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PUBLISHED BY

The Peranakan Association
Raffles City, PO Box 1640
Singapore 911755
Tel: 6255 0704

DESIGNED BY

Michelle Yap

PRINTED BY

Lithographic Print
House Pte Ltd

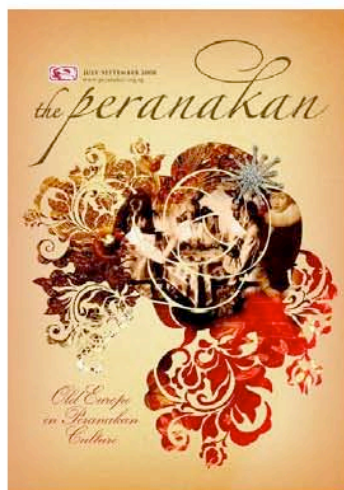
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MICA (P) 041/08/2008

Issue Date: 14/08/2008

Expiry Date: 13/08/2009



THE
PERANAKAN
ASSOCIATION
SINGAPORE

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2008

www.peranakan.org.sg

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Oh, for the Days of Empire!

FEATURE

3 Old Europe in Peranakan Culture

10 Pageants of Progress

13 Dressing Up the Nyonyas

18 English Language and the Peranakans

22 Impact of Christianity



DALAM DAPOR

25 West Meets East – European Influences
on Peranakan Cuisine

28 Fusion Cuisine

LANDMARKS

30 The Baba House: A Gem Shines Again

BOOKS

32 Two Peranakan Tales: The Kitchen
God and The Beaded Slippers



EVENTS

33 Amazing: Peranakan
Museum Opens

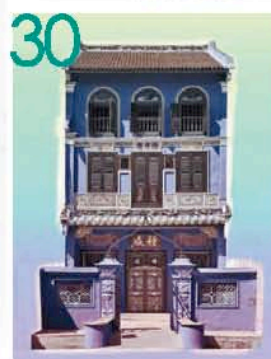
34 Solo Splendour

NOTICEBOARD

35 New Members
108th Anniversary Annual
Dinner and Dance
21st Baba Convention 2008

DIRECTORY

36 Peranakan Guide



Oh, for the Days of Empire!

Babas in dapper three-piece suits at their own wedding. Victorian-inspired décor colouring up their homes. Ford convertibles, afternoons sipping English tea, the evening peg of Cognac and all that. The lifestyle of Babas genteel in their Anglophile trappings, regarded as the upper crust of local society.

Black-and-white photographs of such from yore remind us of the tremendous European influence on the Peranakan way of life. Not only from the British era but way back from the sixteenth century when the Portuguese, then the Dutch and later the British ruled the high seas. The Empire is long gone. But today, the Western habits and English language skills of the Peranakans owe much to these origins.

Vestiges of those times remain, whether in our memories or in our homes. I remember that in his twilight years, my maternal grandfather, Low Chin Chye, penciled an anglicised name "CC Lowson" and the British Union Jack on the inside of any book cover he could lay his hands on. And among my prized possessions are a couple of plates, monogrammed with a beautiful crest bearing the letters LKW in gold script. Presumably part of a dinner service commissioned by my maternal

great-grandfather Low Kay Whatt.

We dedicate this issue to that glorious era when our forefathers adopted and adapted Europeana, if there is such a term. Starting from the cross-influence on the cover, where two *Belanda* (Dutch) couples dressed in local style are at a card game, turn the page as Peter Lee brings us on a fascinating journey through the European epoch in Peranakan history. Emeric Lau traces the development of Peranakan theatre in *Pageants of Progress* while Colin Chee interviews culture doyen Peter Wee on the *Impact of Christianity*. In our popular *Dalam Dapor*, try out the traditional and fusion recipes from Noreen Chan and Jason Ong respectively.

Find out more about the differences between the *baju panjang* and the *kebaya* from Norman Cho. We go one step further to prepare you for the coming annual dinner and dance (turn to page 35 for details) with a step-by-step demonstration on the proper way to wear three types of sarong.

Sampay kita jumpa lagi.

Linda

■ LETTERS ■

Peter Lee's article, "Perfumed and Pungent" in the previous issue reminded me of my elders who would often exclaim, "*Ayee, embok-embok kita suma panday sair gelair-gelair-kan orang*" (Goodness, our womenfolk are so fond of nicknaming others). It comes from the Malay word *gelar* which is usually used as a phrase *yang di gelarkan* (which is known as). It was a very common way to identify people whom we can easily recognize within a certain context, say within the neighbourhood, family or workplace. Therefore, one can conveniently make references to a certain person, without ever having to know their actual names.

Interestingly, such nicknames were often used by third parties, and were never used when addressing the person directly. They would commonly use *tachi* (elder sister), *adek* (younger sister) or *nya* (miss) and *ba* (mister) when addressing a person directly. In her early years, my paternal great-grandmother was known as *si kway it tiam* or *si pajak-gantong* as her husband was a second-hand jewellery dealer. Thus, my grandmother became known as *chik kway it tiam* (youngest child of the second-hand jewellery shop). This would technically make me the *chicik kway it tiam* (great-grandchild of the second-hand jewellery shop)!

Norman Cho

Peter Lee's article "We are Chinese if you please..." and William Gwee's "Tales of a Chinese New Year Fire" were excellently written and very informative.

The early immigrant Chinese of the 18th and early 19th centuries to this region would have to accept native women as their wives. Women from China were forbidden by law to emigrate until the end of the 19th century. According to the local papers of that time, up until 1837, no Chinese woman had ever come to Singapore from China, and only two genuine Chinese women were, at any time had been, in the place, and they were two small-footed ladies who had been, some years before, exhibited in England. As Peter pointed out, females slaves from Bali and Celebes were bought for marriage. In Penang, Thai and Burmese girls would serve the same purpose.

William Gwee's article gave us insight into the different trades of the early Babas ranging from opium, textiles, branched candlesticks and lanterns. The names of the different Babas and their emotional responses were fascinating.

Congratulations to the team of The Peranakan for a beautiful issue.

Lye Wai Choong

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Old Europe in Peranakan Culture

By Peter Lee



The star kerosang on the cover of the Peranakan Museum's A-Z Guide. (Photography courtesy of the Peranakan Museum)

Embazoned on the front cover of the Peranakan Museum's inaugural A-Z Guide is the image of a diamond encrusted star brooch, a fashionable and popular piece of jewellery in late 19th and early 20th century Europe. Everything about it betrays its European heritage, not only the star shape of the brooch, but also the *a jour* technique of setting the diamonds in gold, as well as the modern cut of the diamonds themselves. The multifaceted brilliant-cut diamond, from which the Malay word *bertian* probably derives, has been around since the mid 17th century. But the modern brilliant, with its optimum number of facets, was perfected only in 1919, which would date this star brooch to probably some time between 1920 and 1950.

The brooch represents an important characteristic of Peranakan culture — a tendency to preserve and perpetuate the influences it adopts or adapts, even when they may have long gone out of fashion in their cultures of origin.

Memories of Old Portugal

The Malay language shows one of the clearest legacies of the Portuguese empire. Embedded in the language are many words related to household objects, food and dishes, clothes and jewellery, institutions and titles. Here is a list of some of these words:

Household			
Baba Malay	Kristang	Portuguese	English
aloji	olozi	relógio	clock, watch
almari	almari	ármario	cupboard
			armoire
bangku	banku	banco	bench
biola	biola	viola	violin
bola	bola	bola	ball
botal	botel	botelha	bottle
buyong	buyong	boião	pot, beaker
dadu	dais	dados	dice
ganchu	ganchu	gancho	hook
garfu	garfu	garfo	fork
jendela	janela	janela	window
kereta	kareta	carreta	car, carriage
lampu	lumi	lampada	lamp

Baba Malay	Kristang	Portuguese	English
meja	meza	mesa	table
paso	pasoh	vaso	vase, pot
roda	roda	roda	wheel
sabun	sabang	sabão	soap
tuala	tuala	toalha	towel
Food			
Baba Malay	Kristang	Portuguese	English
bengka	bibingka	~	baked cake, pudding
bolu	bolu	bolo	sponge cake
chacha	chacher	~	precious stones (bubar chacha)
dodol	dodol		glutinous rice custard
keju	kezu	queijo	cheese
kobis	kobis	couve	cabbage
lemo	limang	limão	lime/lemon
mentega	mantega	manteiga	butter
nanas	nanas	ananás	pineapple
pau	pang	pão	bread
tempra	tempra	tempero	seasoning, gravy
terigu	trigu	trigo	wheat

Clothing/Jewellery

Baba Malay	Kristang	Portuguese	English
bolsa	bolsa	bolsa	purse-cloth bag
butang	butang	botão	button
ganchu	ganchu	gancho	hook
kasot	~	calçado	shoe
kopia	~	coifa	cap, hat
krosang	korasang	coração	heart-shape pendant/brooch
krabu	krabu	cravo	ear stud
renda	renda	renda	lace

Urban life

Baba Malay	Kristang	Portuguese	English
bomba	~	bomba	pump
gereja	greza	igreja	church
kapitan	kapitan	capitão	captain
mandor	~	mandador	overseer
Minggu	Duminggu	Domingo	Sunday
nyonya/nonya	nona	nhonha (colonial)	young lady
paderi	padri	padre	priest
pesta	festa	festa	celebration
pistol	pistol	pistola	pistol
sekolah	skola	escola	school
soldadu	soldadu	soldado	soldier

Others

Baba Malay	Kristang	Portuguese	English
palsu	falsu	falso	false
tempu	tempu	tempo	time

Antique Portuguese Fusion

Across the Portuguese Empire, which spanned the globe from Brazil to Africa and Asia, cultural influences travelled in every direction, creating perhaps the world's first global fusion culture. Cuisine is one of the most visible remnants of this, and in former colonies like Goa, Macau and Malacca, one can still come across *bibingka* (*kueh bengka*), *bolu*, *dodol*, *onde-onde* and *belachan*. Then, there are the great number of plants and crops that made their way to Southeast Asia from the Americas, including the chiku, tapioca, pineapple, chili, potato, peanut and sweet potato.

Global Srikaya

A dessert that is pure Portuguese fusion is the *srikaya*. Egg-based desserts are not typically Asian, and the combination of so many egg yolks with coconut milk must have been the invention of a Portuguese Eurasian in one of the colonies. The etymology is unclear but the meaning has some Malay connections — *sri* is a Sanskrit word, meaning bright, and it is also an honorific, meaning 'the illustrious'. *Kaya* is 'rich' in Malay. The custard apple (*Annona*

squamosa) is probably of South American origin, where it is known as *anona* or *nona*, but of course in these parts it is known as *buah nona* or *buah serikaya*. Interestingly the English name also makes some reference to an egg-like concoction — the custard apple.

This steamed egg and coconut custard so beloved by Peranakans is also known throughout Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia. The proliferation of kopitiams and the 'global' push of companies like Ya-kun kaya toast has ensured its evergreen appeal. It may have been exported to Ayutthaya by the Portuguese, and till today in Thailand one can find the *sangkaya* on any Thai menu, which looks and tastes almost exactly like the Peranakan *srikaya*. Even in Portugal and Brazil *sericaia* is a traditional dessert, although it is a more of a soufflé, and popular myth holds that it was brought back to the Alentejo region of Portugal by a 16th century governor of India.

