

## “Kebaya: Knowledge, Skills, Traditions and Practices”

### Letters of consent from community members in Singapore

The letters compiled in this document are contributed by community members who have provided written support for the nomination.

In response to **Criterion R.2**, communities have voiced their support that the inscription of *kebaya* will contribute to sustainable development goals. Please refer to the **highlighted paragraphs** within this document for their statements of support for this criterion.

S/N	Names of communities, groups or individuals	Support by communities that inscription of <i>kebaya</i> will contribute to sustainable development goals (If applicable, the specific goal(s) is listed)
✓ 1.	Ms Christine Ong Kiat Neo	
✓ 2.	Eurasian Association	
✓ 3.	Gunong Sayang Association	Peace and Social Cohesion
✓ 4.	Ms Ow Kim Kit	
✓ 5.	Peranakan Indian (Chitty Melaka) Association of Singapore	Peace and Social Cohesion
✓ 6.	Mr Raymond Wong, Rumah Kim Choo	Gender Equality Quality Education
✓ 7.	Sri Warisan Som Said Performing Arts	Gender Equality Quality Education
✓ 8.	Ms Tan Shu Ying, Sylph	
✓ 9.	Textile & Fashion Industry Centre, Singapore	Quality Education Peace and Social Cohesion
✓ 10.	The Intan	
✓ 11.	The Peranakan Association Singapore	

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30th January 2023

To the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee:

Letter of Support for Multinational Nomination of Kebaya to UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Ms Christine Ong Kiat Neo, sole proprietor of Kris Peranakan Enterprise

UEN: 52919757W

Blk 47, #02-68 Marine Crescent, Singapore 440047

Tel: 69512776. Mobile: 97982176

Email: [kristinong@ymail.com](mailto:kristinong@ymail.com)

I hereby consent and support the multinational nomination of kebaya by Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to be listed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

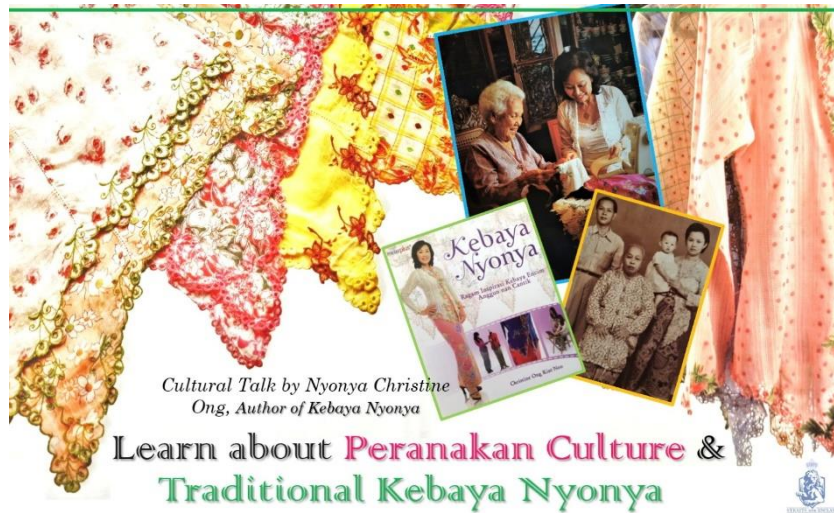
Coming from a true-blue Peranakan family, my late mother and all my female members of both my maternal and paternal families wore the kebayas throughout their lives. They were so comfortable in the kebayas that they refused to wear other traditional costumes as this became their “nyonya” attire / clothing and instant identity, even though Singapore is a multiracial community.

When I was working in the corporate world I started collecting and researching the history of the kebaya and wanted to continue the legacy of wearing the kebaya. Hence, in 2011, I wrote and published my book “Nyonya Kebaya - Intricacies of the Peranakan Heritage”. This book is now being shared in all libraries in Singapore. I hope this will enlighten the younger generations to appreciate one of the many traditional clothing of our multicultural society and to wear the Kebayas.

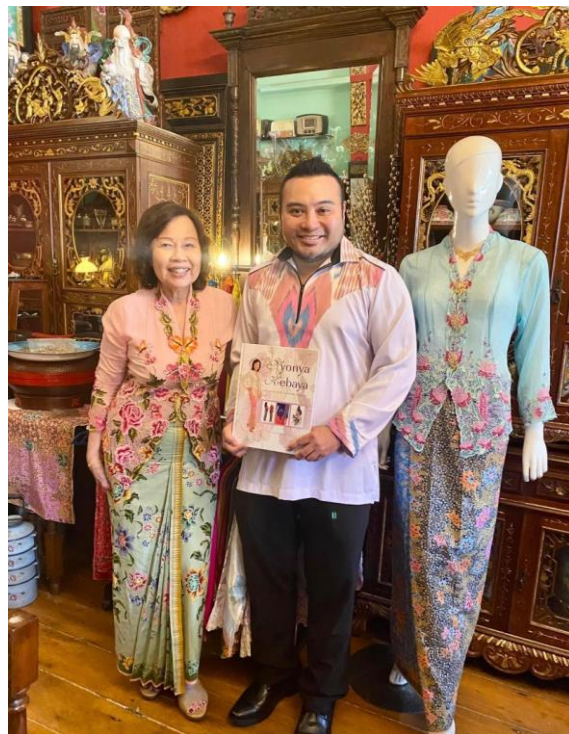
As a present-day living heritage and continuing the tradition passed down from my ancestors to female members of my family, the wearing of kebayas is closest to my heart and gives me a sense of pride and nyonya identity. Now my female siblings and cousins are still wearing the kebayas. More than 10 years ago, I started a small retail business of kebaya and sarong as a complete outfit and have since sold large quantities not only to the Peranakan community but also other ethnic communities / races in Singapore. I recreate the vintage motifs and embroideries to widen the range of the beautiful kebayas.

My greatest hope for the multinational nomination of kebaya to the UNESCO Representative List would be to create awareness and identity of this kebaya outfit to the world. I love wearing it daily at my store.

To share personal stories, I would encourage, teach and share the various ways to achieve the beauty of wearing this outfit. Wearing the kebaya to any occasion / event / celebration / performance / social gathering is a norm now. There are varieties of elaborate embroidery on kebayas for different occasions. I am now in conjunction with an event company giving regular talks and demonstrations on wearing of kebayas.



A series of talks about my book, "Nyonya Kebaya - Intricacies of the Peranakan Heritage" which started from January 2023.



A participant bought my Nyonya Kebaya book at the talk in 2023.



Giving a talk on Peranakan culture at Nanyang Girls High School during Racial Harmony Day 2022.



My sister with my parents during my parents' 50th wedding anniversary in 2002



With my friend Ni Qing at MBS theatre watching a musical, “Lee Kuan Yew Story” in 2022



With a participant at the Kebaya talk in 2023.



## Eurasian Community House

139 Ceylon Road  
Singapore 429744  
Tel (65) 6447 1578  
Fax (65) 6447 3189

10 February 2023

Dear Sir/Mdm,

### **LETTER OF CONSENT FOR THE MULTINATIONAL NOMINATION OF THE KEBAYA TO THE UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY**

1 The Eurasian Association (EA), Singapore was formed in 1919 as a voice for the community. In addition to being one of the four Self-Help Groups since 1994 where we assist the needy through education bursaries and family support services, EA is the only institution in Singapore that acts as a guardian of Eurasian heritage and culture.

2 Set up in 2003, the newly revamped Eurasian Heritage Gallery (EHG) has over 400 images, 130 artefacts and 10 multimedia. The objective of the EHG is to preserve and share the Eurasian history and culture to the wider society. Programmes include guided tours and other segments such as sampling of sugree cake, dance workshop of a traditional Eurasian folk song and more. Our animated docents share the origins, contributions, culture and lifestyle of the small but vibrant Eurasian community, one of the earliest settlers in Singapore.

3 We believe the kebaya is a crucial part of Singapore's heritage and identity, and there is a section on traditional Eurasian attire which features the kebaya in the Eurasian Heritage Gallery. For the Eurasian community, the kebaya's history dates back to 1511, when the Portuguese arrived in Malacca in search of spices. They married the local women and the offspring from these unions would later be called 'Eurasian', as they were a mix of European and Asian parentage. In the 1500s, the Eurasians in Indonesia and Malacca began wearing a kebaya similar to what the local Malay women wore. Eurasians could only afford simple cotton material. The blouse was a long and straight cut with a loose fit for comfort. They called it the 'Cabaia Kumpridu' as 'cabaia' means 'blouse', and 'kumpridu' means 'long' in Portuguese. Other communities also have riveting origins of the kebaya they wear, with different styles, material, cutting and so on.

4 It is important for traditions like this which are symbolic for numerous ethnic communities in Singapore, a melting pot of cultures, to be passed down the generations. A quote by Maya Angelou says, "You can't really know where you are going until you know where you have been." Knowing one's roots and ancestry helps

one to embrace and be proud of who they are, while firmly planted as citizens of Singapore, and as part of the wider region.

5 Our EA members have been involved at various stages of the nomination preparation, from focus group discussions, to contributing photographs and information, as we believe that a successful nomination would encourage the younger generation to continue passing down this heritage to their children.

6 For these reasons, we consent to and fully support the multinational nomination of kebaya by Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to be listed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Yours sincerely,



.....  
Ms Sandra Theseira  
President

The Eurasian Sarong Kebaya, also known as the Cabaia Kumpridu.



Young ladies from the Eurasian community wearing kebayas in the Eurasian Heritage Gallery



Eurasian ladies wearing the sarong kebaya – commonly comprising of a European-inspired blouse of thin, translucent textile, with embroidered lace, paired with a local batik sarong.



GSA/NHB-2023/0323

4<sup>th</sup> March 2023

UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee

To whom it may concern,

**LETTER OF CONSENT IN SUPPORT OF MULTINATIONAL NOMINATION OF KEBAYA**

Gunong Sayang Association (GSA) expresses our full consent and support for the multinational nomination of kebaya by Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to be listed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity.

GSA was founded in 1910, a non-profit organisation, focuses on the preservation of the Peranakan culture through songs, dance, pantuns, the Bahasa Baba/Nyonya and above all the Wayang Peranakan (Peranakan Theatrical Play).

Kebaya, a vital attire that is worn by all the Nyonyas during all our performances and activities inevitably makes this nomination very close to all our hearts. The kebaya embodies what the Peranakan ladies (known as nyonyas) wore for the past century. Kebayas have been passed down from generations and regarded as heritage pieces for some families. Kebaya also connects generations of women across different ethnic communities who grew to appreciate the kebaya as a marker of cultural identity.

GSA has even conducted sulam (embroidery) classes headed by kebaya maker Heath Yeo to pass down the art of embroidery on kebayas to the younger generation.

GSA is so excited that this will be a multinational nomination because kebaya have always been worn not only in Singapore by the Peranakans but also by other nationalities and races. As such, kebaya facilitates social cohesion by bridging communities and families together.

The Peranakan Federation have representatives in Southeast Asia that includes those countries that are in this nomination such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.

We look forward to having this shared culture to be shared to many more for posterity.

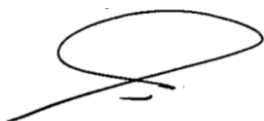
A Pantun to share for this letter of consent:

Baju Kebaya Dari Dulu Kala  
Chantik Di Pakay Nyonya Nyonya  
Disulam Manis Berchorak Bunga  
Sapa Pandang Mesti Tak Lupa

Kebaya from the past  
Beautiful when worn by Nyonya  
Pretty flower design that are embroidered  
Whoever sees it will never forget

Community's statement that inscription of kebaya supports the sustainable development goal of **peace and social cohesion** (criterion R2).

Yours faithfully,



.....  
Alvin Teo  
President  
Gunong Sayang Association

16 Feb 2023

To the Intergovernmental Committee of UNESCO

Dear Sir/Madam,

**CONSENT AND SUPPORT FOR THE MULTINATIONAL NOMINATION OF  
KEBAYA TO BE LISTED IN THE UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF  
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY**

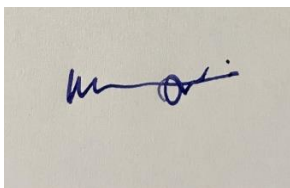
1. I hereby consent and support the multinational nomination of *kebaya* by Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand to the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
2. I have been a keen heritage enthusiast since a very young age and have been a two-time recipient of the Singapore National Heritage Board's Heritage Participation Grant with which I wrote two books that record the history of Singapore's heritage restaurants and hawkers; "Delicious Heirlooms: Storied Behind Singapore's Oldest Family-run Restaurants", and "Delicious Heirlooms 2: Our Hawkers, Our Heritage Heroes."
3. I have also been a keen collector and wearer of *kebaya* since I started my career as a young lawyer in the late 1990s/ early 2000s. My love for *kebaya* can be attributed both to influence and interest. Having very close peranakan relatives inculcated in me a sense of detail and design and wearing *kebaya* was to me, not just for appreciation but also a mission to carry on its rich heritage as a garment of our time and of generations past.
4. Over the years, I have also been promoting *kebaya* within my own group of friends and also to my foreign contacts. While I have not penned my personal journey on *kebaya* to print just yet, I have over time been researching and jotting down anecdotes and real-life experiences with the craft and practices of *kebaya*. Being an integral part of our cultural fabric, *kebaya* is not just for practical daily wear but can also be part of a glittery affair for formal evenings and even state events. It transcends race and religion and highlights our shared heritage across various communities here in Singapore and the ASEAN region.
5. The intricacies and the art of *kebaya* is not something one can appreciate overnight but is a personal journey. It is also accompanied by the accessories and adornments such as the kerosang (ornate strand of

brooches that pins the garment together) and the kasut manek (beaded shoes that the older generation would hand make).

