

THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 1995

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PORTENTS OF AN AWAKENING

by Lee Kip Lee

The record-breaking attendance at the dinner-talk on 28 July, the steady influx of new members, and the contribution of more articles to the Newsletter are encouraging portents of an awakening of interest in the affairs of the Association.

We hope that this momentum will increase in tempo and that a greater number of members will become involved in our activities. We need your suggestions, feedback and participation to assist us in formulating our programmes.

One of the events we have in mind is to visit Peranakan residents of Old Folks Homes from whom we received their lists of names.

It was such a delight to discover, amongst these lists, so many old bibiks with their names ending in "Neo". There were Kim Neo, Chit Neo (probably the seventh daughter), Bee Neo,



Mr Wee Kim Wee accompanied by The Peranakan Association's President, Dr George Tay, at the RELC, 28 July 1995.

Chye Neo, Boon Neo, Teck Neo (94 years old), two Imm Neos, two Seng Neos, as well as Bong Soo, Rosy, Teresa and Alice. All so typically nyonya names!

More details of this proposed community service project will soon be announced.

FOCUS

THE CHINA GERK FROM HONoured GUEST TO SCORned INTRUDER

by Peter Lee

The *China Gerk*. For a long time, it was that magic word, separating "them" from us, a disparaging remark aimed at the "ignorant" new arrivals from China, and later becoming a blanket term for all non-Peranakan Chinese. It was a convenient label, boosting our self-worth. Separating "them" made us feel more important. After all, we come from old families, we have an ancient history in the region, our customs and manners have been refined through the ages.

Laughing at the antics of the *gerk*, their ignorance of the old *adat* and the civilisation of the British Empire, perhaps became an important element of our self-assurance, especially at a time when the old colonial *status quo* was suddenly beginning to crumble, and family fortunes began to dwindle, or got tied up in trusts that would benefit only our great-grandchildren!

All of a sudden there were *gerks* everywhere, especially in business and politics. Not only were they everywhere, they were

beginning to take over! ("But thank goodness we still rule the country, on BOTH sides of the causeway," as many a conservative bibik may have been heard to remark thirty years ago). Now, as the younger generation of Peranakans gradually blend into *gerkdom*, the term is less frequently used and has become very politically incorrect!

But before anyone begins to lament this state of affairs, and starts to yearn for the good old days when "Peranakan" was synonymous with "wealthy ruling class", let's take a closer look at those halcyon days.

And what do you know — history has revealed some unnerving facts. The greatest champions of the *gerks* were none other than our great Peranakan forefathers!

In 1800, according to an *in situ* stone inscription, the burial grounds of Bukit China in Malacca were restored. The explana-

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tion is interesting: "Our Chinese people have travelled far and wide for trade, but many do not fulfill their aims and die abroad, their remains unable to return. Thus are those buried here. Alas! Where are the spirits of the virtuous and heroic? Where are the spirits of the rouged and powdered? At the festivals, none performs the rituals, none makes the offering of wine. This is truly a grievous state of affairs." Many of the major donors to the restoration fund were the direct ancestors of today's Peranakans.

This tradition of benevolence to *gerks* (in Chinese meaning "guests"), or one's unfortunate kin and countrymen, persisted for several generations. Tan Jiak Kim, a true-blue Peranakan if ever there was one, was the founder of the Eng Choon Association of Singapore in 1867, established to provide financial, commercial and legal assistance to all immigrants from Eng Choon district where his family came from.

The Malacca branch of the Association was founded by a third generation Baba, Lee Quee Lim, in 1875. (Many documents showed that he signed his name in Chinese! In fact, this is a clear reminder that before the advent of English education, most Babas were schooled in the Chinese classics, indicated by the copious inscriptions of imperial scholars, monks and tutors at the Cheng Hoon Teng in Malacca.)

