Emily of Emerald Hill, TV producer Kenneth Liang, and the Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Dr Anne Pakir. The moderator was Anamah Tan, a prominent lawyer and President of the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations.

**Knowing your Roots**

Mr Lee defines the Peranakan culture as a blend of Chinese and Malay cultures. Many of the Singaporean Baba's forefathers came from Fujian Province in China and settled in Malacca. He believes that the Malay influence seen in our food, patois and women's dress came from the Malay women whom our ancestors either married or kept as concubines. However, he maintains that "We always identify ourselves as Chinese; our menfolk wore Chinese attire; our customs and wedding costumes were all Chinese."

He himself is a sixth-generation Baba whose great-great-great grandfather arrived in Malacca around 1780. In 1995, he and nine other member of his family, in their quest to discover their roots, visited their village in Eng Choon to see the ancestral house.

"We made copies of the register of births of our forbears. Now we know exactly where we came from. Pride in our history and in our heritage makes it all so relevant," proclaimed Mr Lee.

Mr Lee claims that the Association is especially relevant in Katong which still remains the Peranakan heartland, where buildings still proudly display our unique architectural style, where our food and antiques can still be found, and where our people still abound. A large number of our members live in Katong, Marine Parade, Telok Kurau, Siglap and Bedok. They congregate in numbers at the Holy Family Church in East Coast Road, the Bethesda Church in Pennefather Road, and the Gunong Sayang Association clubhouse in Geylang.

Although many of the womenfolk have abandoned the sarong kebaya in favour of the blouse and slacks for their daily wear, we can still distinguish a Peranakan lady from a non-Peranakan. Indeed, our patois can be heard on the streets!

**Publications**

As an added vehicle for preserving and presenting an insight into Peranakan culture, our Association President Mr Lee Kip Lee has written a book entitled *Amber Sands*. It relates his life story up to the end of the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, and contains interesting anecdotes. It forms part of the Times Heritage Library series, and is already being used by three schools as a prescribed text. Mr Lee feels that this is very encouraging as it will instil in the young an interest in our history.

Finally, there is the Association's Newsletter, *The Peranakan*, an important avenue for keeping members in touch with each other and for building links within our community. The newsletter keeps members informed of programmes, reports on activities and Peranakan-related matters, reviews books and reminds members of our Mission Statement:

"To preserve and revitalise the Peranakan culture and traditions through cultural, social and literary activities."
PERANAKAN YOUTH: QUO VADIS

A traditionalist cautions on unbridled change

By Kenneth Cheo Kim Ban

Like the youth of other communities in Singapore, or, for that matter, the world, some Peranakan youngsters question the values and traditions of their elders, and may consider these values and traditions as irrelevant in a fast-changing, modern world.

I think the most important point which these young people must remember is that without the past there is no present. The values and traditions which they question are the ballast without which they have no culture to pass on to the next generation, and risk the loss of a unique identity.

Whether or not they admit that they are Babas and Nonyas depends on their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of their roots. For example, our young people do not appreciate our pantuns and dondang sayang; they may learn the tune and the words by heart, but how many of them know what they are singing about? It is just form with no substance. The words and phrases used refer to events, people and places in our past; the lack of knowledge of our history and geography are very relevant to the full appreciation and enjoyment of pantuns and dondang sayang. Know your past first, and examine what it means in relation to the present. For in pantuns and dondang sayang there is a lot of reference to human insight, making these songs as universal today as they were when they were first sung.

The Baba community has produced leaders who have led reforms in education, social practices and religion, and who have been proud of their heritage. We are still producing such leaders including those in the political field.

We must be careful not to be an anonymous part of an increasingly anonymous sameness, following the trends and fashion of the moment, and, in the process, forgetting who and what we are. In our eagerness to be modern and creative, let us not institute changes in our food, language and our whole way of life completely divorced from our heritage that in the end we are not even a semblance of ourselves.

SMOOTH SAILING AT THE AGM!

By Anthony Oei

The 97th Annual General Meeting of the Peranakan Association held on 22 March 1997 went smoothly with all items on the agenda dealt with promptly and with no contentious issues raised apart from one or two matters needing clarification.

For the first time there was no annual election of office bearers as the revised constitution called for elections at every alternate annual general meeting only.

So, President Lee Kip Lee and his Committee formed last year automatically continued in office for another year.

A big disappointment was the small attendance which was not sufficient to form a quorum, causing the 2 p.m. start of the AGM to be adjourned for 30 minutes as required by the rules. The Association hopes to see more interest and support from members at future meetings.

