

Kumpulan Kebudayaan Malaysia Kuala Lumpur & Selangor Malaysian Culture Group

Newsletter of the Malaysian Culture Group

May 2011

MCG PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

MCG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	Wednesday, 04 May
BUDDHISM OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN	Wednesday, 11 May
TRAVEL TIPS : SRI LANKA	Wednesday, 18 May
ISLAMIC ART MUSEUM EXHIBIT : AL-ILM - SCHOLARS, SCIENTISTS AND INVENTORS	Thursday, 28 May
FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH LECTURE: THE BABA AND NYONYA—O.C.B.C.?	Wednesday, 01 June

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

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.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

Greetings from your Vice President. It has been an interesting few months since my return to Kuala Lumpur and taking on the position. It is great to be back in the MCG fold. I certainly missed it when I was in Vietnam.

It is not too late for you to register for the AGM on the 4th May, 2011. If you are attending could you please rsvp to me on veep@malaysianculturegroup.org as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements for catering, seating etc.

The AGM is a short meeting during which the committee is elected and our audited financial accounts are presented, together with any other business required. We need to ensure that we have a quorum of members attending so that the AGM can proceed, so please do come and support us.

This year we will be holding the AGM at the relatively new National Textile Museum opposite Merdeka Square. The formal proceedings will be followed by a private screening of the documentary *Aku Siapa* which deals with the subject of why Malaysian Muslim women wear the hijab. There will be coffee and refreshments together with an added bonus of a guided tour of the museum for those who are interested.

Our revised Constitution, with the changes voted on at last year's AGM has finally been approved by the Register of Societies and can be view on the following link <http://www.malaysianculturegroup.org/Committee/MCG%20SEC%20Constitution%20Approved%20Feb-11.pdf>

After the AGM, I will be taking over the position of Events Planning Convenor from Sue Nelson who is resigning after a busy 18 months on the Board. I would like to thank her, and all the other leaving Committee members, for their hard work over the last year. In fact I would like to thank all the Committee members for their hard work over the last year!! Without a vibrant and hard working Committee, the MCG would not be what it is. Most of the hard working Events Planning team have also resigned due to other commitments, so I will be looking for new members of the team. If you think that you could contribute some time and energy in this capacity please drop me a line.

I look forward to meeting you at future events.

Michelle

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOTICE OF AGM

All Members of the Malaysian Culture Group are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Malaysian Culture Group on 4-May-11, at the Muzium Tekstil Negara, 26 Jalan Sultan Hishamuddin, Kuala Lumpur. Registration will commence at 09:30 and the Meeting will start at 10:00AM. All Members will receive details, of the Meeting Agenda, AGM 2010 Minutes, Motions for discussion, Committee Reports, Committee Nominations and the Auditors Report. These will be sent to the registered email address of each member, by 26-Apr-11.

Stuart Wakeman
Secretary

Please join us, after the AGM, for a private showing of “Aku Siapa”, a new documentary about why Malaysian-Muslim women wear the hijab. The Director, Norhayati Kaprawi will lead a discussion after the screening. This special event will be followed by coffee and refreshments. The Director of the Textile Museum has also kindly offered guided tours of the Museum after the AGM event.

When registering for the AGM, at veep@malaysianculturegroup.org

please indicate whether or not you would like to participate in the guided tours. See the bottom of the next page for directions to the Textile Museum.

Michelle Pease
Vice President



A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY
NORHAYATI KAPRAWI
with English subtitles

AKU SIAPA

(WHO AM I)

The National Textile Museum is housed in an elegant Moghul-styled building flanked by the Sultan Abdul Samad building and the Daya Bumi complex at 26 Jalan Sultan Hishamuddin , Kuala Lumpur. Tel : 03-2694 3457 / 3461.
Ample parking at : Merdeka Square carpark, Dayabumi and Central Market and at the Restoran Warisan
For directions, visit the Website: www.jmm.gov.my

UPCOMING EVENTS

MALAYSIAN CULTURE GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DATE: **Wednesday, 04 May 2011**
 TIME: **9.30 am for 10.00 am start**
 PLACE: **National Textile Museum**
Jalan Sultan Hishamuddin, 50050 KL
 COST: **Members only—no cost**
 RSVP: veep@malaysianculturegroup.org



**Your attendance is requested at our
Annual General Meeting**

We will be electing a new slate of candidates for the Committee and voting on important revisions to the Constitution.
The AGM proceedings will be followed by an exclusive screening of “Aku Siapa” a new documentary about why Malaysian Muslim women wear the hijab.
The Director, Norhayati Kaprawi will lead a discussion after the screening.

