



# the peranakan

ISSUE 4 • 2011

## Oh~POCHO K MaK!

Nyonya Mothers VS Sing-song Girls

**Mama** and the  
**Mistresses**

**Coffin-nail**  
**Coifs**

**Modern**  
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Cover image: A courtesan sitting cross-legged in the mid-19th century. Nyonya wives referred to them as 'Makau Sai' or 'Macau shit' (see page 3, 'Good Girl, Bad Girl')

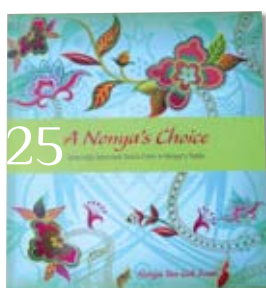


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ASSOCIATION  
SINGAPORE

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## III<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY: AFTERNOON DELIGHT

The *Peranakan Association Singapore* celebrates its 111<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a lunch and dance on Sunday, 4 December 2011 at the Ballroom, Grand Park Hotel City Hall, Hill Street.

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## LETTERS

In Issue 3, 2011, the cover featuring Neo Swee Lin, Dick Lee, Ivan Heng, Glen Goei and Alvin Tan, I must say that everything mentioned about being Peranakan is just so true especially when Glen Goei said that Peranakans are perfectionists. My late father, Baba Peter Tan Hock Seng, was one and his entire family too. The attention we pay to detail is always important and was taught to all of us when we were growing up. It's always a great pleasure receiving issues of *The Peranakan* that make me a proud of my heritage as a nyonya. Please keep up the wonderful work.  
*Celine Tan, Singapore*

**Editor's Note:** "In Memoriam" in Issue 3, 2011, stated inadvertently that the late Baba Tay Lip Hock was a previous President of the *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka*. He was the President of the *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Malaysia*, a post he helmed until his untimely death.

# ADA KAH PERANAKAN JATI?

(Does the 'pure' Peranakan exist?)

Have you, like me, ever wondered why an uncle or auntie of yours was so dark, or looked 'un-Chinese'? For years I was curious about two of my mother's four brothers: One was tanned, like a Malay; another was of fair complexion, almost Eurasian. They shared the same Peranakan-Chinese parents. Did something go a miss in past generations, were there skeletons or secrets that lay untold?

Perhaps the answers lay herein, as our writers investigate tales of the Peranakan *rumah tangga* (household), at times hilarious, that will snub out any prudish notions of *jati* (pure or without 'china gerk blood') lineage. Central to the Peranakan 'Peyton Place' of old was the *garang* (fierce) matriarch, dressed in her *baju panjang* and tightly pulled *sanggol korek kuping*. But maligned as she often was, the Peranakan mother's admirable qualities are also lauded here, notably in the *panton* (poem) that was spontaneously composed for this issue by G T Lye, the doyen of *wayang* Peranakan.

**Mak (MOTHER)** by GT Lye

*Panas hari tibah di kota  
Hilang aus dengan tebu  
Hidop seperti seorang buta  
Kalu tak rasa kaseh ibu*

The heat of day has reached the town  
And thirst must be quenched with sugar cane  
One leads life like someone blind  
When one does not have a mother's love

*Bijik getah jatuh di semak  
Daon bederay di makan rusa  
Bukan mudah menjadi Mak  
Harus panday bertimbang rasa*

The rubber seed falls in a pile  
And its leaves are scattered by a hungry deer  
It's not easy to be a mother  
To know how to be considerate and kind

For interest, the next best thing to a complete Peranakan resource is the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies' (ISEAS) Peranakan bibliography of publications and audiovisuals derived from universities and libraries in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia (access via [www.peranakan.org](http://www.peranakan.org)). It has a record of *The Peranakan* magazines since 1995 and lists 61 cookbook titles! Better still, network with babas and nyonys on 25 – 27 November at the Baba Convention in Penang. It's enriching. And good fun, to boot.

**Linda Chee, Editor**

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# GOOD GIRL, BAD GIRL

Baba Peter Lee takes a humorous, historical jaunt through the world of Peranakan mothers

Above some ancestral altars in the centuries-old Peranakan residences on Heeren Street in Malacca, hang the portraits not of the founding patriarch, as one would expect of patriarchal Confucian custom, but of the power behind that man: the woman he married. Visually at least, a female is sometimes positioned at the apex of these clan genealogies. Who were these first mothers? Some Peranakans still perpetuate the idea of a Ming princess married to a Malacca sultan. If that were the case, all Peranakans would be Muslim, and royal too?

Even though many babas and nyonyas were famous for their royal pretensions and egos, the bare truth is often hard to face. I have said this before and must admit I love saying it again: the first mothers were slave girls. Peranakans claiming not to have any slave blood in their family tree simply have not done enough homework or, dare I say, are not really Peranakans. To be credible babas or nyonyas, we all must have a little bit of slave girl in us. When the Chinese men from Fujian arrived fresh off the boat in the 16<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the only available female company was often purchased. And as Chinese women were not permitted to leave China on pain of death until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all the available and eligible females were sourced from the huge numbers of slaves available in every colonial town. Often the chief suppliers were the local rulers of the various kingdoms in the Malay archipelago. Whenever they ran low in cash, (or if their wives needed yet another croc-skin Birkin) these rulers simply rounded up some poor villagers (male and female) and sold them off. The kings of Bali were notorious, as were the Sultans of Palembang.

Dutch colonial records are replete with references to the wide varieties of girls — from Thailand, southern India, Sumatra (from the Batak highlands and Lampung for example), Java and Bali. A famous case was of the Balinese wife of Zan Siqua, the Chinese *Kapitan* of Batavia, who took over his position for 12 years after he died in the 1660s. 18<sup>th</sup> century Peranakan documents from Malacca in the British Library refer to slaves being the mothers of Peranakan Chinese. The late 18<sup>th</sup> century records of the Chinese Council of Batavia (present-day Jakarta) also frequently mention cases

**“To be credible babas or nyonyas, we all must have a little bit of slave girl in us.”**

of paramount importance, and having sons and descendants

involving young nyonyas and their Balinese mothers.

Naturally it did not take many of such mothers to make a whole community. The sons and daughters of these initial mixed marriages were always given Chinese names, and married off only to other Chinese. The reason: the clan and bloodline were

to continue making offerings to your ancestors and for your everlasting well-being long after you have left this world, were the *raison d'être* of every Peranakan Chinese man in the old days. The most dreadful thing that could happen to a conservative and Confucian Baba of the past was if his eldest son became a Christian, as that would mean the ancestral rites would no longer be performed in the correct manner. Sons have been known to be disowned for this ‘transgression’. There were of course several cases of wayward young nyonyas in 18<sup>th</sup> century Batavia running away from home to live with Dutch men (evidently, the first ‘sarong party girls’ were Peranakan too).



Portrait of Mrs Tan Hay (died 1824), great-great grandmother of Tun Tan Cheng Lock, above the ancestral altar of the Tan house, Heeren Street, Malacca.

## FEATURE

As a result of these Confucian beliefs, increasingly more migrants from China in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century were able to marry a local girl with a Chinese name (as was the case with my family). It is inevitable that her mother, or grandmother or a matriarch further down the line, would have been a slave girl from somewhere in south or southeast Asia. After the chaos of the Taiping rebellion in the 1850s, female refugees from China began trickling into Singapore. In 1860s Singapore, the majority of ‘independent women’ to be photographed were all prostitutes. It was improper for unmarried girls or women to

players of the *pipa*, a Chinese stringed instrument).

From Peranakan plays through the ages, and in reminiscences written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we have become aware of the omnipresence of the larger-than-life bulwark of motherhood known as the Peranakan matriarch: Machiavellian cook, font of arcane wisdom, wizard at card games, hoarder of diamonds, devotee of Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Taoist saints all at once, incorrigible gambler, power networker, and even hardy drinker and smoker. There are undoubtedly other kinds of matriarchs... we hear rumours of genteel, kindly, virtuous and refined nyonya matriarchs, but they have clearly been shoved out of the limelight by their more aggressive sisters.

A hundred years ago, Song Ong Siang and Dr Lim Boon Keng, both Peranakan pioneers and former presidents of the Association, filled the pages of *The Straits Chinese Magazine* with sexist harangues about the decadent lifestyle of Peranakan women, and were eager to send girls to school to free them from ignorance, superstition and gambling. Newspapers frequently reported on wayward matriarchs, usually in relation to illegal *chap ji ki* gambling. In 1900 as many as 16 nyonias were



Above left: Nemesis of all nyonya wives: The sing-song girl, photographed by August Sachtler, Singapore, 1860s.



Above right: You could be descended from this lady. A Batavian slave, illustrated by Caspar Schmalkalden (1642-1652) in *Die wundersamen Reisen des Caspar Schmalkalden*.

leave their hometowns without their parents or husbands. Those brave enough to venture out on their own often ended up in the sex trade. (An innocent stroll around Geylang today may make you wonder if things have changed!) The wave of independent, diligent Cantonese *amahs* (or *majies*) was only possible in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century because these ladies made vows of celibacy to maintain their dignity amid the ocean of ‘bad girls’.

In the old days the Cantonese girl was the nemesis of every married nyonya, who disparagingly referred to her as *Makau Sai* – ‘Macau shit’ – possibly because of the copious amounts of it she stirred in many a household. Cantonese girls were said to be pretty and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were unfairly associated with sex workers or mistresses. Cantonese and Teochew (‘Swatow’) courtesans were referred to as ‘singsong girls’ or *pipa chai* (‘pipa chicks’ in Cantonese; these girls were accomplished

arrested in an illegal gaming house in McCallum Street (*The Straits Times*, 17 March 1900, p. 2.) In 1908, a nyonya by the name of Koh Lean Neo even chewed up lottery tickets to destroy evidence during a raid of her house in Victoria Street (*The Straits Times*, 30 December 1908, p. 7.).

In the Peranakan households described in books and plays, the husband or patriarch is often absent, and the matriarch is left holding the fort with nothing but her wits to help her. The impression of Peranakan men one therefore gets from these plays is of the hapless sons, sad shadows of their fathers: bullied, abused or molly-coddled boys who cannot seem to make any important decision. Or, they have the unreasonable, brutish and ‘brat-ish’ mannerisms of their father, but none of his wily talents.

So where were the patriarchs? They were either busy sailing the high seas making money, gambling or drinking with their friends, having a jolly good

time with their mistresses or secondary wives, or more typically ... dead. Death came early to many gout-stricken Babas of yore, from lives lived to excess. Not surprisingly wishes and symbols of longevity were crucial to every household. Only pruders and Christians seemed to have lived a long life. Widows were often left in charge of households, who in the 20<sup>th</sup> century became the torchbearers of Peranakan custom and tradition, and the domineering force of many families.

Of course not every matriarch produced wimpy sons. There were rare and spectacular exceptions. Just think of the mothers behind every famous Peranakan political and business pioneer. There is something awe-inspiring about a great Baba honouring his mother. When his 100-year-old mother died in 1956, Tun Tan Cheng Lock, the first president of the Malaysian Chinese Association, paid tribute to her in a newspaper interview, stating, 'It was my mother who influenced and encouraged me to become a rubber planter in 1908. She persuaded me to give up teaching. If I have made good in life, I attribute my success to her influence in my upbringing.' (*Straits Times*, 9 March 1956, p. 2.) Our former prime minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, also paid homage to his mother's influence in his memoirs: 'She devoted her life to raising her children to be well-educated and independent professionals... As I grew older, she began consulting me as the eldest son on all important family matters, so while still in my teens, I became *de facto* head of the family. This taught me how to take decisions.' (*The Singapore Story*, 1998, p. 34.)

The late former president of Singapore, Wee Kim Wee, who was a first cousin of Lee Kuan Yew's mother, devoted a chapter of his memoirs to his own mother. Long-suffering and completely devoted to raising her children, often 'with her bare hands', she struggled to eke a living, working as an *ayah* at the Singapore General Hospital, then beading slippers when she needed to be home to look after the children. She passed away when he was just 19 years old. ('Filial Piety', in *Glimpses and Reflections*, 2004, p. 125-133.) It would be fascinating to have an insight into the relationships between



Left: Mrs Lee Chin Koon (née Chua Jim Neo, centre, wearing a blue dress), mother of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, with her siblings, c. 1970s.

