

the peranakan

january-march 2001

quarterly newsletter of the peranakan association www.peranakan.org.sg

DAH **Sa Chupak**
TAK BOLEY

You Can't Change Destiny

Sa Gantang ... *but some people
will try!*



THE
PERANAKAN
ASSOCIATION
SINGAPORE



Malacca Comes to Town!

*Presenting the Association's
very first Wayang Peranakan,
performed by the stars from our
sister Association in Malacca.*

BY PETER LEE

These are exciting days! In our one hundredth year, the Association is charging into the future with many 'firsts' — this is the Association's very first Wayang Peranakan production, and it is also the first joint effort between two sister Associations celebrating their centennial — The Peranakan Association and the Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka. It is also the first time a traditional Wayang Peranakan is being performed in Singapore with an all-Melaka cast!

The Cultural Development Subcommittee under Baba Richard Tan has been pulling out all the stops to produce this play, and members should look forward to a fresh script, fresh staging and a whole new look to posters and programmes. The Association will also be working closely with the various organisations under the National Heritage Board - the National Archives, Asian Civilisations Museum and Singapore History Museum - to provide information and photo displays of their Peranakan collections at the foyer of the World Trade Centre Auditorium, where the performances will be held. Ticket buyers will even be entitled to a \$1 discount for entry into the Asian Civilisations Museum.

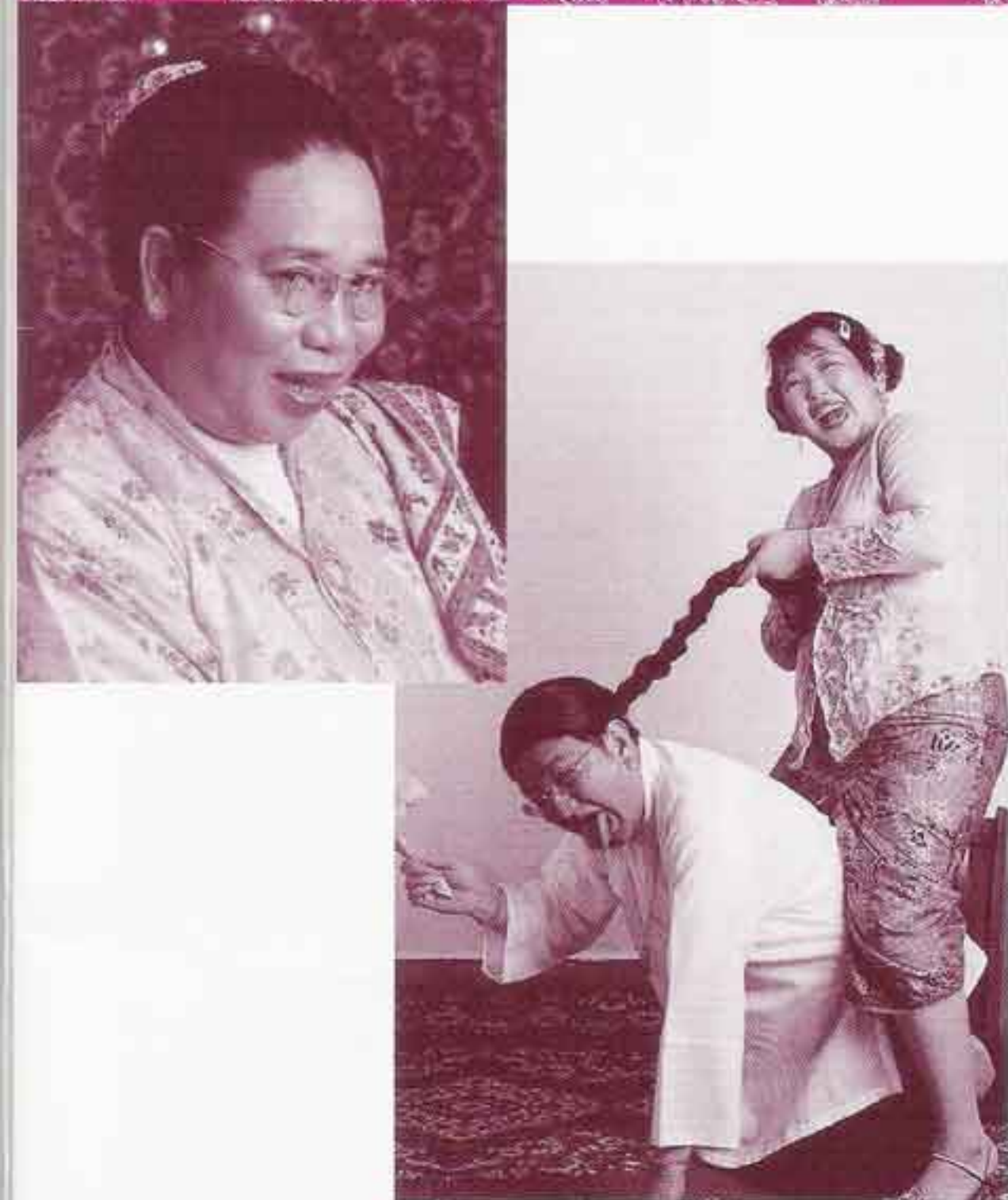
The play's title *Dah Sa-Chupak Tak Boley Sa-Gantang* may be translated as 'A Quart Will Never Make a Gallon'. A *chupak* is an old measure equivalent to half a coconut-shellful, while a *gantang* is 4 *chupak*. The English sub-head, 'You Can't Change Destiny', says it all. Directed by the talented Kenny Chan of the famous Malaysian sitcom *Baba & Nyonya*, it stars, apart from the director himself, Chee Hood Siong, who plays his sidekick *amah* in the TV series, as well as some familiar faces on stage at our special functions, such as Baba Cedric Tan, and Chan's wife, Fern Loo. There will be English subtitles throughout, to help those who may not understand all the nuances of the patois.

