

Kumpulan Kebudayaan Malaysia Kuala Lumpur & Selangor Malaysian Culture Group

Newsletter of the Malaysian Culture Group

March 2011

MCG PROGRAM OF EVENTS

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| FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH LECTURE : TRAVELS WITH SOOTY | Wednesday, 02 March |
| PENANG AT WAR – A TALK BY THE AUTHOR ANDREW BARBER | Tuesday, 08 March |
| TALK BY RAMAN OF SILVERFISH BOOKS, BANGSAR | Wednesday, 16 March |
| VISIT TO SMART TUNNEL | Thursday, 24 March |
| TRAVEL TIPS—NEW ZEALAND | Tuesday, 29 March |
| FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH LECTURE : UNITY IN DIVERSITY : THE ORANG ASLI OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA | Wednesday, 06 April |

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

All information contained in this newsletter is for the exclusive use of Malaysian Culture Group Members only. Permission must be obtained from the President of MCG for use of this material in any other publication in hardcopy or electronic form.

The deadline for the April 2011 issue is March 8. Please send event reports for the next issue to the appropriate event convener. If you have other material of interest to members that you would like us to include, please send it to: newsletter@malaysianculturegroup.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This month we hear from our Membership Secretary Team.,

Welcome to a new and fresh MCG year! Thank you for your support of MCG. Without you, there would be no culture group. We, the Membership Team, would like to point out a couple of things that will help you make the most of your membership and help us with our membership duties.

* Please renew your membership, if you have not already done so. You can renew by bringing cash or a check (made out to the Malaysian Culture Group) to the next MCG event; mailing a check to: Joanneke Verweil / 70, Lorong Chong Khoo Lim 3 / 68000 Ampang; or renewing online via Paypal using the following link - <https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr>.

* Please update us if your personal details change. Email the changes to the MCG membership secretary at membership@malaysianculturegroup.org. We need your help to keep our database up to date.

* Empty your e-mail in-boxes regularly to avoid missing the MCG Newsletter. A full e-mailbox means no MCG Newsletter! The Newsletter arrives around the 15th of each month.

* Spread the word about MCG! Bring a friend to a MCG event this year. Our membership is constantly changing as people's commitments change and/or they are posted elsewhere. So, we are always looking for new members who share our passion for learning more about Malaysian and South-East Asian culture. And, don't forget – our membership includes expatriates AND locals!

Help needed! The current Membership team will be stepping down in May, so MCG needs a new Secretary Membership team. We would suggest that two friends share the duties (which include updating the membership list, attending committee meetings monthly, and communicating with members). For more information email: Joanneke.Verweil59@gmail.com or Elizabeth_Haverkamp@hotmail.com.

Thank you for being a member!

Joanneke Verweil and Elizabeth Haverkamp
MCG Membership Team



CHERYL HOFFMANN

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2011

Final Reminder

We Don't Want To Lose You!!

For those members who joined or renewed prior to September 2010, your Membership Fees are due NOW.

Please renew now to ensure that you continue to receive your newsletters and have access to our great lineup of events.

Renew by sending a cheque and a completed Membership Form to the Membership Secretary (address on the last page of the newsletter) or by

Paypal via our website www.malaysianculturegroup.org along with a

Membership Form emailed to

membership@malaysianculturegroup.org

Calling All Members

MCG NEEDS YOU!

The Malaysian Culture Group is an amazing organization that provides informative and interesting activities for its **membership. But it doesn't happen by magic.**

We need your ideas and energy on our team!

We are now soliciting volunteers for All Positions on the MCG Committee in time for the upcoming elections at the AGM.

If you are interested in serving your organization, please contact one of the current committee members listed on page 2 of this newsletter.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH LECTURE: TRAVELS WITH SOOTY

DATE: **Wednesday, 02 March 2011**
 TIME: **10.00 am for 10.30 am start**
 PLACE: **Meritz Condominium, Jalan Mayang**
 COST: **Members RM15, Guests RM25**
 RSVP: mcgevents@yahoo.com



After deposing his father in a 'Palace Coup' in the early 1970s, Sultan Qaboos bin Said set about bringing his country into the twentieth century. His priority was to overcome a determined armed communist insurgency from South Yemen and to build-up the country's infrastructure. Whilst at that time Oman permitted no tourists to enter the country, it possessed many of the fascinating features that had all but disappeared from the other rapidly developing Gulf States.