Portuguese Sericaia

1 litre milk
6 eggs (separate whites from yolks)
125g flour
250g sugar
1 tbsp cinnamon powder
1 lemon rind
butter
dried prunes

Beat egg yolks well. Gradually blend in milk while beating. Add sugar and flour to milk mixture. Put the pot over low heat, whisking all the time to remove lumps till the consistency is like thick cream. Remove from heat, keep whisking. Whisk egg white separately till stiff, then fold it into the mixture. Pour contents into buttered ovenproof flan dish. Sprinkle with cinnamon powder. Bake in a medium-hot oven. Garnish with dried prunes.

(Maria Carmo Brás Gomes Lourenço Alves, *Portuguese Home Cooking*, 2004, @Datarroba, Lisbon, p. 19)

Musical Instruments

Another sphere where the Portuguese left their indelible influence is of course in music. In *dondang sayang* the violin is a key instrument, while in *keronchong* the ukelele, violin,



The traditional Portuguese *sericaia*.



Gwee Peng Kwee, doyen of the *dondang sayang*, with his group of musicians, including a violinist (courtesy of William Gwee Thian Hock).



A pair of gold and rose-cut diamond kerabu (ear studs), on a bed of cloves, which the Portuguese Eurasians call krabu.



Traditional Portuguese gilt-silver filigree heart-shaped pendant.

cello, flute and guitar are the Western instruments used in the orchestra. The violin is believed to have entered indigenous orchestras throughout the Malay world via freed slaves of Portuguese descent. The earliest *keronchong* may have emerged from Tugu, a suburb of present-day Jakarta, which was the enclave of the descendants of Portuguese Christians.

Jewellery

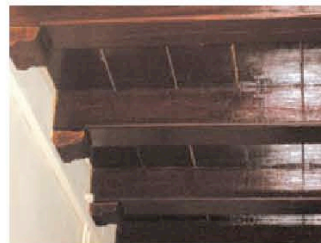
In the 17th century, Goa was a centre for diamond cutting and the production of fine jewels. The brooches worn by Nyonyas, the *kerosang*, may have begun as a heart-shaped pendant, perhaps like the kind worn in the Minho region of Portugal up to today. Another interesting possibility: *krabu* is the Baba Malay word for an ear stud, and interestingly the Kristang word for the clove is likewise *krabu*, and of course the ear stud very much resembles a clove.

Going Dutch

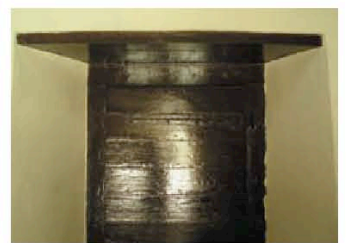
During the Dutch period, Portuguese cultural influence remained strong, even in Batavia. One of the more obvious legacies is architecture. Dutch-style architecture is still evident in Malacca, and even in many Peranakan houses along Heeren Street, many Dutch architectural features can still be found in the houses, including iron door hinges, the *sleutelstuk* (console or corbel) of the ceiling beams, the type of brick used and the grand carved wooden staircases.



The traditional Peranakan terraced house retains architectural features from Dutch times.



The sleutelstuk or corbel in the Malacca Stadthuys.



Chamfered doorway at the Malacca Stadthuys, a feature found also in terraced houses in Heeren Street.

Rare Dutch words in Baba Malay

Baba Malay	Dutch	English
bangket	banket	biscuit
Belanda	Holland	Holland
blueda	broeder	bread-like cake
duit	duit	money
gaji	gage	salary
senapang	snaphaan	rifle
lachi	latje	drawer



Dutch plate from the VOC (Dutch East India Company) period, perhaps late 18th century, with a design reminiscent of early Nyonya ware from the Daoguang period (1820-1850), in the collection of the Malacca Stadthuys (Gift of Guus van Bladel, Muzium Sejarah & Ethnografi).



The theebanket ('tea banket').

The Dutch Banket

Kueh bangket may not resemble anything Dutch. However the word is clearly from the Dutch word *banket*, which is a kind of antiquated term for a biscuit. In the *Oost Indisch-Kookboek* ('East Indies Cookbook' first published 1861), there are four recipes for different kinds of bankets.

Theebanket (Tea Banket)

500g flour
250g sugar
150g butter
2 eggs

Some finely ground cinnamon, some lemon peel. Knead the ingredients to form a dough. Roll it out and cut shapes with a cookie cutter and bake in an oven with heat from top and bottom.

Oost-Indisch Kookboek, 13th edition, GCT van Dorp & Co., Semarang, 1908, p. 105.

Sarong and kebaya

The ruling classes in Batavia in the 18th century comprised Dutch families who had been in Java for generations. Not surprisingly the women adapted their dressing to suit the weather and lifestyle, which was already heavily influenced by Portuguese, Malay and Javanese culture. Visitors to Batavia noted that women were already trimming their kebayas (which were plain, long jackets exactly like the *baju panjang*) with lace in the late 18th century. Lace was known throughout the Indies and the Malay world by its Portuguese name, *renda*. By the second half of the 19th century, women of European descent in the Dutch East Indies were wearing white lace kebayas, together with fine batik sarongs made in workshops owned by such women as well (known by collectors today as *batik Belanda*). A whole new fashion was created, which was soon adopted by Chinese Peranakan women in Java, which then exported this style to Singapore and the Straits Settlements in the early 20th century. The *sarong kebaya* became *démodé* for the European and Eurasian communities during the height of colonial imperialism, as it was considered to be unseemly to dress in a 'native fashion'. Although, in many ways, the lace on the kebayas and the floral motifs on the batiks made the



Batik sarong and kebaya renda worn by Dutch women in the Dutch East Indies, c. 1900.



Dutch couples playing cards at home in Java, c. 1900. The women wear sarong kebaya, and the men are dressed in cotton jackets and batik chelanas or trousers.

outfit a wondrously hybrid expression. Only Peranakan women have steadfastly carried on this way of dressing over the last century, and have claimed it as their own.

British Babas

Trappings of 'modernity'

The establishment of Singapore created a universe of business opportunities for the Babas, who became business partners with western trading firms. This contact also saw the modernisation of Baba life, and the wholesale



Monogrammed cutlery from John Little & Co, c. 1920.

A chamber pot by Johnson Brothers, c. 1900, from the mansion of Pang Joon Teck in Scotts Road (courtesy of Robert Chew). This item is on display at the Junk to Jewels exhibition at the Peranakan Museum.



Tun Tan Cheng Lock was knighted by the British for his contributions to Malaya, in 1952. His medal is on display at the Junk to Jewels exhibition at the Peranakan Museum.



The Union Jack belonging to Tan Guat Poh (courtesy of Lee Kip Lin). This item is on display at the Junk to Jewels exhibition at the Peranakan Museum.



Two Penang nyonyas in their automobile, c. 1920.

adoption of western culture. By the mid 19th century, Babas in the Straits Settlements were emulating European tastes and lifestyles, with seaside villas and country estates, expensive carriages, and the latest Victorian style furniture, cutlery and Western style dinner services. Anglo-Indian dishes also began to be part of Peranakan cuisine, including mulligatawny, remembered in some Malaccan homes as *makatani*.

As the 20th century progressed, this even extended to interest in aeroplanes, the most luxurious automobiles, jewellery from London, round-the-world cruises, horse racing, and everything the latest technologies could offer, such as ornate electrical lamps, expensive refrigerators and stoves.

Song Ong Siang's *One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore*, is a mine of information about the modernisation of the Babas, and the proliferation of sports, literary, musical, philosophical and political associations, as well as English language schools. The models for all these civic, political, academic and cultural endeavours were of course British. The Straits Chinese British Association, ancestor of The Peranakan Association, was also formed for these reasons. The influence of British and global culture is still evident today, not least of all in the publication of this English language magazine on Peranakan culture. 🌸

Tan Guat Poh and her sister Guat Kee in their Heeren Street house, furnished with a Victorian sideboard, on top of which are European figurines, vases and other ornaments, as well as a 'modern' Thonet-style bentwood chair, c. 1905.



First committee of the Straits Chinese British Association (later The Peranakan Association), with Tan Jlak Kim as President (seated fourth from right), 1900. Song Ong Siang, seated fourth from left, had clearly cut off his queue to sport a modern haircut, unlike some of the other members, who preferred to show their allegiance to the Chinese imperial government.



Chia Keng Tye and his orchestra in the garden of his mansion, Rosedale, c. 1935 (courtesy of Dr Noreen Chan).

Historical Timeline

- 1510** Capture of Goa by the Portuguese
- 1511** Alfonso D'Albuquerque invades Malacca
- 1619** Establishment of Batavia by the Dutch
- 1641** Dutch take over Malacca
- 1786** Penang becomes a British possession
- 1795** British occupy Malacca
- 1811** British occupy Java till 1816 (under Raffles)
- 1819** Raffles establishes Singapore
- 1824** British take over Malacca after the Anglo-Dutch Treaty, Straits Settlements formed
- 1867** Straits Settlements become a crown colony
- 1946** Straits Settlements dissolved; Singapore becomes a crown colony, Penang and Malacca become part of Malayan Union
- 1948** Federation of Malaya formed, including Penang and Malacca
- 1957** The Federation is recognised as an independent state within the Commonwealth
- 1963** Malaysia is formed (including Singapore)
- 1965** Singapore separates from Malaysia to become a republic

PAGEANTS OF PROGRESS

Tracing cultural evolution through Peranakan Theatre

By Emeric Lau

After a lapse of over 30 years, Peranakan Theatre returned to the local stage with the debut of Felix Chia's *Pileh Menantu* (Choosing a Daughter-in-Law) at the 1984 Singapore Arts Festival. Since then, numerous productions have been staged under the banner of Peranakan Theatre.

What is Peranakan Theatre?

But what is "Peranakan Theatre"? This term is nebulous and will continue to be in flux. Research proved a trying experience. Online search engines offered numerous results on Baba cuisine, several articles on Straits Chinese identity and lifestyle, but precious little specifically addressing "Peranakan Theatre" or "Wayang Peranakan". This scenario repeated itself when I visited the libraries.

Thus, I write this with information gleaned through exchanges with various "key" Peranakans, and from the few valuable write-ups I managed to uncover.

Like the culture itself, Peranakan theatre appears to originate from a blend of Chinese Wayang and Malay *Bangsawan*. Early productions either referenced or comprised direct translations of classics from both cultures into Baba Malay, such as *Sam Pek Eng Tai* (from *Cherita Dulu Kala*) and *Nyai Dasima* (an Indo-Hindu epic that starred veteran William Tan as the leading heroine). Shakespearean works were also translated - indeed early evidence of western cultural influence.

However, the kind of Peranakan Theatre most would be familiar with involves a plot that centres around a household or family drama. Examples include *Kehidopan Si Buta*, *Nasib Anak Tiri* (both 1950s) and *Menyesal* (1965). A common adage is that theatre mirrors society, and in this respect, Peranakan drama fits right in: it is, after all, in the households that the culture - its language, everyday practices, customs and artifacts - flourished. There is no surprise, therefore, that Peranakan plays are typically set within a home.

