

# THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 1995

NO. 1/95

Restricted Circulation

## EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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Helen Tan, Lim Geok Huay

For Members Only

**W**ith this bumper issue, we take the opportunity of wishing our readers "Selamat Taon Baru".

We have had the extremely good fortune of being able to present an array of articles ranging from David Ong's moving call for our involvement in the welfare of our elderly Peranakans, to Gwee Thian Hock's thought-provoking statement that not enough is being done to attract young Peranakans into our fold; to Anthony Oei's informative coverage of the Penang Convention; and to Felix Chia's enlightening contribution on Baba nicknames.

As a follow-up to David Ong's plea, The Peranakan Association has written to a number of old folks' homes for a list of names of elderly Peranakans whom we would like to visit and render whatever assistance we can.

We have received prompt responses from these homes, and as soon as plans have been finalised we shall ask for volunteers to enrol in this project.

## PANJANG PANJANG UMOR

by  
David Ong

**W**e live in a time that would seem to be marked by an unprecedented interest in almost all manner of things Peranakan.

Tickets for Peranakan plays are often sold out long before performance dates and books on Peranakan jewellery, Peranakan cooking, Peranakan furniture, Peranakan beadwork and embroidery, Peranakan silverware, Nyonyaware, and so on, abound in our bookshops.

Peranakan buffets and cuisine, whenever and wherever they are promoted are often more than well-patronised. And so has membership of The Peranakan Association in Singapore during the past two years.

The Association's bi-monthly dinner/talks are, thank goodness, well supported, and the Annual Dinner & Dance continues to be an ever popular event for the Association's members and their friends.

Even the recent trip to the Baba Convention in Penang attracted a contingent of more than 30 "diehard" Singapore Peranakans, their friends, relatives and fans of the Peranakan culture and cuisine.

However, be that as it may, some of these thoughts crossed my mind after I had, some weeks ago, chatted briefly with a couple of elderly Bibiks and Encheks at a Christmas party which had been organised for the residents of a Home for the Aged.

These elderly folk reminded me so much of some long-gone Chek Kongs and Chim Pohs whom we used to wish "Panjang Panjang Umor" on their birthdays and, especially, at Chinese New Year.

My heart grieved at the thought of how and why, despite the current resurgence of interest in things Peranakans, so little attention had been given to our very own Peranakan senior citizens.

While I am not saying that all of the Peranakan residents in Aged Homes have been abandoned by their families, it is a fact that many of them are destitute, with no immediate relatives, and are living on Public Assistance.

Although 60 is the official age for eligibility of Public Assistance, many of the Bibiks and Encheks in these Homes are, I am sure, more than 80 years old.

Grieved as my heart is that many of these often gentle and well-spoken Peranakan ladies and gentlemen receive so little attention from their own bangsa, it always excites me to think of the possibilities that exist for members of the Peranakan Association who wish to involve themselves with some of these less fortunate Bibiks and Encheks.

These could include regular visits to them, especially if done on a more personalised, so-called, "Adopt a Bibik or Enchek" programme; taking them to see a Peranakan play or attend a Peranakan Church Service if they are Christians; or, if they are more traditional in their beliefs, then to their favourite "beo" or "chye tng" if they want to semayang on auspicious days; or bring them a pot of ayam buah keluak or bakwan kepiting.

The list of possibilities can go on and on. But, whatever is done, the important thing is that it is done in a personal way, with lots of love and, as far as possible, with the Peranakan patois as the means of communication.

The love that is expressed in the care and attention that is given to these Bibiks and Encheks will, I am certain, bring that extra burst of sunshine to their twilight years.

Most of all, it will delight them to know that while they may have thought that the Baba Community had long since been extinct, there are still many of us, albeit from another generation, who are very much alive, and who not only care for things Peranakan but also for the Peranakan people - especially those who are destitute and alone with nothing but memories of happier times in days now since long gone.

Panjang Panjang Umor, Bibik.  
Panjang Panjang Umor, Enchek.

