



Glimpses of Old Penang

IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF STAR PUBLICATIONS (MALAYSIA) BERHAD.

2 OCT 2002

NASKAH PEMELIHARAAN

PERPUSTAKAAN NEGARA MALAYSIA

APB 01077615

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Foreword



DATUK STEVEN TAN
Managing Director
Star Publications (Malaysia) Berhad

PENANG was the birthplace of the first paper in this country, the *Prince of Wales Gazette*. In this earliest of newspapers which was started in February 1805, the people of George Town were informed of the happenings in their community and in the world. In the late 19th century and as the population in Penang grew, the *Penang Gazette*, another venerable newspaper, transformed news reporting to include more challenging community based stories. Following that, Penang's papers, like the *Straits Echo*, gained a respected voice in their critique of happenings.

This gave birth to a newspaper tradition that has continued to this day. The first issue of *The Star* appeared in Penang in September 1971. In the early years the paper, through its news reports and its distinct style, expressed the character and temper of the people of Penang. It also reflected their aspirations. During the chairmanship of the late YTM Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, Father of Independence and Father of Malaysia, *The Star* was remembered for the Tunku's "As I See It..." column. Since the late 1980s, *The Star* has broken new ground and has expanded out of Penang. It is today a truly national paper.

This book is therefore a tribute and an expression of appreciation to the people of Penang from a newspaper that has now

established a spot for itself in Penang's history. *The Star* is the only paper from Penang that has successfully established itself as a national paper.

The book project had its beginning in the "Penang in Pictures" contest held in 1987 of which Star Publications was a co-organiser. The collection of photographs from the contest is an invaluable record of Penang's development and of its unique heritage. Subsequently in July 2001 Star Publications and the Penang Heritage Trust launched the Penang Story Project. The project led to a further documentation of Penang's past in an international conference held in April 2002.

And so as Star Publications celebrates its 30th anniversary, we pause awhile to look back to the past through this attractively produced volume. This book captures in print a few pages from the fascinating story of colonialism, migration, religious celebrations and multiculturalism, and nationalism and nation-building.

This volume is Star Publications' acknowledgement and tribute to all who have supported the paper. It is also a testimony of our abiding commitment to be a family-oriented paper and to further enrich the tradition of journalism started in Penang some 200 years ago.

Memories of Old Penang



DATUK KAMAL HASHIM

Regional Director of Star Publications (Malaysia) Berhad &
Chairman of the Penang Story Project

I FEEL fortunate to have spent my youth in Penang. This grand old city holds so many fond memories. The air was clean, the roads were quiet and safe and the faces friendly and familiar. Riding a bicycle or a motorcycle along the coastal roads around the island was a favourite past time of the young people then. Datin Su Hj Akil, my wife, remembers riding to school trailing behind her seniors like the late P. Ramlie. We enjoyed picnics by the clean secluded beaches and hiking trips up cool Penang Hill. Those were the days before "traffic jams" existed in our vocabulary. I am convinced that even the temperature was a considerable few degrees lower than it is today!

Amongst my earliest childhood memories were those eventful years of the Japanese Occupation. Even though I was still very young then, I remember our family house (*Penawar*) to be a refuge for family and friends. It was located in Ayer Itam, an area outside the city centre which provided a safer shelter away from the bombings. On hearing the siren I remember how I clung to my aunt as we made our way to the riverbank for safety with the rest of the family. There my father had set up a shielded rest area where our extended family would spend many hours together before returning to the house at the sound of the second siren.

After the war, especially in the 1950s, many entertainment places started to mushroom all over the city reviving the social habits of many Penangites. Party lovers started perfecting their

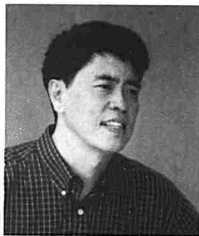
quickstep whilst the more adventurous ones were heading for jiving marathons. There were also various other entertainment like boria plays and stage shows. I remember all too clearly the starched baggy pants and slick hairstyles as we spruced ourselves up in anticipation of the exciting evening ahead.

The heady times gradually made way for a more meaningful era as we all supported the call for Independence in 1957. I was privileged to witness the vigour and excitement of it all as my late father, Tan Sri C.M. Hashim, actively participated in the struggle for independence under the leadership of the late Tunku Abdul Rahman. Later on, I was honoured to have the opportunity to serve under the late Tunku when he became the Star Publication's chairman.

Finally, no memory of Penang would be complete without the mention of its wonderful gastronomic experience. Whilst our people have gone on to become successful entrepreneurs, famous professionals and great entertainers, we all come back to Penang for the food. Yes, we Penangites are truly proud of and passionate about our incomparable cuisine. I remember when a mere 80 cents could buy us a generous plate of *nasi handar* in Hutton Lane and many senior citizens would agree with me when I say that the original taste has yet to be matched!

I hope that this reminiscence has offered a glimpse of a bygone era. While the old days cannot be recovered, we must remember the words of Winston Churchill who said, "the longer you look back, the farther you can look forward".

Penang in Pictures



LAURENCE LOH

Chairman of the Penang in Pictures Project
1987 and Chairman of PAM (Northern Chapter) 1986 and 1987

As the PAM Northern Chapter Chairman for the years 1986 and 1987, I wanted to create an event that had a sense of continuity built into it, one with body and substance. It would be an event that would complement the conservation theme and tone set by the International Conference on Conservation and Urban Planning organised by Pertubuhan Arkitek Malaysia and the Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang held in Penang in the previous year, 1986.

Conservation of our cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, was not on the radar of 99.9% of the population then. A start had to be made somewhere. And because the process of conservation relies heavily on information sources to ensure authenticity, I was drawn to the idea of pictorial archeology. Thus the idea for the competition. I had visions of old grandmothers, daughters and grandchildren rummaging through drawers and emptying out biscuit tins, searching for long-forgotten photographs. I thought of how knowledge of the past through visual records could help us understand the present state of change better.

So PAM together with *The Star*, who embraced the idea whole-heartedly, created a competition that spanned a period of six months. To solicit the continuous submission of old photographs we awarded prizes on a weekly and monthly basis, with grand prizes at the end. Two categories were created: "Architecture" and "People and places". All in all, 1,000 photographs were submitted. Three sets of negatives were produced for archival purposes and lodged with the Penang State

Museum, *The Star* and PAM. And what automatically emerged was a series of weekly articles on the winning photographs which kept readers engrossed and focused on the "Penang Story". It was an exciting competition with suspense because we would look forward to the beginning of each week in anticipation of what would be sent in. "Would this week's entry be the ultimate winner, or is it still to come?"

The climax of the competition was an exhibition at the State Art Gallery which I curated. It was opened by Tunku Abdul Rahman on December 12, 1987. The idea came partly from one of the winning photographs, one in all probability never seen by the public. I remember I was so thrilled to meet him, the man who brokered Merdeka, the starting point of post-Colonial history. It was a photograph of him when he was still a budding politician, with dinner friends at Springtide Hotel in Tanjung Bungah. Most people would be aware that this hotel has since been demolished and the site boarded up.

I treasure the photograph autographed by Tunku. It is my memory of him and of the place where many childhood hours were spent in a hotel by the beach, whose architectural style has long gone from our drawing boards, or should I say, from our CAD computers.

Fifteen years later, *The Star* has delivered its promise to produce this book. With even a lot more lost or destroyed in the intervening years, "Penang in Pictures" is our collective memory enshrined in nostalgic black and whites, now a permanent record for all to share.



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Introduction



Koh Seng Tat's Edinburgh House which was opened to Prince Albert, who visited Penang in 1869. Duke Road is named after the prince.