6. *Kebaya* is a living heritage and continues to be highly relevant in our community's culture. The versatile nature of *kebaya* shows how it can be worn in both formal and casual settings such as festive occasions, social gatherings, and institutional events. It also remains a form of daily wear for some women today.
7. *Kebaya* is diverse and dynamic – one that is constantly evolving according to trends driven by the wider fashion world in the region, while also adapting to local cultural norms and preferences. Beyond just a garment, *kebaya* embodies the stories and memories that we hold dear. It sparks conversations and serves as a connection between families and generations of women who look to the mothers, grandmothers, and other women folk, and grew to appreciate the *kebaya* as a marker of cultural identity or simply as an expression of creativity and fashion.
8. I hope that the recognition of *kebaya* as an intangible cultural heritage on the UNESCO Representative List will inspire discussions, encourage more people to learn about it, and further spread the knowledge and passion for *kebaya* fashion to Singaporeans and the world regardless of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
9. I believe that a successful nomination will strengthen the safeguarding of this living heritage, raise recognition to the artisans, practitioners and cultural advocates of *kebaya*, and inspire the younger generation to continue its transmission for many years to come.

Kim Kit Ow (Miss)

Author, Lawyer

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Kim Kit Ow'.











## PERANAKAN INDIAN (CHITTY MELAKA) ASSOCIATION SINGAPORE

6001 Beach Road #20-06 Golden Mile Tower ,Singapore, 199589

24 February 2023

Attn To: UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee

Letter of Consent

### Multinational nomination of kebaya to the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

The Peranakan Indians or Chitty Melaka are probably the oldest community in Singapore and Malaysia to have evolved from mixed parentage and thus encapsulate the unique character of embracing multiracial, multicultural and multilingual realities with a high degree of comfort and pride.

Like our more familiar cousins - the Straits Chinese or Peranakan Chinese or Babas and Nonyas - the Indian Peranakans sit well in a Singapore which is also a “country of the mixed and the many” where tolerance and living with other races comfortably is given high priority. In the evolving diversity that is the Singaporean and the Peranakan experience, individuals can retain various identities several times in a lifetime.

Wearing the Kebaya features prominently in our culture and identity. It has been our go-to attire at home since the 15<sup>th</sup> century for the Indian Peranakan ladies. The Indian Peranakan or Chitty Melakans are hybrid offsprings which emerged from the inter-marriages between early South Indian settlers and local Malays, Chinese, Javanese and Batak communities in 15<sup>th</sup> century Melaka. Our assimilation with the local culture is the most unique feature of our community. Our clothing, diet, spoken language and appearance bear similar resemblance to the local indigenous (i.e. local Malay and Baba-Nonya) communities. We trace our roots to the Chitty Village in Melaka (perhaps the earliest model of the global city-state in the Southeast Asian region) and photographs of Indian villagers or townsfolk in kebaya-clad attire always confirm for us our community's sense of integration with the local Southeast Asian culture. Such evidence showcases how kebaya is, and has been a cultural connector that builds cultural understanding and appreciation. We take pride in our DNA: an identity formed mainly from our opening our hearts and homes to our neighbours and reinforcing the sense of belonging and integration with local cultures.

Wearing the Kebaya, for the Peranakan Indian, is about being comfortable in their own skin vis-a-vis the larger Indian community at Hindu temples and at Indian community events.

Wearing the kebaya amidst the Malay population and the Chinese Peranakan community also means we are comfortable to call this our home, living in harmony with our neighbours.

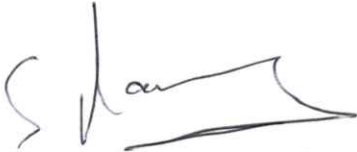
Community's statement that inscription of kebaya supports the sustainable development goal of **peace and social cohesion** (criterion R2).



Wearing the kebaya is a powerful way to celebrate women's strength and identity, and is our tribute to the legacy of our grandmothers and great-grandmothers.

On behalf of our community, the Peranakan Indian (Chitty Melaka) Association **supports** the multinational nomination of kebaya by Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Best regards,



**Ponno Kalastree(Mr)**

President

Peranakan Indian (Chitty Melaka) Association, Singapore

6001 Beach Road #20-06 Golden Mile Tower ,Singapore 199589



Photograph featuring a mother-daughter pair – great-grandmother and grandmother of Pillay Krishnan-VP Peranakan Indian (Chitty Melaka) Association.

Avirame Pillay (L) and Papathe Pillay (R)



Kamala Pillay (photo taken in 1952 when she was 5 years old)



Sharmala (taken at the In the Mood for Kebaya segment at the Peranakan Museum reopening, 17 Feb 2023)  
Sharmala is the daughter of Kamala Pillay(above).



25 January 2023

Attn: UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee

Rumah Kim Choo Pte Ltd  
111 East Coast Road  
Singapore 428801

### **LETTER OF CONSENT FOR THE MULTINATIONAL NOMINATION OF KEBAYA**

I, Raymond Wong, am a 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation Singaporean. My paternal grandmother was a Singaporean Peranakan Chinese – a Nyonya. She taught my siblings and myself to appreciate and be proud of our local heritage and culture. Being deeply rooted in this Peranakan Chinese culture, Rumah Kim Choo Pte Ltd was founded in 2004. Our business' humble beginning began with selling Peranakan Chinese-related lifestyle products including the Nyonya Sarong Kebaya. As a fashion designer specializing in kebayas, I have represented Singapore in Singapore Tourism Board tradeshows through fashion shows, parades, displays. *(Refer to Appendix 1, p. 5 -6)*

Singapore is a multicultural port city, with links across Southeast Asia and the world. Traders brought caftan fashion from the Arabic/Islamic world into Southeast Asia via the Maritime Silk Routes. The caftan later evolved into the kebaya and every region has its own unique variant. Today, the Kebaya is still being worn by many communities across South-east Asia, including Singapore. The kebaya represents our region's (1) shared history and heritage; and (2) common roots with our neighbouring countries – Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, & Thailand.

Rumah Kim Choo frequently conducts in-house tours/talks with groups like People's Association, Peranakan Association Singapore, Friends of the Museum, Primary/Secondary Schools (e.g. Racial Harmony Day), and with locals and tourists alike, to share about the Nyonya kebaya and its evolution. My personal collection of antique kebayas and batik sarongs date from 1900s up to 1970s and would be displayed to the guests for them to better appreciate the range and development of the kebaya particularly in Singapore and the Straits Settlements.

During these inclusive talks and discussions, there is active and lively sharing on topics including (1) how to bring vernacular wear, in particular, the kebaya, to be fashionable and worn, not just as a novelty or as “ethnic” fashion but as daily and festive wear; (2) how to make such fashion statements relevant to the community and enhance the appreciation of the materials, craft and techniques involved in the making of a kebaya. (*Refer to Appendix 2, p. 7-8*)

In contrast to the fast and throwaway fashion that is so prevalent today, the good Kebaya takes time, effort and affection to produce. Thus, rendering the kebaya a one-of-its kind, decoratively beautiful, collectable and wearable piece of art.

We highlight how vintage kebayas and bespoke hand and machine embroidered kebayas are much sought after, the former for their scarcity value and the latter becoming appreciated as family heirlooms with great sentimental value. In all cases, the audience always remark on the fine workmanship and artisanal quality of these beautiful garments.

We also share that kebaya can be worn on all occasions, and explain and demonstrate ways to wear the kebaya, complete with accessories and traditionally paired with batik sarongs. (*Refer to Appendix 3, p.9 -10*)  
We also suggest contemporary forms of the kebaya, and how trendy and updated they can be.

Our openness to share with the community and visitors to Singapore is to heighten understanding of this elegant evergreen classic, which transcended all races, and which had, from the early 1900s until today fulfilled a social and cultural bond among all Singaporean ladies, who wear them with a sense of pride and belonging, whether at home or overseas. Today, Kebayas are seen as symbols of multicultural Singapore, kebayas have inspired and been made into corporate and national gifts to other countries. (*Refer to Appendix 4, p. 11-13*)

Traditions can sometimes be rigid and if we insist that kebayas be worn only in the traditional manner and form, wearing a kebaya may become extraneous to the lifestyle of the younger generation. Therefore, we would share ideas on how we can wear kebayas in combination with the modern clothes. (*Refer to Appendix 5, p. 14-16*)

As the in-house kebaya designer for Rumah Kim Choo, I decided that just working with available materials and commissioning the embroidery was

limiting. Therefore, I decided to embark on the task of learning how to embroider the kebaya. My journey in mastering the craft has been challenging. In 2004, a retired Singapore embroider declined my request as this was a job which only women did, particularly between the 1950s and 1970s. Online resources were not available then unlike today, where YouTube videos showing how free-motion machine embroidery works, are easily available and prolific. The craft skills and knowledge of making kebaya is inclusive, and not limited to a certain gender. Anyone who is interested can learn and practice the craft.

Community member's statement that inscription of kebaya supports the sustainable development goal of **gender equality** (criterion R2).

My efforts paid off when I came across an old sewing machine manual that described the removal of certain elements in the sewing machine, which would then facilitate the execution of free motion embroidery. To better understand how to embroider with the sewing machine, I improvised by recreating the steps in hand embroidery books and magazines for application on the sewing machine. Such research and experiments have stood me in good stead as I am now conversant in many techniques and applications which has been learnt through sheer hard work and trial and error.

My love and appreciation of fabrics and embroidery manifests in my collection of antique and vintage kebayas, photographs, fashion paraphernalia, first used only as samples but have developed into valuable archival references. With these physical examples, I have been able to compile a body of information on the history and development of the kebaya.

In 2009, I was invited by LASALLE College of the Arts to be a guest practitioner and to inspire, lecture and tutor the Year 2 Fashion Textile students to prepare for a fashion show collection to mark the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Peranakan Museum. (*Refer to Appendix 6, p. 17*)

In 2011, LASALLE later extended and elevated my role, by employing me as an adjunct Embroidery Lecturer for their Institute. It was a most fulfilling journey as I was able to promote greater awareness and understanding of this vernacular fashion. In addition, I was able to pass my knowledge and some skills to interested students, both male and female, and of various nationalities. My hope is that the inclusion of free-motion embroidery would inspire and personalize the students' future fashion collections and exclusive and unique fashion wear. Over the years in teaching, during the students' portfolio consultation, their ideas and inspirations inspires me to push personal boundaries and create new pattern drafting and embroidery textures to

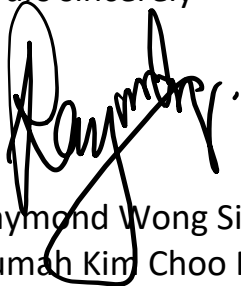
Community member's statement that inscription of kebaya supports the sustainable development goal of **quality education** (criterion R2).

translate the kebaya to a contemporary form. Through these education courses, students have gained a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of kebaya, and they are equipped with knowledge to incorporate the kebaya and its embroidery into their future fashion designs. The kebaya will also serve as an inspiration for these students' future careers.

The detailed and intricate embroidery on the kebaya can take between 6 to 8 weeks to complete for an elaborate kebaya. Done correctly and well, they can be very durable like the vintage kebayas. As part of the sustainability movement in Lasalle, we teach how to salvage the embroidery on used kebayas and applique them onto a new kebaya. (*Refer to Appendix 7, p.18-19*)

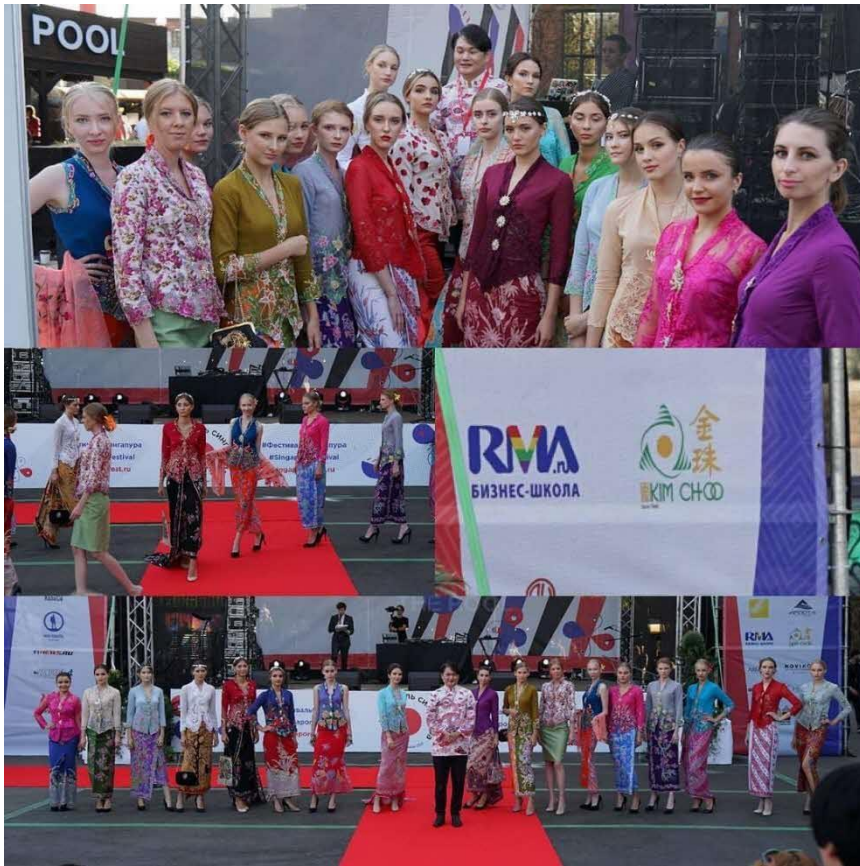
In summary, I totally support this application , as I believe that the successful multinational nomination would (1) encourage Singaporeans to appreciate and value Kebaya as a living heritage of our nation; and (2) encourage connectedness between the people of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand in the shared history and heritage of our early fashion movements .Therefore, I wholeheartedly and expressly support the multi-national nomination of the Kebaya to the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Yours sincerely



Raymond Wong Sin Kang  
Rumah Kim Choo Pte. Ltd.

