

PERANAKAN IDENTITY FORUM: WHO AM I?

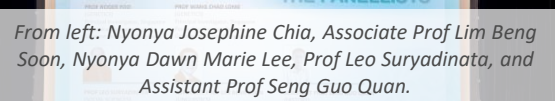
On 2 August 2019, the Peranakan Association organised the “Peranakan Identity Forum: Who Am I” at the Asian Civilisations Museum. The Peranakan Identity is one that has been much debated. This forum served as a platform for lively and open discussion about the ways Peranakans are defined – by genetics, language, cultural practices, and way of life. It was attended by almost 200 guests, including Ms Chang Hwee Neo, CEO of the National Heritage Board.



From left: Prof Wang Chao Long, Prof Roger Foo, Associate Prof Lim Beng Soon, Nyonya Dawn Marie Lee, Baba Colin Chee, Nyonya Josephine Chia, Prof Leo Suryadinata, and Assistant Prof Seng Guo Quan.



Profs Wang Chao Long and Roger Foo



From left: Nyonya Josephine Chia, Associate Prof Lim Beng Soon, Nyonya Dawn Marie Lee, Prof Leo Suryadinata, and Assistant Prof Seng Guo Quan.



Scientists from the Genome Institute of Singapore (GIS), Professors Roger Foo and Wang Chaolong, kicked off the forum by presenting snippets of their findings from a ground-breaking study of Peranakan DNA collected from Singapore Peranakans in 2017 and 2018. The results will be published at the end of 2019.

The forum also hosted a discussion with a panel of scholars comprising Prof Leo Suryadinata (Senior Visiting Fellow, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute), historian, Assistant Prof Seng Guo Quan (Department of History, National University of Singapore), Associate Prof Lim Beng Soon (Head, Malay Language and Literature programme, Singapore University of Social Sciences) and award-winning Peranakan author, Nyonya Josephine Chia. The panel was moderated by Nyonya Dawn Marie Lee, Editor, THE PERANAKAN magazine. Members of the floor was invited to join the discourse, pose questions to the panelists and share their views on Peranakan Identity.

“It was very meaningful to work with the Peranakan community for this project. Although not Peranakan myself, it is a great privilege for Singapore to have this special heritage that we can be proud of. Moreover, to use genetic tools to study it makes it especially meaningful.”

Prof Roger Foo, Senior Group Leader, GIS



“It was a great event to exchange our research findings with the Peranakan community and advance our understanding of the population history. In particular, this forum brought together experts on social sciences, history, and linguistics. It was very exciting to see that our genetic findings are consistent with evidences from these other areas.”

Prof Wang Chaolong, Scientist, GIS

“Thank you for a lovely evening! It was a success. Feedback from the audience was exceptional. They all loved it, without exception.”

Baba Colin Chee, President, The Peranakan Association Singapore



“This forum has shed much light on the Peranakans’ vibrant and colourful cultural heritage, as well as genetic history. As a Peranakan myself, it is an exciting step in decoding of our genetic past and towards making better health choices for the future.”

Prof Patrick Tan, Executive Director, GIS



For more on the Peranakan DNA study, watch Channel News Asia: Singapore Tonight’s interview on 15 July 2019 with Prof Roger Foo and Nyonya Dawn Marie Lee [here](#).