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"Peranakan culture is now at a crossroads and it is timely to examine whether it should be relegated to history or whether it can become a vibrant part of the Singapore cultural scene. I ask you to deliberate on these issues."

Gunong Sayang Association President Mr Charles Koh spoke of "the importance of innovations for all of us, from members of Baba organisations to individuals, and to keep pace with the challenges of changing times, failing which the survival of our Baba Peranakan community will be in doubt."

Malacca association Vice President Mr Chan Yew Tiong described the convention as "a momentous occasion for the Baba community to come together, to contribute, to share and to strengthen the strong bond of kinship among us. It is also a crucial time for us to implant and sow the seeds of interest in our cultural heritage among the younger generations so as to motivate them to carry on the rich traditions of the Peranakan Cina Baba."

Penang association President Dato' Khoo struck an optimistic note. He said, "Peranakans are known for their resilience and pragmatism. If we are prepared to adapt ourselves to the changing times, I do not see why our traditions and customs will not endure for many generations to come."

Official support came from Mr Lim Siam Kim, Chief Executive Officer of the National Heritage Board, who said, "This year's theme is a theme that the National Heritage Board can closely identify with. The Board's mission is to explore and present the heritage and nationhood of Singaporeans in the context of our ancestral cultures, our links with Southeast Asia and the rest of the world."

"One of the Board's main tasks is to present Singapore's history and heritage in a modern-day context and give it relevance to Singaporeans today, especially the younger generation."

Seminar — Breaking Away from the Norm

The 9th Convention broke away from the normal format by featuring at the seminar three speakers who are not by any means experts on traditional Peranakan culture, but they are experts in their own fields with interesting and original points of view that are as valid as traditional ones.

Houses — A Tradition of Adaptation

Dr Jon Lim, Senior Lecturer in the School of Architecture, NUS, traced the history of the Baba house and showed how the Peranakans expressed their culture and identity in the house and how adaptation had been a vital and necessary part of Peranakan tradition. His talk, *The House in Peranakan Culture - Traditions and Adaptations*, also revealed how the original terrace houses inhabited by the early Peranakans in Malacca were indebted to colonial Dutch influence as well as to traditional Hokkien custom. By showing examples from some contemporary homes, Dr Lim revealed the way in which Peranakans still tried to maintain their identity, with the display of heirloom pieces in the home, as well as the formal layout of the residences and the prominent position given to ancestral portraits.

A New Perspective on Food

In matters of cuisine, new dishes had to be created to satisfy the palates of the new generation, and presentation needed to be addressed if the cuisine was to enter the international arena, asserted Ms Violet Oon, the well-known food critic and consultant. In her talk, *Peranakan Food — Past, Present and Future*, Ms Oon shared her experiences in introducing Peranakan food to world-class chefs, international food critics, journalists and television producers. She spoke of how the world's sophisticated cuisines placed great emphasis on presentation and pointed out how poorly Peranakan cuisine scored in this area, and the difficulty she had in convincing international food writers of the intricacy and fine points of the dishes. By way of slides, Ms Oon also showed ways in which presentation could be improved. However, she said while change was necessary, we should preserve the essence.

Detail and Nostalgia in New Art and Drama

The same applied to art and drama, said Mr Desmond Sim, the well-known writer and painter, who examined continuity and creativity in contemporary Peranakan painting and theatre. Mr Sim argued that the works being created today were innovative, while being true to the culture. He noted how an idyllic kind of nostalgia had become a major theme in the plays presented by Gunong Sayang Association as well as in the artworks of Martin Loh and of the speaker himself. Another feature of Peranakan style was the great attention to detail and a certain dry kind of humour, which he argued, had even been successfully passed on to Peranakan drama in English, a prime example being Stella Kon's *Emily of Emerald Hill*. This intricacy and exuberance in Peranakan art could be seen in the furniture and ceramics as well as in beadwork embroidery.

Lively Forum — Consensus on Change

Similar views about the possibilities of and need for innovation came from the three panellists of the forum *Innovation in Peranakan Culture — A Viable Future?* Mrs Anamah Tan, prominent lawyer and President of the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, moderated the discussions expertly.

