

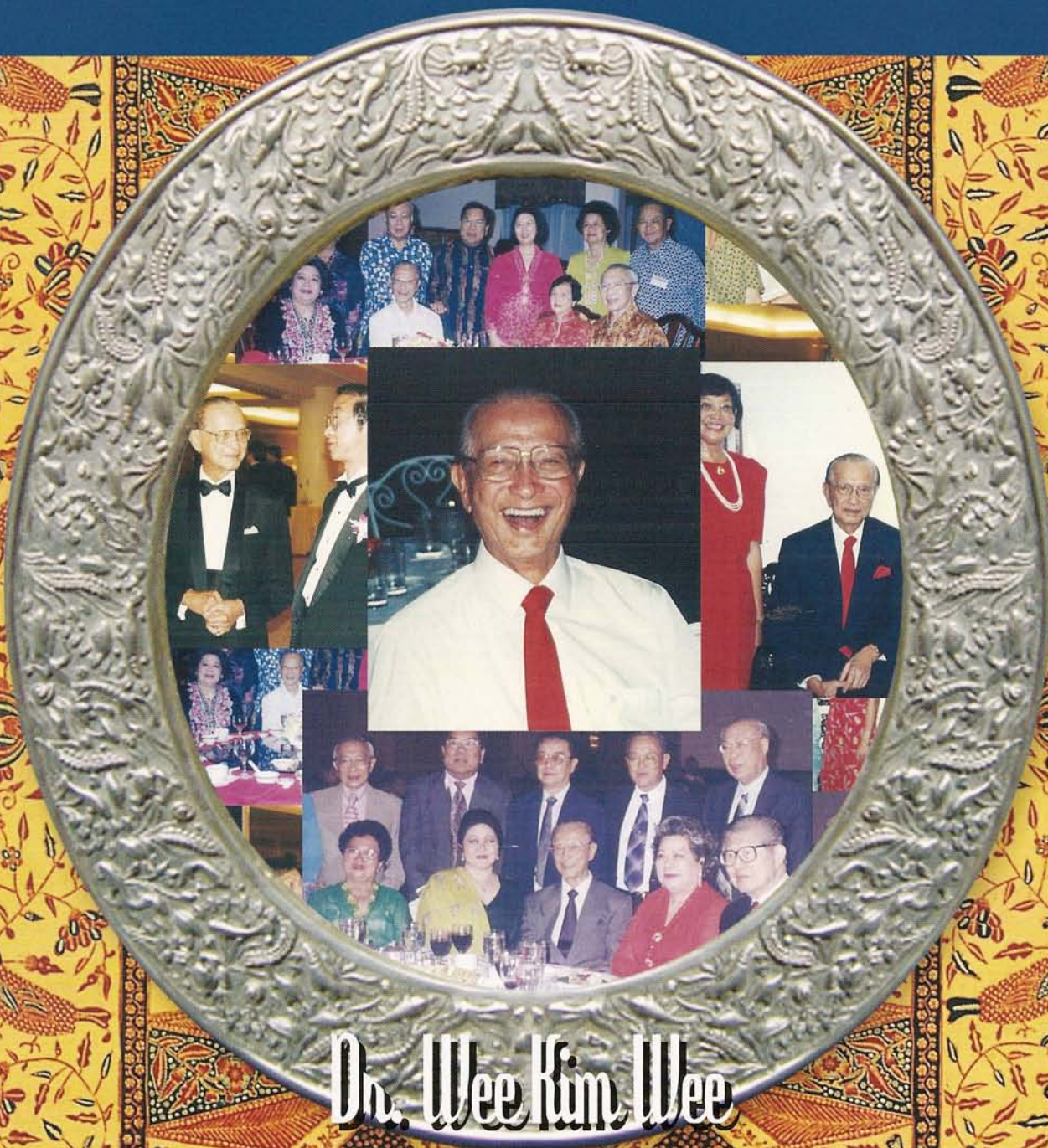
the peranakan

quarterly newsletter of the peranakan association



april-june 2005

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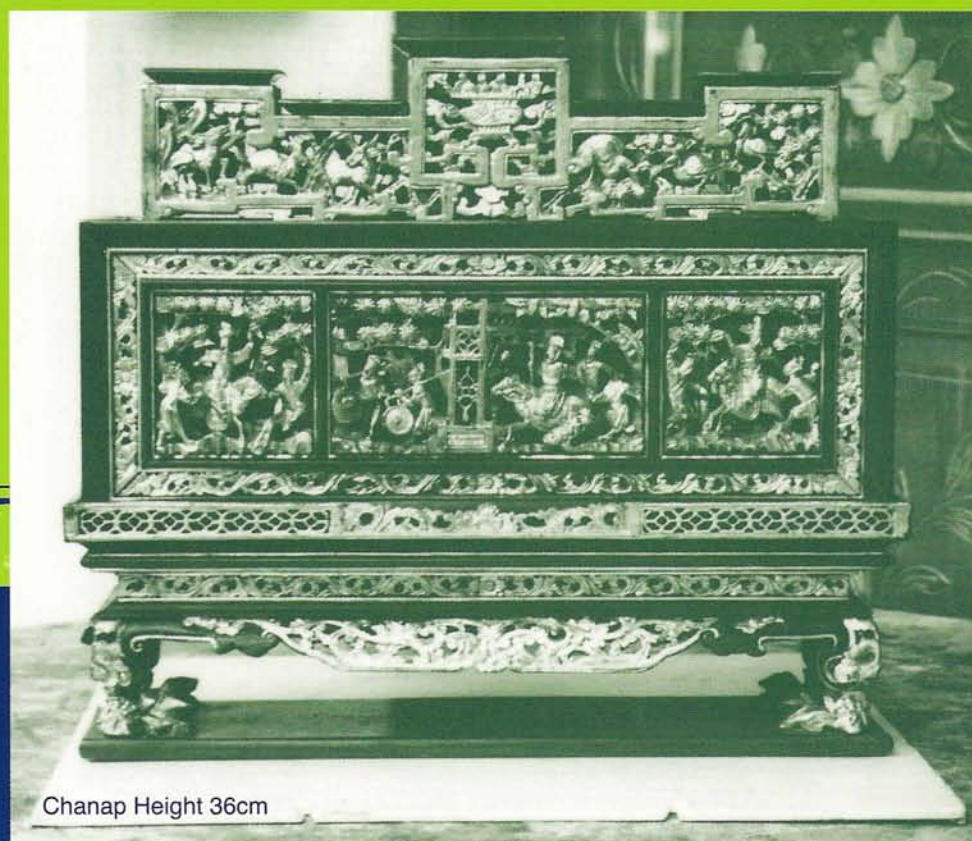


