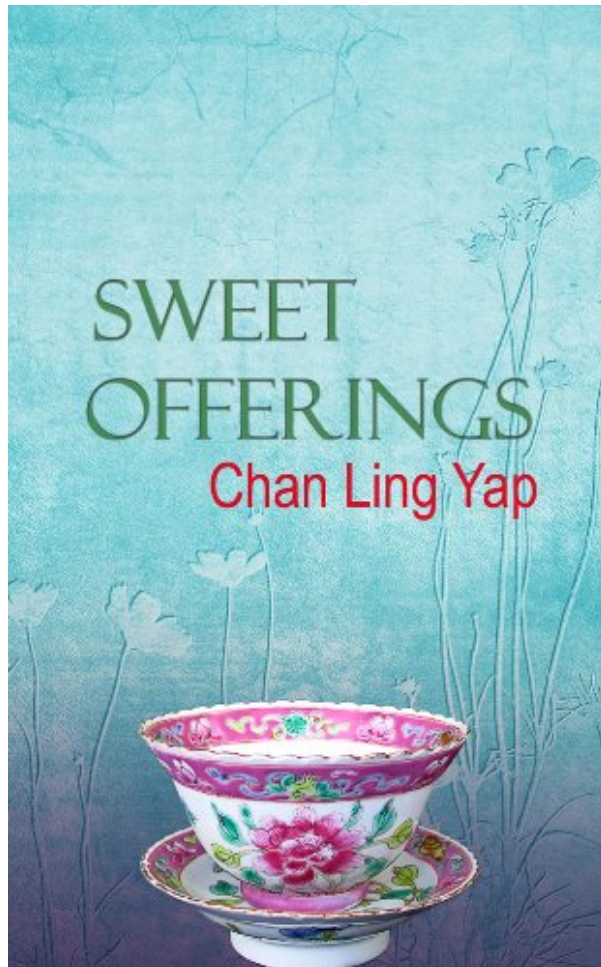
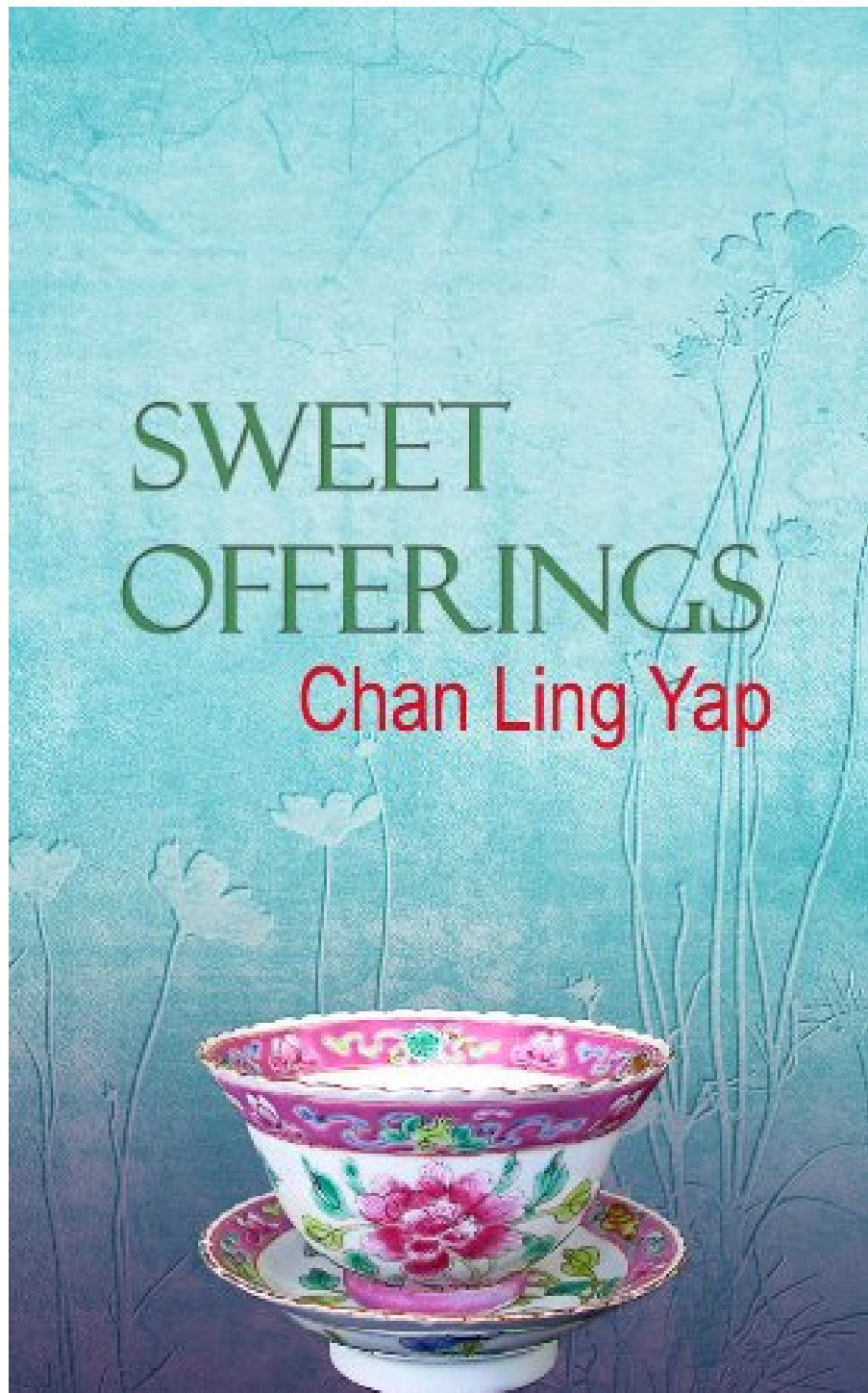