One panellist, Mrs Stella Kon, author of *Emily of Emerald Hill*, stressed the importance of finding the essence of the traditional ideas and making explorations in that direction. "You need to know what is the essence before you invent the new culture," she said, in qualifying her agreement with the need of the culture to change with the times and move forward. Mr Kenneth Liang, a Vice President at TCS, concurred with this view, saying "culture must be allowed to evolve, but certain things have to carry through." The third panellist Dr Anne Pakir, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at NUS and a linguistics expert on Peranakan Malay, touched on language evolution, and the importance of language in culture. She left the delegates with optimistic food for thought: "What



From top to bottom:
Association heads preparing their speeches; arrival of Dr & Mrs Wee; Malacca group entertains; delegates on the dance floor; delegates watching a performance; Mr Lim Siam Kim; Dr Jon Lim

PERANAKAN RHAPSODY

More than five hundred people gathered to celebrate the Association's 96th Anniversary held at the Sheraton Towers Hotel on Sunday, 16 November 1996. The theme for the evening was a musical one — *Peranakan Rhapsody* — and the evening featured *keronchong* music performed by Orkes Keronchong Malindo, a band from Malacca, as well as the duo of Ernest & Greg. There was also an impromptu performance of the song *Bunga Sayang* by composer Dick Lee. No Peranakan evening would have been complete without the appearances of Mr G T Lye, Ms Sally Gan, and Honorary Life Member Mr William Tan, who brightened the evening with their humour and songs.

The occasion was graced by the presence of former President Dr Wee Kim Wee and Mrs Wee, former Association Presidents Mr T W Ong and Dr George Tay and their wives, President of Gunong Sayang Association Mr Charles Koh, Vice President of Eurasian Association Capt. and Mrs R W Scully, and chairman of the Lee Foundation Mr Lee Seng Gee and Mrs Lee. The event was also honoured by the presence of 9th Baba Convention delegates from Penang and Malacca.

The foyer was decorated with a musical theme, featuring a table display of musical instruments favoured by Peranakans, as well as video screens showing scenes of old Singapore.



From top to bottom:
Seminar guests & delegates;
Mr Desmond Sim; Ms Violet
Oon; delegates; Dr Wee
speaking at exhibition
opening; guests at opening



you think is lost may be found!" She felt that the survival of the culture and language could happen with theatre, which so far had evolved from the older oral tradition of the culture and showed signs of successfully capturing Baba nuances in English. Baba sensibilities may pass on to English, which could be a viable medium of Peranakan culture in the future

Most speakers from the floor agreed with the need for change, accepting it as a reality as it was impractical for the younger generation to follow exactly the ways of old. All the views expressed gave valuable food for thought. The message was that whether it was culture or language, we must change with the times, if we were to survive. The future could see the birth of the new Peranakan, with the same heart but with a different lifestyle.



ARTS

RUMAH BABA ASSOCIATION HELPS TO PRESENT MUSEUM EXHIBITION



As part of the Association's aim to promote Peranakan heritage, committee members of the Association have been helping the National Heritage Board to organise *Rumah Baba — Life in a Peranakan House*, which was officially opened on Sunday, 17 November 1996 by former President Dr Wee Kim Wee. The show is sponsored by Hitachi with support from Asahi Shimbun, The Peranakan Association and Gunong Sayang Association.

The Association's support of the exhibition include providing consultancy for the exhibition's concept and presentation. As the exhibition will probably be on permanent display, the Association will also be supporting the Museum's programme of fringe activities.

Rumah Baba displays life in a traditional household. As the richness of the culture is most evident in the domestic context, this approach is very apt. The display is divided into various sections corresponding to the interior spaces of a house — entrance hall, ancestral hall, bedroom (set up as a bridal chamber), living room and kitchen.

As each area allows an aspect of Peranakan tradition or life to be displayed, Peranakan objects and works of art can be seen in their proper contexts. The entrance hall is decorated for Chinese New Year festivities with an altar for the household deity and all the wealth of auspicious offerings. The ancestral hall is similarly arranged in an ornate manner for a ritual feast day such as Cheng Beng. Wedding traditions are the focus of the bedroom, arranged as a sumptuous bridal chamber. The kitchen displays all the implements required in intricate Peranakan cooking, while the eclectic tastes of the culture are shown in the living room, with its gramophone, easy chair and library of multilingual books. Complementing the displays are oil paintings of Peranakan pioneers hanging throughout the gallery, suggesting traditional interiors which are similarly adorned with portraits.