Dr. Wee Kim Wee

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EDITORIAL

Linda Chee

A NOBLE PERANAKAN

I remember more than 10 years ago, at a wedding that Dr Wee Kim Wee attended when he was the President of Singapore, I happened to mention that I was a Peranakan. "Oh, young people like you should join the Peranakan Association." I did, but only a couple of years back. It is to my regret that I did not become a member early enough to enjoy his years of support to the Association.

Dr Wee touched the lives of many, to say the least. I'm sure more than a few tears were shed, mine included, just reading the newspapers about how he helped people from all walks of society, and how he never forgot those who helped him when he was in need. The article about his Indian "brother" who slept under the staircase, so that Dr Wee's young family could stay in his one-room flat after the war, was especially poignant. His love for Mrs Wee struck more than a chord.

In this issue, we join Uncle Lee Kip Lee, our Peranakan Association President, in paying tribute to Dr Wee for making us all proud to be Peranakans. Indeed, involvement and interest in the Peranakan culture is gaining momentum, in this part of the world and across many time zones. As a nyonya in England, for instance, Josephine Chia tells about how a food tasting event evoked great interest in our culture when she wore her sarong kebaya.

Nearer to home, George Putrasahan gives a fascinating account of Peranakans in Padang, Sumatra. Peter Lee tells me that a lot of the best gold and silver, beadwork etc in our local collections all seem to come from Padang. There, old traditions are very much alive and being practised. Which has prompted me to write about probably Singapore's only surviving Peranakan mutual help association, whose annual tradition of sembahyang abu, or ancestral worship, has been faithfully practised for over seven generations!

How apt then, to have a feature by Anthony Oei, on the pioneering forefathers mentioned in Uncle Kip's speech at last year's D&D. Which brings me to close with a gentle reminder to our members: Book your tickets for the Association's coming D&D at the Neptune Restaurant on 25 November. Have a leg up on the ronggeng!

Cover: Photographs of Dr Wee Kim Wee by courtesy of Ms Wee Eng Hwa.
Photograph of silver dish by courtesy of Dr Lye Wai Choong

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*We shall meet but we shall miss him
There will be a vacant chair.
We shall linger to caress him
While we breathe our evening prayer.*

A Tribute to Dr. Wee Kim Wee Our Honorary Life Member

We extend our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Wee Kim Wee and her family on their irreplaceable loss and share with them their grief. Dr. Wee Kim Wee, whose memory will at all times stay with us, was every inch a Peranakan, as well as being the most eminent member of our community. His interest in, and his support of our cause was unstinted whenever we turned to him for advice and when he had proposals to offer. In fact, the emergence of this Newsletter was the result of his suggestion that a periodical was needed to serve "as a very useful conduit for all Peranakans in Singapore to be informed and to exchange views on subjects of mutual interest". Occasionally, he would contribute a letter to the editor. We greatly appreciated his and Mrs. Wee's regular attendance at our Annual Dinner and Dance when his formal acceptance of our invitation would inevitably be accompanied by a donation cheque. The welfare of the Association was frequently on his mind as when he invited delegates to the Baba Convention to the Istana for tea; when he brought some of us to the Indonesian Embassy for a special Keronchong Night, or when, in 1996, he had an ambitious and enthusiastic, but, alas, unfulfilled plan to organise "a big charity event, with tables sold at \$1,000 or more each." It was to be a Gunong Sayang Association Wayang Peranakan Road Show beginning with the 10th Baba Convention in Penang and travelling southwards to Kuala Lumpur, Malacca and Singapore. 🌸





My mother, born and bred in Malacca, was a very beautiful and refined lady, and was proud of being a Peranakan. Although she went from wealth to poverty when she married my father and went to Singapore to live in a shanty hut in Kampong Potong Pasir, she was always sophisticated and regal. My book, "Frog Under A Coconut Shell", was written to honour her. It was she who instilled in me a sense of tradition and culture, making me hold fiercely to my Peranakan heritage in Singapore when unthinking school kids made fun of me because I looked Malay, spoke Malay and yet was Chinese.

His rival, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes stories, lived at Hindhead, our neighbouring town. The story is that they were so competitive with each other that Sir Arthur called his house, Undershaw because it was down the hill from George Bernard Shaw's home. Down the road from us is the home of HG Wells and further south are the homes of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens. So, as an aspiring writer, it was wonderful for me to move into this area.

When I was short-listed in 1992 for UK's top literary prize for short fiction, the Ian St. James Awards, I was interviewed by the local newspaper and the headline was 'Singapore-born Surrey Writer In Line For Major Fiction Award'. When I won the prize, two different newspapers interviewed me. Their headlines went : 'Short Story Wins Grayshott Writer Major Prize' and 'Tropical Fever With A Bonus.'



Josephine Chia

Here in England, after having been in this country for the last 20 years, I still hold on fiercely to my Peranakan heritage not because I am being made fun of but because people make me feel special. Unlike the racial prejudice that exists in big cities, here in the small village of Grayshott on the borders of Surrey and Hampshire, 60 miles outside London, people do respect other cultures and some even go out of their way to make me feel welcome. The village is very English and I know of no other ethnic person in the area so much so that when I first arrived, I was very conscious of the colour of my skin.