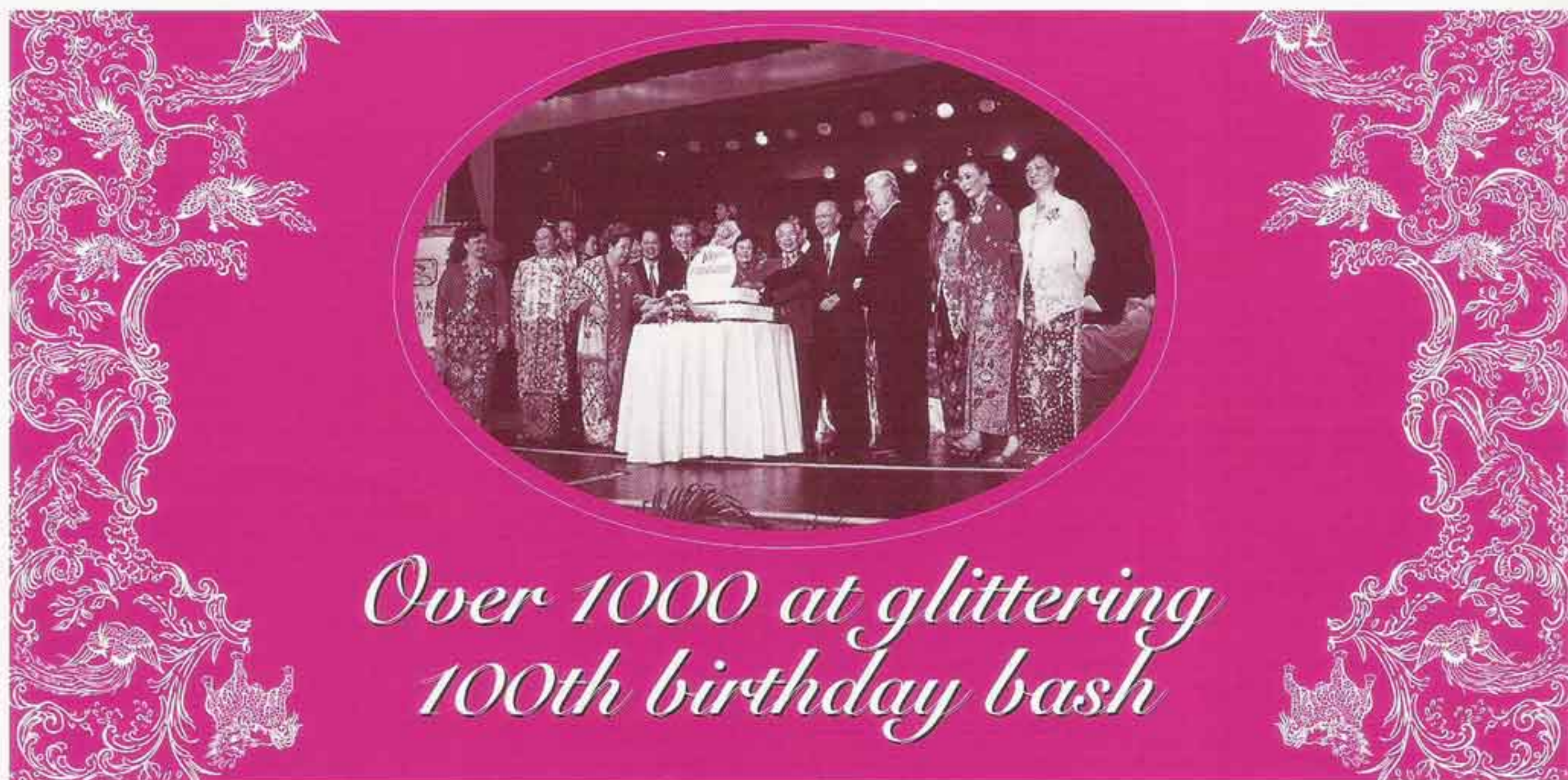
In this play, Bibik Leng Neo, played by Chan, lives with her only son, Robert (Cedric Tan) in a modest house, and is determined to see him marry well. Conniving with her old matchmaker friend, Bibik Toh Neo, she makes things difficult for Robert to refuse an arranged marriage with Babie (Fern Loo), the spoilt girl from a rich family. Meanwhile Robert has got himself in a muddle with two other young women. You have to see for yourself the hilarious and poignant moments as the situation reaches crisis proportions before reaching a resolution. ■

Support our charitable cause! There will be a special charity night on Saturday 24 March 2001 in aid of the Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA). This centennial year will see many projects in aid of this charity, as we aim not only to celebrate our history and promote our heritage, but also to give back to our society.

Dah Sa-Chupak Tak Boley Sa-Gantang,
World Trade Center Auditorium,
Wednesday 21 March to Friday 23 March 2001, 8pm,
Tickets at: \$32, \$42, \$52 are available at all SISTIC Outlets.

Saturday 24 March 2001, 8pm,
Charity Gala Nite in aid of The AWWA,
Tickets at \$52, 62, \$72 (available at all SISTIC Outlets)
and Generous Donations.
Please support us!





Over 1000 at glittering 100th birthday bash

BY ANTHONY OEI



Unveiling the new logo



A new generation of Babas & Nyonyas



Honoured guests Dr Wee Kim Wee & Mrs Wee welcomed by committee members and friend.



More than 1000 members and their guests celebrated The Peranakan Association's glittering 100th birthday bash on 1 December 2000. It was the largest gathering of the clan ever, and the cavernous Neptune Theatre was the appropriate venue for the momentous event.

Joining in the merriment in the Grand Centennial Gala Celebration were prominent public figures such as Mr Lee Yock Suan, Minister for Information and the Arts and Mrs Lee, and Dr Wee Kim Wee, former President of Singapore and Mrs Wee, Mr Lim Kim San and Mr Lee Seng Gee. Their august presence enhanced the grandeur of the occasion.

This was also the hour to unveil the new logo. Created with much thought and effort, the new corporate image expresses the exuberance, optimism and unique cultural heritage of our community, a new spirit that will inspire us in the next 100 years.

The success of the landmark function was due to, as Association President Lee Kip Lee said in his welcome address, "the zealous and energetic Organising Committee who made this evening such a gala affair with a full Peranakan menu for dinner and with a fare of excellent entertainment." The Committee was chaired by Bebe Seet.

Indeed, none present could fault the performances of the Pancaragam Gabongan Artis, the Babacappella with their renditions of *Melodi Baba & Nyonya*, Dick Lee who sang his *Bunga Sayang* as a tribute to the Association, singers Jessica Soo, Alvin Ee, as well as William Tan, G T Lye, Sally Gan and even celebrity chef Violet Oon, not to mention the PA Cultural Development Group, Baba-Shop Quartet, Danny Koh & The Big Band, and the Best Dressed Baba & Nyonya Presentation by the showstopping Ivan Heng as Emily of Emerald Hill.