## A REFLECTION

by

William Gwee Thian Hock

**A** couple of days before her sudden death, a dear Nyonya lady friends of mine invited me to her home for a chat.

Although born and bred in the traditional Baba Peranakan home about 75 years ago, she had been among the rare breed of girls of that era to have been allowed to complete her English education.

During her younger days when she was a career woman, she had found it fashionable to opt for a western lifestyle and, natural enough, to altogether abandon her nyonya ways in her own home.

After her retirement, in a classic example of a born-again syndrome, she attempted to regain her lost nyonya heritage by giving her ardent support to the proliferation of Baba-culture activities (e.g. plays, seminars, talks, exhibitions, dinners, sales, publications, etc.).

At this last conversation with her she confided in me that, apart from her personal efforts to relive her nyonya lifestyle, she had also endeavoured to draw her children, who were in their late 30's, as well as her school-going grandchildren, back to the fold, but found that it had been to no avail.

Not only had they continually declined her invitations to join her at the Baba culture events but they had also returned unread her Baba publication gifts because they were totally unable to identify with and relate to the Baba community with whom they had

been complete strangers since birth.

Thus, with her death, nothing remains of their true-blue Baba ancestry among her descendants.

This lady's episodes, of early neglect of her Baba-Nyonya heritage followed by later regrets and subsequent vain attempts to reintroduce them to her family members, is far from singular. It is in fact the all too familiar story of many families of Baba origin.

Although there has been no dearth of Baba-related activities, this lady and very many others had clearly not enjoyed any tangible benefits from them.

Beyond merely providing entertainment and nostalgia to satisfy ad hoc cravings of the born-again older and middle-aged members of the Baba community these programmes have had no impact whatsoever on the vast majority of the younger generation upon whom the survival of their community rests.

As such, it is perhaps not untimely for organised Baba bodies or individuals responsible for Baba culture activities to reappraise their roles and to brainstorm plans aimed at achieving results which will lead to the perpetuation of their community rather than continue to be satisfied of the large turnouts of the same elderly crowd, but leaving the all-important young indifferent.

Success must not be measured by attaining a "revival of interest" only, but by the ability to attract our youth. Only then can we ensure the survival of our community.

## ANNUAL DINNER & DANCE A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

**S**unday 27 November 1994 was a night to be remembered by those present at the Sheraton Towers Hotel to celebrate the Annual Dinner & Dance commemorating our Association's 94th Anniversary.

The event was a resounding success made poignant by the unique opportunity afforded to the large assembly of Peranakans and their friends to gather around forty tables under one roof; to get acquainted with each other during the "cocktail hour" preceding the dinner; to soak in the Peranakan atmosphere created by Mr. Peter Wee's handicraft and food items stalls manned by young men and women in Peranakan attire; and to be touched by the presence of two elderly ladies in wheel chairs who had made the wonderful effort to come and be with us.

In his welcoming speech, our President Dr. George Tay announced with great pleasure that Mr. Wee



Kim Wee, our Guest of Honour, had accepted our invitation to become an Honorary Life Member.

Judging from the capacity crowd present and the enthusiasm of 13 guests who signed up their membership application forms that evening Dr. Tay was encouraged to happily and proudly observe that the Peranakan community was still alive and not yet ready to be designated as an endangered species.

Mr. Wee Kim Wee, in the course of his reply, urged both the Peranakan Association and The Gunong Sayang Association to seriously keep in the back of their minds the thought of a fusion of the two Associations at some future date.

After the speeches, the spotlight turned on the actors of the Gunong Sayang Association who left the audience in stitches at the antics of the characters portrayed by G. T. Lye, Sally Gan and Jessie Cheang in a presentation of a sketch entitled Jembatan Merah or Red Bridge.

The surprise of the evening was the spontaneous guest appearance on stage of an octogenarian Bibik, Madam Lee Joo Gim (the mother of playwright Mr. Felix Chia) who recited a few pantuns, one of which we reproduce below:-

Jelatang pokok jelatang  
Bunga durian kembang pagi.  
Serta berpuchok daun pun datang  
Serta berdaun ber panjang lagi.