His Majesty's travels across the Empty Quarter enabled him to maintain contact with isolated communities as well as with the wandering Bedouin, (who may or may not have been his subjects). Accompanying His Majesty on these journeys was a convoy manned by numerous Royal Diwan Omani staff plus a small expatriate team, of which Stuart was a part, which catered for the technical and operational requirements of the accompanying helicopters.

PENANG AT WAR – A TALK BY THE AUTHOR ANDREW BARBER

DATE: **Tuesday, 08 March 2011**
 TIME: **10.00 am for 10.30 am start**
 PLACE: **Meritz Condominium, Jalan Mayang**
 COST: **Members RM15, Guests RM25**
 RSVP: mcgevents@yahoo.com



Penang War Museum

Some members may remember Andrew's very interesting talk to MCG about his previous book, '[Penang Under the East India Company](#)'; he has recently written a new book entitled '[Penang At War](#)' and will be giving us another of his fascinating and insightful talks.

[Penang at War](#) is an account of the impact of war on Penang during the twentieth century. The First World War was a time of prosperity and wealth for the settlement, albeit interrupted by the unwelcome visit of the German raider, the SS Emden, which sank allied shipping in the harbour before escaping unhurt in the Straits of Malacca. Following the economic and political strains of the interwar years, the Second World War proved a traumatic and brutal experience for Penang. The withdrawal of the British forces comprising 'Fortress Penang', and the controversial 'whites only' evacuation, was compounded by inept efforts to deny the Japanese key assets and facilities. Within days of their occupation, Radio Penang was beaming hostile propaganda to the beleaguered British forces and civilians in Singapore. The fall of Penang proved to be one of the iconic moments in the collapse of British colonial authority. The war years themselves, under the Japanese, were a time of brutality and political stress, as well as economic hardship. When the British returned in September 1945, unopposed following the Japanese surrender, Penang was a much changed place and the British were immediately confronted by a challenging and often hostile political environment. This book charts these events.

Copies of this book, as well as Andrew's previous ones, will be on sale at the event.

A TALK ON THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY BY RAMAN OF SILVERFISH BOOKS

DATE : **Wednesday, 16 March 2011**
TIME : **10.00 am for 10.30 am start**
PLACE : **Silverfish Books, 1st Floor,
58-1 Jalan Telawi, Bangsar**
COST : **Members RM15, Guests RM25**
RSVP: mcgevents@yahoo.com



For those of you unfamiliar with Silverfish Books, it is one of the only independent booksellers in KL, having opened its doors in 1999; it now produces a monthly online newsletter, has an on-line shop and hosts events at its premises in Bangsar. Silverfish owner, Raman, will talk about the current situation with the publishing industry worldwide and here in Malaysia.

When the (illegal and legal) digital music revolution began a little over 11 years ago with Napster, iTunes and the iPod, the publishing industry watched from the sidelines, perhaps a little too smugly. After all, digitizing books is a far more difficult process than ripping CD's and DVD's. The industry thought that it was mature and immune: they had a perfect product that required no maintenance and no batteries!

But, how things have changed in just two years. Borders has shut its doors in the UK and is approaching bankruptcy in the US. Barnes and Noble, the biggest chain in the US, is also looking for a buyer. And, what about the ebook? Is it an evolution, revolution or, simply, hype? Join us for an interesting discussion by a leading industry expert.

A VISIT TO THE SMART TUNNEL

DATE : **Thursday, 24 March 2011**
TIME : **10.00 am for 10.30 am start**
PLACE : **SMART TUNNEL, Jalan Davis, off Bulatan Kg Pandan, 50400 KL**
COST : **Members RM15, Guests RM25**
RSVP: mcgevents@yahoo.com

We will visit the control centre for the SMART tunnel. SMART is an acronym for Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel, a project developed under the Federal Government, initiated to alleviate the flooding problem in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur. The SMART system is able to divert large volumes of flood water from entering a critical stretch of highway. This is achieved via a holding pond, bypass tunnel and storage reservoir. This reduces the flood water level at the Jalan Tun Perak Bridge, preventing spill-over. The project has a dual purpose, as well as providing flood relief it also uses the main tunnel for traffic dispersal at the main Southern Gateway to the city centre.