# SWEET OFFERINGS BY CHAN LING YAP



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Chan Ling Yap was born in Kuala Lumpur. She was educated in Malaysia and subsequently in England where she obtained a PhD in Economics. She lectured at the University of Malaya before joining the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation in Rome, where she worked for 19 years. She now lives with her husband in the UK. She has written several technical books and many academic and professional papers. Sweet Offerings is her first novel.

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Set in the late 1930s and 1960s, this is the tale of Mei Yin, a young Chinese girl from an impoverished family. Her destiny is shaped when she is sent to Kuala Lumpur to become the ward and companion of the tyrannical and bitter Su Hei who is looking for a suitable wife for her son Ming Kong...and ultimately a grandson and heir to the family dynasty. "Sweet Offerings" is not just a fictional story of the events that ripped one family apart, but a taste of Malaysia's historical political and cultural changes during its transition from colonial rule to independence and beyond.

- Sales Rank: #922578 in eBooks
- Published on: 2013-07-24
- Released on: 2013-07-24
- Format: Kindle eBook

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A story of emancipation!

By Smita Singh

Sweet Offerings by Chan Ling Yap is a novel published by Pen Press. This is one of those novels which doesn't say much to the readers by its humble cover but the moment they start reading it, it takes over them. It is a hard to put down novel with exquisite intricate details of cultural life in Malaya.

The story is basically about emancipation of the main character Mei Yin during the times in 1930s but the author has deftly taken this simple storyline to the next level by including an interesting trip through the history of Malaysia from colonialism, through the second World War, independence and up to the late sixties.

Written from the point of view of various female members of an ethnic Chinese family living in Malaysia, it covers the transition from a poverty struck and traditional way of life to the formation of a modern state.

Through the events happening within one family over three decades, the author takes the readers into a different world, the world that is now Malaysia that adapted to change and the way it was affected by world events. The readers find out how difficult it was for women to have any control over their lives and how often they were treated as assets or bargaining counters.

An example of the kind of poverty could be seen in these lines where a mother bargains to get her daughter a play mate, "I mean, if the girl's get on well, I would like them to attend school together. I will pay Mei Yin's fees."

Although the author highlights the evil traditions that a female in those days had to face in Malaya, in some ways the main character Mei Yin defies all that. So on one hand the readers learn about the horrid things happening to various female characters, on the other hand they learn to appreciate the silent strength of Mei Yin.

The novel is also about the enduring love story of two main characters Ming Kong and Mei Yin and it proves that love prevails even when the situations are impossible.

Some interesting excerpts,

"That's because the British made cricket popular in India. What's fashionable there still influences Indians here. Anyway, the Chinese are not interested in games, only gambling ones,"

"The British had only ships in these waters and the Japanese sank both of them," " Remember the British have the Germans to contend with. They are fighting many fronts, not only in Malaya. We should pray for all those who have lost their lives."

There are a few obvious editorial glitches in the book but the story pulls the readers away from them and takes them into its own world. Overall a much enjoyable read and would recommend it to everyone.

By Smita Singh

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Fictional introduction to the history of Malaysia

By HB

I chose this book as I am interested in learning more about Malaysia, and thought that a novel would complement the history book I had just read. This story of a ethnic Chinese family in Malaysia - and particularly of its women - was an easy read, with the family story set against the backdrop of Malaysian history over the second half of the 20th century. Great literature it was not, but a pleasant (well, not always pleasant as it deals with the subordinate position of women) story, with descriptions of different places in Malaysia. It feels as if it were written with the foreign reader in mind, which gives it a bit of an artificial flavor, but does make it accessible to that foreign reader.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Sweet Offerings

By Fiona

This book told me so much about an area of the world and a time in history that I knew little about. The voices of the characters seemed really authentic and the trials and difficulties of the main character were brought vividly to life. I enjoyed it so much I've now bought Chan Ling's latest book and I'm looking forward to reading it.

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