN FURNITURE

by
Anthony Oei

A record turnout of 105 members were present at our bi-monthly dinner/talk, held on Wednesday 22 February at the RELC, to listen to a talk on Peranakan Furniture by Madam Ong Poh Neo.

The speaker, a fifth-generation Peranakan Singaporean and an expert on the subject, kept her audience enthralled by demonstrating how much good taste and an eye for beauty our forefathers had when she also illustrated with slides examples of cabinets, chairs, sideboards, pintu pagars, washstands, handkerchief cupboards and frames.

Here are extracts from Madam Ong Poh Neo's illuminating talk:-

"In earlier times in Singapore, there were three types of domestic furniture loved by Peranakans:-

1. **Black wood furniture** - plain, with marble or with mother-of-pearl inlay.
2. **Namwood furniture** also known as red-and-gold with the wood grown in China from where the furniture was mainly imported.
3. **Teak wood**, 'brown and gold,' gilded, with wood from Myanmar and made in earlier times, by craftsmen from China.

Taste through the ages changed and, partly because of this, 'brown and gold' became very popular reaching its height between 1910-1930 after which there was a decline.

The Peranakans, in the past, designed to impress and overwhelm the senses, and showed a preference for grandeur and the aesthetic.

The brown and gold is a fine example of the ornate lavish splendour well-to-do Peranakans so often sought and achieved in the design of

local furniture. Such display of wealth was associated with status, rank and power, a long-established Asian tradition.

The Peranakans, with their high aesthetic sense, successfully brought together British Colonial, European and Chinese styles and motifs, producing a distinctive type of furniture which have become a legacy we can proudly call our own.

BROWN AND GOLD, essentially a pictorial book on furniture generally not accessible to viewing, is useful as a pictorial/guide book more nostalgic to the older members of the Peranakan Association which has itself done so much in stimulating interest in Peranakan culture. To these senior citizens, I hope that this book will bring back fond memories."

After the talk, several members and their guests eagerly purchased available copies of the book, autographed by the author.

AN ENTERTAINING AND GRIMLY EXCITING EVENING WITH DICK LEE

By
Anthony Oei

Hon. Secretary Lim Geok Huay's normal of-fice routine took an unusual turn when her fax machine printed out a message from the Television Corporation of Singapore inviting members of the Peranakan Association to their television studio for a recording of an episode of Dick Lee's forthcoming weekly KOPITIAM series.

"Why us?" wondered Geok, until she came to the point where TCS explained that in one of the segments to be shot Dick would be interviewing Singapore's well-loved Baba entertainers - the old Bibik and her servant - G.T. Lye and Sally Gan.

Geok acted with great alacrity to TCS' request to round up as many members as she could to provide a Peranakan audience with the ladies dressed in their sarongs and kebayas.

Despite the very short notice (which was the reason why we were not able to circularise the invitation to all members) the response was fantastic.

At the appointed hour, whilst 57 of us queued outside the studio entrance, Dick came out to thank us for our presence, and especially the ladies for taking the trouble to dress up in sarong and kebaya.

The ebullient Dick smilingly told his audience, by way of introduction, "The show brings together each week people from all walks of life to tell you what they do."

True to his word. Besides the Bibik and her servant, his motley and grim array of guests included two ghost story writers, two embalmers, one exhumation contractor and three martial arts instructors.

To cap the macabre scenario, a funeral brass band marched in with a rendition of "When The Saints Go Marching In."

On the brighter side, the interviews with G.T. Lye and Sally Gan kept the audience in stitches.

Some of our ladies in their finery and their gentlemen were persuaded to go on stage to sit at the tables of the Kopitiam where the co-star of this variety show, Auntie Liz (Dick's mother Elizabeth), in her elegant outfit, was holding court expounding the basis of the points she would award in her selection of the best Kopitiam she and the film crew had visited.

In all, it was an outing of a rare kind for members of the Association. Their verdict:

Entertaining and grimly exciting!