Photograph courtesy of the family of the late Leong Yuen Kin.

other prominent leaders and their Peranakan mothers, such as the late Goh Keng Swee, and our current president Dr Tony Tan, whose late mother had frequently attended events organised by *The Peranakan Association*.

Today, the global trend is for infertile couples to find surrogate mothers or fathers. Wombs are rented, sperm samples bought, so that infertile men and women and gay men and women can have children. I thought we only borrowed wombs and acquired sperm samples for livestock and pets! Recently, international newspapers have highlighted the cases of sperm donors who have from 70 to over 100 biological children, and of the sprouting of on-line donor sibling registries, to prevent potential incest among half-siblings. Interestingly many have tried to contact their biological fathers, which suggest the innate desire of every person to know their origins. An American paper recently reported that one donor even has an excel sheet to keep track of his offspring (Jacqueline Mroz,

Left: Tun Tan Cheng Lock as a youth, standing behind his mother, Lee Seck Bin, in a group photograph with his parents and siblings, taken in Malacca, circa 1900.



'One Sperm Donor, 150 Offspring', *The New York Times*, 5 September 2011).

It baffles me how anyone can think of deliberately bringing a child into this world deprived of his or her birth mother and/or father. I feel humbled and blessed to be the biological product of my parents (I hope that's the case anyway), whom I totally and utterly adore! And my mother! Well, it would take a whole book to tell her amazing story. Personally I feel adoption would be a better choice for childless couples... but that would lead me to digress towards a fascinating, historical Peranakan (horror?) story, and an overflowing can of *belachan* and worms! \*





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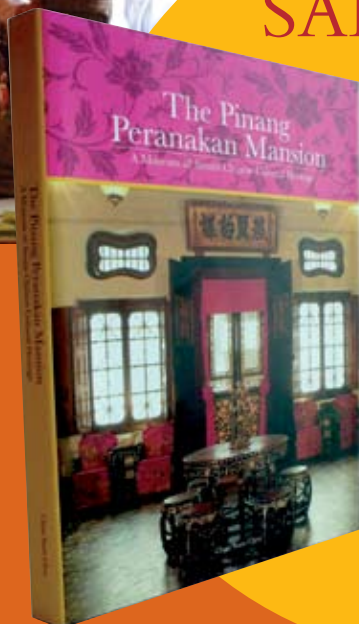
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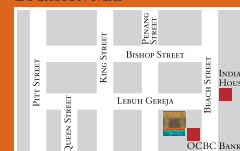
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## **LOCATION MAP**





# CHERITA RUMAH TANGGA (TALES OF THE HOUSEHOLD)

Baba David Neo relates tales of maids and matriarchs



Photo courtesy of Gunong Sayang Association

A household scene from a play by the Gunong Sayang Association, showing a domineering matriarch lording over her maids.

After years of badgering, my Kim Kim,<sup>1</sup> Sally Lee, finally came to Melbourne to visit this Baba hanyut (adrift) who has lived overseas for the last two decades.

For three weeks I nostalgically spoke our Peranakan patois. Kim Kim's expressions were, of course, more colourful and poetic. She used an intriguing term - *sedara anjing*<sup>2</sup> - to refer to step-siblings with different fathers (as opposed to *adek-beradek tiri* who are step-siblings of the same father)! Trust the Peranakans to conjure such colourful yet disparaging imagery. Kim Kim also shared a number of forgotten nyonya recipes and most fascinating of all, we unearthed many *cherita rumah tangga*...

I found out that our *rumah abu*<sup>3</sup> on Kim Yam Road in Singapore was apparently cursed — *rumah tu makan kepala* — apparently the house would “eat” or kill the males of the family. My grandfather died in his early 30s (and was *tak benair* or mentally unsound) and the other males died even younger. Eventually, the house had to be sold to the Buddhist Lodge in order not to perpetuate the curse. I hope to be able to verify this when I am next in Singapore and by tracing the ownership of that plot of land which is still owned by the Buddhist Lodge.

Kim Kim's stories of growing up in her grandfather's plantation estate in Lengkok Tiga were captivating. She talked me through the processes of rubber tapping, and her uncle's prowess at fishing, using *toba* that would make the *ikan mabok*!<sup>4</sup> However, her story of the family's *char bor kan* or indentured maid proved most interesting. Apparently, the *char bor kan* was only a few years older than Kim Kim, whose Mama (grandmother) had purchased the former when she was no more than 10 years old. She was of Cantonese descent, but she quickly learnt our patois so that when she spoke, *dia chakap tak pelat*.<sup>5</sup> The *char bor kan* eventually ran away after enduring years of ill-treatment. She was a purchased commodity, and this gave Mama the license to vent her frustrations upon her! Kim Kim also mentioned that the *char bor kan* “*ada kena kacho*”<sup>6</sup> by her rascally uncle. She finally fled when she was in her early 20s. A few of the family members had gone on an outing. She

1 Wife of my mother's brother.

2 It literally translates to “dog's relatives”.

3 Ancestral home.

4 Make the fish drunk!

5 She spoke fluent Baba Malay which was not Chinese-accented.

6 Had been molested.



## FEATURE

Left: Mama and my parents (standing).

Right: Mama singing *dondang sayang*.



was instructed to buy some ice cream but never returned. The whole family went out in search of her, but to no avail. Mama finally said, *perduli sama dia!*<sup>7</sup> If this *char bor kan* was still alive, she would be in her 80s. It would be fascinating to speak to her.

Many of my *Cho-cho*<sup>8</sup> came from similarly unfortunate circumstances. As I was growing up, I remembered one *Cho-cho* distinctly. Although she never wore the *baju panjang* or *sarong kebaya*, I was instructed to *teriak* (address) her as *Cho-cho*. Her preferred attire was a floral *samfoo* and black silk pants. As I grew older, I learned that she was

the third and favourite *gundek*<sup>9</sup> who attended to my *Kong-cho*<sup>10</sup> till his dying day. *Kong-cho* had apparently saved her from a teahouse and she showed her gratitude by devoting her life to him. *Kong-cho* had a wife and three concubines. I am a descendant of the legitimate *nyonya* wife, who wore a *baju panjang*—she was known as *Cho-cho Mata* (eyes) because she wore glasses. *Cho-cho Mata* had only one daughter - my grandmother. I believe it was because she *tak turunan*



Chocho Mata.

(could not conceive a son) that she had to accede to *Kong-cho piara gundek*.<sup>11</sup> In those days, men of status and wealth were expected to *piara gundek*, and in this case, there was a genuine reason. *Kong-cho*'s first concubine produced four sons and two daughters. The second concubine apparently absconded with the family jewellery! *Cho-cho See Koo*<sup>12</sup> was the third and she was the same age as my Mama — imagine that, being the same age as your stepdaughter! Therefore, it was inappropriate for Mama to mourn *Cho-cho* as a parent. At *Cho-cho*'s wake and funeral, Mama wore a blue *baju panjang* while her other siblings donned black.

*Cho-cho See Koo*, like *Cho-cho Mata*, could only

conceive a daughter, yet her daughter was the only female willed an equal share as the sons in *Kong-cho*'s estate. When *Kong-cho* died, knowing that as a female she had no claims to her father's estate, Mama only wanted her mother's (*Cho-cho Mata*) *kerosang intan*, which was willed to the eldest son. She used to say bitterly, "*Buat apa tak kadang dia pakay?*"<sup>13</sup> For my sister's wedding, she borrowed them from her stepbrother. Kim Kim said that when *Kong-cho*'s will was read and Mama learned that she was not entitled to anything, she stormed out of the room yelling, "*Ini suma anak sundal tapi dapat harta!*"<sup>14</sup>

Mama was a true *garang* (fierce) matriarch. She instilled my pride for our culture and heritage. When I learned in school that I had been mispronouncing Malay words, I made a conscious effort to use the correct pronunciation at home. I asked Mama, "*Mama pisau mana?*" I was duly reproached: "*Lu apa, anak Melayu yeh?*" Since then, I have made sure to pronounce the "au" as "o" and "uar" with "air" sounds.

I asked Kim Kim, "*Mama ada toh tiap tak?*"<sup>15</sup> She promptly replied, "*Boleh tak ah... Lu boleh tanya eepoh-eepoh lu suma, Mama mia baju chukup tegang—siapa oot? Oot salah sia lu mati ah! Eepoh-eepoh lu suma chakap chukup sabair Mama mia menantu...*"<sup>16</sup>

Mama was of pure stock, so she always held her head high. According to Kim Kim, she had no regard for her mothers-in-law (my other set of *Cho-cho*) because they were indentured maids who later became concubines. When my *Gua Kong* (maternal grandfather) died, *Ku Ku* (mother's brother) had

7 Don't give further credence to her.

8 Great-grandmothers.

9 Concubine.

10 Great-grandfather.

11 "Rearing"/having many concubines.

12 She was referred to as fourth aunt since she was the fourth wife.

13 What for? What occasion will a man have to wear them?

14 All you children of whores have inherited the estate!

15 Did Mama bully you?

16 Certainly...your grandaunts can vouch for it—Mama's clothes were all perfectly ironed by me and you'd be dead if there was a crease! All the grandaunts could see how forbearing I had to be.



## FEATURE

to shoulder the responsibility of looking after the whole family. When Kim Kim married into the family, she assumed the role of attending to the physical needs of these *Cho-cho* – they were practically and deprecatingly nicknamed *Cho-cho Panjang* (tall) and *Cho-cho Pendek* (short)! They were of Cantonese stock and Kim Kim said they both *chakap pelat-pelat*.<sup>17</sup> “Mama tak peduli jorang,” Kim Kim said.<sup>18</sup> As Kim Kim had taken care of them, *Cho-cho Pendek* gave Kim Kim her *kerosang*, which Mama borrowed on an occasion and never returned. Her excuse was “*Buat apa lu mo balek lu tak pakay*.”<sup>19</sup> Kim Kim was thankful that Mama never pawned them.

Kim Kim also filled me in on the details surrounding the deaths of our close relatives, particularly my *Ku Ku*, Mama and my cousin who were killed in a car accident. Kim Kim said that Mama “*ada pesan Kim Kim*” (had instructed her) to bury Mama with her *cheo thau* (wedding undergarments) which were wrapped in a large handkerchief. They were so fragile that she herself did not dare unwrap it. At Mama’s death, she carefully instructed the undertaker to put it in the coffin. Realising the importance of the article, the

undertaker got Kim Kim to arrange them inside the casket herself.

All these *cherita rumah tangga* have added to my appreciation for our heritage. My Kim Kim gave me glimpses of a culture and lifestyle that no longer exist. I consider these insights to be a most precious heirloom. The experience is deeply profound and cathartic: I have discovered a part of myself. As to the constant and endless bickering over where the family estate and heirlooms end up, my Kim Kim has an apt and wise idiom - *harta dunia nanti suma pulang balek dunia*.<sup>20</sup> How poetic! *Kamsiah* (thank you) Kim Kim for giving me so much of my Peranakan legacy! \*



My Kim Kim, Sally Lee, who visited me in Melbourne.

17 Spoke Chinese-accented Baba Malay.

18 Grandma couldn’t be bothered with them.

19 Why do you want it back, you never wear it.

20 All the treasures of the earth will return to ashes.

## 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



# CROWNING GLORY

Baba Norman Cho pinpoints a classic coiffure adornment



Above: Wedding hairpins.

Nyonya hairpins, ornamental but utilitarian, were once a staple accessory of all ladies who wore the *baju panjang* and bunned up their long hair. However, fashions evolved and nyonya hairpins are now perhaps the rarest item of jewellery in the wardrobe.

Formality then demanded that the nyonys wore chignons when donning the *baju-panjang*. The style of the nyonya chignon (*sanggol*) varies according to region. Hairpins are known as *chochok sanggol* in Baba Malay, literally meaning hair inserts. The style of chignon is known as the *sanggol nyonya*.