**Appendix 1: Fashion Shows, Trade Shows, Parades, Displays**



Fashion Show in Moscow 2014



Right: Asian Supermodel 2012

Second Right: Miss All Nations 2012

Left: Pyeongchang Olympics 2018



Singapore Tourism Board Weekend Trade Show at Hanoi 2018



Singapore Tourism Board and DBS Bank Trade Show "Singapore Festival" 2019



**Appendix 2: Cultural Talks & Kebaya Appreciation**



American Women's Association Cultural Tour 2018



Cultural Tour for ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Spouses



Kebaya Appreciation for LASALLE Students in 2009

### Appendix 3: Nyonyas In Kebayas in Singapore



Wearing the kebayas gives cultural identity and it is suitable to be worn for all occasions locally and overseas

- Above left: A lady wearing the kebayas, with former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon
- Above right: Former President of Singapore, Mr Tony Tan and Mrs Tan, who is dressed in a kebayas
- Below: Ms Foo Chi Hsia, High Commission of Singapore to the UK, dressed in kebayas in a group photo with Singaporeans in the UK.



Never go wrong wearing the kebaya as a cultural gown to present the community and country.

(Left: Ms Foo Chi Hsia, High Commission of Singapore to UK, meeting Queen Elizabeth II; Right: Ms Lim Hai Yen, spouse of Tampines GRC Mr Baey Yam Keng, meeting Queen Saleha binti Mohamed Alam, the current Sultana of Brunei).



Male Performing Artistes in Kebaya. Traditionally, female roles were played by men in Wayang (Theatre) Peranakan, as it was inappropriate for women to appear on public stage in the past. While there are no longer restrictions, the tradition continues to inspire contemporary theatre. Ivan Heng (Right); Francis Hogan (Right)

#### Appendix 4: Kebayas as Gifts



Singapore has commissioned us to give Embroidered Kebayas to Museums overseas to foster better bilateral relationships. E.g. in 2013, Singapore Government commissioned embroidered kebaya with Seoul's national flower

the Mugunhwa – The Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus Syriacus*), which symbolises eternal blossom that never fades in Korean culture.



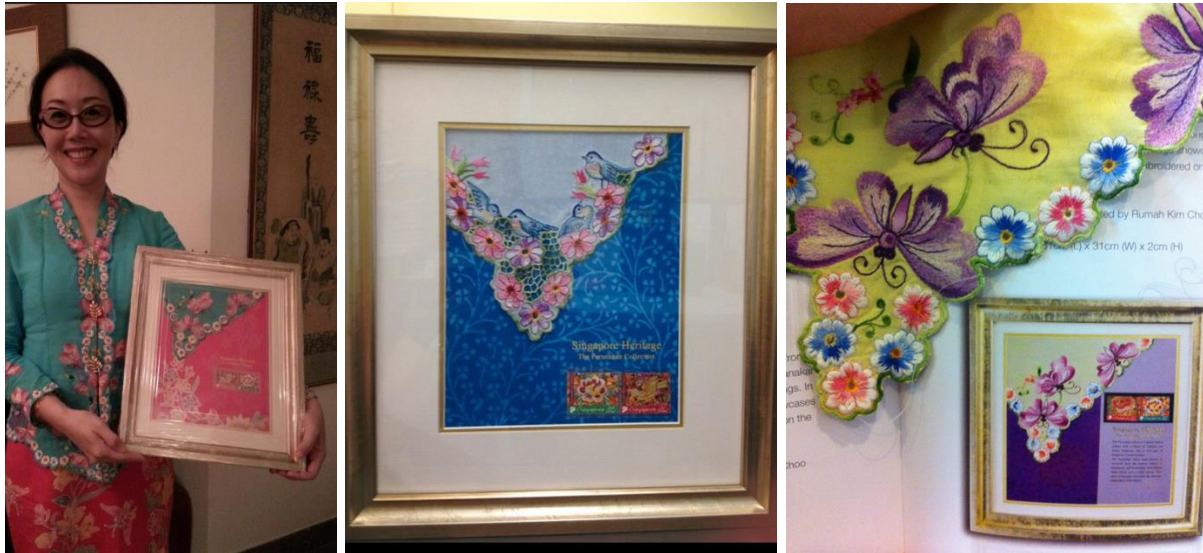
In 2014, Singapore commissioned an Embroidered kebaya with Singapore's national flower – Vanda Miss Joaquim, and Myanmar's national flower – Padauk, which flowers represents youth, love and romance with its fragrant scent. The gift was for the Myanmar National Museum opening of their ASEAN corner.

**Ho Ching's 'uniquely Singapore' gift to the Obamas, made by S'pore Peranakan designer**



In 2016, our Prime Minister's wife commissioned a shawl with Kebaya embroideries specially for Michelle Obama, with our National Flower Vanda Miss Joaquim and the National Butterfly – The Common Rose.

[Ho Ching's 'uniquely Singapore' gift to the Obamas, made by S'pore Peranakan designer - TODAY \(todayonline.com\)](http://todayonline.com)



From 2012 to 2018, the SingPost – the National Post Office, commissioned our company to design their corporate gifts with kebaya embroideries.

## Appendix 5: Translation of the Kebaya to a Contemporary Form



Kebaya Fashion Show for ASEAN Handicraft Promotion and Development Association (APHADA) in Kuching 2019





Kebaya Fashion Show for ASEAN Handicraft Promotion and Development Association (APHADA) in Kuching 2019



Samples of modern designer kebayas made for The Peranakan Association Virtual Dinner 2020

## Appendix 6: Education Efforts



Sharing samples of vintage kebaya and teach them to appreciate the fabrics used for making the kebaya and its embroideries



Teaching the students on how to do free-motion embroidery.

## **Appendix 7: Sustainability Efforts**



Upcycling embroideries from old vintage kebaya and apply them onto a new kebayas as part of the sustainable efforts.



Instead of throwing away an old kebaya. Kebayas with holes can be salvage with embroidery to give it a new look

06-February-2023

Dear Sir/Mesdames,

**Letter of Consent in Support of Multinational Nomination of Kebaya**

I hereby consent and support the multinational nomination of kebaya by Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to be listed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Sri Warisan is a performing arts company founded by renowned cultural Medallion recipient, Madam Som Said. Sri Warisan, formed in 1997, is one of the pivotal forces in Singapore's Malay dance scene. Blending rich traditional forms with contemporary techniques is Sri Warisan's trademark. Its performers are trained to excel in multi-disciplinary art forms such as dance, music, theatre and multi-media. Currently, Sri Warisan is led by Mr. Adel Ahmad, together with 30 performing artists and more than 200 student members committed to developing professionalism in the performing arts reaching out to children, youths and adults

As the Artistic Director/choreographer, I choreograph dance and design costumes. Kebaya is one of the costumes for Traditional, Modern and Contemporary works in traditional and contemporary styles.

Significance of kebaya

Casual wear at home and at work, kebaya is a symbol of identity of a Malay lady. Kebaya is worn as casual wear and a formal wear for festivities as well as for wedding.

Gender Equality

Kebaya represent femininity that signifies - grace, discipline, beauty and strength. The style and design of kebaya are symbols of identity and characters of women. Male and female designers, craftsperson, researchers and representatives of organisations share their knowledge regardless of gender.

Quality Education

Our students are exposed to 'kebaya' as an 'appreciation program' through workshop - demonstration and hands-on program, to enable them to understand the cultural significance of kebaya and its relation to the performing arts and be able to design their kebaya for dances in future. Topics include:

1. Create awareness
2. Understand 'What is Kebaya?'
3. Involve in the design and making of Kebaya.

Community's statement that inscription of kebaya supports the sustainable development goals of **gender equality and quality education** (criterion R2).

Yours sincerely



**Som Said (Mdm)**  
Founder / Director





*~ where imagination lives forever ~*

Sylph Pte. Ltd.,  
531A, Upper Cross Street,  
#04-95,  
051531 Singapore.

17 February 2023.

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF CONSENT IN SUPPORT OF MULTINATIONAL NOMINATION OF KEBAYA TO THE UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

Sylph expresses her full support and consent for the nomination of kebaya to the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage ('ICH') of Humanity.

2 Sylph was founded in 2015 to focus on arts and in the making of bespoke personalised paper creations through a Penangite nyonya's (a female Peranakan) aesthetic. In 2017, Sylph inquisitively created miniature origami (paper folding) accessories as wearable artworks in hopes to further enhance a woman's grace and beauty through her artworks. Sylph's aspiration is to spread the love of art using paper with each artwork passionately handcrafted with utmost attention to detail, love, and sincerity. Sylph is committed to being environmentally friendly, opting to have a minimal impact on the environment, and working with environmentally conscious partners. Sylph also incorporates her Peranakan culture and heritage into arts by making Peranakan batik kirie (paper cut outs) as well as miniature origami kerongsang (brooch) to pair with her kebaya, and is now planning to extend her artworks to include kasut manik (beaded shoes).

3 Sylph's work covers both tangible and intangible cultural heritage through arts and raising awareness towards the traditional art of origami as well as the Peranakans. Sylph works closely with the Japan Creative Centre (Japan Embassy) in Singapore for the traditional art of origami, and researches in the culture and tradition of a Penangite nyonya. This is achieved through exhibitions, fund raising, guiding, social media, talks, and volunteer work.

4 As the Peranakan usually wear the kebaya to showcase their multicultural heritage and identity, the opportunity to wear it proudly as part of our daily lives would be increased as compared to wearing it during occasions such as during multicultural day. It

*~ where imagination lives forever ~*

is also undeniable that the wearing of kebaya is slowly fading into the background as fast fashion makes its way into the younger generation.

5 The beautiful culture, heritage, history, and traditions of the Peranakan can be seen in places such as Malacca and Penang, in Malaysia, and Singapore. The intricacies of the kebaya is identifiable to the culture of a nyonya. However, that being said, the kebaya is such a rich heritage that it includes various other cultures that expands its influences in what defines a kebaya depending on where it is found, making it extremely interesting and what makes all the five different countries, namely Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, collaborate with each other in this multinational nomination of the kebaya to the UNESCO Representative List of ICH.

6 To continuously contribute to the safeguarding of this precious kebaya, Sylph plays her part by wearing them during her events, NUS Baba House guides, and workshops, whilst accompanying it with her handmade miniature origami accessories, where she believes that paper art meets textile art, the beauty of handmade crafts. The kebaya is also being worn during important celebrations such as the Emperor of Japan's birthday celebration where Sylph is being invited as an artist, further increasing awareness and interest in arts, kebaya, and Peranakan. In addition to that, Sylph tries to research as much as possible regarding the motifs and colours in hopes to learn more about Peranakans.

7 Since October 2022, Sylph has been involved in the various stages of the nomination preparation by attending the focus group discussions where kebaya was proposed to be nominated to the UNESCO Representative List of the ICH.

8 As a Penangite who has been living in Singapore for more than 10 years, it is indeed an exciting exposure living in both countries, Malaysia and Singapore, in how the kebaya is being seen as a masterpiece of art. It also brings me good memories of being a Singapore Airlines stewardess as we proudly wore the kebaya, not only as our uniform but as a representative of Singapore. To continue wearing the kebaya and continually seeing the kebaya worn by the citizens would indeed be an amazing achievement.

9 Sylph believes that a successful nomination would encourage Bruneians, Indonesians, Malaysians, Singaporeans, and Thais to further appreciate the kebaya, its beauty, and its rich history. Wearing the kebaya is not just wearing another piece of cloth but also showcasing the artwork that a craftsperson has lovingly created. As it still might be seen as a traditional clothing, it would indeed be a great encouragement to the younger generation to continue this craftsmanship as well as favouring the citizens to wear the kebaya regardless of occasion. It would be for all these reasons that Sylph expresses her consent and support for the multinational nomination of kebaya to the UNESCO Representative List of IHC.