Nevertheless, Mr. Lee first year in office was an eventful one, with a range of functions organised for members and friends as the Committee tried their level best to offer as diverse a programme of entertainment as possible.

The year’s highlight was of course the 9th Baba Convention in Singapore, running from 15 to 17 November 1996 and culminating in the 96th Annual Dinner & Dance romantically dubbed Peranakan Rhapsody.

The Convention, with strong support from our friends from Malacca and Penang, was unique in that, for the first time, the Gunong Sayang Association and the National Heritage Board rallied to support this landmark event of the Peranakans. The Board’s participation was an official endorsement of the relevance of the Peranakan Association to Singapore’s cultural community.

Greatly heartened by the results of his first year at the helm, our President Mr Lee thanked members for their presence at the AGM and his Committee Members for their contributions. He said, “The success of our activities for the year would not have been possible without the hard work put in by the Committee, especially the untiring efforts of our ever-popular Honorary Secretary Mrs Lim Geok Huay, of the Chairman of our Social Sub-Committee Mr Alan Koh, and of the Editor of The Peranakan Mr Peter Lee. I would therefore take this opportunity to express my thanks to them for the excellent support they have given me.”

Mr Lee announced that this year Mr Alan Koh had planned a change of venue for our Annual Dinner & Dance to the Hyatt Hotel on Friday 21 November 1997. This would be followed by the 10th Baba Convention to be held in Penang during the weekend of 5, 6 & 7 December 1997. To add to the regular programmes, new ones were in the pipeline including a study tour of Indonesia. This promises to be an even more interesting year.
A Merry May Gathering

A happy crowd of 80 odd members gathered at the Boom Boom Room on Sunday 25 May to participate in a Tombola game followed by a buffet dinner, a sing-song session and some dancing efficiently organised by members Roland Yap and Philip Chia.

Whilst the tombola numbers were being called by Sally Gan, master-of-ceremonies Alan Koh kept the attention of the audience with his continuous patter and his persuasive power which resulted in Sally Gan, Eddie Chi and Philip Chia coming on stage to sing for us. Alan succeeded in making everyone join in the singing by referring them to the exact page in the Lest We Forget songbook which was conveniently made available for sale at the door. However, and much to our disappointment, no amount of prodding could make Cathy Baker render a number.

The evening ended with a lucky draw during which Wong Khong Chin won two prizes including a Jakarta return air ticket donated by Newsman Travel through Philip Chia.

Author Rosalind Lim Donates 30 Books To Association

Rosalind Lim San Neo, who was also present at the function, not only kindly donated thirty copies of her book to the Association but also autographed copies purchased by members. Thank you, Rosalind.
A Son for Mr Ang
A short story contribution from our member
Rosalind Lim San Neo

When Kai Mah reached the top of the road, the sun had just come out and the dew was still wet on the grass. She had visited the Angs several times since Mrs Ang became pregnant again with her fifth child. During all her previous deliveries, Mrs Ang had no help whatsoever, except from her husband. But of late, Mrs Ang had not been well and as the sale of sireh leaves had been good, Mr Ang had this time grudgingly allowed her the luxury of a midwife.

Kai Mah always marvelled at these women living in the ulu who could deliver their own babies without help. Reminding herself that a woman was in labour and waiting for her, she hurriedly crossed the field of lallang.

She hoped that the child would be a boy because that was what Mr Ang wanted. Their first child was a boy, but he was followed by three girls; so it would not be a pleasant task for her to tell him that his wife had again produced a girl.

Just then, she heard a baby's cry. She ran the last few steps and dashed into the bedroom. What a sight greeted her! Mr Ang was holding the baby in his arms as he knelt beside his wife, who was lying on sheets of paper on the floor. The baby was pink from its struggles to come into the world; its hair was black and glistening; its mouth, open in a wail.

Mr Ang looked up with joy and, without being told, Kai Mah knew that the baby was a boy. She went swiftly to the father, took the baby, placed him on a sheet, cut and tied the umbilical cord, and cleaned him up before handing him to the mother, whose pale face was wreathed in smiles.

Noting with approval that boiling water, a basin and clean swaddling clothes had been laid out on the bed, she began to knead the mother's stomach to remove the placenta.

With the mother comfortable, and the baby asleep, Kai Mah made coffee for the three of them.

Mr Ang, besides selling sireh leaves, worked part-time as a coolie and sold ducks' and hens' eggs.

The house was primitive, with its earthen floor and small windows, and its minimal furniture including wooden platform boards which were used as their beds.