Safety of vehicles in the motorway tunnel is of paramount importance, SMART has additional features that are unique and over and above the features seen in a normal motorway tunnel. The main features are:

- . Automated Flood Control Gates
- . Cross Passage
- . Ventilation/Escape Shafts
- . Radio Re-Broadcasting Services
- . Air Quality Monitoring Equipment (AQME)
- . SCADA Monitoring & Surveillance
- . Other Emergency Equipments
- . First Responder Vehicle (FRV)
- . Medical Response Vehicle (MRV)
- . Alam Flora Road Sweeper

This should be a an interesting visit to a unique modern piece of Malaysian engineering.



TRAVEL TIPS : NEW ZEALAND

DATE : **Tuesday, 29 March 2011**
 TIME : **10.00 am for 10.30 am start**
 PLACE : **Joanneke's home, details of which will be provided in the reminder email**
 COST : **Members RM15, Guests RM25—numbers will be limited, so register early!**
 RSVP: mcgevents@yahoo.com

"Two teenagers, a dad and a mom traveled to New Zealand in the recent December school break".

This is Joanneke's own introduction to a talk about the eighteen days they spent in both the North and South Island during the Christmas vacation. She will show us some of the photographs they took on this amazing journey and will tell us about how they organized their ten stops, which hotels they chose to stay in, how they travelled and some interesting facts about this amazing and breathtaking country



FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH LECTURE :
 UNITY IN DIVERSITY - THE ORANG ASLI OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

DATE : **Wednesday, 06 April, 2011**
 TIME : **10.00 am for 10.30 am start**
 PLACE : **Meritz Condominium, Jalan Mayang**
 COST : **Members RM15, Guests RM25**
 RSVP: mcgevents@yahoo.com

The Orang Asli are not homogenous. With 18 official ethnic groups, these are a diverse people with numerous languages, culture & belief systems. Yet, despite their differences, they share many things in common. Being indigenous minorities (with the smallest, the Kanaq of Johor at one time only had 44 individuals), their collective identity goes beyond woven head-dresses and blowpipes. Orang Asli today try very hard to maintain their languages, traditional beliefs, crafts & culture in a wired world. In this talk, we will showcase their own efforts to maintain their cultural heritage in order to better understand who the Orang Asli are and how they struggle to balance modernity & tradition.



Photo by Reita Rahim

We will be hearing from Reita Rahim, who is the founder and co-ordinator of Gerai Orang Asli (Gerai OA), a non-profit mobile stall selling Orang Asli and Orang Asal handicrafts, plus books/cds/video documentaries for educational purposes. Reita travels all over Malaysia sourcing from many villages and is instrumental in helping crafts people with designs to suit the Kuala Lumpur market.

MEMBERS' CULTURAL CORNER

THE POWER OF FIRE AND WATER AT A BRICKFIELDS TEMPLE



After an intensive renovation, a 12-year reconsecration ceremony was held at the Sri Kandaswamy temple in Brickfields on the new moon of the Hindu month of Thai. Such ceremonies are very sacred as they renew and strengthen the power of the deities in temple. Hindu priests came from Sri Lanka and joined with local priests to lead the nine-day ritual prayers, which culminated in the ceremonious pouring of holy water over the



temple pinnacles, witnessed by a crowd of thousands. I began visiting the temple, with my camera, during the early days of the rituals and observed as a combination of fire, water, sacred threads and the repetition of mantras transformed the temple and rejuvenated both its deities and its community. All Hindu temples undergo these ceremonies so watch for the telltale scaffolding around a temple near you.

The Sri Kandaswamy temple is one of KL's most beautiful. It was founded, and is maintained, by the Sri Lankan community. The main deity of the temple is otherwise known as Lord Murugam, of Thaipusam and Batu Caves fame. I was told that this Brickfields temple is a rarity because the main altar houses a Vel and not a deity. The Vel is the lance carried by Sri Kandaswamy, which was given to him by his mother, to assist him in overpowering evil forces, something he apparently does quite well.



Symbolism was abundant during this ceremony, from a lovely shape that represents the mother's womb, to sprouting seeds, to gold wires strung between smoky fires, pots of water and sacred idols, all of which came together in a mesmerizing mantra on the power of belief.