In his book *A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia*, Yen Ching-hwang lists the founders of all the early Chinese associations and clan organisations of the Straits Settlements and quite a few Baba names can be found: Ong Keng Hoon (of Malacca), Lee Cheng Yan, and Khoo Hua Tong (of Penang's Khoo Kongsi), among others.

Tan Tock Seng was a benefactor of the Chinese Paupers Hospital (Tan Tock Seng Hospital, founded in 1844) and often shouldered the cost of burying poor Chinese immigrants. His son Tan Kim Ching founded the Hokkien Hway Kwan (association) in 1860. And so the list goes on.

Let us also not forget that Dr Lim Boon Keng, whose mother was a Malacca nyonya, was one of the main proponents of a Confucian revival, even though he received a solid English education in his youth. He was also a committee member of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

Then there are the great Tun Tan Cheng Lock who founded the Malayan Chinese Association, and our own former Prime Minister, champion of the Speak Mandarin Campaign. These were and are great visionaries, and they are Baba.

So what happened? Have we latter day Peranakans lost something very important? Or were our forefathers and leaders merely selling out to "the other camp"? What has twisted our perception of "honoured guests" into "scorned newcomers"? Has an insular attitude and siege mentality led us down a dead-end road?

Last issue, Maureen Lim asked "Whither the Peranakan Association", but let's ask ourselves, "Whither the Peranakan culture and people?" Perhaps before we answer that we should look, and look deeply, to where we really came from. It may equip us to leap into the future.

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RECOLLECTIONS by Wee Kim Wee

I am sure the Newsletter is playing a significant role in bringing about cohesiveness among members of the Association. It is therefore vital that we keep it going at the usual regular interval.

Three separate articles in your newsletter caught my attention strongly: "Whither the Peranakan Association" and "Growing Up in a Peranakan Household" by Maureen Lim, and "A Leaf from the Pages of History".

My view is that Maureen Lim's suggestions merit close consideration by the Committee, especially in two aspects, the member-get-member drive, and to get members who are sufficiently interested in the Peranakan culture to want to be part of it.

Unless we can increase our membership strength considerably, there is little hope of having our voices heard. The first step, therefore, is to build up our membership.

P. Ramlee

For those of you who did not follow the Malay movies of the good old days, P. Ramlee was the idol of the movie screen for a long period of time. He was dashing handsome with his Ronald Coleman moustache. His wit and humour and his acting ability made him the Singapore/Malaysian Romeo or, more aptly, the Malay version of Rudolph Valentino who brought the roof of the movie houses down with the first release of *The Sheikh*.

I knew Ramlee well. I often interviewed him as a reporter. I asked him once what was it he missed most as the top film star in our country. With a deep sigh Ramlee said, "You know, as a leading actor I do not get to kiss the leading lady!" Aware of the religious taboo of Muslims kissing in public I reminded him that he was Muslim. Ramlee shot back, "How about the Egyptians? They are Muslims too. How is it that Egyptian actors kiss their leading ladies so passionately?" That stumped me and I believe I reported it in one of the Straits Times Group of newspapers.

Ong Thye Watt

Director Ong Thye Watt of Kumpulan Peranakan Singapura in your article "A Leaf from the Pages of History" was a blue-blooded Peranakan, who could hold his own against all comers in *pantuns* and Malay *ronggeng*.

Thye Watt lived at Joo Chiat. He worked in The Straits Times at Cecil Street. I was his colleague. I attended many *ronggeng* sessions with Thye Watt, especially during The Straits Times Sports Club's social events. We always hired the BEST Malay *ronggeng* troupe, The Dol Mat Troupe. Enche Dol Mat played the lead violin. His beautiful daughters were the *ronggeng* dancing partners. At every party where Thye Watt appeared the *ronggeng* escalated to its heights with his versatile impromptu *pantuns* especially in the dance of *Enche Sittee* (or City). In this, you need to answer

aptly the *pantun* of your 'rival' and Thye Watt knocked them all out for a count of ten, including the Malay challengers, who were supposedly better equipped!