## Nyonya Hairpins

The Malacca-Singapore style of chignon requires a set of three hairpins of graduating sizes with the longest one worn perpendicular to the shortest; the middle one being somewhere in-between. Typically, a set consists of two large scoop-like hairpins resembling gigantic ear-picks; the smallest may be similarly shaped or designed with diamond-studded filigree and insect motifs. Hence, the term *korek kuping* (ear-picks) is used to describe these hairpins while the chignon is called the *sanggol tiga-batang*

(three-stick chignon). The smallest of the three is called the *anak chochok sanggol* (child of the hairpins).

Nyonys around the Riau region also wore similar hairpins and chignons. Evidently, cultural influence transcended geo-political boundaries. However, the origin of its form remains a mystery. Similar forms in wood and ivory have been found in parts of Africa and Japan. The chignon itself may be modeled after an archaic European hairdo, probably Dutch. Sometimes, additional crescent-shaped or round ornamental *intan* (rose-cut diamond) set in gold hairpins were inserted at the *tombong sanggol* (top section of the chignon). In Penang, a row of five to seven graduating hairpins lined the chignon of the nyonya. These resembled a tiara when observed from afar. The Penang chignon seems to have an obvious Burmese influence.

Hairpins were generally made of gilt-silver. The lower cost of silver in comparison to gold probably made them more marketable. During periods of mourning, the gilt-silver hairpins were reverted to plain silver. Silver was perceived to be 'white' and hence a suitable colour for mourning. The pearl-studded silver *anak chochok sanggol* would replace the diamond or stone studded ones. Pearls are a symbol of tears and mourning in western culture. During the Victorian era, mourning jewellery was highly popular. Sometimes, even the larger *korek kuping* hairpins were specially commissioned with pearls to be used during mourning. The Chinese silversmiths nicknamed these *korek kuping* hairpins "coffin-nail" hairpins, much to the annoyance of the nyonys.

Right: Malacca hairpins.



Photographs courtesy of Norman Cho.



## FEATURE

They explained that these hairpins were similar to Chinese coffin-nails!

### Great-grandmother's Hairpins

My paternal grandmother inherited four sets of hairpins in varying sizes, with the largest hairpin being 15cm long, from her mother. Why the need for so many sets? Grandmother explained that these were used at different times in her mother's life. When she was a young girl with less dense hair, the smallest set was used. As she matured into adulthood with denser hair, the largest set was used. When she gradually entered old age and her hair receded, the smaller set was used again. I was enlightened.

### Wedding Hairpins

The Peranakan brides of Malacca and Singapore wore a variation of the Ming Dynasty-inspired Chinese coiffure which was decorated with more than a hundred gold and gilt-silver hairpins. Most were made of filigree and foiled gold or silver flowers, birds and insects. Some were studded with diamonds and stones and were set *en-tremblant* to

create a delicate, glittering effect. At the back of the head, the hair was shaped into a flat triangle known as the *buntot belangkas* (tail of the horseshoe crab). Interestingly, this is a symbol of fidelity as horseshoe crabs are often found in pairs. There were many suggestions as to the number of hairpins on the bridal coiffure. Some have mentioned 100, while others have suggested 108 and 144. However, I do not believe there was an exact number as it all depended on the size of the coiffure based on the length and density of the bride's hair.

### Changing Fashion

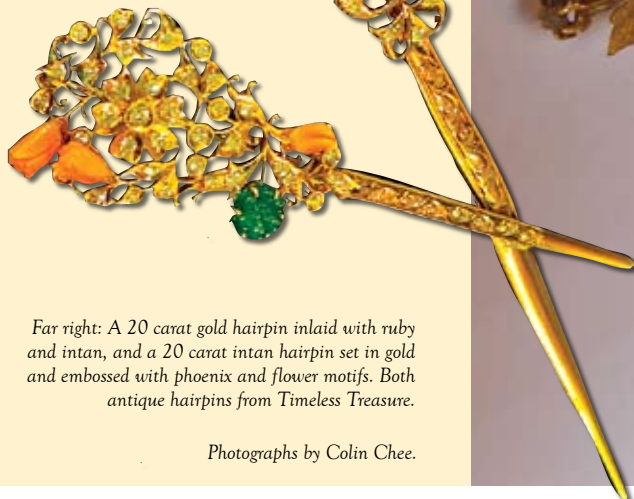
As the nyonyas discarded the *baju panjang* in favour of the *kebaya*, they did away with the *sanggol tiga-batang* as well. Chignons were kept simple with only a single bejeweled hairpin. As modern western hairstyles like the bob and the wave became popular, hairpins gave way to gold or silver hairclips by the late 1930s. However, the older generation of traditional nyonyas did not give up their *baju panjang* and *sanggol tiga-batang*, the last of whom still clung to her *baju panjang* and *sanggol* right up to the 1990s in Singapore. \*

## SHOPTALK

# IN CHIC-NON STYLE

Discover some of the most exquisite accessories in town

Right: A couple of new diamond-studded 18 carat gold hairpins beautifully designed in the old style. From Foundation Jewellery.



Far right: A 20 carat gold hairpin inlaid with ruby and intan, and a 20 carat intan hairpin set in gold and embossed with phoenix and flower motifs. Both antique hairpins from Timeless Treasure.

Photographs by Colin Chee.







With  
me are riches and  
honor, enduring wealth  
and prosperity.  
My fruit is better  
than fine gold;  
what I yield surpasses  
choice silver.  
I walk in the way of  
righteousness, along  
the paths of justice,  
bestowing wealth on  
those who love me and  
making their treasuries  
full. *Proverbs 8:18-21*

*Timeless  
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timetng@singnet.com.sg



# THE LANGUAGE OF PERANAKAN BEADWORK

Baba Tan Kuning strings a glossary of terms related to this precious nyonya art form

Bebe Seet's book, *Peranakan Beadwork – My Heritage*, is a fine work that covers the history of Peranakan beading. It shows the different types of beaded slippers (*kasot manek*), describes the intricate skills involved in their making and includes illustrations of beadwork including shoes, ladies' clutch bags, table cloths, bed covers and a host of wedding paraphernalia like *sangkot bahu* (ceremonial shoulder piece), handkerchiefs, kneepads and collars for both the groom and page-boy, bell covers, pouches, and wedding bed ornaments.

I have attempted to recall the Peranakan terms my grandmother, mother and aunts used to discuss beadwork, with reference to specific page numbers in Bebe's book.

## TYPES OF BEADED SHOES

### • *Kasot hidong*

My grandmother called them *kasot tongkang* (page 18) or bumboat slippers, *kasot hidong*, or "nose-shaped shoes", which refers to their distinctive snout-like front. She had a pair that she used to wear with her *baju panjang* and sarong when she was a young lass back in the 1910s. In 1944, during the Japanese Occupation, Grandmother gave them away to her nyonya neighbour, a very close friend of hers. It was the only time that I saw them.

*Kasot hidong* had silk threads (*menang sutera*) sewn over wooden or cardboard cut outs (*bunga kayu*) adhered to a velvet base (*otinah jong*). *Tanah* means background and *jong* refers to velvet. The motifs could include the peony (*bunga botan*), phoenixes (*burong hong*) or butterflies (*kupu kupu*). Gold and silver metallic threads were sewn over the cutouts using the Malay technique of embossed embroidery called *sulam tekat timbul*.

### • *Kasot serek manek and kasot manek*

*Kasot serek manek* were beaded slippers worn by *bibiks* in *baju panjang* and *sanggol nyonya*. *Kasot manek* refers to beaded shoes with heels (*kasot ada tumit*) as seen on page 184 and worn with the sarong kebaya.

By the 1950s, the height of heels preferred by



High-heels or *kasot tumit tinggi* with matching *kampet manek*.

nyonyas came to about one inch or slightly higher. In the 1960s, the younger women who wore sarong kebaya preferred higher heeled shoes (*kasot tumit tinggi*) as seen on page 180.

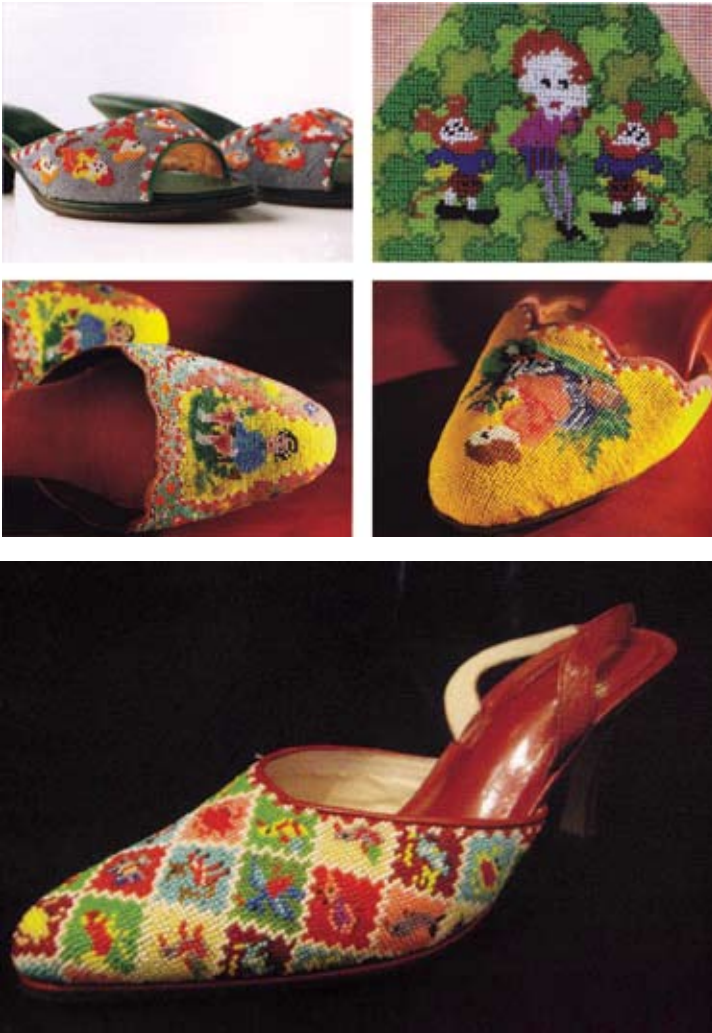
### • *Kasot chakiak*

Open-toed beaded shoes are called *kasot chakiak* (clog-like shoes). There are variations of *kasot chakiak* as can be seen on pages 170 and 172.



*Kasot tongkang* or *kasot hidong*.

## FEATURE



Above: A selection of backgrounds and motifs on muka kasot.

### TYPES OF BEADS

Generally, the nyonyas used three types of beads: faceted beads (*manek potong*), rounded beads (*manek tak potong* or *manek bulat*) and glass beads (*manek kaca*). Tubular-shaped beads (*manek panjang panjang*) and glass beads are collectively called Penang beads or *manek Pulau Pinang*. They knew that beads were products of European countries (*barang negeri Aropa*). Beads were sold by the hanks (*satu ikat, satu ikat manek*). Each hank consisted of 12 strands of beads (*dua belas rentap manek*).

### MOTIFS AND COLOURS

On most shoe faces (*muka kasot*) are motifs of flowers, animals or human figures, centrally placed (*bunga di tengah muka kasot*) against a background (*tanah*). Naming the colours for identification purposes is important. Primary colours like red (*merah*), yellow (*kuning*), green (*ijo*) and also black (*hitam*) and white (*puteh*) and secondary colours like blue (*biru*) and orange (*jingga*) are similar to words found in the Malay vocabulary. Generally, for various shades of colour, the words *tua* (old),

*muda* (young) and *hidop* (bright and lively) are used to differentiate between the darker and lighter or brighter shades. For example, a maroon background is *tanah merah tua*. Certain favourite colours are given specific allusory names. Light red is *merah jambu*. Pink is *paru paru* (lung-colored) while dark green is called *ijo tua taik itek* (green like duck's shit)! Light green or apple green is *ijo daun puchok pisang* (green like the young shoot of a banana leaf). Purple is *umu* but dark purple is *kelopak jantung pisang* (dark like the sheath of banana flowers). Light yellow is *kuning ayer* (yellow water). Saffron is *kuning kunyet*. Navy blue is *biru gelap* and grey is *orna bulu abu* (feathery ash)!