Text and photos : Cheryl Hoffmann



Seen anything interesting in SE Asia recently? Tell us about it and we'll put your story here. Please send us an email at: mcgnewsletter@yahoo.com

REPORTS ON PREVIOUS EVENTS

THAIPUSAM—RITUALS AND BELIEFS

The presentation format adopted by Cheryl whereby a detailed briefing is provided before the event has much to commend it. The illustrated talk upon the Thaipusam Tamil festival that was provided one week before the main event left nothing out from “what may be seen at Batu Caves”. We were immersed in the sights, smells and sounds on the day of our visit three days later as it seemed that worshippers and followers had all been well briefed upon how to really wow the onlookers. The festival, (which can attract more than one million worshippers and onlookers), is characterised by a heady mix of organised chaos and passionate zeal, although to me it was never threatening. The various ritual preparation venues are chosen for their auspicious location rather than their aesthetic appeal, the most popular being on waste ground



under a road bridge, (the attraction being its location alongside the Holy River flowing from the Batu Caves). Cheryl had provided all manner of detail concerning each aspect of the festival, as, whilst all devotees seemed totally sincere, there seemed to be no hard and fast rules with many interesting variations in costume and ceremony.

In brief, the festival commemorates the occasion when ‘Parvati’ gave ‘Lord Murugan’, her youngest son, a ‘vel’ fighting weapon with which to overcome the demon ‘Soorapadman’. A ‘kavadi’ is carried to thank ‘Murugan’ for responding to a plea for help and the God can be implored for support in coping with the burden. The simplest ‘kavadi’ can vary from a simple ‘palkudam’ bowl of milk

or a semicircular decoration on a short wooden pole carried on the shoulder, and the largest is carried by the devotee on the inside and may have up to five ornate tiers of peacock feathers surmounted by an image of the God. Babies are also taken to the shrine swinging in a sheet tied to a sugar cane pole carried by the parents.

On the night before the Festival, a five ton silver chariot bearing a statue of ‘Murugan’ is pulled in a fire-lit procession from the ‘Maha Mariamman Temple’ in Chinatown for the 15 kilometre journey to Batu Caves. It was said that families and friends talking to ‘kavadi’ carriers believe that they are conversing with the God, and who am I to say that they are wrong.

Devotees cleanse themselves through prayer, celibacy and fasting for a month or so before the festival. On the day of their devotions, followers often have their head



shaved and have yellow turmeric paste smeared on their heads before they bath and cast their



locks into the Holy River. Intricate rituals are performed, although again inconsistent, which culminate in bearing the ‘kavadi’ in procession and up the 272 steps to the Temple. It is readily apparent that ‘kavadi’ carriers are closely supported by family and friends, both throughout their extensive preparations which often include entering a trance before having their skin

pierced with *vel* skewers, as well as on their subsequent journey to the Temple. Many devotees have the traditional third eye as well as the triple stripe of ‘Vibhuti’ sacred ash smeared on their bodies. Whilst the atmosphere seems to be highly charged with testosterone, closer observation indicates some women undertaking similar devotions but perhaps in a more serene manner. In fact, for me, the most memorable moments concerned the times when a small group identically dressed women were ready to depart and formed a short disciplined line as they peacefully carried their milk pots out of the bewilderment and onto the teeming road for the short journey to the Temple.

Stuart Wakefield—text and photo; Cheryl Hoffmann—photos

CHINATOWN WALKING TOUR



Clear blue skies and colourful spring decorations for the Chinese New Year greeted us outside Central Market. Before heading out to Sin Sze Si Ya temple, our group gathered at Precious Restaurant for a talk by our guide Loh from the Central Market’s complimentary walking tours.

Chinese New Year always comes around spring time between January 21 and February 20. Other than the 12-year cycle of the animal zodiac, the year is also associated with the five elements: water, fire, earth, metal and wood. This produces a 60-year cycle; thus a Chinese decade is 60 years as opposed to the Gregorian 10.



According to legend, New Year started with a fight against a monster that was on the loose, attacking and eating crops, animals and people, especially little children. Thus villagers started laying out food as offering to the beast in the hope that the food will stop it from attacking them. One time they realized that the monster ran away from a child wearing red. Hence celebrations for CNY started with decorative red lanterns and fire crackers to scare the monster away. Eventually a monk caught the monster and killed it.

To welcome the New Year, it is the custom to spring clean your home the day before and after but not on New Year’s Day. On New Year’s Eve, all brooms, mops and cleaning equipment are locked away so that one does not sweep the year’s good fortune away. Offerings of fruits and rice cakes are put at the altar to welcome the gods. The living room is decorated with blossoms and paired banners are hung with good wishes such as “May you enjoy continuous good health” and “May the Star of Happiness, the Star of Wealth and the Star of Longevity shine on you”. To celebrate, the families visit the elderly and each other bearing gifts such as oranges, tangerines, and a *lai see* (red envelopes filled with money).