Many times I felt nostalgically that if we had Thye Watt still with us today he would be a real pillar of strength to lead our entertainment cultural groups to its former heights.

Ong Thye Watt had made thousands of people happy with his singing and his antics. He lived a full and happy life, even if not materially wealthy. I adore him.

Wee Kim Wee

AN EXPERT'S OPINION by William Gwee Thian Hock

I will be most grateful if you will kindly permit me to voice further comments on the Peranakan Bangsawan Theatre.

In Singapore, apart from the majority of elderly babas and nyonyas, Malays and perhaps a few younger members of their respective communities, other Singaporeans have not heard of, let alone found the term "extra turn" of interest at all. In an article on the wayang peranakan and the role of the extra turn that I had once submitted to The Straits Times, I mentioned, "In between changes of scenes an interlude was provided in the form of solo or group singing, group dancing, or a comic sketch. This was known as the 'extra turn'." When the article was eventually published (5 June 1986) the last sentence with the term "extra turn" was omitted.

During the heyday of the wayang peranakan in the 1930s, the extra turn songs were so popular among the babas and nyonyas that Wan Boon Seng in 1933 published a collection of extra turn favourites in a book "Nyanyi-an Extra Turn & Pantuns" in which was included 14 *kronchongs*, *stamboels*, *aslis*, and other favourite songs of that era.

When Mr Wee Kim Wee in his article mentioned that "many *embok-embok* fell head over heels for Khairuddin's charm," it reminded me that in the article I had submitted to the press I had also pointed out, "In the era when the majority of Baba womenfolk were rarely seen in public, an exception was made of the Bangsawan. There the presence of the womenfolk, the nyonyas, was not an uncommon sight. In fact, some of them became such ardent fans that a few of the more forward ones among them were reputed to have gone so far as to wait backstage with gifts of jewelleries for their favourite performers." When the edited version was published the word "jewelleries" was left out. Incidentally the type of jewellery usually presented to the performers was the *chichak berlian*, a brilliant-studded gold brooch with a lizard design. But such show of hero-worship, especially of the opposite sex, was frowned upon by the rest of the nyonyas as they deemed such behaviour unbecoming of *orang bertapis-tapis*. During the performance of *Nyai Dasima* in 1958 by the Singapore

LETTERS

Peranakan Amateur Dramatic Party, some members of the cast were presented with such jewellery by well-to-do fans.

I also wish to respond to Mr Lee Kip Lee's invitation for theories on the origin of "Swa Sway" and *orang bek bek*.

The song "Swa Sway" has intrigued me for many years since I first heard my mother's version of "Swa Sway Kemorning" and her ending of "istri bunga raja", my late father's "Swa Sway Kemuning" ending with "istri bunga raya" and other variations of the opening and closing lines of the lyrics.

According to my mother she had first heard this song as an extra turn number at a Malay opera whose patron was Koh Hoon Teck. In my quest for the origin of this song I was informed that the original was the song "So Early in the Morning" and that it was an Irish folk song. Thus when I met an Irish lady who had taught music in her young days I hummed the tune to her and sought her comments. She identified it as a children's song entitled "In and Out the Window".

In my opinion, Mr Lee's father was probably right: "Swa Sway" had originated from a western song. This song ("So Early in the Morning"? "In and Out the Window"?) might have been first popularised in Singapore or elsewhere in the Straits Settlements by the early minstrel groups (such as the Cornwall Mintrels), and was subsequently picked up by the Baba and/or Malay communities' theatre groups, introduced in their extra turn with ethnic lyrics, and finally ended with the babas' and nyonyas' versions of the lyrics. Aisha Akbar in her song book "36 Best Loved Songs of Malaysia and Singapore" entitles it as "Suar Sui — Folk song of English Origin".

As for the term *orang bek bek* it is rather unexpected that Mr Lee's Peranakan friends had never heard nor were able to hazard a guess as to its meaning. This is a common Baba expression not used as a derogatory remark nor need it have been used only by the Lee family. The babas and nyonyas at one time used to take pride in their refined ways and background and termed themselves proudly as *orang bertapis-tapis* (refined people).

