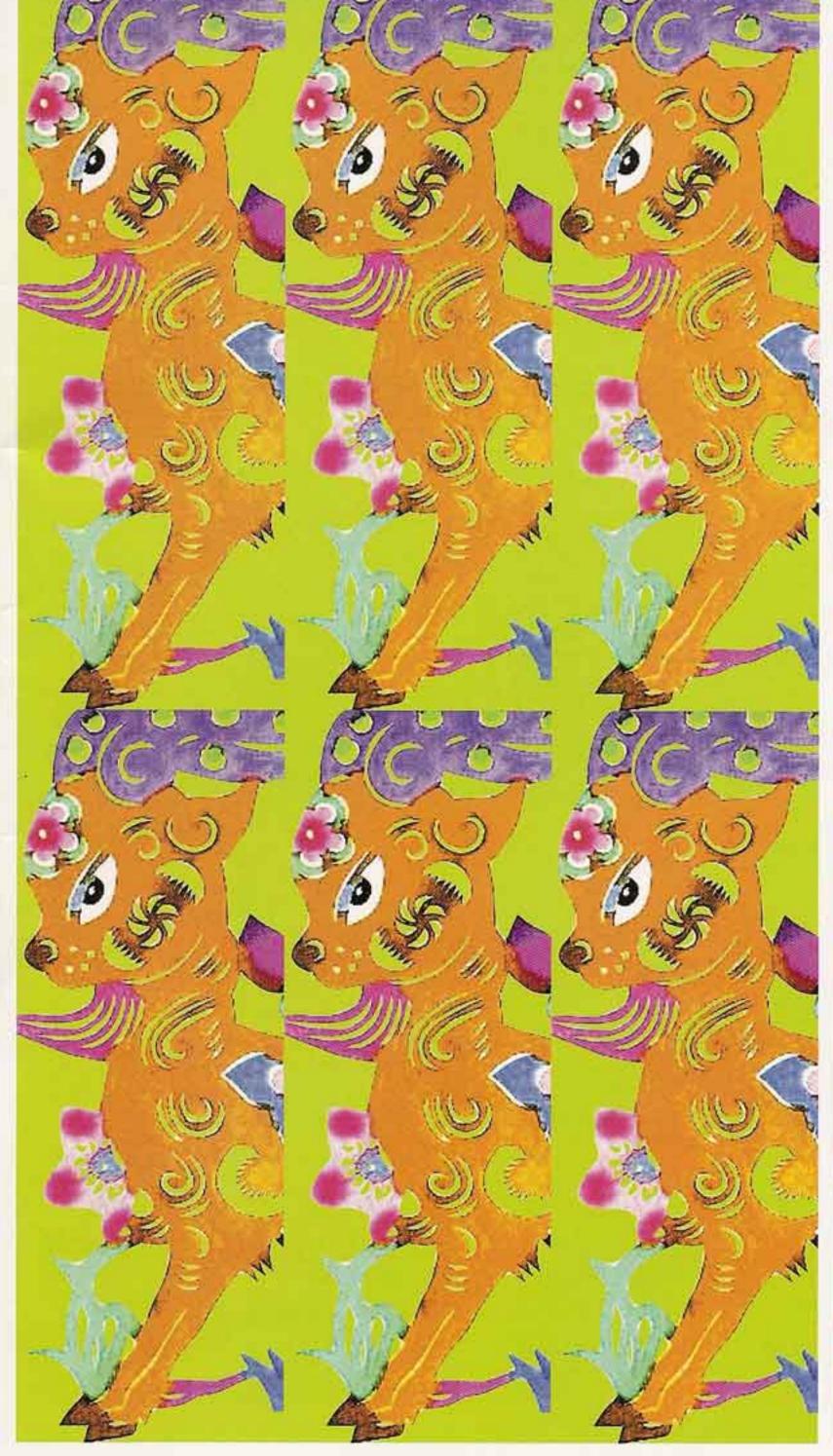
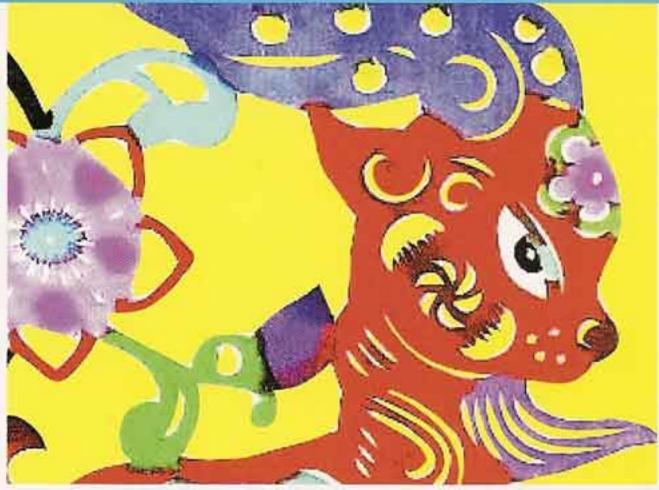