Amidst the stinging nettle  
The durian flowers bloom in the morning.  
Accompanying them are the leaves,  
And with the leaves come survival.

Among the official guests, besides Mr. & Mrs. Wee Kim Wee, were Mr. Timothy De Souza, President of The Eurasian Association and Mrs. De Souza, Dato Khoo Keat Siew, President of the Persatuan Peranakan Cina Pulau Pinang and Datin Khoo, and Mr. Charles Koh, President of The Gunong Sayang Association and his committee members.

## **PENANG BABA CONVENTION A GREAT SUCCESS**

Special Report  
by  
Anthony Oei & Lee Kip Lee

**F**or five days in December 1994, the Novotel Hotel in Penang was alive with the sights and sounds of Peranakan Chinese culture as some 100 Babas and Nyonyas from Singapore, Malacca and Penang

descended there to attend the 7th Baba Convention.

The scene was full of Nyonyas in alluring sarong kebaya and Babas in colourful batik shirts, while the air reverberated with their chatterings in the unique Baba Malay patois.

The Singapore delegation comprised about 30 from the Peranakan Association and the Gunong Sayang Association. It was the largest number from Singapore ever to attend a Baba Convention in Penang.

Malacca, however, did better with a busload of 44 members amongst whom it was refreshing to see were many young participants. It augurs well for the future of the culture

### **Function graced by presence of Governor of Penang**

**T**he presence of TYT Yang Di Pertua Negeri Pulau Pinang, Tun Dato Seri (Dr) Haji Hamdan bin Shaik Tahir added importance to the occasion. His Excellency officiated at the opening ceremony at the hotel's Penang Ballroom on 2 December, and also graced the Convention Dinner with his presence the following night at the 74th Anniversary of the State Chinese (Penang) Association.

### **Opening Ceremony**

**I**n his address at the opening ceremony, Dato Khoo Keat Siew, President of the Association said that although some academicians had described the Peranakan culture as a "dying culture" he personally believed that, no matter what the prophets of doom decreed, there was a chance for us to arrest the decline and revive the spirit of our culture.

"It is with this idea in mind," continued Dato Khoo, "that the past Baba Conventions were staged, and it is important for all of us to continue with this commitment if we wish to see a resurgence of our culture.

"The good news is that the younger generation are showing interest today in tracing their Baba ancestry and rediscovering their cross-cultural links.

"It remains to be seen as to whether this development is a flash in the pan or a real renaissance. However, what is of paramount importance is that the Babas and Nyonyas themselves must have faith in their own culture and show a good example to the younger generation.

"We should try our level best to continue practising our customs and observing our traditions right in our homes. For the best place to pass on our culture is at the home, where the heart is."

## Presidents' Reports

Following the opening ceremony the Presidents of the four Associations presented their reports in the course of which Malacca gave an account of their "chongkak" competition, collection of antiques from members, and recruitment of more young Babas to help organise next year's convention to be held in Malacca.

Penang, on the other hand, had included ballroom and folk dancing as part of their activities, and had also embarked on a project to set up a Baba Museum.

Singapore announced the success of their bi-monthly gatherings at which, after dinner, members adjourned to a function room to listen to a talk, whilst the Gunong Sayang Association gave details of their script-writing workshop.

## Debate

The above proceedings were followed by a debate on a motion proposed by the Penang Toastmasters' Club that THE PERANAKAN BABA IDENTITY IS IRRELEVANT TO PRESENT SOCIETY.

Those who spoke in favour of the motion cited the ignorance of and lack of interest in our culture by our youth as evidence to support their contention. They enquired as to how a dormant and almost dead culture could have any bearing on the activities going on in the modern world.

However, the opposition countered with the observation that the very attendance of so many delegates at the Convention was living proof of the presence and relevance of the Peranakan Identity.

In reply, the proposers pointed out that such Peranakan presence and relevance were confined within the four walls of the hotel ballroom beyond which they had no impact whatsoever on the outside world.