### BACKGROUNDS

A background of a single colour is called *tanah penoh*. To complete the stitching of the background is to *tutop tanah* or *tutop penoh* (fully cover the background).

A patterned background is given a name that fits its description. *Tanah potong wajek* is a background filled with diamond shapes. *Wajek* is a steamed cake that is often cut into small diamond-shaped pieces when served. *Tanah batu karang* (page 200), is a patterned background of rocks or boulders that are arranged close to one another. *Tanah charang charang* or *ranting ranting* is a background of branches as shown in the shoes with blue shades on page 167. A wavy background is *tanah ombak ombak* (page 166). *Muka lauchian* (page 126) refers to white squares lined with red beads where each square features a figure of a small animal or flower that is never repeated anywhere else. *Lauchian* is the joker card in the game of *cherki*. A joker is considered a character of many faces. A background filled with motifs of a white star represents *bunga tanjung*, a small white flower circular in shape with many points. See the illustration of white stars alternating with blue crosses on page 116.

### THE CENTRAL MOTIF

The central motif (*bunga tengah*) of a shoe face is often copied from friends' shoes or taken from samples of cross-stitch patterns. The nyonyas had a rich vocabulary to describe the animals and flowers for the shoe face (*muka kasot*). Popular animals are *anak kucing* (kittens), *anjing* (dogs), *rusa* (deer), *kepala arimo* (tiger head), *ikan mas* (gold fish) and *merak* (peacocks). Flowers include *bunga ros* (roses), *botan* (peony), *kek hua* (chrysanthemum) and *terateh* (lotus). Favourite fruits are *buah delima* (pomegranates) which symbolise good luck and *lemo jari* (Buddha's hand) which is considered sacred. Figures of European girls (*anak mem*) in various poses were also common: *anak mem diri*





# GOLDEN VILLAGE KATONG

Where the East meets Hollywood's Best

OPENS 22 DECEMBER

## GV KATONG: A PERANAKAN-INSPIRED MOVIE DESTINATION

This December, the Katong and Joo Chiat area will see the addition of a new iconic cinema - Golden Village's tenth multiplex, GV Katong.

Home to generations of Peranakans, the area is renowned for great food, iconic shophouse architecture and rich diversity.

GV Katong will complement the area with a first-class movie theatre; Katong has been without an anchoring cinema for nearly 20 years! To integrate with the surrounding landscape, GV Katong has been specially designed to reflect the area's rich history and culture. Decorative interior touches take their cues from Peranakan motifs and objects d'art, making the cinema a truly unique venue.

GV Katong will have a total of eight cinema auditoriums: six traditional halls with stadium seating, digital sound and wall-to-wall screens, and two luxurious Gold Class halls that are set to be the pinnacle of cinematic entertainment in the East Coast. The multiplex will have a total capacity of 924 seats, including 56 super-luxurious Gold Class recliners.

No movie experience in Katong is complete without a sampling of much-acclaimed Peranakan cuisine. Available at the Gold Class lounge will be dishes such as *otak samosas*, assam fish with fragrant basmati rice, and a selection of nyonya *kueh* and delicacies alongside our chef's popular signature Western dishes.

GV Katong will be in a class of its own, and promises to be the entertainment heartbeat of the East, bringing the full movie experience closer to home!



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Singapore 428802



## FEATURE

*di kebun bunga* would mean a girl standing in the garden, *anak mem main piano* (a girl playing the piano) or *anak mem dudok di rumput* (a girl sitting on grass).

There were also other motifs, including images from fairy tales like the seven dwarfs from Snow White, and these would be considered 'modern' designs.

The various items needed for beadwork, including beads in various colours, cross-stitched cloth (*kain jait kasot*), needles and threads (*menang jarum*) and graph paper were all typically purchased from a haberdashery at Arab Street in Kampong Java.

Sometimes, a Chinese man would come calling to sell beads and haberdasher wares. He would say repeatedly, *mai dong xi* ("buy my things" in Mandarin). In my family he was called *Cheena mai dong xi*, *Cheena* in the Peranakan vocabulary meaning a recent immigrant from China as when compared to the Peranakans or local born Chinese. He was also nicknamed *Cheena kelentong* which referred to the sound produced by an instrument he held in his right hand, actually a mini drum on a stick with two strings attached on either side, with a bead at the end of each string. To announce his arrival, he would twirl the drum, and the beads would beat the drum, producing the *kelentong* sound.

### REGANG PIDANGAN

Before the beading could proceed, a template had to be set up (*regang pidangan*) with the use of string. The template is called *pidangan* (top of page 88). It is placed on a stand called *kaki pidangan* (lower portion of page 88). To do the beadwork, the beader sits on the floor or on a bench with both legs folded

inwards (*dudok telepok* or *dudok bersila*) or could choose to sit in a chair (*dudok kerosi*).

### TAPAK KASOT

When the beadwork for the shoe face was completed it was time to send it to the haberdasher to set them into shoes (*tapak kasot*). The haberdasher was often the shoe-maker himself. Generally, the colour of the leather would be similar to the background of the shoe face. Any other colour would be considered a mismatch (*orna sambar*).

### KASOT TUAHA

Mourning is regarded as a filial duty which had to be carried out seriously. Different mourning shoes (*kasot tuaha*) had to be worn according to the stage of mourning. For the first year of heavy mourning (*tua ha berat*) women should only wear black and white sarong kebaya. Their shoes should consist of white and black motifs only (page 69). During the second year of mourning (*tua ha ringan* or *tua ha biru*) the beaded shoes should be dark blue or dark green with some black and white beads (page 34). Brighter colours like red, brown and orange were prohibited. Towards the end of the mourning period (*dekat dekat lepas tua ha*), about three months before the mourning is over, the overall appearance of the shoe face should be of lighter hues (pages 33 and 227). By now, in some cases, yellow could be mixed with green, blue and black.

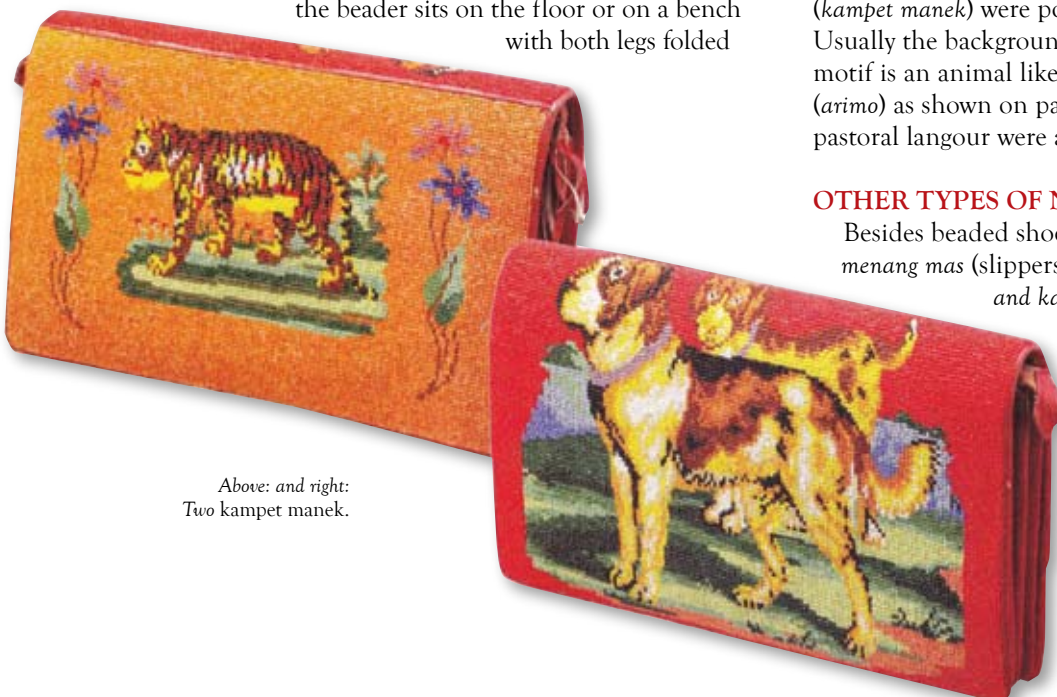
### KAMPET MANEK

*Kampet* is a generic term for wallet, purse or a clutch bag or a handbag. Beaded clutch bags (*kampet manek*) were popular among the nyonyas. Usually the background is plain and the central motif is an animal like a peacock (*merak*) or tiger (*arimo*) as shown on pages 71 and 72. Scenes of pastoral langour were also common.

### OTHER TYPES OF NYONYA FOOTWEAR

Besides beaded shoes, there were also the *kasot menang mas* (slippers sewn with gold thread) and *kasot menang sutera tanah jong* (slippers sewn with silk threads with velvet background) - see page 162.

The terms supplied here may not apply for all Peranakans - different families may have their own names for these items, especially when describing colours and motifs. \*



Above: and right:  
Two kampet manek.



# BRINGING UP BABY

*The Peranakan* interviews two contemporary nyonya mothers

From recollections of their own upbringing to the minefield of negotiating religion and use of the *rotan* (cane), today's Peranakan mothers are finding out how to raise their kids in a world where the only constant is change.

Nyonya Stella Clare Wee has made a career out of her love for heritage. Proudly Peranakan, she is the Manager for Industry Development at the National Heritage Board.

Nyonya Sharon Wee (not related to Stella) lives with her husband, son and daughter in New York. See *The Peranakan, Issue 1, 2011* for her story on creating a Peranakan household in the Big Apple.

## Did you have a Peranakan upbringing? Who was responsible for it?

**Stella:** Yes, though I never considered it Peranakan *per se*. My maternal grandmother, *Mama*, originally from Indonesia, lived with us. She was the unofficial matriarch at home and was also the one who wielded the *rotan* when needed!

**Sharon:** Yes! My mother was mostly responsible for it but I also have five older sisters. When you are surrounded by female relatives, their mannerisms, speech, insights and attitudes rub off on you. I spoke Baba Malay and English with my mother, and absorbed her traditions and way of running the household. My mother was quick to *chubit* (pinch), *sepak* (slap) or cane me for being naughty. I remember her chasing me around the house with a cane for having accidentally eaten her *tempeh* (soya bean cake).

## What do you best remember about it? Any memories to share?

**Stella:** I remember speaking only Baba Malay and a form of our Indonesian dialect from *Mama's* hometown. I only started speaking English when I went to kindergarten.

It was a rather carefree childhood with memories of lots of food! My grandmother was an excellent cook and had exacting standards. She could tell if we hadn't done something right. She passed on her culinary skills to my late mother. There was always something cooking or baking in their kitchen.

**Sharon:** I fondly recall all the family gatherings as they centred around food! Birthdays, reunions and Chinese New Year. My niece once remarked

that the audio accompaniment for the *tok panjang* exhibit at the Peranakan Museum sounds just like our family: the cackle, chatter and laughter of young and old amidst the tinkling of utensils and shuffling of chairs.

## What, do you think were the three most important values or social mores that were impressed on you? How have you benefitted from them?

**Stella:** These were respect for elders or anyone older than oneself, to always do the right thing and know that God is watching and guiding us, and to always be polite and respectful in dealing with others.

My mom used to say, "*Harimau mati tinggal belang, manusia mati tinggal nama.*" Her greatest joy would be to hear that I was a well brought up child, though I still get reminders from relatives that as an only child, my parents spoilt me rotten materially.



**Sharon:** One was decorum. My mother called me *kaki gajah* (for loud footsteps), *suara* (sound of) thunder and "ruffian" (as opposed to *alus* or gentle). I was expected to sit properly, be soft-spoken, definitely not look or act *hiao*. And no skimpy clothes like short skirts!