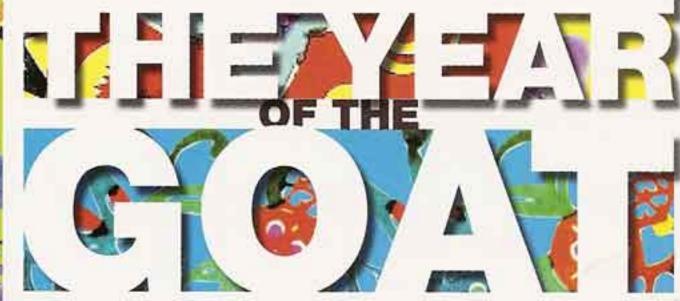
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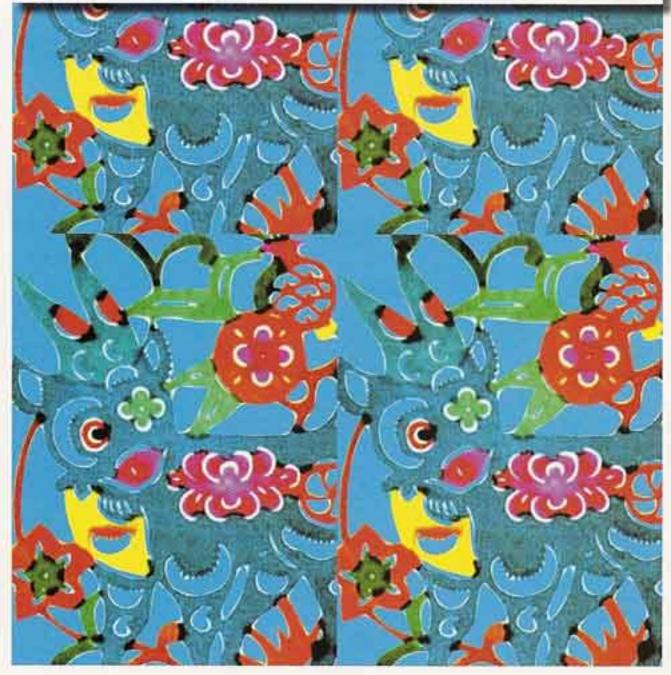
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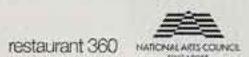
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LEE KIP LEE

MAY WE EXTEND TO ALL READERS A SELAMAT TAHUN BARU and may you all enjoy panjang pangjang umor in the year of the Goat as we enter the 103rd anniversary of The Peranakan Association.

We have again had a successful year the outstanding features of which are the rave reports on BIBIKS BEHIND BARS (BBB) and the 15th Baba Convention. BBB played to full houses at all its performances firstly at the Marine Parade Community Club and secondly at two repeat shows at the Kallang Theatre. And the 15th Baba Convention received lavish accolade for the unique format of its talk-show seminar with its high-tech ancillaries as well as for securing the surprising attendance of delegations of Peranakans from Phuket, Thailand.

This issue contains a diversity of articles ranging from youth group member Noreen Chan's insight into the Peranakan pecking order - the correct form of addressing your relatives; to a contribution received via the internet from Dr P Desikan about an Indian perspective of the origin of the word "baba;" to reviews of our own Peranakan play BIBIKS BEHIND BARS and the Gunong Sayang Association's ANAK UDANG ANAK TENGGIRI; to an account of Ivan Heng in Australia; and to reports of the 15th Baba Convention held in Singapore and of our 102nd Anniversary and Annual Dinner & Dance.

Besides that, some of the activites planned for the year include the following forthcoming events: The 103rd Annual General Meeting of The Peranakan Association on Saturday 29 March 2003 at the RELC at 2.30 p.m. a Dinner-Talk to be held on Friday 25 April 2003 at the Pin Hsiang Restaurant, Orange Grove Road with Prof. Wang Gungwu, Director, East Asian Institute as guest speaker and the celebration of our 103rd Anniversary and Annual Dinner & Dance on Friday 31st October 2003.

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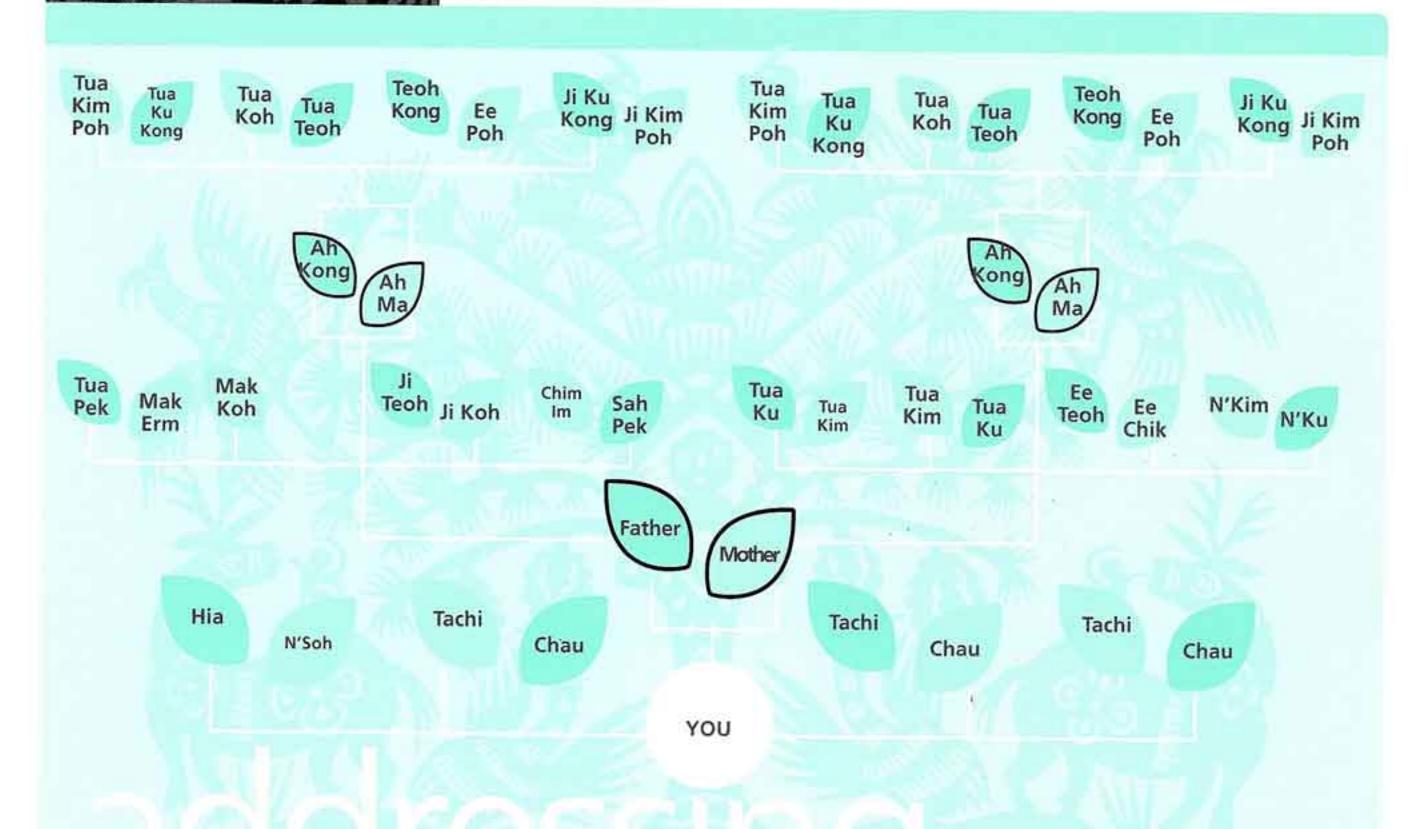
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perANAKan - THE YOUTH GROUP