COMMENTS ON TERMS USED BY BABAS AND NONBABAS

By
Gwee Thian Hock

In the January 1995 issue of the Newsletter there was a reference to SUARA BABA - the souvenir publication of the Penang Convention - which contained a list of "Terms Used By Babas and Non Babas" compiled by Mr. Lee Liang Hye.

I read the article with great interest since I use the Baba language (as spoken in Singapore and Malacca) very much in my daily conversa-

tion, and would take this opportunity to set out Mr. Lee Liang Hye's definition of certain terms followed by my comments thereon:-

Embok-Embok

~ an exclusive, definitive term used by the Peranakans to describe themselves.

Comment:

The Baba Peranakan community never use the term as a blanket description of themselves. This term refers to the Nyonyas (females) only, and it excludes the Babas (males) - see "Mas Sepuloh" - p.80.

Jantan-Embok

~ a descriptive term applied to Babas by the Peranakan community.

Comment:

The correct form of usage is "Embok-Jantan" which is a polite term for "husband." - see "Mas Sepuloh" - p.80. "Jantan Embok" is never used to describe the Babas.

Bah:

~ a term used by domestic servants when addressing sons of Baba families. It is an abbreviation of "Baba."

Comment:

To the best of my knowledge and recollection domestic staff would address sons of Baba families with one of these terms - "Baba," "Baba Chai," "Ahwah Chai" or "Wah-Wah Chai." The term "Bah" or "Ba," fondly used by elders when addressing the younger generation, would be too familiar for servants to use.

Baba Jati/Nyonya Jati:

~ a boastful term used by Peranakans claiming to be true-blue Babas and Nyonyas.

Comment:

When the Babas and Nyonyas proudly talk of their lineage they automatically refer to themselves as "Peranakan Jati." It is the non-Baba Peranakans who occasionally refer to the Babas alone as "Baba Jati." I have never heard of the term "Nyonya Jati."

Baba Chelop/Nyonya Chelop

~ a Peranakan term to describe those who are partly Baba/Nyonya.

Comment:

When someone who is not of the Baba Peranakan community attempts to ape or claim

to be a Baba or Nyonya, the term used by the Baba Peranakans to describe such a person is usually "Peranakan Chelop" which covers both sexes. The term "Nyonya Chelop" does not exist in the vocabulary of the Baba Peranakan community.

China Chelop

~ a disdainful term used by non-Peranakan Chinese to describe the Babas as superficial Chinese.

Comment:

In all my years of being on the receiving end of derogatory terms applied to me by non-Baba Chinese they would unfailingly use Chinese dialect words, never Malay, to label me in unflattering terms as a "superficial Chinese." I would imagine that if a non-Baba Chinese were that familiar with such an obviously Malay term as "China chelop" he would be sufficiently proficient in the Malay language, through social contacts with the Babas and Malays, to be more sympathetic to the existence of the Babas than to apply such a disparaging term to them.

Orang Puteh Chelop

~ a critical term used by non-Peranakans describing certain Peranakans as "mixed white persons."

Comment:

To the best of my knowledge it is the Baba Peranakans themselves rather than the non-Peranakans who would use this term on Babas, and even non-Babas, whom they deem to be too westernised in their lifestyles.

Nya

~ a term, used by relatives, to address Nyonya ladies; also an abbreviation of the term "Nyonya."

Comment:

In general, elderly Nyonya ladies will address all much younger Nyonyas than themselves by this term "nya." Relatives will address other Nyonyas either by name or kinship term depending on their age differences and kinship ties. Young ladies not belonging to the community will be addressed as "nya" or "Ah Nya."

Baba Chinese

~ a term used by others on Peranakans to differentiate them from the Chinese Chinese.

Comment:

Other people usually use the term "Baba" to denote the Babas. I have not come across any of them using the term "Baba Chinese."

In the same issue of Suara Baba, there is a report on the 6th Baba Convention held in Singapore in 1993 by its Chairman Mr. Lee Liang Hye. In it there are several non-Baba expressions which I shall attempt to translate into the Baba language (in larger print):

Satu kejayaan yang cemerlang:-

Chukop samporna.