A variation of this term is *orang baik baik* (people of good standing or background). An often heard expression is "Kita anak buah orang baik baik" ("We come from a good/refined family background."). *Orang bek bek* is simply some nyonyas' way of pronouncing *orang baik baik*. It is not uncommon for some babas and especially the nyonyas to pronounce words differently, eg. *tengok* is many a time expressed as *tiok*, *sudah* as *sua*, *sepoy line* as *spair land*, *storekeeper* as *storekissair*, etc.

On the other hand, there is a possibility that *orang bek bek* may have been used to mean *orang tepi tepi*. This is typical of members of the Baba community. They would purposely choose a word or expression opposite to the meaning they wish to convey when they are out to be sarcastic or to be critical. This is to mask their real intention and to avoid unpleasant consequences. Family members would of

course appreciate what message they are trying to convey.

Orang tepi tepi is not all that uncommon an expression either. Babas and nyonyas often take exception to those within their community whose ways and behaviour do not conform to their refined code of conduct especially in public. They would consider such people as *takleh ke-medan* or *takleh ke-tengah* (unfit for good company). The words *medan* or *tengah* used in this context denote central, ie, a position of prominence in the public gaze. Therefore, those who are not fit to occupy this central position are relegated to the periphery, ie, they are sidelined and belong not to the centre but to the *tepi* (edge). *Orang tepi-tepi* thus describes those at the edge of the refined circle and is a derogatory remark.

William Gwee Thian Hock
Singapore 1545

MORE ON "ORANG BEK BEK"

When I asked my mother about the *orang bek bek*, she chuckled and then explained that they were the "orang orang yang tak tau hal, pakai baju tak berapa lawah, chakap pun tak kepala tak buntut," and that they were generally *tak senonoh* in their behaviour, manner of speech and dressing.

My *Tua-ee* whom I remember to be a beautiful, elegant and oh-so-prim-and-proper lady, used this term, it seems, liberally. It is significant to note that my maternal relatives trace their roots to Malacca.

When I asked my *Makoh* who is a Singaporean bibik, she insisted that she had never heard of it. Now, that's strange! My *Makoh* is as Peranakan as anyone can be. She plays *cherki*, wears the sarong and *baju pendek* at home, and cannot eat without her sambal belachan, but she has not heard of the *orang bek bek*.

I decided to call *Ee Baby* who was unfortunately out of town but her son, a well-known playwright, was able to enlighten me on the subject. This term which most probably originated in Malacca, was coined by the snobbish bibiks who frowned on those who had been pushed aside from the mainstream of society (hence *orang tepi tepi*) as they could not maintain the standard of living at that time. They were generally uncouth, not well educated, and not well-dressed.

Suspecting this class of *orang bek bek* to be the poor cousins of the successful and well-to-do Peranakans, I pursued the matter further with my mother who claimed that they were generally *orang miskin* and naturally could not keep up with the standard of the *orang kaya*. What do you think of that? I'm glad I don't use that term on our fellow Peranakans.

Yeo Seok Yan
Singapore 2057

REDISCOVERING ROOTS

As you may be aware, I am a new member of the Association. I was most delighted to receive the newsletter. Going through its contents was like discovering myself and my roots all over again! Is there some way I can get back issues of the newsletter?

I fully second Maureen Lim's suggestions on attracting members and getting current members to play a bigger part in the Association. I think that part of the answer is for the Association to take a higher profile and invest more in publicity.

Take my case for example. I have always been proud of my Peranakan heritage and have kept close tabs on what is happening in the community. I did an academic exercise on the Babas for my Honours degree in Sociology.

I have seen almost every Peranakan play that was ever staged and collected numerous video tapes and books on anything Baba. If it is any measure of my passion, I went to see *Pileh Menantu* 10 days after giving birth to my first child (amidst much head-shaking and tongue-clicking of the old folks!)