**We invite you to join us for this special event
followed by coffee and refreshments**

THE BUDDHISM OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

DATE: **Wednesday, 11 May 2011**
 TIME: **10.00 am for 10.30 am start**
 PLACE: **Meritz Condo, opposite KLCC**
 COST: **Members RM15, Guests RM25**
 RSVP: mcgevents@yahoo.com



In this talk, MCG member, Sapna Walia will explain to us the teaching of Nichiren, a 13th-century Japanese priest, whose teachings have inspired millions of people. In 1975, the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) was founded as a worldwide network of Nichiren Buddhists. It is dedicated to a common vision of a better world through the empowerment of the individual and the promotion of peace, culture and education, by embracing the Lotus Sutra, the core of the teachings of Nichiren.

More than 12 million people in 192 countries practice this type of Buddhism and there are a lot of testimonies to its success. Tina Turner, Orlando Bloom, Italian Footballer Roberto Baggio are some famous Soka Gakkai Members. This talk will focus on how individuals can apply Nichiren Buddhism to the challenges of daily life and achieve their highest potential.

Sapna Walia, has been practicing this Buddhism for the past six years. Please join us as Sapna shares what she has learned about Nichiren Buddhism as she has seen it in action in India, the US and Malaysia.

TRAVEL TIPS : SRI LANKA

DATE: Wednesday, 18 May 2011
TIME: 10.00 am for 10.30 am start
PLACE: Meritz Condo, opposite KLCC
COST: Members RM15, Guests RM25
R.S.V.P mcgevents@yahoo.com



Sri Lanka, formerly called Ceylon, and often referred to as the Pearl of the Indian Ocean, has become readily accessible to Malaysia with the advent of low cost flights from KL on Air Asia. It is an island of immense natural beauty with lush tropical forests and white beaches, and a diversity of landscapes, from the dry south ,through the verdant hill country full of tea estates, to the cultural triangle to the north and east, making it an ideal tourist destination. It is not expensive to hire a car and a driver (who will speak English) and circumnavigate the entire island, especially now that the danger of the war in the north has been removed.

Hotels are plentiful and VERY stylish; Sri Lankan architecture was created by virtually one man, Geoffrey Bawa, and examples of his particular style are to be found throughout the island. The hotels range from the very expensive, especially in and around Galle in the South, to more modest, catering for mass tourism; Eco hotels are becoming popular. Food is essentially HOT, rice and curry being the national dish, although most hotels will serve Western food as well. Colombo, the capital, still boasts some Colonial architecture, namely the Galle Face Hotel, as well as a part of town called Cinnamon Gardens, resplendent with huge white colonial villas, now sadly being threatened by the creeping development of condominium blocks.

Shereen Costlery and Sue Nelson will take you on a journey around this beautiful, sometimes frustrating, but unfailingly fascinating island.

AL-ILM – SCHOLARS, SCIENTISTS AND INVENTORS – AN EXHIBITION AT THE ISLAMIC ART MUSEUM

DATE: Thursday, 28 May 2011
TIME: 10.00 am for 10.30am start
PLACE: Islamic Arts Museum, Jalan Lembah Perdana
COST: Members RM15, Guests RM25
RSVP: mcgevents@yahoo.com



We are always excited when a new exhibition comes to the beautiful Islamic Arts Museum and we are indeed fortunate that they are willing to provide one of the exhibition’s curators to accompany us on the tour.

The latest exhibition is entitled Al-Ilm, Scholars, Scientists and Inventors, which highlights the invaluable contributions made by Muslims over the centuries and around the world.

Please join us for a guided tour of this Exhibition and make time for lunch afterwards in the Museum’s stunning restaurant. Don’t forget - the Gift Shop is one of the best in KL!