The exhibition's curator, Miss Jennifer Chen, worked for almost a year to present the show and this effort to promote the culture has been very successful, for which I'm sure all Peranakans are grateful.

Peter Lee



NEW MEMBERS

We welcome aboard the following **126** new members, whose addition increases our roll to **822** members:

Life members

Mr Nicholas Kevin Aeria
Mr Amran bin Abdul Majid
Mr Colin Ang Cheng Hong
Mr Adrian Ang Lian Lee
Mdm Susan Ang Siew Cheng
Mr Nicodemus Aw Wei Jet
Ms Betsy R Chan
Miss Geraldine Chan Kee Huang
Mr Chan Cheng Koon
Mdm Mary Anne Chan Mei Liang
Mr James Chan Tiang Seng
Mdm Alice Cheang
Miss Pansy Cheang Keng Neo
Mr Philip Casmir Cheong Weng Kiang
Mr Johnny Chew Kim Chuan
Mr Paddy H L Chew
Mr Wilson Chew Huat Chye
Mr Harry Y B Chi
Mr Lawrence Chia Kim Yam
Mr Lawrence Chia
Ms Angela Chong
Mrs Novarro C K Choo
Mr Michael Choo Quee Hock
Mrs Lucy Choy
Mdm Catherine Chua Beng Guat
Ms Elizabeth Eu Yuet Yee
Mrs Florence Gan
Mr Richard Peter Gan
Miss Patricia Gaw Soei Tien
Mrs Julia Geisel
Ms Giam Cheng Han
Miss Goh Ser Ann
Mr Colin Goh Yong Ping
Dr Mari Amna George
Mrs Baillyne Sung-Hon
Mr Jeya Poh Wan Suppiah
Mr Danny Khoo
Mrs Jessiline Khoo Lee Eng
Dr Alvin Koh Jit Meng
Mr Hendrick Koh
Mrs Maryanne Lam
Dr Alfred Lee Hood Yew
Ms Cynthia Lee Hu Gek
Miss Lee Seok Tin
Ms Li Pik Yoke
Mr Kenneth Raymond Liang Keng Teik
Miss Liaw Mee Lan
Mr Lim Fung Peen
Mr Lim Hock Chye
Mr Philip Lim Kee Soon
Dr Connie Lim Kim Loan
Mdm Theresa Lim Kim Choo
Miss Lisa Lim Li Su
Mrs Gretchen Liu
Mrs Loo-Loh Lay Ken
Miss Stephanie Loh Siow Kheng
Miss Irene Low Cheng Gek
Mr Jack Low Kee Seng

Mdm Low Suan Neo
Mr Sunny Low
Dr Lye Wai Choong
Mrs Jenny Ma
Mrs Neo Chook Siew
Mrs Irene Netto
Ms Anna Ng
Mrs Janette Ng Kwai Seng
Mdm Maggie Ng
Professor Ng Soon Chye
Ms Esther Ong Cheok Neo
Miss Rosalind Ong
Mr George Rahadian Putrasahan @ Gho Tjeng Yauw
Mrs Jacinta Dewi Putrasahan @ Siem Kiok Nio
Mr Tony Quek Hock Choon
Mdm Daisy Seah Quee Chang
Mr Bob Seah Quee Chye
Mdm Seet Kiat Neo
Mdm Lucy Seow
Mr George Seow Tiang Chuan
Mdm Sim Geok Whay
Mrs Betty H K Sheares
Dr Joseph H H Sheares
Mr Gary Sng Chi-Hsin
Mr Ernest Sng Lian Huat
Mr Andrew Soh Cheong Chee
Mrs Janet Soh Poh Eng
Ms Stephanie Soo Chong Nghoh
Dr Jenny Lee- Soon
Miss Aleena Tan
Mr Kelvin Tan Beng Kiat
Mrs Amy Tan Eng Luan
Mr Tan Cheng Hoe
Mr Tan Cheng Siang
Miss Judy Tan Choo Tee
Mr Billy Tan Hock Boon
Mr Sunny Tan Jin San
Miss Kristin Tan Kim Neo
Mr Hayward Tan Kock Ooi
Mr Louis Tan Tiang Hong
Ms Ruby Tan Soon Kim
Mrs Tan- Soh Cheng Hoon
Mr Valerie Tan
Miss Ivy Tay Ai Guat
Miss Lucy Tay Beng Cheng
Ms Tay Beng Hiang
Miss Juliet Tay
Mr Tay Kheng Soon
Mdm Taye Lang Hiang
Ms Rosy Teo Lian Geok
Mrs Tham Chiew Kuan
Ms Sylvia Toh Paik Choo
Miss Joanna Tointon
Miss Rosalind Tok Gek Tee
Mr Victor W L Wee
Mr Eugene Wong
Mr Lawrence Wong
Mrs Marion Wong
Ms Rebecca Lynn Wong
Mr Wong Sin Seng
Miss Eileen Wu
Dr Woffles T L Wu
Mr Gilbert Yap Tai Leng
Mr Kenny Yeo Cheng Lock
Miss Maggie Yeo Chwee Neo
Mr Yeo Joo Lim
Ms Jomaine Yeo Mei Ling
Mr Francis Yeow Chee Chong

