







Contents

ISSUE 2 • 2010















2 EDITORIAL

It's All About Connections!

NEW PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

3 Baba Lee Kip Lee Passes the Baton to Baba Peter Wee

FEATURE

- 4 Aspects of Respect Familial Greetings
- 5 Ritual Practices
- 6 True Altar-native Style
- 8 Coming Full Circle
- 10 Tracing My Roots
- 14 Amassing the Amazing

DALAM DAPOR

16 On Preserves and Pasir Panjang

BOOKS

21 Out from Under a Coconut Shell

EVENTS

- 23 Rediscovering Heritage
- 25 Young Faces Herald Renewal
- 26 Babas in Burma Chinese Batiks of Java
- 27 NOTICEBOARD
- 28 DIRECTORY

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IT'S ALL ABOUT CONNECTIONS!

ust do it!" is Nike's renowned catchphrase. If Peranakan parents could adapt it for their children, it would almost certainly become, "Don't ask, just do it!" We all have those memories of childhood: being instructed in great detail about how to address certain relatives whom we did not meet often, or being told exactly what to do during certain religious rituals. And, unquestioningly, we obeyed. Thus, we connected with systems that had be set in place long before. In this issue, we delve into the ties that bind: Peranakan kinship terms, Cheng Beng rituals, and our links with Taoism and Buddhism.

Also, Baba Norman Cho connects with his family's past in a sojourn to Malacca to discover his roots, Nyonya Noreen Chan divulges some delicious seafood preserve recipes and new writer Vera Wijaya is amazed by Baba Christopher Lim's collection of

Peranakan artefacts. Especially useful are Vera's tips for potential collectors who wish to amass remarkable collections.

Finally, a connection of the greatest significance to our members would be the handover of the proverbial baton from Association President Baba Lee Kip Lee to new President Baba Peter Wee. A key point of Baba Peter Wee's message as our newly-elected President (see next page) echoes the Association's ongoing objective of strengthening connections both within and outside the Peranakan community.

With Linda on a most well-deserved vacation over this period, and having blind faith in me to carry this baby, I fully understand your surprise in seeing this name signing off underneath...

Emeric Lau Assistant Editor editor@perankan.org.sg

LETTER FROM BABA WILLIAM GWEE THIAN HOCK

n response to "At the Tok Panjang", it was found that the kinds of dishes served at the tok panjang were actually rather specific. Baba William highlights three categories of food as laok mangkok, comprising soups, laok pingan besar, which are foods served on large plates and laok piring, which comprise side dishes and appetizers. Foods offered for prayers or laok semayang, such as chapchai, were never served for birthdays, weddings and any other festive occasions. Segregation of the genders at tok panjang luncheons was sometimes, but not always, practised. The borrowing of nyonyaware, while rare, would largely be limited to relatives and neighbours living nearby for ease of transportation. Families would sometimes make permanent stain marks on the underside of their pieces to distinguish their sets from those belonging to others.

In response to "Sambot Taon", Baba William offers a variation on the time for hanging the *chai ki* (red bunting): some families would hang it up

on the 24th day of the 12th lunar month, when the Kitchen God is believed to ascend into heaven. He affirms the traditions of bolting the main door and throwing it open at the auspicious hour to welcome the New Year, and also of visiting the graves of one's ancestors on Chinese New Year morning.

In addition, Baba William has composed another New Year *panton* for us to enjoy:

Taon ini, dua puloh sepuloh Taon Baru, taon arimo Kita mintak jerki sepenoh Badan kuat-kuat, panjang omor

On this New Year of twenty ten On this the Tiger year We pray for Luck ever often Healthy body, life blessed with many years

The full contents of Baba William Gwee's letter may be found at http://peranakan.sg/2010/articles/comments

here has been a lot of interest in the Uncle Jolly's recipe for pongteh in the last issue of The Peranakan. Several of our readers have said that coriander powder (ketumbar) is never added into babi pongteh. All the classic recipe books also do not have this ingredient for this dish. We have checked with Uncle Jolly and he confirms that he uses ketumbar in his babi pongteh recipe. He says that it enhances the flavour of garlic and soya bean paste in the dish.

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NEW PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BABA LEE KIP LEE PASSES THE BATON TO BABA PETER WEE

would like to convey my heartfelt thanks to Mr Lee Kip Lee for his confidence in me, and to members of The Peranakan Association for electing me at our 110th AGM held on 27 March 2010.

The baton has been passed to me to build on the strong foundations of our Association and to improve on the gains made under the leadership of Mr Lee

With the assistance of an Advisory Panel that I hope to establish, we shall forge greater ties with our sister associations:

- The Persatuan Peranakan Cina Pulau Pinang
- The Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka
- The Phuket Baba Peranakan Association
- The Persatuan Peranakan Baba Nyonya Kuala Lumpur and Selangor
- The Australian Peranakan Association
- The Gunong Sayang Association
- The Association of Chetti Melaka (Peranakan Indians) Singapore

We will also strengthen the close and enduring partnerships we have with:

- The National Heritage Board of Singapore
- The Asian Civilisations Museum
- The Peranakan Museum
- The National University of Singapore Museum
- Singapore Tourism Board



Our new president, Baba Peter Wee (left) and outgoing president, Baba Lee Kip Lee.

- National Library Board
- Ministry of Community Devlopment Youth and Sports
- People's Association

The Peranakan Association Singapore will engage today's younger generation, advancing our Association's goal in bringing our culture and heritage to members and the community.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Wee

President

The Peranakan Association Singapore

Please also see the coverage of the Association's Annual General Meeting on page $26\,$

BABA PETER WEE is the newly-elected President of The Peranakan Association Singapore.

He is a Singapore Peranakan, the grandson of movie theatre pioneer Tan Cheng Kee, the greatgrandson of Tan Keong Saik, and the owner of Katong Antique House.

He advocates the philosophy of "Knowing one's past, understanding the present and drawing on the past to embrace the future". He is a consultant on Peranakan material culture,

and is often engaged to give talks where he shares his extensive knowledge and passion for the culture.

He hopes his work will increase awareness of the richness, diversity and values of Peranakan culture and heritage.

ASPECTS OF RESPECT

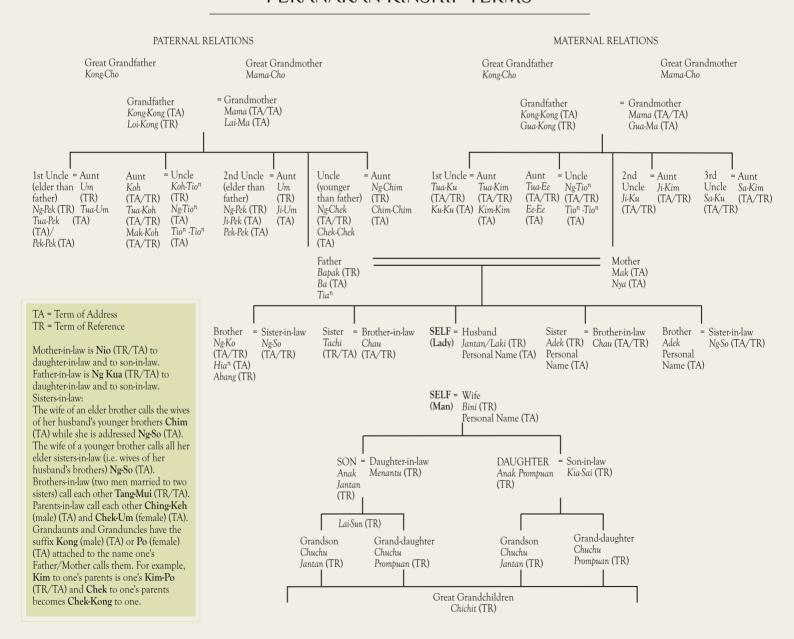
"Men are respectable only as they respect." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Peranakan reproduces a chart detailing kinship terms in Baba Malay, compiled by Lau Chwee Kim and Aileen Lau Guek Lin.

owadays, the terms "Auntie" and "Uncle", sometimes followed by an identifying moniker, have become an accepted manner to greet everyone from cab drivers to non-immediate relatives.

