



The Malaysian Culture Group



Members take shelter from the hot Melakan sun outside the traditional Peranakan home that hosted the MCG for the Chinese New Year in Melaka trip on February 27th.



Happy well-fed members of Enak! special interest group enjoyed camaraderie and delicious food at Origin Café in Ampang.

Another Opportunity...

...to contribute to MCG and to learn a valuable new skill. I have a few months left as newsletter editor, and would love to help one or two of you learn to produce this newsletter. The newsletter job will be getting smaller as much of the content will move to the new website when it is up and running in the near future. One of the benefits of learning publishing software is that my personal correspondence has certainly been kicked up a notch! If you are interested in learning more, please contact me at newsletter@mcgkl.org.

Helen Mastache, Newsletter Editor



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The MCG Website Needs You!

The new MCG website is on the verge of release. Over the past months Jeanie Kennedy, responsible for the design of the site, and I have worked with our development company Just Simple. Our new site will be a ready reference for everything MCG, for existing and potential members, speakers and hosts. The easy-to-use site will include all the information you need on:

- Lectures and excursions—upcoming events
- Special interest groups—book groups, Enak! and Explorers
- Essentials—membership, contacts, library, Annual General Meeting, etc.
- MCG news—announcements and monthly newsletter
- Reviews and reports—lectures, excursions, book groups, Enak!, and Explorers

The website is well supported within the MCG by several skilled, enthusiastic MCG members who are now familiar with the site. Just Simple is supportive and responsive to our requests for help.

We now need someone to join our team to keep the site up to date. Advanced IT skills are NOT a requirement—if you are familiar with word processing you can perform all necessary tasks. In addition, the team will support you and appropriate training can be arranged.

If you would like to find out more about the website team and how you can contribute, please contact me at margo@margo-rosenberg.com.

Thank you for reading this. I look forward to hearing from you.

Margo

President's Message

Dear MCG members,

Let me first share a great experience I had this week. I had the honor to join the Enak! event at The Origin, a vegetarian restaurant in Ampang. I have eaten a lot of veg food in India and KL, but this experience was fabulous. The Chinese philosophy of linking food to the five elements, the choice of the recipes geared towards health benefits, the fresh ingredients and even selecting colours which are good for different organs was interesting and different. Many dishes were served, and the taste was superb. *Thanks Enak! for your hospitality.*

We Can Help You When You Help Us

I hear often from new members that they find MCG one of the best organized associations that they have encountered. It proves we do have a unique group.

This week our treasurer Katherine and I met with a relatively new member who is keen to learn a new skill and likes to meet other people. Coffee mornings are nice, but she wanted more stimulation. She was afraid that travelling would be an issue if she volunteered to serve the MCG. Katherine and I are both frequent travelers and spoke from experience that it is not an issue. As Committee members we cover for each other and keep things moving in a relaxed way. We do not need all committee members to be present at every meeting. This eased her concern and she has indicated that she will pick up the Treasurer role ☺.

She may be the third Treasurer who had no previous experience in book keeping. Katherine and I did not have previous accounting experience, our newsletter editor didn't know how to use publish software, and some of our website support people have never maintained or developed a website before.

Picking up a new challenge can be a good addition to your CV for those who have temporarily stopped working. As a manager, I have interviewed many people across the world. Those who have shown initiative to pick up new challenges and could talk with passion about them definitely have an advantage over others.

I have also observed that people who do different things are more productive overall because they get more stimuli and learn to do things more efficiently with their new knowledge. For those who are not so experienced with the computer (Word, Excel) or want to learn a new skill, training is available.

We need more people to come forward or the continuation of MCG is seriously at stake. Our smoothly running organization with our happy members can quickly come to a standstill. *We cannot let it end in this way!*

AGM and Lecture on April 8

See you all at the AGM on April 8th at 9.30 am at the Royal Selangor Club. After the short business meeting, Rehman Rashid will give a thought provoking lecture entitled *Whither Malaysia*.

Alexius

The Malaysian Culture Group Annual General Meeting AGM 2015

With lecture to follow by
Rehman Rashid, author of *A Malaysian Journey*

DATE: Wednesday April 8th, 2015
TIME: 9:30 am for a 10:00 am start
PLACE: The Royal Selangor Club, 1 Jalan Raja, 52100 Kuala Lumpur
RSVP: <http://anyvite.com/events/home/o8gilwkeyu>

The AGM is for members only. For those who have not yet paid the membership fee, please do so soonest.

A public transport option is LRT Masjid Jamek and a 10 min walk. An alternative is a taxi.

The main purpose of the AGM is to approve the financial results of 2014, to appoint the committee for 2015-2016 and to vote on motions put forward by the committee or members. As you are aware we have currently vacancies for President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Events Convener and Communications. You will receive a separate mail about the various functions. If we cannot fulfill the positions, then the continuity of MCG is in danger. MCG is flourishing and we wouldn't like this to happen!