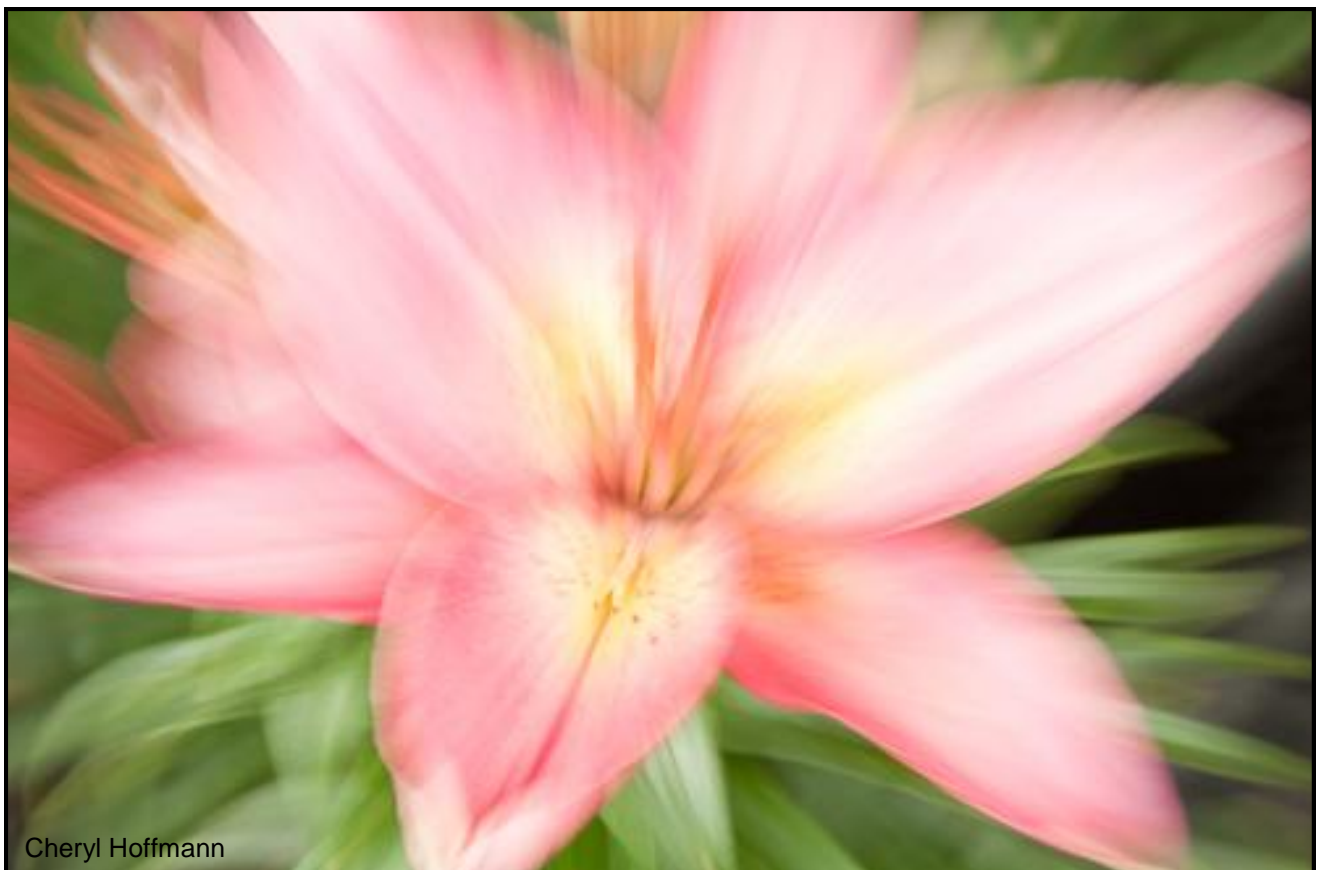
**FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH LECTURE :
THE BABA AND NYONYA - O.C.B.C.?
AN INTRODUCTION TO PERANAKAN CULTURE**

DATE: Wednesday, 1st June, 2011
TIME: 10.00 am for 10.30 am start
PLACE: Meritz Condominium, opposite KLCC
COST: Members RM15, Guests RM25
RSVP: mcgevents@yahoo.com



Baba & Nyonyas are sometimes mistaken as a local community as they have adopted local costumes and speak in the local patois. In the eyes of the diehard Chinese, they are deemed as 'O.C.B.C. - orang cina bukan cina' (chinese and yet not chinese). This talk will delve on the this issue and walk you through some markers of this unique culture and will leave the audience to ponder if the above remark holds true.