Peranakans fastidiously emphasize the importance of respect for one's elders. Using the correct Baba Malay term to greet one's relatives both identified the exact familial relationship two people shared and accorded due respect to each party.

PERANAKAN KINSHIP TERMS



RITUAL PRACTICES

Baba Ee Sin Soo summarises Cheng Beng traditions - an annual festival where Peranakans pay respect to their forbears

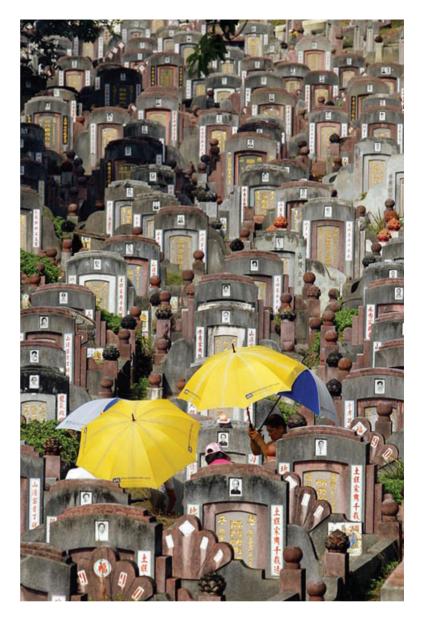
heng Beng (also known as Qingming Festival 清明节, 'Ancestors' Day' or 'Tomb Sweeping' Day) is on the 104th day after the winter solstice, usually occurring on 4th or 5th April of the Gregorian calendar. Buddhist or Taoist Peranakans offer prayers and/or make food offerings during the period of 10 days before or after 4th or 5th April.

It is a time to show filial piety, by remembering and honouring ancestors at family altars/ancestral altar, and grave sites. Young and old pray before the ancestors, sweep the tombs and offer food, tea, wine and joss paper. The rites have a long tradition and are observed in the traditional manner by Buddhist or Taoist Peranakans, who take this festival, its heritage, rituals and strict decorum seriously. Cheng Beng is an elaborate family or clan affair (e.g. in Penang) and a family obligation.

It is a time for reflection, giving thanks and seeking the blessings and protection of the ancestors.

Observances begin early in the morning, with the ancestral veneration at domestic ancestral altars, followed by visiting the graves of close relations. After the prayers at the grave site, the whole family would feast on the food offered at the prayers, signifying family reunion with the ancestors. It is like paying respect to the elders by visiting their homes at Chinese New year.







Above, below left & right: Peranakans visit their ancestors' graves with a selection of food offerings.

TRUE ALTAR-NATIVE STYLE

Baba Ee Sin Soo describes the batik tokwi of Indonesia

B uddhists and Taoists believe that their altars reflect the structure of the cosmos. The altar is visualised as a sacred mountain connecting the human and divine realms, giving the practitioner ritual space. and solemn occasions, a Peranakan altar commands attention. It consists of two tables an upper and a lower square table, which has a tokwi (table valance) draped at its front, placed beneath the higher table and pulled out before it.

The *tokwi* in its two-dimensional form is visually spectacular and its artwork vibrant and rich in Buddhist and/or Taoist iconography. It boasts motifs, ideograms and a pantheon of deities who populate an elaborate

network of heavens. Beyond the beauty, value, and content of these works, such textiles in Peranakan culture and worship create sacred spaces for the depiction of images believed to embody a spiritual presence. They complement the ritual objects and prescribed rituals before precisely laid-out altars. Once adorning the table, the *tokwi* is transformed, taking on a third dimension.

the batik illustrations, yet expressing religious devotion.

The Chinese artistic motifs and designs have been interpreted by local artists who might not be familiar with Chinese art, resulting in an evolution of styles and techniques of expression. They are drawn in wax on cotton fabric and their stylistic artistry and expressions amaze modern viewers.





In Singapore and Malaysia, we are familiar with embroidered *tokwi* either locally-made or imported from China. However, in Indonesia, the Peranakans create an environment in which their Chinese beliefs meshed with locally inspired traditions. Their *tokwi* is made of batik, incorporating imagery of local imagination into

The meaning and function of the tokwi have remained unchanged, but interpreting an Indonesian batik tokwi successfully is not at all easy apart from the common symbols, partly because the illustrations are

composed of less complicated abstract designs. Some have been drawn from the natural world, others from local Indonesian myths, and yet others from the Buddhist and Taoist religions.

The batik renditions attest to the Peranakans' adaptation and acceptance of local skills and artistic expression. •

Right: A tokwi with a qilin motif.

Below: Details of tokwi

with designs of qilins and phoenixes.



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COMING FULL CIRCLE

Baba Tan Kuning explores the Buddhist influence in Peranakan religious practices and beliefs after reading *Father*, an article by Robert Yeo in our *April – June 2009* issue, whose deceased father was given Buddhist funeral rites even though he was not a Buddhist.

A ll Peranakans who were not Christian converts considered themselves Buddhists by default. Steeped in Confucian values of filial piety, Peranakans through the generations were brought up to carry out Buddhist rituals without questioning their elders.

Illiterate in Chinese by the early 20th century, they could not access Mahayana Buddhist texts translated from Sanskrit into the Chinese language. Their inability to speak and understand Chinese deprived them of the opportunity to learn Mahayana Buddhism from Buddhist monks, who were mostly recent migrants from Southern China.

Detail of an altar showing images of both Taoist and Buddhist deities, in the reception hall of 157 Neil Road, photographed in the late 1960s

Religious practices

The religious practices of the Peranakans were really a mix of Taoist and Buddhist rituals. Taoist elements included ancestral worship, and the worship of the God of Heaven (Ti Kong) and

other deities. The worship of Guan Yin Boddhisattva, popularly known as the Goddess of Mercy, a personification of compassion, is of Buddhist origin.

Taoist temples or Chai Tng

Ti Kong Tua, named in dedication to Ti Kong, the God of Heaven, is the Peranakans' most popular Taoist temple. It is situated along Havelock Road. The annual feast day is on the ninth day of the New Year, in the first lunar month of the Chinese calendar. Other devotees choose to pray at a *Chai Tng* with a big image of Ti Kong. Among them were the Chai Tngs(temple) at Devonshire Road and Tembeling Road.