However, all these years, although I vaguely knew of the existence of The Peranakan Association and had once or twice read about its activities in the newspapers, I did not have much information on it, much less on how to be a member. It was only lately when I accidentally found out from my cousin that she had a friend who was a member that I seized the opportunity to become a member. What I have missed out in not joining the Association earlier!

Can I make a suggestion to follow up on Maureen Lim's idea that we start a membership drive to capture all the people out there who long to associate with their kind and work towards preserving their heritage?

A good catchment area would be Peranakan events, eg. Peranakan plays, food festivals, etc. The Association should perhaps "make a presence" at such events and set up booths for membership, make special announcements or presentations on stage or even just distribute membership leaflets and forms at the door or in the programmes. Another idea would be to work with the various Peranakan restaurants and shops as a channel for distributing forms or information about the Association.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the Editorial Committee for producing a delightful newsletter and thank you for the patience in bearing with the *panjang lebar* of my ramblings. I hope you would pardon these as the enthusiasm of a new member. Keep up the good work!

Lilian Wong
Singapore 1954

Thank you for your suggestions and your encouraging letter. The committee is working on these ideas. For back issues of the newsletter, kindly contact the Hon. Secretary Mrs Lim Geok Huay at 255-0704, or 256-4863.

REPORTS

THE VIPs COME TO DINNER

by
Anthony Oei and Peter Lee

Never has The Peranakan Association seen such distinguished guests and a record attendance as at its most recent dinner held on 28 July 1995, the highlight of which was a talk presented by the eminent Dr Cheah Jin Seng, Professor of Medicine at the National University of Singapore and an avid collector of Nyonya Porcelain.

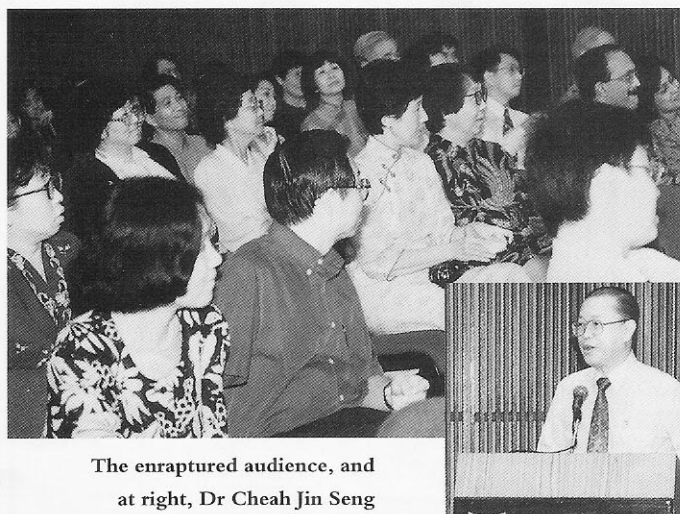
The VIPs at the gathering were none other than the former President of Singapore, Mr Wee Kim Wee, and Mrs Wee, and included other luminaries like Professor Tommy Koh, Chairman of the National Arts Council, and Mr Gordon Seow, former Singapore Commissioner in Hong Kong.

Their presence was a great honour and testifies to their interest in Peranakan culture and their support of the Association's work in promoting it. The attendance broke all records, soaring to 180 people, nearly double the number at the previous dinner talk.

Dr Cheah's talk was an impressive and clearly-presented introduction into all the important aspects of Nyonya ware. It was enhanced by slides of many exceptional pieces shown side-by-side from two projectors. In this way, the audience could view the objects simultaneously from different angles. Salient points were reiterated in concise texts projected on screen.

He examined and distinguished the porcelain by its shapes, colours, uses, decoration and ownership and delved into the problems of dating and definition. Interestingly, he even showed European porcelain, including fine china from Meissen in Germany, that had been commissioned by Peranakans, which he suggested may even be defined as a species of Nyonya ware.

