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# The old way... on exhibit

By Anna Vivienne

**IN** the late 18th century Chinese immigrants began to come to Sabah, then known as North Borneo. They lived along the West Coast: the land until the tip of Borneo, Kudat. At that time they were mostly farmers. In Kudat, they planted coconut for its copra. In Menggatal, inanan and around that area, they planted rubber. Chinese communities in Sabah can also be found in Sandakan and Tawau.

The locals then were quite curious about their new neighbours. Their language and their attire were different. Even their houses were a curiosity.

The locals were used to stilted houses, long or otherwise, but they had never seen a house that sits on the ground. Needless to say, they peeked and peered. By and by, the local people began to get used to the Hakka Chinese homes. Some even emulated the architecture.

For years, the two groups of people from different backgrounds enjoyed each other's company, neighbourhood and homes' architecture.

Nowadays, however, the old home styles are nearly gone. Most Hakka Chinese live in modern homes; and so do the Kadazan-Dusuns, who once built homes like their Chinese neighbours.

Only the elderly remember what the houses looked like, even then, their memories may be rose-tinted at times.

However, one should not despair. There is one Hakka Chinese house at the Heritage Cultural Village at the Sabah Museum.

According to the caretaker, Thomas Chua, 56, a traditional Hakka house is built without any pillar and with strong fengshui influences.



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