The Chai Tngs mix Buddhist and Taoist religious practices. Temples run by male keepers are separate



Photograph courtesy of Lee Kip Lin)

from those run by women. The keepers are vegetarians and celibate but do not shave their heads like Buddhist monks and nuns. In Singapore, the well-known male *Chai Tngs* are Kuan Im Temple at Waterloo Street, and the Devonshire Road and Tembeling Road *Chai Tngs*. There are more temples run by women.

One peculiar social phenomena of the Peranakan culture is that the women are the ones who visit the *Chai Tng* to pray to Kuan Im to solve family problems.

Buddhist influence

The devotion to Kuan Im led to more religious practices influenced by Buddhism. In Buddhism, Kuan Im is a *bodhisattva*, a Buddha-to-be. The nyonyas were told in Malay, by the temple keepers,

that they were praying to Kuan Im Hood Cho, a Buddha. This could be the influence of Tibetan Buddhism. Kuan Im festive days, which occur three times a year, are called Hood Cho Seh Jit - birthdays of Kuan Im Buddha. These made the nyonyas think that they were worshipping a Buddha and so were Buddhists. They made regular visits to the Chai Tng on full moon night and new moon night of the month, which were respectively the 15th and the first days of the Chinese lunar month, considered as "holy days" in Buddhist sutras. On these two days, the worshippers would makan sayor setengah hari saja, (be a vegetarian for half the day up to noon.) Like pure Mahayana Buddhists, they abstained from eating beef. But as lay people, they were discouraged from reciting Buddhist sutras (scriptures) and mantras (chants) by the temple keepers as they were not full-time vegetarians nor celibate.

Buddhist influence on Peranakan morals

The concept of retribution or *balasan* is commonly used to teach morality in Peranakan homes. It is equivalent to the word *karma* in Buddhism.

Children who told lies would be chided, "Jangan chakap bohong, nanti kena potong lidah", which literally translates as "Don't tell lies or your tongue will be sliced off in hell". This is a reference to the Buddhist concept of the dead being punished for their wrongdoings in the 18 Levels of Hell, known in Hokkien as Chap Puek Teh Gek.

Mothers would sometimes say, "Jangan buat dosa, nanti kena palu ka Chap Puek Teh Gek" meaning, do not commit sin lest you be punished in the 18 Levels of Hell. The nyonyas also knew about Giam Khoon, the Justice of Hell, a popular Buddhist deity in the Chrita Dulukala (Tales of Ancient Times) books written in romanised Malay by Peranakan authors. Another story, Journey to the West, was popular among English-educated Peranakans. This story was about Kow Chay Tian or the Monkey God, who accompanied a Chinese monk on his journey westwards to India in search of the original Buddhist sutras, during the Tang Dynasty.

The Babas and religion

Peranakan men were largely not involved in religious activities. As household heads and breadwinners, the men were often preoccupied with their career and other secular pursuits. When death occurred in the family, they were unfamiliar with Buddhist rituals of salvation, such as the elaborate *Kong Teck*, which is a ritual where the living build up merits and transfer them to the dead. Usually, a Buddhist monk would simply be

called upon to perform the last rites by chanting Buddhist sutras.

Salvation by faith

The belief in salvation by faith, through the grace of Amitabha Buddha rather than merits from good deeds, originated from a Mahayana sutra called Sutra on Amitabha Buddha, or Oh Mi To Kheng in Hokkien. It was believed that faith alone could enable a person to be reborn in the Western Paradise where he would learn the Dharma (teachings of the Buddha), develop wisdom after a period of time and attain Enlightenment, the ultimate goal for every Buddhist.

Urns in Buddhist temples

Putting urns containing ashes of the dead in a Buddhist temple is a practice derived from the Taoist belief that the spirit of the dead would hear the sutras chanted daily in the temple and hence, develop faith in the Amitabha Buddha. In Singapore, the social phenomena may only have surfaced after the end of the Second World War. The temple urns are an alternative to keeping ancestral tablets at home, and relieve the family of the trouble of ancestral worship or semayang abu (praying to the ashes), in the form of food offerings, burning incense and prayers. For the Peranakans, the most popular temple for ancestral worship was the Buddhist temple at Jalan Senyum, founded by the first Peranakan Buddhist monk in the late 1940s.

However, Buddhism in Peranakan society saw a reformation of sorts from the mid-20th century. In the 1940s a Sri Lankan monk, Ven. M. M. Mahaveera, introduced Theravada Buddhism (Teaching of the Elders) where devotees worshipped differently from Mahayana (The Great Circle) Buddhism, which flourished in Central and East Asia. For the first time, the Peranakans could communicate with Buddhist monks, learn and recite Buddhist teachings in romanised English. Theravada Buddhist rites now often take the place of Kong Teck, a Mahayana funeral ritual. For example, the dead are cremated and the ashes buried at sea. As practicing Buddhists, Peranakans have come full circle. **

References:

- (1) Oh Mi To Kheng or Sukhavyati Vyuha (in Sanskrit), a sutra of the Pure Land Sect, translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva and translated into English by F Max Muller.
- (2) Pu Men Pin, 'The All Sided One', a chapter from the Lotus Sutra, translated into Chinese from Sanskrit by Kumarajiva and translated into English by Jan Hendrik Kern.

TRACING MY ROOTS

Baba Norman Cho journeys in search of his family history

Below: Obituary of Norman's great-greatgreatgrandfather, Chan Whye Cheok. Straits Times, 18 Sets 1926, Page 8.

ho are my ancestors (referred to as Cho-Kong or Nenek-Moyang by the Peranakans)? This question has plagued me ever since I became aware of genealogy. It began when I was asked to chart my family tree for a school history project. I was fortunate to be able to trace my Peranakan greatgrandparents for both paternal and maternal families.

> The quest to discover my ancestry was an extension of my desire to better understand my Peranakan identity.

mindful of one's ancestors,

recognising the contributions

displayed prominently above

the altar. Deceased forebears

would each have a tablet

inscribed with his or her

name, together with some

biographical information.

These tablets were housed in

a kam or shrine on the altar

domestic altars are seldom

maternal great-grandfather are

missing and have probably

been discarded. Yet, an

table. Nowadays, these

My own family's

genealogical records,

previously kept by my

maintained.

that they have made to the

family. A portrait of the

family's immediate late

patriarch or sometimes

matriarch was usually

including those who lived

long before. It means

forgotten links to relatives who we may not even know exist. As early Peranakans favoured marrying within the community, it is not surprising to find that today's Peranakans often discover that they are Plagues mounted above related somewhat. Knowing your roots helps such the ancestral altar of traditional Peranakan homes identification. All these points compelled me to were commonly emblazoned research my own family history. Thus, my adventure with the Chinese characters began... zhuiyuan or seek far. This served as a reminder to be

I interviewed older relatives, located old surviving family documents, and also scoured the internet. My unusual surname "Cho" made filtering the records less daunting.

that their in-laws were descended from respectable

families or turunan orang bertapis-tapis. Their ancestors

had to be free of scandals! When introducing oneself,

it was common for the Peranakans to make reference

to notable ancestors. My father was taught to refer

second-hand jewellery dealer). Indeed, recognition

could be wrought via the merits of one's ancestors.