Second was *ut hao* or gratefulness. There was always some nagging about being *bo cheng* (forgetting to express thanks to someone for a gift or help). I always try to give a present to show my gratitude to someone who has helped me.

Stella with husband, Darren, and daughter, Georgina.

## CHAKAP CHAKAP

Third was respect for elders. I had to greet them, not butt into conversations and be on my best behaviour. I have sometimes misconstrued it to be 'fear of seniors'. So it has taken me a long while to be less fearful of anyone in a higher or older position, including old bosses. At work in the past, I was often afraid to speak up for fear of upsetting them.

### Are you raising your children the same way on these same values and social mores?

**Stella:** I am a mother of a two-and-a-half year old, with another on the way. I am trying my best to raise my daughter with the same values and mores as I was raised. There's some minor conflicts with my also-Peranakan husband at times as I tend to be a little bit more fastidious, but we do share similar principles on discipline.

**Sharon:** First, I am bringing up my children as Christians, so they attend Sunday school. Their values stem from biblical perspectives but that is not to say that Christian values and Peranakan values are mutually exclusive. The love, grace, family focus and respect for others are all descended from the commandments and there is the golden rule to love others as you would like others to love you. I also decided to become a stay-at-home mom despite getting my MBA.

I grew up with a housewife mother and did not know anything different from that. I want to give my kids the benefit of my attention. The most involved my mother got at my school was making *popiah* for a fundraiser one year. Now, I have channeled most of my energy to my children's schools – bookfairs, parades, fundraiser auctions. They feel that I have invested in their education by seeing me in school, staying at home to cook and guiding them with homework. I could have plopped my daughter in a school bus but I ride

up with her and talk to her about the values we hold dear.

I definitely would want them to learn to be grateful to those who help them or provide for them, be it their aunts, nannies, teachers and family friends. I expect them to be courteous to housekeepers, drivers and doormen. They know that we buy or make year-end gifts for teachers. I encourage hospitality - we throw open our place for lots of dinner parties with other families.

It is important for me to ensure that they respect older relatives. Hence we make it a point to visit my dad even if it means travelling to Singapore from New York twice a year. We visit a few other elders and spend time with every single one of my sisters.

What I do want to discourage is a fear of death, bad luck and other superstitions. I often joke that I could never become a doctor because of my fear of cadavers. I don't want my children to be shortchanged in the same way.

### If you have made changes to these, what are they? Is it because you needed to ensure these changes are suitable for today's more nucleated and fast-paced environment?

**Stella:** We've taken a somewhat organic approach with our daughter and let her develop naturally. By that, I mean we have been quite atypical parents as we've not kept up with the trend of sending her for enrichment classes. Yet, well-meaning friends have advised us that Chinese enrichment is a must because our household is pretty Anglophile.

Of course times have changed, but the guiding principles of teaching the right values must remain the foundation of her upbringing.

**Sharon:** In New York, it is not the custom for children to greet others "uncle" or "auntie" if they are not part of the family. Nobody calls the Jamaican doorman 'Uncle Mark' or the nanny 'Auntie Brenda'. Nevertheless, I still encourage them to use those terms as a sign of respect and gratitude for the work they do for us.

Children these days are also more engaged. You would assume that it is more prevalent in the Western culture to speak up and voice your opinions, but I see this phenomenon even among my friends' children in Singapore. In my time, my mother would have yelled "*Jangan menyampok, kaypoh*" (Don't butt in, nosey one.) These days, doing so would shut them up altogether, so we tread a fine line between telling them to listen and not interrupt, and not speaking up at all.



Sharon at home with son Alexander and little nyonya Elizabeth. Behind them are paintings by Peranakan artist Desmond Sim.



## CHAKAP CHAKAP

My mother was never a tiger mom who nagged me on to achieve her dream ambition. I may be completely wrong, but I don't think us Peranakans were ever so hungry to "conquer the world" the way immigrant families are. All the stories we love reflect a lauding of our ancestors who made their fortunes for us to live on. We talk a lot about the good, golden days and wealthy Babas. I think we enjoyed our lifestyle and have become a relaxed, convivial bunch.

These days, kids need to work harder and not rest on laurels of the past. That said, I have had no qualms bringing out the *rotan* to get them to do their homework. I also tell them about my mother who used to threaten to smear me with



Sharon at her wedding in 2000 with husband, Tracy Fu and parents, Wee Hoon Leong and Polly Cheang.

chili paste if I ever told a lie. Thanks to her, it pains me if I have to tell a white lie.

The *rotan* and the chili.....I couldn't care if the NYPD or a social worker arrested me. Boy, were they effective and I will still use them if needed! \*

*Photographs courtesy of Stella Wee and Sharon Wee.*

## THE COLLECTION OF KATONG ANTIQUE HOUSE



*The house at 67 Waterloo Street, 1958*



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## NIBBLE OR FEAST?

The Peranakan presents festive recipes for the year's end from renowned chefs in the community

### COCONUT COOKIES

*Contributed by Nyonya Helen Lim of Kim Choo Kueh Chang*

**Ingredients:**

yields about 36 cookies

115g butter

155g plain flour

100g icing sugar

100g brown sugar

(Sift the above together before use)

1 egg

5ml vanilla essence

5g salt

155g plain flour

5g soda bicarbonate

100g flaked coconut

**Preparation:**

Preheat oven to 200°C. Sift the flour, soda bicarbonate and salt, and set aside. Cream the butter, brown sugar and icing sugar until smooth. Beat in the egg and vanilla essence until light and fluffy. Blend in the flour mixture gradually, and then mix in the flaked coconut. When evenly



mixed, cool the mixture in the fridge for 30 minutes. Roll the dough to 6mm in thickness and cut into your preferred shapes using cookie cutters. Bake for 15 to 18 minutes in the preheated oven and cool on wire racks. The cookies are then ready to serve.



### FESTIVE OLIVE RICE

*Contributed by Baba Anthony Heng of Katong Catering*

**Ingredients:**

5 cups cooked rice

350g turkey ham

10 black olives

4 cloves of garlic

3 tbsp oyster sauce

1 tbsp thin soy sauce

1 tbsp sugar

3 tbsp olive oil

Garnishing: crushed walnuts and raisins

**Preparation:**

Remove seeds and chop black olives finely. Peel garlic and mince. Heat oil in a wok on medium heat. When oil is hot, add garlic and fry until fragrant. Add finely chopped black olives, stir fry about two minutes, then add chopped turkey ham. Stir well until the turkey ham is cooked, season with oyster sauce and thin soy sauce and sugar, then stir all ingredients thoroughly. Add cooked rice, stir mix thoroughly. Remove from heat. Scoop olive rice onto a plate, garnish with crushed walnuts and raisins and then serve immediately.



## ITEK SIO (BRAISED DUCK)

Contributed by Nyonya Bebe Seet of Rumah Bebe

### Ingredients:

1 whole duck, with head and feet intact, weighing about 2.5 kg

### Marinade:

- (a) 4 tbsp freshly ground *ketumbar* ( coriander seeds)
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp pepper
- 3 tbsp thick black sauce

### Other ingredients:

- (b) 200g *assam* (tamarind pulp)
- 250ml water
- (c) 6 tbsp oil
- 300g shallots, sliced
- 200g *lengkuas* (blue ginger), cut in chunks & bruised slightly
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 10 cloves
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1.5 litres sugar cane juice (optional) or water

### Preparation:

Clean duck thoroughly and wipe dry. Rub marinade (a) all over duck. Mix (b) to form a thick paste. Strain the mixture and rub onto the duck. Tuck in the wings and feet of the duck. Leave to marinade overnight in the refrigerator; the duck can only be cooked the next day.



Heat oil, fry ingredients (c) till fragrant. Add sugar last to caramelise. Put in the duck as soon as the sugar begins to caramelise. Sear the duck evenly and quickly. Add the rest of the marinade. Keep stirring.

Stuff the cavity of the duck with 2 pieces of *lengkuas* and some cloves. Pour in the sugar cane juice or water to fully cover the duck. Bring to boil. Simmer over low fire till duck is tender and gravy thickens. Add water if the gravy dries up too fast. Baste and turn the duck constantly to get an even glaze.

The duck may be served whole or chopped up. Pour the gravy over the duck and garnish with coriander leaves and spring onions. For an alternative “crispy” *itek sio*, just before serving, place the whole cooked duck under a hot oven grill till the skin starts to blister and crisp. Serve immediately with the gravy as a dip. \*

## BABI ROAST

(Braised and baked roast pork with cloves)

Contributed by Chef Baba Philip Chia

### Ingredients:

- 600g lean pork (*twee-bak* in Hokkien)
- 30-40 pieces of cloves (to be pierced into the marinated pork)
- 2 tbsp dark soya sauce
- 2 tsp white pepper
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 500 ml water

### Preparation:

Marinate by rubbing the soya sauce, pepper and sugar over the whole lean pork. Then pierce the cloves evenly all over the pork. To cook, braise the pork in a pot with water at low heat till tender. This should take about 30-40 minutes. After that, transfer to a baking tray and bake for 15 minutes in a preheated oven at 170 deg C. Roast for 15 minutes on each side. Remove from the oven to cool before slicing.

Serve on a plate of salad leaves or lettuce and sliced cucumbers. Additional sauce may be made with the following recipe:

### Ingredients:

- 300ml water
- 6 pieces of cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp white pepper
- 1 tbsp dark soya sauce

Mix all the ingredients and cook the mixture till thick. This will take about 5-6 minutes on a medium flame. Pour this sauce over the roasted sliced pork.

Photographs by Colin Chee.







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Staying committed to our roots by promoting our Straits-born culture and heritage has brought us overseas again for another exciting showcase of our beautiful way of life.

The 'Singapore Night in Moscow 2011' successfully concluded and the positive reviews have given us much encouragement as a cultural showcase to the World.

We would like to take this opportunity once again to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Singapore Tourism Board for allowing us to represent Singapore in this meaningful event.

Please enjoy watching the video captured on the day's event and share it with your family and friends.

Nyonya Helen Lim  
Managing Director / Executive Chef

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# ROUTES - A SINGAPOREAN MEMOIR 1940-75

Baba Colin Chee is captivated by Baba Robert Yeo's personal tales that parallel Singapore's history

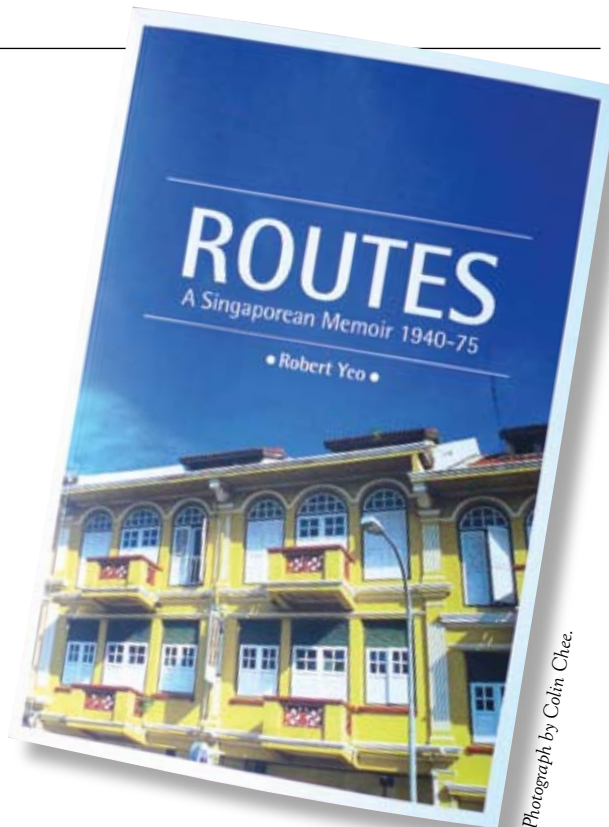
Robert Yeo writes in his inimitable style as one best suited to storytelling of the highest order – not some wildly imaginative fiction, nor some academic thesis. Just an honest-to-goodness investigation into the lineage of a Baba who happens to be one of Singapore's better-known poets and playwrights.