10 Attached with this letter (below) would be Sylph's photographs in kebaya, which is shared in hopes that it would be of importance in adding to the successful nomination of kebaya.

11



### International Celebration Images



Left : Peranakan turquoise kebaya (chosen as the colour is usually associated with Penangites) worn with amah's sarung (chosen as it is from my amah, generation heritage), kasut manik, paired with miniature origami crane earrings (chosen as it is associated with Japanese origami), and miniature origami phoenix kerongsang (chosen as the phoenix is a symbol recognised within Peranakan).

Right : Taken with Mrs Yuko Ishikawa, the wife of the Ambassador of Japan in Singapore on 23rd February 2023 in celebration of the Emperor of Japan's 63rd Birthday Celebration in Ritz Carlton, Singapore.

### Exhibition Images



Left : Wearing the kebaya during the opening of The Beauty and Diversity of Japanese Washi Paper, a collaboration with Mrs Masako Soeda, a Japanese paper doll artist, and Mino washi, a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, in Japan Creative Centre, Singapore. (Photograph together with Singapore's ceramist, Iskandar Jalil and his wife, Ms Saleha.)

Right : Wearing the kebaya during Sylph's solo exhibition of kirie Peranakan Batik, raising awareness towards the culture, heritage, and traditions of a Penang Peranakan nyonya, translating amah's sarung to paper at GMBB, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Event Images



Left : Wearing the kebaya during the pop-up of iLight Marina Bay, in conjunction with Singapore Design Week.

Right : Wearing the kebaya during the Christmas Fair at Orchard Rendezvous Hotel with Japan Creative Centre Director, Ms Akiko Sugita.

Guiding Images



Top : Wearing the kebaya while guiding at the NUS Baba House, Singapore.

Workshop Images



Top : Wearing kebaya while teaching Side flower Peranakan Kirie workshop to Japanese at the Japanese Association Singapore.  
Left : Wearing kebaya while conducting origami workshop during the COVID-19 pandemic in conjunction with Singapore's 56th National Day (and the last day of the Tokyo Olympics 2020) with the Japan Creative Centre, and the People's Association.

Thank you for your kind time in reading this letter of consent.

Yours sincerely,

Tan ShuYing  
Owner/Creative Director  
Sylph Pte. Ltd.

To whom it may concern,

March 16, 2023

Dear Sir/ Mdm,

**LETTER OF CONSENT FOR THE MULTINATIONAL NOMINATION OF KEBAYA TO  
UNESCO'S REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF  
HUMANITY**

The Textile and Fashion Industry Training Centre (TaF.tc) express our full support and consent for the multinational nomination of the Kebaya to UNESCO's representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The Textile and Fashion Industry Training Centre Pte Ltd (TaF.tc) was established in 1983 and has been a long-term partner of SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) as the appointed Continuous Education Training Centre (CET) of the textile and fashion industry. TaF.tc is also EduTrust certified by the Committee for Private Education (CPE) in Singapore.

Since 2009 we have received regional recognition for providing industry training and consultancy in countries including Cambodia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, China, Laos, Malaysia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Our in-depth knowledge of pre-production processes within the fashion industry enables factories to move up the supply chain through capacity development in Merchandising, Design and Product Development. Working in close collaboration with industry associations in other countries, we help identify competencies and performance gaps, and provide capacity development through our robust training programmes in our esteemed design school.

As of July 2020, TaF.tc has partnered and signed accreditation agreements with other renowned fashion schools and universities locally and overseas. To date, we have partnered with the following schools and universities:


- Atelier Chardon Savard (ACS) - Paris
- Paris College of Art (PCA) - Paris
- MDIS School of Fashion (SFD) - Singapore
- Mod'Art International Paris | Sri Lanka - Colombo/Paris
- LIM College - New York
- Academy of Art University - San Francisco

**Textile & Fashion Industry Training Centre Pte Ltd**

**Main Office**

Central Plaza  
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Company Registration No. 198301430C

- Polimoda\* - Florence
- Manchester Metropolitan University\* (MMU) - Manchester
- Kingston University - London
- University of the Arts London\* (UAL) - London
- Istituto Europeo di Design\* (IED) - Italy and Spain
- IFA Paris - Shanghai/ Paris/ Istanbul campus - Shanghai/ Paris/ Istanbul
- Academy of Entrepreneurs\* - Sydney

It is our belief that the Kebaya should be listed as it showcases the identity and rich history of the clothing of our region. Having taught students both locally and worldwide, it is imperative that the kebaya be recognized not just for what it represents but to be able to inspire future designers on the cultural significance of the Kebaya and how it can be translated for modern dressing. It is from my experience that when I show the Kebaya to the students, both locally and internationally, they were often enamored by the quality of work and the references it has on the world stage. From inspiration by designers like the world renowned Dries van Noten to the identity of our national carrier Singapore Airlines, the Kebaya has been seen all over the world but rarely has there been a connection to it on the South-East Asian region. By providing this platform, we hope it will garner much interest and pride to the heritage of this part of the world.

**Community's statement that inscription of kebaya supports the sustainable development goal of **quality education** (criterion R2).**

In our institution, we strive to create an environment where students are constantly inspired and look at the past to create the future. This has led us to bring students to view historical clothings, environment and artifacts and challenge the students to create fashion that not only pushes the idea of spreading what is in our backyard to the commercial customers but also to the world. This is especially true when the international exchange students get to experience the heritage of our region and get them inspired and bring this piece of our history back home and create fashion that makes their designs much more special, inclusive and diverse. In fact, when students from China or France comes to Singapore during their exchange programme, they were often surprised why elements of South-East Asian culture were not as widely recognized as it should be.


For the local fashion students, having this recognition will also inspire them to look deeper to their own heritage and bring a sense of pride to present designs that is deeply rooted in their own backyard and will help in creating designs that are more intimate and tells a story that everyone in the region can relate and understand. As is, we have students/ designers from Malay

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Company Registration No. 198301430C

Community's statement that inscription of kebaya supports the sustainable development goal of **quality education** (criterion R2).

TaF.tc

and Peranakan descent wanting to push forth the idea of not just modernizing the Kebaya, but make it more accessible to the modern dressers of Singapore, to infuse the traditional and pride of the region into styles that make their designs and brand stand out from the crowd in a world that dresses so similarly and homogeneous.

This is also the reason why this initiative is a collaborative effort involving regional countries like Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. It will tie a connective thread to strengthen the story of our countries and bring forth references and interpretation of the Kebaya in this region to the world. And it is with this thought, TaF.tc is onboard together with our partner around the region to advocate for the multinational nomination of the Kebaya to UNESCO's Representation List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Yours truly,

Community's statement that inscription of kebaya supports the sustainable development goal of **peace and social cohesion** (criterion R2).

Thomas Tan  
**Deputy Director/ Senior Design Consultant & Trainer**  
Textile & Fashion Industry Training Centre, Singapore


Email address: [thomas@taftc.org](mailto:thomas@taftc.org)  
Telephone: +65 9686 7329

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Company Registration No. 198301430C



Celebrating All Things Peranakan  
www.the-intan.com  
69 Joo Chiat Terrace Singapore 427231

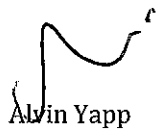
27 February 2023

To: UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee

Letter of consent for the  
**Consent in Support of Multinational Nomination of Kebaya onto the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**

Dear Sir/Mdm,

1. The Intan was founded in 2003 with the purpose of promoting and celebrating Singapore's unique Peranakan culture. Over the last 20 years, The Intan has hosted thousands of local and foreign visitors.
2. Some of the key activities organised by The Intan that are related to kebaya are
  - a. Kebaya set up at various local community events eg community centres, schools, associations
  - b. Teaching children how to dress a kebaya as HomeTeamNS Tplay and Kidzania
  - c. Presenting the Kebaya at overseas Tourism and Diplomatic events including China, Korea, UK, France and Spain
3. The Intan promotes the Peranakan kebaya by sharing with visitors how the kebaya encompasses local, Chinese and European culture. Children and visitors are encouraged to wear the kebaya for photo taking @ The Intan.
4. The kebaya has a strong identity with the Peranakan culture since 1930s. The kebaya is now a statement for Peranakan ladies who want to identify themselves as Peranakans.
5. The Intan *hereby consents and support the multinational nomination of kebaya by Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to be listed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.*



Alvin Yapp

The Intan Pte Ltd (201922016D)  
[Alvin@busads.com.sg](mailto:Alvin@busads.com.sg)  
93382234  
69 Joo Chiat Terrace Singapore 427231



THE  
PERANAKAN  
ASSOCIATION  
SINGAPORE

**The Peranakan Association Singapore**

Raffles City P.O. Box 1640  
Singapore 911755

Attn: UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee

Dear Sirs/Madams,

**LETTER OF CONSENT FOR NOMINATION OF THE KEBAYA FOR INSCRIPTION ON  
THE UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE  
OF HUMANITY**

**BACKGROUND**

The Peranakan community is a unique aspect of Southeast Asian culture. Its origins can be traced back to the 14th century when merchants from around the world travelled via the Maritime Silk Road for trade purposes. Among these merchants were southern Chinese seafarers who would settle in major ports in Southeast Asia, including Singapore. These early Chinese settlers would intermarry with non-Muslim indigenous women and their offspring were known as Peranakan Chinese.

The Peranakan Chinese recognised the importance of building trust with the local communities through cultural exchange if they wanted to make their port of call a permanent home. After many years of cultural exchange with the local people, the Peranakan Chinese learned to appreciate and embrace cultures different from their own. They readily accepted the cultural differences, which would explain why the Peranakan Chinese community has such a rich cultural



heritage, which is a primarily a fusion between Chinese, Malay and other Southeast Asian cultural influences. They have their own distinct traditions, including their own language, cuisine, music, dance, jewellery and clothing.

The kebaya is an excellent example of how the Peranakan Chinese women successfully adopted local fashion and adapted it to suit their preferences. They transformed the kebaya into a version shorter than what was traditionally favoured by the indigenous women and embellished it with intricate embroidery (*sulam*) and lacework. This fusion of different cultural influences not only showcases the appreciation for aesthetics by the Peranakan Chinese, but it also demonstrates the community's ability, willingness and openness to embrace and incorporate elements of other cultures into their own.

The Peranakan community's unique blend of cultural influences is a testament to the importance of cultural exchange and its role in fostering mutual respect, understanding, and acceptance. The ability of the Peranakans to appreciate and embrace other cultures while preserving their own identity and heritage is a valuable lesson for future generations and an important step towards building a more inclusive and harmonious society.

#### THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION SINGAPORE

The history of The Peranakan Association Singapore (TPAS) dates back to its founding as the Straits Chinese British Association (SCBA) on 17 August 1900. Its original objective was to provide a platform for discussions on social and moral welfare for the community. As Singapore evolved into an independent state, the SCBA changed its name to The Peranakan Association Singapore on 23 February 1966.

The association is dedicated to educating society on the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Peranakan community through various initiatives. They engage with the public through their publications, such as THE PERANAKAN magazine, as well as workshops, talks, exhibitions, and by maintaining an active social media presence. The association also regularly holds events, such as dinners and dances, overseas tours, and collaborates with organisations such as the People's Association, National Heritage Board, The Peranakan Museum, National Library Board, and Friends of the Museum. These initiatives are platforms for the community to showcase their identity by wearing the kebaya and learn more about the significance of this garment. (*Refer to Appendix 1: Talks, Seminars, Workshops, Social Events*)

The goal of TPAS is to create a social environment where the Peranakan community can understand their history and heritage and integrate their culture into their daily lives. The association aims to make their culture relevant and accessible to all, and they often provide opportunities for the community to showcase their heritage and practise their culture, such as by wearing their traditional kebayas with pride. Through these activities, TPAS strives to cultivate a sense of pride and appreciation for the rich cultural heritage of the Peranakans.

TPAS has been publishing its magazine called "THE PERANAKAN" since June 1994, which continues to be a valuable source of information and education on the culture of the Peranakan community, including the kebaya, both within and without Singapore to this day. The magazine is produced through the efforts of dedicated volunteers on the editorial committee, writers, and advertisers, who work together to make it a unique and vibrant contribution to Singapore's cultural landscape. It not only explores traditional cultural values but also looks at how the community is evolving and advancing, promoting an exchange of ideas in the process. *(Refer to Appendix 2 – Some editions of THE PERANAKAN magazine)*

The magazine is an excellent way for the younger generation to learn about their culture and heritage. It also serves as a means for the 14 Peranakan associations which make up "The Federation of Peranakan Associations" to disseminate information about their activities and any significant events in their respective associations. *(Refer to Appendix 3: Cultivating the Younger Generation)*

With the magazine soon to be made available online, TPAS hopes to raise greater awareness of the culture by reaching an even wider audience. The association has also been gaining more attention on its social media platforms in recent years as monthly videos are released to update the public on upcoming events. *(Refer to Appendix 4: Social Media)*.