Tracing the family tree also enables us to discover

to himself as chuchu kway-it tiam (grandson of the

Then in May 2009, a breakthrough of sorts occurred when I discovered that the National Library had digitized the Straits Times from 1831 to 2000. Isn't it fantastic that modern technology now enables us to sieve through over a hundred years of news at the click of a mouse? I found an article from 1922 describing a suit by a certain Cho Poo of 84 Heeren Street, Malacca, for the recovery of 76 acres of land. He was represented by his attorney, Cho Kim Choon. When I cross-referenced the Land Grant Number with the old family documents of my paternal grandfather, Cho Kim Leong (1903-1945), the number matched exactly! I was elated. This was the land parcel that my grandfather inherited and I now know its history. More importantly, I know the name of my paternal great-grandfather and where he resided. Who was Cho Kim Choon then? In an article in 1948, the death of Cho Kim Choon (1891 - 1948) was announced. He was described as a respected citizen of Negri Sembilan and the son of the late pioneer of gambier, tapioca and rubberplanting, Cho Poo. I now know that Kim Choon was my granduncle and that my great-grandfather owned various plantations. Cho Poo was a generous man whose name was listed as a donor to several causes. As I found more news about Kim Choon, I realised that he was an intelligent man, whose hobby was solving crossword puzzles - his name appeared numerous times in the crossword section of the

DEATHS

CHAN WHYE CHEOK - Aged 78 years at his residence No.431, Havelock Road at 10pm on September 15, 1926. He leaves two daughters, Chan Geng Ean and Geng Hong, one son-in-law Mr. Yeo Hoon Swi of Messrs. Connell Bros. Co., three grandsons Chan Cheow Poh of N.V. Straits Java Trading Co., Yeo Cheow Hin and Yeo Cheow Ann, five granddaughters, four grandsons-in-law and eight great-grandchildren to mourn his loss. Interment on Sunday at 11am at Senh Chan Burial Ground, Silat Road, off Kampong Bharu Road. F.M.S. and Malacca papers please copy.

GOVERNMENT OF JOHORE

IN THE SUPREME COURT AT JOHORE BAHRU

Miscellaneous Suit No.26 of 1922 CHO POO of 84, Heeren Street, Malacca, by his attorney, CHO KIM CHOON of 9, Rahang Road, Seremban, Chargee against

1. LIM BAH NEE of Malacca, 2. HO NYA CHIK, administratrix of TAY NGO, deceased of 49-e, Kubu Road, Malacca, Changers

CHARGEE'S SALE OF

1. All that piece of land containing by admeasurement 68 acres, 2 roods and 15 poles and situated in the district of Segamat and comprised in Grant for Land 2969, Register of Grants Vol. XXX Folio 69.

2. All that piece of land containing 7 acres, 1 rood and 33 poles, or thereabouts and situated in the district of Segamat and comprised in Grant for Land 2970, Register of Grants Vol. XXX Folio 70.

The Annual rents are \$171.90 and \$18.80 respectively.

To be sold by public auction at our salesroom, No.38, Riverside, Malacca, on Friday, October 27, at 12 noon.

For the recovery of \$14,950.00 and costs. CHEONG KOON SENG & CO.,

Auctioneers.

Messrs. COOPER & WONG, Solicitors.

Above: Lawsuit filed by Norman's greatgrandfather. Straits Times, 10 Oct 1922. Page 5

awareness of one's ancestry is integral to Peranakan culture. This is manifested through filial piety and ancestral worship. Deceased relatives are accorded due respect. When choosing a prospective son- or daughter-in-law, families took great efforts to ascertain





Left: Exterior of 84 Heeren Street; Right: Exterior of 151 Heeren Street, Malacca.

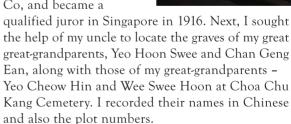
newspaper. He was sociable and had held numerous parties at his residence. His son, Cho Nyit Yew, more popularly known as Cho Jolly, was a celebrated motorcycle racer from the late 1920s to the late 1930s. He reportedly won many competitions across Malaya and was awarded a silver cup by Ariel Motors for endorsing its motorcycles. He was a masculine character who loved running and playing rugby and was a much loved scoutmaster. He was also a Health Inspector of Negri Sembilan.

nother name, Cho Kim Hock, also appeared frequently in the papers of the 1930s. He was the brother of Kim Choon and a celebrated badminton player who represented Malacca and won numerous competitions across the Malayan Peninsula. He was the team captain for Malacca's Argonaut's Badminton Party. He later migrated to Singapore and worked for the American Embassy. Another brother, Kim Tian, seemed to be the only sibling left residing in Malacca. He was a civil servant who was mentioned attending public events in several newspaper articles. While the digitised archive of the newspaper has been useful in providing a wealth of information, it was my aunt who informed me that her uncle Kim Tian eventually migrated to Australia and that great-grandfather had another house at 151 Heeren Street. He probably housed his wives in separate residences. He had three wives and might have owned as many houses. Thus, it seems that the last of the Chos had emigrated from Malacca.

I also searched for my maternal ancestors, the Yeos, from the archived obituary pages. Keying in the name of my maternal great-grandfather, Yeo Cheow Ann, I was thrilled to find his name listed in the obituaries of his father and maternal grandfather. This reverse-tracing enabled me to discover that my great great-grandfather was Yeo Hoon Swee (1869–1937). His wife was Chan Geng Ean (1872–1930) and his father-in-law was Chan Whye Cheok (1848–1926). They had come from Malacca and lived in 28 Everton Road and 431 Havelock Road respectively. I felt that I had done pretty well in tracing my roots back over 150 years

with such limited resources. Hoon Swee's obituary not only listed the names of his other sons – Cheow Poh and Cheow Hin (who was my great greatgrandfather) but also included the name of his brother, Hoon Kiat, and those of his nephews – Hong Wee, Poh Hood, Tay Seng and Ann Soon from Malacca. The Obituaries are an invaluable resource that can reveal the names of relatives, along with the age and place of residence of the deceased. Next, I used the Internet to search these names, and promptly discovered a war hero in the family! SGT Yeo Tay

Seng (Malacca Volunteer Corp) died on 28 Feb 1942 in Bukit Timah (Singapore) at the age of 30 while fighting the war against the Japanese. He was interred at Kranji War Cemetery and was honoured with a war memorial plaque at the Clock Tower in Malacca. The web also revealed that Yeo Hoon Swee was working for Hooglandt & Co, and became a



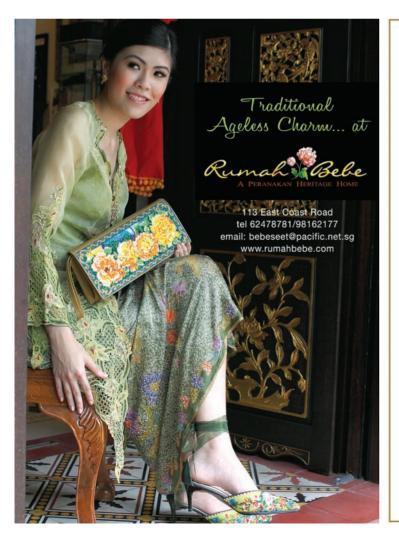
In August 2009, the search for my family history culminated in a field-trip to Malacca. I was hoping to uncover more information by visiting the hometown of my ancestors. My first stop was the Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka (Malacca's Peranakan Association). Coincidentally, the Persatuan's office occupies 151 Heeren Street - one of Cho Poo's former residences! I was interested in the Cho family history as I had not been able to trace anyone beyond my great-grandfather.