Nominations for any Committee position and motions by members need to be received by the Committee by March 18. In the Committee meeting on March 19 we will review the agenda and other documents for the AGM. You will receive these in the third week of March.

If you are unable to attend the AGM, you are requested to designate a proxy to vote on your behalf. (We need a quorum for decision making.) In that case please confirm NO in this invite and the proxy form will be sent to you. You can also use the attached form. The completed form needs to be received by April 6 or handed over before the AGM.

You can submit motions, nominations and proxy forms to MCG President via e-mail to presidentmcg@gmail.com or by post to President MCG, Meritz Management Office, No. 19 Jalan Mayang, Kuala Lumpur 50450.

Rehman Rashid is a fascinating orator and writer. If you want to know more about him, grab a copy of his outstanding book *A Malaysian Journey*. If you bring your book, he will gladly sign it.

Alexius Collette, President

April Monthly Lecture:

Members' Corner: Malayan Memories with Jagdev Kaur



DATE: Wednesday April 15th, 2015
TIME: 10:00 am for a 10:30 am start
PLACE: The Meritz, 19 Jalan Mayang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur
COST: Members RM15, Nonmembers RM25
RSVP: <http://anyvite.com/0wevtihhme>

Jagdev Kaur once again offers to share her experiences with fellow MCG members! This time she will bring us on a trip down memory lane. She will share her childhood memories of life in multi-cultural Malaya and the transition to modern day Malaysia.

Jagdev grew up in Kuala Kangsar, studied abroad in the UK and had a career as a university lecturer.

April Monthly Event:

Natural Beads of Indigenous Malaysia



DATE: Wednesday April 22nd, 2015
TIME: 10:00 am for a 10:30 am start
PLACE: The Meritz, 19 Jalan Mayang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur
COST: Members RM15, Nonmembers RM25
RSVP: <http://anyvite.com/events/home/zfdoba6pny/>

MCG welcomes Reita Rahim back after a long absence. She will talk about natural beads, focusing her talk on beads from the *Orang Asli* of Peninsular Malaysia and the Rungus of Sabah.

Reita Rahim is founder of Gerai OA, a volunteer-run initiative which documents, revives, repurposes and sells indigenous handicraft to enable a new generation of Malaysians (and expats!) to appreciate the crafts, while ensuring artisans earn a living from their traditional skills. Gerai OA defines itself as a “nomadic volunteer-run stall which sells handicrafts made by *Orang Asli*, the indigenous minorities of Malaysia.”

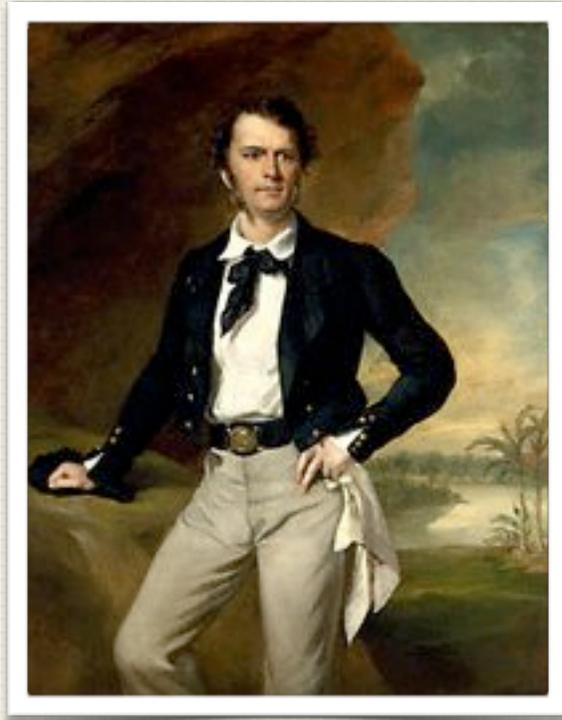
They are not a business, not an NGO, just a volunteer group.

Reita Rahim graduated as a Graphic Designer in 1997 but is now a freelance craft researcher focusing on handicrafts made by the Orang Asal. In 2004, Reita founded *Gerai OA*. Although interested in traditional knowledge, her current focus is on training indigenous women to improve their crafts via design, colour management & quality controls, as well as sustainable natural resource management. She occasionally works as a freelance trainer for rural development projects. Reita has also organized village-level indigenous women’s handicraft groups to improve on income-generating skills.

For more information on what Gerai OA does and what Reita passionately dedicates her life to: <http://www.theborneopost.com/2012/01/08/earning-a-living-with-dignity/>

May Monthly Lecture:

The White Rajas of Sarawak



DATE: Wednesday, 6th May 2015

TIME: 10.00 am for 10.30 am start

PLACE: Meritz Condominiums, Jalan Mayang, K.L.C.C.

COST: Members RM15, Guests RM25

RSVP: <http://anyvite.com/dlac2frcx>

Please join us for what will be an interesting lecture by Angela Naylor on the White Rajas of Sarawak, a history of Sir James Brooke and his family dynasty.