The Federation of Peranakan Associations comprises 14 associations from various countries, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Australia. The Baba Nyonya International Convention is a highly anticipated event organised by the members of the federation by rotation. The convention represents an opportunity for delegates from the member countries to come together to discuss and study the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Peranakan community. The discussions are active and lively, with a focus on both the history of the culture and finding ways to make it relevant to the community in

the present and future. *(Refer to Appendix 5: Listing of The Federation of Peranakan Associations)*

In 2021, TPAS live-streamed the 33rd Baba Nyonya International Convention due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to uphold its tradition of connecting members of the community despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. The federation provides an important platform for members to come together and share their experiences, knowledge, and ideas on preserving and promoting the Peranakan culture. *(Refer to Appendix 6 Past Conventions hosted by TPAS)*

The kebaya is a traditional attire that holds great significance in the cultural heritage and identity of Southeast Asia. Its popularity and widespread usage in countries such as Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and even some parts of Australia are a testament to its deep historical and strong cultural roots. TPAS recognises the importance of safeguarding and promoting the kebaya, and has taken various initiatives to achieve this. For instance, TPAS works closely with the Peranakan Museum in the research and promotion of the kebaya, locally and abroad. *(Refer to Appendix 7 TPAS Collaborations with the Peranakan Museum)*

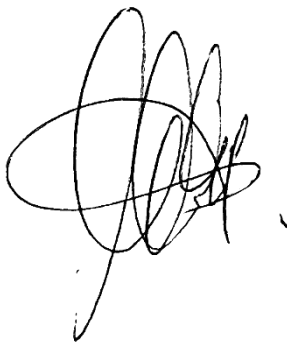
## FUTURE ENDEAVOURS

To increase the visibility and awareness of the kebaya, the association will continue to actively promote it through its publication (THE PERANAKAN magazine), as well as its online presence and social media platforms. The association will endeavour to organise workshops, talks, exhibitions, and discussions centred around the kebaya to educate people about its cultural significance and to encourage its wider use as fashionable wear, both for daily (even to the workplace) and festive occasions.

In addition, the association will give their full support when working with various government agencies such as the National Heritage Board, National Library Board, Singapore Tourism board, and Ministry of Education to raise awareness of and create sustained interest in the kebaya and its cultural importance. Being an active member of the federation, the association will continue to work with them to promote interest in the kebaya and continue to create a social environment conducive for Peranakans and non-Peranakans alike to come together to encourage each other in their cultivation of appreciation for the kebaya.

The Peranakan Association Singapore fully supports the nomination of the kebaya jointly by Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Thailand - for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The association believes this would encourage more connectedness between the people of the participating countries and also help to promote the rich cultural heritage associated with the kebaya and to entrench its place and enhance its relevance in today's society and future generations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the left.

Nyonya Genevieve Jeffs  
President, 2022 - 2024  
The Peranakan Association Singapore  
10 February 2023

# APPENDIX 1: TALKS, SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS, SOCIAL EVENTS

ONLY

## The Baba Nyonya Literary Festival

2nd

**THIS YEAR'S NYONYA LITERARY FESTIVAL, HOSTED BY THE 2ND BABA NYONYA HOUSE, IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE AND APPRECIATE THE CULTURAL, LITERARY AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE OF THE COMMUNITY. THIS YEAR'S THEME IS 'POSSIBLY THE SMALLEST LITERARY FESTIVAL IN THE WORLD' TO BE HELD ON 16-17 SEPTEMBER 2024.**

**THE FESTIVAL RETURNS THIS YEAR BIGGER AND BEAUTIFULLY DISPLAYED. IT WILL BE FULLY SPONSORED AND SUPPORTED BY A NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS. WE ARE PLEASED TO HAVE RECEIVED A GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND THE NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD (NLB) AND THE PENANG, A COMMITMENT TO PRESERVE THE HISTORY OF PENANG.**

The Festival will be published on NLB's social media channels and lists to be held at the National Library - Pulau Penang. The bookshop will be held at the event and will carry all the literature at its disposal.

The panel for this year's Festival is on the history of Penang in the past. It will comprise several Members of a Singaporean Literary Society, including Prof. Jock Mac Innes, a Singaporean writer, poet and author of *The Tale of Tanjong Pagar*, and a Singaporean author and poet, Prof. Chua Kah Kee and Prof. Tang Keng.

And it goes on! Singapore Chinese Arts and Culture Festival, Penang Cultural Festival, and Penang Cultural Centre. The festival will be the longest literary festival in Penang. It will be held at the National Library Board Penang. It will be held at the National Library Board Penang. It will be held at the National Library Board Penang.



**THE FESTIVAL RETURNS THIS YEAR, BIGGER & BETTER!**

There is no such thing as a free lunch. The festival is a great opportunity for us to celebrate our rich cultural and literary heritage. We are grateful to the National Archives and the National Library Board for their support. We are also grateful to the Penang, a commitment to preserve the history of Penang.

We are excited to see how we can be a partner in Penang, including the use of the festival to promote our literary festival.



**POSSIBLY THE SMALLEST LITERARY FESTIVAL IN THE WORLD**

The year 2024 was a special one for the festival. It was the first time it was held at the National Library Board Penang. It was a great opportunity for us to celebrate our rich cultural and literary heritage.

The first festival was a sumptuous feast of literary delights, delicious, diverse, inspiring, creative and most enjoyable. It also felt like being amongst family.

and share the joy of reading. No festival will be complete without the celebration of food. For one of the food stalls, Christopher Tan, author of *The Way of Zen*, and Kim [Name] and one of the food stalls will be a special one. We also look forward to a reading by a former writer Chua Ding [Name] and Kenneth Chan, the author of *Chiu-Chiu Kung-Fu*, a collection of short stories.



We are excited to see how we can be a partner in Penang, including the use of the festival to promote our literary festival. We are grateful to the National Archives and the National Library Board for their support. We are also grateful to the Penang, a commitment to preserve the history of Penang.

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ONLY

## Potong Hertair Merah DEMONSTRATION

EVENT HELD AT THE PENANG HOUSE OF THE BABA NYONYA HOUSE, PENANG



In preparation for the Lunar New Year, TMNS organised a potting paper-cutting demonstration on 15 January 2024 together with the NUS Baba House. This workshop was the first of a series of joint events to be held in partnership with the NUS Baba House.

Paper-cutting is a Chinese folk art originating in the Ming dynasty. These paper-cut arts are usually used for festive decorations or gifts as they usually feature motifs that symbolise luck, well-being, and happiness for the year.

The craft was expertly demonstrated by TMNS volunteer, Nanyang Linda Chai, in her early 60s, and her daughter, Nanyang Sze Siu, who will pass on this art to her grandchildren. Linda Chai has a rich history of Chinese New Year motifs and red lanterns which she has passed down through the generations. She shares her expertise of the craft and a passion for its continuation. Participants learn a simple yet thoughtful way to celebrate their gifts with an auspicious forecast.



## Christmas MALAM JOLLY

EVENT HELD AT THE PENANG HOUSE OF THE BABA NYONYA HOUSE, PENANG



**M**alam Jolly, the Penang Association Singapore's annual event, was held at the Chinese Swimming Club on 21 December 2023.

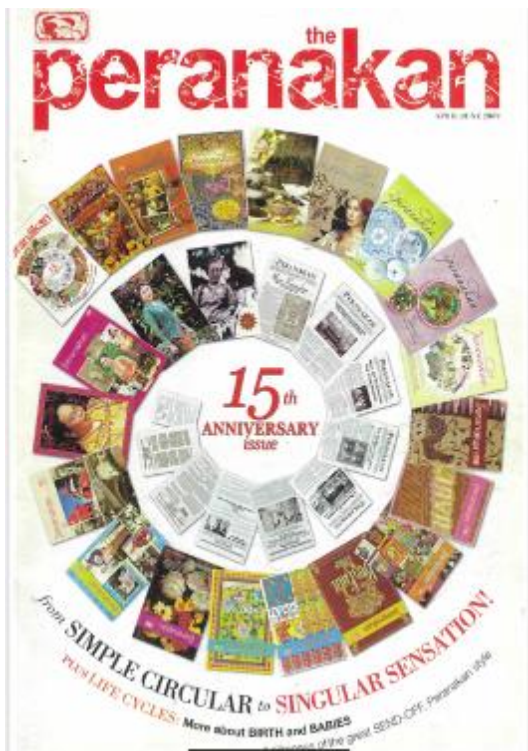
200 TMNS members and guests were treated to an evening of delicious food, sing and dance including musical acts by the Penang Association, Eddie Tubb, and the Musical Band. As a surprise, TMNS president, Bala Collyer, took to the stage with Assistant First Secretary, Nanyang Agnes Ng and surrounded the crowd who cheered the duo on during their rendition of festive Penang songs. TMNS would like to thank our Baba Aka Aka who kindly hosted our guests and entertained.

Since this year's Malam Jolly was held at Tang Chai, the day of the Winter Solstice is celebrated by Penangites. Baba Collyer and Bala Tan Kuaning composed a poem for this special occasion. In Penang tradition, guests enjoyed both the traditional glutinous rice porridge and seafood (a common motif that evening to mark Tang Chai).

The Malam Jolly was a very successful evening, headed by our year-end Treasurer, Bala Bryan Tan, managed to get over 300 people attended for the night. The two poems, a musical performance, and a gift was presented by Dorothy Tsoung. It was an enjoyable evening with smiles all around.



**APPENDIX 2: SOME EDITIONS OF THE PERANAKAN MAGAZINE**



# APPENDIX 3: Cultivating the Younger Generation

**chakap budak chakap budak**

**BARU BILLY TAN AND SIMONE, RANING TAN DE ZENIA**  
PERFORMING THE SONG "BUKTI BUKTI"  
 Raning Tan

For the first time in the Association's 12-year history, we have gender-neutral. With the launch of our Junior Membership for youths aged 12, we hope that more young people will come to learn about our rich heritage and culture. My speak is one of our young members too.

**Little Nanyang SIMONE STEPHANIE TAN** 17

I love wearing the **BAKONG JOHORE**. It's important to wear it at every time, not just for special occasions. The batik motif is very beautiful in the colour of dark red, yellow, and blue. In preparation and before each batik motif, I pay attention to the details and start stitching it with others.

**Little Nanyang NATASHA LEE** 15

My friends call me "Nat" because I love to smile. I'm the youngest in my family. While it's fun making batik, I really enjoy the process of learning to make batik. The most fun part is when I get to see the batik designs that I've made.

**Little Nanyang SIMONE STEPHANIE TAN** 17

I'm amazed at how Peranakan love to decorate everything from a simple **BAKONG JOHORE** food container to their traditional table's pretty pieces of art. His eyes reveal me of the way Peranakan thought that make Peranakan food so good.

**Little Nanyang ROWENA JOY EER** 14

When I was young, I loved playing **CONGGAK** with my friends. It's a fun game that I had a long time, and I was very proud to be a doctor but also continue to play for fun.

**Little Nanyang AMELIA NG** 10

I also like playing **CONGGAK** with my friends. It's a fun game that I had a long time, and I was very proud to be a doctor but also continue to play for fun.

**Little Nanyang AMELIA NG** 10

**QR CODE**

QR CODE

**chakap budak chakap budak**

**BARU BILLY TAN AND SIMONE, RANING TAN DE ZENIA**  
PERFORMING THE SONG "BUKTI BUKTI"  
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**Little Nanyang BRYAN SEI** 17

I love wearing the **BAKONG JOHORE**. It's important to wear it at every time, not just for special occasions. The batik motif is very beautiful in the colour of dark red, yellow, and blue. In preparation and before each batik motif, I pay attention to the details and start stitching it with others.

**Little Nanyang ALEXANDER CONNOR CHUA** 11

If you need to eat quickly, that's the perfect meal. It's a simple meal that I can eat anytime, anywhere. My friends and I love to eat it together. It's a fun meal to eat with friends.

**Little Nanyang CHRISTOPHER JUSTIN CHUA** 10

My parents forced me to play. I think they are Peranakan. I go back to my favourite game, "Star Wars".

**Little Nanyang BENJAMIN WISLEY CHUA** 8

I also like playing **CONGGAK** with my friends. It's a fun game that I had a long time, and I was very proud to be a doctor but also continue to play for fun.

**Little Nanyang BENJAMIN WISLEY CHUA** 8

**QR CODE**

QR CODE



# Tales of a Peranakan Heritage

NYONYA JOY QUEK KOOI LIAN, A LONG-TIME TEACHER AND FORMER STUDENT OF SCGS, SPELLS OUT AN ANNUAL TRADITION OF THE SCHOOL

Every year, all the Secondary One pupils of Singapore Chinese Girls' School (SCGS) make a three-day pilgrimage to Malacca. Their mission: to acquaint themselves with the historical town of their institution's heritage as a Peranakan school.

Mrs Florence Phuah, previously a student and a retired vice-principal of SCGS, shared that when the school became independent in 1989, it sought a holistic range of enrichment programmes to boost the curriculum and make learning interesting. Lessons would go beyond the classroom, "so we started local and overseas heritage tours, social etiquette, camps, and so on."

Malacca afforded the young ladies a chance to be away from home, out of their comfort zone, to learn culture, heritage and history. This, revealed Mrs Phuah, "was when we built and capitalised on the story of SCGS, its Peranakan roots and created the *kingkek*\* image." Tan Toek Seng was one of the earliest Peranakans who came to Singapore from Malacca. His descendant, Tan Hoon Siang, was the SCGS Board chairman for many years. His son, Tan Jiew Hoe, remains a member of the Board.