"I was part of a Baba family, one of the very few, living in a predominantly Teochew community six miles from the city. But six miles from the city is a psychological distance from both a recognizable location where matters of national interest were transacted, and a major city road, which for me was Bras Basah Road.... As part of a Baba family speaking Baba Malay as a first language, I felt or was made to feel apart. The frequent taunt that we were Chinese who could not speak Chinese made us feel different...." Robert writes on page 40 of the book. It was not until he studied history in A-levels that Robert first understood his Peranakan heritage.

*Routes* is not just about one man's journey into his family history. It may have begun as such. But it has ended up as an exciting retracing of Singapore's history from the Second World War through to independence, separation, and the economic miracle that followed. It is seen from the perspective of an ordinary man in the street. Robert's recollection of little details and historical episodes brings to life street memories for an older generation of readers. It will certainly not be lost on our younger generation who may have been privy to historical snippets shared by *Kong Kong* and *Mama* over the dinner table or during history lessons in air-conditioned classrooms.

Robert writes about the time he and his friends had driven to Kuala Lumpur on the way to peninsular Malaysia's east coast.

"For some inexplicable reason, we had ignored the fact that relations between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore were worsening. The three of us drove up in my Austin on the day of 8 August, and spent the night in the federal capital. Around eleven the next morning, we decided to visit a friend of mine, Lawrence Pereira, within sight of the jail. The moment I met Lawrence, we started to banter. "Adeh,

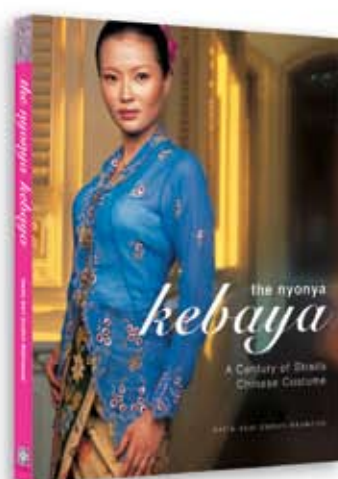
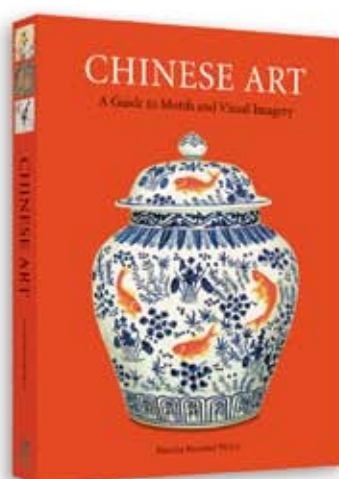
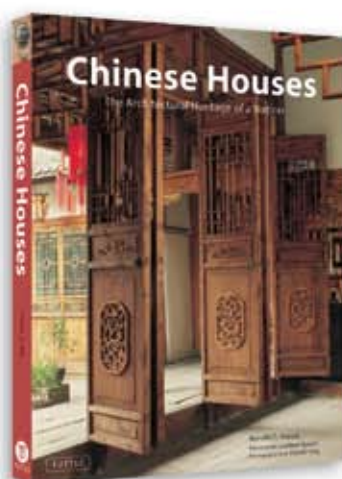
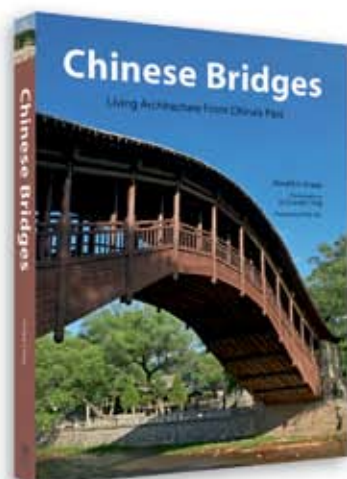
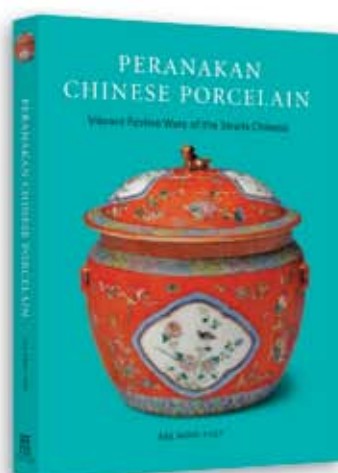
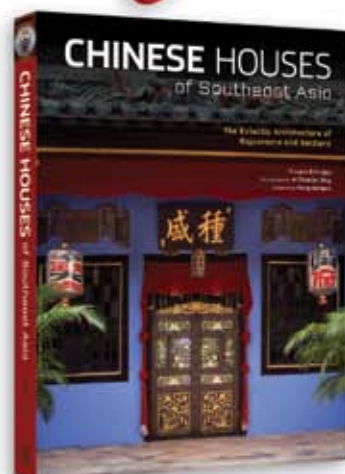
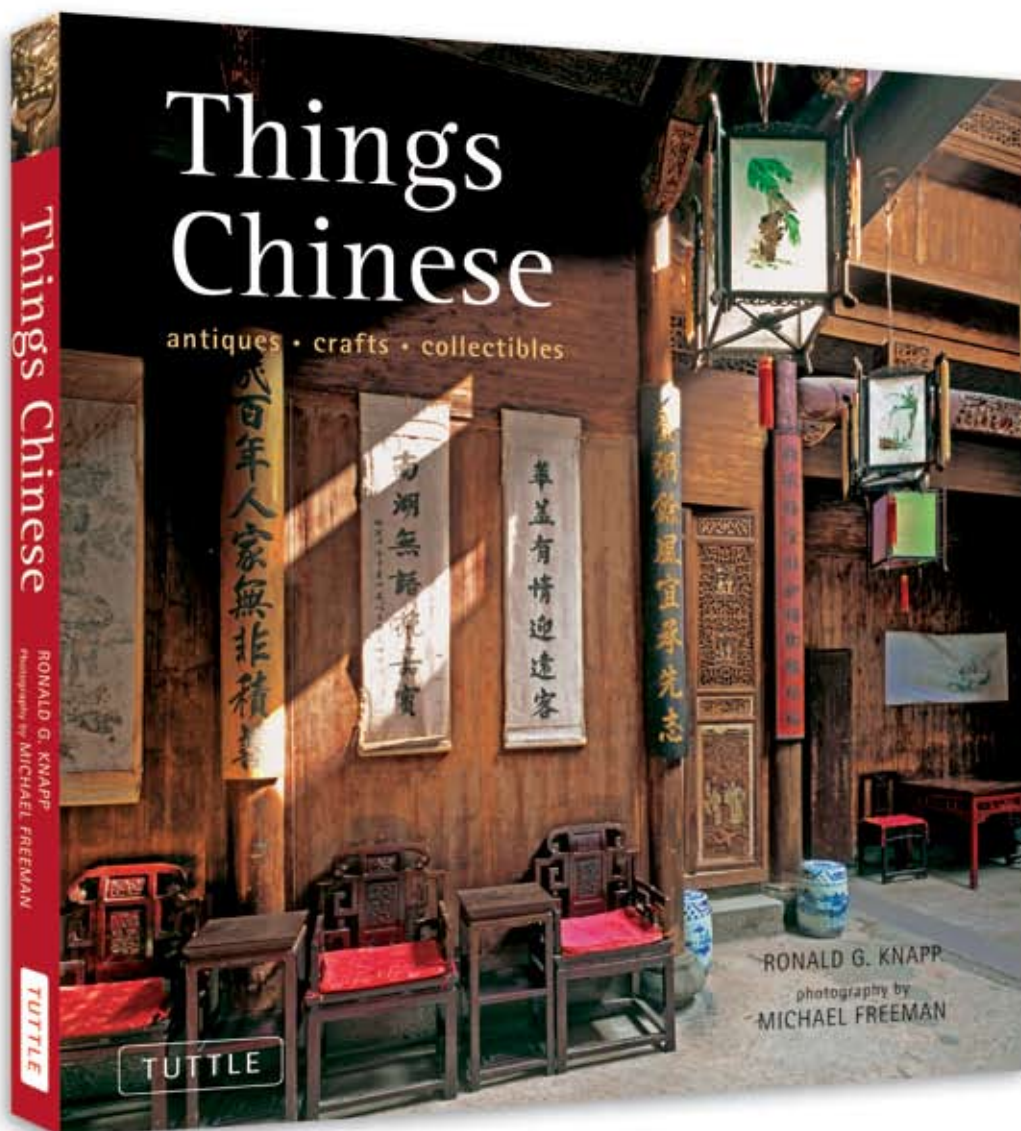


watcha ya doing here, I thought we kicked you out?" Lawrence greeted me and my two companions. "Don't kid, lah. You need us more than we need you," I said. In a few seconds, our conversation became serious. Lawrence told us that there had been radio news reports early in the morning which announced Singapore had separated from Malaysia effective that same day....the three of us from Singapore decided we could not continue on our journey to the east coast and decided to return to Singapore on the same day."

We are invited to share in Robert's very personal tales of Singapore, like this one that, when multiplied 1.8 million times then, make up the historical context of that eventful day. Told in a manner that is lyrically nuanced, Robert's independence tale makes for light reading that both entertains and educates. *Routes* may be one man's search of his being but in many ways it is also an enjoyable record of Singapore's short history till the 70s.

A Singaporean Memoir 1940-75 by Robert Yeo is published under the imprint of Ethos Books.

# A Richly-illustrated Introduction to All Things Chinese



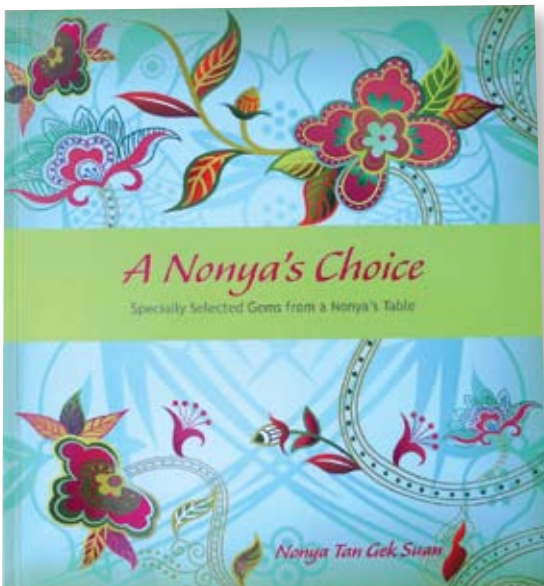
TUTTLE



## A NYONYA'S CHOICE

Baba Colin Chee finds useful gems in Nyonya Tan Gek Suan's family recipes

This is Nyonya Tan Gek Suan's fourth book of family recipes – one that's dedicated to her parents Tan Keng Seng and Tan Geok Lin. It is essentially a reprint of her first cookbook, *At a Nyonya's Table*, but with a few more unpublished family gems.



Photograph by Colin Chee.

The recipes have been kept as family-authentic as possible. They are simple to follow and the measurements have been simplified using cups and spoons, which is really how most Peranakans cook – *agak agak*.

But what I like is firstly, its Cooking Guide. There are some little treasures that the first-timer and even seasoned cooks will find helpful in the kitchen:

- Add salt first to hot oil in pan before frying veggies to keep them green.
- When using a blender to make *rempah*, add a few drops of cooking oil for smoother operation.

The other feature I like about Gek Suan's cookbook are her Food Notes. A sample:

- Save the shells and heads from peeled prawns and boil them with some water to make a stock. Strain and cool the stock. Freeze in small quantities for future use.

She has some recipes that I have not seen in many other Peranakan cookbooks that remind me of my mum's cooking – like spicy fish floss, white bait in banana leaf, and pork ribs and barley soup. It's a cookbook worth checking out and trying.

*A Nyonya's Choice* is produced by Graceworks Pte Ltd.