From the first Rajah, Sir James, to his nephew Charles Brooke and the end of the dynasty with his son Vyner Brooke, Angela will give us an overlook of the fascinating 100-year rule of a land otherwise infamous for its piracy and headhunting.

Sir James Brooke was a British trader and adventurer who, under a treaty signed in 1841 between he and Pangeran Muda Hashim, was given Sarawak in return for help in settling the many conflicts that were plaguing the region at that time. This lecture is the story of what followed.

Report: February Lecture

A Morning with Artist Rafiee Ghani



Rafiee Ghani is one of Malaysia's most prominent contemporary fine artists. For those among us already acquainted with his work, it was an exciting opportunity to meet the man behind the internationally celebrated paintings. And for the art novice, a morning of fascinating discovery lay in wait!

Rafiee began his lecture with a brief introduction to his career, before presenting his many captivating paintings in a slideshow.

He studied at the Vrije Academie Voor Beelende, an art school in The Hague, Netherlands, in 1980, before returning to Malaysia to study for a further four years at a local art school. He then headed to the United Kingdom in 1986, where he completed his Master of Fine Art. Upon returning to

Malaysia, he taught at a local university for some years before taking time off to travel to Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. He has exhibited in Europe, the United States, Asia; and of course, Malaysia, where his private collections are proudly displayed at prominent locations, such as The National Art Gallery and Bank Negara.

Artists are frequently asked where they find their inspiration, and modern contemporary art often provokes a keen interest, because the meaning isn't always immediately obvious. Rafiee tells us that the greatest influence on his work has been his extensive travelling experiences, and in particular, the rich culture, vibrant colours, and intermixture of texture found in some of his favourite destinations: Morocco, Tunisia,

Report: February Lecture

A Morning with Artist Rafiee Ghani (con't)

Turkey and Africa. However, despite being widely travelled, he continues to find inspiration in Malaysia—especially childhood memories from his hometown in Kulim, Kedah.

Rafiee's love of nature is also evident, for he frequently connects with the elements—sky, clouds, mountains, rock formations, rivers, oceans, sandy beaches, trees, plantations, vegetation and, of course, the sun and moon. His bold and vibrant strokes fill the canvas with energy, and at times it is easier to *feel* the 'meaning' rather than search to understand it. In a painting that depicts a small fishing village, for example, we feel the power in the turbulent waves as they approach the shore. Rafiee explains that the waves represent a bounty and a source of income for the fishermen, while the overhead clouds promise that rain will come—a gift to the people. But even without the benefit of his interpretation, we can tell from his fluid and lyrical strokes that this little village is symbolic of love, trust and faith.

Rafiee has the most remarkable talent for using suggestion to capture the viewer's imagination, and many of us were curious to know how he proceeds with such a challenging task: "I sketch on the spot, on location, but the sketch is just a record. I don't normally transfer the sketch into a painting. A photograph is also good to capture the moment. I digest the photos and sketches and study them. It is a selective process. The scenery is just to inspire me, but the rest is from my imagination. My expression."

Interestingly, Rafiee works with relatively few colours; typically bright hues of red, orange, green and blue, yet the complexity of the composition, with its exaggerated lines and bold strokes, capture our attention and claim our imagination.

Frequently, random objects can be seen in a painting, which seemingly appear to be out of context, and we were intrigued by the somewhat offbeat presence of a cup, vase or chair. Rafiee explained that he puts still life onto a landscape to represent something familiar, because although these things are routinely seen in our everyday lives, their inherent beauty is easily dismissed. Similarly, the heart shape that was noticed in several paintings is representative of love—a universal emotion.

Rafiee says: "People can look at a painting and relate to it. I want people to feel secure." He tells us that he has seen many great things in his life and speaks fondly of the countless people that he has met during his travels, emphasizing that nice people can be found from all walks of life. And although figures rarely feature in his more recent work, it is clear that he is touched by the human spirit, for it is subtly interwoven throughout many of his paintings.

When asked which artist has influenced him the most, Rafiee cites the French painter, Matisse, who is also known for his bold and expressive use of colour. In fact, it was his fascination with Matisse that prompted him to visit Morocco and seek out the very same café overlooking the scenery that had once inspired that great artist!

Report: February Lecture

A Morning with Artist Rafiee Ghani (con't)

To our delight, Rafiee concluded his lecture by not only answering our many questions, but also graciously sharing his personal insights and techniques: figurative and abstract; light and shade; colour and form; symbol and metaphor; his colour pallet of water-colours, oil paints and oil sticks; brushes and tools; and his plans to experiment with mixed media.

It was a great pleasure not only to view the work of an exceptionally talented painter, but also to listen to an artist of extraordinary vision. Thank you, Rafiee Ghani.