This annual tradition to bring SCGS *kingeks* out of Singapore has carried on since 1990, long before it was fashionable for schools to do so. At the end of term one in early March, some eight classes of students - about 240 girls in all - troop up north to visit the stronghold of Peranakan culture.

Programmes vary, depending on whether the English or History Departments are leading the visits. The girls could be visiting the museums, the Stadthuys, tasting the cuisine, attending cooking lessons, or even meeting up with the Chetti Melaka community (Indian Peranakans who speak Malay but practice Hinduism and don the *kebaya*).

*\*Kingkek (gold and jade in Hokkien): An accomplished young nyonya of good character is like jade encased in gold. Every piece of jade is unique. The SCGS philosophy, started by former Principal Ms Rosalind Heng, is to accentuate the best qualities of each and every kingkek entrusted to their care.*



# feature



### The kinglek touch

After the trip to Malacca, the students would document the history of cuisines, festivals and architecture, or even research on topics such as special foods for pregnancy. I recently discovered some former students' works that are precious to the school. Their project (as seen here) was to rewrite fairy tales with a Peranakan twist.

And so we have Cinderella as a nyonya learning to cook and beading slippers, a modern-day nyonya who goes through a time warp to her grandmother's era, the sufferings of an infertile first wife in a Peranakan household and other tales, captured in charming illustrations and even hand-stitched felt fabric (top right).



# BRINGING UP NYONYAS

By Linda Chee

More than a century after it was opened by Baba Song Ong Siang for young nyonyas to be educated, the Singapore Chinese Girls' School continues to keep traditions alive by cleverly weaving them into the curriculum.

## From the garden...

The Singapore Chinese Girls' School has preserved an important aspect of the Peranakan household – the garden - with its own green courtyard featuring plants the Peranakans consider both beautiful and functional.

"I chose them based on the pre-1935 Malay garden. The list of plants came from the Botanic Gardens Bulletin in 1933 by Professor R E Holttum," said Mr Tan Jiew Hoe, President of the Singapore Gardening Society and a Board Director of the school. He personally supervised the design and planting for the Peranakan Courtyard.

SCGS' Courtyard has plants commonly found in Peranakan gardens and are used for a variety of purposes. Some for aesthetic value, but mostly for other reasons such as their usefulness in cooking, for medicine, as food or cosmetic dyes, as natural air fresheners for the house or at family altars.

"This tradition is used to convey values and as a vibrant learning venue where students research on the use of various plants that also relates to aspects of science at the same time," said Mrs Julie Lee, SCGS Registrar.

## ...to the kitchen

Home Economics as taught in SCGS reflects the cooking tradition so valued by the community for one of the most revered aspects of the culture – its unique cuisine. Peranakan condiments are used, some proudly from the school's own garden, to cook up a storm of mouth-watering dishes and desserts. ☘



Mrs Dora Fernandez and her domestic science students.



SCGS' own Peranakan courtyard.

# Next Generation Nyonyas

BABA EMERIC LAU DISCOVERS HOW TWO YOUNG LADIES WITH A PASSION FOR TEXTILES ARE INFUSING THEIR WORK WITH PERANAKAN-DERIVED TECHNIQUES

## CHERYL TEO, 22

Fashion graduate Cheryl Teo was a student of Nanyang Junior College, but she eschewed taking the typical route into one of Singapore's universities. Instead, buoyed by her passion for textile and design (and thankfully with the blessing of her family), she enrolled in LASALLE College of the Arts, where she graduated with a B.A. specialising in Fashion Textiles in May 2016.

Her expertise includes textile print designs, surface manipulation and embroidery. She loves bright and bold motifs, and cites European designer Mary Katrantzou as one of her inspirations. However, she isn't one to merely ape others. "I love relatively new techniques like digital printing and laser cutting, because they open up fresh possibilities for fabrication. I combine these processes with traditional methods which require handcrafting – and it's in that where you will see elements of *sulam* and other artisanal methods at play." Her experiments with techniques include thread sketching, eyelet making, satin stitches,



Cheryl's textile design (middle) inspired by the traditional batik parang motif (above).



Young textile specialists Cheryl Teo (seated) and Devi Honami.

ribbon and *kerawang* or cutwork embroidery.

The fabric samples she totes along for her interview with *The Peranakan* reveal a love for intense, vibrant colour, much like those seen on *sarong kebaya*. A closer inspection reveals the inclusion of refined traditional techniques – evidence of a budding couturier at work.

Cheryl continues to experiment and refine her craft. She acknowledges certain parameters, "For digital printing, colours are best reproduced on 100% polyester, and there are width restrictions owing to the size of the printing press we can feed the fabric through. Still, I love how



## DEVI HONAMI, 20

Fashion student Devi Honami is a second-year student at LASALLE College of the Arts. Originally from Surabaya, Indonesia, her family is involved in both hospitality and garment manufacturing. She decided on her course of studies on advice from her brother, and arrived in the Lion City two years ago. "I love how Singapore is so safe and clean, and public transport is very reliable and comfortable here."

Devi reflects her strong appreciation for Peranakan motifs and craft in the pieces she has designed. "I want to raise more awareness of this South East Asian culture among my peers. It has been a journey to learn more about my roots as well. The younger generation needs to start appreciating and preserving this culture, because it is truly ours," the self-identified *Tionghua* says.

She is also sensitive to the variations between regions, "Peranakans in Indonesia and Singapore have some similarities and also differences. I am learning and applying all the different techniques into my work," Devi notes how items of diverse global origins, such as European lace, Indonesian batik, and Chinese colour palettes and motifs have come together to create the sarong kebaya we know today.

*An example of Devi's intricate handiwork.*

creating fashion textile designs allow me to express myself and tell a story through the work I produce."

For her graduate collection, she collaborated with her classmate, pattern cutter Agnes Citto, and created a brand called ARYL CITO. The collection features motifs derived by pixelating traditional batik patterns such as the Javanese *parang* motif. The pieces were well received both in Singapore and at the London Graduate Fashion Week, and can be viewed and pre-ordered at <http://arylcto.wixsite.com/fashion>. The duo's pieces were even selected for a TANGS department store pop-up retail concept.

"If things go well, I may take the brand further and do it full time. Alternatively, I would love to work as a fashion textile designer in an established firm to gain more insight and experience."

Devi experiments with *sulam* and beading techniques and is prolific at handiwork – flashing elaborate A4-sized handiwork samples, taking no longer than a couple of days to complete each item. She even managed to complete beading one *kasot manek* slipper face in just eight hours! She likes floral motifs, in particular those on *batik enchim*, but is content to work on a neutral white palette for the moment, refining her stitching skills, as she wishes to become an excellent embroiderer and beader first of all.

Devi eventually hopes to work with a designer like Peggy Hartanto, whose strong, clean lines and almost architectural construction of her garments belies the fact that the pieces employ traditional techniques and design inspirations. She shares, "I want to get adequate work experience and familiarise myself with the business side of things as well. It is my dream to one day start my own clothing brand in Jakarta." ●

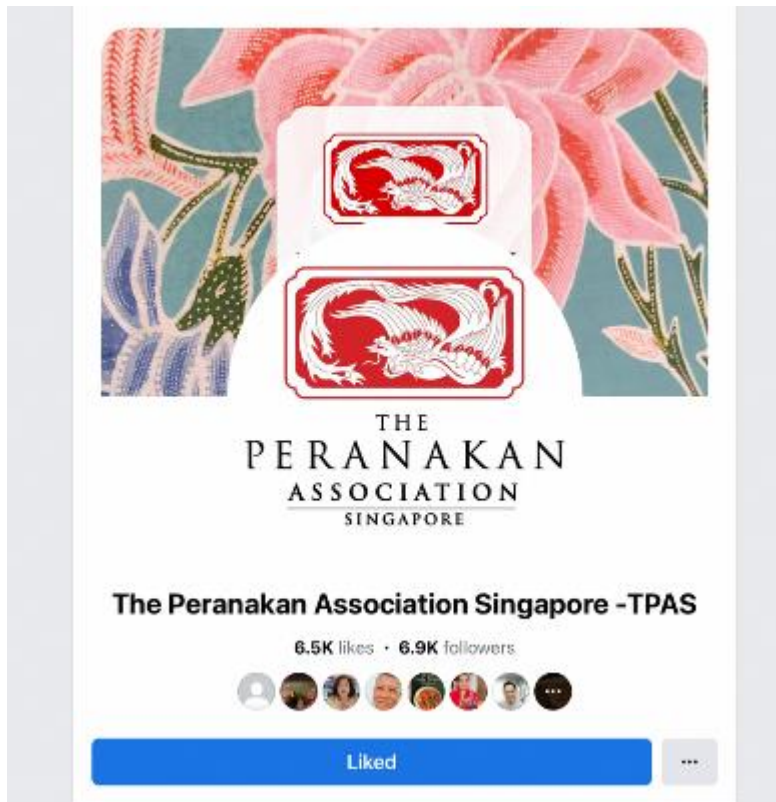
**APPENDIX 4: SOCIAL MEDIA**

<http://www.peranakan.org.sg>

The screenshot displays the website interface for the Peranakan Association Singapore. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the email address [secretariat@peranakan.org.sg](mailto:secretariat@peranakan.org.sg) and menu items: Home, About, Events, Magazine, Membership Application, and Donate. The main content area features several event posters:

- Peranakan Museum Re-Open:** A poster for the museum's reopening with the theme "In the Mood for Kebaya". It includes details about the museum's location at 111 East Coast Road, Singapore, and mentions a batik painting workshop for children.
- Batik painting workshop for Anak Peranakans:** A specific event listing for a batik painting workshop on Saturday, 17 Dec 2022, from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.
- 34th Baba Nyonya International Convention:** A large poster for the convention held from 24-26 Nov 2023 in Melaka, Malaysia. The theme is "Between Man and the Ocean".
- Habis Masak Terus Makan with Nyonya Anne Goh:** A poster for a cooking demonstration on 25 February 2023, featuring dishes like Nasi Ulam and Kueh Putu Tegair. It lists membership fees (SGD 38.00 for members, SGD 48.00 for non-members).
- Portrait of the Bibik:** A poster for a solo exhibition by Nyonya May Oon, held from 27 Oct to 9 Nov 2022 at Design Orchard.

## The Peranakan Association Singapore Facebook



## Regular Chakap-Chakap Sessions (Monthly updates)



## **APPENDIX 5: LISTING OF THE FEDERATION OF PERANAKAN ASSOCIATIONS**

### **SINGAPORE**

#### **The Peranakan Association Singapore**

Raffles City P.O. Box 1640  
Singapore 911755

#### **Gunong Sayang Association**

205 Marine Parade Road  
Singapore 449530

#### **Peranakan Indian Association Singapore (Chitty Melaka)**

5001 Beach Road #08-09, Golden Mile Complex  
Singapore 199588

### **INDONESIA**

#### **Peranakan Tionghoa Indonesia**

Hero Building II Suite 902, Jl.  
Jend Gatot Subroto 177A, KAV. 64  
Jarkarta 12870, Indonesia

#### **Peranakan Tionghoa Warga Indonesia (PERTIWI)**

Yayasan PERTIWI c/o King's EEC,  
Jalan Baharudin No. 8,  
Tangerang 15111, Banten, Indonesia

### **MALAYSIA**

#### **Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka (PPCM)**

149 Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock (Heeren Street)  
Melaka 75200, Malaysia

#### **Persatuan Peranakan Baba Nyonya Malaysia**

243 Jalan Tangkera  
Melaka 75200, Malaysia



**State Chinese (Penang) Association**  
**a.k.a Persatuan Peranakan Cina Pulau Pinang**  
13 Jalan Perak Road, Penang 10150, Malaysia

**Persatuan Peranakan Baba Nyonya Kuala Lumpur & Selangor**  
**Persatuan Peranakan Cina Kelantan**  
Unit B-8-3A, Block B, Menara KIP,  
No.1 Jalan Seri, Utara, off Jalan Ipoh  
Kuala Lumpur 68100, Malaysia

**Persatuan Peranakan Cina Kelantan**  
B-234, Jalan Wan Ahmad,  
17500 Tanah Merah, Kelantan, Malaysia

## **THAILAND**

**Thai Peranakan Association**  
124 Yaowarat Road, Taladyai Muang  
Phuket 83000, Thailand

## **AUSTRALIA**

**Peranakan Association Australia Inc. (Melbourne)**  
PO Box 1278, Hawksburn, Victoria, Australia 3142

**Peranakan Association Australia Inc. (New South Wales) (Sydney)**  
PO Box 3810 Marsfield, NSW 2122 Australia

**The Peranakan Community of Western Australia Inc. (Perth)**  
PO Box 385, Bullcreek,  
Western Australia 6149, Australia

## APPENDIX 6: PAST CONVENTIONS HOSTED BY TPAS

### 2015: 28<sup>th</sup> Baba Nyonya Convention & Peranakan Arts Festival



The Peranakan Association Singapore (TPAS) was honoured to host the 28th Baba Nyonya Convention in Singapore. A record 300 overseas delegates from 11 Peranakan associations attended the event that ran from 4 to 8 November 2015. The Convention rotates among various host countries. The last convention in Singapore was five years ago.