A PICTURE, they say, paints a thousand words. How many pictures would it take to capture the essence of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious Penang? More than are contained in this book, certainly. What this book offers is a beginning, an introduction, not only to rare images but also fascinating information gathered from many sources.

The pictures in this book come largely from an unique project called Penang in Pictures that was organised by *The Star* and the Northern Chapter of the Architect's Association of Malaysia in 1987. A nationwide call for photographs of old Penang elicited a treasure trove of rare photos. Then the project took on larger dimensions when the Penang Heritage Trust and

The Star organised another project: the almost year-long Penang Story Project that began in July 2001 to help the island's capital, George Town, achieve its bid for Living Heritage Status from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco). This project, which saw the publication of a series of articles on old Penang in *The Star's* Section 2, culminated in an international conference entitled *The Penang Story: A Celebration of Cultural Diversity* in April 2002.

Research in preparation for this book as well as conference findings revealed that sources of information on Penang's history are very much scattered. Wonderful gems of information lie in old magazines like the *Straits Chinese Magazine* (1897-1907);

newspapers like the country's first, the *Prince of Wales Island Government Gazette*, and, later, the *Straits Echo*; and periodicals such as the *Singapore & Straits Directory* and many others. Then there are the more contemporary sources, such as the now defunct *Pulau Pinang Magazine*, the various newsletters of the Penang Heritage Trust, and *The Star* itself, which began publication on the island in 1971. Research by academics interested in Penang as well as personal accounts also offered interesting views. The latter included tales from Penang personalities like Lim Kean Siew, the late Datuk Khor Cheang Kee and Queenie Chang. Foreign accounts of Penang, starting with the *Sumatra Factory Records*, captured the early development of Penang, while travellers' accounts and – a particular favourite – the memoirs of George Bilainkin, editor of the *Straits Echo* before World War II, afford a more personal glimpse of Penang's past. But all these sources are difficult to come by and are not generally accessible. Hence, this attempt to give readers a taste of hidden information and a glimpse of how Penang was shaped by the forces of history.

This is, however, not a historical monograph. Instead, *Glimpses of Old Penang* explores the island's past from numerous points of view, including personal ones. While it opens, traditionally enough, with an article on the founding of Fort Cornwallis – exploring British motives for raising the Union Jack in Penang – it also attempts to offer fresh perspectives of the state's history by juxtaposing that article with a critical one featuring Francis Light's "wrongdoings" in securing Penang for the British East India Company. The rest of the first chapter looks at what concerned island folk in everyday life in Penang's first newspaper, offers recollections about the role of significant colonial landmarks, and features a selection of watercolours from the 19th century that the Penang Museum and Art Gallery generously allowed us to reproduce.

Broadly, the second chapter covers various aspects of Penang's development as a trading community featuring, first, its early traders, and then the Western and Chinese enterprises that eventually forged Malaysia's first international chamber of commerce. Of course, the chapter would not be complete without a look at Penang's busy port in the 1930s.

The third and fourth chapters form the backbone of the book as they look at what makes Penang so unique – the multi-

ethnic people and their colourful festivals and lifestyles. This section begins, appropriately enough, with the earliest census of George Town and is followed by descriptions of Penang's multi-cultural community. These two chapters also trace the development of some unique Penang communities like the Straits Chinese and the Jawi Pekans. As Penang's rich group of minority communities has been described in other publications, this section ends with a rare glimpse of one of those communities that tends to be overlooked – the Armenians.

Penang is also the birthplace of the nation's first educational institutions and associations. This is acknowledged with photographs of the Convent Light Street's nuns and the primary class of St Xavier's Institution marking their 150th anniversary this year. The oldest English school in Malaysia, the Penang Free School, makes an appearance in an article on one of its golden boys, the late Dr Wu Lien Teh.

More than all the information, however, it is the pictures submitted by readers of *The Star* during the Glimpses of Old Penang project that make this book special. They tell a rich tale of social and cultural activities of an era past. Firsthand accounts by locals and Westerners who called Penang their home are also used to bring to life places, buildings and notable personalities. All this is showcased in the last three chapters of the book. And to supplement the photos of vintage motorcars, *jinrikshas* and various other modes of transportation in these chapters, this book also includes travellers' tales of round-island trips and anecdotes about everyday occurrences of the past.

The book's final chapter opens with an examination of Penang's amazing Muslim heritage, further exploring places close to home. It ends with a story from the country's beloved first prime minister, the late Tunku Abdul Rahman, as he told it in his popular "As I See It..." column in *The Star*. His column, written in the 1980s, urges Malaysians, and Penangites in particular, to treasure their heritage. With that in mind, it is hoped that this book will eventually contribute towards securing George Town's bid for Living Heritage Status from Unesco.

Penang's tale, however, is a many-sided one not easily told. In the attempt to capture it, some stories have been left untold or touched upon only briefly. No doubt there will be other publications in the future that will paint more pictures of this fascinating island.

The Arrival of the British



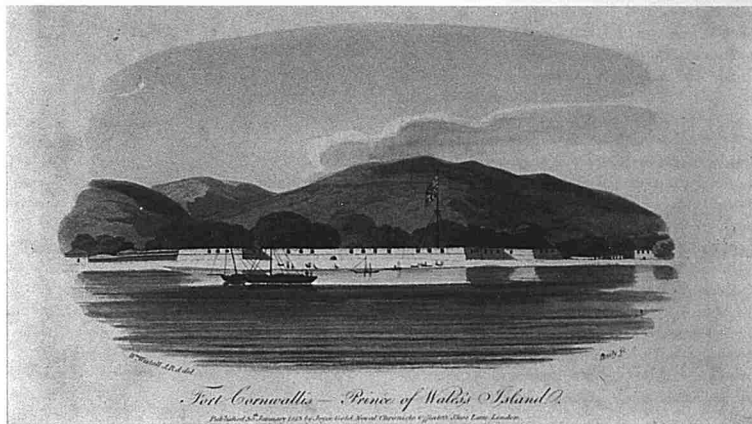
The moat and the flagstaff at Fort Cornwallis, 1900s.

HISTORIANS have argued much about the founding and military significance of Penang's Fort Cornwallis, the first British colonial outpost in Malaysia. Historian K.G. Tregonning, for example, has argued that the underlying factor for British involvement in Malaya was not the need for a military outpost but was, instead, trade. The political landscape of South-East Asia at that time, however, makes the military dimension a convincing possibility.

Anglo-French rivalry is said to be a key factor in the expansion of British influence in South and South-East Asia. The biggest prize was the domination of India. The British had just lost their American colonies in 1776 while the French were firmly established in Louisiana and Quebec (in what is now part of the United States and Canada respectively), making this ancient

rivalry all the more bitter. And in India, the French campaign was threatening British factories along the Coromandel Coast in the Indian Ocean.

In the days of the sail ship, meteorological conditions influenced military strategy. The British, having no ports on the east coast of India, had to withdraw to the west to avoid the monsoon. In 1758, for example, with the British fleet sheltering in Bombay from the October-January north-east monsoon, the French were able to lay siege to Madras. Furthermore, the French had a military outpost in Aceh, on the northern tip of Sumatra within striking reach to India. Thus there was urgent need for a British military outpost in the northern region of the Straits of Malacca to prevent the French from repeating their near-successful siege of Madras.



An early impression of Fort Cornwallis painted by William Westall in 1804.