DR NOREEN CHAN

.: More than a simple case of Auntie and Uncle? Can't tell your Ku from your Koh? Your Chim from your Chek? Fear not, help is here!

e've all been there before: it is Chinese New Year or some big family gathering and mum tells you to *teriak* or 'call' your seemingly endless hordes of relatives. Of course your brain freezes and so you parrot her instructions to 'panggeh Sah Ee' (or See Teoh, or Chim Poh) without really knowing how you are actually related.

While calling everyone Uncle or Auntie would make it very simple, the proper term of address is not only adat (etiquette) but tells you exactly what your relationship is to the other person. You will know immediately if this relative is on your father's or mother's side, whether it is a tie of blood or marriage, and how many generations removed. This custom is an old Chinese tradition; where the Peranakans differ is in the honorific for

grandparents, as we do not distinguish between the father's or mother's side.

One should call one's elder brother (or male cousin) Hia, and elder sisters or cousins are addressed as Tachi. Nowadays the more modern terms of Koko and Cheche tend to be used. Your Hia's wife, or elder sister-in-law, should be called N'Soh. Your Tachi's husband is addressed as Chau. In earlier times, the eldest daughter was often affectionately called Nya (or Nonya) Besar, the second Nya Tengah and the youngest Bongsoo.

Aunts and uncles are numbered by birth order, males separately from females. For example, Sah Ee means third maternal aunt. By convention the Hokkien dialect is used, but over time Malay words have also crept in, as in the term Ee Chik for youngest maternal aunt, 'Chik' being a derivation of kecil ('small').

For our grandparents' generation, the suffixes Kong or Poh (for male and female respectively) are used; greatgrand-relations use the suffix Cho. For example, Ku Kong Cho means great-grand maternal uncle.

FATHER'S SIDE

This is slightly more complicated because a distinction is made between your father's elder and younger brothers. His elder brothers should be addressed Pek or M'pek, the eldest being Tua Pek and his wife, Mak Erm. Younger brothers are called Chek (Enchek) and their wives, N'Chim. Your father's sisters should be called Koh, the eldest generally being called Mak Koh and the youngest, Koh Chik. Their husbands are addressed as Teoh Teoh, or Koh Teoh if you wish to be more specific.

MOTHER'S SIDE

Your mother's brothers are called Ku (N'Ku) and their wives, Kim (N'Kim). Mother's sisters are termed Ee, and their husbands Teoh (or Ee Teoh).

NICKNAMES

What would Peranakan relations be without their beloved nicknames? When one has Kohs aplenty, inevitably someone will think of a way to tell them apart by using nicknames. My paternal great-grandmother was known as Mak Payong (Mak Cho Payong to me) as she always carried an umbrella. A maternal great-grand aunt was called Ee Poh Cho Seranggong because she lived in Upper Serangoon; when she moved to Carmichael Road so did her name.

GLOSSARY

Adek	Younger sibling

Bongsoo Affectionate term for the youngest child

Chau Senior brother-in-law i.e. elder sister's

(Tachi's) husband

Chek (N'Chek) Paternal uncle, specifically father's

younger brother (cf. Pek)

Chim (N'Chim) Chek's i.e. father's younger brother's wife

Cho Suffix to indicate three generations

removed i.e. great-grand

e.g. Mak Cho = Great grandmother

Hia Elder brother (or male cousin)

Kua Father-in-law

Kim Mother's brother's (N'Ku's) wife

Koh Paternal aunt i.e. father's sister

Kong Suffix to indicate a male relative two

generations removed i.e. grand uncle

Ku (N'Ku) Maternal uncle i.e. mother's brother

Mak Erm Tua Pek's i.e. father's eldest brother's wife

Mak Koh Eldest paternal aunt i.e. father's eldest sister

Pek (M'Pek) Paternal uncle, specifically father's

elder brother

Poh Suffix to indicate a female relative

two generations removed i.e. grand aunt

Soh (N'Soh) Sister-in-law, specifically elder brother's wife

Tachi Elder sister (or female cousin)

Teoh Parent's sister's husband. Koh Teoh for

father's side, Ee Teoh for mother's side

Tua Pek Eldest paternal uncle i.e. father's eldest brother

The family tree is an example of how you (as the solid square at the bottom) should address your relatives.

TEST YOURSELE

If your elder brother had children, what would they call:

- 1. Your elder sister (tachi) and her husband
- 2. You (if you are male)
- 3. Your younger brother
- 4. Younger sister?

If your elder sister had children, what would they call:

- Your elder brother and his wife
- ii. You (assuming you are male)
- iii. Your younger brother
- iv. Younger sister?

1. Mak Koh and Teoh Teoh (or Koh Teoh)

2. Ji Chek 3. Sah Chek 4. Ji Koh
or Koh Chik i. Tua Ku and Tua Kim ii. Ji Ku
iii. Sah Ku iv. Ji Ee or Ee Chik

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Panjang Umor

HEATHER ONG

hese words had symbolic meaning for a group of 160 young Peranakans, members of our Internet e-group forum. In the days leading up to the Lunar New Year, the forum was abuzz with postings about our Baba patois, and the above phrase was probably the only one that everyone understood, a vestige of our once common language.

The discussion started in early January when a linguist, Sarah, asked if anyone was interested in contributing to a Baba/English dictionary on the Internet. This dictionary would make the language widely accessible, could highlight the differences in the patois of Singapore, Malacca, Penang & Indonesia; serve as a resource, and as a documentation of an almost extinct language.