WINE TASTING AT LES AMIS

Members enjoyed the rare privilege of enjoying a range of fine wines and a sumptuous lunch at one of Singapore's premier restaurants, whose wine list is reputedly as impressive as, if not better than, the best restaurants in the world.

This bid by the committee to create a variety of events for members received a good response, with about sixty people, almost the restaurant's capacity, turning up for lunch on 7 December 1996.

The Maitre Sommerlier Mr Tye Yee Nen gave an introductory talk on wines and presented four for tasting – a 1993 Fritz Haag Kabinett Riesling, a 1994 Shaw & Smith Chardonnay, a 1993 Roc de Combes Cabernet Sauvignon, and a 1993 Domaine Bruno Clair Pinot Noir. Lunch started with a langoustine bisque and was followed by a panfried crispy seabream; dessert was an irresistible flaky apple tart with home-made vanilla ice cream. Throughout lunch, a 1994 Cuvee Francis Courseille Chateau Thieuley was served.

The reasonable price of \$68 per head for members was arranged by committee member Mdm Yeo Seok Yan, through her personal connection with restaurant owner Mr Desmond Lim (she was his revered tutor), whose mother Mrs Nancy Lim also happens to be an active Association member.

DINNER TALK

The Peranakan Association's most recent dinner talk was held at the Pin Hsiang Restaurant, RELC Building, on 3 October 1996. Attended by more than 120 members and friends, the evening featured Dr Lye Wai Choong, a Penang-born Baba, a specialist in kidney diseases and a collector of Nyonya ware. The talk, *Collecting Straits Chinese Ceramics*, began just after 9 pm. Dr Lye began by defining Nyonya ware and continued with guidelines on what to collect, how to collect as well as warnings about the emotional heartaches of being a collector. Good examples of Nyonya porcelain were presented through slides of his own collection as well as of others. Dr Lye even suggested that the Association could take a lead in giving a correct definition or identification of Nyonya ware. He also cautioned about cracks, repair work, reproductions and fakes. This made it an interesting and educational

experience for potential collectors, and apparently inspired a few potential collectors into entering the world of Nyonya ceramics. *Peter Wee*

**Dr Lye Wai Choong,
Mr Lee Kip Lee, Mrs
Lee & Mr Peter Wee.**



NOTICEBOARD

AGM — 22 MARCH 1997

Please mark this date on your diary. The AGM will be held at 2.00 pm in the Bougainvillea Room, RELC Building, Orange Grove Road. Members wishing to attend are kindly requested to inform the Honorary Secretary Mrs Lim Geok Huay (Tel: 2550704).

MEMBERSHIP CARD FEE

With effect from 1 April 1997, the fee for making membership cards will increase by \$1.00 to \$3.00. Members are encouraged to apply for the cards to enjoy privileges at certain restaurants and shops.

CONDOLENCES

The Peranakan Association extends its deepest sympathies to the family of Mr LAUW KIM GUAN, who passed away at the age of 75 years on 29 November 1996. He had been a member since 1994.

TOMBOLA

Tea and Tombola gatherings are held on the last Saturday of every month at 3.00 pm at Boom Boom Room. Members are encouraged to take this opportunity to meet in a casual environment. As this is a regular event, circulars and reminders will not be sent out to members. Please call the Honorary Secretary Mrs Lim Geok Huay for reservations and information (Tel: 2550704).