The MCG is pleased to welcome back this excellent speaker into our midst. Cedric Tan is a 6th descendent Baba from Malacca and is actively researching and promoting Baba & Nyonya culture in Malaysia and Singapore. He has been a culture consultant in most Baba & Nyonya events in Malaysia amongst which includes the promotion of Nyonya Kebayas by the late YBhg Datin Seri Endon Mahmood and various Peranakan exhibitions in Muzium Negara, Kuala Lumpur. He is reviving the traditional Baba wedding and actively shares his thoughts and articles on the culture in the quarterly Peranakan newsletter issued by the Singapore Peranakan Association. He is also the Honorary Secretary of the Peranakan Baba Nyonya Association of Kuala Lumpur & Selangor



Cheryl Hoffmann

To those of you celebrating - HAPPY EASTER!

REPORTS ON PREVIOUS EVENTS

SMART OPERATORS

26 Members found their way to the SMART Tunnel Headquarters, although some with greater ease than others; (my excuse was that the building I pass at least three times every week has very effective camouflage). The “Storm Water Management & Road Tunnel” was initially conceived as a flood mitigation project that subsequently developed into the world’s first single tunnel solution for both floodwater and traffic management. The SMART Tunnel construction project was completed in 2007 and the Joint Venture group that built and now operates the system opened the tunnel with a never-to-be-repeated one month toll free use. SMART Tunnel Headquarters are well used to visitors and show an interesting documentary film of the design, construction and operation of the system. In our case the film was followed by a lengthy Question and Answer session. The visit had its ‘gee whiz’ moment when the blinds were raised in front of the audience at the completion of the film to reveal the ‘Command Centre’ with its 72 CCTV screens being calmly monitored by two controllers.



The automated structure has a large water reservoir at each end of the dual purpose tunnel which is itself is divided into three levels with a lower water passage plus two road passages above for vehicle traffic. Built-in safety features include the provision of traffic separation in each direction, fifteen emergency exits and telephones situated every 250 metres plus six ventilation and escape shafts situated every kilometre. There are also specialised ‘Fire Emergency and Rescue’ vehicles based at both Jalan Pudu and Jalan Tun Razak. The ‘SMART Ronda Team’ continuously patrols the road system and provides free-of-charge assistance for all vehicle emergencies, accidents and breakdowns. When required, the two road passages can be closed to traffic and used as additional water channels. However, two days are normally required to fully clean and inspect the fabric, to test the facilities and to undertake required repairs.

Happily for those whose existence depends upon mobile phone accessibility, communication can be continued

SMART IN FIGURES

Construction Cost	RM1.93 bill
Construction Time	4 years
Tunnel diameter	13.2 meters
Tunnel Structural Rings	3,071
Road Tunnel Length	3.2 km
Storm Water Drainage Length	9.7km



within the tunnel. In addition, comfort can be drawn from motor bikes and lane changing being banned, the 60 kph speed limit together with the recommended 10 metres between vehicles. It is pleasing that such discipline provides the SMART Tunnel system with one of the highest safety standards for tunnel motorway operations in Malaysia.