Chrissie Kemp



Report: February Event

Thaipusam Festival at Batu Caves

On a bright and early Monday morning of group of MCG members and friends met Cheryl Hoffmann for an informative and enriching tour of the Thaipusam Festival at Batu Caves. Batu Caves is one of the largest Thaipusam festivals outside of India, and 2015 marks the 125th anniversary of Thaipusam celebrations here.

The tour was the day before Thaipusam, while the Silver Chariot was on its way from Sri Mahamariamman Temple in the city center. This enabled us to get an up close view while things were relatively quiet before the excitement and crowds grew later in the day.

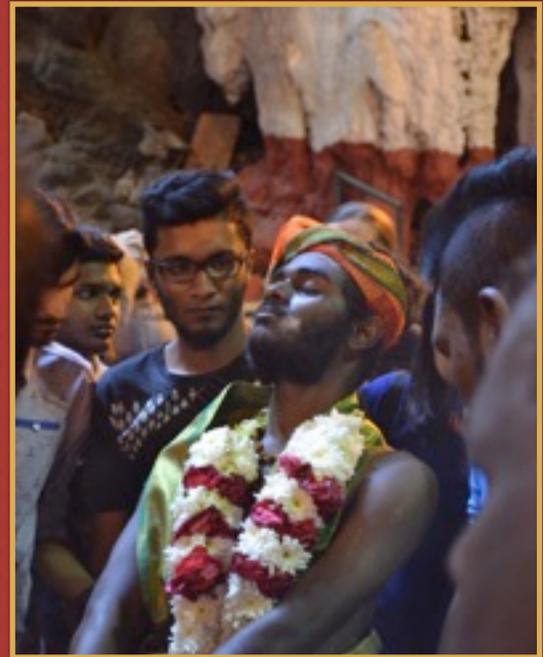
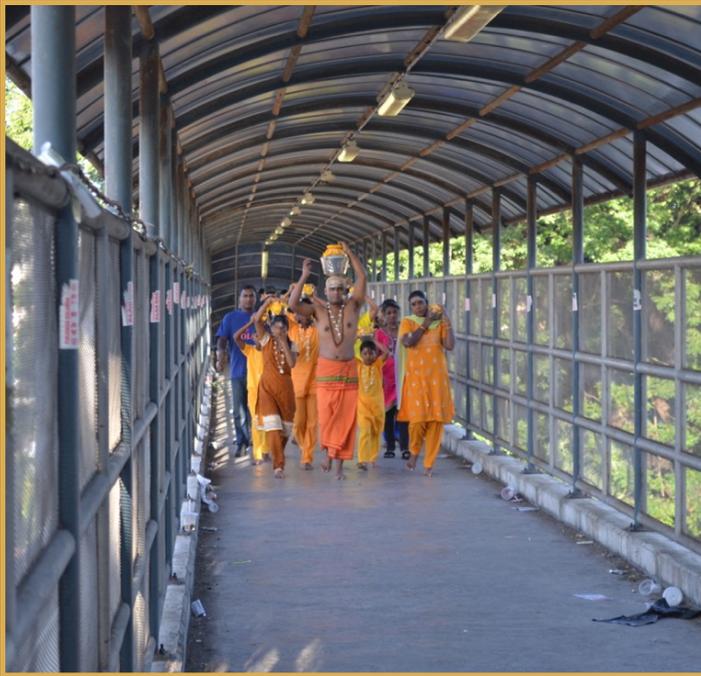
Thaipusam is a colorful and vibrant Hindu festival celebrated by the south

Indian Tamil people. The festival is celebrated in the tenth month of the Tamil calendar (January/February) during the full moon. It signifies the victory of Lord Murugan, the god of war, over the demon Surapadman. Murugan uses a vel (spear) given to him by his mother, Parvati, to defeat the demon. The festival gives thanks to Lord Murugan for prayers answered over the last year and hopeful blessings for the coming year, such as fertility, health, and prosperity.

Devotees give thanks through physical burdens or kavadi. Kavadi originates from the fight between Idumban and Lord Murugan. The fight began when Idumban moved the hills Lord Murugan lived in. Lord Murugan became angry and planted the hills to the ground. He fought



Report: February Event Thaipusam Festival at Batu Caves (con't)



and killed Idumban but later brought him back to life. Idumban became Murugan's follower and said that whoever brings kavadi or offerings to Lord Murugan will be blessed. Carrying the kavadi symbolizes the burden of Idumban carrying the hills.

These burdens manifest in various forms. The most common offering is carrying a silver urn filled with milk known as paal kudam. Traditional kavadi consists of a frame decorated with bright colors and peacock feathers carried on the shoulders. In more extreme cases, devotees may carry heavy objects, push a skewer through their tongue, or suspend hooks from their flesh. Many shave their heads; a thick turmeric paste is applied afterwards as an anti-inflammatory. It's common for devotees to take vows for the month leading up to

Thaipusam such as fasting or sleeping on a hard floor. Regardless of what they choose, they will not utter a single complaint during the process. It is believed that an individual taking on these physical burdens is 'taking pain for his community or family' in the hopes of gaining a blessing from Lord Murugan.