Anglo-Dutch rivalry in South-East Asia over the spice trade was another reason the British established an outpost in Malaya. The British East India Company's (EIC) search for a suitable port and military base in South-East Asia, however, had been futile up to 1786. Early expeditions, driven by the search for spices, had led the British to Penang as early as 1592. In that year, English ships captained by James Lancaster arrived at "the isles of Pulo Pinaom" for a period of rest and re-fitting. Subsequently, an English factory was established in Bantam (Java) in 1603 but it was not successful. The Amboyna Massacre in 1623 that saw the torture and killing of Englishmen by the Dutch on that "Spice Island" ended British expeditions to secure the spice trade. While the British did have a settlement on Bencoolen, its location on the west coast of Sumatra made it unsuitable as a military or trade outpost.

Historians now agree that military outposts were usually established to help expand trade. For instance, in the last quarter of the 18th century, their lucrative tea trade with China meant that the British had to have a toehold in the Straits of

Malacca if they were to protect their trade route and their sources of export.

Of the three events that contributed to the establishment of Fort Cornwallis on Penang, the first was the result of poor diplomacy while the other two had great military significance. British overtures in Aceh (in 1771) and their early attempt to establish a trading outpost in Kuala Kedah both failed due to poor diplomacy on the part of EIC officials. Compounding this diplomatic failure was the expansion of Dutch influence in the region after the defeat of their enemies, the Bugis, in Malacca and the death of Raja Haji, the great Bugis leader, in 1785. In that same year, a Burmese army (from what is now Myanmar) invaded Phuket (part of Siam, or, as it is now known, Thailand), making the island unsuitable for trade.

It was under these circumstances that the EIC accepted Francis Light's move to establish a trading post on Penang. Light was employed by the firm Jourdain, Sullivan & De Souza of Madras. He began his career in Aceh and, while there, he became aware of the traditional flow of pepper, tin and other

goods from Sumatra to Kedah along the route dictated by the north-west monsoon. In 1771, he arrived in Kedah and there became a country trader selling opium at \$800 (Straits dollars) a chest. After the failure of a mission sent out by the EIC to negotiate for the establishment of an outpost in Kuala Kedah, Light moved to Junk Ceylon, as Phuket was also known. He continued to urge the EIC to establish an outpost in the area and found favourable ears in 1786 when Bengal (under British rule) decided to accept Sultan Abdullah Mukarram Shah of Kedah's offer of the island in exchange for British protection. The British never lived up to their side of the bargain leaving Light with a reputation for duplicity (see "Light on a Dark Subject").

Some time between July 17 and Aug 10, 1786, Light built a fort made of *nibong attap* (a type of palm) at Point Penaggar and named it after the Governor-General of Bengal, Lord Cornwallis. As the political landscape changed, however, the fort's military significance became much reduced. *Sepoy* (native) troops from India were at first employed to strengthen the fort and, in its early days, it "protected" British interests against Kedah's attacks in 1790. Although the sultan's forces never really succeeded in attacking the fort, Light's 400-strong contingent launched a pre-emptive strike against Kedah's forces from Fort Cornwallis.

In 1787, Light reported to Calcutta that he had appointed leaders among the various races who came to live in Penang "to be their captain, to settle their disputes and to superintend their conduct". By the time he died in 1794, Light had strengthened the position of Superintendent, established a peaceful trading post for British ships and established law and order in the settlement.

The rise of Penang between 1795 and 1805 can be attributed to the island's surging trade figures and its role as a military outpost following the capture of Malacca by the British in 1795. Penang was made the fourth presidency of India in 1805. The Battle of Trafalgar (which the French lost to the British) in the same year saw Penang consolidate its position. It also marked the end of the French military threat to British power on the seas. Dutch possessions in the East were also being transferred to British control after the French army overran Holland in 1790. By 1799, the Dutch East Indies Company, a rival to the British East India Company (EIC), was bankrupt and, prior to that, in 1795, the British had successfully occupied Malacca (the



Statue of Francis Light unveiled by Sir Shenton Thomas, governor of the Straits Settlements, in 1939.

Straits Settlements eventually comprised Penang, Malacca and Singapore). All these events helped in the rise of Penang.

And, at the behest of the mercantile community — prompted by the complaint that one cannon ball fired from an enemy ship would immediately burn it down — Fort Cornwallis was rebuilt in 1810. By 1815, however, the fort had, in a strategic sense, become redundant. It assumed, instead, a new position as the heart of colonial administration and, eventually, administrative buildings sprung up around it. The following sections offer a glimpse of those buildings and Penang's 171 years under British rule, beginning with Light's take-over of the island.

LIGHT ON A DARK SUBJECT

BY DR CHEAH BOON KHENG

WHEN Francis Light took possession of Penang island, which belonged to Kedah, on Aug 11, 1786, in the name of King George III of Britain, calling it the Prince of Wales Island, he did so without a treaty.

The illegal occupation of the island lasted five years. During this period, the terms of cession of the island to the British East India Company (EIC), including compensation for its lease, the resultant loss of trade, and the issue of defence and protection for Sultan Abdullah of Kedah from his enemies, were still unresolved.

But Light, who was very keen to make his fortune, had been anxious to occupy the island, turn it quickly into a British port and become Superintendent of Penang. As early as 1771, he had been an independent country trader and a frequent visitor to Kedah where he became greatly liked and trusted by the Malays.

In 1786, he was appointed an EIC agent. Sultan Abdullah grew so fond of him that he allowed Light to marry a lady of his court, the beautiful Portuguese Eurasian, Martina Rozells, who later bore him five children, one of whom became aide-de-camp to the Duke of Wellington and, afterwards, founder of Adelaide in Australia.

In order to curry favour with the EIC, which was looking for an island on the route between Britain and China to serve as a naval station, Light had claimed to have obtained a free grant of the island of Penang from Sultan Abdullah to the EIC on condition that the company protected the sultan from his enemies.

The EIC's records reveal that Light appeared deceitful in his dealings with both the sultan and the EIC. Acting as a mediator to and an agent of both parties, he misrepresented and misinformed both on several occasions. Throughout the proceedings, he was motivated only by self-interest.

Light's conduct did not win him praise from his superiors in the EIC. Papers in the EIC archives reveal him as a man without honour who dared to promise more than he could deliver.

This led a British historian, R.O. Winstedt, to remark in his book, *Britain and Malaya, 1786-1943* (1949, Longmans): "The acquisition of Penang is the blackest spot on the British record of Malaya."

Earlier, in 1908, Sir Frank Swettenham, a former British Governor, in his book, *British Malaya*, lamented that the acquisition of Penang was "unflattering to our (British) national pride," as it did not live up to "British good faith and honour".

Malaysian historian R. Bonney in his account, *Kedah, 1771-1821: The Search for Security and Independence*, (1971, Oxford University Press), also asserted: "By taking formal possession of the island on 11 August, 1786, Light not only committed, by European standards, a breach of international law, but cheated Sultan Abdullah as well."

Yet, despite these views, Malaysian school history books produced during the final stages of the British administration — from the 1950s until Malaya's independence in 1957 — concealed the true story of Light's acquisition of Penang. Instead, they extolled him as the "Founder of Penang" and praised his contribution to the development and progress of British Malaya.

WHAT WAS LIGHT'S WRONGDOING?

Light, in his negotiations with his EIC superiors in India, had failed to inform them of Siamese (or Thai, as they are now known) and Burmese threats to Kedah. He gave the impression that the grant of the island was made because Sultan Abdullah needed protection only from his internal enemies, the Bugis-backed Kedah rebels taking refuge in Selangor.

When Sultan Abdullah received the EIC's reply, he noted that the EIC had only offered to "always keep an armed vessel stationed to guard the island of Penang and the coast adjacent belonging to the island of Queda (or Kedah)." He regarded this as insufficient defence for Kedah against a land attack from the Burmese or Siamese. There was also no word about paying him any compensation.