Stuart Wakefield—text



Robert Tyabji—photos

Trip to New Zealand December 23, 2010 – January 9, 2011

Two teenagers, a dad and a mom traveled to New Zealand in the recent December school break 2010. In those 18 days, including the flights, they made a small tour of the North island and a bigger tour of the South island. Below is a bullet point list of how they organized their 10 stops, the hotels, the traveling and some facts of this amazing and breath taking country. If you are planning a trip to New Zealand, feel free to email Joanneke on Joanneke.verweil59@gmail.com

- Look at: New Zealand Tourism and www.accomodationinnewzealand.co.nz For Motels, Bed & Breakfast, Hotels, Apartments etc.
- Use the Lonely Planet New Zealand for activities and restaurants . Very practical to have a NZ map with a timetable to organize your route and Google: “Travel Times and Distances in NZ.” We also used a GPS.
- Direct Flight KL- Auckland is 10 hours and 10 minutes. Now also with Air Asia!
- Roads are very good. Maximum speed is 100 km.
- Thursday **Dec. 23:** Flight Kuala Lumpur-Auckland; Departure 21:35pm and Arrival in Auckland Friday Dec. 24, 12:50am
- Sunday **Dec. 26:** Drive Auckland-Rotorua is 3.5 to 4 hours. Duxton/Rotorua. Hotel: “Duxton Okawa Bay” 3 nights. Surfing At Mount Maunganui. Visit to Rotorua Museum of Art & History and Buried Village of Te Wairoa.
- Wednesday **Dec. 29:** Drive Rotorua – Mata Mata – Auckland is 4 hours. Visit Hobbiton Movie set and Farm (www.hobbitontours.com) This tour in Mata Mata is 2.5 hours. Flight Auckland-Christchurch at 19.30-20.50 (and back 1072,- NZD) Hotel Christchurch: “Off The Square.”
- Thursday **Dec. 30:** Drive Christchurch-Kaikoura is 3.5 hours. Kaikoura. Apartment: “Waves on the Esplanade.” Highly Recommended Apartment! Whale Watch (410 NZD for 4 persons).
- Friday **Dec. 31:** Drive Kaikoura-Lake Tekapo via Mount Cook is 6 hours. Lake Tekapo. Cabin: “Lake Tekapo Motels & Holiday Park.” **January 1, 2011;** Hike to Mount John.
- Sunday **Jan. 2:** Queenstown. Hotel: “Tanoa Aspen Hotel.” DON’T BOOK THIS HOTEL ! Drive from Lake Tekapo to Queenstown is 5 hours.
- Monday **Jan. 3:** Drive Queenstown-Manapouri is 3 hours. 3 nights Stay at “Motor Inn: Lake View Manapouri.” Highly Recommended!
- Tuesday **Jan. 4:** In Manapouri. Boat Cruise (Real Journeys) to Doubtful Sound (500 NZD for 4 persons).
- Wednesday **Jan. 5:** Drive Manapouri- boat to Milford Sound is 2 hours. Boat Cruise to Milford Sound (200 NZD for 4 persons). Don’t cancel it when it is raining, boats are partly covered; the more rain, the more waterfalls!
- Thursday **Jan. 6:** Drive Manapouri-Queenstown is 3 hours. “Tanoa Aspen Hotel”, DO NOT BOOK IT.
- Friday **Jan. 7:** Horse riding close to Arrowtown. Drive Queenstown-Oamaru (Penguintown) is 5 hours. Motel: “Highfield Mews.” Highly Recommended Motel.
- Saturday **Jan. 8:** Visit Penguin Centre. If you want to see the colony of Blue Penguins visit the centre after 5.30pm (www.penguins.co.nz). Drive Oamaru - Moeraki Boulders – Christchurch is 6 hours. Hotel in Christchurch “Off The Square”again.
- Sunday **Jan. 9:** Flight Christchurch – Auckland – KL. Departure: 08:55am and Arrival in KL: 20:05pm



Text and photos by
Joanneke Verweil

'UNITY IN DIVERSITY – THE ORANG ASLI OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA'

A cross-section of new and long-time members of MCG attended the April 06 lecture titled "Unity in Diversity – The Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia" given by Ms. Reita Rahim.



The name, Orang Asli, refers to the indigenous minorities of peninsular Malaysia. They are part of the "Orang Asal" (the indigenous peoples of Malaysia) which also includes the Natives of East Malaysia (the Dayak & Orang Ulu of Sarawak, and the Anak Negeri of Sabah). Although categorized under one name, the Orang Asli are not a homogenous group, instead, there are 18 sub-ethnic groups. Their total population is small, making up less than 1% of the population of Malaysia. The Orang Asli now live in rural and semi-forested areas. Each group has its own language and traditions; some groups are known for their weaving abilities, while other groups are proficient in wood carving. The Mah Meri (also known as Hma' Meri or Hma' Btsisi) live along the central western coast of Peninsular Malaysia, however, the majority of Orang Asli live in the centrally located forested areas. For those of us who spend most of our time in the larger cities, you may occasionally meet younger Orang Asli who are part of the urban drift.