Our tour started at Sungei Batu, the river adjacent to Batu Caves. This is the staging area where the devotees prepare for their pilgrimage. We watched followers begin by bathing and cleansing themselves in the sacred river water. Many were getting their heads shaved at makeshift barbershop tents. Groups of families, ranging in age from infants to elderly, dressed each other in colorful matching outfits. Bright yellow saffron, the color of Shiva, was the most

Report: February Event Thaipusam Festival at Batu Caves (con't)

common, but there was no shortage of other colors. Some prayed, burning rich smelling incense, while others decorated their heads or bodies with ash. Many prepared a simple burden of paal kudam. Typically, one or two group members had more elaborate burdens like kavadis. A few had priests administer skewers through their tongues, or hooks in their flesh to hang small urns of milk. When a group was ready to make the journey to Batu Caves, they held a rally next to the river, praying, chanting, and dancing.

Next we made our way from the river to the gates and to base of Batu Caves. We were pushed along with the crowd preparing to make the climb to the top. Huge speakers were blasting Tamil songs, and there was loud and boisterous singing and chanting. We passed by vendors selling food and wares. It was an ultimate visceral sensory experience of color, sounds, and smells. We briefly stopped at the temple before climbing the 272 stairs to the top. We walked next to several groups on the way up the stairs. Those carrying kavadi laboriously made their way up the center column of stairs. Priests, friends, and family stood close by to offer support through chants of encouragement and at times even hands to provide balance

as the kavadi rested on heads and shoulders or burdens hung through flesh. Each step for some took all the strength they had.

At the top of the stairs, the devotees continued into the cave to the altar for Lord Murugan. Some were so excited they ran screaming loudly. Those with paal kudam poured their milk over a golden vel. Groups congregated next to the altar in a celebratory mood. Several participants were in a trance channeling Lord Murugan. They spoke through him to the members of their group, offering support and guidance to family members with words of encouragement. Afterwards, we watched as priests helped those out of their trance state before making our way back down to the base of the caves.

What a colorful, exuberant experience...to see these families working together and supporting those in their group taking on such physical burdens. The tour ended with a delicious vegetarian banana leaf meal and a deeper understanding of this rich and symbolic Tamil tradition.

Paulette Norman

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Report: February Event

Chinese New Year in Melaka



Above: Lotus candle offerings at temple.

Right: Festive lanterns announce the family name and business.



On the ninth day of the Chinese New Year festival, 30 members headed south to Malacca (Melaka) to learn about how the Peranakan celebrate their lunar new year. Our first stop was at a 100-year old house, which is the ancestral home of a man who proudly calls himself a Peranakan.

The origin of the Peranakan people isn't certain, in part because the lineage was only documented for the males. Based on tombs in the Bukit Cina area of old Melaka, it can be assumed that the Chinese first came to Melaka during the Qing Dynasty (1600's). They married local women and blended their

customs with the Malay way of life. The men are still called Baba (an honorific for the word, "sir") and ladies of a certain age are called Nyonya.

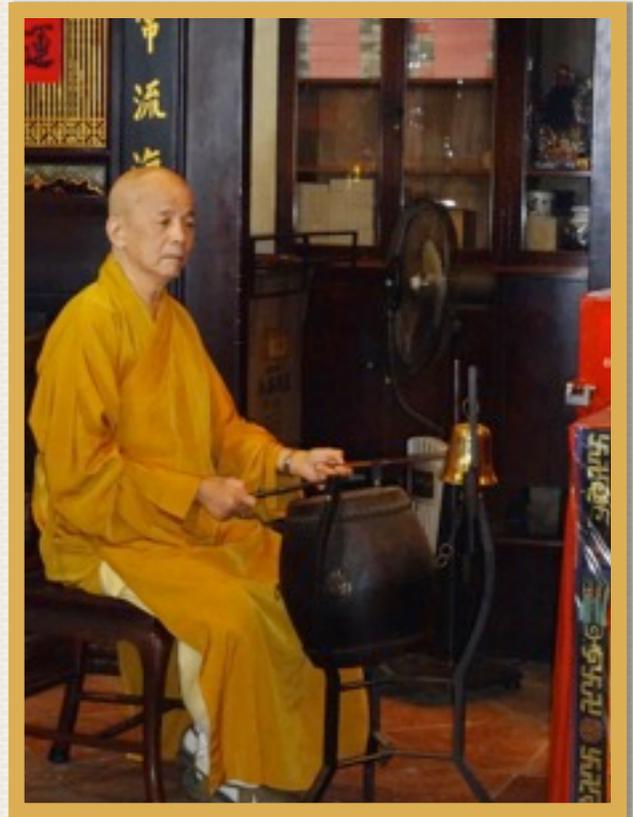
At the entrance to this beautifully restored private home were big colourful lanterns as well as a large red banner draping the entrance. The lanterns were unique to that house as they conveyed both the address of the residence and the surname of the owner. The first room was where visitors are welcomed. Everything, including the furniture, was placed symmetrically so as to achieve balance and harmony. In the second room,