Relief panel, 151 Heeren Street, Malacca.

Unfortunately, the Persatuan did not keep any early records of the Peranakans in Malacca. I was utterly disappointed. Nonetheless, it was exciting to be able to visit my great-grandfather's former house. I could imagine what the house would have been like when my family lived there. Number 149, its adjoining unit, is architecturally similar and its interior has been preserved. I mentioned that my maternal family, the Yeos, had also come from Malacca. My great great-granduncle, Yeo Hoon Kiat's descendants should still be residing in Malacca. It would be marvelous if I could meet them. Suddenly, a voice from the room behind the office exclaimed "Did someone just mentioned my grandfather's name? Yeo Hoon Kiat?". It was the Persatuan's Secretary, Betty Ong. She enquired further and I was able to confirm the names of Hoon Kiat's sons. It was absolute serendipity! I had found a long lost Ee-Po (maternal grandaunt). Hoon Kiat was her maternal grandfather. She knew of lost relatives in Singapore but never anticipated a reunion. I had finally reconnected with my relatives in Malacca! Betty revealed that her mother had told her that the Yeos had a long history in Malacca. There was a genealogy book of the Yeos maintained by her uncle but it went missing after his death. Her mother was reportedly about the 7th generation. I also visited 84 Heeren Street, another one of Cho Poo's residences. It has now been transformed into a shop specialising in beaded shoes, Ah Lan's Heeren Beaded Attire Shop. The kind proprietress acceded to my request to view the interior of this unit. It was large: much wider and longer than 151 and it had three air-wells. The place was largely in its original state but badly dilapidated. There were missing panels and broken tiles that belied the grandeur of its heyday. If only the walls could talk...

I returned to Singapore with a sense of accomplishment. I had found lost relatives and seen the houses where my ancestors lived. Discovering my family history has enhanced my sense of identity and given me a deeper appreciation of my heritage. Everyone has a unique family history waiting to be explored. If you have an interest in learning more about yours, I hope that my experience can serve as a guide and inspiration. •



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local history's famous personalities, the 'Hai Kee Chan' or Sea Remembrance Store had once served as the residence and office of Kapitan Cina Chung Keng Kwee.

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LOCATION MAP



AMASSING THE AMAZING

Inspired by Baba Christopher Lim, Vera Wijaya presents her thoughts on the art of collecting

Remember your childhood pastime of collecting comic books, toys or maybe seashells? How about the joy of obtaining a rare stamp no one else had? Collecting involves passion and patience. Collected objects reflect who you are at various stages in your life. They provide a peek into the lives of their owners.

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of viewing Baba Christopher Lim's fabulous collection of

> Peranakan artifacts. A pastor in Australia and a regular contributor to The Peranakan, he is also a passionate collector. He previously uploaded several photos of his

collection onto
his Facebook
profile. These
include old
Peranakan
family
photographs,
handmade beaded
tablecloths, vintage
kebayas, sarongs and

nyonya dolls. Awed by what I saw, I asked him to share his

motivation and approach to the art of collecting. Enthusiastically, he explained that he was proud of his roots, being a sixth generation Peranakan from Penang, and wished to preserve the material culture for others to appreciate. He added that his collection was built over many years and that he intended to continue acquiring more items.

Baba Lim is both methodical and passionate in his approach to collecting. He has trawled his family's effects, spent time making beaded handicrafts and also looks for interesting objects





when he travels. He takes great pains to understand Peranakan culture. Besides collecting, he listens to keronchong music and chats with fellow Peranakans from all over Southeast Asia. His large collection allows viewers to grasp a little of what the culture was like in its heyday.

After speaking with Baba Christopher Lim and other collectors, I can say that collecting entails a process of learning. I have compiled some of their recommendations below. Hopefully, you will find these pointers useful should you wish to build your own collection.

Above: Woodpecker kasot.

Above right: Detail of a beaded tablecloth.

Right: An old photo c.1930.

Collecting Tips

Only buy what you like and what interests you.

While some collectors hope that the value of their artifacts will increase, it is not wise to collect solely for investment's sake. Unlike gold and real estate, most artifacts can be extremely elastic in value. It is best to collect what you truly like and derive joy from ownership; any increase in value is simply a bonus.

Educate yourself about what you are collecting – the more you know about the objects, the easier it is for you to appreciate them fully. Strong knowledge also prevents you from buying counterfeit or damaged goods.

Research and plan collecting with focus leads to building up a meaningful group of objects. Smart collectors plan every acquisition. After they've decided what they like, they adopt some means of organising and classifying their collection. Smart collecting involves much thought. All the objects relate to one another and strengthen the collection. Such careful planning and research set smart collectors apart from others.

Choose a theme for your collection. This will guide your purchasing decisions and ensure where everything belongs. Quality collections should always have a recognisable theme.

Collecting need not be expensive. You can collect crafts or artworks made by family members and friends. At times, bartering can be mutually beneficial.

Share your collection with others by lending them to museum exhibitions or giving educational talks.

Be a responsible collector. Caring for your collection is important to ensure its longevity. Take precautions to protect vour collection against humidity, direct sunlight. mould and damage.



Before making your first purchase, it is important to understand the characteristics of your intended collection. For example, collectors of batik, beaded handicrafts or old photographs would benefit from researching to learn how to identify good quality objects and avoid being taken in by fakes.

Museums

Learn about displaying your collection from the excellent displays at various museums. Recommended museums in Singapore include The Peranakan Museum, The National Museum and the Singapore Art Museum (SAM). There are also heritage landmarks including The Baba House, Singapore, Baba-Nyonya Heritage Museum in Malacca and the Pinang Peranakan Mansion in Penang. Textile enthusiasts can also check out the Museum Batik Danar Hadi in Solo, Indonesia.



Miniature dolls in kebayas.

Galleries and Speciality Shops

The objects in a museum's display are almost never on sale, but you can look for similar finds at a gallery. Gallery collections cater to diverse collectors. Establishing good relationships with gallery staff will allow them to understand your preferences. Attending exhibition openings and other events will keep you updated on the latest trends.

Collectors, Curators and Dealers

Talking to fellow collectors and other professionals helps broaden your horizon and offers different perspectives in your collecting approach.