The Western Influence

British Colonialism

Going to England for a British education became fashionable amongst the Babas from the 1900s, and with

this came increased awareness and adoption of a more westernized artistic presentation style. Peranakan Theatre contains traces of Edwardian drawing room dramas - one detects uncanny similarities between the characterizations of matriarchs and Oscar Wilde's *Lady Bracknell* (from *The Importance of Being Earnest*).

We also find parallels in the typical themes of both such English and Peranakan dramas - the characters' pride and prejudices are reflected in their preoccupations with issues of class and status to comic effect.

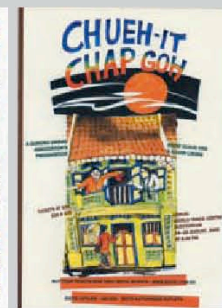
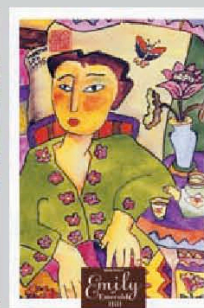
Interestingly, Felix Chia states in his Foreword to *Pileh Menantu* (Magro, 1984) that he views the arrival in Singapore of English education as "the beginning of the erosion of [the Peranakan] culture". In contrast, most present-day Peranakans regard their excellent command of English as a positive part of their heritage - we believe it has served us well with English being Singapore's preferred language.

Modernity

Since the revival of Peranakan Theatre in the 1980s, the theme of modernity has permeated all aspects of production. Playwrights exploit it as a convenient device to illustrate the generation gap with "modern values" in stark opposition to "traditional" ones in their storylines. More recent scripts have the older characters mixing the patois with English words, while younger characters converse wholly in English.

In stagecraft, costuming for inter-generational depictions of Peranakan families typically call for the *baju panjang* for matriarchs, the *sarong kebaya* for the bibiks, while the younger *nyonyas* don contemporary dresses. Presented by Gunong Sayang Association, William Gwee's traditional-style plays, *Kalu Jodoh Tak Mana Lari* (1996), *Bulan Pernama* (1997) and *Janji Perot* (1999) all benefitted from modern stage sets that used movable platforms for different interior or exterior scenes.

Pileh Menantu was published with its script as performed in Baba Malay, with a corresponding English translation set alongside it on facing pages, generating a constant tension for the reader. It feels as though Chia is alerting would-be performers to consider the consequences of mounting his play in a language already understood by few.





Peranakan Theatre as Novelty / Camp Spectacle

With public interest and curiosity about Baba culture stoked to a new high in the 1990s and up to the present, it makes sense to mount productions boasting Peranakan elements. This is a happy confluence: colourful Peranakan dressing, quick-fire repartee and spectacular traditional practices all combine to make a pleasant evening of entertainment.

Contemporary Peranakan Theatre has largely abandoned the intimate style of drawing room dramas. In their place are large-scale Broadway-type musicals. Such productions include *Kampung Amber* (1994), *A Twist of Fate* (The Straits Times Best Musical of 1997, re-staged 2005), and *Bibiks Go Broadway* (2003), all veritable star-studded crowd-pleasing hits that satiate an appetite for nostalgia, being set in the past. Dick Lee cites Agatha Christie and Noel Coward as his sources of inspiration for *A Twist of Fate* – both much-feted British writers, and attesting to a continuing western influence in Peranakan Theatre today.

On television, there was Melvyn Chew as *Bibik Belachan* of *The RaRa Show* (1993-4) and Margaret Chan in *Masters of the Sea* (1994) – the only thing one remembers of that ill-fated soap opera being her infamous quip, “Kerrruss him, as you would, a cockroach!” Together with the more recent *Ways of the Matriarch* series and spanking new comedy, *Sayang Sayang*, these productions have camped up the stereotype of the stern, traditional matriarch to milk laughs.

Other productions have focused on elements of pageantry, such as staged Peranakan weddings and musical revues. Under Richard Tan, the Main Wayang Company has formed its very own “Anak Baba Band”. Their novel attempts include the incorporation of rap lyrics and multimedia to make the Peranakan Theatre experience more appealing to a younger and wider audience.

Reclaiming “Peranakan-ness”: Post-Modernity and Beyond

In an increasingly globalised world, a fresh generation of Peranakans is gradually becoming more aware of the urgent need to discover their roots so as to derive a sense of self-identity.

Playwright Desmond Sim wrote *Postcards from Rosa* (2007) as a tribute to his late grandmother. Performed in English, Rosa's story gradually reveals a life lived in service and dedication to her family. A heartfelt and poignant salute to a time when everything was done purely out of

love, Rosa stands as a superb foil to the image of the Peranakan matriarch as a campy old bat. Desmond says of the piece, “There were many reasons why I wrote Rosa. I wanted to take the bibik out of her comfort zone – the four walls of sitting room drama which has trapped the Peranakan woman for decades. And it is from this vantage point, outside her home, in traveling clothes and suitcase, that she sees the microcosm of her finely woven, detail-packed life. My grandmother's generation was one of the last in Singapore in which women weren't given a choice about family or career. She was the last generation to be officially match-made. I wanted to present...a humbler, more accessible and lovable nonya.”

My own search for identity led to the writing of *Being and Becoming* (2007), a short contemporary play that was an attempt to abstract the strong values a Peranakan upbringing ingrains in one.

Yet there is one production that reconciles the present appetite for novelty with respect for tradition. Stella Kon's seminal work, *Emily of Emerald Hill*, explores themes of power and femininity via the life story of a Peranakan matriarch. In her stage directions, Kon succinctly describes her vision for Emily with a famous line from Shakespeare, “Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety”, and Ivan Heng, who first took on the role in 2000, followed that instruction to the hilt. In full Nanyang drag as Emily, Heng paid tribute to the tradition of wayang Peranakan. He remained the priestess of high camp while delivering a two-and-a-half-hour long monologue in which notions of woman as blushing bride, abused servant, dominant mother, tyrannical matriarch and finally, graceful grandmother were glorified and vilified. Heng further drew from various genres of western theatre – Stanislavski realism, Commedia dell'Arte and stand-up comedy – to bring Emily to life. In that sense, Heng captured the essence of the Peranakans: we are both a patchwork quilt of several cultures and a beautiful transcendent one with universal relevance.

It is a challenge for the ever-fragmenting generation of younger Peranakans to ensure that this patchwork does not come apart at its many seams. This is a possible eventuality, and something that the increasing diversity of what now qualifies as Peranakan Theatre appears to herald. ❷

I wish to thank Peter Lee, Dick Lee, Desmond Sim, Richard Tan, Francis Hogan, G.T. Lye and Felix Chia for their invaluable input in the course of writing this article.

DRESSING UP THE NONYAS

By Norman Cho

Whenever we mention 'nyonya', images of damsels in sarongs and kebayas or matriarchs in *baju panjang* come to mind. These costumes adopted from the Malays are so uniquely identifiable to the nyonias that we have forged strong associations with them. Let's explore the differences between the *paju panjang* and the *baju kebaya*, and the proper way to wear them. Being better acquainted with the Malacca-Singapore nyonya heritage, I shall use this as my contextual reference-point, since the nyonya attire varies from one region to another.

The *baju panjang* is the predecessor of the *baju kebaya* (also known as the *baju nona*) and the earliest recorded dress-form for the nyonias. It is a tunic-like blouse with tapering sleeves which were most probably inspired by a similar version from Indonesia. It was commonly worn by the nyonias from the 1850s to 1920s. The earliest existing photographic evidence dates back to the 1850s, although it could have been a form of dressing during much earlier times. After this era, another Indonesian attire called the *kebaya* began to replace the *baju panjang*. The *kebaya* was originally a loose-fitting hip-length blouse with monotone lace-applied trimmings or simple embroidered sides; it gradually evolved into the fanciful embroidered top with striking colours that we presently know.

Let's look at assembling the complete look of the *baju panjang* and the *baju kebaya* :

HEAD

Baju Panjang :

When donning the *baju panjang*, the Malacca-Singapore nyonya will use a set of 3 hairpins of graduating size to hold her chignon. This is referred to as the *sanggol nyonya* (nyonya-style chignon) or the *sanggol tiga-batang* (three-

hairpin chignon). The hairpins are called the *korek-kuping* (ear-digger) as they resemble enormous ear-picks and can span up to 15cm in length. The longest pin is inserted upright while the smaller one is slipped in at an angle to the chignon. The smallest, which may not resemble an ear-pick at all, is inserted at right-angles to the longest one. This is

known as the *anak chochok sanggol* or the *anak korek-kuping*. It is usually gem-studded with decorative motifs of flowers, insects or birds. To complete the look, strung-flowers (usually jasmine, sometimes paper flowers) adorn the base of the chignon.

For little girls and young maidens, the flowers will encircle the base of the entire chignon, whereas adults who are married will leave a small gap in front of the chignon, forming a "C" shape. If your hair lacks volume, artificial hair called *chemara* can be added to complement your natural hair. Incidentally, for old *wakwaks* with little hair, their miniscule chignon is sometimes termed the *sanggol*

talk-ayam (chicken dropping chignon).

It was considered unbecoming to let down one's hair when nyonias donned the *baju panjang*, except during times when she was aggrieved when in mourning or invoking a curse, or if she was dressing up, asleep or bathing.

Kebaya :

Those who wear the *kebaya* will usually sport a modern hairdo – the perm, the bob or the wave – whatever they fancy. The older nyonias will usually sport a simple chignon like the *sanggol siput* (snail chignon). This is supported by a simple hairpin, bejeweled or otherwise.

TOP

Baju Panjang :

The *baju panjang* is usually made of fabric like cotton



Accessories that accompany the *baju panjang*.

batik, silk, georgette (*kasair-gelair*, literally rough-glass) or voile. Various types of *kerosangs* (a set of 3 brooches) may be used to fasten the *baju panjang*. One is the *kerosang serong* (angular *kerosang*). This consists of 1 heart-shaped brooch with either 2 circlet brooches, or 1 circle brooch with 1 insect/bird-shaped brooch. The heart-shaped brooch is the *ibu-kerosang* while the other 2 are the *anak-kerosang*. The *ibu* will be the top-most while the insect/bird-shaped one is worn in the middle. The *kerosang serong* set is sometimes incorrectly referred to as the *kerosang ibu*. Another variation consists of 3 circlets where the smaller one is fastened in the middle. Alternatively, the middle one can be floral-shaped, in place of the circlet. This is the *kerosang bulat*. Yet another variety consists of pierced-work designs set with diamonds or *intans*. The middle *kerosang* can be of a different design or the same as the other two. If the middle one is the more impressive of the set, then this will be the *ibu*. Since the *baju panjang* is plain and elegant, the fabulous *kerosangs* are the focal points of the attire.

The *baju panjang* is worn with an inner garment called the *baju dalam* or the *baju kechik*. It is usually a white cotton blouse with three-quarter sleeves fastened with a set of coin-buttons.

Kebaya :

The *kebaya* is usually of cotton or robia-voile, and is fastened using the *kerosang rantay* (a set of 3 leaf-shaped brooches held together with chains). To ensure that the *kebaya* does not hang to one side while fastening the *kerosang*, the hem must be held level before securing the brooches. The *kebaya* used to be worn with a cotton camisole but nowadays a modern brassiere suffices.

My grandmother and her church-mates would normally wear the *baju* and *kain tua-har* (mourning) to attend the Good Friday service as she would a funeral. This typically consists of a blue or white *kebaya*, blue *sarong*, silver *kerosang* and beaded slippers in blue or green hues.