Report: February Event Chinese New Year in Melaka (con't)

which was referred to as the Dark Hall, our host showed us images and tributes to the five generations that preceded him. Moving further to the rear of the house was the living room or ancestral hall. It was there that we were introduced to the Jade Emperor whom the Hokkien and Peranakans believe is a mythical monarch of all deities in heaven. The altar in this room has three levels representing heaven, man and earth. There was also an abundance of symbolic treats. It was there that we learned that the ninth day of Lunar New Year is very important as it commemorates the Jade Emperor's birthday. The two rooms at the rear of the house were for all things related to food.

At the Persatuan Peranakan Cina Malaysia, we were given a slide presentation that helped us to understand the amount of time and preparation required each Chinese New Year. This included spring cleaning; baking and cooking; decorating; folding and cutting of various coloured papers; ancestral worship and also the exchanging of gifts and cards.

The timing of our stop at the Cheng Hoon Temple was ideal in that a prayer service was still underway. At this very busy temple, we were shown the statue of Guan Yin, whom it's believed was originally a male destined to be a Buddha but instead, chose to become female in order to remain on earth to help relieve suffering. At the main entrance to the temple, a local lady dressed in full costume as Guan Yin gave out *ang pao* (red packets) and posed for photos. In addition to the main part of the temple, there were several additional alcoves for prayer or ancestral worship.



Monk at Cheng Hoon Temple with bell and drum

After our temple visit, we went back to the Peranakan Association's hall where we were seated at traditional long tables and served a lunch of home-cooked Nyonya food.

On behalf of The Malaysian Culture Group, I would like to thank Baba Cedric Tan for opening up his beautiful home to us and also for his interesting and informative talk about the Peranakan New Year celebration.

Randee Duncan

Report: March Lecture

A Nyonya and her Jewelry: A Talk by Lily

We were fortunate to be able to listen to the very informative talk about the place of traditional jewelry in the culture of the Penang nyonya community.

Personal jewelry is part of the traditional dress for a Penang nyonya girl. Small items are bestowed in infancy and girls wear bangles or chains as part of their daily costume, and in the past even to school on special occasions. Babies are given chains, bangles, anklets and tiny rings. Amulets and talisman, such as elephant hair encased on a child's bangle, are protection against evil spirits. Children are brought up to wear items such as bangles and chains as part of their daily wear. Ear piercing is done early. The speaker told us that at Chinese New Year she went to school wearing jewelry and always wears jewelry of some sort.

The nyonias of Penang descended from Hokkien immigrants from South China. They were poor but worked hard and developed and invested in the rubber and tin industries and also ran gambling and opium smoking dens. They invested their money in industry and property and bought jewelry. Jewels were worn for important occasions such as weddings and Chinese New Year, and less elaborate jewelry was worn on a daily basis. On the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar, the items were washed and put in the sun to absorb *chi*. The nyonya's jewelry usually consisted of a wide selection of earrings, kerosangs (three-piece brooches for closing the front of kebayas), rings, bangles for arms and legs, bracelets, necklaces and hairpins.

Sometimes items were borrowed from relatives for a special occasion. Photographs of the occasion were taken and were expensive. During a period of mourning only

silver and pearls would be worn for the first year. Blue sapphires were added in the second year and jades and emeralds in the third year. Sometimes jewels were specially made for the mourning period.

For joyful occasions gold, diamonds and rubies were used. Brides were photographed with jewelry before leaving their home.

The craftsmen were usually Ceylonese and their workmanship showed a strong Victorian influence. Later craftsmen came from China, and goldsmiths would be commissioned by rich clients. Motifs used were auspicious symbols of varied ethnic origin e.g. tulips, birds, the eight immortals, insects such as dragonflies. For special occasions Penang nyonias styled their hair in top-knots with small flowers and many decorative pins, usually sets of five. They look like coronets and were probably of Thai or Burmese influence. There were often sets of earrings and pendants using a filigree design. Kerosang th'oe sets were for the vintage long kebayas. They consisted of one large peach-shaped brooch and two small circular brooches. Kerosangs with three identical brooches and connecting chains are for the shorter nyonya kebayas. Some of the jewelry is wearable today as earrings, pendants or traditional kerosang sets.