"You should be adding an extension to your house now; you will need another room as the girls are growing up," Kai Mah said. "Yes. We will add another room once the children's mother is on her feet again."

"Don't you have a hired man?" Kai Mah asked, rather startled. "Building and climbing are heavy work for a woman."

"I pay good money when I have a strong woman," Mr Ang replied.

Turning to the mother, Kai Mah asked what name they were giving the new-born.

"Kim Wah," she said, looking tenderly at the baby in her arms, as if knowing that he would be the last child she would bear. "Mr Ang thought of this name. You will remember that our first son is called Kim Seng."

Rising to go, Kai Mah said, "I will come for a while to bathe the baby and to see how Mrs Ang is doing."

"She will manage; she won't need help."

Mr Ang's voice was defensive, and the midwife knew he begrudged his wife the expense.

"I always visit until the baby's navel is dried up; she said firmly. Turning to Mrs Ang she asked, "Can I bring you anything from the village when I come tomorrow?"

"I fancy some milk with my cup of coffee," Mrs Ang replied yearningly.

"Too expensive!" Mr Ang snapped at once. "Drink rice tea or plain water. I won't have you starting fancies!"

Mrs Ang sighed, "Very well then. Don't buy anything."

Kai Mah was fuming when she let herself out. She was crossing the yard when she heard Mr Ang calling her.

"Wait, Kai Mah!" She turned back with brow raised. "Buy her a tin of condensed milk, the cheapest one!"

His voice was gruff as if he were ashamed of his words. "It is a boy and, well, I don't often make a fool of myself over money. She did give me another boy. She can have milk in her coffee.

Kai Mah didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

Mr Ang was a mean little man and he was rewarding his wife with a tin of condensed milk for giving him a son.

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MORE GEMS FROM MAS SEPULOH
(Reproduced by kind permission of Mr William Gwee Thian Hook)

U GONG JIP BO GONG CHUT (Hokkien) - to be calculative. Dia u gong jip bo gong chut, jangan lu pi dekat dia nanti lu rugi. He is calculative so it is best you do not go near him for you will be at the losing end.

TEMPAT JIN BUANG ANAK - Far and inaccessible place. Dia pindah jauh sampa ni tempat jin buang anak. He has shifted to a far and inaccessible place.

TANGAN PANJANG - Light fingered. Orang gaji tu kerna buang kerja pasair tangan panjang. The maid has been sacked due to being light-fingered.

TAKMO KASI MULOT - Will not encourage a conversation. Dia nia garang, gua takmok kasi mulot. He is so fierce that I will not encourage a conversation.

PROMPUAN JALANG - Loose woman; harlot. Lepark dia buang laki, dia charak maken jadi prompuan jalang. After her divorce, she earned her living as a harlot.

MAIN KAYU TIGA - Adulterous - Gua takmok chakap siak, dia tak sedaik bini dia ada main kayu tiga. I do not want to mention it but he seems to be unaware that his wife is adulterous.
Books

Reviewed By Lee Kip Lee

MY LIFE MY MEMORIES MY STORY - Recollections of a 75-year old great-grandmother
By Lim San Neo
Epic Management Services 1997
Price $10.00.

This book is the story of a remarkable Peranakan woman whose singleness of purpose led to her writing, in a conversational style which we all can relate to, this courageous account of her life of trial and tribulation. It is amply illustrated with vintage photographs from the family album.

She was born in Lorong 26 at a time when all the Lorongs from Kallang to the end of Geylang Road led to the neighbouring swamps and the sea. She was eventually sent to the Geylang Methodist Girls' School at Sims Avenue at the age of eight years after satisfying her mother with much persuasion that she would attend to pelajaran rumah tangga (household chores) after school. After three and a half years she had to quit primary school when her mother died, and at the age of 12 years she had to assume the heavy responsibility of looking after a household consisting of her father and five siblings.

When she was 17 a marriage was arranged for her, but, unfortunately she lost her husband three years later in 1942 when he was one of the thousands rounded up and killed by the Japanese during the Occupation. At 25 she re-married and placed herself in the invincible position of having to share her love between her second husband and her two children who resented him. She struggled to make ends meet for herself and her two children and, after the war, her determination to succeed resulted in her promotion from Cashier to Head of the Savings Department in the Chartered Bank with ten girls under her charge.