A "100 Years in 10 Minutes" video clip, entertainingly presented by Lim Kay Siu and Neo Swee Lin, graphically summarised the Association's colourful history, from its humble beginnings a century ago to the present where the fraternity now boasts over 1500 members!

Midway through the rejoicing came the high point of the evening - the singing of the birthday song and the cutting of the centennial birthday cake to rousing cheers and boisterous applause. Giving his centennial report, President Lee said the Association had made great

100 ANNIVERSARY



Display and sale of food and crafts



strides culturally by "creating a more public awareness of our presence largely through our newsletter *The Peranakan*, as well as through activities of our Cultural Development Group."

He outlined the Group's plans. First, it would stage a *Wayang Peranakan* with a full cast of actors from our sister organisation in Malacca — the Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka. Secondly, it would produce its own *Peranakan Bangasawan*. Thirdly, it would organise, as a community service, "Introduction to the Peranakans" Road Shows to tour schools and other locations in Singapore.

On the literary side, the Association intended to launch a *Peranakan* dictionary (the first of its kind) and a commemorative centennial book.

"We have also been collaborating with the National Heritage Board by participating in events organised by the Singapore History Museum and the Asian Civilisations Museums (ACM)," said Mr Lee. "This month, the ACM has invited us to take part in a programme in connection with the opening of the *Peranakan Legacy* exhibition at its new *Peranakan* galleries." (See separate story).

The *pantun* composed by Felix Chia which the President shared with us gave much food for thought:

*Barang baru cantik seperti matahari
Harapan berkali-kali tinggi tinggi
Barang lama cantik sekali di hati
Zaman berlalu tidak menanti kami.*

*Things new are pretty as the sunshine
Hopes are continuously held high
Things old are so dear to the heart
The passing of an era waits not for us all.*



The Pancaragam Gabongan Artis group



Finale of the multi-media entertainment extravaganza



The Baba Conga-Line



The amazing Babacappella

Association helps bring The Peranakan Legacy to life



Mr Lee Kip Lee and Mrs Lee with Dr Kenson Kwok, director of the ACM, and museum curators



Ceremonial welcome

BY ANTHONY OEI

*P*eranakan Association President Lee Kip Lee opened the new permanent *The Peranakan Legacy* display at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) to a full house on 6 December 2000. The Association had worked with the ACM to help bring the Baba legacy to life, as part of its contribution to the preservation and promotion of the culture.

The exhibition showcases under one roof at ACM the best collections in the region that include jewellery, textiles, rare batik, embroidery, beadwork, garments, silver and porcelain, a contextual model of a wedding chamber, an ancestral altar complete with ceremonial silverware, and other top-grade Peranakan materials.

They are all there in glory for everyone to see, admire and reflect, thanks to the contributions of ACM's lenders, donors and supporters such as Edmond Chin, Khoo Poh Neo, Dr Della Lee, Peter Lee, Roger and Betty Mariette, Annie Wee and Peter Wee.

Said President Lee: "The Peranakan Association has long recognised that the promotion of one's culture is not an easy task and we commend the Asian Civilisations Museum for their efforts in promoting the ancestral cultures and heritage of Singaporeans.

"We have therefore been delighted to have worked with the museums of the National Heritage Board in the past, are doing so for the present exhibition and hope to continue to do so in the future."

The big attendance at the opening ceremony was indicative of the growing interest in Peranakan culture among Singaporeans. And there were luminaries, too, among the visitors that evening, such as none other than noted historian Prof Wang Gung Wu. The Director of East Asian Studies particularly liked the textiles and ceramics which he described as exquisite. He endorsed the effort to preserve history for posterity.

Certainly, there is much to be said about the need to preserve the Peranakan culture. Arising in the last 200 years, the culture is an example of acculturation in this part of the world, forged between the Chinese, Malay and European worlds.

These blending influences produced a whole array of beaded, textile-based, gold and silver ornaments inspired by the Peranakan Chinese and held in high esteem even in this day and age. ■

BY MAUREEN LIM



*W*hat an eventful end to the old millennium. In the four months since The Peranakan Association launched its centennial celebrations on 17 August 2000 with a dinner at Far East Pavilion, it has been one event after another for members - two food and craft fairs, the opening of the *The Peranakan Legacy* exhibition at the Asian Civilisations Museum, and the gala annual Dinner & Dance. Some members even travelled north to attend the Baba Convention in Penang. At all these happenings, our Cultural Development artistes were there to represent the Association in song and dance.

Peranakan goodies galore at food and craft fair



Cooking demonstrations at the fair

BY ANTHONY OEI

*H*ungry Babas and Nyonyas thronged the carpark adjoining the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) on 10 December 2000 to satisfy their craving for Peranakan table fare after admiring the newly opened permanent *The Peranakan Legacy* Exhibition. The Peranakan Festival reinforced the drive to keep the culture alive, and as with the permanent legacy display, we helped the ACM organise it. There was much to please the eyes and senses, with Baba and Nyonya dishes and desserts, handicrafts, *sarong kebaya*, accessories and gift items galore for all and sundry.

Lending importance to the fete, a good number of Baba community leaders dropped by to savour the offerings and the atmosphere, like Dato' Khoo Keat Siew, President of the Persatuan Peranakan Cina Pulau Pinang and Datin Khoo. They gave the thumbs up!

The carnival atmosphere was heightened by cooking and other demonstrations, and stimulating activities like a medley of songs and dances by The Peranakan Association Cultural Development Group, *joget*, comic skit and games. Nelson Lee, for example, showed his skills in cooking *nasi ulam*, Philip Chia in *ayam pedas*, Jolly Wee and Lulu in *ayam buah keluak*, while chefs of J R Food explained the method of preparing *rempah*.

There were also lessons on how to wrap a sarong, tie the Nyonya hair bun and the festive red flower, create *kasut manek* beading and embroidery and *cherki* craft (origami with *cherki*), how to play *cherki*, plus a *chongkak* competition and a recollection of yesterday's fashion of the *baju panjang* and *kebaya*.