## Seminar at U.S.M.

On 3 December delegates were taken by coach to the impressive campus of the University Sains Malaysia for a talk on PERANAKAN ARCHITECTURE by Mr. Haidar b. Kassim, lecturer, School of Architecture, USM.

The speaker dwelt on the evolution of Peranakan Architecture from the timber-walled shophouses of the early 18th century to the Straits Eclectic Shophouses of 1900 - 1940 with their facades decorated with plastic renderings, to the Art Deco Shophouses of 1940 - 1960

with their long and thin rectangles, circles or continuous horizontal bands on their facades.

The other category of Peranakan Architecture was the colonial bungalow, splendid examples of which can still be seen in the mansions along Northam, McAlister and Burmah Roads in Penang.

## Convention Dinner & Concert

The highlight of the Convention Dinner at the hotel was the Nyonya Fashion Show presented by Mr. Michael Cheah, some of whose models paraded in their own exquisite "baju panjang" and sarongs with "bimpohs" slung over their shoulders.

The happy evening ended with The Gunong Sayang Association's presentation of cultural dances and a skit which the audience loved especially when the lines were interspersed with Baba Hokkien.

At the cultural concert at the USM a group of Nyonyas - all middle-aged and matronly - stole the limelight as they elegantly sashayed across the stage in a dance routine, swinging the "tempat sirehs" held in their hands.

## PENANG CONVENTION VIGNETTES

By  
Anthony Oei

## Hospitality Most Supreme

It was the kind of hospitality which would be difficult to match. And the man behind the organisation was none other than Dato Khoo Keat Siew, President of the State Chinese (Penang) Association.

No stone was left unturned by the amiable Dato Khoo, his wife Datin Khoo and his associates to make our stay comfortable and memorable.

The sightseeing tours gave us a good glimpse of Penang and its people, not to mention a taste of the famous food of the Pearl of the Orient at Guernsey Drive where we stopped on a night tour of Penang City after a farewell dinner at the Tanjong Country Club almost next door to our hotel.

Talking about food! There was plenty of it! Four meals a day to be exact, all provided for under the package programme. It included the food cooked at the poolside competition where a Nasi Ulam dish was awarded the top prize by the judges - our President, Dr. George Tay, and Madam Wee Cheng Neo.



## A Teacher-Pupil Meeting

**G**atherings like the Convention strengthen friendships among the participants and create new friends. Sometimes they also bring together long-lost friends.

For Teresa Oei, the Convention re-united her with Irene Tan Geok Nee, her former Primary Two pupil whom she taught some three decades ago at St. Anthony's Convent!

Teresa was in the holding area at Changi Airport waiting to board the plane with the rest of the delegates when Irene came up to her.

It took only a few moments for Teresa to recognise Irene, who was travelling with her husband Baba Thomas Tan and their two children, as one of her brightest pupils.

## When The Rains Came.....

**F**or our Honorary Treasurer, Helen Tan, it was a minor disaster when, upon arrival in Penang, she discovered that her canvas bag and clothes in it had been drenched by the rain during the loading of the luggage at Changi Airport.

She stormed straight into the SIA office in Penang Airport to lodge her complaint and came out with a compensation which many considered to be inadequate.

Fortunately, Helen managed to salvage one dress which was not thoroughly wet, and despite the ordeal, she was her usual bubbly self, joking and laughing away the whole episode.

## Get Well, Daisy

**D**aisy Chee was another member of the Singapore delegation who had a rough time in Penang.

Soon after arrival she fell ill. Weakened by her ailment Daisy stayed in bed most of the time, missing the welcome dinner by the poolside and the outings.

However, she managed to participate in the Opening Ceremony and the Convention Dinner on Saturday which she attended with her room-mates Lim Geok Huay and Teo Seow Boon.

Sorry this should have happened to you Daisy. Get well soon!

## All thanks to you

**I**f we had an enjoyable and successful trip to Penang, it was mainly due to Honorary Secretary Lim Geok Huay and Honorary Treasurer Helen Tan.