The book provides vignettes of life in Singapore before and after World War Two. Mentions were made of her boxing promoter uncle who arranged bouts between the Negro Gunboat Jack and American Al Rivers; of the meeting arranged by the matchmaker at the New World Amusement to enable the young man to catch a glimpse of his intended before deciding on their betrothal; of the solemnisation of her marriage at the "Chinese Consulate"; of her having no other reading material at home except her mother's story books written in Peranakan Malay; of her daughter, a nurse in the General Hospital, adding some Brooklax laxative into the coffee of an obnoxious doctor; of her mother-in-law cursing her daughter-in-law "Lu orang satu-satu mesti mati kasi gua tengok" to which the daughter-in-law responded with a suitable gem of a reply "Yah, kita semua mati kasi Neo tengok, nanti Neo mau mati Neo sendiri korek lobang dan tanam sendiri".

Most of the contributors to this excellent collection of articles are geographers and sociologists in whose essays are revealed the history, the character and the life of Katong, Orchard Road, Holland Village, Ang Mo Kio, Chong Pang Village and Kampung Wak Selat in Kranji. Each article also contains photographs of people, familiar landmarks, and easy-to-decipher, clearly-delineated maps.

But what will certainly be of interest to Peranankans is the section entitled Exploring Local Cultures: The Constructions and Evolution of Meaning and Identity in Katong by Phua Yue Keng and Lily Kong who begin their dissertation with the early days of Katong in the 1830s when the development of the area started with coconut plantations, some of which were owned by Thomas Dunman (of Dunman Road) and Thomas Crane (of Crane Road). Then came the seaside bungalows initially used as week-end retreats which eventually became permanent residences of a wealthy suburb.

Later, with the opening of roads, many modest homes on smaller plots of land were built in the Katong heartland along the stretch of East Coast Road, from Haig Road to Telok Kurau Road, and radiating from it (Map in Fig.1). With more families moving eastwards, public facilities such as the Katong Park and Bandstand, the Chinese Swimming Club in Amber Road, the Singapore Swimming Club in Tanjong Rhu and the Roxy Cinema in East Coast Road - had to be provided. Both residents and outsiders have a perception of Katong as "an area with a distinctive culture that sets it apart from the rest of the island. Katong has its own atmosphere, its own culture. Katong has the old world charm, long gone from other places."

Tay Buan Guan, Katong's first supermarket popular in the 1960's, is still there and so are the Red House Bakery, Chin Mee Chin with "you help yourself. Take whatever curry puff or cake you want and eventually they will ask you 'How many did you eat?' and the makan place of my boyhood days - the coffeshop at the junction of East Coast Road and Joo Chiat Road.

Katong culture is made unique by its association with two specific ethnic groups, the Peranakans and the Eurasians, and because of them the "lingua franca in Katong is recognised as English and Baba Malay. In asserting that the Peranakan culture in Katong is also distinguished by its unique costume, Mrs Koh, who was interviewed said: "the gracefulfulness and adornments of a nonya makes her beautiful; the kebaya are so elaborate and colourful. It's just their presence in Katong that makes the place pleasant......Katong is more of a Peranakan area than Emerald Hill."

Readers should take heart from this book when they realise that we Peranakans still abound in Katong where a great number of our members live.
NEW MEMBERS

We welcome aboard the following 71 new members whose addition increases our roll to 893 members. Congratulations to Mr Ong Thiam Kim for his magnificent effort in recruiting 20 new members!

Ms Ang Mei Ling Emma
Ms Brigit Bong
Ms Bong Hiong Kiuk Millicent
Ms Bong Hiong Moy Genevieve
Mr Carvalho Christopher D
Mrs Cheah Ruth
Ms Cheong Su Lan Linda
Mr Chia Chian Hock Barry
Mr Chia Chin Foo Frank
Ms Chia Phok Hoi Pansy
Ms Chong Tak Chee Regena
Ms Chua Cheok See Elsie
Ms Chuah Geok Hiok
Mr Dhillion S S
Ms Ee Suan Neo Margaret
Ms Eu Angeline
Ms Foo Meng Tat
Ms Heng Ai Kooi Audrey
Mrs Joseph Mo Ching
Ms Kan Caroline
Mr Kang Hak Leng
Mr Koon Huat Kin
Mdm Koon Im Guek
Mr Koon Keen Lai
Mr Krishna Kumar s/o Karpaya
Mr Krishnamoorthy S
Ms Khoo Li-Wen Rachel
Mr Lau Seck Geok
Ms Lee Serene
Ms Leong San San Vivien
Mrs Liew Cheng Kam Patricia
Mr Lim Chin Beng
Mr Lim Ee Suan
Ms Lim Jenny
Ms Lim Kim Eng
Ms Lim Maureen
Ms Lim Soh Hiang
Mr Lim Victor
Mrs Lim Winifred
Mr Loh Cheok Leng
Ms Ngo Soalai
Ms Ogawara Junko
Dr Ong Geok Wei Heather
Mdm Ong Leng Neo
Ms Ong Su-Chzeng
Ms Ong Tit Choo Ruby
Mr Pang Seng Lim
Mdm Quah Phaik Siew
Mrs Seah Irene
Ms Seow Lea Keng Agnes
Ms Tan Bo Tan
Mr Tan Chian Teck Richard
Mdm Tan Chye Choo
Mr Tan Hock Choon
Mdm Tan Mei Yuen Lucy
Mr Tan Milton Keng Bee
Mr Tan Peng Kim Thomas
Mrs Tan Peng Kim Jessie

