

**SPEECH BY MR ERIC CHUA, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH & MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT FOR THE LAUNCH OF “THE CHIANG FAMILY HISTORY – A TALE OF THREE CULTURES AND CHIA KENG VILLAGE” ON 7 OCTOBER 2022, 5:15PM – 6:15PM**

1. I am very happy to join you this evening for the launch of Mr Bernard Chiang’s book “*The Chiang Family History - A Tale of Three Cultures and Chia Keng Village*”.

**A Multitude of Voices**

2. The book is a very engaging read.
  - a. Meticulously researched for the last 17 years, it showcases the history of the Teochew Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia through the lens of the Chiang Family.

- b. It gives us a window into the lives and experiences of our forefathers who had made that fateful journey down south and sunk their roots here.
- 3. It is also a very personal read – going deep into the histories of Mr Chiang’s family in fascinating detail as he endeavoured to trace and document his family history.
  - a. From heartfelt family reunions in his ancestral home in Zhanglin (樟林) village, China; across Thailand; and finally in Singapore,
  - b. To Mr Chiang’s formative years growing up in Kampong Chia Keng, memories of his Peranakan maternal family, and accounts of his family’s community work.
- 4. In the context of documenting and celebrating our heritage, Mr Chiang’s effort is highly commendable.

## **The Importance of History**

5. Each of us has our own personal history, and that shapes who we are today. Because the past always shapes the present, and the present also has an impact on our own future.
  
6. These personal histories are important.
  - a. They inform us of the lives of people who were then living in pre- and post-independent Singapore.
    - i. As a former lifesaver and SCDF officer myself, also coincidentally for 17 years, the story of how village elders came together to form a volunteer firefighting unit to protect the village from the threat of fire resonated with me personally. That is truly, the epitome of the kampong spirit, that Mr Ng [President of the Genealogy Society of Singapore] says, with some lament, is somewhat lacking in today's society. But I would give it a little twist that it is perhaps hidden. It has a hidden potential in our communities and society, waiting for us to unearth it once again. It is something, perhaps, for the younger generations, #UniquelySingapore.

- b. These histories strengthen our Singapore Story, or rather I should say, our collective Singapore Story, giving us all a better understanding of who we are and how we came to be as one people.

## **Enduring Values**

- 7. With 2022 being designated as the Year of Celebrating SG Families, Mr Chiang's book is very apt because it emphasises the importance of family.
  - a. Family keeps us rooted to our own identity, provides us with a key source of strength and support as we face adversities in life, such as the pandemic which we witnessed the past two or three years.
  - b. As Mr Chiang has mentioned, it was a dark cloud that passed by us, but there were silver linings as well. So we are glad that he took those three months to upgrade his computer skills, and also upgrade his translation skills in the meantime. And that gave us an excellent product in the book that will be launched today.

- c. Strong families, at the end of the day, build and nurture resilient individuals, and that helps us build a stable foundation for our society.
- 8. “*The Chiang Family History*”, with its lovingly written tributes to individual family members, clearly demonstrates this point.

### **Celebrating Community Initiatives**

- 9. The book is a great example of how individuals can take the initiative, take the plunge, and it doesn't have to be 17 years I am sure, to participate in documenting and celebrating our shared heritage.
  - a. We welcome such ground-up efforts and initiatives, as they offer new perspectives and voices that add to the vibrancy of our shared heritage.
  - b. With the National Heritage Board's Heritage Grants Scheme, we encourage individuals, communities and institutions alike to play a bigger role in writing our Singapore history.

10. Contributions like “*The Chiang Family History*” ensure that records of personal memories and anecdotes are preserved for posterity.
  - a. And with Mr Chiang’s compelling storytelling, they have also been brought to life for the benefit of future generations.

## **Conclusion**

11. To conclude, I want to say a big thank you to Mr Chiang for his extremely commendable effort to safeguard and celebrate our heritage and our values through “*The Chiang Family History*”.
12. A big congratulations to Mr Chiang and the Genealogy Society of Singapore on the successful launch of this book.
13. On that note, I wish everybody a pleasant evening.

Thank you.