Chukup puas hati:-

Bagus, tak kurang.

Senang kan hati mereka:-

Iborkan hati (or ati) jorang.

Sudah mampus:-

This is an impolite expression (See "Maş Sepuloh p.256). A proper version is "sua ta ah."

Mana boleh hidupkan lagi:-

Tak dapat idopkan balek.

Tak malukah, kalah adik beradik dari Pulau Pinang dan Negeri Melaka?:-

Ta'ahkah rasa segan kalu tak rupa menang jorang kat Pulo Pinang sama Melaka?

In the same report Mr. Lee Liang Hye waxed lyrical when he "noticed our younger brothers and sisters from Penang and Malacca speaking in their Baba Hokkien and Baba Malay with such naturalism and fluency..... their Baba Hokkien and their Baba Malay are very much alive and very much being used in their daily lives and surroundings" and he felt that "they put us Singaporeans to shame."

Interestingly enough, I have been informed that not a few Malaccan Baba parents are now concerned about the survival of their Baba language in their homes. Due to greater emphasis on Bahasa Malaysia in schools their children are not only speaking Bahasa Malaysia rather than their Baba mother tongue among themselves both in and out of schools, but have also been ridiculing their parents for their incorrect usage of the National Language, and even urging them to speak proper, correct Malay in their conversations!

MY MEMORIES OF THE PERANAKAN-BANGSAWAN THEATRE

By
K.T.Koh

The Star Opera Company, which produced Malay Bangsawan operas, consisted of a group of 20 young, and some middle-aged, Malay professional actors and actresses who, from the 1920's till the 1930's, were some of the pioneers who brought live shows on to the Singapore stage.

They were all related or partially-related to each other in a closely-knit community into which new players were recruited strictly on the recommendations of existing members, without the need of any auditions. Salaries were paid according to merit.

The manager of the troupe was Khairudin, from Hongkong - a handsome, intelligent and creative individual of mixed parentage who, so I was told, could speak a smattering of Cantonese. He was actor, singer, choreographer and director, all rolled into one.

His wife was Miss Tijah, a young and beautiful actress with a powerful soprano voice, much like that of a prima donna in a European opera.

With these two attractions, it was therefore no surprise that the Star Opera became popular and in great demand both in Malaya and Sarawak.

My father and uncle were the co-owners of the Theatre Royal in North Bridge Road, opposite Clyde Street in the vicinity of where Blanco Court now is.

It was in this hall that the Star Opera was contracted to perform nightly certain popular stories suggested by my father to Kharudin who would then write the script and direct the play.

Thus it came about that Shakespeare's "Romeo & Juliet," "The Merchant of Venice," "Julius Caesar," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Hamlet," "Othello," and "The Comedy of Errors" were all performed in Bangsawan Malay.

The Babas and Nyonyas loved these plays with their intrigues, plots, sub-plots, comic characters, ghosts, kings queens, princes, princesses and fairies! They could relate to such tales which abounded in their Peranakan culture.

Furthermore, as most of the audience could speak neither English nor Chinese, they found great affinity with the Bangsawan dialogue since their mother tongue was Baba Malay.

There were also Malay historical plays about "Hang Tuah," "Hang Jebat" and "Puteri Delimah," as well as Chinese stories such as "Boo Siong Sat Soh" and "Seet Jin Quee."

Before the opening of a historical play a "Kenduri" ceremony was held on stage with the entire cast present. "Nasi Kunyet" and chicken and lamb (kambing) cooked in curry were offered to appease the spirit characters in the play, and to ask for pardon in case of inaccuracies of events, offensive speech or misrepresentation of characters.

These rituals were strictly observed to avoid the occurrences of accidents and mishaps during the performance.

I was then, as far as I can remember, between 9 - 13 years old, and vividly recollect how admirers showered their favourite actors and actresses with gifts of gold and diamond jewellery which they were allowed to keep for themselves.