In all, it was a golden opportunity to experience the sight, sound and colour of the unique Peranakan cultural heritage, and discover that it is booming. ■

For every event or production, there are those who have given much time and energy to make it all happen. So it was that on 17th Dec. 2000, a "thank you" tea party was held at Café Boum in Far East Square. More than eighty members were invited, this time not to plan, rehearse, nor perform, but to just enjoy themselves as guests of the Association, and to receive small mementos of appreciation. Also present were our President and Mrs Lee, and PA committee members. And we all had a jolly good time. ■

Mr Lee Kip Lee presents thank you tokens to all who helped



Genteel Society

*Peranakans ate, talked and shopped their way
to finding out what it means to be
Peranakan at the 13th Baba Convention,
Penang, November 24-26 2000*

BY CYNTHIA WEE-HOEFER

*Landing in Pulau Pinang
last November for the
13th Baba Convention,
the ice was thawed by
a missing suitcase.
As the contingent of
40 members of our
Peranakan Association
waited in the coach for the
luggage to appear,
it was time for getting
to know each other.*



The clubhouse of the Persatuan Peranakan Cina Pulau Pinang

That's not difficult to do as one of the traits of the Peranakans is their "openness" to others - a point raised during the seminar following the theme "Towards a more genteel and gracious society." More on that later...

At the lobby of the Paradise Hotel in Tanjung Bungah, the mood was earnest as in most conventions (my first with the Association abroad). The missing luggage turned up all right, in the wrong hands of one lady member. Hers, same look and brand, had gone the wrong route and was to be diverted back the following day. So with that amusing ending, the get-together moved on.

The Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka members arrived by the carloads and in a coach followed by the Gunong Sayang Association representatives and all were heartily welcomed by the host committee of The Persatuan Peranakan Cina Pulau Pinang.

When the hotel rooms were finally sorted out, there was a mass exodus of the "newly-arrived" in search of family, friends and food. My roommate Jeannie and I headed for town and a hairdressing salon in the monolithic Komtar building.

We came across our fellow members in search of *laksa*, fried *kway teow*, ice *kacang* and local delights. The usual Penang hawker fare had been cleared away by late afternoon and the friendly taxi-driver drove us to Guernsey Drive open-air food centre where the action was just beginning. We had our fill and made our way back to the hotel foregoing the in-house buffet to get ourselves ready in *sarong* and *kebaya* for the evening's *bangsawan* play.

The play *Sam Pek Eng Tai* was amateur theatre admirably acted by the members from our host association. The guest-of-honour was TYT Yang Dipertua Negeri Pulau Pinang Tun Dato' Seri (Dr.) Haji Hamdan Bin Sheikh Tahir or chief of state who happened to be a former classmate of our own Association's president Mr Lee at the Raffles College in Singapore. They had a lot of catching up to do.

The favourite Chinese love story of the heroine in male disguise was acted out in lyrical Malay and tested the younger Singaporeans' knowledge of the language. Though the script was long, there was much going-on outside in the foyer. I happened to witness the preparation of the final scene when the wedding procession complete with an original palanquin and musicians made a brief entrance into the hall. Quite a number of the audience sitting at the far end of the hall missed the entry of the bride before her tragic end. In all, the *Bangsawan* proved a challenge for the other participating associations to take up.



Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon with presidents and representative of the various associations



Exchange of mementos



Mrs Cynthia Wee-Hoefer (right), Mr Lee Kip Lee and member Dr Lim Kim Leong tuck into a classic Penang meal

The following day, Saturday 25th November, had guests and delegates standing to attention for the YAB Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, Chief Minister of Penang no less, who opened the Baba Convention. At the Rafflesia Ballroom, there was a conspicuous absence of the younger Peranakans as the older members got down to cerebral and albeit, emotional discussion.

Dr. Koh was encouraging of the Peranakan Chinese culture and gave praise to the participants and proceeded to outline his plans to twin Malacca and Penang as historical settlements and to conserve their heritage buildings and communities. Work has already begun to improve and retain the Old Fort area of Penang including the restoration of the legendary E & O Hotel around now.

The Chief Minister was also applying for status from Unesco World Heritage Site authorities. Then he astutely tossed the ball to the Singaporean court "to see what they can do on their end," presumably to link to the sister-cities as Peranakan Chinese strongholds.

After opening the Peranakan Art Exhibition by Martin Lo, Singapore's Baba artist, the Chief Minister mingled with guests before leaving. The first seminar session proceeded on a different note. The original speaker was unable to attend and was replaced by Baba Cedric Tan Chye Cheng from Malacca who was the epitome of Peranakan correctness.

He started with apologies and a *pantun* alluding to *lembut sekali* (the graciousness) of the Nonya Malacca and the danger of being *lembek* (weak) in the span of three eras of a Peranakan household. As it turned out, Baba Cedric who is probably in his late thirties, spelt out the "identity-preserving traits" of Peranakans in general. Or what makes a Peranakan and what does not; and why these hallmarks are disappearing (fall of economic status, shift in family lifestyle, breakdown of the extended family, etc.)