Light told Sultan Abdullah that the request for protection had been referred by the EIC in India to London, and that the company would come to some settlement with him.

If the island was a free grant, why should Light insist upon the EIC's obligation to come to a settlement? Light also assured the sultan that he would not suffer and that the EIC would protect him — but Light later found himself in a difficult and unpleasant situation for he had promised more than he was permitted.

At his request, he was allowed by Sultan Abdullah to occupy Penang island tentatively until the ruler's demands were met. Tactically, the ruler might have considered it prudent to allow Light's presence in Penang as a temporary deterrent to his enemies. In 1788, however, the EIC directors' decision finally arrived, in which they rejected the ruler's request for protection against the Burmese and Siamese; but Light was ordered to negotiate a financial settlement with the ruler.

"Light, sanguine and eager, had staked his honour and lost," observed Winstedt. " ... there is no doubt that Light had led Kedah to expect more than he could fulfil."

Caught by his own deception, Light had no choice now but to use the island's revenue to pay the sultan some compensation. Sultan Abdullah refused to accept Light's offer of \$10,000 (Straits dollars) a year for eight years for the island, or \$4,000 a year for so long as the EIC occupied the island.

By late 1790, Sultan Abdullah had refused to part with Penang unless the company promised him assistance against Siamese attacks. He assembled his forces off the coast of Prai on the mainland to retake the island. Light, however, ordered English ships to attack and destroy the Kedah fleet.

Penang island was now forcibly held by Light. On April 20, 1791, a nine-point treaty called the Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed between the two parties, in which the EIC promised to pay an annual sum of 6,000 Spanish dollars for as long as the English continued in possession of the island.

Light dictated the terms from a position of strength. Although the two countries promised "to live in peace by sea and land, to continue as long as the Sun and Moon give light," the EIC no longer committed itself to protect Kedah from Siam or Burma, or from the sultan's enemies in Kedah or Selangor.

This was the protection that the ruler had continuously

asked for and which Light knew was the one condition on which he had been willing to cede Penang. Light had betrayed the trust and friendship of Sultan Abdullah. The Englishman's word was no longer his bond.

The treaty stipulated there was to be free trade with Kedah in provisions; that both parties would mutually hand over fugitive slaves, debtors, murderers and forgers; that the sultan would exclude other Europeans from Kedah; and that the English would not harbour traitors or rebels from Kedah.

In 1800, Sultan Abdullah's successor, Sultan Dhuaidin, signed a treaty ceding to the EIC a piece of territory on the Kedah mainland at Prai, which the British called Province Wellesley, for an annual payment of \$4,000. The ruler was in debt, and probably also thought that the English presence could be a deterrent to Siam or Burma. (Today, the Penang Government still pays RM10,000 to Kedah.)

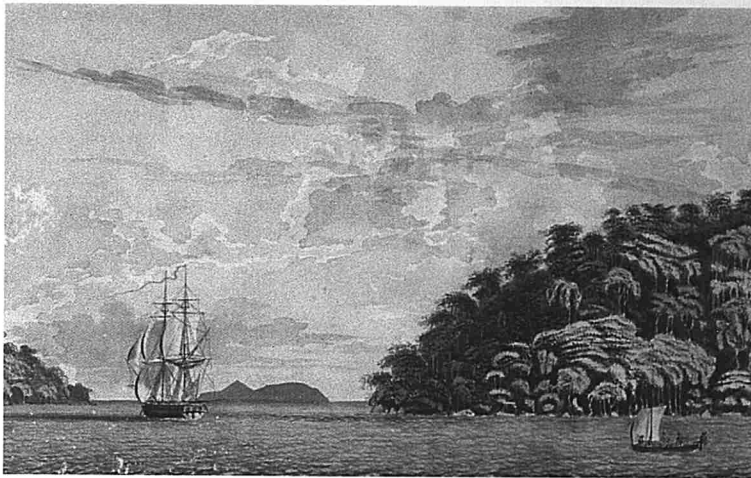
In 1821, despite the EIC's presence in Penang, Kedah was attacked by Siamese forces and occupied until 1841. The EIC administrators in Penang sat idly by, and only allowed Kedah's ruler at the time, Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin, to take refuge on Penang. To appease the Siamese, he was later asked to move to Malacca.

Sultan Ahmad appealed to the EIC for help, urging it to ratify "the engagements contracted by Mr Light with my father," and reminded it that Penang island had originally been ceded on the understanding that protection would be given to Kedah, but the plea was to no avail.

The 1800 Treaty had, in fact, superseded the 1791 Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Light, and the EIC had cleverly again absolved itself from any commitment to render protection to Kedah.

The final blow to Kedah came in 1826 when the EIC's agent, Henry Burney, went to Bangkok and concluded a treaty with Siam, under which the British acknowledged Siam's overlordship of Kedah and promised non-interference in Kedah's affairs. In return, the Siamese recognised the British right to occupy Penang and the mainland territory of Province Wellesley.

"The cause of these untoward events," wrote Swettenham in *British Malaya*, "was the cowardice of the East India Company, ending in a breach of faith which sullied the British name and weakened its influence with Malaya for very many years."



[Above] The 'HMS Brig Viper' sailing between the little island of 'Pulo Reyma' and Penang Island in 1778. 'Pulo Reyma' or Tiger Island is on the left; also, notice the native craft in the foreground, evidence of Penang's early local inhabitants.

[Right] The idyllic view of 'Glugor House' and spice plantations painted by Robert Smith in 1818. 'Glugor House' was the home of David Brown, pioneer trader of Penang.



GLIMPSES OF LIFE THROUGH THE 'PRINCE OF WALES GOVERNMENT GAZETTE' PIONEER PAPER

BY DR GEOFF WADE

THE *Prince of Wales Island Government Gazette* appears, at first sight, to be the name of some obscure British royal publication. It was, however, this name that graced the first newspaper to appear in the Malay peninsula. Penang was, in its earliest days, known to the British as Prince of Wales Island, while its capital was named George Town, both named in honour of George, Prince of Wales, who was later to become Britain's King George IV.

For its first 20 years, despite its population growing to over 10,000, the settlement on Penang managed to survive without a newspaper. On a Saturday in Feb 1806, however, there appeared on the streets of George Town the first edition of the *Prince of Wales Island Government Gazette*. No copies of the first few issues appear to have survived and it is only with Vol. 1, No. 4, published on March 22, 1806, and comprising four pages, that the known library holdings begin.

Under various titles, including *The Government Gazette* and *Prince of Wales Island Gazette*, the newspaper continued in print until the early 1830s. The first issues of the *Gazette* bore at the bottom of their final page the statement: "Printed and Published by A.B. Bone, No. 68 Beach Street, for himself and the other proprietors". Bone was also half of a partnership named "Court and Bone", an auction and commission house, and advertisements for their auctions were carried on the first page of the early issues of the newspaper. The subsequent publisher, one William Cox, also ran the operation from premises in Beach Street, which in the early 19th century did indeed front the beach. By the end of its existence in 1830, the newspaper was being printed at the Government Press by an E. De Oliveira.

In many ways, the *Prince of Wales Island Gazette* was a government organ despite being privately-run for most of its existence, and "Published under the Authority and Patronage of Government" was emblazoned on its title page as part of the paper's masthead. The concerns of the East India Company administrators in Penang are revealed through the various issues, particularly by the "General Orders" which most issues carried.