They worked tirelessly behind the scenes, liaising with their Penang counterparts, making the flight arrangements with the travel agent, calling the delegates, delivering some of their air tickets, and doing a thousand other things.

Their work even continued in Penang, accommodating delegates' requests for this and that and all the time keeping cheerful faces.

We could not have asked for more. Thanks a million, Geok and Helen, for a job well done!

## NEW MEMBERS

**W**e bid welcome to the following 19 new members:-

Ms Amy Chiang  
Mr Mickey Chiang  
Mr Chin Teck Huat  
Ms Doreen Chong  
Mdm Maggie Doulet  
Ms Irene Kho  
Ms Katherine Kho  
Mr Alan Koh Tiong Jin  
Mr Frank Lee Chan Hong  
Ms Lucy Lim Geok Eng  
Ms Mabel Lim  
Mr. Charles Low Cheow Lye  
Ms Pamela Ong Yunn Ling  
Mr Gordon Seow  
Mr Dennis Soh Keng Beng  
Mr Freddy Soon  
Mr Bernard Tan E Wei  
Mr Melvin Tan Bee Hong  
Mdm Luise Yeo Bee Lay

## CONDOLENCE

**W**e extend our deepest sympathy to Mr. Raymond Teo on the death of his wife Mrs. Sally Teo.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**O**ur next Annual General Meeting will be held in the afternoon on Saturday 25 March 1995, details of which, including the venue, will be announced in a separate notice. Please keep the date free.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR from Mr. Wee Kim Wee

"I am glad that the Peranakan Association Newsletter is appearing regularly and that the contents are covering a wider field of subjects, which make interesting reading.

Above all, I feel it is serving as a very useful conduit for all Peranakans in Singapore to be informed and to exchange views on subjects of mutual interest.

I am sure if some of your editorial committee members were to have the time to research on Peranakan culture on an ongoing basis they should be able to unearth very interesting topics that can be passed on to members of the community through the columns of your Newsletter.

I wish your Newsletter continuing success."

## GUNONG SAYANG ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

The Gunong Sayang Association will hold its Annual General Meeting in February 1995 and will celebrate its 85th Annual Dinner & Dance on Friday 24 March 1995 at the Orchard Hotel.

## SUARA BABA

We have received from Penang a limited supply of SUARA BABA - THE VOICE OF THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATIONS IN MALAYSIA & SINGAPORE, the souvenir publication of the 7th Baba Convention.

It contains articles on Chap Goh Mei by Raymond Kwok, The Peranakan Culture by Kenneth Cheo and Terms Used By Babas and Non Babas by Lee Liang Hye.

Copies are available on application to the Hon. Secretary.

## DINNER PHOTOGRAPHS

Orders for photographs taken at the last Dinner & Dance can be made at the next Dinner/Talk.

Look out for the announcement of date and venue.

## SURVEY ON MEMBERS' AREA OF INTEREST

We shall be sending members questionnaires to determine their interests in matters of heritage, administration, social events, our bi-monthly dinner/talks and this Newsletter.

Please complete and return them as soon as possible so that we can formulate a plan of action to satisfy the requirements and expectations of members in order that they can take a more active part in the Association's activities.

Any suggestions and feedback will be most welcome.

## CHIRORONG, CHIORENG

By  
Felix Chia

(Culled from his books and experiences)

Like everyone else, the Babas were fond of nicknames. However, because of their culture, they had the advantage of dualism - that of the Chinese and Malay influences.

An interesting example of the few Hokkien nicknames used by the Babas was "Si Pak Boh Siangkan", a label meant for those "who couldn't care less."

Compare this with "Si Tak Perot," literally meaning "The one with no stomach," and referring to an inconsiderate person. You will then discern its connection with someone "who couldn't care less."

The title of this article needs an explanation. It is a derogatory nickname for a couple of "clowns," in this instance, women whom others consider "silly and stupid." These characters could have been created by the scriptwriters of the earlier Bangsawan.

"Si Chirorong, Chioreseng" originated in the Bangsawan (Malay Opera) of the 1930's, notably in the troupe owned by EncheK Kairudin, or "Tairu" to his fans.