Grayshott is a very picturesque village with a Square around which are a few shops and very old houses, like my own which is more than a hundred years old. There are three beautiful lakes, lovely forests and a thousand acres of land for walking and picnicking. It is also a historically literary village, with George Bernard Shaw, famous playwright of My Fair Lady, having lived in our village whose former house is now a school.

Tropical Fever was the title of my winning short story. This publicity helped to establish me as a local writer. From then on, my cookery book, Taste Of Singapore, was sold in the local bookshop and in the Pottery, where they sell gifts and pottery made on the premises and where there is a lovely tea-shop for that quintessential English Cream Tea, oven-hot scones with fresh cream and home-made jam.

When the bookshop changed hands, the new owner, Julia Madgwick, invited me to have a Singaporean Food Tasting event in her store and to promote my book. She particularly requested me to dress in my sarong kebaya. I did. People complimented me on my outfit and asked about Singapore and my culture. The English were not just being patronising but were genuinely interested. So it occurred to me that this was the best way for me to promote my own Peranakan culture, Singapore and Singaporean Cookery. Thus began my private journey as a writer and a self-appointed ambassador for Peranakan culture and Singapore.



Waterstones, one of the UK's largest bookstores, invited me to their branch in Guildford, Surrey, to do a Singaporean Cookery demonstration. I went in my sarong kebaya and on that one Saturday, they sold 70 copies of my cookery book! Many of the people who came to watch the cooking demonstrations were new to Singaporean Cookery or were families of those who had been stationed in Singapore. But it was not until *Frog Under A Coconut Shell* came out in 2002 that I began to receive invitations from readers groups and the women's institutes to give talks about Singapore, the Peranakan culture and cooking demonstrations.

I have been asked to teach, besides yoga, Singaporean Cookery at adult learning centres. Some of my students have been men! Except

when I am teaching yoga, I always dress in my sarong kebaya. In winter, because its material is more suited for the tropics, I have to wear a body-warmer underneath and have a shawl round my shoulders!

My diary for Year 2005 is already full with appointments to speak and teach. I prefer to stick to venues in the home counties of Surrey, Hampshire and West Sussex for these engagements because at least they are within a day's driving distance from me. Bearing in mind that the county of Surrey is five times larger than Singapore and Hampshire just as big and West

Sussex is bigger still, that's a lot of driving!

But I love it! Even more than my previous career as a PR/Marketing Manager because now I am doing what I truly love: writing, teaching and cooking. To top it, my appreciative audience always acknowledge me as a writer, fulfilling one of my major dreams. It is also wonderful how they respect my ethnicity and yet acknowledge me as one of them. And although I am a nonya abroad, di luar negeri, I no longer feel that I am only a visitor – England has become home to me just as Singapore had been.

Acknowledging another country as home does not diminish the importance of Singapore and Peranakan culture for me, because both are an intrinsic part of me that can never be erased or taken away. And I am proud of both. ❖

The Herald 6th December 2002

Josephine has a tale to tell

Josephine Chua, 51, from Singapore, is the author of the new book *Body and Mind Sculpture/Shape up for Self Discovery* about shaping not only the physical but also the emotional and mental bodies. It uses everyday concepts to bring the reader closer to the true meaning of yoga explaining in practical terms what yoga bodywork is about.



An appetising welcome to Singaporean cookery

Josephine Chua, 51, from Singapore, is the author of the new book *Body and Mind Sculpture/Shape up for Self Discovery* about shaping not only the physical but also the emotional and mental bodies. It uses everyday concepts to bring the reader closer to the true meaning of yoga explaining in practical terms what yoga bodywork is about.

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The Herald 2nd May 2003

Yoga - with a difference Grayshott author's latest

A YOGA book with a difference, is the latest in a line of books by Grayshott author Josephine Chua.

Body and Mind Sculpture/Shape up for Self Discovery is about shaping not only the physical but also the emotional and mental bodies. It uses everyday concepts to bring the reader closer to the true meaning of yoga explaining in practical terms what yoga bodywork is about.

The book, which is also suitable for the complete beginner, is divided into body sculpture and mind sculpture and is written in short and concise paragraphs.

The 52-year-old author, who is originally from Singapore, dispels the myth that yoga is strictly a spiritual term of body fitness.

Ms Chua believes that you can begin yoga at any age and was persuaded by the publisher



Lifestyle

Singapore-born Surrey writer in line for major fiction award

Villages

Josephine offers a taste of the Orient with western ingredients

Short story wins Grayshot writer major prize

Tropical Fever with a bonus

Band OF Brothers

Linda Chee

Formed in 1831, the Keng Teck Whay is probably Singapore's only surviving Peranakan association forged out of a brotherhood for mutual help. It has continued for seven generations but whither its future?

You would never have guessed that the Keng Teck Whay was not a religious institution. Flanking the resplendent Thian Hock Keng Temple on the right, the secretariat at 150, Telok Ayer Street is easily mistaken as an extension of the temple.

The Preservation of Monuments Board has marked its premises for conservation. So the Keng Teck Whay members must ensure its architectural attributes be kept intact, come what may. A bigger concern though, is how this monument to seven generations of brotherhood will be able to withstand societal change, in a struggle to sustain its membership, traditions and rituals.

The Keng Teck Whay was founded in 1831 as a family benefit society by 36 young Chinese wholesalers and merchants from Malacca and Singapore. Their surnames were varied: Ang, Chan, Chee, Cheong, Chia, Chua, Gan, Ho, Khoo, Koh, Lee, Neo, Ong, Seet, So, Tan, Tay, Yap and Yeo. No matter, the men took an oath of mutual help that

would bind them and successive generations.

Each subscribed \$100 to a common fund to invest in property, provide for destitute widows and families of the association, and also for charitable causes. Fairly well-to-do, the businessmen contributed financially to the establishment of the Thian Hock Keng Temple, giving from \$24 to \$305. No small beer, back in 1831. They also gave generously to other Chinese institutions and education.