Many wrote back, lamenting that the number of speakers of Baba patois is fast dwindling and that the language can only be revived if more people used it regularly. A reason for this decline is that Baba patois is now less functional, since English & Mandarin were the main languages taught in schools. Some were indignant that 'Peranakan' as an identity, was not included in any official Singapore document, even though our sarong kebaya inspired the very recognisable SIA uniform.

Someone, in his 20's, was certain about the demise of the Baba patois and Culture after the next generation, as 'most Peranakans today don't live the way they lived in the 1930's, with all the original traditions, religion and pantangs intact'. To which Nat (aged 22) replied, '...natural progression of society in general. Do we still sit around, gossip while digging your ears in contentment? Of course not, we work, we live our lives, but we remember our culture.'

We also received comments from Peranakans living in Penang, Malacca, USA, New Zealand & Indonesia. Many reaffirmed that they were proud of their heritage, but they could hardly understand any Baba patois. What Gen (aged 20) wrote, 'I really want to understand at least one GT Lye play before I turn 30' summed up the general feeling of the Peranakans in their 20's, so we were keen to organise classes to teach the language. When we asked for a commitment of time & effort to attend the classes, sadly, only one person indicated his interest.

This inaction & unwillingness to attend any activity led some PA regulars to urge the hidden 'cyber-peranakans' to come forward, to benefit from



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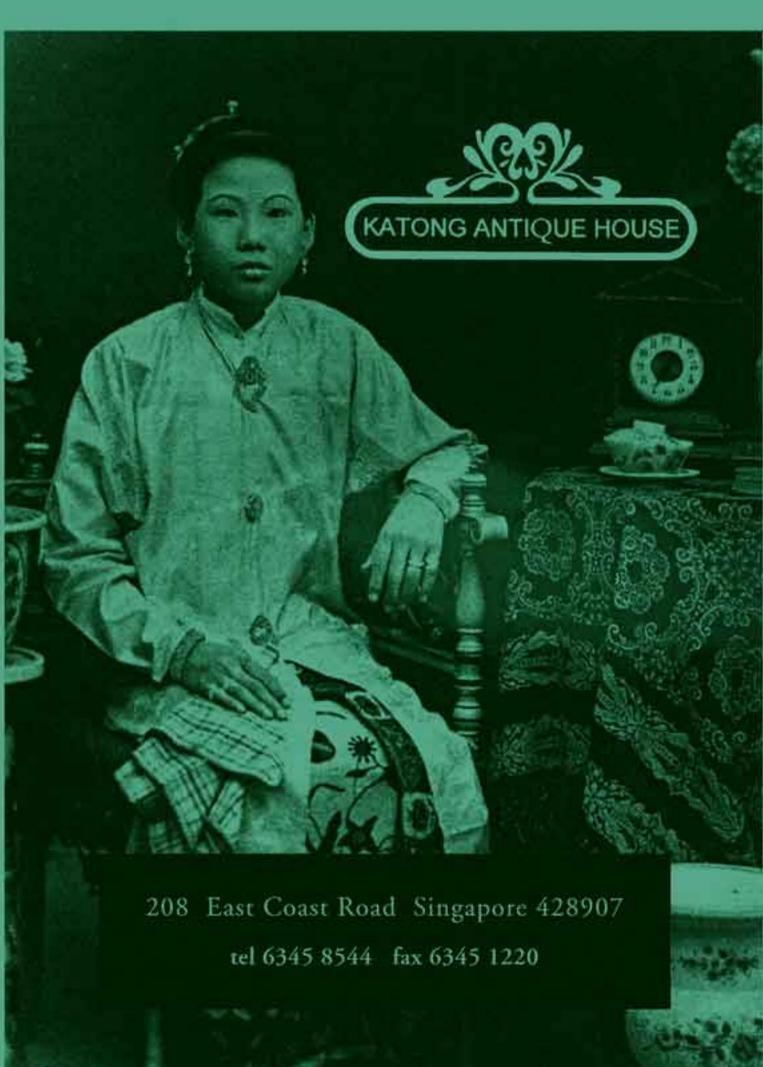
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EVENTS

The 15th Baba Convention The Peranakans or Straits Chinese still
consider themselves unique despite
their culture having been diluted over
the years TAN SOOI BENG

delegation of Thai-born Chinese from Phuket took part for the first time in this year's Baba Convention which was held in Singapore recently.

Organised by The Peranakan Association of Singapore, the 15th Baba Convention was held from Nov 29 to 1 Dec 2002. It was a gathering of the Peranakan Baba/Nyonya or Straits-born Chinese of Penang, Malacca and Singapore for exchanging, performing and celebrating their shared history and heritage as well as their differences.

As a researcher and composer interested in the recreation and blending of cultures in multi-ethnic communities, I was fascinated with the forum Reviewing the Peranakan Identity, which was hosted by the Singaporean Nyonya actress Margaret Chan. The discussion took off from a survey carried out by the Association on what it means to be a Peranakan in the 21st century.

'Is there such a unique identity that can be termed Peranakan? Or has the boundary between the Baba and singkek (new arrivals) communities become so blurred that there is no longer a unique group that can be recognised as Peranakan?' was the first question in the survey. An overwhelming number of respondents, 73 out of 87 felt that the Peranakans are a unique community.

In addition, 45 of the 87 respondents said that Baba Malay was vital to the survival of the community's identity. As Bahasa Malaysia and English became the lingua franca in Malaysia and Singapore respectively after Independence, it would seem that Peranakan identity is under 'threat' today. The Baba patois is no longer used daily (particularly in Singapore and Penang) but displayed in plays and musical performances occasionally.





Instead of moaning about the loss of a unique heritage, participants of the convention agreed that it was not possible to 'fossilise' Baba culture and cling on to the 'dated images of the late 19th century and early 20th century heyday'. After all, Baba cultures and their corresponding identities have been changing over time. The Peranakans have always adapted to their environment and kept up with the times.