Another set of twin nicknames were "Si aide-de-camp terkejut" and "Si aide-de-camp terpranjat" and referred to a "surprised" and a "shocked" aide respectively. These terms applied to those who danced attendance on their wealthier friends in the hope of gaining some favours from them.

The aide-de-camps serving past colonial governors must have inspired the witty Baba who thought of these nicknames.

One of the most apt nicknames to describe an incorrigible miser was "Si taik idong asin" or "he of the salty nose wax," the wax in whose nose was salty enough for him to use it as salt.

Another "gem" was "Si Makan tak comma tak fullstop," which was coined by my mother. It showed the curious idiosyncrasy of the Baba with his penchant for combining English and Baba Malay words. "Eating without comma and fullstop" amply illustrated the voracious appetite of someone who ate at all times of the day and night.

To a Baba, the acronym OTC was not "over the counter." Instead, it meant "Si Otak Tak Centre," or "Not right in the head," a nickname given to a buffoon.

When superstition entered a Nyonya's life she would conjure nicknames to ward off evil from her children. For example, if she was concerned that her pretty young daughter would grow up ugly she would call her "Si Burok" or "Ugly One" in the belief that the opposite would always prevail. And so, by being called "Ugly" her daughter would continue to grow beautifully!

Nevertheless, there were others who called a spade a spade. Hence a "Si Itam" or "Dark One" was nothing more than just that - a dark-complexioned person.

Most nicknames were applicable to both sexes. Sometimes opposites were paired off when a "Si Baba Itam" married a "Si Nyonya Puteh".

What's in a name? To a Baba it meant a lot.

## A LEAF FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

**Thursday, 29th & 30th Friday, May 1958** - The Singapore Pranakan Dramatic Party presented KERHIDOPAN SE BUTA - "a play about old custom marriage with seroni and featuring a genuine sam kek umh (Madam Ah Bee)" - at The Happy World Stadium at 8.30 p.m. sharp under the kind Patronage of Mrs. Lee Choon Guan M.B.E. and First Patron The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Tan Ah Tah in aid of the Red Cross Crippled Children's Home.

The final line of the programme displayed an amusing credit:

"Make up by Max Factor."

## MORE GEMS FROM 'MAS SEPULOH'

(Reproduced by kind permission of  
Mr. William Gwee Thian Hock)

**Anjing kepala busok** - to be ignored and unwanted. (Orang benchi dia. Bila dia datang, orang buat macham anjing kepala busok -He is so unpopular that whenever he comes he is ignored by everyone.)

**Baju Lok Chuan** - loose Chinese jacket and trousers of silk worn by Babas on festive occasions. (Baba-baba dulukala selalu pakay baju lok chuan bila pi orang chia - In the olden days, Babas would wear the silk jacket and trousers whenever they attended a social function.)

**Chakap pantat** - to gossip maliciously - (Sapa suka chakap pantat orang, amek chermin tengok mungka seniri - Whoever likes to gossip should take a look at her own image in the mirror.)

**Dua kali lima sepuloh** - two of a kind - (Susah mo chakap sapa salah, dia dua orang dua kali lima sepuloh - It is difficult to say who is in the wrong. They are two of a kind.)

**Eh, sabas** - My, My! Well done! - (Eh, sabas! Gua dengair lu sua jumpa jodoh - My, My! I heard you have met your beloved.)

**Gorblock** - fool - (Orang tau dia gorblock jadi senang orang tipu dia - Knowing that he is a fool, it is easy for people to swindle him.)

**Gila bayang** - lovesick - (Dia sua gila bayang sama prompuan tu sampay tak makan tak tidor - He's so lovesick that he can't eat or sleep.)

**Jaga pantat** - busybody - (Pasair jaga pantat orang tak orang boleh menang dia - As a busybody, she has no rivals.)

**Mo berak baru charek jamban** - procrastinate until the last desperate moment - (Bukan kata siang-siang mo bikin tu kreja, lu tunggu sampay mo berak baru charek jamban - Instead of completing the job quickly, you waited and procrastinated until the last desperate hour.)