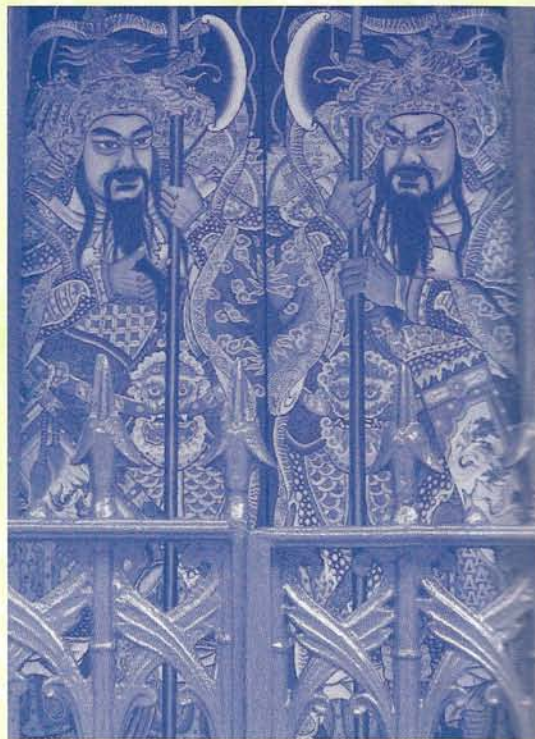
Membership came with a strict ruling to sembayang five times a year – on the 14th day of the 1st, 7th and 10th Chinese Moons to their patron sage, Sam Kuan Tai Teh; and during Cheng Beng and Tang Chek to the memorial tablets of the founders.

Today, the Keng Teck Whay observes these practices under the watch of a constitution that has ensured succession by male descendants of the founder members. The seat is passed either from father to son or to a brother and his son, but always on the father's side and bearing the same surname.

After 174 years of history, a total of 29 members remain: 17 in Singapore and 12 in its only branch in Malacca. All of them are

descendants of the original 36 founders; the reduced numbers a consequence of some members passing on without leaving any male successors.

Meanwhile, the secretariat entrance, bent under the strain of age, reflects the burden of continuity shouldered by the current generation of members. My father, Louis Tan Tiang Hong, 78, a direct descendant of founder-member Tan Beng Chong, is one from this generation. ❖





December 1831: In the Reign of Emperor Toh Kong, 10th Moon of the Dragon Year, 36 young Chinese businessmen from Malacca and Singapore formed the Keng Teck Whay.

Sembayang ABU CHENG BENG AT THE Keng Teck Whay

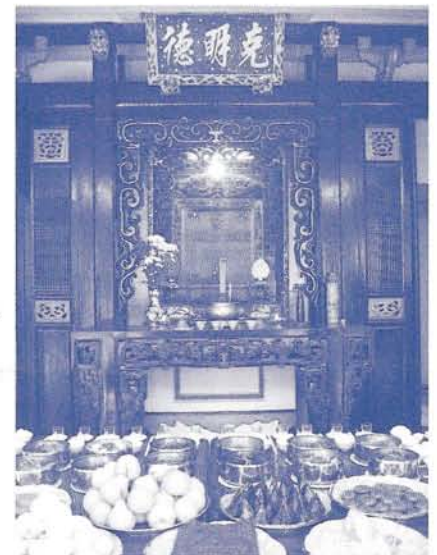
Randall Ee and Linda Chee

The annual tradition of sembayang abu or ancestor worship is carried out faithfully through the generations of the Keng Teck Whay during the period of Cheng Beng, in early April each year. An elaborate "feast" is prepared and prayers are offered to the ancestral tablets at the altar.

Traditionally, the cooks (chongpohs) of the house or association would cook the food that would be offered to the ancestors on the altar. It was

the duty of the men (babas) to serve and place the offerings on the table. Nowadays, the Keng Teck Whay has resorted to the more convenient measure of ordering the food from restaurants.

Witnessing a recent sembayang abu at the Keng Teck Whay is a rare sight. Peranakan families that still practise this usually do it in the ancestral house or a home. Even in the homes, the practice today is not as common as it once was.



Sembayang abu also involves a simple ritual known as Chia Abu or the invitation to the ancestors. It usually takes place on the evening of the day before the feast. Simple fruit offerings and lighted candles are placed on the altar. Then the head of the house or association would ritually invite the ancestors by name with lighted joss sticks, telling them of the feast on the next day and for them to make the journey back to the home to partake in the feast laid out for them. ☸

THE Ancestral

ALTAR OFFERINGS

At the front of the memorial tablet were placed brandy, sweet kueh (teh liow), sireh (betel leaves), cigarettes



and flowers. These were to complete the offerings made to the ancestors as in life, it was a common practice to chew sireh or smoke a cigarette after a meal (and sometimes before).

LAOK TOK

A total of 36 bowls of rice were lined up for the 36 founders of the Keng Teck Whay. Rice was traditionally served in rice bowls with an additional bowl of rice placed on it. The rice was the staple for a wide assortment of Peranakan dishes as follows:



- *Itek*
- *Babi Panggang* (using *sam chien bak* or belly pork)
- *Ayam*

Panggang Mee (yellow noodles)

- *Joohee* (Cuttlefish)
- *Kepiting* (Crabs)
- *Ayam Sioh*
- *Kueh Pie Tee* (in place of *Pong Tahu*)
- *Itek Sio*
- *Chap Chye*
- *Babi Pongteh*
- *Itek Tim*
- *Ikan Pari Masak Kua Ladah*
- *Hati Babi Bungkus*
- *Udang Goreng Rempah*
- *Ayam Buah Keluak*
- *Hee Pio*
- *Perot Babi*



KUEH SEMBAYANG

Desserts were aplenty, to complete the whole feast:

- *Kueh Wajek*
- *Mangkok Kueh* or *Huat Kueh*
- *Kueh Ku Merah*
- *Kueh Kochee*
- *Kueh Ku Hitam*
- *Tebu* (sugarcane)
- *Pisang Raja* (a type of banana)
- Pears
- Apples
- Oranges

Around noon, the association president tossed two kidney-shaped pieces of wood blocks in a ritual known as *pak puey*. This is done to see if the ancestors had finished their meal. A confirmation usually involves one of the blocks falling and the other falling face down. Once the confirmation was secured, a basket of folded joss paper "money" was brought out, offered to the altar and set aflame to be "spirited" up to the ancestors. The altar was then cleared, and the food and dessert offerings distributed to the members of the association.