Welcoming Peranakans from Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia and Thailand, Convention Chairman Raymond Wong invited participants to “collectively make a grand toast to our future”. A series of interactive seminars about *Realising Peranakan Possibilities* explored language and identity, the business of being Peranakan, and the Peranakan Wish List, where participants shared their hopes for the future of our community.

A *tok panjang* dinner saw babas and nyonyas dressed in their best batiks and kebayas excitedly meeting old friends and making new ones. Australian Marilyn Pynor who hails from Hay, a small farming town with a population just a fraction of Katong’s, said that she felt so warmly welcomed. “When my friend Lynn Curtayne and I arrived at the Convention, we were surprised at how many people wanted to take

photos with us. Maybe they were amazed that we had embraced Peranakan culture and came all the way to Singapore to be a part of this event.”

#### The first Peranakan Arts Festival

For the first time, a Peranakan Arts Festival was also held in conjunction with the Convention in and around the historic Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall.

A collaboration between TPAS and GenerAsia, the exciting event line-up included four exhibitions, numerous live performances, cooking demonstrations, fashion shows, a bustling bazaar and two world premiere theatre plays.

The two plays, Baba Richard Tan’s *Bibiks Behind Bars, Kena Again!* and Baba Desmond Sim’s *Pintu Pagar*, enthralled audiences with much humour, drama and colour.

In Baba Richard’s musical comedy, the *bibiks* of Katong were up to mischief and unwittingly run foul of the law. “I hadn’t laughed so much in a long time!” said Nyonya Roselind Lee who watched it with her daughter. “The cast was really talented and I loved all the Baba Malay jokes which are so seldom heard these days,” she added.

In contrast, the romantic drama *Pintu Pagar* left audiences in a reflective mood. Set in the colonial days, it is a poignant tale of two lovers who swing by at close quarters but never quite connect. Their hit-and-miss 40-year love affair was heartwarming to watch. Written in English, the play made Peranakan theatre accessible to those not fluent in Baba Malay.

There was something for everyone at the Festival. From Peranakan tile painting to woodblock printing, jazz and *joget*, batik painting and handbell performances. Even the most jaded palates were tickled with innovative *buah keluak* ice cream! ●



*Laughter all around as the masterful moderator Baba Iean Heng heats up heats up the lively discussions during the seminars.*



*Delegates from the region, including Melbourne and Phuket, in a bonding moment.*



*From left: Seminar panelists Zai Ho, Linda Wee and Thomas Kywan.*



*A grand finale shot for the KL delegation against the backdrop of Sir Stamford Raffles' statue and the Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall.*



*The Melbourne Peranakans performing their versions of classic Baba tunes.*



*Singers from the New South Wales Peranakan Association.*



*Delegates from Australia.*



*Lovely to have Life President, Baba Lee Kip Lee (third from left) joining us.*



*Our counterparts from Indonesia.*



*A lighter moment.*



*Joyful joget at the tok panjang dinner.*



*Partying the night away with jazz and joget.*



*Koh Chieng Mun as the flamboyant Judy Lai, Goddess of Fortune.*

*Bibik Bella Chan (Melkya Chew) caught at the Joo Chiai Police Station.*



*Nara Samwir as the acid-tongued nyonya in Pesta Pagan.*

*A live batik painting demo.*



*A little nyonya enjoys Peranakan tile painting.*

*Shopping for kebayas at the Ba-Bazaar.*



*Chef Phillip Chia in action.*

# 2021 – 33rd Baba Nyonya International Festival (LIVE STREAM ONLINE)

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

# Embracing Evolution

Baba Evren: Tan reflects on the sentiments raised at the 33rd Baba Nyonya International Convention held in Singapore on 20 November 2021

**E** VOLUTION could very well be the keyword at the 33rd Baba Nyonya International Convention held at the Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre and attended by over 700 delegates both in person and online.

The opening dinner was an opening statement by 33rd President Baba Loke Chuan and the arrival of the Guest of Honour and Singapore President, Mr. Halimah Yoon, who was a guest of honour for the 33rd Baba Nyonya International Convention opening. Mr. Halimah Yoon then presented with letters of appreciation to the convention's honorees and was accompanied by a message by Baba Chuanling, Chairman and President of the Baba Nyonya Association of Singapore.

This was followed by the keynote address on the theme "Embracing Evolution" for the occasion, which was presented by Singapore Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Lawrence Chan. Mr. Chan's keynote address was followed by the opening of the convention by the 33rd President, Baba Loke Chuan.

Directed by Baba Awan Tan, the Malaysia Baba Nyonya Association (MBA) presented a performance by the group "The Baba Nyonya" which was performed by the group "The Baba Nyonya" from the group "The Baba Nyonya" from the group "The Baba Nyonya".

The convention also featured a number of other activities, including a number of workshops and seminars, and a number of exhibitions.





1 Reception of Singapore President Halimah Yoon, opening the dinner and the convention.



2 Keynote address by Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Chan.



3 Opening of the convention by 33rd President Baba Loke Chuan.



4 Performance by the group 'The Baba Nyonya'.



5 Presentation of letters of appreciation to the honorees.



6 Presentation of letters of appreciation to the honorees.



7 Presentation of letters of appreciation to the honorees.



8 Presentation of letters of appreciation to the honorees.

## 33rd BABA NYONYA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

# Symposium Insights

These excerpts from the essays of various forum panellists provide much gist on the continuing evolution of Peranakan culture.



**WANG GUNGWU**

**BABA-NYONYA AS NATIVE CHINESE**

HONORARY FELLOW, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

WHEN I EXCEPTED to be the only non-Malay to be invited to the Baba Nyonya Symposium, I felt a bit of a curiosity. I am Chinese, not Malay, and my origins, like those of the Baba Nyonyas, are Chinese. My Baba Nyonya ancestors, like those of the Baba Nyonyas, were Chinese who had migrated to the Malay Peninsula and developed a unique culture. I am Chinese, not Malay, and my origins, like those of the Baba Nyonyas, are Chinese. My Baba Nyonya ancestors, like those of the Baba Nyonyas, were Chinese who had migrated to the Malay Peninsula and developed a unique culture.



**AWA CHENG GUAN**

**CHANGE AND THE CULTURAL RESILIENCE OF THE PERANAKAN CHINESE**

SENIOR ADVISOR, HONG KONG POLICE FORCE

PERANAKAN CHINESE IN SINGAPORE

PERANAKAN CHINESE IN SINGAPORE

PERANAKAN CHINESE IN SINGAPORE



**EVOLVING IN SINGAPORE AND THE MALAY PENINSULA**

UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE



**BECOMING LOCAL AND COMING HOME: IDENTIFYING AND THE WAY FORWARD**

UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE



## APPENDIX 7 TPAS COLLABORATIONS WITH THE PERANAKAN MUSEUM

2011 – Baba Bling in Paris, France

### EVENTS

## TAKING PARIS WITH PANACHE

Baba Emeric Lau gets happily wed in the City of Romance – five times over!

This was an opportunity like no other. For Peranakans, the traditional wedding procession with seronee, lanterns, umbrellas, *chaiki* and bridal couple, *sangkek-um*, *pak-chindek* plus family members in tow is a once-in-a-lifetime spectacle, mounted to trumpet a new union and display their families' finery.

There is no other image more emblematic of the 12-day wedding than the procession. For contemporary lovebirds, nothing says "you're the ONE" more than taking off together for a holiday in Paris, the City of Romance.

How about combining the two? A Peranakan wedding procession in Paris – what a dream! And it certainly was no less than a dream come true for me to have the honour of playing the groom in a wedding procession staged at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, smack beside the Eiffel Tower.

It all came about through a desire to further strengthen relations between Singapore and France. The two countries decided to mount the *Singapour Festivarts* in Paris to showcase Singapore culture to the French. Several government bodies, led by the Singapore Ministry of Information, Culture and the Arts, requested that The Peranakan Association Singapore (TPAS) organise an entertainment item to add drama to the various opening events for the Musée du Quai Branly's *Baba Bling* exhibition.



Posing with Prof. Tommy Koh.

Baba Bling poster in French.



EVENTS

which was to be mounted over there, along with selected star pieces from Singapore's Peranakan Museum.

Needless to say, we were completely enthralled from the outset; Peranakan culture was going truly international. We can say for certain that this is the first time the culture has been shown off on such a scale outside Southeast Asia. Moreover, our stage would be Paris – a city widely recognised as the Cultural Capital of the World!

Preparations began in early 2010 via the remarkable liaising and organising skills of Nyonya Bebe Seet. Happily, it all proved more than worthwhile.

The Straits Times  
Life! coverage, 7  
Oct 2010.

Our chaiki bears  
had to watch out  
for low ceilings!



The 23 representatives from TPAS, which included doyen G T Lye in the role of *sangkek um*, flew direct to Paris on 30 September. For the next five days, we lived in a whirlwind wonderland of rehearsals, performances and taking in the sights, sounds and (but of course) fine cuisine that the city



readily yielded. For me, this experience will remain unforgettable.

Sadly, Mdm Kwa Geok Choo, the mother of Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, passed away, necessitating his abrupt return to Singapore while on tour in Europe. The PM would otherwise have been guest-of-honour at the official opening of the exhibition. Minister for MICA, Lui Tuck Yew, stepped in, while the French were represented by Culture Minister Frederic Mitterand. Other familiar figures in attendance included Professor Tommy Koh and our very own Baba Dick Lee.

The wedding procession, tea ceremony and Singapore medley sung by The Peranakan Voices (TPV) were greeted with enthusiastic applause. Many guests openly expressed admiration for the high level of detailing on the Peranakan costumes and artefacts. Such was the delight expressed that even the oldest amongst us forgot all about the sore feet and aching jaws from standing and smiling for the countless cameras pointed our way.

We enacted the wedding procession and tea ceremony a total of five times for various audiences – friends and supporters of the museum, the French and international media at the official opening and a VIP dinner reception.

Other activities included cooking demonstrations by Violet Oon and Bebe's beading sessions.

For myself, this trip also proved a perfect chance to bond with other TPAS members.



I managed to learn much from the older members, and forge stronger friendships with those from my generation. Helping one another out backstage, trooping out late after the evening performance to look for a promising makan place to try out, cracking jokes and laughing till our sides ached – these treasured moments are really the intangible elements that will anchor and buoy our culture not just across the globe, but across time. We make it ours, and with panache. ❄



*Left: The enthusiastic French media were literally in our faces!*

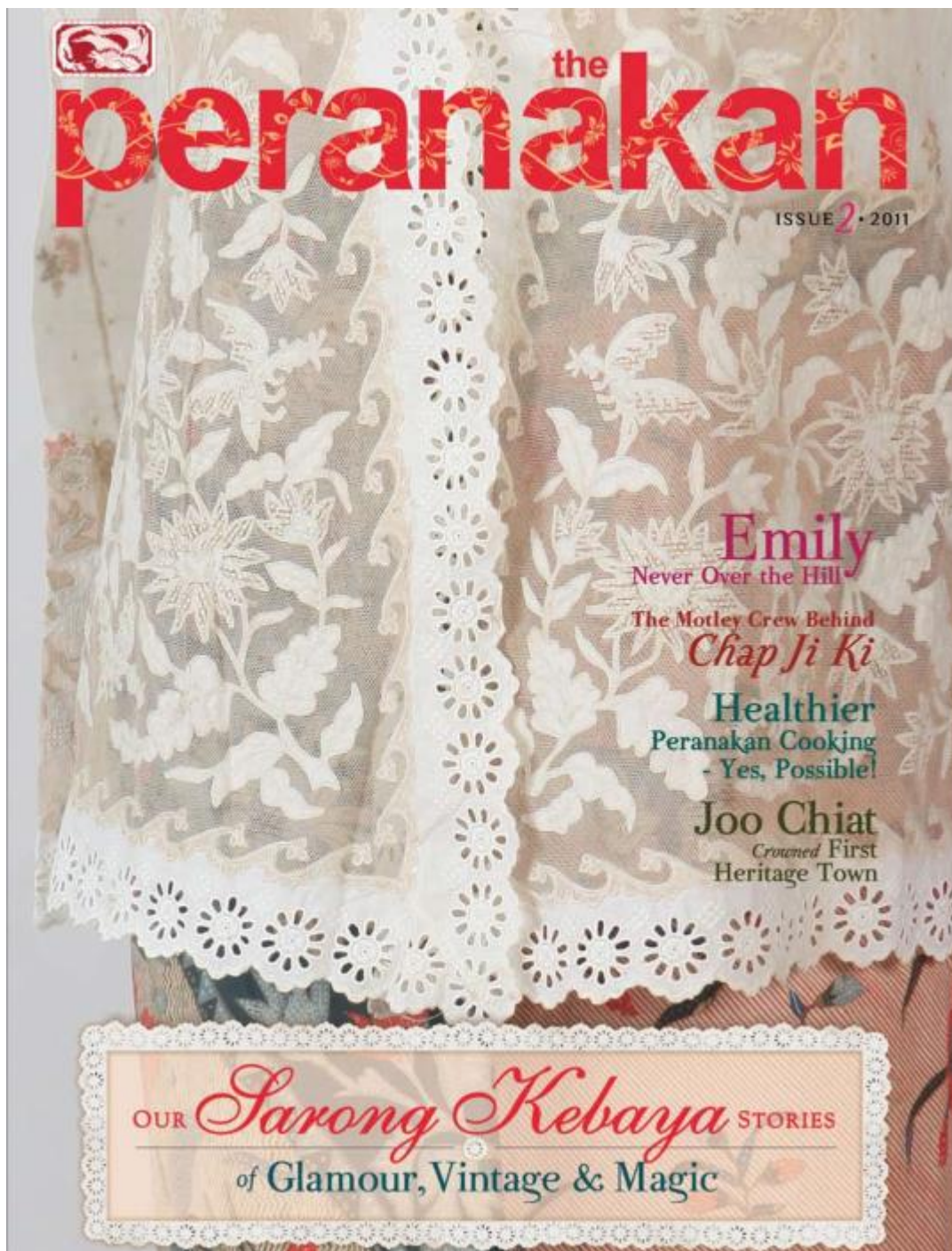
*Right: The Peranakan Voices at the Babu Bling exhibition.*

*The exhibition, including the million bead tablecloth, is ready ahead of opening day.*



*The creative French team made large inflatable versions of our porcelainware. Visitors strolling in the museum grounds took much delight in chancing upon them.*

2011-2012 Sarong Kebaya, Peranakan Fashion and its International Sources



# FRUGALITY, OPULENCE OR MAGIC?

Baba Peter Lee wanders across time and continents to muse on patchwork and appliqué in artefacts from *Sarong Kebaya*, an exhibition at the Peranakan Museum (1 April 2011 to February 2012)

Patchwork is commonly associated with frugality, the assemblage of remnant fabrics, stitched together for something practical or utilitarian. For Peranakans, this was called *tampal* or *tampair*, and was used to not only describe patching cloth together, but mending, even of teeth (*tampair gigi*: filling a tooth). Patchwork cloths (*kain tampal*) were used for very specific purposes: for the traditional child's bib or stomacher (*o to*), blanket (*kain selemat*), a wrap for shoes (*kain bungkus kasot*) and even for a cloth to dry the hands (*kain lap tangan*).