Ms. Rahim told us that there is evidence to suggest that the Orang Asli lived here before the Malays. They lived in remote jungle villages, which may have contributed to their being discriminated against and called derogatory names. With the rise of the Malay sultanates in the 18th and 19th centuries, there was a demand for cheap labour and one source for this cheap labour was Orang Asli settlements. The men were often killed and the women and children taken captive and sold as slaves. As a result of the raids, the Orang Asli withdrew into more remote locations.

When the British came to the Malay peninsula, there were attempts to stop the slavery of the Orang Asli. During the Malay Emergency (1948 – 1960), the Orang Asli played a role in defeating the Communist insurgents.

Despite changing times and attitudes, life is still difficult for the Orang Asli. Due to re-groupment schemes, a number of Orang Asli communities have been resettled into areas away from their traditional homelands. In some cases, relocation has caused greater hardship to the population either because of the location of the new settlement or due to the lack of natural resources. Remoteness of their villages limits their access to schools and health care. Ms. Rahim showed emotion when she talked about land being taken away from different communities without prior notification, discussion or compensation.

With the numbers of knowledgeable elders dwindling, increased emphasis is being given by the Orang Asli to the preservation of their language, music and traditions. This is being done through the sharing of knowledge by the old to the young, through education and also through community programs. One of the community programs is Gerai OA (Indigenous People's Stall). Reita Rahim, our guest speaker for this lecture, is the founder and co-ordinator for Gerai OA. She and her small group of volunteers have helped to set up mobile stalls for the promotion and sale of traditional Orang Asli products, with 100% of the proceeds flowing back to the artisans or their communities.

Randee Duncan—text



GOA Mobile Stall



Photos—Cheryl Hoffmann and Vicki Fennessy

EXPLORERS

Explorers, March 14, 2011

Tour and Write up by Polly Szantor and Kathryn Tan

If you're anything like me, you'll have a sadly out-of-date bottle of soy sauce sitting on a shelf in your fridge or cupboard. Since I desperately needed a new bottle, it was ideal that the March Explorers' trip took us to a soy sauce factory. Fifteen Explorers met in Balakong, on the southern edge of KL, to visit Yuan Woh Soy Sauce Factory, where a variety of soy-based products are still made in the traditional way.

This family-run business was established more than 50 years ago by the father of the current owner. The family lives on the premises, and we were welcomed into their large living room. We began our visit with a brief introduction to the history of soy sauce, including information about the different types of this important condiment so common throughout much of Asia. Next



we watched a slide show to learn how traditional brewing differs from the more popular chemical method. Most remarkably, the traditional way takes 6 months or more, while the sauce can be made in 3 days using acid hydrolyzed vegetable protein. Before touring the factory, the traditional fermentation process was explained in detail, and we watched a short video. We also had a chance to sample the A1 sauce, which is the best quality. The taste and aroma is in all ways superior to any product I've tried before.

A rich, earthy smell permeates the yard. First, we visited the cleaning area, where plastic

jugs are scrubbed for reuse, and the storeroom where the ingredients are kept: soy beans from Canada, sea salt from Australia, flour, sugar, liquid caramel for the dark

sauce, sodium benzoate to inhibit microbial growth and a live culture to increase fermentation. Next, we looked at the areas where the sauce is actually made. The beans are steamed over a wood fire for 24 hours, and dried slightly. They are then mixed with flour and culture and spread to dry further for 3 days. Finally they are transferred to huge vats lined up in the yard, and brine is added. They are left to ferment in the sun for 5 to 6 months, and are covered with lids overnight and when it rains. We were glad to hear that the thick crust on top of the vats is always discarded.