PERANAKAN POWER IN EARLY SINGAPORE



The First SCBA Committee 1900. Back row (from left): Mr Seah Eng Kiat, Dr Lim Boon Keng, Mr Chia Keng Chin, Mr Tan Boo Liat, Mr Tan Hup Seng, & Mr Wee Thiam Tew. Front row (from left): Mr Ong Kew Hoe, Mr Chan Chuan Fook, Mr Tan Chay Yan, Mr Song Ong Siang, . Hon. Mr Tan Jiak Kim (President), Mr Seah Liang Seah, Mr Lee Cheang Yee, & Mr Wee Kim Yam.

By Anthony Oei

In his address at our 2004 Dinner and Dance function, President Lee Kip Lee paid tribute to our forefathers for their achievements in commerce, philanthropy, education and politics, declaring that “these are the most priceless and motivating aspects of our heritage.”

Indeed, the Straits-born or Peranakan community of early Singapore played a dominant role in Singapore affairs. They were enterprising, innovative, adventurous, farsighted and bold. In their ranks were those who wielded power and influence.

Let's turn back the pages of history a bit and meet some of these prominent Peranakan personalities whose contributions will long be remembered and whose pioneering spirit is an inspiration to us.

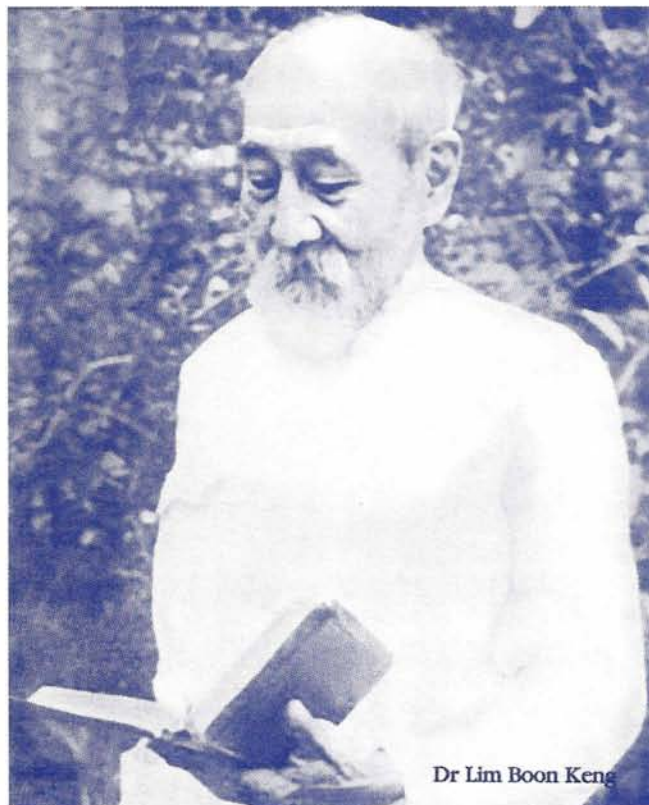
Tan Tock Seng, born in Malacca in 1798, moved to Singapore and became wealthy working as a retailer and land speculator. He was also a philanthropist. His greatest and most enduring legacy is, of course, the Tan Tock Seng hospital.

Tan Kim Seng, born in Malacca in 1805, was a trader and land owner. There is a road in Singapore named after him. Another well-known Malacca-born Peranakan (1844) was Gan Eng Seng, a compradore, labour contractor and property owner. He contributed to the development of education, with a school bearing his name.

Cheang Hong Lim, born in Singapore in 1825, was a shipowner, opium and spirit farmer and property owner. He is immortalised by a large park in Chinatown.

Other great Singapore-born Babas, like Tan Beng Swee (1828), Tan Kim Ching (1829), Seah Liang Seah (1850) and Tan Jiak Kim (1857), even went regional in their businesses long before the word "regionalisation" was coined.

Beng Swee, a trader, was the first Singapore Chinese merchant to open an import-export firm in Shanghai, and



Dr Lim Boon Keng

that in the days of sailing ships. Kim Ching, a sawmill and ship owner, had rice mills in Vietnam and Siam (now Thailand). Liang Seah, a gambier and pepper merchant and owner of pineapple-canning factories, developed plantations in Johor. Jiak Kim, a trader in tin and other local products, founded the Straits Steamship Company that helped facilitate Singapore's foreign trade.



Mr Tan Jiak Kim



Mr S J Chan

Then there were Dr Lim Boon Keng (1869), a physician, and Sir Song Ong Siang (1871), a lawyer, who contributed much to Singapore's social development.

Dr Lim is credited with being a pioneer in Chinese education in Singapore by initiating a programme of Mandarin classes for English-educated Chinese. He recognised the importance of English and Mandarin, describing these two languages as keys to the understanding of both occidental and oriental civilisations. He and Sir Song Ong Siang also provided new ideas and incentives for the promotion of Chinese interests.

These Baba trail-blazers, along with several China-born contemporaries, formed Singapore's Chinese leadership between 1819 and 1900, according to Dr C F Yong in his book, *Chinese Leadership and Power in Colonial Singapore*.

At the turn of the century (1900), the Peranakan leaders strengthened their positions and established their Peranakan identity by forming the Straits Chinese British Association (SCBA), the forerunner of the Peranakan Association.

The SCBA leaders up to the outbreak of World War II, were Dr Lim Boon Keng, Sir Song Ong Siang, Tan Jiak Kim and Seah Liang Seah, as well as Lee Choon Guan, Koh San Hin, Tay Lian Teck (all merchants), Wee Swee Teow, Chan Sze Jin, Ong Tiang Wee, S Q Wong (lawyers), and Dr Lim Han Hoe (physician).