SONGBOOK

A new Peranakan Association songbook, *Lest We Forget*, was launched at this year's Annual Dinner & Dance. It features a collection of the lyrics of the memorable songs of yesteryear as well as *keronchong* favourites. Look out for them at any Association event, where they will be on sale for \$10.

NEW RESTAURANTS

We welcome two new restaurants to our list of establishments offering discounts to members. *Gek Kim* is a comfortable, casual restaurant in the Katong neighbourhood offering delicious homestyle Peranakan favourites. *Embok Embok* is ideal for those wanting the evening outdoor ambience of Bugis Village with the bonus of irresistible, delectable dishes prepared by the former chef of Chocho's.

PROMOTIONS

Discounts for members, on presentation of membership cards, are available in the following shops and restaurants:

RESTAURANTS

Baba Inn & Lounge

103 Frankel Avenue
Singapore 458225
Tel: 4452404

Peranakan Inn & Lounge

210 East Coast Road
Singapore 428909
Tel: 4406195

10% discount to all members in these long-established restaurants run by Bob Seah, one of the pioneers of the Peranakan restaurant.

Gek Kim

143 Joo Chiat Place
Singapore 427872
Tel: 3485743

10% discount for food purchases above \$20 in this homestyle family restaurant with everybody's favoured dishes, run by Steven and Pauline Leong.

Embok Embok

3 New Bugis Street
#01-18/19
Singapore
Tel: 3345219

The latest Peranakan restaurant set in the heart of town, just opposite Bugis Junction, with chef Nyonya Shirley, formerly of ChoCho's Restaurant. A 10% discount on all food items.

Guan Hoe Soon

214 Joo Chiat Road
Singapore 427482
Tel: 3442761

10% discount for their array of all-time Peranakan favourites. Guan Hoe Soon have been the caterers for our annual dinners for many years.

SPORTSWEAR

Canterbury of New Zealand

160 Orchard Road
#02-16 Orchard Point
Singapore 238842
Tel: 7329489

Discount of 15% for their full range of authentic rugbywear, fashion jerseys and accessories. Also a 10% discount for Kasco products, a complete line of top quality golf equipment and accessories.

Prosimmon Golf Centre

101 Thomson Road
#01-80 United Square
Singapore 307591
Tel: 2564863

One of Australia's top custom-made golf clubs. A 15% discount for a full-set of clubs, free gift, and free club testing and fitting.

PHOTOGRAPHY SERVICES

Image Presentation

Blk 1093 Lower Delta Road
#06-13 Tiong Bahru Industrial Estate
Singapore 169204
Tel: 2761778

10% discount for portraits. Please call for appointment. They have laboratories and studio, and a range of photographic services.

BEAUTY THERAPY

Bella Donna

402 Orchard Road
#03-18 Delfi Orchard
Singapore 238876
Tel: 2350662

Producers of one of the finest aromatic essential oils. Now offering a 30% discount for foot massage therapy in a relaxing environment. Please call for appointment.

FLORIST

Paisley Florist & Gifts

1 Brooke Road
#B1-22 Katong Plaza
Singapore 429979
Tel: 3467813

A 15% discount for purchases below \$100 and a 20% discount for purchases above \$100. Run by member Roland Yap, Paisley specialises in all floral arrangements, floral gifts, hampers, wedding packages, office arrangements, and theme parties.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tea & Tombola

Last Saturday of every month
28 December 1996
25 January 1997
22 February 1997
29 March 1997
Boom Boom Room
3.00pm

Malam Terang Bulan

16 February 1997
Boom Boom Room
7.30 pm

Rumah Baba Tour

15 March 1997
19 April 1997
3.00 pm, National Museum

For more information
Please call Mrs Lim Geok Huay
Tel: 2550704

Museum Fringe Activities

Peranakan Fashion Show
2.00 pm, 30 March 1997
Joget Workshop
11.00 am, 2.00 pm, 27 April 1997

RUMAH BABA FREE GUIDED TOURS

**Take this opportunity to visit the
most comprehensive Peranakan exhibition
to be staged in Singapore in a long time!!**

• Featuring •

• a free guided tour • free refreshments •

For members only. Limited to 30 people!

3.00pm Saturday 15 March 1997

3.00 pm Saturday 19 April 1997

Please call Mrs Lim Geok Huay for reservations (Tel: 2550704)

Meeting place : National Museum entrance