Children and the unmarried receive money in the famous red envelopes. The food normally represents something positive. For example, oranges and tangerines are symbols for abundant happiness. It is believed that appearance and attitude during New Year’s sets the tone for the rest of the year; so, red, a bright happy color, is the color of choice for the celebration, and negative unlucky words are avoided.

With this background information we headed on to Sze Ya Temple, the oldest Taoist temple in Kuala Lumpur. The temple was built by Kapitan Yap Ah Loy, one of the founders of KL, in 1864. Built on what was originally a plantation, the temple is dedicated to Sin Sze Ya and Si Sze Ya, the patron deities of the residents of Kuala Lumpur. It is believed that Sin Sze



Ya and Si Sze Ya guided the people during the Selangor Civil War and lead them to triumph. Having drunk water that had blood from their pricked fingers, they were blood brothers to Kapitan Yap Ah Loy. He wanted to honour them by building the temple.



Continued over page.....

The temple is a fine specimen of traditional Chinese architecture, based on Feng Shui principles. It is the custom to build the temples on a hill. As there was no hill in the city, they made one. The temple was built so it faced the river. It has 4 pillars and according to custom, gold is laid in the foundation. The colors used reflect the five elements; red-fire, green-wood, yellow-earth, black-water and white-metal.

As you stand at the entrance, 2 lions, a male and female guard the doorway. Next time you visit, try to see which one is the female; look for a cub under one of the paws! There is a main hall with two symmetrical chambers on either side. On New Year's Day devotees come bearing gifts to the deities and praying for health, fertility, wealth, beauty, mercy, good fortune, or for passing an exam. The temple is famous for its charity work, as a portion of its income is donated to charitable causes, and educational and medical purposes.

As no celebration is complete without food we stopped by a Chinese store once we left the temple to get a feel for the preparations. Waxed duck, pickled jelly fish, birds' nest, dried octopus, chillies, shrimp, fish and sea cucumbers! These were just a few of the items we got to see after which our group headed on to sample a traditional Chinese New Year meal.

Lina Saadi

Central Market tours will have their office on the second floor of market starting March 2011.

Walks are complimentary and are conducted daily at 10:30 meeting at the information desk at Central Market.

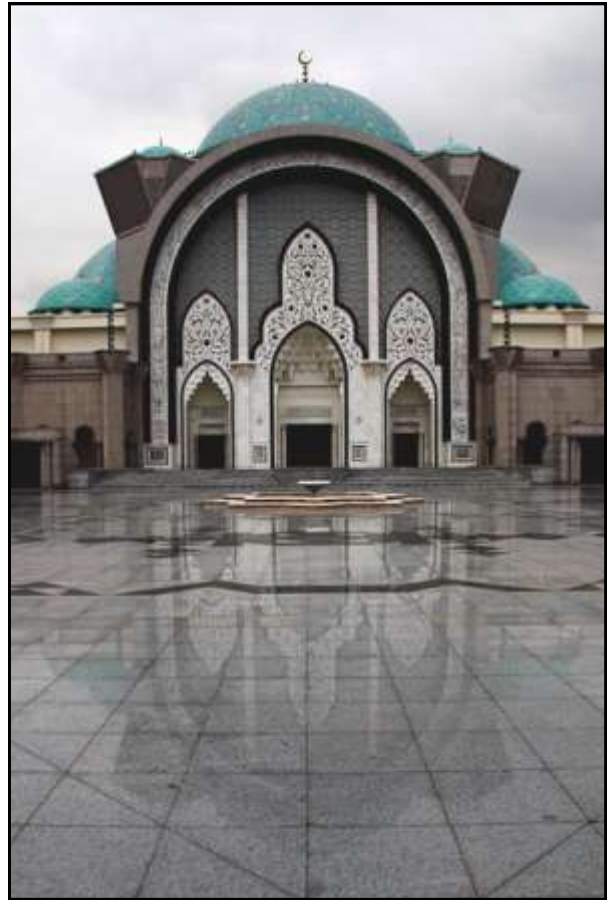


Photos by Lina Saadi and Vicki Fennessy

TOUR OF MASJID WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN

Many of us have driven down Jalan Duta and marveled at the impressive blue domes of the Masjid Wilayah Persekutuan, or Federal Territory Mosque, as we've passed by, but few stop to explore the enormous mosque complex. On Thursday, 27 January, members of the mosque and tour leader Bob Borhanuddin welcomed a group of MCG members and MVM Volunteers to tour this stunning mosque and learn more about what can often be misconstrued by outsiders as a mysterious religion.