As early as the 17th century, their male ancestors came to Malaya and intermarried with local women. They Malayised culturally, acquired a Malay patois known as Baba Malay. Over time, Baba material culture incorporated a rich mix of Malay, Chinese and European elements — Malay spicy food, the practice of chewing sireh, and the kebaya were adapted; red and gold furniture and porcelain were commissioned from Chinese manufacturers; beads for the embroidered shoes worn by the Nyonya were of European origin; jewellery such as the kerosang used to hold women's kebaya had motifs from the three cultures. The new migrants found solace in Chinese religion, which was a mix of Buddhism, Taoism and



Confucianism and held on to ancestor worship, festivals and elaborate wedding ceremonies, which they brought from China.

During the colonial days, the Babas learnt to speak English, worked in British government that in this modern day, the Peranakan identity should blur rigid definitions such as racial mix, or the ability to speak a patois, and move on to a more fluid and inclusive definition? There was unanimous agreement that a person could "consider herself/himself to be Peranakan on the basis of a sensed affinity for the community and its cultural values."

Dr Prasit Koysiripongse, the chief executive of the Phuket Provincial Administration stressed that 'through a broader inclusive definition, the Babas will be able to include more people and hence help to revive Baba culture.' 'In Phuket, Thais with Chinese



TOP A gracious hostess serving a guest. BOTTOM Entertaining dinner guests at the ACM II OPPOSITE PAGE TOP A bevy of beautiful bibiks BOTTOM Our president and the president of the Penang Association

offices and sent their children to English schools. Due to their wealth, political allegiance to the British

and ability to speak the King's English, the elite Babas acquired the status of British subjects. It was only after the war that the Baba as a community began to decline economically and culturally.

If the Peranakans are still a unique community in the new millennium, who are they? What is the essence of the Peranakan heritage? As Baba Lee Liang Hye, a member of The Peranakan Association of Singapore emphasised, "A person is no less Peranakan if he/she speaks English or Hokkien instead of the Baba patois." However, the *kebaya* or *baju panjang*, red and gold furniture, spicy food and cultural performances such as *dondang sayang*, *keroncong*, and *wayang peranakan* remain important cultural markers. A Peranakan can also be recognised by his/her 'colourful expression', 'larger than life persona', 'sense of graciousness', 'tolerance' and 'adaptability' proclaimed the Nyonya women.

In conclusion Margaret Chan asked, 'Do you think

blood who practise Chinese culture are considered Baba. Many do not speak Chinese but keep aspects of their culture,' he continued.

Dick Lee, the internationally acclaimed musician, echoed the same sentiment. He said that he suffered an identity crisis for most of his life as he came from an anglicised Baba family. His grandmother read Jane Austen. 'I thought I was a character in the Enid Blyton Famous Five novel until I went to England at the age of 14,' he said. He has been looking for his roots since then. Today, he feels as much a Peranakan as a Singaporean-Chinese or Asian. 'You are what you believe you are. It is in your heart. You have to know who you are,' he added.

It is indeed not possible to preserve Baba culture as it was in the pre-war days but the Peranakans should know what their culture is so that they can adapt it to their own way in the 21st century. Those Peranakans who wear their mother's *kebayas* as a blouse over pants or buy ready-made *rempah* in a packet as a base for cooking are recreating tradition and passing down new forms of Baba costume and cuisine to the younger generation.

A rare sight nowadays... A traditional Peranakan wedding procession

Believing in actively transmitting the Baba cultural heritage to the young, The Peranakan Association of Singapore organised a craft and food fair with cultural performances for the public at the Asian Civilisations Museum on the last day of the Convention. The festival drew large crowds of local Singaporeans and tourists. On display were sets for sireh chewing, red and gold furniture, porcelain,

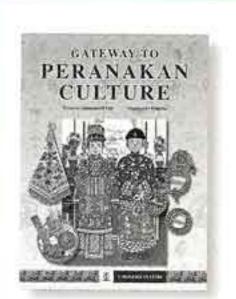
embroidered kebayas, the art of making beaded slippers, different types of kerosang and an array of Baba/Nyonya cuisine.

The Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka provided live entertainment with dondang sayang. keroncong and joget music as well as an abridged version of a 12-day Peranakan wedding procession.

Over 400 people followed the groom dressed in blue and gold baju kiasai from the Singapore History Museum through the streets of Singapore to the bride's house at the Asian Civilisations Museum.

DR TAN SOOI BENG IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND DEPUTY DEAN OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH AT THE SCHOOL OF ARTS, UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF BANGSAWAN: A SOCIAL AND STYLISTIC HISTORY OF POPULAR MALAY OPERA (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1993) AND MANY ARTICLES ON THE CHINESE PERFORMING ARTS AND POPULAR MUSIC.





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You are cordially invited to a gathering, to celebrate the launch of Gateway to Peranakan Culture published by Asiapac Books. Light refreshments will be served.

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COME MEET YOUR FELLOW NYONYAS AND BABAS!

(PLEASE BRING ALONG YOUR NEWSLETTER FOR ADMISSION.)



On Sunday 27 Oct 2002 a joint function was organised by the Malay Cultural Group of the Cairnhill Community Club and The Peranakan Association. As a contribution towards greater cultural understanding and awareness, our Cultural Group provided a short skit, and our Peranakan Voices cheered the crowds with their happy, familiar songs and their colourful dress. We also had our own stalls selling books, umbrellas and other Association souvenirs. Naturally, the Malay Cultural Group also provided exciting cultural performances and craft demonstrations among other activities. The Guest of Honour was Ms Indranee T Rajah MP for Tanjong Pagar GRC.

PHO END ESSENTING TO 2 YEARS!