Getting Your Feet Wet

If you are creative and passionate, you can try your hand at replicating your collections, such as by learning how to make *kasot manek* or batik. Look out for local community classes offering such workshops. •

DALAM DAPOR

ON PRESERVES AND PASIR PANJANG

Nyonya Noreen Chan shows how to prepare preserves without getting into a pickle

efore the advent of reliable refrigeration, it was important to preserve food to reduce wastage and to have sufficient supplies during lean times. Eggs, for example, can be preserved in different ways. My Australian friends recounted how, during their childhood, eggs were put into isinglass (a kind of

gelatin) or covered in

In tropical climes,

fruit and vegetables are readily available all year, but there was still the challenge of keeping raw fish and meat from going bad, and also having to polish off large quantities of seasonal fruit (my grandmother used to make mangosteen toffee!). Before World War 2, refrigerators were luxury items; my great-grandfather Chia Keng Tye's diary records a purchase, on 15 November 1935, of a "Refrigerator - Burnes Co. \$470, less 10% = \$423 + \$32 c/o wiring (4 years' guarantee)". This was a princely sum in those days,

but a good investment as five years later, he traded it in for a "Kelvinator \$476 net, as \$160".

Back then, people tended to buy food in small quantities, but shopped frequently (even daily), as opposed to the weekly shopping trips and overflowing trolleys so common nowadays. Even so, when certain

> ingredients were very cheap and one had bought a lot, it was necessary to do something to make the lot last. For seafood, the options included salting, various degrees of drying, and making keropok (or crackers). The latter consists of making a paste of seafood (fish or prawn), sago flour and

seasonings, steaming and then slicing it into thin pieces for deep frying. My grandmother would help her mother make keropok whenever prawns were in season, and then sell the excess.

Grandmother's (Mama's) family had ready access to fresh seafood at their holiday home in Pasir Panjang, which was located at the ½ mile point along Pasir Panjang Road. The house - raised on pillars in the traditional style - was surrounded by coconut groves and a stone's throw from the sea. A number of steps

wax. In Chinese culture, egg preservation has gone a step further: duck eggs are salted or covered in an alkaline paste of quicklime, producing salted eggs and "century eggs" which can be enjoyed as unique foods in their own right.

Bottom left: The Pasir Panjang holiday home.

Pasir Panjang.

A view of the coast at

Bottom right: On the steps of the sea wall at Pasir Panjang. Noreen Chan's grandmother, Elsie Chia, is seated on the right at the back.







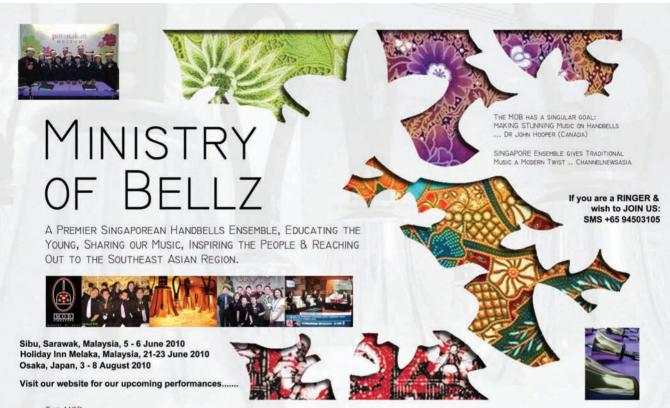
led down to the water; beside them was a jetty that ended in a boathouse. Great-grandfather was an avid boatman, and enjoyed racing his speedboat, wittily named "Excuse Me".

During the school holidays, the whole family would decamp to Pasir Panjang, along with one of the junior *chong pos* (cooks). Even the piano teacher would go there to conduct lessons for the children. It was an idyllic time, filled with swimming, fishing and boat trips. The children would collect *sinting*, *remis*, *lala* and other shellfish along the beach.

Mama would tell us about how she sometimes accompanied her father out in a small boat at night during the squid season. All they had to do was shine a torch over the water and hundreds of squid would swim up to the light; a few scoops of the net

(holding it over the water to allow the squid to squirt their ink) would bring in a bucketful of live squid. Then it was a matter of signalling those waiting on shore to boil some water and prepare dipping sauce, and in a short while there would be heaps of fresh live squid for supper!

he local fishermen used to land their boats on the beach nearby, and would call out over the fence "Nyonya, nyonya, beli udang, beli ikan!" ("Come, buy my prawns and fish!"). With the fresh catch literally jumping, it was impossible to resist. It is hard to believe that seafood in Singapore used to be so abundant. Sadly, modernisation and pollution have meant that seafood is now expensive, and it has become impossible to find shellfish on our beaches.



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DALAM DAPOR

RECIPES

Mama's book featured several recipes for turning seafood into condiments by salting and fermentation. Asam Sinting is a dish that is probably extinct, because it is nigh impossible to find sinting along Singapore's or Malacca's beaches. These are also known as window pane oysters (placuna spp) and in the Philippines are called kapis (or capiz) shells, and they are made into ornaments. My mother recalls digging for them as child.

Ayer Kaypua and Kerpeting Asin seem like terribly extravagant dishes, as they require the freshest prawns and crabs. Mama always said she preferred Ayer Kaypua to Chinchalok, but I never got to try these recipes. The keropok recipe is credited to Grandma P.P. who was Chia Keng Tye's mother-in-law; she moved from the Blair Road area (where she went by the nickname Mak Spylan) to the Pasir Panjang house, and was renamed Grandma Pasir Panjang.

An interesting note: in an older version of Mama's (handwritten) recipe book, the recipes are in Malay, but in the latest version, she translated the instructions into English and added clarifications.

ASAM SINTING

(Preserved oysters)

"Sinting korek, abis chuchi buang lenday.
Tiris kan.10 cups sinting (heap), a cup garam halus (level). Mix, pukol, buang busa. Tarok brandy di botol kring, abis masok kan sinting. Suda masak mau makan tarok bras goring (halus), ahlia toombok, pra lamo, sedikit gula."

Wash the sinting by rinsing in water to remove the mud. With a sharp knife, prise open the sinting and remove the meat. Rinse the sinting in a sieve under a running tap until all the slimy mucus is washed off. Repeat until clean. Mix 10 heaped cups of sinting with 1 level cup of roasted salt. Mix well and beat with the palm of your hand. Remove the froth from the surface. Repeat until clear. Pour brandy into completely dry bottles and put in the sinting. Set aside for 1 week. Serve with a sprinkling of fried ground rice, finely pounded ginger, a squeeze of lemon and sugar.

AYER KAYPUA

Udang bia hidup, buang kerpala, boontot. Chuchi, tiris, abis potong bia kasar. 5 toompok udang, 1 toompok bras goring halus, 1 toompok garam goring panas. Esee botol bia kring dan tuang sedikit brandy."

Use live prawns. Wash and drain, remove heads and tails, slice into ²/₃ inch segments.

Assemble portions of 5 parts prawns, 1 part fried ground rice and 1 part fried hot salt. Mix together, add brandy, place in completely dry jars and pour in more brandy. Set aside until the prawns are soft and a bit 'wet'. Serve with fried fish, a squeeze lemo kasturi juice and sliced chillies.

KERPITING ASIN (Salted crabs)

"Kerpiting chuchi bresi, tiris kring, abis chinchung halus. Tidak mau chintong nya. 6 toompok kerpiting, 1 toompok garum goring (cold), 1 toompok bras goring halus. Champor, tarok di botol bia ada brandy. Suda masak mau makan tuang sedikit chukka sama ahlia toombok halus."

Wash black crabs until clean. Chop the legs and body into small pieces and drain. Discard claws.

Assemble portions of 6 parts crab, 1 part fried ground rice and 1 part fried salt (cold). Mix together and place in completely dry jars with a little brandy. Keep in jars for about 1 week. Serve with rice vinegar and finely pounded ginger.