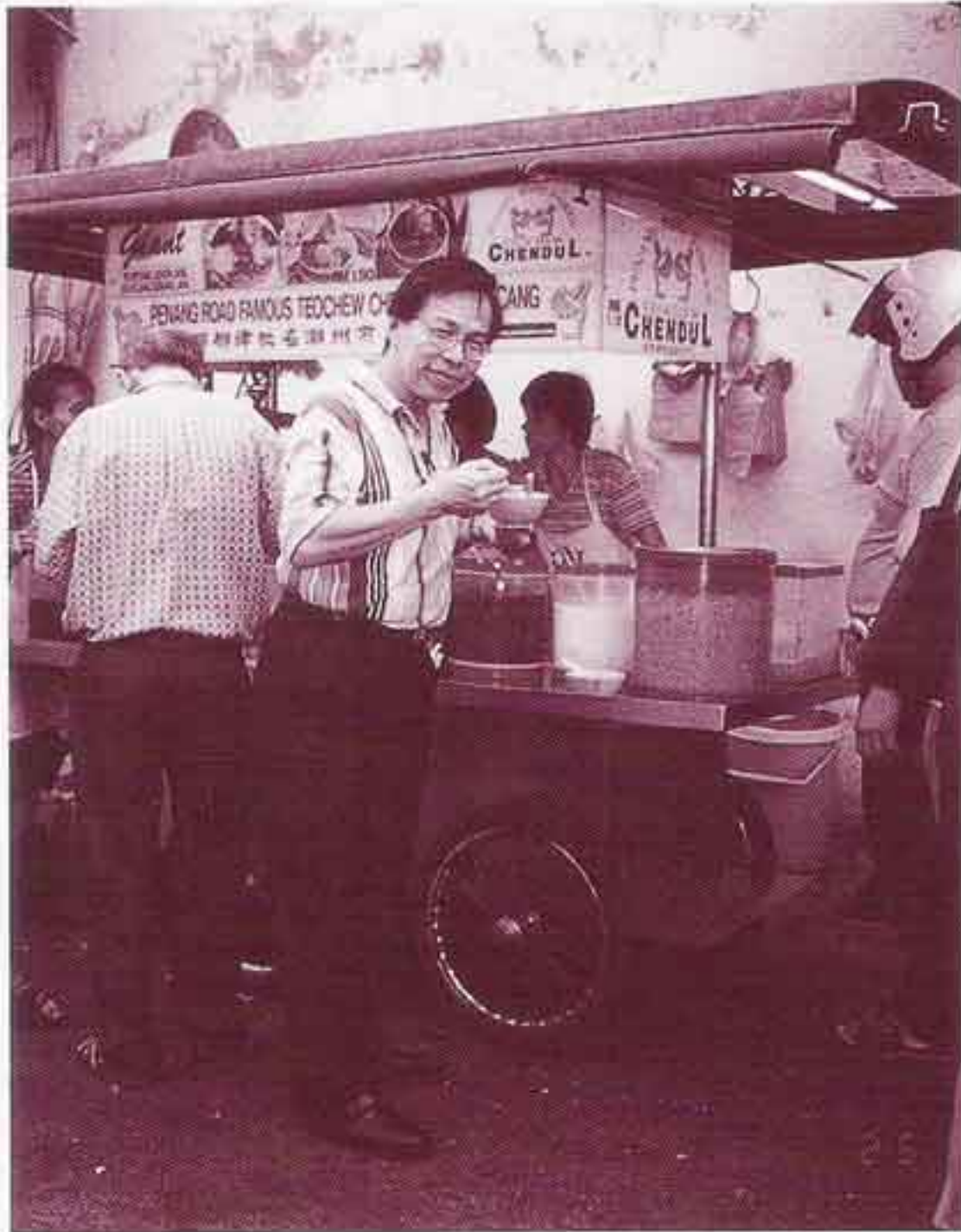
Best of all, here is one guy who offered some careful thoughts on how to preserve the identity (see next story) and threw it open to the house to come up with some lively suggestions. There is a matter of the language, lamented one Baba from Malacca married to a Penang girl. He grew up speaking only Malay at home and not a Chinese dialect. So when his wife's Peranakan family from Penang chided him "You Chinese, so why can't speak Chinese?" he felt humiliated because to him "being Baba means speaking only Malay."

The Penangites retorted that they only speak Hokkien or Teochew at home and they consider themselves true-blue Peranakans. The poor Singaporean Babas had more to moan; their children can't even speak a word of Malay so taken up they are with Mandarin! And so it went, a spirited exchange of experiences and beliefs and to summarise the seminar — what are the brass tacks to preserve the culture? One suggestion was to let the inimitable Straits-Chinese culture go www.peranakan.org.sg.

Over lunch, the talk moved triumphantly to food and what a delectable surprise to meet and receive a name card from the honourable Baba Charlie Lee, specialist in all kinds of Nonya cake, Nonya *popiah* and buffet party. Well, I need not add that the gentleman hails from Malacca.

The second session was on "Peranakan Hokkien - The Language of the Penang Peranakans" by Mr Lim Beng Soon. The highlight of the Convention was the dinner and dance and a celebration of the 80th year of the Penang Association. Now here is when the nonya ladies and the refined gentlemen step out in their full regalia. Our Association had our lovely twin mascots Nadine and Nadia Kang in splendid *baju panjang* outfits to rival the Penang sisters already a familiar sight from the previous evening.

Penang's famous hawker food was laid out in mini-stalls and proved a hit. When all the farewells were said, there was a special request — a reprise of Bunga Sayang which had captured the hearts of our Peranakan friends.



Members take a sweet break

As the evening progressed, it was evident that the fashion parade of the ladies was a feast for our eyes. The food served was less enticing though. The entertainment included a presentation of modern Chinese costumes on models and tots, and the Caring and Sharing Society Choir from Penang. Our Malacca friends brought out the four stages of nonya wear which was delightful in their authenticity. Sparkling too was the jewellery filled with *intan* of all shapes and sizes.

The Singapore team gave a dazzling display of singing and choreography with the highlight being *Bunga Sayang*, composed by Dick Lee and stylishly sung by our own Baba Richard Chia. A Peranakan event would not be complete without a skit featuring Sally Gan (in another guise as girlfriend), G.T. Lye as the perennial Bibik mother and Alvin Teo as her son the suitor.

More singing and dancing followed by the dance group of the Gunong Sayang Association. By the end of the performances, there was a noticeably cheerful air. After the guest-of-honour Tun Dato' Seri (Dr) Haji Hamdan bin Sheikh Tahir and his wife left, the tables were cleared, and the light-footed danced the cha-cha and quicksteps to their hearts' content.

By Sunday, the delegates were raring for more. There was a quick tour of The Garage, a restored motor-repair building put to use as a shopping centre with restaurant. There was a whistle-stop lookaround of the Penang Museum and then we eventually assembled at the Perak Road club house of our hosts for a farewell lunch. The guest of honour was Dato' Kee Phaik Cheen, a dynamic lady with tourism, culture and the arts and women's development under her portfolio as an EXCO member in the state cabinet.

With hours to go before taking the plane home, everyone dispersed for more of the same - shopping, spending, sightseeing.

Jeannie and I were privileged to get into the Penang Heritage Society guided-tour of the restored Cheong Fatt Tze mansion in the Fort area. Here was where the French actress lay on the Chinese wedding bed for the scene in the movie *Indochine*, said the enthusiastic guide-curator.

Cheong Fatt Tze, the tin and silver tycoon, almost bought the P & O company when they refused to take his reservation for a cruise on the Titanic. The English realised how serious he was and relented. Fortunately, he did not go on the fateful journey. Such was the intriguing anecdote.

His mansion epitomises Chinese *feng-shui* principles. The masonry, the imported wrought ironwork, the *trompe l'oeil* technique of *faux* marble on the iron beams, the delicate stucco figurines by Chinese craftsmen and the several rooms spread over the extended wings, all kept ringing in my ears as I hurriedly took in the old-worldliness of Penang.