As the British extended their activities in South-East Asia, so do we observe an increase in the number of articles in the *Gazette* detailing the events affecting surrounding politics and societies. Perhaps one of the most important events for the future of Penang (of course, we do have the benefit of hindsight) was recorded in the Aug 7, 1819, issue. It read, in part, "The Dutch have hoisted their flag on the Rajah Mooda's fort at Rhio, and almost all the inhabitants have, in consequence, left it to reside under Major Farquhar at Singapore — the Rajah Mooda himself has retired to Lingin." The burgeoning of Penang's major future competitor (Singapore) had begun.

The events during the war in Lower Burma in 1824, as the British attempted to establish further territorial control in Asia, were also reported frequently. "Piracy" throughout the archipelago was of great concern to all as passenger transport and freight carriage was all by sea.

The beginnings of a social and intellectual life among the British of Penang, whom the *Gazette* mainly served, is revealed through numerous items. By the late 1820s, Penang had a theatre, the *Gazette* was running book reviews, and the items offered for sale by auction houses suggest that quite a proportion of the newspaper-reading public lived lives of some opulence.

In January 1830, someone who signed himself as "Y", submitted to the *Gazette* a "Prospectus for a Literary Society at Penang", which he urged be based on the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, but it appears that no society was ever established.

The growing complexity of society even allowed, by 1819, the publication of a *Prince of Wales Island Directory*, offered for sale in the *Gazette*.

The need for education facilities for the growing population is reflected in accounts found within the pages of this newspaper. The issue of Feb 17, 1816, carried an "Address to the Public in behalf of a school to be established in Prince of Wales Island", which heralded the beginnings of Penang Free School, the first school to be established in the Malay Peninsula.



View from Strawberry Hill, Prince of Wales Island, 1818. Painted by William Daniel, it shows the English garden landscape reputedly introduced by Francis Light and another trader, David Brown. [Below] View of Mount Erskine and 'Pulo Ticoose Bay', Prince of Wales Island, by William Daniel (1818).



In 1819, we read in the pages of the *Gazette* a tender notice seeking bids to build a schoolhouse for the Free School. Issues of 1827 indicate that the school was still seeking funds and had opened an orphanage and a boarding school.

Other items which the *Gazette* chose to print were, like some of the most popular columns in papers today, simply matters of general interest to readers, with little social or political significance. They do, however, give us glimpses of a Penang now long gone. The issue on Christmas Day 1824, for example, noted how an "alligator" weighing 856 pounds (389kg) and measuring 14ft 6in (4.36m) in length was captured at Tanjong Tokong. The killing of a tiger in Province Wellesley was also given space.

When a Captain Smith painted a set of landscapes of the island, prints of them were offered for sale to readers of the *Gazette* in July 1819. Copies of these "10 Views by Captain Smith" are today kept by the Penang Museum, and reflect a very different landscape to the vehicle-choked roads of 21st century Penang.

While the majority of subscribers to the *Gazette* would likely have been British (there are no figures to suggest how many subscribers the newspaper had), the fact that the newspaper reached many more persons than just the European population is evidenced by the fact that advertisements and notices in Jawi were also included in the various issues.

Other items in the press suggest the importance of non-

British Penang communities. The prominence of major trading families from India, Sumatra and China is suggested by the frequent mention of members of these families in the shipping lists as they travelled to and from Penang.

The frequent movement of members of the Marican and Maydin families between Acheen (Acheh), Nagore and Malacca, as recorded in these lists, suggests wide-ranging family business networks, and reflects the importance of the Penang-Acheh linkages in the early 19th century. A party at the Penang home of Tengku Syed Hussain (who also hailed from Aceh and was the founder of the Acheen Street Mosque), recorded in a *Gazette* issue of 1806, suggests the grandness and opulence of the lives of some of the major merchants in early Penang.

The frequent movement of major Chinese merchants between Penang and Malacca (and, subsequently, Singapore) also indicates the development of business and family links between these ports — links that in some cases have lasted until today.

The newspaper also provides us with much background on the early development of Penang as a base for the British East India Company. Francis Light (the trader who had acquired the island for the company) had made the port free of duty to ships of all nations, and it was the shipping this policy attracted that brought early wealth to the island. The importance of shipping for the settlement is reflected in the pages of the various issues of the *Gazette*.

THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION



World War I War Memorial, the Esplanade.

THE HUB OF GOVERNMENT

BY ANNA CHEAH

KING Edward Place used to be where almost all the departments of the Straits Settlements Government, Penang, were located. The 60ft (18m) clock tower, built in 1897 to commemorate the diamond jubilee year of Queen Victoria's reign — 60 feet to represent 60 years — served as a useful landmark for out-of-town residents.

The tower donated by Cheah Chen Eok still stands at the junction of four streets: King Edward Place, Beach Street, Light Street and Fort Road. The most prominent feature of the area is the Government Quadrangle, a U-shaped building with the U starting at Weld Quay, turning at a right angle down King Edward Place, and turning up again at Beach Street.

Khoo Hong Teong, 75, who retired as deputy chief

surveyor in 1969, recalled that some of the government departments were housed in this Government Quadrangle during the 1930s. The General Post Office, he said, was located at the junction of Weld Quay and Downing Street. "My office was located on the first floor, above the Land Office, at Beach Street," Khoo recalled.

"Only part of this block was standing after the war. The rest of the building was bombed during the Japanese Occupation." Khoo said the Resident Commissioner's, or Governor's, Office was located at the corner of this building, directly opposite the clock tower.

After the General Post Office, across the Weld Quay-Downing Street junction, was the Town Club — formed in 1901



Aerial view of King Edward's Place, 1930s.

by Robert Yeats, of Messrs Boustead and Co, who was first chairman of the Penang Chamber of Commerce — and the Penang Chamber of Commerce. "There was also what the locals referred to as the European canteen within the building, and, of course, only the mat sallehs used to congregate there at lunch-time," Khoo said.

According to Datuk Aziz Haji Ibrahim, a former state Executive Councillor who was once acting Penang Chief Minister, next to this corner building was a government building housing the Education Department and the Treasury Office. "The site of both these buildings is where the Bangunan Tuanku Syed Putra now stands," Abdul Aziz said. "The old Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank building, which could easily be identified by its dome, was located at the Downing Street-Beach Street Junction."

"What is now the Beach Street Police station was the old Marine Police Station, and what is now the Immigration Office

was the Traffic Police Station. The old Immigration Office was across the road where the Penang Tourist Association office now is." Beside the old Immigration Office was a row of government bonded warehouses. "The rectangular building where King Edward Place turns into Weld Quay was the Harbour Board Office, blocking off the Swettenham Pier," said Abdul Aziz.

PLAN OF GOVERNMENT QUADRANGLE

Hari Singh, a retired interpreter, could easily identify what is now the State Legislative Assembly building along Light Street.

"I started my career as an interpreter at the Police and District Courts housed in this stately building, facing Fort Cornwallis, just before World War II," Hari Singh recalled.

Going down Weld Quay from this government administration centre, the first pier was the old Victoria Pier. "There used to be a launch service there taking passengers to and from the steamers anchored in the harbour," Hari Singh said.



The 'Residency' began life as the official residence of the Resident Commissioner of Penang. Now, it is the official home of the governor of Penang.