Our group started the morning visit with a short video showing us the highlights of what we would see during our walking tour. The 47,000 square foot, 244 million ringgit complex can hold 17,000 worshippers, and includes rooms for weddings, funerals, conferences and lectures, and classrooms for children's classes. The mosque's 22 beautiful blue domes are reminiscent of the domes of the Blue Mosque in Turkey. The mosque was inspired by the architecture of mosques in Egypt, Turkey, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, but also features Malaysian craftwork done by artisans in Terengganu and Kelantan, and marble imported from India.



Bob and his team of friendly outreach volunteers led us through ablutions, where we cleaned our hands and feet, before gathering us in the main prayer room for a discussion of the main tenets of Islam. Sitting on a few of the 1400 prayer rugs in the main hall, our group asked Bob questions about the daily calls to prayer, the importance of the Koran, the Friday noon prayer, and the roll of the mosque community in wed-

dings and funerals. We then left the main prayer hall and walked throughout the mosque complex, which offered views of the city and a peaceful atmosphere for reflection.



After the walking tour, we gathered back in the reception room, where the outreach volunteers shared with us an unexpected but very much appreciated buffet lunch and a thoughtful door gift with more information about the mosque complex. The volunteers welcomed us to bring our friends and visitors back any day between 10am and 6pm, and recommended calling their office on +60-3-6201-8791 to arrange a tour for anyone who is interested in learning more about their community and the mosque itself.

**Text and photos
By Lauren Massy**



BOOK GROUPS

BOOK GROUP 2

The Sweet and Simple Kind by Yasmine Gooneratne

Eight members of Book Group 2 met at Sue Nelson's home on Wednesday, 26th January 2011, to discuss The Sweet and Simple Kind by Yasmine Gooneratne. A lively discussion ensued followed by an equally enjoyable lunch with a Sri Lankan menu.

The Sweet and Simple Kind is a long (630 pages) family saga based in Sri Lanka – or Ceylon, as it then was – at the time of Independence in 1948, with the personal stories written against the background of a country about to enter a new and uncertain future. Many true events are written into the novel as a backdrop to the story of two female cousins, Latha and Tsunami who embrace the new mood of the country by attending the prestigious university of Peradiniya in Kandy. There they meet people from all walks of life who come from very different backgrounds, both economically, politically and racially.

The possibilities of marriage weigh heavily on the girls throughout, sound arranged marriages being the bedrock of Sri Lankan society at the time. However, Tsunami's father's love marriage to a cultured Indian lady falls apart, causing outrage and disbelief when she flees the country with her husband's estate Manager. Latha's own parents' marriage is more traditional and survives, largely due to the benign temperament of her father.

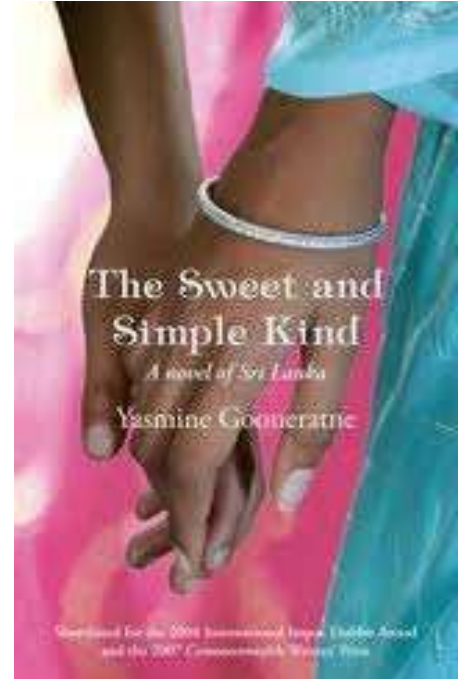
Set against the backdrop of a Tea Estate in the Hill Country of Sri Lanka, and the beautiful grounds of the University in Peradiniya, the book is visually enchanting whilst at the same time revealing uncomfortable truths about the class structure of the country and the unpleasantness of a caste system.

The Group enjoyed the book, with one or two giving it a fifty percent approval; all found it easy to read and interesting despite not being familiar with the country nor its recent history. We agreed that the characters were not defined as much as they could have been but some felt that this was an advantage in that it gave us the freedom to 'colour' in their personalities ourselves. The first and last chapters we all found disappointing, the first for its rather vague relevance to the story, the last because it was too brief after such a long book.