BOTTOM

Baju Panjang :

From the 1850s to the early 1900s, the *baju panjang* was typically worn with the *kain chaylay* (checkered cotton Bugis cloth made into sarong) or the *kain lasong* (monotone organic-dyed batik from *lasem* made into sarong). By the 1920s, these gave way to the more colourful floral bouquet batiks from Pekalongan and Kedungwuni.

Kebaya :

The *kebaya* is predominantly worn with the *sarong* or the *kain-lepas* from Pekalongan. The difference between a *sarong* and a *kain-lepas* is that the *sarong* is sewn at the seams to form a tube whereas the *kain-lepas* is a rectangular cloth about three metres long. However, local *nonyas* use the term 'kain' more often to describe their sarongs. Thus, they are often heard saying *pakay kain*, *kain baju*, *kain chaylay* or *kain lasong*. Of course, *pakay sarong kebaya* is equally acceptable. The term *masuk kat bawah kain* is

used to describe men who are afraid of their wives!

The *sarong* consists of a large panel called the *badan kain* and a smaller panel called the *kepala kain*. The sides are known as the *kaki kain*. Interestingly, the frontal *kepala kain* resembles the apron on ancient Chinese skirts as evident in old Peranakan wedding portraits. Whether the *sarong* was inspired by the ancient Chinese costume still remains a mystery. Only the Peranakan kind of *sarong*, the *kain klascik*, has no *kepala*. It is all *badan*.

See the following pages for a step-by-step guide to wear different sarongs.

FOOTWEAR

Baju Panjang :

The earliest known footwear to complement the *baju panjang* are the flat-soled slippers with a flat front, known as the *kasot beridong* (shoes with a nose). The flat front looks like a snout of sort. It is also known by its other name, the *kasot tongkang* (shoes resembling a bumboat), as it does resemble a bumboat too. The slippers are usually embroidered with gold and silver thread, or silk thread.

However, some are executed in beadwork.

Sometimes, another type of flat-soled but pointed front slippers are used. Also embroidered with silver and gold thread, or silk thread, they are sometimes known as wedding slippers, as they were commonly presented to the bridal couple at their wedding.

It is interesting to note that embroidered slippers were more popular with the *baju panjang* till the 1920s. After the 1920's beaded slippers were more popular.

Kebaya :

The *kebaya* is normally worn with beaded slippers, although during earlier times the embroidered wedding slippers were sometimes worn. The beaded slippers are known as the *kasot manek-manek*. They come in a variety of designs – flat-sole, high-heel, pointed front, round front, open-toe, cross-strap etc., depending on the fashion of the period. Traditionally, the *nonya* would match the colours of her slippers with those of her *kebayas* and her *sarong*: a red *kebaya* would be matched with a red *sarong* and a pair of red slippers.

OTHER ORNAMENTS

Baju Panjang :

Other objects of adornment worn with the *baju panjang* are a pair of anklets, the *gelang kaki*.

Kebaya :

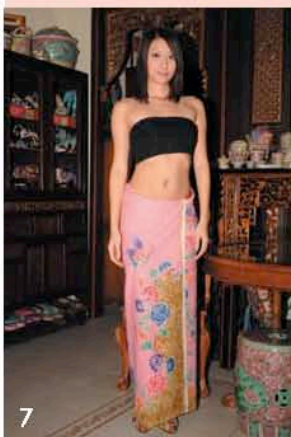
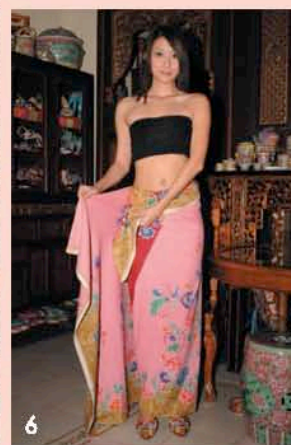
Besides the quintessential *kerosang*, the belt and buckle, the *nyonya* may clip a silver purse and a key-holder onto her belt. She may even carry a beaded clutch-bag in place of the silver purse. A pair of *intan* earrings, a pair of bracelets, a pendant and a ring complete the look of a fully dressed *nyonya*. 衆



HOW TO WEAR A SARONG

KAIN-LEPAS (PAGI-SORE)

Fold a triangle at one end of the sarong
Place the sarong over the right shoulder at an angle.
Wind the sarong around the back of the torso and bring the sarong across the front.
Fold the end down and to the right and tuck it in towards the left.

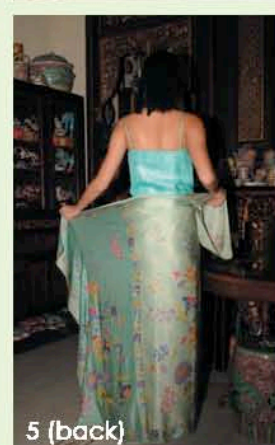
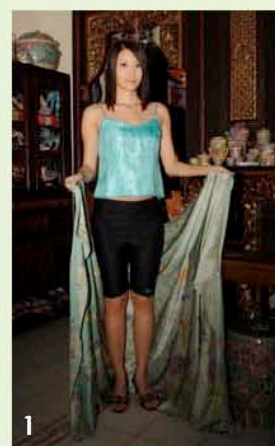


Kain lepas is paired with a teal kebaya.



BEADED SILK SARONG

Position the front panel to the side of the hips.
Ensure that the sarong ends at the ankle – this is the correct length.
Cross the sarong to the front and left and around the back, keeping the left side held away from the body.
Pull the corner end of the sarong up and to the right.
Twist the end of the sarong and bring the twisted portion across to the right.
Knot the ends together and tuck them in.





7



8



9



10

TUBULAR BATIK SARONG

Step into the tube.

Adjust so that the sarong's kepala (head panel) faces front.

Gather the sarong and fold it across the waist and to the right.

Cinch the sarong up the waist and to the right, showing off the under-flap. Do ensure that the inner layer of cloth is not visible beneath the outer layer.

Gently, tuck the top of the sarong in.

Finish by fastening a belt, and folding the sarong down to fit.



This tubular sarong works well with a bright pink kebaya.



This silk sarong goes well with a turquoise kebaya and matching camisole.



1



2



3



4



5

Model: June Wee @ Ezen Models

Photography: Jason Ong

Location, Clothes and Accessories: Rumah Bebe

ENGLISH EDUCATION AND THE ROMANISATION OF BABA MALAY

By Tan Kuning

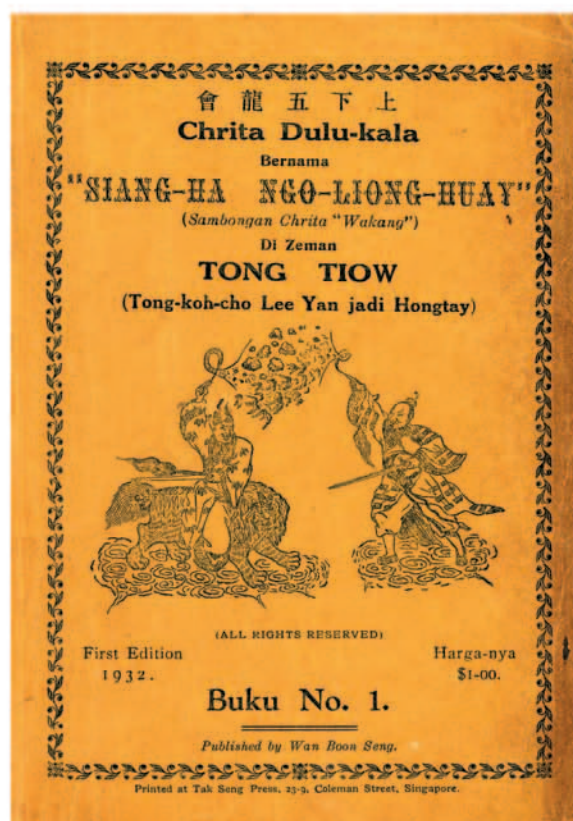
Peranakans are also known as the Straits Chinese because they were living mainly in the Straits Settlements that were formed in 1824 under the administration of the East India Company. The Straits Settlements consisted of Penang, Malacca and Singapore.

When the Dutch exchanged Malacca for Bencoolen by the Treaty of London 1824, the Baba community was already in existence. After Singapore was founded in 1819, some Peranakans migrated from Malacca to Singapore. Other families had also settled in Penang, which was ceded to Francis Light in 1786.

The Malacca Baba merchants were the first to make direct contact with the British in business dealings. They also became the middlemen between the British and the local population. The British found them to be steeped in Chinese customs, but speaking Malay and with little knowledge of China.

When English language schools were established by the British administration and the Christian missionaries of both the Catholic and the Protestant churches in Penang, Malacca and Singapore, the Babas sent their children for education in English. The London Missionary Society established the Penang Free School in 1816, the Singapore Free School in 1823, and the Malacca High School in 1826. Raffles tried to establish a Singapore Institution in the 1820s but failed. It was revived in 1835. Later, more and more English schools were built. The Catholic missionaries opened St Joseph's Institution in Singapore (1852) and St Xavier's Institution in Penang (1853).

The Baba community acquired a new identity in the early 19th century when the men became bilingual in the Malay patois and English, but were still steeped in Chinese cultural practices. Some women, even before the establishment of the Singapore Chinese Girls School, learned the English alphabet and had the ability to correspond among friends and relatives. Men holding Senior Cambridge Certificates (equivalent to an "O" Level Certificate today) worked as clerks in government service as well as in English commercial firms. Some became



Chrita Dulu Kala Siang Ha Ngo Liong Huay published in 1932.

qualified teachers in government and missionary schools. Later, with the establishment of the Medical College and Raffles College in Singapore, Baba children graduated as doctors and diploma holders to hold executive posts in the civil service and business houses.

In the early 20th century, a few rich Baba merchants sent their children to England to study law. By the 1930s, there was a handful of Baba advocates and solicitors practising law in the Straits Settlements.

The Emergence of Peranakan Literature

From the 1890s, a social phenomenon arose in the Baba community: the emergence of Baba literature. Baba writers pioneered the writing of Peranakan literature

in Baba patois using Romanised English. They published newspapers, Sha'er, panton books and *Cherita Dulu Kala* (Novels based on popular Chinese classics). It must have been a daunting task to render Chinese classics into Baba patois.

The writing style of Baba Literature

The Baba writers narrated their stories in exactly the way the patois was spoken. Malay grammar was not strictly adhered to. They adopted the English system of Romanisation but did not follow the standard form of spelling set by Frank Swettenham in his *Malay-English Dictionary* published in 1881. The Malays adopted this system later when they changed to Rumi (Romanised script) from Jawi (Arabic script used to spell Malay words). Chinese words were incorporated freely to express Chinese custom and Chinese religious concepts where necessary. In Indonesian Peranakan literature, the Dutch system of Romanisation was followed while in the Straits Settlements it was the English system.

The sociological and economic factors of the time were also favourable to their venture. There were enough Peranakan readers able to read their books and support them financially, and there were keen publishers and distributors for their literary output.

The Indonesian Peranakans started writing their literary works in as early as the 1860s. In the Straits Settlements, Peranakan literature emerged in the 1890s. There are similarities and differences between the two spelling systems. The vowels are similar. That is:

a = ah, e = eh, i = ee, o = oh, u = oo.