# "THE BABAS REVISITED" BY FELIX CHIA

(Published by Heinemann Asia  
\$15.45 including GST)

A Review by Lee Kip Lee

This volume is a revised third edition of "The Babas" which was first published in 1980.

It is a mine of anecdotal information on our culture and social history and encompasses a wide spectrum of topics including our origins, characteristics, dialect, social life and festivals.

Mr. Chia postulates that a Baba is, by definition, someone "whose first ancestor married, or made a union with, a local woman of the pre-Islamic era. He speaks little or no Chinese at all, but speaks Baba Malay. His more immediate ancestors attended English schools, although his earlier forbears, if they were prosperous, had tutors teaching them the Chinese language at home, and some even received education in China."

In support of his conclusion, Mr. Chia quotes from such authoritative sources as J.D. Vaughn and Victor Purcell.

Readers of Mr. Chia's vintage will relish his accounts, such as of children having to invite a whole string of adults to "makan" before being permitted to tuck into their food at mealtimes; or an exasperated mother screaming "Chilaka! Penyalu! Cherkek darah gual!" to a recalcitrant child; or the rudiments of a "cherki" game; or the manner of calling out the numbers in a Lotto game.

Those of a younger generation will feel the excitement of kite-flying when Mr. Chia takes them on a nostalgic trip "to the golden hours of my boyhood, spent in flying the kites on the abandoned railway line" behind his house in Emerald Hill Road.

They will also be intrigued by his description of the intricate preparation involved in "armouring" kite strings with a concoction of pounded glass and glue, and the aerial dogfights between the "Chap Sotong" and the "Chap Dum Dum" types of layang-layang, and the thrill of chasing after runaway kites.

With the kind permission of Mr. Chia, I am reproducing a few letters in Baba Malay which appear in this book. First, a note from a lady to her uncle:

"My dear Goh Chek,

Saya baniak suka hati dan sudah dengar Goh Chek suda slamat sampay.

Saya harap Goh Chek boleh kirim kan satu baby pram kasi sama saya punya chu-chu, dan saya ada bintang sama Goh Chek. Saya harap Goh Chek boleh tolong charik kan satu baik punya. Lagi pun, Goh Chek tolong tulis satu surat pasal Baba punya estate. Saya harap Goh Chek boleh tolong tengok kan ini pasal.

Tidak apa lagi. Harap Goh Chek sama Goh Chim dan suma ada baik.

Your loving niece."

"My dear Fifth Uncle,

I am happy to hear that you have arrived safely.

I hope that Fifth Uncle will send to my grandchild a baby pram for which I had asked you. I hope that Fifth Uncle will look for a good one. Furthermore, will Fifth Uncle please write a letter about my father's estate. I hope Fifth Uncle will look into this matter.

Thats' about all. I hope Fifth Uncle and Fifth Aunt and all at home are well.

Your loving niece."

Now here is a business letter in Baba Malay:

"My dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Gua ada dapat notice yang Malacca Rubber Treating Co. ada panggil meeting 15th Dec. ini mau confirm itu minutes yang suda passed di meeting 29th Nov. 1921. Kerna nya gua tidak boleh pergi attend itu meeting 15th Dec. kita disini punya shareholders, harap yang lu boleh tolong tengok kan yang itu liquidators punya fee jangan tarok kan telalu banyak, sebab skarang tempu slump dan serdikit pun kalu dapat di kurang kan, serdikit jugak dapat kita merasa nya.

Harap lu ada baik."

"My dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I have received notice from the Malacca Treating Co. calling for a meeting on 15th Dec. to confirm its minutes passed at the meeting of 29th Nov. 1921. Since I cannot attend the meeting of 15th Dec., we the shareholders here, hope that you will see to it that the liquidator's fee is not too excessive, because now is the time of the slump, so whatever little discount you can obtain will make a difference to us."

This well-illustrated book is indeed a treasure house of reminiscences for those interested in learning and "thinking of the days that are no more".