Dr Yong describes them as the dominant socio-economic force in those days. They initiated projects for the well-being of the Chinese community. They were vocal, too. The British, acknowledging their strength and value to

Singapore society, allowed them to participate in local affairs and often nominated them as unofficial members of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council, Municipal Commission and other government bodies

The SCBA leaders took full advantage of the platform provided. Although they pledged their loyalty to the British Crown, they made demands for improved working conditions, better education, more employment opportunities and other issues.

In the field of education, they advocated the adoption of free primary school education and contributed in cash and kind to the setting up of the King Edward VII Medical School in 1905 and Raffles College in 1928, among other education projects. They knew that higher education was the passport to a better future.

In the field of employment opportunities, their greatest breakthrough, after years of agitation in the Legislative Council, was opening the door that allowed Singaporeans to work in the Straits Settlements Civil Service previously barred to non-Europeans.

Not only did the SCBA leaders keep the socio-economic development wheels turning, some of them also tried, in the 1920s and 1930s, to influence the course of local politics by proposing a self-governing Malaya. They wanted locals to play a greater role in the political life of the country. Yes, there was political consciousness even in those days.

In his book, Dr Yong makes no mention of the outcome of the call for self-government. Probably no major headway was made at that time and the agenda fizzled out with the outbreak of World War II. Nevertheless, we can see that the anti-colonial movement that took place after the war and led us to independence was not an original idea. Come to think of it, many of the ideas on business and social matters bandied about today are not new either. Our forefathers had planted the seeds.

Their spirit of enterprise lives on to this day. There are Peranakans in business, the professions, government, the arts and other meaningful occupations. Our own Peranakan Association itself boasts members who are in many of these lines. Today's Peranakan community will continue to contribute significantly to Singapore. It is the spirit that made Singapore a great entrepot and now a global manufacturing and services hub as well. For us Babas and Nyonyas, there is another valuable gift



Sir Ong Siang Song

Dato' S Q Wong

Mr Wee Swee Teow

we cherish The Peranakan Association. Thanks to our ancestors, we have the vehicle for preserving and promoting our unique culture.

We will always remember them with pride and gratitude. ☸

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Uniquely Padang Peranakan

By George Putrasahan

Despite the 32 years of Suharto's Indonesianization between 1965 and 1997, when all forms of Chinese festivals and literature were barred, traditional values of the Peranakans are pretty much intact, as our recent visit to Padang, West Sumatra, showed up.

Small numbers of Chinese seafarers and merchants had migrated to Padang long before the Europeans colonised Indonesia. In 1819, Padang town was bustling with some 10,000 people, of which the Chinese made up a mere pocket of 200. Cut off from China and compelled to assimilate, almost all Peranakans here today speak Minang or Malay only, unlike the Peranakans in Medan who converse mainly in Hokkien, a dialect popular even with Bataks and Indians.

The native Minangkabaus comprise a homogenous matriarchal society, one of only three or four such societies still existing in the world. Living side by side with the Peranakans, each holds very much to their own traditions. This mutual respect possibly explains why Peranakans are able to preserve and practise their traditions until today, even after four or five generations in Padang.

One example is the various surname organisations in Padang (Lie, Gho, Oei, Tan, Lim, Tjoa, etc), each comprising between 200 and 500 members. Their committee



A street in Padang's Chinatown.



The Putrasahans in the reception hall of a Peranakan house in Padang.

members, about 20 persons, regularly meet on every Che It and Chap Goh to pay respects to their ancestors or discuss important matters. These organizations may have been originally formed as mutual help groups but nowadays they are more like social clubs. Their leader and deputy are still addressed as twako and jiko, and members as cin nang or cin nang soh (for the ladies).

The two existing Peranakan social organizations are the Himpunan Bersatu Teguh or HBT (formerly Heng Beng Tong), with branch organisations in Padang Panjang, Bukit Tinggi, Payah Kumbu and Pekanbaru; and the Himpunan Tjinta Teman or HTT (formerly Hock Tek Tong), which is said to have originated in Malaysia.

Both organisations promote cultural and sports activities, offering their facilities for social functions like weddings, funeral services and some festival celebrations. In a meeting with HBT leaders we were

told that their members (hia ti and hia soh) actively promote social functions among all the communities. The younger generation is encouraged to learn about their cultural heritage and at the same time write pantuns

(poems) in the local Minang language. The main cultural activities are the lion and dragon dances.

Like some Chinese dialect groups, wedding rituals are customary where the parents of the bridegroom present a large angpaw, half of which would be returned later by the bride's parents. Gifts are exchanged before the wedding day. The bride's parents present a dowry of household utensils (in pairs), jewellery, a bronze bucket, a pair of shoes and two new suitcases for the new couple. After the wedding dinner, the couple kneel to receive gifts and angpows from their elders. Their parents are presented

a pair of sandals and a housecoat to symbolise care for their wellbeing after the marriage.

The more extreme among Padang Peranakans insist on being part of the local culture by marrying only pribumis (locals). Others are thoroughly westernised from overseas stay. There remain though, the Peranakans who believe in the diversity principle of Indonesian society, and so continue their traditions as a way of life including imparting practices to the next generation like addressing relatives according to position instead of the generic "uncle and aunt".

Padang Peranakans in the 19th Century

They were mostly traders or retailers for commodities such as kayu manis (cinnamon) coffee, gambier and pepper. In the latter 19th century, building new market places became popular and some Peranakans, led by a wealthy businessman called Lie Saay, set up a very successful market on their tanah kongsi (jointly owned land). Many shop owners today are still the Peranakans.



Gho Goan Tee 1900



3 Padang Babas in Medan, 1927

The Dutch government appointed Lie Saay a Capitan China to take charge of the Chinese Peranakan residents. Later, his children Lie Khong Teck and Lie Khong Haan were also appointed as Capitans. Other prominent Padang Capitans were Oei Soei Kiat, Gho Goan Tee and Gho Soon Tong.