At the end of the talk Dr Cheah remarked that Nyonya ware had appreciated in value over the years, but one should not collect these treasures merely for monetary considerations. Collecting, he said, should be a pleasure and if one makes money in the process, it is a bonus.

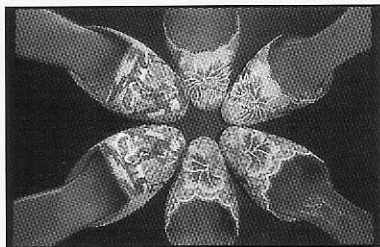


The enraptured audience, and
at right, Dr Cheah Jin Seng

ART

CHRISTIE'S SEPTEMBER AUCTION 30 SEPTEMBER – 1 OCTOBER 1995

The second Christie's auction of Straits Chinese Ceramics, Gold and Silver will also include a new category: Straits Chinese Works of Art (Beadwork and Embroidery). Although a smaller collection than their offering last March, the auction will still draw considerable interest for its selection of fine and rare artworks, which in total may sell for as much as \$500,000.



Among the treasures are an important *famille-rose* coral-red *tengkat* from the Tongzhi reign period (1862-1874) with an



estimated value of between a whopping \$25,000 and \$30,000, a very rare and unusual 1930s set of six silver-gilt and filigree glass holders going for between \$6,000 and \$8,000, and a "very rare" silver and pearl *kerosang serong* set dating back to the late 19th century, which is estimated very reasonably between \$2,200 and \$2,800. There is also an excellent selection of high quality beadwork and embroidery, the likes of which have never seen the light of day for a long time, including bridal bed hangings, ceremonial handkerchiefs and *kasot manek*, all priced between \$3,000 to \$8,000. Members are encouraged to attend the viewings, which are opened to the public, at the Hyatt Regency function rooms.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the following 36 new members:

Mrs Lucy Ban
Miss Sylvia Ban
Mr Francis Chan
Mrs Mabel Chew
Mdm Betty Gan
Ms Elizabeth Sephora Gan
Miss Jenny Gan Siew Neo
Mr Gan Kee Soon
Mrs Goh Soon Hui
Miss Vivien Koh Swee Hoon
Ms Irene Khoo Hong Leng
Mr Donald Kow Chong Peng
Miss Agnes Lee Swan Kee
Mdm Daisy Lim Ban Gek
Mdm Lim Ban Swan
Mr Arthur Lim
Ms Maureen Lim Kheng Har
Miss Donna Meyer
Ms Gloria Ng Lee Lian
Miss Tina Quake Siew Tin
Mdm Quek Koon Neo
Miss Laraine Seah Mui Eng
Mr Tan Kok Meng
Ms Maureen Tay Geok Neo
Mr Edwin K. H. Tay
Ms Irene Tay Pow Neo
Mrs Judy Teo-Gan Lee Keow
Ms Cellia Wan
Mrs Gek Wee
Mrs Doris Yap Swi Neo
Mr Ian Yap Kheng Lin
Mrs Yeo-Liew Soo Har

Associate Members:

Mr John Chi Teck Guan
Mr Chi Teck Yam
Mdm Alice Chua Swee Neo
Mr Ooi Beng Chooi.