Yet can patchwork really be an expression of frugality? The meticulous and time-consuming craft of cutting various types of cloth, planning a coherent pattern or arrangement out of the varieties, and carefully stitching them altogether, should be regarded as a rather elaborate art form. In many Peranakan households, the fragments used for patchwork were not salvaged rags, but remnants of expensive cloth. A darned hole in a shirt or jacket would be a more fitting expression of frugality. In the case of protective leather elbow patches on tweed jackets, which were originally worn in Scotland for hunting, they have evolved to become a fashion statement.

The same can be said of the Buddhist monk's *kasaya*, or patchwork robe. It may have had its origins in the idea of frugality, but clearly by the Tang dynasty, high-ranking monks wore patchwork *kasayas* made from very expensive silk brocades. One example in the British Museum found in China's Dunhuang caves and dating to the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century even has patches of



purple silk, a colour that could only be worn with imperial sanction.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit term *kasaya* is *jtasha*, and interestingly another variant meaning of this word is 'muslin', which must have come from the old Indian trade word for gauzes, which is still used in Baba Malay in the term *kasa gelair* (organdie).

But this was hardly the earliest example of patchwork. In the collection of Cairo's Egyptian Museum is a royal patchwork funerary canopy (much like the Peranakan *kuanta*) made of multi-coloured gazelle hide dating to 960 BC, and is said to belong to Queen Isemkheb of the Twenty First Dynasty. As for Christendom, it has been suggested that Joseph's multi-coloured coat may have been made of patchwork. In Protestant England, Catholic priests in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries apparently avoided detection by disguising their chasubles as patchwork quilts. An excellent example of a patchwork chasuble is preserved in the Chapel of All Saints, Wardour Castle in Wiltshire.<sup>2</sup>

Patchwork o to (child's bib) made of machine-woven kain chaylay (plaid cloth), early 20th century, collection of Ms Robyn Rae, New York.

All other photographs courtesy of the Peranakan Museum. Kebaya: collection of the Peranakan Museum and Asian Civilisations Museum, gifts of Mr & Mrs Lee Kip Lee. Ceremonial cloths and batik: collection of Mr & Mrs Lee Kip Lee.

FEATURE

An 18th century ceremonial cloth, made in India for the Indonesian market, with a *daun paku* patchwork pattern.



Right: Detail of a late 19th century batik sarong from the workshop of Lien Metzelaar, Pekalongan, with a patchwork or *tambalan* design.

Below: An 18th century patchwork kebaya from Sumatra, made with cottons, silks and wools from India, China, Indonesia and Europe.



Umar (c. 586-644), the second Caliph in Islam, lived an ascetic life and possessed only a patchwork shirt and mantle. Islamic rulers in Java, such as the sultans of Jogjakarta, also wore patchwork jackets in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although this had more to do with their talismanic qualities, and with the similar kind of jackets worn by traditional shamans in remote areas such as Tengger in east Java. Indian textiles and specific patterns even, were considered to possess magical qualities.

In the Javanese royal courts the patchwork pattern was called *antakusuma* and the jackets were known as *kyahi antakusuma* ('the venerable many-flowered').<sup>3</sup> An 18<sup>th</sup> century patchwork coat from Lampung in the exhibition, made from a breathtaking array of fine Indian, European, Chinese and Javanese cloths for a local chief may have been influenced by the Javanese court of Banten, and therefore may have had a talismanic function. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, control of the pepper trade in the area was a prime concern of not only the kingdom of Banten, but also of Palembang, as well as the Dutch East India Company. Then again, with patchwork and quilts being so popular in Holland and its American colonies at that time as well, it may have even been commissioned by a Dutch agent as a lavish gift for a Lampung chief.

Another kind of patchwork technique

— appliqué — was also used on lace *kebaya* worn by European women. *Kebaya*s with lace borders were worn by women in the Dutch colonies at least since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it had become a standard feature. The exhibition displays *kebaya*s from this period made of cottons, linen and silk, and decorated with motifs using a wide array of intricate needlework techniques, including fine appliqué floral patterns. In this technique, a piece of cloth is cut into a decorative shape and sewn onto or under another cloth to create a pattern. In contrast, the *kebaya* today is only made of wool and ornamented solely with sewing machine embroidery.



Patchwork designs, known in Java as *tambalan*, were potent symbols (curiously, shamans in the Philippine Islands are also known as *tambalan*). Drawn and painted imitations of patchwork patterns were made in India in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for the Malay archipelago. This pattern survived in batiks made a century later, and *tambalan* became part of the classical Javanese repertoire of court patterns,

Right: Detail of a 1910-1920s kebaya with appliqué decoration for a Peranakan lady in Java.

Below: A late 19th century ensemble typical for a European or Eurasian woman in colonial Indonesia.

The silk and lace kebaya is paired with a batik sarong by Lien Metzelaar of Pekalongan, decorated with a patchwork or tambalan design.



and was also a motif favoured by European, Eurasian and Chinese entrepreneurs in Pekalongan on Java's north coast in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Each drawn *tambalan* pattern is different: the arrangements of an array of intricate and finely executed patterns create designs that are dynamic and complex.

Against this historical backdrop, can Peranakan patchwork be nothing more than just frugality turned to craft? The child's bib or *o to* (which in Malay is known as a *bariet*), comes from a Chinese prototype that is usually embroidered.

Children who were not toilet-trained were often naked except for their *o to*. The patchwork variant was worn throughout Java, and even by European children in Batavia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and by Peranakan children up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Even the 18<sup>th</sup> century Christian missionary Jan Brandes dressed his young son in a patchwork *o to*, and was happy that the boy was usually 'walking around naked'.<sup>3</sup> Could this design also have been inspired by a Javanese belief in the talismanic and protective powers of patchwork cloth? Children were so vulnerable to fatal illnesses that it is somehow impossible to believe that Peranakans made their precious offspring wear just meaningless scraps of cloth. Accordingly, could a patchwork *kain lap tangan* or handcloth therefore be some way to



*buang suay* - to discard or wipe away bad luck? A patchwork *selemot* or blanket would have equally protective powers.

Underlying even the most mundane or utilitarian artefact from the past could be a universe of imagination, belief and history. However, centuries from now, what would historians think of our present-day *bajus*, blankets and bibs? \*

1 [http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_objects/asia/p/patchwork\\_of\\_silk\\_probably\\_a.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/asia/p/patchwork_of_silk_probably_a.aspx)

2 <http://www.flickr.com/photos/33663838@N00/4714793655/in/photostream>

3 Alit Veldhuisen-Djajasoebrota, *Bloemen van het Heelal*, Rotterdam, 1984, p.76-78.

4 Cornelis de Bruijn, *Reizen over Moskovic, door Persie en Indie*, Amsterdam, 1711, p. 356.

5 Max de Bruijn & Remco Raben, *The World of Jan Brandes, 1743-1808*, Amsterdam, 2004, p. 153-161.

**Sarong Kebaya- Peranakan Fashion and its International Sources**  
 Now on till 26 February 2012  
 The Peranakan Museum  
 39 Armenian Street  
 Tel: 6332 7591  
 Prevailing admission rates apply.

## CROSSING OVER TO KOREA

Koreans were introduced to Singapore's Peranakan culture recently at a travelling exhibition at their National Museum of Korea



The Asian Civilisations Museum's Peranakan exhibition called "The Peranakan World: Cross-cultural Art from Singapore and the Straits" was successfully launched on 19 March 2013 and ended on 19 May.

It was to give Koreans a glimpse of Singapore's multi-racial communities, how they evolved and how they form the core of Singapore's identity.

With 230 objects from the Peranakan

Museum, supplemented by loans from local collectors, the exhibition tells the fascinating story of how Chinese immigrants created an unique culture when they settled in their new homes in the Straits Settlements.

Visitors were able to explore this fusion culture that flourished during the golden age of the Peranakans from the late 19th to early 20th centuries.

The exhibition in Korea marks a significant milestone for Singapore as it is the first time that its Peranakan collection has travelled to East Asia. The exhibition had previously travelled once to Paris in 2010 where it was shown at the Museum du Quai Branly.

Dr Alan Chong, Director of the Asian Civilisations Museum and Peranakan Museum said, "We are proud to present Peranakan art and culture to audiences in Korea. Peranakan art is an important example of multi-cultural contact, which reveals Singapore as a multicultural state, formed by centuries of trade, immigration and colonial networks."

The exhibition included a weekend programme allowing visitors to gain an appreciation of the colourful and fusion culture of the Peranakans through engaging workshops on Peranakan beading, cuisine and fashion.

It was jointly curated by Dr Pedro Moura Carvalho, Chief Curator, Asian Civilisations

(Above)  
An exhibit of a wealthy Peranakan's bridal bed, ceramics and carpets typically found in their bridal chambers.

(Right) An assortment of baju panjangs and sarong kebaya worn by Peranakan women as everyday wear or on special occasions accompanied by brilliant jewellery.



2016 Kebaya Exhibition in Shoto Museum in Tokyo



Singapore, Sarong Kebaya and Style - Peranakan fashion in an interconnected world!

サロンクバヤ  
 シンガポール 麗しのスタイル  
 つながりあう世界のプラナカン・ファッション

2016年  
 7月26日[火] - 9月25日[日]

An exhibition jointly curated with Per Lee and  
 organized with the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore  
 16 July - 25 September 2016 THE SHOTO MUSEUM OF ART

本展覧会は、シンガポールのPer Leeさんと共同で企画し、シンガポールのAsian Civilisations Museumと共同で開催いたします。シンガポールのPer Leeさんと共同で企画し、シンガポールのAsian Civilisations Museumと共同で開催いたします。シンガポールのPer Leeさんと共同で企画し、シンガポールのAsian Civilisations Museumと共同で開催いたします。

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# Nyonya Fashion goes to Japan

PERANAKAN MUSEUM CURATOR JACKIE YOONG REPORTS FROM FUKUOKA

The Peranakan Museum's first travelling exhibition focusing on Peranakan fashion opened in Fukuoka on 17 April as part of SJ50, celebrating 50 years of diplomatic relations between Singapore and Japan.

Co-organised with the Fukuoka Art Museum (FAM), the showcase is inspired by an earlier exhibition held in Singapore in 2011 called *Sarong Kebaya: Peranakan Fashion in an Interconnected World*. Art historian Baba Peter Lee guest curated the exhibition, which features approximately 40 combinations of sarongs and kebayas exploring the evolution of the style over 200 years.

FAM Chief Curator Etsuko Iwanaga carefully tailored parts of the exhibition to target the Japanese audience. The display included a rare kimono under-robe made of batik fabric identical to that found in *nyonya baju panjang* from the collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee; and a *kain Hokokai* (batik originating from the time of the Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia, with Japanese-inspired designs) from the Eiko Kusuma collection at FAM.

Renowned singer-composer Dick Lee represented the Lee family at the Fukuoka opening. The exhibition travels to the Shoto Museum of Art, Tokyo, on 26 July. An exhibition catalogue in Japanese was produced. The exhibition was made possible by generous donations of sarongs and kebayas by Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee to both museums. ●



Top: Signboard announcing the exhibition outside the museum.

Middle: The *baju panjang* and kimono under-robe reveal a surprise - both are made using batik of similar print.

Left: Curator Peter Lee interacts with guests at the exhibition.