Dalam Dapur

The inside story – of spare parts and organ meats

by Noreen Chan

It is said that Chinese will eat anything with four legs except a table, anything that flies except an aeroplane and anything that swims except a submarine. Perhaps they should also add that the Chinese will eat any organ except a pipe organ! Indeed, the Chinese are loathe to waste any part of a pig – as testified in the TV programme “Extreme Gourmet” -- having created hundreds of recipes to use every edible bit.

The enjoyment of organ or “variety” meats is not confined to the Chinese. Once, in a traditional restaurant in Vienna, I was struggling to make sense of the menu, all written in German. If not for the kind translation by a helpful local, I would have unknowingly ordered calves’ brains, a local specialty.

Even names in English may be misleading. I have heard lungs referred to as “lights”. Lamb fries are, well, testicles. France is no better, where the interestingly named Lyonnais specialty “tablier sapeur” (literally sapper’s apron) is tripe cooked in a white wine and cream sauce. The French, of course, are reputed for their imaginative ways of cooking internal organs, including delicacies such as boudin noir, a specialty pork sausage enriched with blood.

The Peranakans, true to their Chinese roots, have evolved a number of dishes around organ parts. In the days when ancestors were feted with 12 kinds of dishes for the Cheng Beng sembayang,

foods like char tee hee, purut babi and hati babi figured prominently. Now-defunct Peranakan restaurant Cheng Heng used to cook a mean Hailam-style hot and tangy purut kambing soup, only by personal request (or wheedling). It used to be a family staple for Chinese New Year. My mother would order weeks before; we even had a dedicated enamel soup pot with her name written prominently on the side to collect this precious cargo.

In recent times, though, health concerns are denting the popularity of such dishes, notoriously high in saturated fat, cholesterol and a protein called purines which can aggravate gout. Caught up with work, fewer families can indulge in the time-consuming preparation. But as my grandmother would say “bukan hari hari makan, kadang kadang let go tak apa” (not to eat every day, but occasionally to indulge yourself, is OK).

For Penang-style recipes featuring internal organs, the book “Nonya Flavours – A Complete Guide to Penang Straits Chinese Cuisine” has a good selection including Too Hee Char Ong Lai (Fried Pig’s Lung with Pineapple) and Too Huwait Char Kuchai (Stir Fried Chives with Pig’s Blood). The book is highly recommended, if only for the droolworthy photographs.



HATI BABI BUNGKUS (MINCED PORK AND LIVER BALLS)

This is a labour-intensive dish rarely found outside a Peranakan home and even then, prepared maybe once or twice a year for festive occasions. Made with minced liver and pork wrapped in caul, it derives its distinctive Peranakan flavour from the generous use of ketumbar or ground coriander seed. The richness or *jelak* of the dish is counteracted by a pickle made with julienned mustard greens (*luak chye* or *sayo sesawi*), salted and the excess water squeezed out. Sugar, vinegar and powdered mustard are added to taste.

The balls can be made ahead of time and steamed before freezing. Defrost and shallow fry until brown on all sides before serving. The caul wrapping helps to give a *garing* or crisp finish while keeping the meat moist.

HATI BABI BUNGKUS BUNGSEK

1/2 kati hati babi

1 bungsek

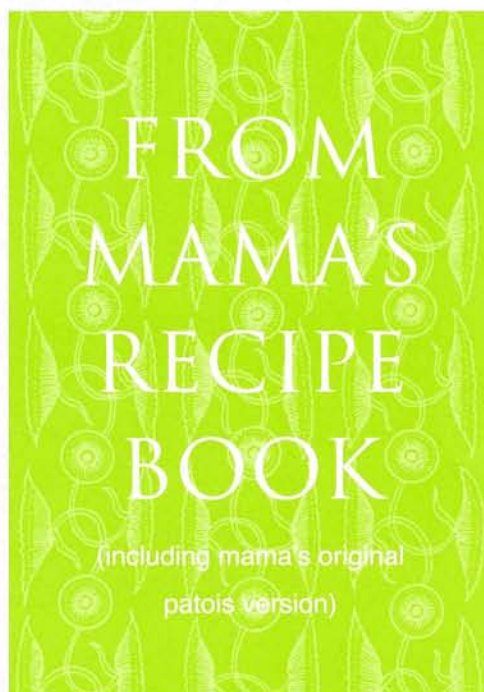
1 kati esee babi

1 kati minyak babi

Rumpah ketumbar goring halus

Hati babi -- Esee babi chingchang halus, sedikit minyak babi potong kecil chumpoh sama esee. Tumis bawang merah, masok hati babi sudah potong sekerping2 abis tuang rumpah panas atau kertumba bia rata. Suda sedjok, potong kecil2. Champor sama esee semua, tarok gula, garem, lada, abis boongkoos satu2 sama bungsek baru goring. Makan sama luak chye.

Luak chye -- Sayo sesawi di chuchi bresi, abis rawot sayo, daon dan batang lain kan. Ahlia di iris masok kan. Ramas sayo sama garem bia lecho abis peras ayer nya kerlua. Ramas batang juga sama garem abis peras ayer nya. Bukak kan di tongok bia kering. Toombok bawang puteh, halia bia halus, tarok



mustard powder, sugar sama chukka, sedekit ayer makan abis masok kan sayo semua bia rata.

CHAR BEK (PIG KIDNEY & LIVER SOUP)

My mother detested cooking this dish because of the work involved in cleaning the pig kidneys. If not done properly the final dish would have an unpleasant ammoniacal smell. The kidneys have to be split and the tough inner portion removed. After thorough washing they are soaked in brandy with ginger. Those prone to gout beware!

CHABAKE (BATAWEE)

Yoke chee, bla, bresi kan dalam, kerluar2 moonka abis potong. Tarok brandy chelor kan 2-3 times. Esee babi potong nipis2. Tee-kuah or tee-cheek, tarok brandy abis reboos.