But for consonants, dj = j, j = y, sj = sy/ sh, tj = ch, ch = kh the first set applies to the Dutch system, the second to English.

Baba literature consists of the following categories: (The list is not exhaustive)

Sha'er and Pantun in Newspapers

- 1893 Bintang Timor: Shair Bulan Puasa by Kalam Langit
- 1894 Bintang Timor: Shair Perak by Peranakan Peraka
- 1894 Bintang Timor: Shair Orang Harak Chinggeh by Kalam Langit
- 1894 Bintang Timor: Shair Negeri Johor by Kalam Langit
- 1895 Bintang Timor: Shair Selamat Hari Lahirnya Seri Begenda Queen Victoria di-Negeri England
- 1895 Bintang Timor: Shair Bintang Timor Berakar Perkhidarannya Kalam Langit
- 1985 Bintang Timor: Sha'er Selamat Bintang Timor
- 1924 Kabar Slalu: Shair Sam Pek Eng Tai by Siow Hay Yam
- 1924 Kabar Slalu: Nyanyian Dondang Sayang by Wan Boon Seng
- 1926 Kabar Uchapan Baru: ni Nyanyi-an Pantun by Siow Hay Yam
- 1930 Bintang Peranakan: Pantun Dondang Sayang by Batek

Books with Sha'er and /or Pantun:

- 1890 Lim Hock Chee: Buku Shaer dan Pantun Melayu.
- 1908 Cheah Thean Lye: Silam Bari dan Kampong Giam Terbakar dan Pantun Lain Lain, Penang.
- 1912 Aboo & Pinch: Inilah Shak-yer Karangan Cherki or Evils of Gambling in Romanised Malay, Penang
- 1933 Wan Boon Seng: Shaer Kiasye dan Sii Nio-Nyanyian Extra-Turns & Kronchong and Stambols Special Extra Turns Songs
- 1933 Wan Boon Seng: Pantun Shair Nyai Dasima
- 1938 Wee Chin Kam: Sha'er Puji Pujian

Pantun Books and others:

- 1890 Lim Hock Chee: Buku Sha'er dan Pantun Melayu
- 1911-1916 Koh & Co (Koh Hun Teck): Pantun Dondang Sayang Baba Baba Peranakan Vols I - V
- 1916 Cherita Rampaey Rampaey dan Dondang Sayang
- 1912 Lim Hock Soon: Malay Pantun Book
- 1926 Bulat: Dondang Sayang dengan Cherita Buah Berakal
- 1929 Lim Hock Chwee: Malay Pantun Book
- 1931 Man Hun Seng: Pantun Dondang Sayang & Nyanyian Lain
- 1931 Wan Boon Seng: Dondang Sayang & Nyanyian Lain Lain
- 1933 Wan Boon Seng: Pantun Nyanyian Extra-Turns & Pantons, Kronchong, Stambols Special Extra Turns Songs
- 1932 Chan Kim Boon: Pantun Champor Bawor

Sha'er Books:

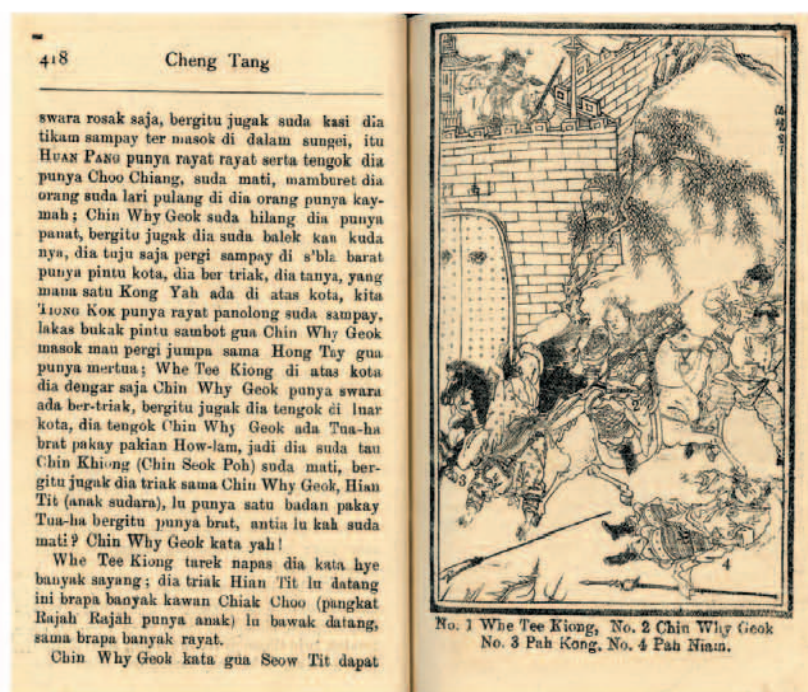
- 1896 Na Tien Pit: Sha'er Almarhum Baginda Sultan Johor
- 1938 Wee Chin Kam: Shair Puji-Pujian

Cherita Dulu Kala

The oldest publications of *Cherita Dulu Kala* were *Oey Se* by Thio Tjien Boen and *Lo Fen Koei* by Giow Peng Liang, both Indonesian Peranakans in 1903. By the 1930s Baba writers in the Straits Settlement began to write *Cherita Dulu Kala*. Writers like Say Siow Hup, Wan Boon Seng and Chan Kim Boon were English-educated, experts in reading Chinese classics and fluent in the Baba patois. All their novels were based on popular Chinese classics. Singapore was the centre of publication.

Babas were illiterate in Chinese. By 1890s all their moral values, religious beliefs of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism were based on tradition without much overt difference to their Chinese origins. They worshipped the Jade Emperor, the God of Heaven and *Kwan Teh Kong*, (General Kuan Ti in Sam Kok deified), *Tai Seng Yah* (Monkey God) and *Pao Kong* (Justice Pao). Many of the writers claimed that their main purpose in publishing Peranakan literature was to entertain their readers. Inadvertently, they were providing knowledge of religious stories to the Peranakan community. Popular Taoist tales like *Sam Ha Lam Thong* and others are about the feats by the Immortals. Much was said about the will of the Jade Emperor, the king of Taoist gods or the will of Heaven in deciding on the affairs of the world.

The Monkey God was immortalized in the story of *Kao Chay Tian* (The Monkey). It was about the Buddhist monk, *Sam Chong* (Tripitaka) who, under the imperial instruction of the Tang emperor set out to India to acquire genuine Buddhist sutras via the Silk Route. What appealed to the Peranakans were the feats performed by the Monkey



Romanised text from *See Jin Quee Cheng Tang*, published by Kong Guan Hin Press, Singapore, 1895.

God to protect his master, *Sam Chong* (Tripitaka) from being harmed by other demons. This mischievous monkey was always under the control of Bodhisttava *Kuan Yin*. In the end, the Buddhist sutras were obtained and the demon monkey converted to Buddhism and became enlightened. He was deified and worshipped as a Taoist god known as *Tai Seng Yah*. The power of *Kuan Yin* to control the monkey demon enthralled the Peranakans too. *Sam Kok*, a classic Chinese war epic, appealed to the Peranakans because of General *Kuan Ti* who served his king, *Lau Pi*, with great loyalty. In Chinese history, a few centuries later *Kuan Ti* was deified as a Taoist god of peace. The Peranakan merchants, like their Chinese counterpart, worshipped *Kuan Ti* who bestowed prosperity on his worshippers.

The Water Margin

Water Margin (*Song Kang*) was about 108 strong men who revolted against their Emperor and his corrupted court. What appealed to the Peranakans was the story of *Boo Siong*, the chief of the revolution. He killed a tiger with his bare hands. His act of killing his sister-in-law, found to be unfaithful to his brother, was perceived as an act of filial piety, a virtue greatly upheld by the Peranakans. They would flock to see Cantonese opera

whenever there was a performance of *Woh Siong Sat Soh* (in Cantonese). *Boo Siong* beheaded his sister-in-law and offered his dead brother her internal organs just like the Peranakans who offer pig innards to *semayang* (pray to) their ancestors. Justice Pao was immortalized in the story of *Teck Cheng* the warrior who conquered the barbaric states.

After 1945, two isolated publications were published in Malaya and Singapore:

1. *Shair Sam Peck Eng Tai* by Wee Hock Keng, 1983, Singapore
2. *Pantun Dulu Kala Peranakan China*, by Lee Chee Lin 1999, Melaka

According to Prof. Ding Choo Ming of the *Universiti Kebangsaan Melayu*, there were about 70 writers publishing Baba literature from the turn of the 19th century up to the early 1940s before World War II. This period marked the Golden Age of Peranakan culture. ♣

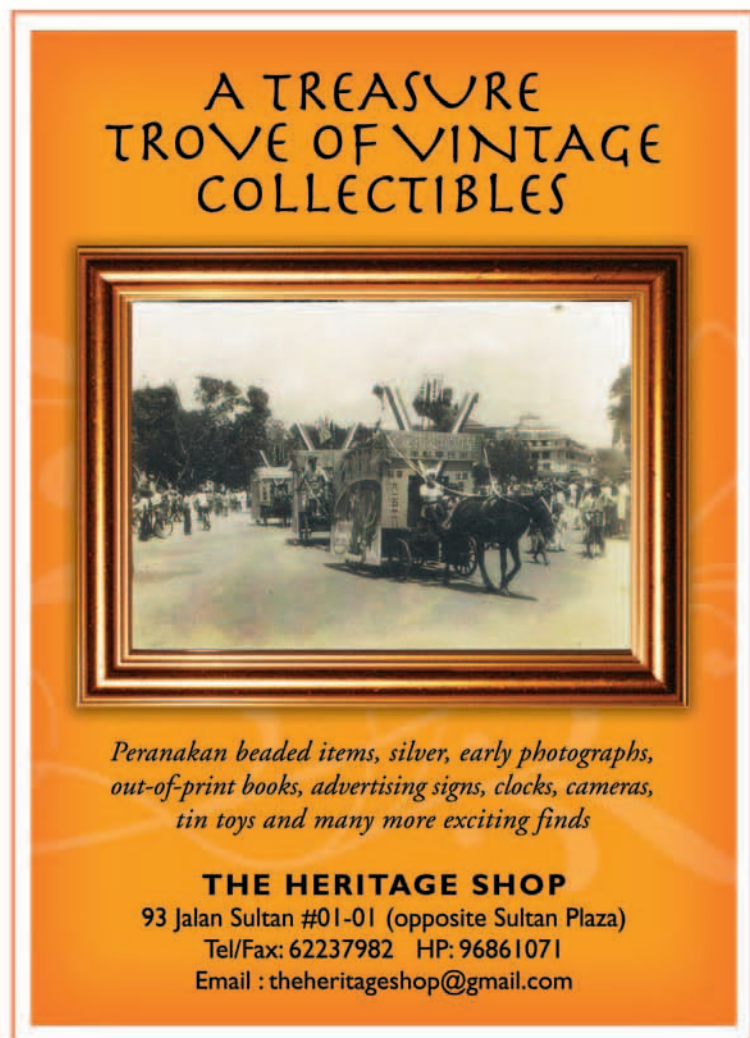
References:

1. *Asian Transformation, A History of South East Asia and East Asia* by Gilbert Khoo and Dorothy Lo
2. *Pantun Peranakan Baba, Mutiara Gemilang, Negeri-negeri Selat (In Malay)* by Prof. Ding Choo Ming
3. *Malay Pantuns* by A.W. Hamilton



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THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY

By Colin Chee

Peter Wee, Vice-President of The Peranakan Association, is regarded as the doyen of our culture in Singapore. Himself a staunch and practicing Catholic, Peter has for decades been the go-to person for both Peranakans and members of Singapore's larger community in general. *The Peranakan* recently sought Peter's thoughts on how Christianity has impacted our way of life.