DEST The Executive Committee in charge of organishing the diffuse & dance minors. The colourful table witting which reliected the ment brothe that sold a wide array of traditional crefts and goodns.

ome things never change. I am talking about our Association's Annual Dinner & Dance, where more than 780 of us had a rollicking good time. And despite the rather bleak economic outlook, there were still generous members and friends who took up more than 20 donation tables. Because the event preceded the annual Baba Convention hosted this time around by us (next year, Penang), our associates from Penang and Malacca, and, for the very first time, a sizeable delegation from Phuket were present. Some of the guests were the Malaysian High Commissioner, the Indonesian Charge d'Affaires, Dr. Wee Kim Wee, Mr. Lee Seng Gee, the



president of Gunong Sayang Association, and their respective spouses. Keeping to tradition (few treasure it more than the Peranakans, yes?), the menu was strictly Nyonya cuisine. Making us feel even more at home were the items provided by our choir groups Babacappella and The Peranakan Voices, in attire as colourful as the repertoire. MC/Entertainer Victor Khoo had earlier divided the crowd into two teams -'Phoenixes' and 'Flowers' - in keeping with the theme for the evening. He kept the crowd running up to the stage either to compete in his zany contests or to donate generously just for the 'privilege' of taking part in these contests! This added an approximate \$2,700 to the Association's kitty. Did anyone still have energy to hit the dance floor after this? Yes, definitely! So if you missed it all, be sure to be first in line for the next one, and don't say the news did not come early enough. There's plenty of time to gather your favourite kakis and get that fabulous outfit done!

LEFT Stunningly beautiful... The kebaya is now de riguer at all our Peranakan events

THE NEXT DINNER & DANGE FRIDAY 31 OCT 2003

Giving Thanks at Mid-Autumn

aturday 21 September 2002, Dinner Time: A Mid-Autumn Festival party was thrown at Association President Lee Kip Lee's residence to thank the cast members of *Bibiks Behind Bars*. This occasion marked the completion of one of the Association's most ambitious projects to promote Peranakan awareness and heralds the beginning of exciting things to come!





Food and fun galore with all the trappings

Kebaya Royae





FAR LEFT Part of the
Exhibition at the launch
of the book LEFT The
Malaysian Queen Her
Majesty Seri Paduka
Raja Permaisuri Agung
Tuanku Fauziah binti AlMarhum Tengku Abdul
Rashid (right) together
with the author Datin Sri
Endon Mamood (left),
wife of the Deputy Prime
Minister of Malaysia

he latest book on Peranakan culture, The Nyonya Kebaya: A showcase of Nyonya Kebayas from the collection of Datin Sri Endon Mahmood was launched in a glittering high tea function in Kuala Lumpur's Shangri-La Hotel on Saturday, 2 November, 2002. This 114-page coffee table sized book is written by Datin Sri Endon Mahmood, the wife of the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and the launch was officiated by Her Majesty the Queen, Seri Paduka Raja Permaisuri Agung Tuanku Fauziah binti Al-Marhum Tengku Abdul Rashid. Pos Malaysia also launched a series of Nyonya kebaya stamps at this event, which was attended by

about 800 luminaries and the who's who of Malaysia. Also present were some designers from Indonesia, foreign diplomats and members of the Peranakan Chinese community; many of whom came donning their best kebayas and sarongs.

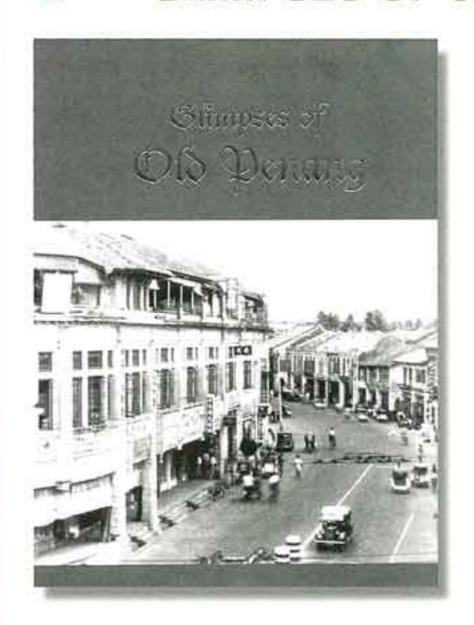
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GLIMPSES OF OLD PENANG



An excellent book by Neil Khor with 210 pictures and illustrations including many previously unpublished photos of old Penang, including some from Penang collector Michael Cheah, with contributions from many scholars including Dr. Geoff Wade, Dr. Ooi Keat Gin, Khoo Salma Nasution and Dr. Tan Sooi Beng.

For further inquiries, please contact Mr. Yeap at lubisksn@tm.net.my. (Hardcover; Price RM 60)

A DICTIONARY OF CHINESE CERAMICS

Perhaps one of the most important books on Chinese ceramics, A Dictionary of Chinese Ceramics, by Prof Wang Qingzheng of the Shanghai Museum, is a 368-page encyclopedia of all areas of ceramic production and history, including comprehensive marks, inscriptions, kilns, decorations, forms, wares and much more, with over 2,000 entries and more than 1,000 illustrations, and is the only such reference book in English. It also has pinyin and Chinese character references on each entry and a comprehensive index for English terms, pinyin terms, reference books, and illustrations.

The opus was carefully translated by Lillian Chin of Christie's and Jay Xu of the Seattle Art Museum.

For enquiries please contact Laure Lau at orientalart@orientalartmag.com or Oriental Art Publications, 268 Orchard Road #19-06, Singapore 238856, TEL 6737 9931, FAX 6737 3190. (Hardcover; Price \$450; Free delivery in Singapore.)





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APA BABA?

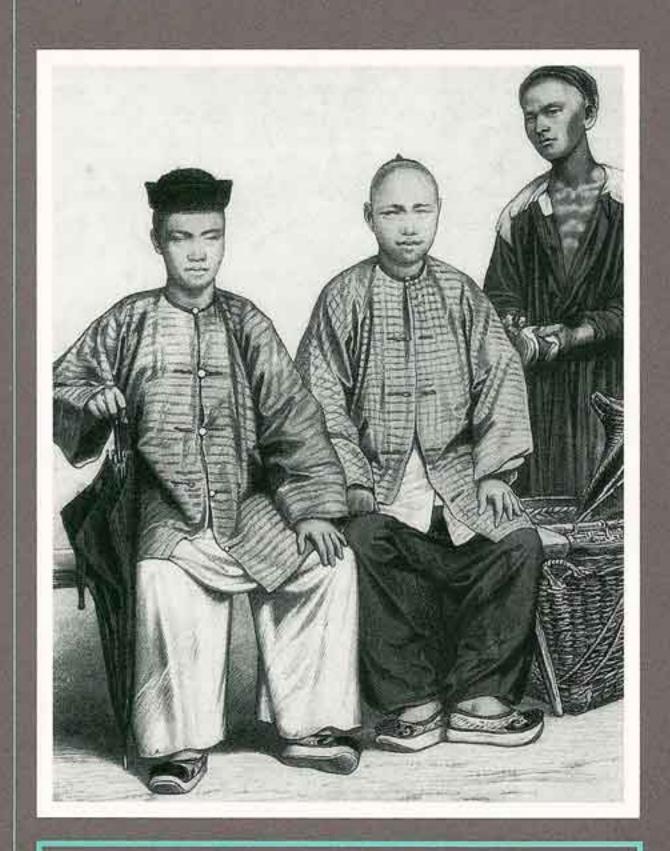
DR PARTHA DESIKAN

r Partha Desikan, who contributed this article as well as a study of Peranakan culture for our website, looks at the term Baba from an Indian perspective.