I wonder how we Peranakans in Singapore can match up to the vision of a heritage site in tandem with our kin northwards? ■

What makes a Peranakan?

When encountering someone, have the ability to address the person, whether relative, friend or acquaintance, in a correct manner. Nowadays, people tend to be too casual ("uncle" or "auntie") about the right form of addressing one's elders or contemporaries. Terms like *baba*, *bibik*, *nya*, *adek*, *tachi*, *hia*, or *ungkoo* denote the relationship or deference between two individuals. Then there is the *balek mulut* or return greeting in the accepted form.

A Peranakan should never be rude to elders; one has to thank them in the form of prayers and thanksgiving when they have departed. Even when nature calls and you have to stop by the wayside, there are words of gratitude to the spirits for disturbing their terrain. One should always use refined language when speaking to elders with the words "saya" against "gua".

Dress immaculately and appropriately for the occasion. Wearing the right apparel when making a visit at a wake, respecting the dress code when required, and generally try not to offend a visitor to the house by appearing in singlet and sarong, or being bare-bodied in the case of a male.

A Peranakan knows how to *sojah* (pay respects on bended knees with clasped hands) and say the appropriate salutations to the elders for birthdays and the Chinese New Year. Babas and Nonyas know how to conduct the proper religious rites and ceremonies in accordance with the wishes of their elders and loved ones. For Baba Cedric, the foundation of our Peranakan culture is filial piety, and respect for the trinity of earth, heaven and man.

Tolerate the beliefs (religions) of others. The Baba is willing to take part in others' religious events. The Baba is known to offer coconut milk in the Hindu festival or to join in the Novena processions of the Catholics or to find spiritual guidance from the *datok* mediums with the understanding that they have the best of everything. In other words, the Baba's outlook is not negative as far as others' practices are concerned.

The known quality of the Peranakans is to extract others' traits and amalgamate them to their own, and to go one better by refining and lavishing on these traits. Think of the costumes the nonyas adapted from Malay garments which are embellished further with embroidery and sumptuous textiles and fine imported batiks; the jewellery refined with Indian and Sinhalese techniques.



RECOUNTED BY CYNTHIA WEE-HOEFER

Some points raised by Baba Cedric Tan from Melaka at the last convention in Penang.

The most outstanding requirement is that of paying attention to detail whether in preparing food or social rites. In the ancestral rites, the decoration on the altar tables, the order of laying out the utensils and paraphernalia and other details are getting difficult to maintain. With the fall of economic status of old Baba families, the lifestyle is hard to upkeep. Without the villas and big houses, the extended family has declined so that certain aspects of continuing the traditions have to go.

"So which of these traits are desirable?" asked Baba Cedric.

Within the household, certain formalities should be perpetuated. A simple rule when sitting down at mealtime is to address each and everyone of your elders with "*Bapak, makan*" ("Father, please eat"), "*Mak, makan*" or "*Tua-ko, makan*". These help to reinforce family values.

Elders have to play their part to nurture the traits themselves and be consistent. They must ground themselves in the virtues and traits of a true Peranakan and set the standard. "No *chin chye*" (lackadaisical) attitude, stressed Baba Cedric. The older Peranakans must spark the interest of the younger ones and make them realise their traditions. Encourage a young girl to wear a *kebaya* outfit and make her see the beauty and femininity of wearing the *sarong kebaya* (blouse and batik wrap) with *kerosang* and *kasut manek*.

One must pass on the knowledge on a timely basis before the culture disappears totally. This can be done by sharing feelings about one's Peranakan identity or perhaps writing a story.

Looking ahead Baba Cedric felt that it will be important for Babas and Nonyas to increase contact with members of the community in order to reinforce the value of being a Peranakan, especially through group activities. Most importantly of all, it is vital for a Peranakan to feel proud to be a Peranakan. ■

peranakan the youth group

BY HEATHER ONG

Be a Neo-Peranakan

The youth group dancers performed at the D&D, and the opening of the *Peranakan Legacy* exhibition at the Asian Civilisations Museum, as part of the newly formed Cultural Development Group. Preparations began months in advance, with Baba Richard Tan and his team working overtime to bring the programme from conception to realisation.

Several new volunteers answered the call for more youths to participate — some were experienced performers, some were persuaded to debut with us, and others helped in various behind-the-scenes aspects. It was not easy for our volunteers to juggle schoolwork, careers and families, but the strong camaraderie drew everyone together. There was always time for laughter, *makan-makan*, and even festive shopping in between rehearsals.

It is heartening to see old traditions come alive, as our dancers donned vintage *baju panjang* and fashioned their hair in the *sanggul Nonya* of that period. One performer said, "When we are dressed in these resplendent outfits, and adorned with authentic jewellery, we can't help but put aside the hustle and bustle of our workday. I feel totally immersed in the genteel world of the old Peranakans."

Do join us as we learn more about our unique heritage — through talks, teaching workshops and *makan* sessions. Get

connected with egroups, a free email group for Babas and Nonyas. Subscribe at <peranakan-subscribe@egroups.com> *New Members Get-together on eve of Hari Raya Haji (Monday, 5 March 2001)*

Meet us at 7.30 pm, at California Café, Bakery, Deli, located on the ground floor of Novena Square, facing Thomson Road.

There will be nice pasta, sandwiches, desserts, and good company at a reasonable price. Friends and family are welcome too, as we just split the bill at the end of the evening. Contact Heather if you'd like to come. 481 4288(O), or email <youth@peranakan.org.sg>

PASIR RIS BEACH OUTING Saturday 21 April 2001, 5 pm onwards. An evening of fun, food & optional overnight fishing at Pasir Ris Beach Park. Come! Enjoy some fresh air (hope it doesn't rain-must remember to stick the traditional chilly & bawang anti-rain device all over our picnic site!!), show off your beach wear & maybe learn to make *otak-otak*. Details to be announced, but we would like an indication of how many are interested. Please RSVP. <youth@peranakan.org.sg>.

KUEH SESSION II Saturday 12 May 2001, 2.30 pm at Katong Antique House. Learn authentic Nonya kueh from true-blue Bibik, Kim Choo. Thinking of *kueh dadar* and *kueh koswee*. Any suggestions? Refreshments, & laughter included. ■

From City-Slicker to Sanggul Sister

BY NADINE KANG

A Singapore girl tells of her transformation to a genteel nyonya

The widely anticipated Baba Convention in Penang last year was a welcome opportunity for me to detach myself from the monotonies of city life, and indulge in the unique revelries of my distinctive culture in a quaint town. The trappings of leisure were abundant here, the sedating sea view from the hotel, the fragrant food & the economical shopping!