FAMILIAR FACES, SIMPLE LIVES

an exhibition of works by
Martin Loh & Desmond Sim
29 - 30 October 1995

**The Substation Gallery, 45 Armenian Street
Singapore 0617**

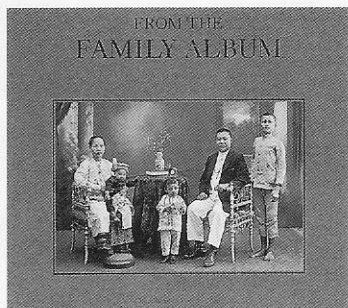
All too often we need to be reminded about simplicity, to reminisce on the innocence and beauty of ordinary life. This exhibition by our two Singaporean Baba artists is a welcome and timely celebration of this spirit. Their subjects include Peranakan women, children, lovers, cats, household chores, childhood pleasures and flowers. Martin Loh has been extremely successful with his *naive* watercolours, acrylics and oils, ever since his first solo sell-out show in 1992. He is most well-known for his idyllic images of Nyonya women, and his works are well-received in Singapore and abroad. The National Museum has acquired several of his works. Most recently he has even moved on to painting on wood and porcelain. Desmond Sim will be participating in his second joint-exhibition with Martin Loh. He paints on paper and canvas and his works, well regarded by collectors, are consistently sold-out. Desmond is also a well-known poet and playwright.

BOOK REVIEWS

by Peter Lee

FROM THE FAMILY ALBUM: PORTRAITS FROM THE LEE BROTHERS STUDIO, 1910-1925

**Publisher: National Heritage
Board and Landmark Books,
1995**

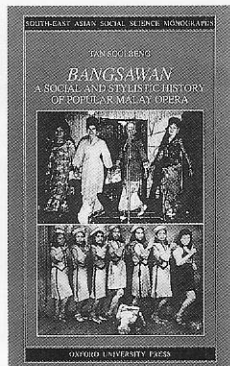


One of this year's most delightful publications, *From the Family Album* is a treasure trove of very rare photographic portraits of turn-of-the century Singaporean individuals and families. Credit must be given to Gretchen Liu, editor of several important books on old Singapore, who came to know of the collection of photographs through one of the granddaughters of the founder of the Lee Brothers Studio.

Lee Poh Yan and Lee King Yan founded their studio at 58-4 Hill Street in about 1910. The brothers came from an old Christian family from Guangdong province, and learned their skills from their father, who had established a studio as early as 1875. Liu provides an interesting introduction to the history of the studio as well as the development of photographic portraiture in early Singapore.

The photographs were extra or uncollected prints pristinely kept by 80-year-old Lee Hin Ming, Lee Poh Yan's eldest son, who donated the collection to the National Archives last year. The images bear testimony to Singapore's early multi-culturalism. Patrons were largely middle class and wealthy families of all races, dressed up in their "Sunday-best", creating photographs of great charm and interest.

Liu's selection, does justice to the collection as a whole, which has over 2,500 originals. Of great interest are the large proportion of Peranakan portraits, whole clans, mother and child, siblings, heavily bejewelled bibiks, even an old towkay with his nubile nyonya bride. The National Archives is eager to identify many of the families and individuals. This reviewer has so far only recognised two photographs: the Tan Jiak Kim family outside Panglima Prang, their home in River Valley, on page 43, and Lee Cheng Yan, with his son Lee Choon Guan and grandson Lee Pang Chuan on the left of page 115. Anyone identifying other photographs can contact this reviewer through The Peranakan Association which will collate and pass on the information to the National Archives.



BANGSAWAN A SOCIAL AND STYLISTIC HISTORY OF POPULAR MALAY OPERA

Author: Tan Sooi Beng

**Publisher: Oxford University Press,
1993**

Tan Sooi Beng, an ethnomusicologist at the Arts Centre, Universiti Sains Malaysia, traces the stylistic changes of *bangsawan* from the late 19th century to the 1980s and documents his own experiences observing a modern-day troupe.

The book makes several interesting observations. *Bangsawan* is a modern rather than traditional Malay phenomenon. It was a popular and commercial form of entertainment incorporating elements from the West such as pantomime, ballet, circus and vaudeville with traditional Malay dance and drama, as well as popular Hindi, Arab, Egyptian, Chinese, Javanese, and Latin American music and stories. Its success and vitality were results of this meeting of art forms and intense competition among troupes which resulted in great experimentation and innovation. Its decline was caused by the disruption of the 2nd World War and the growing popularity of the movies. The author laments the fact that *bangsawan* is now seen by the Malaysian government as a form of traditional Malay theatre, and have "Malayanised" it to such an extent that its early eclectic flavour and dynamism have been lost.