In Hindi, Urdu and several languages and dialects of North India, whose culture has been partly Islamic since about the 13th century, the word Baba means Father or Grandfather, or a Father figure such as a religious leader, especially someone regarded with considerable veneration. For example, Kriya Baba Nagaraj or simply Babaji, is a saint believed to be living in the Himalayas since the beginning of the third century. He was born in Tamil Nadu and went away to the mountains at the age of sixteen. Since then devotees have experienced miraculous visitations in various Himalayan locations at regular intervals. A Muslim fakir who lived in Shirdi, Maharashtra, and a Hindu spiritual leader who resides in Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh, are both called Sai Baba. A million devotees around the world, including the author and his family consider the Sai Babas as manifestations or avatars of God. Several other religious leaders and Masters in India are also given the respectful title Baba.

By a twist of linguistic usage, the term came also to be applied by servants in north Indian households for addressing the young children of their masters. J.D. Vaughan, in *The Manners and Customs of the Straits Settlements* (1879) noted that it was probably the Indian convicts of Penang who applied the label *Baba* for the first time to Chinese children. Some Indian shopkeepers in Penang still address all Chinese customers as *Baba*. The term *Baba* is also used in friendly conversation even today by Indians to address any close relative or friend, and may have been imported into South East Asia by Gujarati Muslim traders in the 19th century. If one visits any part of North India, whether rural or urban, he

or she will keep hearing the phrases, *Arey baba* and *Naa baba*. It is quite likely that Indians and Chinese got together as fellow traders and the former foisted the label *Baba* on to the latter. They would also have felt like using this affectionate form for addressing local children, when their own families were far away in distant Gujarat. However, whether the term *Baba* was earlier to the label *Peranakan* or not can only be a matter of conjecture.



The first Babas who arrived from China

FOR THE COMPLETE VERSION OF DR DESIKAN'S STUDY
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DR PARTHA DESIKAN OF BANGALORE, INDIA IS A SCIENTIST AND TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL SPECIALISING IN CHEMISTRY AND CHEMICAL TECHNOLOGY, WHO IS ALSO A WRITER IN TAMIL AND IN ENGLISH ON MATTERS OF CULTURAL AND LITERARY INTEREST INCLUDING A TAMIL BOOK ON SOME ASPECTS OF THE RAMAYANA, AND AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF A TAMIL CLASSIC.



BIBIKS BOLEFII

PETER LEE

ibiks Behind Bars was an unmitigated success! The two shows held on 12 and 13 September 2002 at the Kallang Theatre were completely sold out! It was a joy to witness not only the great range of ages from young children, teenagers to yuppies, ancient bibiks in wheelchairs, but also the variety of races including many Malays, Eurasians and Indians, as well as the large numbers of esteemed guests who bestowed great honour to our association by their presence, including President S R Nathan and Mrs Nathan, former President Dr and Mrs Wee Kim Wee, former First Lady Puan Noor Aishah, Mr and Mrs Lee Seng Gee and several Ministers who came incognito. Most of all the many Peranakans. However EVERYONE was united in laughter and joy.

The show also had massive support from the media — radio, TV, newspapers, magazines and websites. This huge success would not have happened without a dedicated and hardworking committee headed by Baba Richard Tan that took care of absolutely everything from budgets, production (including the fabulous and ingenious set!), publicity, and music among others. Then of course there was the support of the Marine Parade CDC, and the generous donations of some private individuals. It would also not have happened without the great support from the many professionals who lent a hand to the production and who trained the many equally passionate and dedicated amateurs who put in their hearts and souls into the production — from performers to singers to stage hands and technicians. Accolades to all the people on, behind and before the stage!

Rave reviews were given, although many had one slight bone to pick — the English translations of the dialogue was generally poor. Of course Francis Hogan

and Georgie Lee stole the show as the bickering Bibiks, although the group of Nyonyas provided excellent support with their natural talent to portray well-defined characters. Mention must be made of Jessie Cheang who has put a whole new twist to the 'Ah Sim' or maid role. The Babas also put up strong performances, especially Tony Quek as Inspector Chew. The show was made all the more sparkling with the contributions of stellar actors like Nora Samosair, Karen Lim, Darren Seah and Noorlinah Mohamed.

Watch a slightly edited version on ArtsCentral at 10 pm on 9 and 16 March 2003.

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TRUTH HURTS

PETER LEE REVIEWS GUNONG SAYANG ASSOCIATION'S SERIOUS PRESENTATION OF THE DARKER SIDE OF THE PERANAKAN EXPERIENCE

hile last year The Peranakan Association turned a funny and embarrassing part of our history into a hilarious comedy and musical, the Gunong Sayang Association took another interesting path by looking seriously at the dark and terrible domestic situations that haunted many Peranakan families in the past. Let's face it: cruelty was part and parcel of old family life. We get glimpses of it in *Emily of Emerald Hill*, in the protagonist's struggle from being an 'unwanted' orphan, to her initial place at the bottom of the family rung, to her eventual domination of the household, only to inflict the same kind of control over her son.

Anak Udang Anak Tenggiri ('Blood is Thicker Than Water'), written and directed by GT Lye, is the story of an adopted son, Bobby, who gets chased out of the house by

EMILY - Highlight of the Melbourne Festival!