Being active participants of the annual convention, The Peranakan Association put up a song and dance segment entitled *Bunga Sayang* for our enthusiastic audience. As we beautified ourselves for the night, the bustling activity in the dressing room was positively intoxicating as we witnessed the elegant metamorphosis of the modern generation to the genteel Peranakan of yesteryear. I was morphed from a hipster-wearing city girl to a refined lady clothed in antique *baju panjang*, with a delicate *sanggul* to match. With that, my body language took on a life of its own as I sashayed daintily into the ballroom.

Excitement was rife in the embellished ballroom as guests from Malacca, Singapore and Penang converged for a night of merry-making and gastronomical delights. Nervousness masqueraded as confidence as I took to the stage for our dance item. The delight derived from performing that night was compounded by the sheer exuberance of the audience. The evening ended blissfully with blinding camera flashes to encapsulate this glorious occasion for the history books as we look forward to the next convention in Malacca! ■



NOTICEBOARD

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome aboard the following 17 new members whose addition increases our roll to 1572 members:

Ordinary Members

Mr Chan Eng Thai
 Mr Choa Khoo Cheng James
 Ms Fu Ye-Lan Felicia
 Ms Gan Bee Geok Audrey
 Mrs Khoo Eng Neo Maureen
 Mr Khoo Liat Boon Christopher
 Mr Koh Yew Bin Daniel
 Dr Lee Boon Teck
 Mr Ling Kong Tiong James
 Ms Low Philomina Linda
 Ms Ng Lai Hun
 Mr Ng Tye Seng Augustine
 Ms Ono Hiroko
 Ms Oon Swee Gek Violet
 Mdm Seow Yew Bee Eunice
 Mdm Tan Siok Eng
 Mrs Williams Suzanne Mary

OBITUARY

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families of

Mr Seow Sian Chye
 Ms Tan Li Min Esther
 On their recent bereavement.

Mr Seow Sian Chye, who was featured in the July-September 2000 issue of The Peranakan, was, at 93 years (12 December 1907 - 1 January 2001), the oldest member of The Peranakan Association. He was the grandson of Chia Hood Theam, a prominent member of our community and comradore of the Mercantile Bank. He was also a well-known sportsman who represented Singapore in water-polo.

MALACCA TRIP

Friday 15 June to Sunday 17 June 2001
BOOK YOUR LEAVE NOW!!

This trip is organised by the Association and the National Heritage Board.

Going by past experience, get ready for non-stop fun, food, entertainment & culture. There will also be shopping time (kueh-kueh, clothes, antique jewellery). Gather your family or kaki & share a room. This is a great opportunity to get to know other members of the Association - you may be shocked at the elders' antics! Youngsters usually stay up late to pub/party the night away.

Meet on Friday at Newton Carpark for the 7.30 am coach, and leave Malacca after lunch on Sunday. Details will be announced later. *Limited places only!*

VCDs of Classic GSA Plays

Please contact the Gunong Sayang Association for vcds and videos of their stage productions. GSA, 50 Geylang Lorong 24A Singapore 398574; Tel: 842 3921, Fax 7416305. The following VCDs of GSA plays are now available:

- * Salah Sangka (1993), Set of 3 VCDs \$30.00
- * Bulan Pernama (1997), Set of 3 VCDs \$30.00
- * Chueh It, Chap Goh (2000), VCD, \$25.00
- * Janji Perot (1999), VCD, \$25.00
- * Kalau Jodoh Tak Mana Lari (1996), VCD, \$25.00
- * Nasib (1992), VCD, \$25.00
- * Biji Mata Mak, VCD, \$25.00

Cruise to KL onboard the Superstar Virgo!
 Special Rates for Members 18 - 20 April 2001

Here's your chance to join a special 3 days/2 nights cruise departing Wednesday 18 April 2001! Rates from \$260 to \$400. Includes a Malam Joget for Association members. BOOK NOW!! Gather your kaki to enjoy group discounts that we have negotiated for all. For enquiries, please call the Hon. Secretary at Tel: 2550704, or Bebe Seet at Tel: 2478781.



wanted

EMILY OF EMERALD HILL
AUGUST 2001

*Details in the next issue of
 The Peranakan Association Newsletter.*



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Chakap Baba-Nonya

Inche-inche, Bibik-bibik, ada baik?

Gua pun member Kumpulan Peranakan. Wah, sekarang sudah ada nama stylo: the Peranakan Association. Surat khabar pun lebeh chantek, ada gambar warna warni. Tapi penulis banyakan banyakan perumpuan. Menapa inche-inche semua bagitu sibok tak ada time? Jadi selalu bacha cherita dapor: "tok panjang, ayam buah keluak, kueh chuchi mulot" Lagi pun tengde gambar-gambar sarong kebaya, kerosang, kasut manek... baju lok chuan apa rupanya? Baba pakai kasut, apa bila pakai baju lok chuan? Kasut Bally, Bata atau kasut seret beli di-pasar?

Sudah, chukup gua merapek. Ada satu suggestion sebelum gua tutup surat ini.

Peranakan satu kata: "Kita ta' tahu chakap Baba because ta' chance chakap, mak bapak ta'ajar. Mama pun sudah tutup mata, jadi dirumah semua chakap Orang Puteh. Dulu, mak bapak selalu suru kita chakap Inggeris. Belajar Inggeris baik-baik, dapat certificate A1, boleh pergi Unibersiti, dapat pakeh kopiah, boleh kerja dapat gaji besar... jadi dokto, jadi loyah."

Bukan baik kita older generation start satu page "Chakap Baba-Nonya". Begitu kaypoh-kaypoh macham gua dapat champor tangan, masok mulot, boleh bersungut, cheritakan hal dulu kala, boleh tanya resipi, tanya mana ada tempat makan lauk Peranakan... Boleh ta'? Atau orang-orang zaman sekarang hiam kita nanti chakap kita ini "old economy".

Sudah-lah. Gua pun ta' senang. Banyak kerja. Buka mata, tutup mata sudah Hari Raya Serani, Hari Raya Melayu, Hari Raya China. Adoi, kueh belum bikin, achar belum jemoh. Tinggal-ya?