KEROPOK UDANG (Grandma P.P.'s recipe)

1 kati prawns, shelled, washed and with centre veins removed. Grind into a fine paste ¹/₂ kati sago flour 2 tsp *beecheng* (MSG) 3 tsp *bawang merah* (shallots), finely ground 1 tsp pepper powder 3 tsp fine sugar 1 ¹/₂ tsp fine salt 1 small egg

Mix together and knead until the dough does not stick to the hand. Roll into bars and steam for 1 hour. When cool, refrigerate overnight. Slice, but not too thinly, and dry in the sun for 2-3 days. Fry before serving. •

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Baba Emeric Lau appreciates an honest story from Josephine Chia

osephine Chia's (or Phine's, as she calls herself) novel, *Frog Under a Coconut Shell*, is a deeply personal account that presents the reader with a hefty slice of true Singaporean life, warts and all.

The story is both a tribute to Phine's mother, Soon Neo, and an autobiography. The title is an English translation of the Malay idiom *katak bawah tempurong*, which likens someone to a frog that lives under a coconut shell, believing the shell to be its entire world. It is a metaphor that Soon Neo rallies against by ensuring that her daughters receive a sound education.

The narrative traces how Phine's newly-poor Nyonya mother struggled with her limited means to emerge a well-respected figure in her *kampong*, defying the conventions and limitations of the time to put her daughters through school. In turn, the author shares the pain she felt when her mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, the trauma of her own first marriage and the difficulties she experiences in her second marriage when she migrates to England and later becomes a globetrotter.

Brilliant moments abound, especially in the recollections of 1960s life. Phine shares how her clothes were made of the previous year's curtains, including a full skirt with a "fashionable" can-can underneath! Readers will also appreciate the many heartrending memories captured. Hunger engendered such desperation that Phine attempted to steal some meat laid out for a fearsome Alsatian, only to escape being badly bitten by a hair's breadth. The author also suffered physical abuse at the hands of her father who misinterpreted a chaperoned visit to the National Library as a far too premature rendezvous with a boy.

Interspersed with these recollections are Phine's reflections from a contemporary perspective. She ponders, "I often wondered how much of me is really me and how much of me is really my mother or even my father? Do I own something that is solely mine? Where does the off-shoot of my own personality begin?"

There is also a idealised, cathartic quality in the way regret is voiced, such as in regard to missing

out on watching her children grow up: "It's the little things I have lost, a child's first words, his face when he opens his birthday present, me reaching out to clean ice cream off his cheek, feeling his breath on my skin, hear him call me *mummy*. Little things which would have plugged up the hole of my emptiness."

FROG

Josephine Chia

Other lines, however, occasionally bring the author's intentions into question. Phine takes a jibe at her stepdaughter, whom she refers to as Sadie: "She has never known a single day of hunger and has made herself rotund by her love of food but not exercise, so that even designer clothes could not disguise it."

This being a second edition of the novel, Phine has included an Afterword where she reiterates her intention to exalt her mother, and asks forgiveness from those who may have felt slighted.

This is indeed a no-holds barred account of two lives both shared and lived, and if at times imperfect, should be more than excused for its sheer honesty. No one, least of all us Peranakans, likes their dirty linen aired – but then again, how are lives to be recorded in full if the bitter is not committed to the page along with the sweet? •

Frog Under a Coconut Shell (new edition, 2010) is published by Times Books. Available from all Times Bookstores and Amazon.com





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REDISCOVERING HERITAGE

Baba Emeric Lau goes on a Peranakan tour

rganised with the support of the Singapore Tourism Board and Luxury Tours, 30 individuals comprising students to retirees gathered at Joo Chiat Community Club at 9am on 27 February for a half-day Peranakan-themed tour

With many of us being Peranakan and members of the Association, it was ironic that the only person who arrived dressed in a kebaya was our tour leader, Ms. Selva. Armed with her notebook of neat, handwritten points and a confident maternal air, she deftly led us through a morning's worth of rediscovering our heritage.

First up on the itinerary was the NUS Baba House at 157 Neil Road. It was interesting to see the subtle changes since its opening. Baba Chris Yap's exhibition on the third level, featuring a large photographic montage across five panels, brought smiles to the faces of those who recognised our Honorary Life President, Baba Lee Kip Lee and Mrs Elizabeth Lee, along with Baba Peter Lee and Baba K.T. in his cross-dressing element, posing amongst other prominent personalities from the community.

We stopped for a look around Emerald Hill, with all cameras out in force to shoot the ornate house facades. A member of our party found a real estate flier detailing recent property transactions in the area. Exclamations at the skyhigh prices followed, "Wah! The cheapest one is five million...I remember a time when a house here cost only fifty thousand..."

Then it was off to Sian Teck Tng Vegetarian Convent at Cuppage Road, the oldest Buddhist convent which was opened by a Nyonya in Singapore. The convent's first two halls boast impressive high altars flanked by Tiffany-style lamps and crystal chandeliers - an interesting mix of items from different cultures. The real delight lay in venturing deeper into the temple to see the nuns' living quarters. Unlike the Baba House, which was derelict before undergoing restoration, we found a place that has been continually lived in for over a century. Utilitarian plastic water boilers and a microwave oven were placed atop museum-quality antique consoles and buffets, alongside the day's vegetarian servings on simple melamine ware. An elaborately carved brown and gold cupboard sat serenely under a staircase. In a nook, a worn teak desk supported a flat-screen



Altar at Sian Teck Tng. Notice the crystal chandelier and Tiffany lamp.



Antique dresser in the pantry of Sian Teck Tng.

EVENTS





PC connected to a blinking internet modem. This juxtaposition of ancient and new pointed to the nuns' frugality. They never threw out their old but sturdy furniture even as they kept apace with modernity!

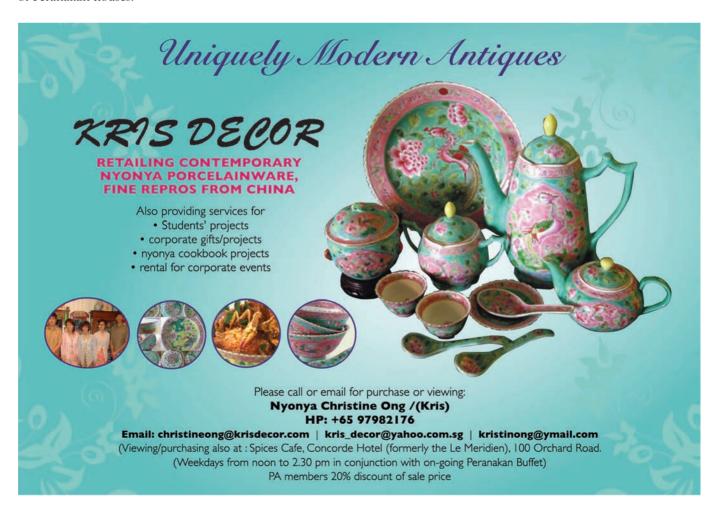
We also drove past Tong Sian Tng, a Straits Chinese Buddhist temple on Devonshire Road, and through the Koon Seng Road and Blair Road enclaves to take in the variety of architectural styles of Peranakan houses. Having worked up an appetite from all the sightseeing, it was totally fitting that the tour concluded with a hearty nyonya lunch at Rumah Kim Choo back in Katong.