Those were indeed very happy years for me as I looked forward to the weekends when I was permitted to join my parents at the Star Opera. Very often I fell asleep in the theatre to be carried to my sixth aunt's house next door to continue with my dreams of fairies, kings, queens, clowns and what have you in my own world of make believe.

If and when such visits were in the day I could wander in the theatre on to the stage and into the dressing rooms to behold the costumes made of satin beautifully embroidered with sequin and "menang-emas."

They were not all Malay costumes. Some were European or English period outfits designed for the Shakespearean plays.

The Star Opera even had its own orchestra which not only provided music to suit the moods and atmosphere of the drama, but also accompanied the singers and dancers who appeared during the interlude, called the "Extra Turn," when the scenes were being changed.

Life then was really good. I enjoyed my Peranakan girlhood days. Even going to school

was fun. We had very little or no home work to do, no stress, and especially no high expectations from my parents to whom my grades did not matter much. They were happy enough as long as I did not bring home reports of rudeness, insubordination, and laziness. They were content as long as I was promoted to the next grade.

Those were really educational years. Young as I was then, I enjoyed the freedom to develop my interests in singing, acting and sports.

My love for acting and the theatre, inspired by the Star Opera, is reflected in my children and grandchildren. For all these I owe a debt of gratitude to Khairudin, Tijah and my parents all of whom, unknowingly, became my role models.

PANTUN PANTUN UNTOK TAHUN BARU

By
William Tan

Lagu: Rasa Sayang

Pagi-pagi bukap pintu
Pasang teng, gantong chye-kee
Uchapan Tahun Baru
Panjang-kan umor, murah-kan jerki.

Bintang timor di-balek gunong
Nampak dari luar Daratan
Mintak-kan umor sa-tinggi gunong
Tambah-kan jerki sa-lebar lautan.

Dudok di-atas belakang kerbo
Tiup sulin lagu merdu
Angkat tangan jari sa-puloh
Beri selamat tahun baru.

Burong merpati terbang ke-desa
Hinggap berenti di-pohon pinang
Kaya raya, mewah sentiasa
Hidup ma'akmor senang lenang.

Sa-gala orang yang ada di-sini
Tua muda, miskin dan kaya
Tidak kira perumpuan, lelaki
Tahun baru bersuka ria.

(This pantun is reproduced with the kind permission of Mr. William Tan, who wrote it in 1987 as his contribution to the celebration of the Peranakan Family Mass held on Chinese New Year's Eve at the Catholic Holy Family Church in Katong - Ed.)

A LEAF FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

23 JUNE 1956 - The Siglap Girls' Club and The Singapore Young People Association presented an Ancient Straits Chinese Wedding Ceremony at a Midsummer Ball.

*Dinner & Dance from
8 pm to 2 am*

Members of the Chinese Ladies Association who took part in the Chinese Wedding Ceremony were:-

Mrs Lilly Chan	The Bride
Mrs S.K. Wong	The Bridegroom
Mrs P.K. Hernon	Bestman
Mrs E. Chan	Bestman
Mrs Loke Yew	Bride's Father
Mrs L.T. Firbank	Bridegroom's Father
Mrs Yeo Jim Bang	Bridegroom's Mother

Madam Ah Bee conducted the Wedding Ceremony.

Mr & Mrs Low Poh San and Mr Lam Joon Khim & Partner gave exhibitions of ballroom dancing.

Mr Jerry Soliano and his band provided music for dancing.

MORE GEMS FROM "MAS SEPULOH"

Reproduced by kind permission of
Mr William Gwee Thian Hock.

Antu bulan tuju ~ gluttonous (like the hungry ghosts).

Dia kalu makan mia iau kui, sama antu bulan tuju.
When it comes to wating, he is as gluttonous as the hungry ghosts.

Budak Taik ~ the very young and immature.
Dia chuma budak taik lagik tapi bila orna tua-tua berchakap dia sula mo menyampok.
He is still young and immature but every time the elders are talking, he would interrupt.

Chichak kering ~ thin and emaciated (like a dried-up lizard)
Dia kurus sampay bagi chichak kering.
He has grown so thin he looks like a dried-up lizard.