THE 'RESIDENCY'

Now known as *Seri Mutiara*, the *Residency* is a stately villa that once anchored a new elite European neighbourhood that grew up along Macalister Road, Western Road and Scotland Road. In its immediate vicinity is the Polo Club, the Race Course and the Penang Sports Club. The architect who built *Seri Mutiara* was Major Sir Maurice Alexander Cameron (1855-1930), who served as Deputy Colonial Engineer and Surveyor General of the Straits Settlements (1883-1892). This elegant house is composed of two

portions according to a "T-Plan" — an east-west axis intersected by a longitudinal axis. It has its earliest English precedent in the *Wanstead House* which was designed by one Colen Campbell. The gardens of *Seri Mutiara* house an exotic host of plants, a tradition started by the English. *Seri Mutiara* was started in 1888 and completed in 1890. It is the official residence of the Governor of Penang. (Source: *The Star's North* pullout, Sept 22, 1987 and *P. Pinang Magazine* Vol. 2, No. 3, 1990)

PENANG'S CHIEF ADMINISTRATORS (1786-PRESENT)

COLONIAL GOVERNORS (1786-1826)

Francis Light	1786-1794
Philip Mannington	1794-1795
Forbes Ross McDonald	1795-1799
George Leith	1799-1804
Robert Townsend Farquhar	1804-1805
Philip Dundas	1805-1807
Norman Macalister	1807-1810
Charles Andrew Bruce	1810
William Edward Philip (1)	1810-1812
William Petrie	1812-1816
William Edward Philip (2)	1816-1817
John Alexander Bannerman	1817-1819
William Edward Philip (3)	1819-1824
Robert Fullerton	1824-1826

COLONIAL GOVERNORS OF THE STRAITS SETTLEMENTS

Robert Fullerton	1826-1828
Robert Ibbetson	1828-1836

[Settlements' capital moved to Singapore in 1832]

Samuel G. Bonham	1837-1843
William J. Butterworth	1843-1855
Edmund A. Blundell	1855-1859
Orfeur Cavenagh	1859-1867
Harry St. G. Ord	1867-1873
Andrew Clarke	1873-1875
William D.D. Jervois	1875-1877
Archibald E.H. Anson (Acting)	1877
William C.F. Robinson	1877-1879
Archibald E.H. Anson	1879-1880
Frederick A. Weld	1880-1887
Cecil Clementi Smith	1887-1893
W. E. Maxwell	1893-1894
Charles B.H. Mitchell	1894-1896
Sir T. Alexander Swettenham	1898

COLONIAL GOVERNORS OF THE STRAITS SETTLEMENTS & HIGH COMMISSIONERS OF THE FEDERATED MALAY STATES (FROM 1898)

Charles B.H. Mitchell	1898-1899
James Athelstane Swettenham	1899-1901
Frank Athelstane Swettenham	1901-1904
John Anderson	1904-1911
Arthur H. Young	1911-1919
Laurence Guillemard	1919-1927
Hugh Clifford	1927-1929
Cecil Clementi	1929-1934
Shenton Thomas	1934-1942

GOVERNORS OF PENANG DURING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION (1942-1945)

Lt Gen Katayama Shotaro	1942-1943
Inomata Jiro	1943-1944
Maj Gen Itami Masakichi	1944
Lt Gen Shinohara Seichiro	1944-1945

HIGH COMMISSIONERS OF THE FEDERATION OF MALAYA

[The Straits Settlements were absorbed into the Federation in 1946; Singapore, however, remained a crown colony until 1963]

Gerald Edward James Gent	1946-1948
Henry Lovell Goldsworthy Gurney	1948-1951
Gerald Walter Robert Templar	1951-1954
Donald Charles McGillivray	1954-1957

PENANG'S POST-INDEPENDENCE GOVERNORS AND CHIEF MINISTERS

Governors

Raja Tun Uda Raja Muhammad	1957-1967
Tun Syed Sheh Syed Abdullah Sulaiman	1967-1969
Tun Syed Sheh Syed Hassan Barakbah	1969-1974
Tun Sardon Haji Jubir	1974-1989
Tun Datuk Seri Dr. Haji Hamdan Sheikh Tahir	1989-2001
Tun Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Abbas	2001-

List compiled by Dr Lee Kam Hing in *Malaysian Personalities: Past and Present*, University of Malaya Press, 1997.

THE ESPLANADE

By ANNA CHEAH



The Esplanade Grounds during a sporting event at the turn of the last century.

THE Esplanade Grounds were the venue for European sports like cricket, lawn tennis and lawn bowling during the 1930s; it was also the choice spot to hold the pre-war Glugor Shield Inter-School sports. The Penang Cricket Club, which organised many a game on the Esplanade Grounds, was formed around the 1900s but membership was restricted to the Europeans during the colonial era. The Eurasians played their own cricket games in front of their own Penang Recreation Club — the club's premises can be seen in the background of the photograph above — over at the Fort Cornwallis end of the Esplanade Grounds.

At that time, Malays could join the Penang Malay Association; Indians, the Indian Association; and the Chinese, the Chinese Recreation Club, all sited elsewhere. Cricket matches were held weekly and training sessions held almost daily. "My father said the curious locals used to watch the games from the sides but certainly not from the premises of either club," said Khoo Hong Teong, 75, who retired as deputy chief surveyor in 1969. Neither the Cricket Club nor the Recreation

Club buildings are still standing.

He remembered that the Penang Cricket Club was later renamed the Penang Sports Club. He also recalled that the Municipal Band, under bandmaster Cecil Scott, used to give weekly performances in the circular bandstand at the Esplanade.

The Municipal Council buildings on each side of the old Municipal canteen are still standing today. The Council had in recent years moved to the multi-storey Komtar building; suggestions that the buildings be used for the Penang Museum have yet to be acted upon.

Retired Court Interpreter Hari Singh recalled that when he was working at the High Court before World War II, there was a huge building, the stately home of businessman Khoo Sian Ewe, in the present carpark located at the Light Street-Jalan Tun Syed Sheh Barakbah junction. The latter road did not exist then. "I remember there were stone lions at the gate of this house but the building was bombed during the Japanese Occupation. (Extract from *The Star's North* pullout, Sept 29, 1987)

THE EASTERN AND ORIENTAL HOTEL

By JUNE BENNET

"I HAVE a postcard photograph taken probably somewhere around 1930 or so. The caption says 'Eastern and Oriental Hotel, Penang, The New Wing'. It shows the frontage facing the sea. It also shows that there are shutters on each of the windows on the three upper floors, and slatted louvered windows on the rooms on the ground floor. The picture shows that there were no coconut trees along the front then, no swimming pool and no cannon.

"But I happen to know that there were cannon along there somewhere because we used to climb onto them; my brother and I used to get chased away, too, by the staff and told not to use the E&O Hotel gardens as a playground. But it was all too easy for us to come from our house in Leith Street Ghaut to the E&O Hotel lawns because we shared the same sea front and wall. There was no fence to keep us away. And if ever there had been a fence we would probably have climbed that, too!

"We must have been an awful nuisance to the staff, especially when they were preparing for some function or other to be held outside on the lawns, which happened to be quite often. But I think I have been forgiven; my husband and I come to stay often, and no questions are asked. Perhaps they can see that I am not so inclined to climb things, now! It was, however, a great moment for me to see my own grandchildren sitting on those same cannon earlier this year (1989).

"On the back of this postcard photograph it reads: 'The E&O Hotel Penang: The Gateway to Malaya and the Far East. Three minutes' drive from the Wharves, Dancing: Tuesdays, Saturdays and Mail Days, Orchestral Concert: Every Sunday Evening on the Lawn overlooking the Sea, 902 Feet of Sea Frontage'. Mail Days were really very special days then. They

were heralded by the appearance of the Union Jack fluttering from the front of all the bookstalls: a signal that all the daily newspapers and magazines and comics had arrived from Britain, a postal service that took at least a month. There was no airmail service then, so letters from home were received with a good deal of excitement. Besides, there were hours of quiet reading to look forward to. It was therefore a day calling for some sort of celebration.