PETER LEE

Wild Rice's production of Stella Kon's *Emily of Emerald Hill*, was a resounding success at the prestigious Melbourne Festival. The production, which had it's first performance outside Asia, had 6 completely sold-out performances to a largely Australian audience of more than 2,000, who gave every show a standing ovation. The standing ovation is a rare occurrence in Melbourne, and reserved for the very best performances. It's wonderful that this production from Singapore has moved Australian audiences in such a profound way, and it's

very deserving,' said Mary Ellen King, General Manager of the Melbourne Festival.

Sun as one of the highlights of the Melbourne Festival in its Festival Round Up. The Age in its 31 October edition said that Emily's star Ivan Heng 'manages the tragic emotional nuances of the character with as much authority as he does the full-on bitchy badinage with the audience where Emily doesn't so much discard the



On a little street in Melbourne



Capturing the hearts of the Australian audience

fourth wall as shed it and use it as land fill. Moving, funny and accomplished... Emily of Emerald Hill is a fascinating, entertaining and challenging piece of theatre.'

The Sunday Age on 3 November said: 'This is both a life story and a social history. It is a many layered production, about social construction and role-play, an orphan playing society hostess, a Singaporean adopting colonial airs, a man playing a woman. Full of humour, sadness and play, it is all handled with pin point timing by Heng, who is clearly a very polished performer.'

'Heng's timing is superb; it took only a sly grin or the raise of an eyebrow at the right moment to get the audience giggling. When she came out to collect her bouquet and the audience stood in ovation, Emily had a tear in her eye and so did I, such was the power of this sharp, unpredictable character,' raved the Melbourne Festival eNews.

Heng went on to move audiences in Montreal at the 10th Commerce Internationale des Arts de la Scene (CINARS), or the International Exchange for the Performing Arts from 19 to 23 November 2002. More news to come!



his family, because of the machinations of a jealous and abusive brother, Joe, disgruntled over their affections for the same woman, Kristina, and by his mother's fondness for him. Bobby then meets the cake seller Bik Turi who takes him in and who turns out to be his real mother. All ends well, a good ending precipitated by the tragic death of Bik Turi, played by KT, the only young female impersonator today, bravely carrying on an old tradi-

tion. These stories are disturbingly real, even if in a certain sense they may appear like any soap opera, and if anyone were to care to scrape beneath the surface of our family histories, we will find all the darkness, misery and injustice of domestic Peranakan life. (A member, Rosalind Lim, once

wrote on 'Slave Concubines, Slaves and Debt Slavery', in The Peranakan Associaton Newsletter, June 1996 p. 4.) The biggest delight for the audience was to enjoy all the elegance and nuance of pure, unadulterated Baba Malay dialogue. Some people even remarked on the reappearance of many antique words unheard of for a long time, such as sambaliko ('inelegant, unrefined in behaviour'), gedak-gedik ('rough and tumble') sejoklah perot lu dapat begini punya anak ('lucky to get such a son' or 'it was worthwhile carrying such a baby since it turned out to be a good son'). Although the production was hampered by an understandably tighter budget (which affected the quality of the sets and staging) and the fact that the show received little publicity, it was a wonderful effort all-round by the producers and cast including GT Lye, KT, Fredrick Soh, Alvin Teo and Lee Yong Ming, and included a touching and memorable theme song, Kristina, composed by the director.



NEW MEMBERS

The Association welcomes the following 18 life members whose addition increases our roll to 1,704 members:

Rev. Father Alfred Chan
Ms Chan Oi Lin Marissa
Mrs Chee Linda
Mr Chia Felix
Ms Choh Sok Kuang Clarinda
Mr Lau Johnson
Mdm Law Mew Lin
Mdm Lee Siew Hong Dulcie
Mr Lim Bock Seng Philip
Ms Lim Linda
Mrs Lim-Yeo Molley
Assoc Prof. Lim Beng Soon
Miss Low Rebecca

Mr Ong Tian Hoe
Miss Sing Hwee Eng Noelle
Mr Soh Poh Min Peter
Ms Tan Gek Lian Selena
Mrs Tan Khar Nai
Mrs Katherine Tan
Mr Tan Lai Mong John
Mr Tan Yu Wei Christopher
Ms Teo Suay Moi Helen
Mdm Wee Beng Choo
Mdm Wei Irene
Ms Wu Siew See
Dr Yeo Poh Kim Astrid

RETURN OF THE DINNER TALK

The eminent Professor Wang Gungwu

Professor Wang Gungwu, Director of the East Asian Institute and faculty Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Distinguished Professorial Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies who is renowned for his work on the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, has graciously agreed to present a talk to the Association (title to be announced).

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Selamat Tahun Baru Cina,

...continued from page 4

organised cultural and social schedules. Some young Peranakans, however, preferred to indulge in their 'private hobby' of gathering information about their own roots.

Yes, we do urge self-study, but by immersing yourselves in social situations where Baba patois is spoken, you will quickly pick-up common phrases, and eventually find it natural to spice up your conversations with these linguistic gems!

Some members posted lists of common phrases & their meanings. We exchanged wishes for the new year, for prosperity & peace by sending each other greetings like 'Selamat tahun baru cina',' Boleh dapat untong besair', 'Boleh satu rumah peng-an'.

We then issued an invitation to meet, listen to an explanation of phrases from a Peranakan play, and chat over kueh-kueh. We thought that it would be a good introduction to the language, but there was once again no response from the forum. We scratched our heads, and wondered about this state of young Peranakans called 'NATO'—no action, talk only!

We believe that every Peranakan has pride in his heritage. Some have started taking note of family customs, some have joined the PA, some organise activities that promote our culture; and some are still unable to spare the time to nurture their latent pride. To all young Peranakans, we say, 'Do give some thought to the comments posted on the forum, meet up and give our community 2 hours of your time every month by attending our teaching, or eating sessions. You will gain from the camaraderie, the patois, the delicious makan & the great fun.'

KEEP UPDATED ABOUT OUR COMING EVENTS, AND GET AN IDEA OF THE THOUGHTS & FEELINGS OF OTHER YOUNG NONYA & BABA. SEND AN EMAIL FROM YOUR ACCOUNT TO

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