TP: Is Peranakan culture in decline?

PW: Peranakan culture, as our parents know it, is at its tail-end. It is almost finished because it cannot fit into the 21st century – its ideologies, attitudes, lifestyle, and competing distractions. In this age of convenience and two-career nuclear families, extended families are simply unable to set aside time and come together as a matter of course to prepare for tok panjangs and celebrations, or even for the less taxing enterprise of preparing bak changs for the dumpling festival. It is like forcing a square peg into a round hole. How it will evolve even I can't tell. We have lost some of the traditions as they were practised in the past. It is fine if the culture evolves through simplification while maintaining its integrity. But the sad thing is we are seeing new interpretations of certain traditions based on misunderstandings of what their corresponding practices and cultural elements mean.

TP: Is Christianity a cause of this cultural decline?

PW: We can't just put the blame on Christianity. Yes, it has led to less emphasis on ancestral worship and other Peranakan traditions that are based on Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian beliefs. But really there are other culprits. We can also point to Western education in general which Peranakan families had once embraced wholeheartedly in their ambition to remain economically relevant and socially prominent. Modern lifestyle choices are also to blame. The same is true of their impact on the Malay and even Indian communities.

TP: Let's narrow this down a bit. In what ways has Christianity contributed to the decline of Peranakan culture?

PW: Firstly, it is important to remember that Peranakan culture, as our parents practiced it, is 80% Chinese customs steeped in Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, and 20% assimilation of other cultures, primarily Malay. The other thing to remember too is that Christianity is completely and sometimes even opposed and different to these Asian beliefs. For a start: no ancestral worship. This is a cornerstone of Chinese religious culture. Remove it and it considerably weakens the community's cultural foundation. It weakens family bonds, pleties and related traditions. The Peranakans always had their ancestral altars

in the second hall of their homes.

Next, Christians believe in only one God. This has impacted the celebration by Peranakans of the birthdays of the many Buddhist and Taoist deities such as *Ting Kong* (God of Heaven), *Tai Seng Yah* (Monkey God) and *Hoot Chor* (Goddess of Mercy) and their related festivals. In the days of our parents, I remember that the birthdays of these deities were accorded extreme priority. I mean these festivals were very elaborate, and days before each celebration, whole families would come together for a communal cook-out and to prepare for prayers. Not to mention the daily evening prayers to ancestors and our home's Kitchen God.

TP: Is there no hope then?

PW: Cultures will always evolve as communities adapt to the new and changing circumstances of the day, philosophies, attitudes, education, and nostalgia. It will be the same for our culture. What is important is to ensure continuity. We can achieve this by making sure our young do not grow distant or disconnected from it. How can we manage this? Through exposure, through rote of practice, through education, through getting them to be part of the larger Peranakan community and through getting them to identify themselves as Peranakans even if they are only 10% DNA from marital dilution. The Peranakan Association and its volunteers are helping to spread this awareness. Families are encouraging this and schools like the Singapore Chinese Girls' School are also helping to raise awareness of our culture.

The restaurants, shops and cultural groups, the Peranakan Museum and very soon the Baba House will also bring alive the beauty and vibrancy of our culture. And, I am told, the upcoming updated edition of *Lonely Planet* will feature Katong and Joo Chiat as the culture's living heritage area: our food, music, jewellery, sarong kebayas, architecture, ceramics, furniture. Even our Prime Minister proudly identifies himself as a Peranakan. The sum of these acts will collectively ensure our culture stays vibrant and relevant. ㊦

Photography by Colin Chee



KIM CHOO
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WEST MEETS EAST – EUROPEAN INFLUENCES ON PERANAKAN CUISINE

By Noreen Chan

Western influence in this part of the world is hardly a recent phenomenon. European powers had been expanding across the known world since the 15th century. Portugal was the first colonial superpower, establishing colonies from South America to India and China (Macau). These colonies allowed it considerable influence over the important Asiatic trade routes of the 16th century.

It wasn't long before England and the Netherlands followed suit. This rivalry inevitably led to various skirmishes and wars in Southeast Asia over towns, cities and even the island of Java – which the British won from the Netherlands.

This jostling for power and profits over the centuries had the effect of enriching the local cultures with which the Europeans came into contact. For example, the Malay words for butter (*mentega*) and bench (*banku*) have Portuguese roots. These cultural influences filtered into not just language – including the development of patois such as *Cristang* in Melaka – but also dress, architecture and design, and of course cooking. By the 50's and 60's, local cookbooks by Peranakan doyennes Mrs Lee Chin Koon and Mrs Leong Yee Soo invariably featured Western style savoury dishes, desserts and cakes. An early edition of Ellice Handy's "My Favourite Recipes" not only had recipes for sambals, but also *Curry Belandah* (Dutch Curry) and Anglo-Indian dishes like Country Captain.

The Portuguese brought with them not just their own European cooking traditions, but those of their colonies, to the effect that in Macau, for example, the local cuisine features ingredients like *bacalhau* (salt cod originally from Northern Europe) and *balichao* (a Goan prawn paste similar to our *belachan*), and dishes like *Feijoada* (a rich Brazilian stew) and *Galinha à Africana* ("African Chicken" which has a spicy peanut sauce). Cherie Y. Hamilton's book "Cuisines of Portuguese Encounters : Recipes of Portugal, Madeira/Azores, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, Angola, Mozambique, Goa, Brazil, Malacca, East Timor and Macao" has a collection of fascinating recipes.

The Dutch influence can also be seen in the cooking styles of its former colonies, particularly in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Indonesia. *Bergedel*, for example, is believed to be a corruption of the Dutch word *frikadel* (meatball). *Speculaas*, a traditional Dutch cookie, is still produced and sold in Indonesia, which is not surprising given the main flavouring ingredients of cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves would have been grown in the region.

The British may have established themselves relatively later, but once they did so, their influence was pervasive and lasting.

The following recipes are a few examples of fusion-type food that arose during the colonial period. Strictly speaking some of them are Eurasian dishes, but Peranakans happily adopted them into their repertoire.



Mrs Lopez's bludder.



Bergedel pangang.

RECIPES

MRS LOPEZ'S BLUDDER (sometimes also spell BLUEDA or BROEDER)

This rich yeasted cake is known as breudher among the Ceylonese Dutch Burgher community. Interestingly the Malacca Portuguese Eurasians claim this as their own; my grandmother recalls that Mrs Lopez, a family friend of her in-laws, would make it for them every year. The Malacca version uses toddy as a rising agent instead of yeast. It is traditionally prepared in a mould with deep spiralling grooves and is associated with Christmas celebrations. Mrs Lopez's heart-stopping recipe (if nothing else, the lavish use of egg yolks suggests a Portuguese connection) is as below:

1 lb self-raising flour
1 lb butter
1/4 lb lard
1 kati (600g) sugar
50 egg yolks
1 small glass toddy
1 spoonful brandy

Beat sugar and egg together until creamy. Knead the flour with a little salt and water, add butter, lard and toddy – mix it to a nice dough. Put the dough in a pot, and then pour the eggs slowly, beating all the time. Store the dough overnight. Add flavouring and brandy before baking.

A lighter version by Mrs Khek Jim is given below:

5 oz (125g) sugar
8 egg yolks
4-5 oz (100-125g) butter
10 oz (250g) flour

For ebu (starter, or rising agent), use 1/2 oz (15g) yeast, 5 oz (150ml) warm water, 5 oz (125g) flour. Mix together and leave to rise for one hour.

Beat egg yolks and sugar until thick, add flour and

the ebu and beat until well blended. Add the creamed butter and leave in a warm place to rise. After the batter is well risen, stir and pour into a well greased and floured mould. Allow it to rise for another two hours. Bake in a moderate oven (about 190°C).

BERGEDEL PANGANG or "CROCODILE" (by Violet Ong; from a recipe by Poh Cho Hum Seow)

This is a meatloaf made with minced pork and flavoured with a hint of cinnamon, possibly a throwback to Dutch-Indonesian colonial days. The use of Worcestershire sauce – Lea & Perrins being the favourite brand – betrays our British connections. The quantities, as with dishes of this nature, are approximate.

Butter the inside of a pyrex dish. Soak bread in water and squeeze dry. Mix together minced pork, 1-2 tablespoons of butter, bread, ground onions, a teaspoon of ground cinnamon, salt and pepper to taste. Press evenly into the baking dish, brush the top with butter and beaten egg and bake in a moderate oven until done (the top should be golden and the meat slightly pulled away from the sides).

Eat with Worcestershire sauce and cucumber salad. To make the salad, peel cucumber and slice very finely. Add salt to draw out the water. Squeeze dry and mix with finely sliced onions, vinegar and sugar.

PANG SUSIT OR SUSI BUN

This fast-disappearing Malacca snack is of uncertain provenance, but probably has Portuguese influence. I am told by my Malacca relatives that the original pang susit was made with pastry – similar to the kind used for pineapple tarts – but the shape remains the same, tapered at both ends like a teardrop. It was only later that the sweet potato bread version was developed.

The filling is made from minced or finely chopped

continued from page 27



Pang Susit.

pork, flavoured with what my relatives call *rempah panas*; the nearest I can find to it is 5-spice powder. Celine Marbeck, in her book *Cuzinhia Cristang* uses stew spice which contains a mixture of cinnamon, cloves, star anise and nutmeg.

Ms Koh Poh Swee took it one step further and used a curry filling (either pork or chicken with finely diced potatoes and onion). This is her recipe for the dough:

- 1 kati (600g) plain flour
- 1 tsp dry yeast
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1/2 cup warm water

In the meantime, boil sweet potatoes, mash and sieve, add salt and 4 tbsp sugar. In total, this should occupy 1/2 cup or less. Put flour in basin, add sweet potato, 2 egg yolks; mix and pour in yeast slowly. Add 4-5 tablespoons of lard, a little at a time, mixing and kneading all the while. As the dough is kneaded, add a little water if it is hard, until it does not stick to your fingers and pan, till you get a soft dough. Leave it to rise for 5-6 hours. Take a bit of the dough, shape it and put in the filling and leave to rise. Brush with egg yolk and bake.

References:

Cuzinhia Cristang. A Malacca-Portuguese Cookbook. Celine J. Marbeck (Tropical Press Sdn Bhd)
The Food of Love. Four Centuries of East-West Cuisine. Wendy Hutton with a contribution from Charmaine Solomon (Marshall Cavendish)
In a Malayan Kitchen, Foreword by Lady Y.P. McNiece. Mrs Susie Hing (Mun Heong Press).
My Favourite Recipes 2nd Edition (1960). Ellice Handy (Malayan Publishing House)

Photography by Jason Ong

FUSION CUISINE

By Jason Ong

Back in Singapore after having spent several years in New York, Jason Ong counts cooking among his many passions. For *The Peranakan*, he explores relatively recent fusion cuisine, giving pumpkin soup a twist by adding eastern spices and enhancing a favourite local fish dish with western flavours. The results are refreshing, yet comforting and familiar. Jason counts horticulture, animals and photography amongst his other current interests.