All in, the tour and lunch made getting out of bed early on a Saturday more than worth while! *

Should you wish to join our next Peranakan tour, please contact Mrs. Lim Geok Huay at 6255 0704 for details.

Above left: Facade of the Sian Teck Tng Vegetarian

Above right: Our guide, Mrs Selva, leads our group through Emerald Hill



YOUNG FACES HERALD RENEWAL

Baba Emeric Lau reports on The Peranakan Association's 110th Annual General Meeting

eranakan culture is a dynamic polyglot of Southeast Asian and European cultures - a blend of traditions and practices that span several centuries - equally progressive and yet respectful of history. Underscoring this at the Association's 110th AGM was the election of younger faces into the Main Committee, as well as a proposal for the creation of a new Advisory Panel that will comprise the past Association President and Vice-Presidents.

Saturday, 27 March saw some 70 members gathered at

the RELC to witness our President, Baba Lee Kip Lee pass the proverbial baton to Baba Peter Wee.

Presided over by the humorous Baba David Ong, elections for the Committee for the term 2010/12 followed. Notably, two younger faces were elected as first-time Committee Members.



Our heartiest congratulations go to Babas Alvin Yapp and Edmond Wong! New President Baba Peter Wee, thanked all Association members for their continued support and expressed his wish that the Association forged ahead to establish and strengthen ties both amongst and outside the Peranakan communities across Asia.

Baba Lee, or Uncle Kip, as he is fondly known, may assume the role of Honorary Life President after 15 years at the helm of the Association. Together with

Baba David Ong and Nyonya Ong Poh Neo, he will be invited to be part of the Association's proposed Advisory Panel.

After recording a vote of thanks to Uncle Kip for his steady stewardship, the meeting concluded and adjourned for light Nyonya snacks and afternoon tea.

Outgoing President, Baba Lee Kip Lee, addresses the meeting.





THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION'S 2010/12 COMMITTEE

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First Vice-President Alan Koh

Second Vice-President Peter Lee

Honorary Secretary
Lim Geok Huay

Assistant Honorary Secretary

Gavin Ooi **Treasurer**Ee Sin Soo

Members

Monica Alsagoff, Chan Eng Thai, Emeric Lau, Bebe Seet, Edmond Wong, Alvin Yapp Above left: The new Committee for 2010.

Below left: Our attentive members at the AGM.

EVENTS

BABAS IN BURMA

Baba Peter Lee learns about the Burmese Peranakans

n 23 October 2009, The Peranakan Museum, in collaboration with The Peranakan Association, presented a talk by Dr Thaw Kaung on "A Preliminary Survey of the Peranakans in Myanmar, with Special Reference to Penang." Dr Thaw Kaung, Professor in Library and Information Studies at the University of Yangon. has been at the forefront of librarianship in his country, and was Chief Librarian of the Universities Central Library from 1969 until his retirement in 1996. A summary of his paper was published in the October-December 2009 issue of The Peranakan. The Museum's Ixora room was almost filled to capacity with about 60 visitors, many of whom stayed back after the talk to chat with Dr Thaw Kaung. *

Right: Detail of a batik tiga negeri made in a Chinese workshop in Java, from the collection of Santosa Doellah, Museum Batik Danar Hadi, Solo, Indonesia

A TREASURE TROVE OF VINTAGE COLLECTIBLES Peranakan beaded items, silver, early photographs, out-of-print books, advertising signs, clocks, cameras, tin toys and many more exciting finds THE HERITAGE SHOP 93 Jalan Sultan #01-01 (opposite Sultan Plaza) Tel/Fax:62237982 HP: 96861071 Email: theheritageshop@gmail.com

CHINESE BATIKS OF JAVA

Baba Peter Lee is batty for batiks



tograph courtesy of Museum Batik Danar Hadi)

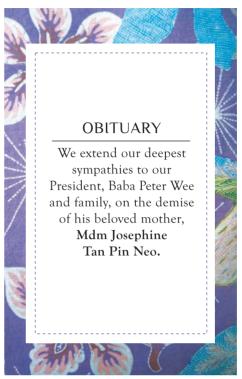
n 6 February 2010, the Danar Hadi museum in Solo, Indonesia, launched two new rooms showcasing about 200 of the museum's finest batiks made by Chinese-owned workshops in Java, dating from the late 19th century to the present. Mr Santosa Doellah, owner of the museum as well as of the famous Danar Hadi batik brand, is perhaps one of the most important batik collectors in Indonesia, possessing national treasures made in the workshops of the Javanese royal courts, as well as the Javanese, Sumatran, Chinese, Arab and Indo-European entrepreneurs of the late 19th and 20th centuries. According to an Indonesian newspaper report, the Chinese collection alone is said to comprise about 2,800 pieces, and his entire collection consists of about 10,000 batiks.

Many of the Chinese-owned batik workshops produced for the Straits Settlements market, and the Peranakans of the region are very familiar with the batiks from production centres such as Pekalongan and Lasem, in the north coast of Java. Some pieces on display are extraordinarily rare. For example, an exceptional *kain panjang* by batik master Oey Soe Tjoen from the 1930s displays astonishing craftsmanship and the subtlest of pastel tones. Although advertised to end on 31 March, it is understood that this is now a permanent display. •

For more information please visit: http://museumbatikdanarhadi.blogspot.com

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THE PERANAKAN GUIDE • SINGAPORE

MUSEUMS



Peranakan Museum, 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 Jiak 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.



Baba House.

This heritage house at 157 Neil Road opened on 4 September 2008. Go back in time to 1928 and experience what a grand Peranakan terraced house would have been like. Owned by the Wee family (whose ancestor

Wee Bin was a mid-19th century shipping magnate) since 1910, the house was sold in 2005 to the National University of Singapore and is now run by NUS Museum. Funds for the purchase and restoration were donated by Agnes Tan, in memory of her father Tun Tan Cheng Lock. Baba House 157 Neil Road, Singapore.

Tel: 62275731. Visits are by guided tours. Please call the house for details. http://www.nus.edu.sg/museum/baba/index.html

Asian Civilisations Museum. The first museum in the region to display a wide range of artefacts from across Asia, the ACM not surprisingly has some important Peranakan treasures. The Mary and Philbert Chin Gallery has some lavish examples of gold jewellery, sireh boxes and other paraphernalia, some encrusted with diamonds, and fine batik textiles from the north coast of Java, all made for the Peranakan market.

1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555, Tel: 63322982, Opening Hours: 9am to 7pm (Tuesdays to Saturdays), 1pm to 7pm (Mondays), Admission \$8 (adults), \$4 (senior citizens and students). http://www.acm.org.sg

LANDMARKS

Blair Plain. A typical Peranakan residential area around Spottiswoode Park, Blair Road and Neil Road which 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 nearby grand seaside villas and elaborate Peranakan terraced houses. The latter can still be seen in a walk along 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.

One of the first Peranakan enclaves, now occupied by restaurants and offices. 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 wellknown 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.*



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