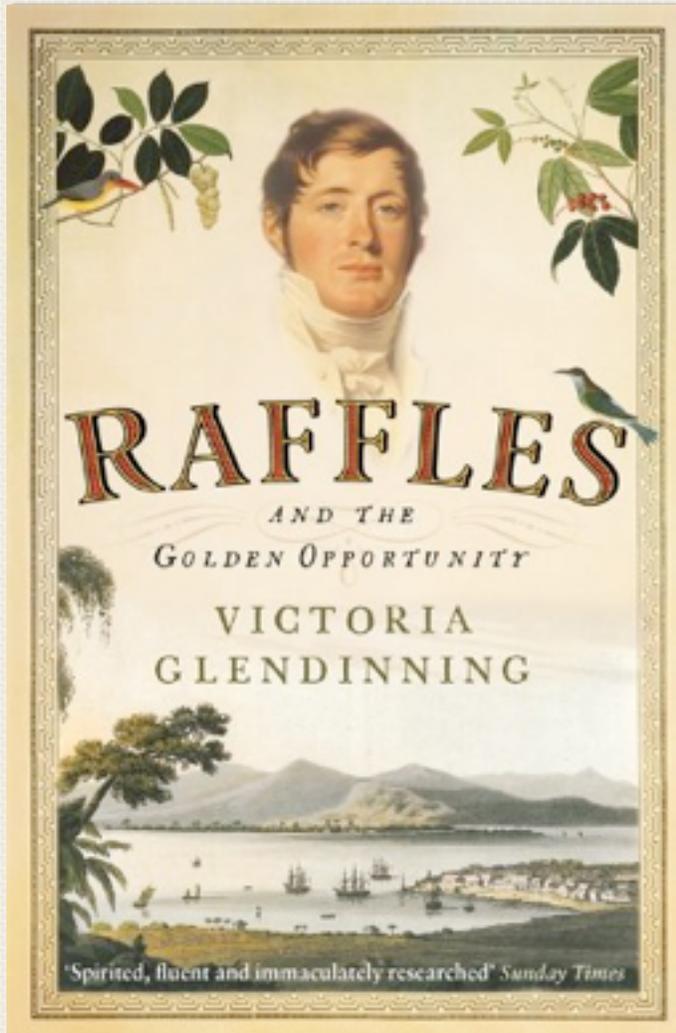
For further information:

<http://www.peranakan-kl.org>

Review: Book Group 1

Raffles and the Golden Opportunity

by Victoria Glendinning



Raffles and the Golden Opportunity by Victoria Glendinning takes us on a journey through the life of Raffles from his birth on July 5, 1781 to his death on July 5, 1826, one day before his 46th birthday. Perhaps his future adventures were influenced by his birth at sea off the coast of Jamaica on the West Indiaman *Ann*, captained by his father. Beginning at the age of 14, and for the next 10 years, Raffles worked as an Extra Clerk for the East India Company (EIC), a position in which he was a 'human word-processor' as all documents had to be copied and recopied by hand. On March 8, 1805 he was promoted to Assistant Secretary to the Governor for the EIC free port of Penang. On March 14, aged 23 he married the love of his life, Olivia, aged 33 and in April they set sail to 'the Eastward.'

And so began his infatuation with the East and his private dream of creating an Eastern Empire. His inquiring approach was reflected in his growing proficiency in Malay, his burgeoning interest in all aspects of natural history and his appreciation of the surrounding cultures. His collections of drawings, specimens, historical documents and manuscripts grew. During this period the Napoleonic Wars in Europe meant that

lands in the East frequently bounced back and forth between the Dutch and the English depending on the outcome of the latest war.

In 1810 Raffles moved to Malacca as Agent to the Governor-General with the Malay States. While there, he connived with Lord Minto, Governor-General of Bengal to attack Batavia. After successfully sacking Batavia and gaining control of Dutch territory, Raffles was declared Lieutenant-General of Java. His time in Java was marred by questionable land sales, tax issues, territorial scandals, the passing of Lord Minto, and the death of his beloved Olivia in

Review: Book Group I

Raffles and the Golden Opportunity (con't)

1814. Charges were brought against him by the EIC, and the state of his health deteriorated gravely.

Raffles returned to England for the years 1816 to 1817, allowing him time to recover, salvage his reputation, publish his book, *The History of Java*, marry his second wife, Sophia, who loved him deeply and be knighted Sir Stamford Raffles. His rehabilitation in the eyes of the EIC was complete when it was announced that he would be appointed Lieutenant-Governor at Bencoolen, on the west coast of Sumatra.

In 1818, he and Sophia arrived at Bencoolen and set up their home on "their Hill". With concessions to the Dutch, only Penang and Bencoolen were left in British hands and their trade was threatened. The EIC realized they needed to acquire a modest trading post south of Malacca to stay competitive. Raffles agreed that Major William Farquhar should investigate the islands off Johore. The two men and their squadron anchored off shore of the island of Singapore in January 1819 with his golden opportunity within reach. On February 6 a treaty was signed with Sultan Hussein Shah, promising him "five thousand Spanish dollars a year and the protection of the British. In return the British government was granted exclusive rights to establish a settlement or 'trading factory' on the island. It was not a conquest ... more like a leasehold purchase." Nine days later Raffles sailed away, leaving Farquhar as Resident and Commandant under his Government at Bencoolen.