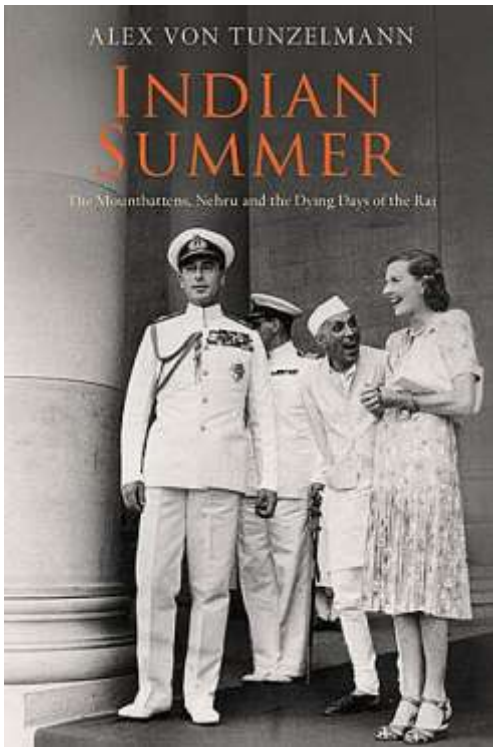
Sue Nelson



Author Yasmine Gooneratne



BOOK GROUP 3



Indian Summer by Alex von Tunzelmann

Eleven of us met at Ana Palomo's house on January 26th for a lively discussion of Indian Summer: the secret history of the end of an empire by Alex von Tunzelmann, published in 2007.

Popularly promoted as a history of the affair between Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, and Edwina Mountbatten, the wife of the country's last English viceroy, it is in fact a scholarly account of the build-up to the end of the empire. The affair is covered in the book, but it is just a small part of the bigger story.

The first half of the book explains the events and personalities in Indian and British politics up to the summer of 1947. Von Tunzelmann is particularly witty and insightful in her portrayals of Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah and both Mountbattens; for instance, Mountbatten's colourful and somewhat disastrous war record is described, as are Gandhi's unusual methods of testing his own celibacy.

The second half of the book depicts the events of the summer of 1947 as India careered towards independence and towards partition into the two separate nations of India and Pakistan. Von Tunzelmann clearly charts

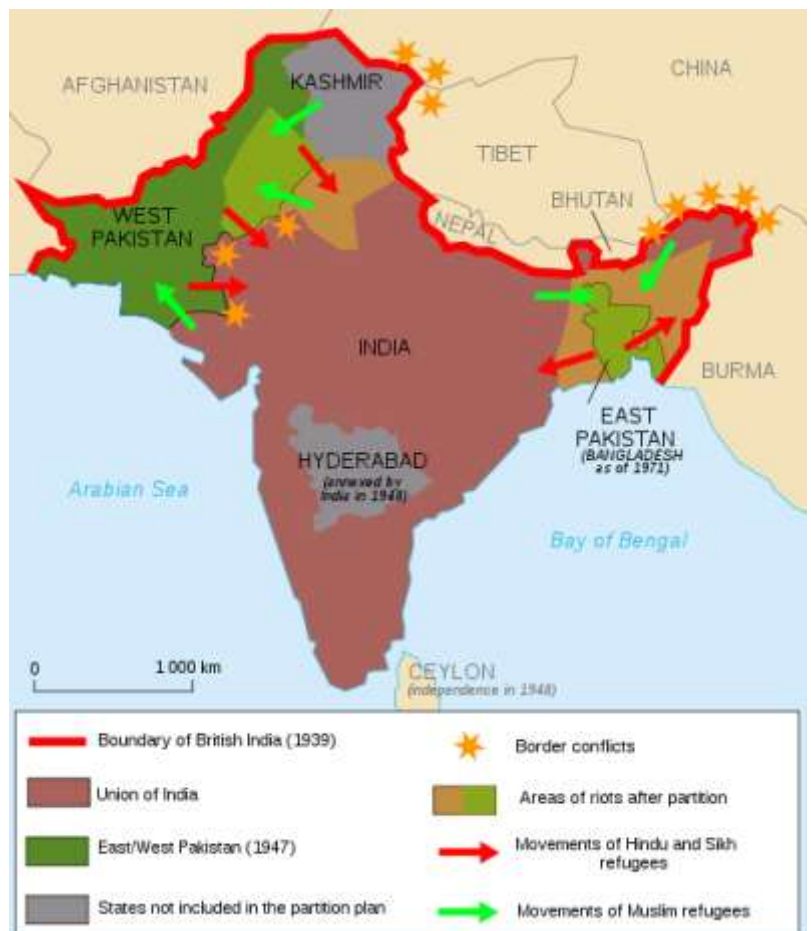
the inevitability of the chaos that followed.