— **Nonya Shirley Bong nee Shirley Tan**
SINGAPURA

Orang puteh Bulan 12, Tahun 20 nought belum

Accolades from Dr Wee Kim Wee

You must have received many accolades for the grand style the Association's centenary was held in the Neptune Theatre & Restaurant on Friday 1 December 2000.

I merely like to add one more to the long list. Your Organising Committee deserve the highest tribute and congratulation for a superb job well done and executed. It was truly a fitting way to celebrate 100 years of the Association's existence. Everyone rose to the occasion.

As I have said and written earlier your President and Committee have kept the Peranakan flag flying at the top of the mast today as it was in the years of yore.

— **Dr Wee Kim Wee**
SINGAPORE

A Tribute from Hawaii

I wish to congratulate the Association on the beautiful production of its new face and logo. To the Babas and Nyonyas it gives them the feeling that the Association is looking towards a bright and better future.

To your President and hard working Committee I wish you Good Luck and every success for the coming year.

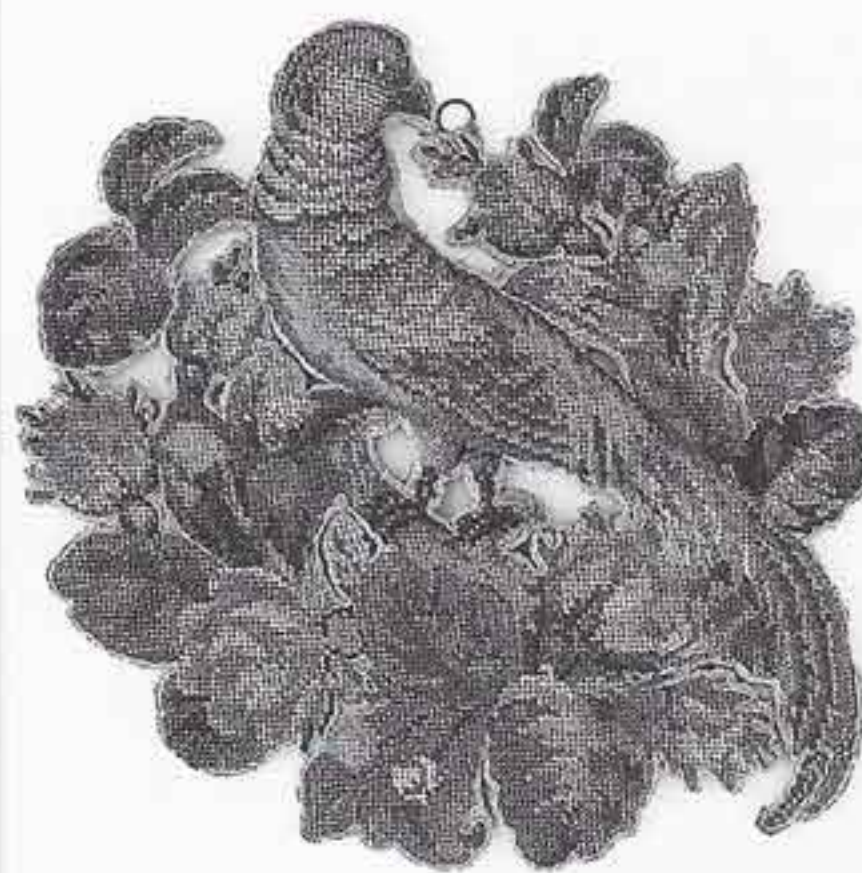
— **Ong Choon Bee**
HONOLULU
Hawaii

with compliments

**DOMINIE PRESS
PTE. LTD.**



Blk 1200 Depot Road
#01-21/27 Telok Blangah Ind. Est. Singapore 109675
Telephone 65-2730755 Facsimile: 65-2730060



Ang Eng
BAJU KEBAYA

*for embroidered kebaya and
modern cheongsam*

Steven Ong
Telephone 03-7875 0892 Mobile 012-650 9812
Email sjbong@hotmail.com



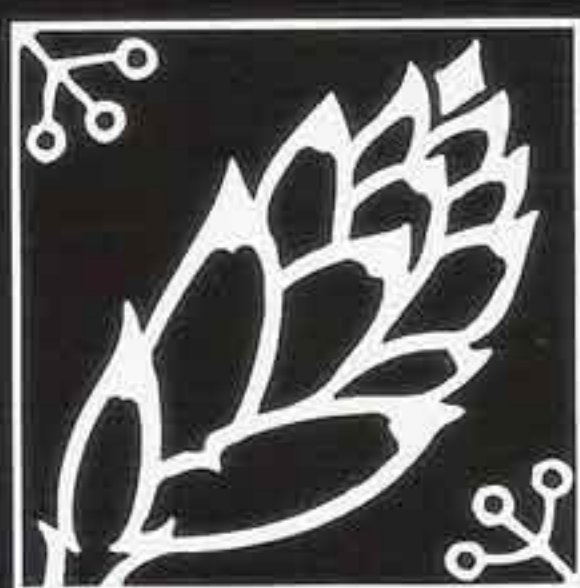
208 East Coast Road Singapore 428907
tel 345 8544 fax 345 1220



with
compliments

equinox art & design

275 south bridge road singapore 058824
Telephone 2278896 Fa csimile 2275009



The
BLUE GINGER
Restaurant

*Authentic Peranakan cuisine
in an elegant contemporary setting*

97 tanjong pagar road singapore 088518 tel 222 3928
the heeren 260 orchard road 05-02c singapore 238855 tel 835 3928



THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION

in celebration of its 100th anniversary

presents

A Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka production of

Dah Sa Chupak Tak Bolely Sa Gantang.



World Trade Center Auditorium

8pm, Wednesday 21 to Friday 23 March 2001

TICKETS \$32, \$42, \$52 available at all SISTIC Outlets

Charity Gala Performance in aid of

AWWA (Asian Women's Welfare Association) through Community Chest

8 pm, Saturday 24 March 2001

TICKETS \$52, \$62, \$72 available at all SISTIC Outlets

Generous Donations Welcomed!

SISTIC WEBSITE | www.sistic.com.sg
SISTIC HOTLINE | 348-5555



SUPPORTED BY



ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM
a National Museum

THE PERANAKAN
LEGACY

SPECIAL DISCOUNT!!!

Present your tickets and get **\$1 off** your adult admission ticket to the New Peranakan Legacy exhibition at Asian Civilisations Museum.