The book is also an excellent reference for those who are interested in the whole culture of *bangsawan*, and much mention is made of the early stars, Miss Maimoon, Minah Alias, Menah Yem the Queen of Dance, as well as *bangsawan* band leaders like Alfonso Soliano, and the various troupes, Dean's Union Opera, Wayang Yap Chow Thong, and Tay Boon Teck's Opera Stamboul. The stage is also thoroughly described as well as the seating and etiquette of theatregoing. The appendix is filled with musical notation of various lagu, synopses of six major operas (*Jula Juli Bintang Tiga*, *Puteri Bakawali*, *Laksamana Bentan*, *Laila Majnun*, *Sam Pek Eng Tai* and *Hamlet*).

Interestingly there is also mention of the various Peranakan *bangsawan*, including Penang Nyonya Bangsawan, performed by a party of "Chinese Ladies of Penang" at the Drury Lane Theatre Hall in December 1926. The programme included *Jula Juli Bintang Tiga*, *Nyai Dasima* and *A Merchant of Baghdad*. Box seats were priced at \$6, reserved seats \$3, and First Class \$1.

A LEAF FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

Awas, awas! Apa itu?
SPECIAL PUNYA BUKU-NYANYI-AN
MA
"KRONCHONG & EXTRA - TURNS"

(Harga-nya chuma 30 cents saja)

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From September, Chocho's Restaurant will be offering a **10% discount** to all members. Chocho's Edwin K.H. Tay, a true-blue Baba and Association member, named the restaurant in honour of his great-grandmother (*chocho*) whose wonderful recipes include jantung pisang, which one can hardly find in a restaurant nowadays, ayam buah keluak, hee peow soup, papaya titek, nanka lemak and her own ayam alia.

Complementing the fine food is a cosy Peranakan ambience. There is even a small elegant room for private dinner functions. All this with attentive Peranakan hospitality and prices that are very reasonable. Members must produce their membership cards for the discount, which will not apply to any special promotional activities and is valid only for food and beverage consumed in the restaurant and pub. Call now to make your reservations!

September Social

Members are invited to get together in a relaxed, friendly and casual atmosphere at our September Social Dinner.

Numbers will be restricted to 60
so book early!

For members and their spouses only.

Venue: Chocho's restaurant

Date: Friday, 22 September 1995

Time: 7.30 pm

Price: \$28 nett per person

for a
**Peranakan buffet dinner
inclusive of soft drinks**

Coupon Car parks at Selegie House and
open car park next to former Rex cinema

Please make your reservations through

Mrs Lim Geok Huay Tel: 2550704, 2564863

Mr Lee Kip Lee, Tel: 4662801

**THE PERANAKAN
ASSOCIATION'S**

**95TH ANNIVERSARY
ANNUAL DINNER & DANCE**

**at the
Sheraton Towers Hotel
39 Scotts Road
Singapore 0922
on**

**Sunday
19 November 1995**

Time: 7.30 pm

**Price: \$68 nett, or \$98 nett
per person**

**Members may also
buy donation tables**

For reservations and enquiries please contact

Mrs Lim Geok Huay

Tel: 2550704, 2564863

**THE 8TH BABA CONVENTION
1995, MALACCA**

24 - 26 November 1995

VENUE: AIR KEROH D'VILLAGE

**RM300 PAX TWIN SHARING
INCLUDING**

RM150 REGISTRATION FEE

WELCOME DINNER/DANCE, 24/11

B/FAST, TEA & LUNCH, 25/11

STEAMBOAT DINNER 25/11

FOR ENQUIRIES CONTACT

MRS LIM GEOK HUAY, OR

MR LEE KIP LEE, TEL: 4662801

**THE GUNONG SAYANG'S
MANIS MANIS PAIT
VIDEO TAPES**

**available at the
SPECIAL PRICE OF \$30**

Please contact

Mrs Lim Geok Huay