"I have a clear memory of being allowed to stay up past our usual bedtime to see my parents leave for one of their functions

at the E&O Hotel, dressed in all their finery. The best memory I have is of my mother dressed in a lovely pale pink crepe dress with a long of row of buttons down her back. She wore her favourite pearls and jewelled tiger-claw broach. My father, in a white jacket, black evening trousers, cummerbund

and bow-tie, looked very handsome. Evening dress was always worn for ballroom functions, and band music on Sundays required a well-dressed appearance. No one seemed to mind dressing up in those days; they quite enjoyed it. It certainly gave them a chance to wear something a little special and different from the very plain clothes they wore during the day.

"I can almost hear now the music drifting from the hotel across the lawns to our house. It was a very romantic setting, a tropical moon shining on a constantly moving sea, fallen blossoms sprinkling the lawn under a frangipani tree, and a cooling breeze blowing. Fortunately for all of us, the moon and the sea and cooling breeze at least have remained in place over the years."

(Source: *Warisan* Vol. 2, No. 2, June 1989, with the permission of the Penang Heritage Trust.)



WORLD WAR II & THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

ON OCT 3, 1939, Sir Shenton Thomas, Governor of the Straits Settlements, unveiled a memorial statue of Captain Francis Light at the Esplanade. It was to be the last big celebration before World War II. In fact, war with Germany had already started and in East Asia, the Sino-Japanese War began as early as in 1937. While British Malaya was preparing for an invasion in the 1930s, historian Paul Kratoska explains in *The Japanese Occupation of Malaya 1941-1945* (1995) that "studies of this event also call attention to personality clashes, interservice rivalries and civilian-military conflicts, and suggest that the leadership was at least complacent and, arguably, incompetent."

Penang, like the rest of British Malaya, was not prepared for war and Penangites were even more unprepared for their abandonment by the British. Although regarded as a fortress, only one Indian battalion and one Volunteer battalion defended Penang. The settlement had virtually no air protection and only a few pillboxes were built. When the Japanese landed in Kota Baru (in Kelantan) and in Southern Thailand on Dec 8, 1941, their progress down the peninsular was swift. By Dec 12, the Japanese had dislodged the British at Jitra, about 24km north of Alor Star (capital of Kedah). And Penang was in their path towards Singapore.



Pre-war Municipal Offices that were spared in the bombing of Penang by the Japanese.
The building later housed the City Council office of George Town.

AIR RAIDS

A day before Jitra fell, air raids started in Penang. Datuk Khoo Keat Siew remembers Gurkha troops camping on the Ranong Grounds (in what is now the Dewan Sri Pinang area). His father, the late Khoo Sian Ewe, was then Municipal Commissioner and owned a house next to the grounds. "I remember that Japanese planes had machine-gunned the camp site. The next day we left for our plantations on Pulau Tikus," he said. This was fortunate for them, as Penang was bombed on Dec 11, 1941. One of the intended targets was the Supreme Court Building on Farquhar Street but instead the Japanese bombed and destroyed Khoo's family house (Sunbeam Hall) opposite the Supreme Court.

A few minutes before the bombs fell, Lim Kean Siew was in the garden of his father's house in Northam Road, slightly more than 3km from George Town. "I looked at them (the Japanese planes) as they came in directly from the sea and passed to my right, aiming at the city ... glowing in the morning light, they flew in perfect formation, the perfect symmetry of their grey shapes looking coldly impressive," he recollected in his book, *Blood in the Golden Sands* (1999). At 10am, the first bombs fell, recalled the late Khor Chiang Kee, then a journalist with the *Straits Echo*. On that same morning, half of George Town caught fire and, as the air raids continued, many buildings were damaged. Lim later ventured into the city to find dead bodies everywhere and, as he noted, there was a total breakdown of public service. People were also afraid and one of his friends, who was living in Siam Road, had bolted the house doors. "It was completely chaotic and no one was in charge."

ABANDONED BY THE BRITISH

What was more shocking was the fact that sometime after the first bombing, the British had decided to abandon Penang to the Japanese. At the stroke of midnight on the Dec 13, "the British sailed into the midnight mists in silence and in stealth", Lim recalled. The next day, the bombing continued until then the *Straits Echo* editor M. Saravanamuthu decided to raise the white flag at Fort Cornwallis. According to Lim, "at the same time, a young Eurasian horse trainer chose to cycle all the twenty-one miles (more than 33km) to Sungai Petani, where the Japanese frontline headquarters were, to inform them, the enemy, that the British government had evacuated the island."



The government offices that were destroyed by American B-29 bombers in air raids during the closing months of World War II

PENANG UNDER THE JAPANESE

In his book, *My Island in the Sun: A Penang Perspective* (1995), the late Khor Chiang Kee recalls that the first Japanese invasion troops landed in Penang on Dec 16, 1941. Eager to demonstrate their authority, the Japanese soldiers were brutal and violent. Khor remembers the beheading of two men outside the Police Headquarters in Penang Road. "The big crowd were stunned into silence. One boy who had climbed up a tree was so sickened at the sight of the blood spurting out of that headless body that he fell from his perch. The heads were then displayed on spikes outside the headquarters."

The people particularly dreaded the *Kempetai*, or secret police. Many who were rounded up were never seen again. Datuk Zubaidah Ariff, who was then a teenager, remembers looking out of her window at night and seeing informers in black hoods pointing out people who were against the Japanese. "These people are never heard from again," she recalled. While

the main target of Japanese oppression were Chinese-educated students, organisers of the China Relief Fund, and known British sympathisers, the local Malay community was not spared from summary punishment. Datuk Zubaidah Ariff, also remembers her father, the late Tan Sri C.M. Hashim being arrested by Japanese soldiers for allegedly hoarding rice. "We cried when the Japanese soldiers came to take him away but thank God, he was released the next day," she added.

Penang's economy — largely dependent on its port — was severely affected by the war. The docks had been bombed and Penang was cut off from its much needed regional trade. The Japanese also introduced a new currency — popularly referred to as banana money — to replace British currency. Soon the economy collapsed and many resorted to planting tapioca to supplement their diet. The Chinese community was also asked to collect "blood money" as redemption for their anti-Japanese activities before the war. The Japanese appointed the late Heah Joo Siang to head the Penang committee responsible for collecting the fund.

After the terror and shock of the first few months, people tried to return to their normal activities. School children began learning Japanese and Japanese propaganda filled the airwaves and the newspapers.

Entertainment, according to journalist Khor Chiang Kee, included gambling at the Goraku; there were no cars, people walked or cycled everywhere. Malaya was also made to follow Tokyo time which was then one and half hours ahead, so "people retired at midnight when it was actually 10.30pm," Khor recalled.

Datuk P.G. Lim, Malaysia's first woman ambassador and Cambridge University's first Chinese female graduate, who had just returned from the university in 1941, remembers a light-hearted incident during the Occupation: "It was customary when passing a Japanese sentry to stop cycling, get down and bow, wishing him either good morning or good afternoon. In 1945, when many had heard of the imminent surrender of the Japanese, my friend got off his bicycle to bow to the sentry but instead of saying good morning, out came the word 'sayonara' (goodbye in Japanese) involuntarily. He was rewarded with two slaps across the face and several kicks. He was lucky not to have been shot dead for his gaffe," she said.

THE END OF THE OCCUPATION

The last few weeks of the Occupation witnessed another series of bombings, this time by the Allied Forces. Among those hit was the St Xavier's Institution's building, which was then located next to the Light Street Convent. Penang's government offices were also bombed. At the end of the war, more than 1,000 houses were destroyed by bombing and looting.