## A BEAUTY RESTORED

The Pinang Peranakan Mansion is unveiled in a book by Chan Suan Choo

In 1894, Kapitan Cina Chung Keng Kwee built a magnificent mansion that served as his residence and office. Called the *Hai Kee Chan* or Sea Remembrance Store, it incorporated architectural elements from all across the civilised world – Victorian England, Qing Dynasty China, Indo-European and Arabic grandeur. The eclectic design called for Chinese carved-wood panels, English floor-tiles and Scottish iron-works, and rooms that surrounded a central, Middle Eastern-inspired courtyard.

Fast forward 100 years, and Mr Peter Soon has restored the building to its glory days. It is now known as the Pinang Peranakan Mansion and boasts a fine collection of baba-nyonya antiques. These include Straits Chinese wedding attire and accessories, exquisite European period artefacts and collectibles, and rare photographs of pre-war Chinese Peranakan families. Also on display are Peranakan porcelainware and silverware, clothing and crafts.



Left to right: Peter Soon, owner of Pinang Peranakan Mansion; Museum Director Lilian Tong; and Danny Law, Penang State Exco for Tourism Development and Culture.

The details of the restoration of the Kapitan's *Hai Kee Chan* and its present-day incarnation as a cultural showcase and museum have now been recorded in a new book, simply titled ***The Pinang Peranakan Mansion***.

The book will be launched by Lim Guan Eng, the Chief Minister of Penang, on 24 November 2011. \*

Please contact [rmhbaba@streamyx.com](mailto:rmhbaba@streamyx.com) to purchase the book.

## BOOKS

# SHOPHOUSE REFLECTIONS

Baba David Neo reviews Julian Davison's latest book

Julian Davison's earlier book, *Black and White: The Singapore House 1898-1941*, surveyed the black and white colonial houses in Singapore that apparently have their roots in India. **Singapore Shophouse**, with its shocking pink cover, captures the spirit of Peranakan shophouses, which were often painted in bright and sometimes garish colours.

The book comprises three sections: *Defining the Shophouse*; *Development of the Shophouse*; and *The Shophouse Today*. Readers looking for deep academic and architectural insights may be disappointed. Still, the book does supply an overview, history and general understanding of shophouses in Singapore. It works well as a gorgeous coffee table tome with a cornucopia of beautiful pictures of shophouses, showcasing the variety of their features. To be fair, that is probably how the book was conceived – it does not acknowledge Davison as author but as text contributor.

In the first section, Davison defines the characteristics of the shophouse and traces its Chinese features and influence; its colonial specifications – the *kaki lima* or five-foot way – and influences; and finally its Malay influences, demonstrating what is often described as the “Straits Eclectic” style which very much captures the cosmopolitan and hybrid nature of Southeast Asia.

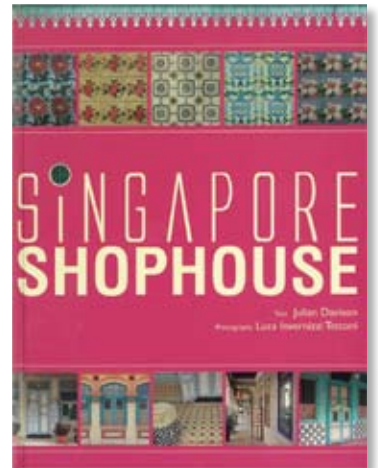
The second section, *Development of the Shophouse*, takes us on an interesting journey beginning

with China and the Nanyang communities to early Singapore and the pockets of shophouses in areas like Emerald Hill and what Davison describes as the “Blair Plain”. He also maps out the development, influences and evolution of the shophouses and the architects and builders involved. This section ends with modernism being introduced into shophouse designs—influences from Shanghai, Art Deco and functionalism.

The last section takes us to several exceptionally-designed and re-modified shophouses today. It is fascinating how innovatively and creatively these old shophouses have been reconfigured.

If you are into coffee table books or appreciate a beautifully-photographed tome – this book is quite perfect. I think the book's true value is its pictorial documentation, archiving for posterity the living spaces we used to inhabit. \*

*Singapore Shophouse*. Text by Julian Davison. Photography: Luca Invernizzi Tettoni. Published by Talisman Publishing in 2010. Available at all good bookstores.



Photograph by David Neo.

## EVENTS

# MOTHER OF ALL MANEK

Baba Peter Lee is totally beadazzled!

So you think you've seen beadwork?

Earlier this year, Sotheby's in New York sold a magnificent beadwork canopy (yes, canopy!) made of, well, some glass beads, but more importantly, over 500,000 Basra pearls as well as diamonds, sapphires, rubies and emeralds. Commissioned by Khande Rao Gaekwar, the Maharaja of Baroda and made between 1865 and 1870, this manek-ficently opulent canopy was part of a suite that included four pearl carpets which was intended as an adornment for the Prophet's tomb in Medina. It was later kept in Monaco by the late Maharani Sita Devi, the enigmatic second wife of a later Maharaja, Pratap Singh Gaekwar. The canopy was only recently exhibited at the Maharaja exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, and its sale so soon after a high-profile exhibition raised some eyebrows, but still not as many as the astonishing price: US\$2,322,500.

See the full story on [www.peranakan.org](http://www.peranakan.org).



Photograph courtesy of Sotheby's.



## EVENTS

# FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE

Brothers Edmond and Raymond Wong bring  
Baba to the land of Borscht

At the Singapore Night in Moscow 2011, Babas Edmond and Raymond Wong of Kim Choo Kueh Chang represented the Singaporean Peranakan community with a showcase of our iconic culture, receiving very positive reception from the Russian audience.

Kebaya designer Raymond presented modern interpretations of the traditional kebaya in a show with 20 lanky Russian models parading in svelte nyonya fashion. Back in Singapore, Raymond conducts workshops for students at LaSalle College besides teaching privately.

Kim Choo will soon launch a cultural centre to generate greater interest and appreciation for Peranakan culture and traditions. Cooking classes will be conducted by Executive Chef Helen Lim, who also contributes recipes regularly in the local media, while Raymond will hold kebaya classes. \*



*Babas Edmond and Raymond Wong (middle) with the 20 gorgeous Russian models decked in kebayas.*

Please visit [www.kimchoo.com](http://www.kimchoo.com) for more details. The fashion show held in Russia as part of "Singapore Night in Moscow 2011" can be viewed at <http://www.kimchoo.com/index.php/our-journey>.



Peranakan ceremonial hanging. Batik. 19th C. North-coast Java



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## EVENTS

# OUR EPIC THIRD TAN TOCK SENG FAMILY REUNION – *BUKAN MAIN LAU-JIAT!*

Babas Ivy Humphreys, David Neo, Darrell Tan and Roney Tan take on the significance of this reunion

The third Tan Tock Seng family reunion began with a Peranakan high tea at the Golden Bell Villa in Singapore on 26 July. The stately and grand mansion located at 10 Pender Road on Mount Faber was built in 1910 by Tan Boo Liat, a great-grandson of Tan Tock Seng. He named the mansion “Golden Bell” in memory of his father, Tan Kim Ching, the eldest son of Tan Tock Seng. Kim Ching in Hokkien translates to “golden bell”. Currently, the premise houses the Danish Seamen’s Mission.

This event ushered in a week of various activities from the Peranakan Museum hosting a reception and guided tour for the family, to the 167<sup>th</sup> Tan Tock Seng Hospital Founder’s Day on 30 July. The highlight of this year’s Founder’s Day was a fund-raising cycling trip that began from Malacca, the birth place of Tan Tock Seng. Minister Vivian Balakrishnan was present to receive the arrival of the cyclists. The week’s events culminated with the Family Reunion Dinner at The Pines on the same evening.

However, for 30 family members who came from seven different countries, the highlight of the reunion was the trip to our ancestral village, Houxu in Haicheng, from 1 – 5 August. Our Chek Chek, Baba Roney Tan, who has organised

the past reunions including this latest one, has traced our roots and found more relations in China. Our time in China was truly *lau-jiat* and we *makan sampay gila!* Each meal consisted of no less than 12 courses!

When we arrived at Xiamen, the Xiamen University Library and Xiamen Overseas Chinese Museum hosted the family. The next day we attended the opening ceremony at the Xiamen

Overseas Chinese Museum that held a special exhibition on Fujian Chinese who migrated to Southeast Asia with a special focus on Tan Tock Seng and his descendants.

We were truly impressed with the museum;

it documented the acculturation of the early Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia with a Peranakan focus; but more than anything else, we were impressed at how the museum mobilised students as guides – it was educational for the students in terms of learning the history of overseas Chinese immigrants and also gave them a chance to practise their English.

Topping it all was the fantastic reception we got at Houxu – *betol bukan main-main!* When we got off the bus, a lion dance with a female band and a group of children chanted welcome greetings. In addition, *ada petair* (firecrackers) and later fireworks *juga*—for those of us born in Singapore



Right: The cyclists with Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan at the Tan Tock Seng Hospital’s 167<sup>th</sup> Founder’s Day.

Below: The Tan Tock Seng clan at their 2011 reunion dinner.





## EVENTS

after the ban on firecrackers, it was undoubtedly *betol bukan main lau-jiat* 1950s style!

We were lavishly treated to a grand dinner with more lion dance performances and entertainment. As Ida Chionh from Melbourne remarked, “we were treated like royalty!” Some of us were so overwhelmed that tears welled in our



eyes. But the evening left the village changed as well, as an elderly relative from the village said that she had not witnessed such a grand occasion in all her life! Both events were reported in the local media.

As Tan Tock Seng descendants, we are all truly proud and humbled at the same time to have inherited such a rich legacy! ✱

Above: At the opening of the Xiamen Overseas Chinese Museum.

Left: A lion dance performance in Houxu.

# OF FORTRESSES AND DRAGONS

Baba George Putrasahan on the Peranakans of Tangerang

The town of Tangerang, 50km to the west of Jakarta, is home to a little-known community of Indonesian Chinese. This Peranakan community has lived there for over 400 years, and many unique cultural practices have emerged as a result of assimilation with the locals through intermarriage.

Tangerang is a traditionally agrarian area, dotted with a number of small shops and eating houses. When the first Chinese arrived, they settled near the Cisadane River, where the Dutch had built a fortress. From this derived the name *Cina Benteng* or Fortress Chinese, to describe the Chinese who lived there. In recent years, many have emigrated and now live in Jakarta, Bogor or overseas in Australia and Singapore.

Tangerang is now undergoing urban development but some older temples and houses



can still be seen. The Boen Tek Bio Temple, built in 1750, has been organising the annual Dragon Boat Festivals or *Pe Cun* (Hokkien for paddling boat) since 1911. This was disrupted when the Suharto government banned all Chinese cultural festivities. Fortunately, the festival has been revived and a heritage museum is also being built.

Baba Joseph Chen of Jakarta recently attended the Tangerang *Pe Cun* Festival and shares his impressions: “I read about the Tangerang Festival on the web. The programmes listed include a dragon boat race, *gambang kromong* (local music with a mixture of Sundanese, Javanese, Malay and Chinese influence), drum beat performance, *wushu* performance, lion and dragon dances, a big prayer ceremony and release of ducks into the Cisadane River amongst others. It is interesting to see how, despite intermarriage with the locals, the Fortress Chinese have continued their traditions.” ✱

Top and left: Cultural activities – like dragon-boat racing and wushu – that are very much alive in Tangerang.

Photographs by Joseph Chen.



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## Baba Nyonya Newstalgia

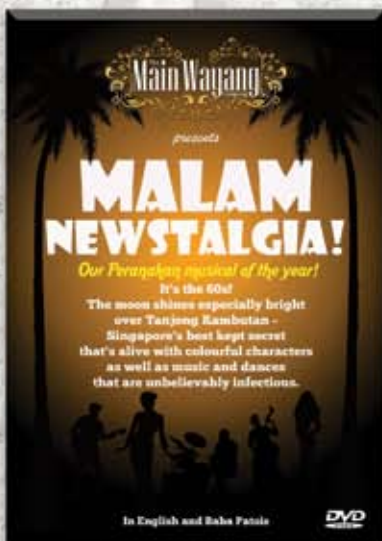


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## EVENTS

# NEWSTALGIC FOR MORE

Main Wayang rocks and rolls with the times

From the Twist, Rock 'n' Roll, Keronchong, Doowop and Swing to Rumba, Cha Cha, Samba and even Dangdut, the fourth and latest album by The Main Wayang Company has it all! This time around a conscious effort was made to create a nostalgic feel. "Babas and nyonyas enjoy listening to so many different genres of music. It was also important to compose new songs that Babas and Nyonyas can truly call our own," said Main Wayang's Co-Founder, Alvin Oon. Fusing various languages and music styles, some of the old classics have been remixed with new materials, hence the album title, *Baba Nyonya Newstalgia*. "The disc itself looks just like a vinyl record from the old days. We hope no one tries to play it off a record turntable!"