SPICE-INFUSED PUMPKIN SOUP WITH SHRIMP

- 300g pumpkin
- 5 medium shrimp cut into small cubes
- 1 freshly squeezed coconut milk
- Blend of curry powder, coarse black pepper, dill, coriander and paprika
- Salt

Remove the seeds from the pumpkin, wrap in aluminum foil and bake in the oven at 200 degrees for 20 minutes or until soft. Grate the pumpkin, put it in the food processor and blend while adding a little water until a creamy consistency is attained. Cook using low heat on the stove until it starts to boil. Add the shrimp and keep stirring until the soup boils again. Add salt and spice mixture to taste. Top with coconut milk before serving.

CARAMELISED MACKEREL (BATANG)

- 1 1/2 inch thick slice batang fish fillet
- Tamarind paste
- Sugar
- Aged or crème balsamic vinegar
- Cooking oil



Spice-infused pumpkin soup with shrimp.

Add some water to the tamarind paste and mix till dissolved. Remove all the seeds and marinate the fish in the mixture for 15 minutes.

Pan fry the fish in a non-stick pan with some cooking oil together with the tamarind marinate. Make sure to cover the pan to lightly steam the fish in the liquid for about 10 minutes. Remove the cover and turn the fish over. Pan fry for another 5 minutes and let the liquid evaporate.

Sprinkle some sugar on one side of the fish and then flip over and sprinkle also on the other side. Turn the heat up to brown the fish. Top with aged or crème balsamic vinegar before serving. ㊟



Caramelised mackerel (Batang).

Photography by Jason Ong

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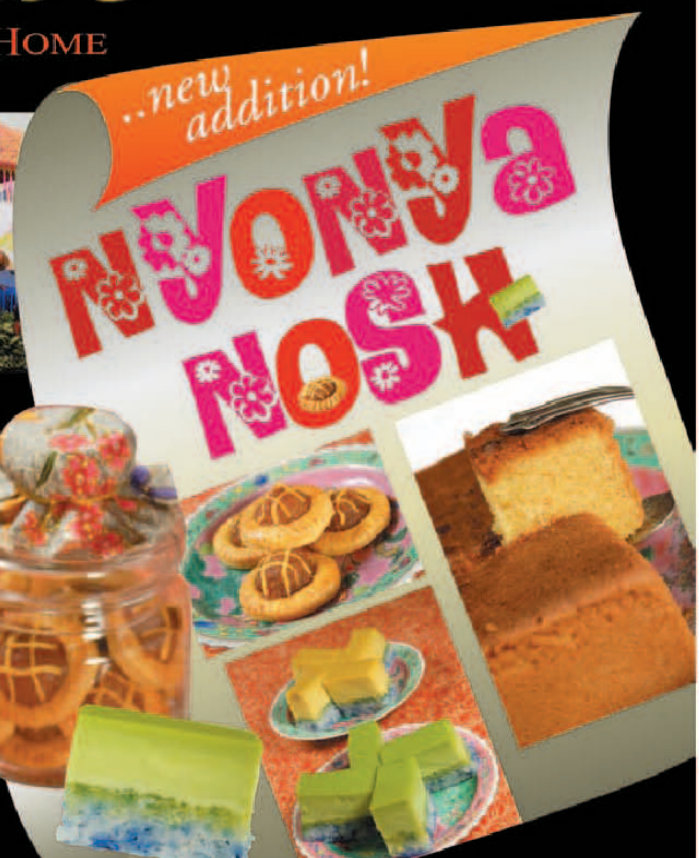
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THE BABA HOUSE: A GEM SHINES AGAIN

By Linda Chee

Come mid-September, Singapore will greet a new cultural landmark simply named the Baba House, a resplendent heritage home at 157, Neil Road.

The Baba House is literally a three-storey artifact in itself. After an intensive 16-month-long restoration, including archaeological work that uncovered hidden treasures from the past, the nearly century old rowhouse has been fully restored to its true state of Peranakan splendour.

On 4 September the Baba House will be officially opened by none other than the President of Singapore, Mr S.R. Nathan, himself one of the culture's strongest supporters. The new icon is managed by the National University of Singapore (NUS) Museum, of the NUS Centre for the Arts. Its acquisition was made possible through a donation to NUS by Agnes Tan, the last surviving daughter of the late Tun Tan Cheng Lock, a Straits Chinese community leader.

Walk along the terrace of picture-perfect Straits Chinese townhouses and you will notice that they are easily some of the most ornate residences in this conservation district. Decorative features on the facade of the Baba House include delicate 'qian ci' or bowl-shard decorations of peonies, phoenixes and figurative compositions and calligraphy. It also features impressively gilded corbels on all its beams and restored plasterwork detailing on the dado walls. Wooden screens and window casements are intricately carved and gilded.

True to its era, visitors will experience the coolness of its interiors, made possible with high ceilings and a marble-

and-tiled air-well that allows generous ventilation throughout the house with antique fans providing additional comfort.

Decor items including Victorian furniture reflect the Peranakans' fondness for an eclectic mix of western opulence with traditional Chinese grandeur. You can admire furniture acquired from the Wee family, four generations of whom had lived at 157 Neil Road

since the early 1900s, as well as understand the context and use of various artifacts in the Peranakan household of yore.

The gallery on the third floor provides for temporary exhibitions including contemporary art and serves as a counterpoint to the first two floors' traditional furnishing. Singapore artist Michael H.H. Lee will create the opening art exhibition, using one of his favourite mediums, paper. Through his artwork, he will explore the origins of Peranakan culture.

Baba House will serve as a valuable resource for tertiary-level studies and research into the Straits Chinese culture, particularly on its evolution and influence in today's context. In the pipeline

are talks and hands-on programmes that explore nyonya cuisine, arts, crafts and fashion. Educational programmes for students are also in the offing. ㊟

Baba House will be open for visits by members of the public from 15 September. Tours are by appointment only, on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays at \$10 per person, and includes a drink and snack. Peranakan Association members enjoy a 50% discount upon producing valid proof of membership. Please call Arthur Wong at 6516 4616 for further information.



POETRY INSPIRED BY THE BABA HOUSE

Restoration

By Yong Shu Hoong

If only it is as easy as unclogging
peepholes in the floorboards
to peer into the past – Instead I see
the visitor's hall one floor below,
vacant and awaiting the fall
of the makeover scalpel. Perhaps
It's only through precise incisions
that we uncover emblematic lesions
on Peranakan tiles, reveal the true
colour within the wall's epidermis
or dissect the meanings behind
Chinese blessings tattooed above door beams.
Perhaps it is through deep hypnosis
that we excavate the real source
of melancholy in someone else's tales,
memories that flutter like bat wings
roosting beneath fractured roof.

National Grain

By Yeow Kai Chai

That the bats also admired the house was clear:
From the way they flapped and squeaked
(wish you were) but also from generous
Droppings loosely here and there. Watch out.
Grey streaked across, dollops of Pollock. And
Don't start with the smell. Not today, honey.
Just like how a lepidopterist painstakingly
Pins a specimen onto this (rigged for posterity),
Every aspect of it was geared to please
The one and only towkay – friezes,
Rail balustrades, mythical creatures
And Chinese characters, all have found a perfect
Home now relouched to the last wee comfort,
My repainter. Flip a panel on the mezzanine
And look below: Busily does everyone
Bluster and declaim, then pause and forward,
But lucky is the visitor who finds himself
Smacked upside the head by Mum
And, often, as flummoxed by the sudden
Swing of the electorate as everybody else
In this bollixed-up world where everything
Old is new again. (Just like this toilet basin.)
In things we trust. How will this wash
With the top? Caught red-handed, this marginalia
Has tended to detract from the key issue:
What really happened here and where were you?

The storyteller's daughter

By Grace Chua

When her father died, the storyteller's daughter felt sure
she would cease to exist. She felt as though
her father had spun her out of whole cloth
which was slowly coming undone; and not just at the

seams, but like a thick black braid of hair with a ribbon
wound through it.

Puttering round their old Peranakan house,
(she was no spring chicken herself), she was left alone
with
a closet full of tales she'd only lived secondhand.

What was she to do with them? Her father's last three
fans

- a goat, a duck and a one-eyed dwarf -
squatted by the gale, begging her to give them away
for free. She considered, too, selling them on eBay
to make a quick buck, but she knew
they were worth more than that. Once told,
a story cannot be un-told, no more than the sun can
unshine or the rain un-fall. Finally she decided,
I will weave the stories into a net

to entangle time and insects. The house, with its
passages full of memories, shall be
my little mausoleum, my living museum.

And so she began, stitching the old tales together
in a patchwork that kept her warm at night.

She did it in her spare time on Saturdays and buses,
one word at a time. Her trembling fingers

worried at her work by candlelight until her failing eyes
could no longer discern the right sentences.

But unlike her father, she could spin no new children
out of the cloth. So, flax to ashes. The tale
might end here; the house was crumbling around her,
its honeycombed walls falling through time
she could not snare. She felt time slipping
through her grasp, as sand-hued cats

twined their tails about her legs. The storyteller's daughter
knew she was only part of the story now. From upstairs,
she heard a gout of black bats beat against the windows
to spray into a spiral galaxy up at the night. The tinkle
of glass

or a heart breaking. Then
the wind rushed in.

Yong Shu Hoong

Yong Shu Hoong's published poetry collections include
Issac (1997, re-released as *Issac Revisited* in 2001), *dowhile*
(2002), and *Frottage* (2005), which won the 2006 Singapore
Literature Prize.

Yeow Kai Chai

Yeow Kai Chai's first poetry collection, *Secret Manta*, was
published in 2001. He is a co-editor of *Quarterly Literary
Review Singapore*. His second collection, *Pretend I'm Not
Here*, was published in 2006.

Grace Chua

Grace Chua is working towards a B.A. in English and
Psychology at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Her
poems have appeared in *Quarterly Literary Review
Singapore*.

TWO PERANAKAN TALES: THE KITCHEN GOD AND THE BEADED SLIPPERS

by Adeline Foo • Illustrated by Lee Kowling

Reviewed by Colin Chee

The Kitchen God and The Beaded Slippers. If there are two children's books that I would recommend to parents, especially Peranakan parents, for their toddlers to read, these would be the ones.

Maybe because I am biased.

But author Adeline Foo has done a wonderful job capturing the temper, flavours, smells, and traditions of an old Peranakan family. One that's made up of a little six year old girl named *Puteh*, her grandma and amah, a maid-servant from China. There is no sense of location and geography, so this family could be anywhere in Singapore or Malacca or Penang.