Tumis bawang puteh, suda garing masok halia iris, abis babi iris, suda serup tuang ayer tarok garem, mau makan masok yoke chee, tee-kuah etc, tarok wanswee.

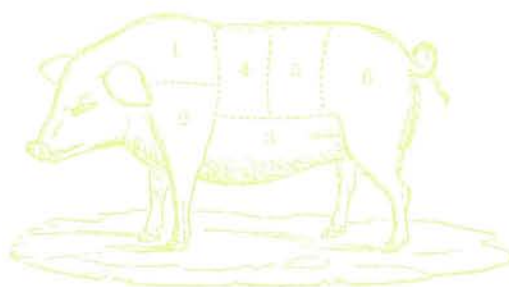
CHAR TEEHEE (FRIED PIG LUNGS WITH BAMBOO SHOOTS)

Practically the only place one might find lungs of any sort nowadays are at the nasi padang stalls (and those would be beef lung). I recall seeing my great aunt boiling up a pair of lungs for Cheng Beng prayers; the frothing, bubbling sight was not to be forgotten for a while. This recipe calls for boiled lung to be finely sliced, and fried with sliced pork, bamboo shoot, ginger and flavoured with *towcheo* (fermented soybean).

CHAR TEEHEE

Teehee rebus abis iris, babi iris, rebong iris, ahlia iris.

Tumis bawang puteh, suda garing masok ahlia, abis towcheo, suda wangi masok rebong, babi, teehee. Tarok garem, ayer sedikit, balek2 suda kering angkat.



Kebaya Splendour

by Cedric Tan

The exuberance of the Nyonya Kebaya was spotlighted in Malaysia and Singapore in a flurry of highly publicized activities showcasing its heritage and attraction as an elegant fashion item. In Kuala Lumpur, a glittering gala charity dinner themed on the Peranakan Wedding on 12 December was graced by the First Lady of Kebaya herself, Datin Paduka Seri Endon Mahmood and specially honoured by her husband, Malaysia's Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi. The event, held at the KL Hilton, raised RM300,000 for three women's organizations i.e. Women's Aid Organisation, women shelters Pusat Kasih Sayang in Klang and Rumah Solehah in Cheras, KL.

In keeping with the spirit of the tradition, the Malaccan-style wedding procession was staged with the bridal couple resplendent in gold embroidered wedding costumes. Hosts for the night, Bibik GT and Bibik KT provided a running commentary piled on with comic relief.

The highlight of the evening was the kebaya fashion show. Malaysian designers such as Razduan Radzill, Beatrice



Kebaya way to closer ties



CULTURE 1901: The Peranakan voice choir entertaining guests with two duet songs at the launch of the exhibition in Singapore on Tuesday.

SINGAPORE: Kebaya, a traditional Malaccan-style wedding dress, was showcased at the launch of the exhibition in Singapore on Tuesday. The event was held at the KL Hilton and was attended by the Prime Minister, Datin Paduka Seri Endon Mahmood, and other dignitaries. The exhibition, which runs from 12 to 20 February, features a collection of traditional Nyonya Kebaya dresses and accessories. The event was a success, raising RM300,000 for three women's organizations.

Looi, Bill Keith, Salikin Sidek and Embun paraded their interpretations of the kebaya. They were followed by antique sarong kebayas sponsored by Baba Peter Wee and yours truly as the fashion and event consultant. Other kebaya-related promotions in Malaysia included road shows in Johor Baru (10-11 December), Malacca (30 -31 December), Kuching (January) and even a street parade in urban hotspot Bangsar on 18 December.

Datin Seri's own kebaya collection took to the road with highly successful public exhibitions in KLCC's Petronas Gallery from 12 - 20 February and Singapore's Asian Civilisations Museum at Empress Place from 9 March - 29 May. The Singapore event, which ran for nearly three months, also featured a display of modern interpretations of the kebaya by Singapore designers Bebe Seet, Francis Louis Ler and Ali Milmodh.

Note: For more information on the kebaya promotional activities, please contact Cedric at or surf the following website: www.tv3.com.my and click onto the Kebaya Splendour button.

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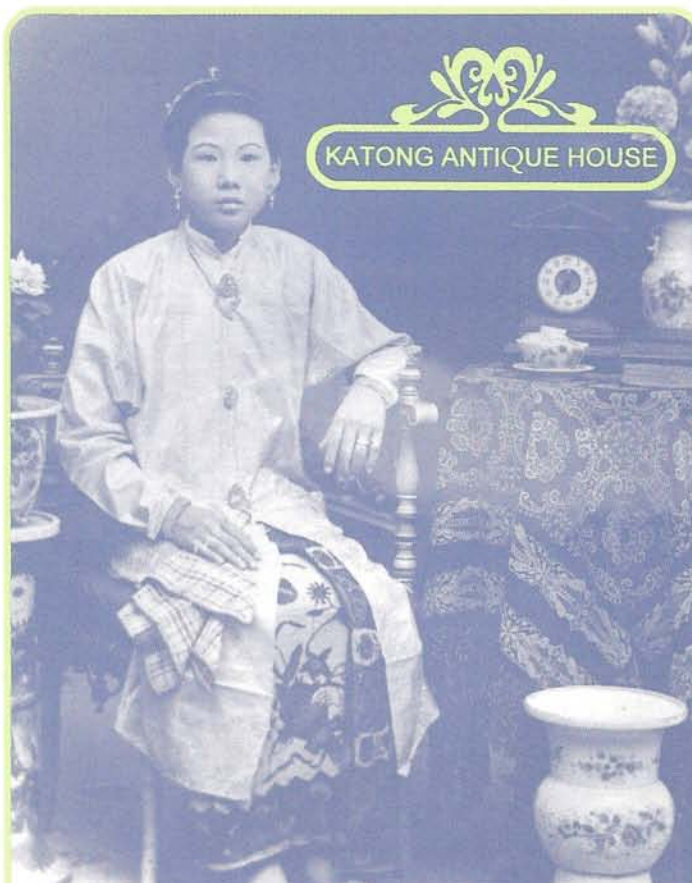
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