Raffles was not to return till October 1822, two and a half years later. He found his "almost only child (Singapore) had ... grown and advanced beyond measure." Although

the city had blossomed under Farquhar, the two men soon became embroiled in an on-going slinging match covering all sorts of petty matters. Raffles countermanded many of Farquhar's policies but he did establish the Raffles Institution. Terrible headaches began to beset him and Raffles was urged to return to England, where he arrived in 1824, after only nine months in Singapore.

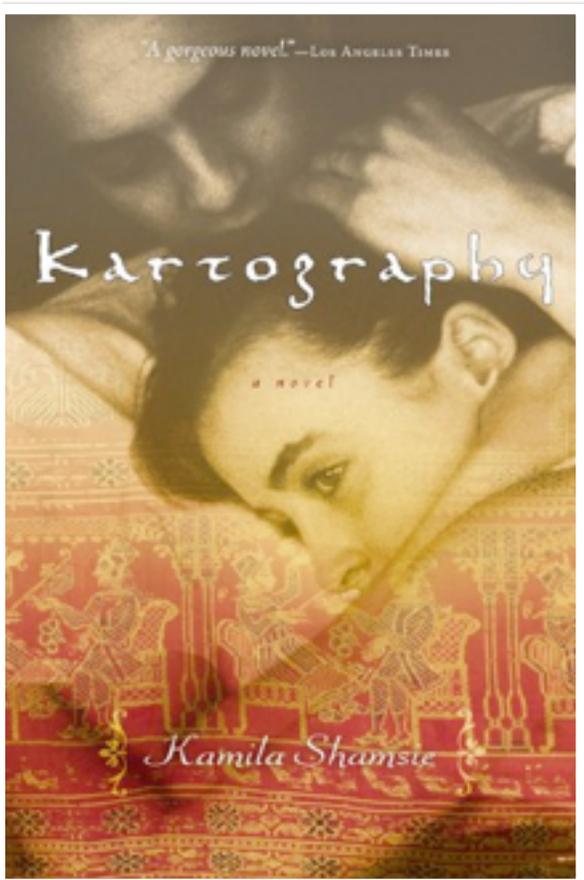
Once back in England, Raffles helped establish the Zoological Society, the precursor to the London Zoo. The EIC presented him with an invoice for almost £23,000 being payment of his salary claimed while he was in England previously. Seriously in debt, he died in 1826. His second wife, Sophia, wrote a memoir of his life, which cemented his accomplishments in the public's mind.

Our group appreciated the research that Glendinning must have undertaken to come up with such a detailed biography of the founder of Singapore, but found the many personalities referred to and the time details confusing. It gave us a more balanced view of Raffles, giving us insight into his many sacrifices (four of his children died while he was in Asia) and his difficult nature (squabbles with many colleagues and only informing his superiors of his actions after the fact). It was a noble effort at profiling an enduring name in Asian history.

Leslie Muri

Review: Book Group 2

Kartography by Kamila Shamsie



Raheen and her best friend Karim share an idyllic upper-class childhood in Karachi. Their parents were once engaged to each other's partners until they rematched in what they call the "fiancée swap". But as adolescence distances the friends, Karim takes refuge in maps while Raheen searches for the secret behind her parents' exchange. What she uncovers reveals not just a family's but a country's turbulent history and a grown-up Raheen and Karim are caught between strained friendship and fated love.

A love story with a family mystery at its heart, *Kartography* is a dazzling novel by a young writer of astonishing maturity and exhilarating style. Shamsie transports us to a world we have not often seen in fiction - vibrant, dangerous, sensuous Pakistan. But even as she takes us far from the familiar, her story of passion and family secrets rings universally true.

The book was really enjoyed by all members of the group, with very few criticisms; a list of characters would have been appreciated, as would

a Map of east and west Pakistan. An added bonus was hearing one of our member's descriptions of her childhood experiences growing up in this very same environment. We would recommend this book as a very good read.

Sue Nelson

Report: Enak! Origins



ENAK! Thursday, 12th March 2015
No. 8, Jalan 1/67B, (Off Jalan Mengkudu,)
Ampang, 55000 Kuala Lumpur
Tel : 03-42535388
www.originvegcafe.com

The Origin Café & Restaurant is a family-owned vegetarian restaurant in Ampang. The vegetarian food is prepared in the Chinese-Malay style, with an emphasis on using fresh, organic produce to balance our "qi" energy. Based on principles of wellness for the mind, body and spirit, the restaurant does not use garlic, onion, shallots, chives or spring onions in their cooking as these five ingredients are purported to be harmful to the five elements (earth, fire, water, wind and metal) which correspond to the five main

organs of our body (heart, lung, kidney, spleen and lungs).

One of the owners, Ms. Lim Yan, explained how each dish maintains our health and well-being. A special menu had been planned consisting of different textures and tastes that only pure vegetarian food can provide. Enakers agreed that must-try dishes are wasabi mushrooms, vegetarian satay and chrysanthemum tea.

Hosted by Michelle & Vivin

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