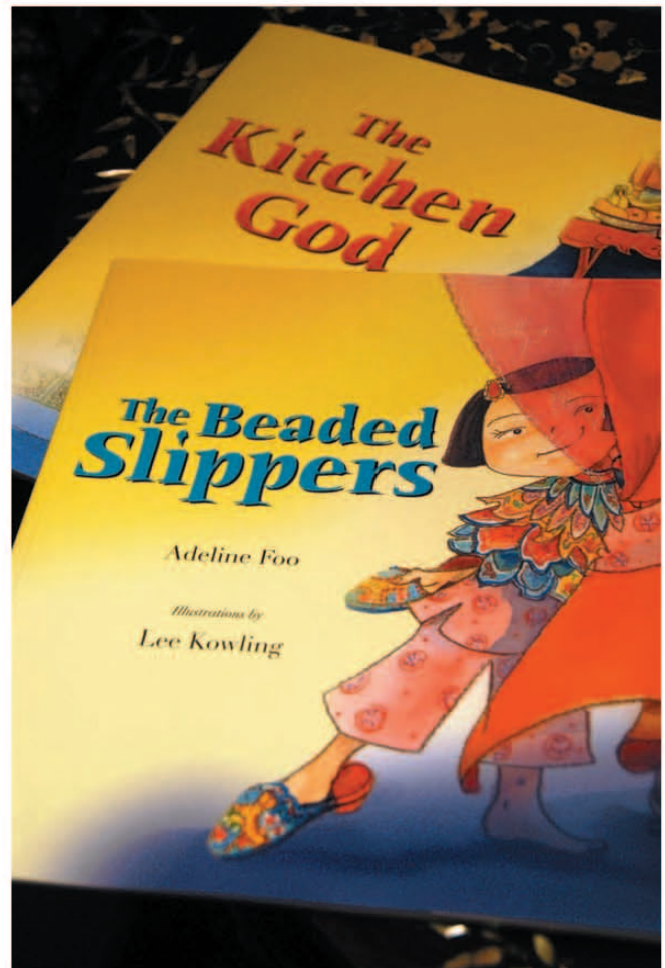
The first book on the Kitchen God dwells on a Peranakan family's traditional *dapor* and the family's typical comfort foods and desserts. The second is on the *kasot manek* or beaded slippers and the nonya's bridal chamber. The stories bring to life in a very real and yet simple manner the Peranakans' beliefs, lifestyle and creativity. They are the first two books of four in the Story of *Puteh* series. There will be two more titles to look out for, *Chilli Padi* and *The Amulet*, which will be published by the last quarter of the year.

Said Adeline on why she decided to write these stories: "Museums are so boring...." Benjamin, my 7-year-old son said. I felt hurt, because I wanted to introduce him to my Peranakan heritage, and there was a new museum that I was looking forward to bringing him to, but he wasn't interested.

"This was in January 2008, four months before the opening of the Peranakan Museum. I felt a deep sense of urgency, as my father, who is a Peranakan, had been diagnosed with early onset of Alzheimers'. There was no one else left in his family that I could tap on as a resource to teach my children about my Peranakan heritage. I decided then that I would draw on my experiences from my childhood, and tap on my Mama's tales of quirky Bibiks and Mak Neneks, to interesting stories of my heritage for my children to read about."

Twinning Adeline's stories around Peranakan traditions is Lee Kowling's beautiful and aching accurate water colour illustrations. Her observations and attention to detail are just astounding and true to life. The drawings represent an accurate documentary record of everyday odds and ends that a typical Peranakan family even in Katong as recent as in the 70s would have lived with.

Adeline Foo is an award-winning author and has already published four books. The stories around *Puteh* are her new



heritage series which she hopes will help little children to learn more about this brilliant indigenous culture.

Lee Kowling is a children's book illustrator of standing. She has illustrated more than 20 children's books and is a designer by training. Though not a Peranakan, Kowling was so inspired from working on the illustrations for these books that she bought a pair of beaded slippers and tailored Peranakan-inspired motifs for her attire, which she wore at the launch of these two books at the Peranakan Museum.

Providing editorial advice is Baba Peter Lee, who is himself a Peranakan and who is one of the community's best historians and scholars.☸

Published in Singapore by Booksmith Production
Supported by National Heritage Board, Singapore
Available at all major book stores, the museum shops and online through www.marketasia.com.sg

AMAZING!

By Linda Chee

Mari Lao Jiat (let's make merry)! On that rousing note, the world's first Peranakan Museum opened with a gloriously colourful bang on the evening of Friday, 26 April 2008.

Over the following three weekends, Peranakan food, craft, fashion and cultural performances drew huge crowds who braved the searing mid-day sun to be part of the opening festivities. Groups streamed in by the busloads, a sight rarely seen at Singapore museums. Young and old, families and friends, it seemed like all of

Singapore was at 39 Armenian Street!

At the close of the festival, the Museum had checked in some 22,000 visitors. At last count end-July, over 80,000 people had entered its halls. Museum officials are elated that it took less than three months to hit the same visitorship that the previous Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) took over a year to achieve. Importantly, three-quarters of the visitors were locals, with many first-time museum-goers – a fact not lost on the keen interest in our living culture. 🌸



The Museum was officially opened by Singapore's foremost Baba, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (middle).



Guests revelling and feasting at the opening reception.



Visitors galore at the opening night. The Museum received a record 80,000 visitors within just three months.

Photographs courtesy of the Peranakan Museum.

SOLO SPLENDOUR

Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the Mangkunegaran Dynasty

By Peter Lee

On 11 November 2007, the Mangkunegaran principality in Solo, Indonesia, celebrated the 250th anniversary of its establishment. The dynasty, a branch of the royal family of Mataram, was founded by Raden Mas Said (1726-1795), who won himself the right to a *kadipaten* (principality), a palace and a hereditary princely title after a long war against his cousin Pukubowono II and the Dutch East India Company (VOC). This honour was ratified at the Salatiga Agreement in March 1757.

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of this event, the palace organised a charity fund-raiser showcasing a 'colossal dance performance', *Adeging Praja Mangkunegaran* ('The Rise of the Mangkunegaran Court'). The whole of Jakarta society, and well over a thousand guests from all over Indonesia and Southeast Asia were in attendance. The evening was presided over by the current prince, Mangkunegara IX and his family, including his sister, Gusti Raden Ajeng Retno Astrini, and her husband, Tunku Abu Bakar of Johor. GRA Astrini, also known as Putri, lives in Johor and has many Singaporean friends. The Peranakan Association has also been honoured with her presence at our anniversary dinner a few years ago. 🍀



Dinner guests under the palace's main pendopo or hall.



Gusti Raden Ajeng Retno Astrini, her husband Tunku Abu Bakar of Johor, their two children and Association member Cynthia Hofer.



Jakarta society ladies — out in full force.



A sequence of the dance drama.



Mangkunegara IX holding stalks of tebu or sugar cane in a ceremony at the end of the evening.

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7. Mr Alfred Tan Beng Lin
8. Mrs Tan-Ng Shook Fong
9. Mrs Lucy Teo-Kang Joo Swee
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THE PERANAKAN GUIDE SINGAPORE

MUSEUMS

Peranakan Museum. Opened on 26 April 2008. See the world's first national Peranakan Museum with the most comprehensive and finest collection of Peranakan artefacts. Be delighted by the vibrant and colourful culture of the Babas and Nonyas. Singapore's newest boutique museum examines the centres of Peranakan culture in Malacca, Penang and Singapore, and traces its links to as far as Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand. Peranakan Museum, 39 Armenian Street, Singapore 179941. website: www.peranakanmuseum.sg Email: nhb_pm_vs@nhb.gov.sg Tel: +65 6332 2982.



National Museum of Singapore. The museum's Singapore History Gallery pays tribute to the contributions of the pioneering Peranakans. On view are some outstanding artefacts, including the oil portrait of Lim Boon Keng, old photographs, Jewellery and sireh sets, as well as the magnificent carved wood hearse of Tan Jlak Kim, which is considered one of the 11 Treasures of the National Museum'. National Museum of Singapore, 93 Stamford Road, Tel: 63323659, Opening Hours: 10am to 6pm Daily (Singapore History Gallery), 10am to 9pm Daily (Singapore Living Galleries), Admission \$10 (adults) \$5 (senior citizens above 60), \$5 (students, Nsmen), Free admission to the Singapore Living Galleries from 6pm to 9pm. <http://nationalmuseum.sg>.

The Baba House — COMING SOON! This new heritage house museum at 157 Neil Road will open in mid-September. Meanwhile you can 'visit' the house on-line. <http://www.nus.edu.sg/museums/baba/index.html>.

NUS Museum, NUS Centre For the Arts, is a comprehensive establishment for teaching and research. It focuses on Asian regional

art and culture and seeks to create an enriching experience through its collections, exhibition practices and partnerships. The Museum has over 7,000 artefacts and artworks from four collections. NUS Museum, NUS Centre For the Arts, 50 Kent Ridge Crescent, Tel: 6516 4617/6, Opening Hours: 10am to 7.30pm (Tuesdays to Saturdays), 10am to 6pm on Sundays. Closed on Mondays and Public Holidays. Admission is FREE. http://www.nus.edu.sg/museums/exhibitions_sseac.htm. For programmes related to the exhibition, see <http://www.nus.edu.sg/museums/cattoni.html>.

LANDMARKS

Blair Plain. A typical Peranakan residential area around Blair Road, Spottiswoode Park, Nell Road and New Bridge Road that is worth a stroll. Visit Guan Antiques nearby at Kampong Bahru Road, a treasure trove of Peranakan heirlooms. http://www.arch.nus.edu.sg/SOA/design_studio/dds2b/blair/study/Blair.html.

Emerald Hill Road. Another interesting residential district showcasing the best of eclectic Peranakan domestic architecture, just off Orchard Road.



Katong and Joo Chiat. Perhaps the nerve centre of Peranakan life in Singapore. In its heyday it was the site of grand seaside villas and elaborate Peranakan terraced houses. The latter can still be seen in a walk around Koon Seng Road. Also visit Peranakan shops such as Katong Antique House (208 East Coast Road) and Rumah Bebe (113 East Coast Road) as well as the great variety of Peranakan restaurants in the neighbourhood. http://www.visitsingapore.com/publish/stbportal/en/home/what_to_see/suburban_living/katong.html. <http://www.myjoochiat.com>.

Amoy Street and Telok Ayer Street. Perhaps one of the first Peranakan enclaves. Many

Peranakans from Malacca moved to this area as soon as the East India Company began to lease out land for sale.



Thian Hock Keng. The oldest Hokkien temple in Singapore was founded in 1821 although the present structure, built without nails, was completed only in 1841. The temple is dedicated to Mazu, the Daoist goddess of the sea and protector of all seamen. Many of the temple's patrons were Peranakan pioneers, such as Tan Tock Seng, who donated \$30,000 for renovations. He also founded the hospital named after him. The Hokkien Huay Kuan, a community organisation for Hokkien people in Singapore was housed at the temple and also helmed by Peranakan pioneers. Thian Hock Keng, 158 Telok Ayer Street, Tel: 64234616.

Tan Si Chong Su. Built in 1878, Tan Si Chong Su is the ancestral temple of the Tan clan, and was founded by prominent Baba philanthropists Tan Kim Ching, son of Tan Tock Seng, and Tan Beng Swee, the son of Tan Kim Seng. The first president of the temple, Tan Kim Tian, was a well-known Baba shipping tycoon. The temple consists of shrines for the ancestral tablets of Tan clansmen, as well as altars to the clan deities. The elaborate stone and wood carvings as well as the swooping ceramic roof finials makes this one of the most elaborate Chinese temples in Singapore, quaintly located amid the gleaming towers of the financial district. Tan Si Chong Su, 15 Magazine Road.