When fermentation is complete, the liquid is siphoned off the beans, and moved to smaller vats where it's mixed with sugar. It sits for a further 6 weeks, and is then bottled as the A1 sauce. The vats are topped up with salty water four more times to produce the other grades of sauce. Yuan Woh supplies plum sauce, 5 varieties of soy sauce and 3 types of bean paste to restaurants and stalls all over Malaysia. Before moving on, many members took advantage of the opportunity to purchase the excellent, premium soy sauce and several other sauces.



Our next stop was to visit a Chinese temple in Cheras Selatan, dedicated to Kuan Ti, the Taoist god of righteousness and chivalry. Buddhists honor him as their protector. Taoists often visit Kuan Ti temples at Chinese New Year to give thanks for blessings received and to seek his continued protection in the coming year.

To complete our outing, we had a delicious lunch at Tien Xia Restaurant, adjacent to the temple.

I'm happy to report that I now have a new bottle of excellent soy sauce in my fridge, and when I run out, I'm planning to return to Yuan Woh Soy Sauce Factory for a replacement. If you would like to venture there yourself, the address is: No. 449A, Jalan 19, Salak Selatan Baru, 57100 Kuala Lumpur

Polly Szantor and Kathryn Tan – tour and write-up;



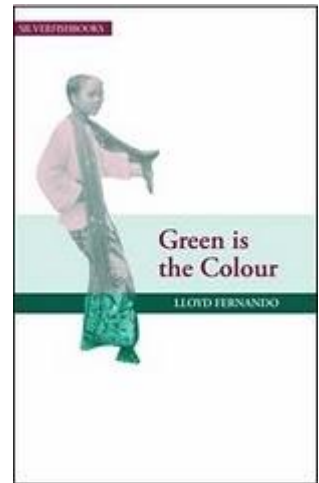
Cheryl Hoffmann - photos

BOOK GROUPS

Book Group 1

Green is the Colour by Lloyd Fernando

Green is the Colour was the novel chosen by Book Group One for its March meeting. It was published in 1993 but is based on the infamous May 13th 1969 incident in which race riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur following a general election. The main concern of the book is how people of different races managed to get along particularly after these riots. In this story an artificial togetherness (Ministry of Unity) has been created to prevent further incidents. Fresh violence breaks out and the main characters, all of different races, religions, and political persuasions, are severely tested and affected depending on their levels of tolerance. Fernando takes a somewhat radical approach to the multicultural society giving it a rather Orwellian direction. He seems to have been able to touch on issues normally quite sensitive in Malaysia regarding interracial conflict and race relations and show just how fragile the Malaysian identity is.



“Nobody could get May sixty-nine right, she thought. It was hopeless to pretend you could be objective about it. Speaking even to someone close to you, you were careful for fear the person might unwittingly quote you to others. If a third person was present, it was worse; you spoke for that person’s benefit. If he was Malay, you spoke one way, Chinese another way, Indian another.”

Although many were lukewarm about the book, it certainly generated a great deal of excellent discussion. Some of our members had lived in Malaysia during the May 13th episode and had personal stories to tell. We were disappointed that, except for possibly Siti Sara, the characters were not well developed. In addition the story did not flow smoothly leaving one stumbling to figure out what was happening. A major distraction was the seemingly poor editing with many errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling. I queried Silverfish, the publisher, about this; they reported that this is a reprint since Fernando’s wife has sole rights to the manuscript and would not allow any changes. This book was the first to be written in English about ‘the sixty-nine riots’ along with some possible long term outcomes. Is Green the colour of Islam? Envy? Hope? We found no definitive answers.

Joanne Mahendran

Wesak
May 7, 2011

**Celebrated by Buddhists
the world over to mark the
enlightenment of Buddha**



Cheryl Hoffmann

Book Group 2

The Disappeared by Kim Echlin

In The Disappeared, Canadian author Kim Echlin tells the story of a romance so raw, passionate and romantic that it almost defies comprehension. The romance is set against a backdrop of a human tragedy so evil and horrific, that it too defies comprehension. Love and loss was the theme of Book Group 2's discussion of the novel for March.