There is still controversy over the nature of the relationship between Nehru and Lady Mountbatten. Von Tunzelmann was not allowed access to the private letters held by the two families. Well-advanced plans to turn the book into a film foundered over the Indian government's insistence that the relationship between Nehru and Edwina was a deep and lasting friendship and no more. Edwina Mountbatten died in Sabah in 1960 with letters from Nehru strewn on her bed.

This is a well-researched popular history. Although it is not always an easy read for the novice to Indian history, von Tunzelmann's wit and light touch carry one through. The maps, footnotes and fascinating photographs are most helpful.

Book Group 3 would recommend the book to anyone interested in the history of the partition of India. Our discussion was greatly aided by the presence of group members with personal experience of India.

Alison Harrison



Courtesy of Wikipedia

ENAK!

January Enak! To Foong Foong Yong Tau Foo

On a typical tropical day in Kuala Lumpur, the Enak! Group braved the hot and humid mid day weather and busy lunch time traffic to check out the infamous Ampang Yong Tau Foo at Foong Foong restaurant. We were justly rewarded with a wonderful array of stuffed tau foo, vegetables, won ton soup and fried won tons.

Yong Tau Foo 釀豆腐 (spelt numerous ways, eg. yong tou fu, yong tou foo) is of Hakka origin with Hokkien and Teochew variations. This dish can be found in various restaurants and food courts in China, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. The literal translation of Yong Tau Foo is stuffed bean curd. The original Hakka version consisted of firm bean curd cakes stuffed with a mixture of meat and fish (sometimes with bits of salted fish) which is then braised or deep fried, served dry or in a broth.



Over time, the term Yong Tau Foo has been used to liberally include variations from this. Different types of stuffed vegetables like bitter gourds, lady fingers (okra), brinjals (egg plant) and even shitaki mushrooms are stuffed. Depending on which country Yong Tau Foo is served, this dish is served with either peanut sauce, spicy tangy sauce, sweet brown soya sauce, curry or chilli sauce. In various food courts, noodles can also be served. Foong Foong restaurant has been in business in Ampang since 1974 and they are by far the busiest Yong Tau Foo restaurant in the area. It is located along a busy road (Jalan Besar Ampang) and parking can be challenging during peak times. We were told that only the freshest ingredients are used. If the owner is unable to source these, they will not serve that particular dish. All the food items we were served came out piping hot and fresh..

Placing our order at the restaurant was an interesting experience. Instead of a waiter coming up to ask us what we would like, we had to go up to the counter to place our order. The person in charge conveyed our order to the kitchen using a microphone. The order was repeated back over the PA for confirmation. Our table number was followed by the number of pieces of Yong Tau Foo we had ordered and any other orders like bowls of rice, soup or vegetables we might have placed.



Continued over page.....



The kitchen is out in the open right next to the dining area and large piles of vegetables could be seen sitting on the counters at various stages of the process. Huge vats of oil or broth heating on stoves can also be found, boiling away.

As soon as we were all seated and our orders placed, our utensils were served to us in a basin of hot water. Side plates, spoons and sauce dishes were soaking in the hot water. It was a comforting thought that these were being sterilized.



Overall, the food at Foong Foong was wonderful. Our meal cost us RM54.60 altogether, drinks included and we all agreed that we would head back for more in the future!

The address for the restaurant is 621-A, Jalan Besar Ampang, 68000, Ampang. It is opened daily from 10am to 7pm everyday but Tuesday.

Charlotte Sanders—text and photos



Kumpulan Kebudayaan Malaysia
 Kuala Lumpur & Selangor
 Malaysian Culture Group

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 Application Form**
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2011 Membership Form

Membership fees: Annual Membership: January —December 2011 RM 60
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MCG is run by volunteers. What would you like to do in 2011?

- ___ Write a report about a meeting
- ___ Assist with Events Planning
- ___ Assist with membership
- ___ Give a talk about _____
- ___ Occasionally provide a venue for meetings
- ___ Something else?

Do you have any expertise or experience to share with MCG?