Ms Tan Po Ling Susanna
Mrs Tan Vivien Ann
Ms Teo Chwee Gek Gloria
Mrs Thio Jok Lan
Ms Tok Gek Tee Rosalind
Ms Wan Bee Neo Vivienne
Mdm Wee Seok Lin Madeleine
Ms Wee Swan Neo Julie
Mr Wee Teck Seng Ronald
Mr Wong Yue Soon Winston
Ms Yeo Bee Ha Jane
Ms Yeoh Kim Peng Magdalene
Mr Yuen Pak Lun Jimmy

NOTICEBOARD

GENERAL COMMITTEE:
RESIGNATION AND
NEW APPOINTMENT

Dr Irene Lim Kay Han has resigned from the General Committee due to pressure of work. We would like to thank her for the services she had rendered to the Association during her term of office. We welcome Mrs Ruby R Ng-Ong who, upon accepting our invitation to serve on the General Committee, expressed her pride and joy in being able to follow the footsteps of her great-grandfather Mr Ong Kew Hoe who was a member of the founding committee of the Straits Chinese British Association in 1900.

OBITUARY

MR LIM CHIN HIN

May we express our deepest sympathy to the family of the late Mr Lim Chin Hin who passed away on 15 May at the age of 81. Mr Lim, our former Vice-President and a very active member of the Association, was the son of Mr Lim Bock Kee, a General Manager of OCBC and later Comprador of the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank. Mr Lim was also one of the early graduates of Raffles College and later succeeded his father as Comprador. We shall miss his cheerful presence at our gatherings and especially the clarifications he often sought from speakers at our dinner talks.

10TH BABA CONVENTION

The Tenth Baba Convention will be held in Penang at the Novotel Hotel on 5, 6 & 7 (Friday, Saturday & Sunday) December 1997. More details will be announced later.

THE P.A. SHOP

The following items will be available for sale at the Dinner/Talk, at other functions or from the Hon. Secretary: Mas Sculab - Baba Conversational Gems by William Gwee $5-00, Lest We Forget - A Compilation of Songs from the 30s to the 60s by Maureen Koh $10-00, Peranakan Association Lapel Badge $15-00.
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: 3485749
10% discount for food purchases above $20 in this homestyle family restaurant with everybody's favourite dishes, run by Steven and Pauline Leong.

**Embok Embok**
3 New Bugis Street
#01-18/19
Singapore 188867
Tel: 3345219
The latest Peranakan restaurant set in the heart of town, just opposite Bugis Junction, serving a wide range of authentic traditional fare. 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.

Bowling at Jackie's Bowl
East Coast Road
Sunday 6 July
at Noon

Member $14.00
Guest $15.00
for 3 games and a cup of hot drink.

Please give this, our first sporting gathering organised by Mrs Ruby Ng, the Bowling Convener, your full support!

Closing date: Wednesday 13 June.
For more information, please call:
the Hon. Secretary
Tel 2550704
or Mrs Ruby Ng
Tel 3530408

Dinner Talk
"Beaded Beauties"
a history of the art of Kasut Manek or Peranakan beaded slippers

by Ms Bebe Seet, a former school teacher and an ardent beadwork hobbyist and collector who conducts classes in sewing kasut manek at The Katong Antique House.

Date: Friday 20 June 1997 at 7.30 p.m
Venue: Pin Hsiang Restaurant, REIC Building,
30 Orange Grove Road
Price: $24 (Member) and $28 (Guest)
(inclusive of Chinese banquet dinner)
For reservations please call the Hon. Secretary Mrs Lim Geok Huay
Tel 2550704.