Of the 14 tracks, five feature folk songs that most Peranakans are familiar with, like *Di Tanjong Katong*, *Ole Bandung*, *Enjit Enjit Semut*, *Suriram* and *Lenggang Kangkong*. Main Wayang also roped in the talents of radio deejay and theatre actor Denise Tan and TV personality Henry Heng.

All the original songs were written, arranged and produced by Alvin, who has been actively writing and producing Peranakan songs since 2004. "Music breaks down cultural and language barriers and promotes friendship and harmony. It is always a joy to see people singing the songs, especially foreigners who quickly pick up the melodies and patois even when they do not understand the language."

New songs include the 'mouth-watering' *Sedap S'kali*, which waxes lyrical about nyonya food and even features the *lesong* (mortar and pestle) as a percussion instrument.

The *Baba Nyonya Newstalgia* CD album will make its debut at the staging of The Main Wayang Company's latest musical, *Malam Newstalgia!* at the Republic Cultural Centre on 4 and 5 November, 2011.



Besides featuring its own talents, (from left to right) Nadia Kang, Alvin Oon, Jacqueline Pereira, Tony Quek and Nadine Kang, Main Wayang has also roped in radio deejay and theatre personality Denise Tan and TV personality Henry Heng.



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## EVENTS

### HERE'S TO SYDNEY!

A toast to the launch of a new chapter Down Under

Front Row: 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Josephine Lim; Bibi Teo; Melbourne Chapter President Alfred Chi; PAA President Evelyn Tan; Event Coordinator Rose Tan; and Secretary Lian Tan. Back Row: Adrian Watts; Webmaster Nigel Tan; Jim Teoh; 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Jerry Tan; Dr Donald Tan and Treasurer Derrick de Souza.

The Peranakan Association Australia (PAA) Sydney chapter was officially launched on 18 September 2011 in the hallowed surroundings of Curzon Hall, a heritage 'castle' in Marsfield suburb. It was a grand start with some 120 of Sydney's babas and nyonyas turning up in full Peranakan garb to celebrate their unique culture.

Guests included representatives from Malaysia's consulate and tourism board, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia and a delegation from the Melbourne Chapter led by its President, Alfred Chi. \*



## IN MEMORIAM

### THE GENTLE TUTOR

Nyonya Anne Chia remembers TPV's choral teacher Lim Tiat Seng

Mr Lim Tiat Seng, who passed away on 18 Sep 2011, was the first choral cum music teacher for The Peranakan Voices (TPV).



Ruby Ng, who helped to gather members to form TPV in 1999, remembers approaching Mr Lim to give the group singing lessons, "We had our first few lessons at the Ang Mo Kio Community Centre. Back then, our choir comprised a rather small group but that did not dampen Mr Lim's enthusiasm at all."

Mr Lim was then a Choir Director of the People's Association. He not only taught us Peranakan songs, but also Mandarin songs and choreography. Always patient and encouraging, Mr Lim eventually became a member of *The Peranakan Association Singapore* and conducted TPV's first public performance at the Association's 99th Annual Dinner and Dance in 1999. \*

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# ADIEU, WITH A BOW

Baba Cedric Tan bids a fond farewell to acting luminary, Chee Hood Siong

It was late on Sunday, 2 October 2011 when another Peranakan luminary light was snuffed. A phone call announced the shocking news of the passing of my elder and friend, the late Chee Hood Siong@Chee Hood Kim. We had a marvellous lunch with some acquaintances just the day before; it was to be the last time I saw this jolly persona. His fatal heart attack in Genting Highlands left me stunned. He was just 66

Uncle Chee was a scion of the illustrious Melakan Chee Yam Chuan family. Like most of the uptown boys living on the western side of the Malacca River, he was educated at the Anglo Chinese School and later joined public service. He is survived by a daughter and a son from his first marriage and his current wife, Gladys Ong Keng Wah. Up till his passing, he maintained a good relationship with his previous wife and she, with her siblings in tow, were notably present at the wake daily.

My first encounter with Uncle Chee, as we fondly addressed him, was in Seck Kia Eenh Temple, Melaka, in the early 1970s. I was then a Sunday school student



while he was an active Youth Member with great affinity for stage shows. The temple members were regularly organising fund-raising performances for various purposes, such as a new extension, renovation of the shrine hall and a scholarship fund. Uncle Chee would be the man of many wigs literally. He sportingly helmed diverse roles from an enterprising Indian merchant in a Buddhist Jataka to a witty *bibik* or crafty *amah* (maidservant) in a Peranakan skit, a voluptuous Carmen Miranda with the synonymous frilly skirt, to a Hispanic beach siren belting out hot *cha-cha* numbers! He added spice to campfires and gatherings with his upbeat songs, outlandish showmanship and those unforgettable gyrating hips! The affable performer was popular with children and adults alike. He would later become our mentor.

Uncle Chee partnered with another Seck Kia Eenh talent, Baba Kenny Chan, to perform drag *nyonya* skits, often as a *bibiks*, in Singapore in the early 1980s. His forte was portraying the know-all

*ah chim* which suited his spritely character well. Their amazing chemistry won popularity and regular travel between Singapore and Malaysia, and occasionally to Brunei and Hong Kong. They soon caught the attention of Malaysian drama producers, leading to the longest-running television comedy series, *Baba Nyonya*. Uncle Chee also acted in full-length stage plays such as *Dah Secupak Tak Bolay Segantang*.

The Kenny-Chee partnership lasted more than two decades. When Uncle Chee officially hung up his *ah chim* wig in the early 2000's, he spent

much time at Buddhist retreats and spiritual events. With failing health, he advocated happiness, love and a non-attachment to worldly materialism, as reflected in his facebook postings



and conversations with us. He made an effort to reach out and make peace with all his contacts. Perhaps it was his subtle way of announcing that he knew his time would soon be up.

Uncle Chee will always be remembered for his humility and generosity in sharing his experiences and possessions. Once, he insisted on lending me a *Hantu Tetek* (mammary spirit) costume for a fancy dress party and even soiled his hands to paint me black! He encouraged me to continue promoting the Peranakan culture and, seeing my passion, even offered to sell his private collection to me.

We are indeed blessed to have known this epitome of jolliness.

My heartfelt thoughts are in this *panton* which I composed and posted on facebook within the hour of receiving the sad news:

*Anak wayang dua menyanyi,  
Wayang tekyan kasi S.K.E.  
Baba Hood Siong terperanjat pergi,  
Tak sempat bilang selamat jalan lagi.*

*Two actors singing,  
In a charity concert for Seck Kia Eenh.  
Baba Hood Siong, you left so suddenly,  
Too sudden to even bid goodbye.*



Chee Hood Siong  
(23 March 1945  
– 2 October 2011).

Left: Hamming  
it up as Carmen  
Miranda.

Right: With  
blackened face and  
partnering Cedric  
as the Hantu  
Tetek (in dress).

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| 2. Ms Carol Chan Eng Geok | 6. Ms Irene Quek     |
| 3. Ms Chuah Ai Lin        | 7. Ms Susie Seah     |
| 4. Ms Angela Lee Swee Hua | 8. Mdm Tan Seng Choo |

### OBITUARY

Our deepest sympathies to the families of our esteemed members who have passed on:

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Mr Chee Hood Siong | 4. Mr Lim Tiat Seng |
| 2. Mrs Koh Keong Tuan | 5. Mr Tan Hock Boon |
| 3. Mr Tan Hock Seng   |                     |

## PERANAKAN ASSOCIATIONS IN THE REGION

### SINGAPORE

**The Peranakan Association Singapore (TPAS)**  
Raffles City PO Box 1640, Singapore 911755  
Contact: Mrs Lim Geok Huay, Hon Secretary  
Email: geok@peranakan.org.sg  
Tel: 65 6255 0704  
Fax: 65 6353 6801  
Website: peranakan.org.sg

**Gunong Sayang Association (GSA)**  
50 Lorong 24A, Geylang Road, Singapore 398574  
Contact: Mr Victor Goh Liang Chuan, President  
Email: goh\_liangchuan@yahoo.com.sg  
Mobile: 65 9647 8456  
Fax: 65 6441 1569  
Website: gunongsayang.org

**Association of Chetti Melaka (Peranakan Indians) Singapore**  
5001 Beach Road #08-09  
Golden Mile Complex  
Singapore 199588  
Contact: Mr Pono Kalastree

Office: 6297 1229  
Mobile: 9678 1767

### MALAYSIA MELAKA

**Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka (PPCM)**  
149, Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock (Heeren Street), 75200 Melaka  
Contact: Ms Chin Siok Hoon, PJK (Hon Secretary)  
Email: ppcm@pd.jaring.my  
Tel: 012 6218 909  
Fax: 06 2837 215  
To contact the President, Datuk Phua Jin Hock, please email phujah@gmail.com.

### PENANG

**State Chinese (Penang) Association / Persatuan Peranakan Cina Pulau Pinang**  
13, Perak Road  
President: Datuk Tan Gin Soon  
Contact: 0162050517  
Email: ginsoon@hotmail.com

### KUALA LUMPUR & SELANGOR

**Persatuan Peranakan Baba Nyonya Kuala Lumpur & Selangor (PPBNKLS)**  
63 Jalan Telawi, Bangsar Baru, 59100, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Contact: Cedric Tan, Hon Secretary  
Email: peranakan\_kl@yahoo.com.my  
Tel: 03 2287 1613  
Fax: 03 2287 3613  
Website: peranakan-kl.org  
To contact the President, Dr Lee Su Kim, please email sukim25@yahoo.com.

### THAILAND

**Thai Peranakan Association**  
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**Peranakan Association Australia Inc**  
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### Peranakan Association Australia (PAA) NSW Inc SYDNEY

P O Box 3810, Marsfield, NSW 2122  
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## 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 Nyonyas. 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](http://www.peranakanmuseum.sg)

Email: [nhb\\_pm\\_vs@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_pm_vs@nhb.gov.sg)  
Tel: 6332 7591.



### Sarong Kebaya: Peranakan Fashion and its International Sources

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**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: 6332 2982, 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>

### Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

The old Sun Yat Sen Villa reopened in October 2011 after extensive renovations with a new name. Managed by the National Heritage Board, the new interactive exhibitions were created by curators from the National Museum. Fitting tribute is given to the former owners of the house, especially Teo Eng Hock, a son of Teo Lee, one of the pioneer Teochew merchants in Singapore, and also a great-granduncle of



Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean. Teo, together with his nephew Lim Nee Soon, were

among the loyal supporters of Sun Yat Sen's bid to overthrow the Qing government. The exhibition shows how Singapore, and the Chinese community here played an important part in this pivotal moment of world history. Intimate photos of family life, and of Teo Eng Hock's nyonya mother, Mrs Teo Lee née Tan Poh Neo (granddaughter of the kapitan of Muntok), add charm and a Peranakan angle to the experience. 12 Tai Gin Road, Singapore 327874, Tel: 6256 7377, Opening Hours: 10am-5pm daily, Admission is free for October, and no charges have been announced for November and beyond. Website: [wanqingyuan.org.sg](http://wanqingyuan.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/SGOA/design\\_studio/dds2b/blair/study/Blair.html](http://www.arch.nus.edu.sg/SGOA/design_studio/dds2b/blair/study/Blair.html).



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

**Katong and Joo Chiat.** Once 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.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: 6423 4616.



### 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.





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