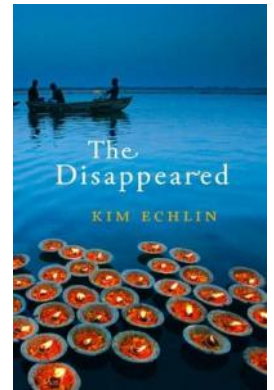
It was almost love at first sight for 16 year old Anne Greves and Cambodian refugee Serey when they meet in a Montreal blues bar. Anne is a student in high school; Serey is a math tutor, sent to Montreal by his family to escape the atrocities of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. Their relationship quickly becomes all consuming—much to the dismay of Anne's widowed father, and they come to realize that it is their destiny to be together.

For four years in Montreal, Serey had no news of his family in Cambodia. When the Cambodian borders reopened to him after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, Serey returns to search for his parents and brother, with a promise to Anne that they will stay in touch. Ten years pass but Anne has no word from Serey. She dedicates herself to finding him—she studies the Khmer language, flies to Phnom Penh, and hires a tuk tuk driver to take her through the streets in search of him.

The lovers are reunited, and quickly resume their passionate romance. But there is an edge. Serey's parents have been killed, his brother no longer the same boy he left behind. The country has been devastated by genocide. There is much that Serey wants to hide from Anne. When Serey ultimately goes missing after a street demonstration, Anne sets out on yet another search for her lover, which culminates in a gripping and horrifying act of love.

In spare prose, The Disappeared is written as if it's a love letter to Serey. Interestingly, the author described in an interview that the "testimony of those who have suffered in war or genocide...is very pared down. People say, 'I was tortured,' 'I was raped,' 'I was thrown in a mass grave and managed to get out.' There is little embellishment, no metaphor, and little description beyond the plain recounting of the event. I wanted my style to reflect this kind of language: spare, essential. This is the place language begins, in very direct communication between two people." Our group found the language of the book to be very compelling, and would recommend The Disappeared as a very powerful read.

Pam Gartner



Book Group 3

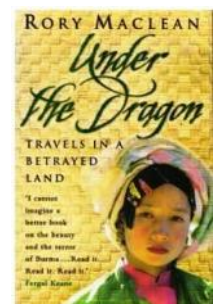
Under the Dragon by Rory MacLean

For their March meeting Book Group 3 read 'Under the Dragon' written by Rory MacLean. Most members enjoyed reading the book as the lively style makes the book pleasant to read. However they would advise you not to read the preface by William Dalrymple. It can easily put you off reading the book altogether, as it is a bit pompous. In the preface, it is stated that the writer gets emotionally involved with the book's subject, Burma, but it was thought that he got more emotionally involved with his wife, who was accompanying him on his journey, than with the people of Burma.

He and his wife were traveling around Burma in search of a particular basket. This search set them off on their journey. In general this was thought to be a pretext and a bit too contrived. Although the political situation curbed his freedom to write openly about people's lives, there was some doubt as to whether he actually met some of the people whose lives he described. In this respect some considered the book more a novel than a travel-book. Consequently we wondered how realistic his description is of the political situation in Burma and the living conditions of its people.

Although a lack of reference was felt in general, three of our members who had actually been to Burma could recognize the places pretty accurately from his description, as well as the difficulties in getting around in Burma. Above all they recognized the kindness of the Burmese people as they had encountered this themselves in various ways. Summed up we would recommend this book to anyone who doesn't know much about Burma. Afterward you will know a bit more about the way of life of the Burmese people. Overall the book gives you an enjoyable read and a bit of an insight into Burmese society.

Anita Olthof





Kumpulan Kebudayaan Malaysia
 Kuala Lumpur & Selangor
 Malaysian Culture Group

**Member
 Application Form**

2011 Membership Form

Membership fees: Annual Membership: January —December 2011 RM 60

Pay with PayPal via the website or mail a cheque with this form to:

form to:

**Joanneke Verweil
 70 Lorong Chong Khoon, Lin 3,
 68000 Kuala Lumpur
 Malaysia.**

	First Name	Surname	Nationality
Member			
Spouse/ Partner			
Address			
Postcode			
Telephone	Are you interested in:		
Handphone	Book Group _____		
Email	Explorers _____		
Enak! _____		

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?