British invincibility had been irrevocably shattered during the war and although the people cheered when the Japanese surrendered on Aug 15, 1945, the abandonment by the British and the subsequent suffering under the Japanese galvanised them toward self-determination. As P.G. Lim said, "we were now caught up in the call for independence. India had gained her independence (in 1947), so we were all together demanding for it for Malaya."

FIGHTING THE MALAYAN UNION

Upon the return of normalcy, the British colonial office announced the formation of the Malayan Union, whereby the Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca were "unified" with the Federated and Unfederated Malay States. This was a turning point in Malaysian politics as Malay nationalism swept the country — led by Datuk Onn Jaafar — in protest at the further erosion of Malay rights under the new scheme.

Onn went on to lead the United Malays National Organisation (Umno) which was founded in May 1946. He gave fiery speeches throughout the country and visited Penang several times. Onn and Umno eventually won its fight against the Malayan Union which was replaced by the 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement which secured the position of the Malay rulers. The special position of the Malays was also guaranteed under this agreement.

THE SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT

Penang's local leaders who were not consulted in the formation of the Malayan Union or the Federation became anxious as they would rather remain under the British Crown like Singapore, which was not included in the Federation.

In 1948, these leaders formed a movement to secede from the Federation. They were also motivated by the fact that they would lose the rights and privileges that they enjoyed as British



subjects; some demanded that they should enjoy the same privileges as that of the Malays on the peninsula. The movement failed when it was overwhelmed by sweeping Malay nationalism and its fate was sealed when the British ignored the demands of its delegation in London.

MERDEKA EUPHORIA

The figure of Tunku Abdul Rahman, who by 1951 had taken over from Onn as Umno president, emerged at this time as a fighter for independence. It was perhaps destined that the Tunku, as he was fondly known, was to lead the independence movement for it was his great-grandfather who had ceded Penang to Francis Light in 1786. A charismatic and much-loved leader, the Tunku led the Alliance Party, which saw the co-operation between Umno and the Malayan Chinese Association in the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Elections in 1952. The Malayan Indian Congress joined the Alliance in 1955 and during the first democratic elections of that year, the Alliance won 51 out of 52 seats. The Tunku, as Chief Minister, led the Malayan delegation to negotiate for the independence of Malaya. Securing independence for Malaya weakened the armed insurgency of the Malayan Communist Party, which started in 1948. At the Baling



[Clockwise from top left] Datuk Onn Jaafar addressing a gathering in Francis Light School in the 1950s; the late Senator Ismail Nagore (on the left of the trio holding the sign) and local leader Mohd Noor Ishak fighting to keep Penang in the Federation; Tunku Abdul Rahman leading shouts of "Merdeka" in a 1950s gathering with local Penang Umno leaders.

Talks, the Tunku demanded the unconditional surrender of the communists.

In Penang, the Tunku's call for independence found great support. Thus, on Aug 31, 1957, after 171 years under British colonialism, a Kedah prince delivered independence to Penang and the rest of Malaya.

LOWERING THE FLAG AT FORT CORNWALLIS

BY TAN SRI WONG POW NEE
Penang's first Chief Minister

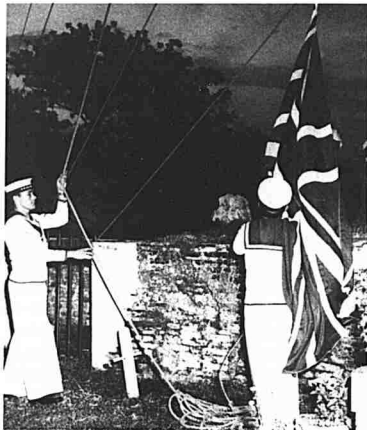
THE highest point in my life was when our first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, gave me the honour of reading the proclamation of Independence on Aug 31, 1957, at the Esplanade, Penang. Outside Kuala Lumpur, the proclamation was read out in Penang and Malacca which were former colonies of the British Crown. I flew back in a Dakota plane after attending the independence celebration in the federal capital with Tunku and headed for the Esplanade around 3.30pm.

The weather that Saturday afternoon was bright and the people, thousands of them who came out to celebrate independence, all looked very happy. The Union Jack had been lowered for the last time the day before at 6.45pm at the base of the Naval Light House at Fort Cornwallis.

The last British resident commissioner, R.P. Bingham, and his aide de camp arrived at the Esplanade and were met by the British state secretary Ellis (I can't remember his full name). All guests stood up and Bingham ascended the dais where he was received by a royal salute. Also on the dais was the Governor, Raja Tun Sir Uda Raja Muhammad.

I read out the proclamation speech, which I had rehearsed several times the previous day, in Malay, signifying the severing of the new state of Penang from 171 years of British rule. Hashim Awang, head of the Province Wellesley Malay Association, read it in English after me. "MER-DE-KA!" I shouted several times and the crowd echoed after me and cheered. There was complete silence as the first note of our national song, *NegaraKu*, was struck; this was followed by a 101 gun salute and the raising of the state flag. There was a grand parade of various units and schools, including the Second Field Federation Infantry Brigade police and cadets from St Xavier's Institution and Penang Free School.

The out-going commissioner performed his last official act when he presented the constitutional instrument, a flag, to Raja Uda. He inspected a farewell Guard of Honour mounted by the Federation of Malaya Police at Kedah Pier before he was taken by *Stella Maris*, a small ship, at 5.30pm to board the *HMAS Tobruk*, a British warship, which left for Singapore.



[Top] Lowering the British flag for the last time at Fort Cornwallis. Hashim Awang, Head of the Province Wellesley Malay Association, reads the Proclamation of Independence in English.

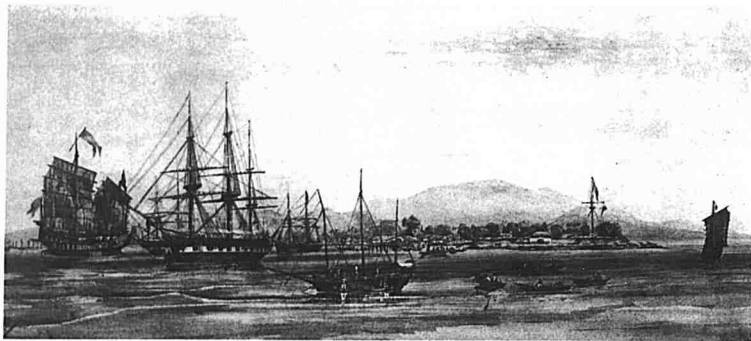


[Above] The last British Resident Commissioner R. P. Bingham (third right) on the dais during the proclamation of independence ceremony.

Tan Sri Wong Pow Nee leading the people with shouts of "Merdeka!"



The Trade & The Port



Penang from the Harbour, a water-colour painted by Captain Charles Henry Cazalet in 1856, depicts the variety of ships that was visiting the port at that time.

FRANCIS Light and the other traders who set up Penang as an English port were solely interested in making money; the nobler aims of these men were later written into posterity. It was more the age of buccaneers than empire and what was important to the British East India Company then was the tea trade with China. As historian K.G. Tregonning noted, "there were no real altruistic motives because company officials were nearly all involved in the trade themselves".

Thanks to the energetic, some would even say unscrupulous, efforts of men such as Light and his business partner James

Scott, trade in Penang developed despite the port's location too far north in the Straits of Malacca to be a suitable entrepot. Its fortunes fluctuated with the changing patterns of trade in the region but by its 40th year, Penang emerged as an important regional emporium.

As Light noted, while Penang might not have made a good entrepot, it was in the right place to corner goods swirling around the ports of the northern states on both sides of the Malaccan Straits. Between December 1786 and May 1787, he reported that there were 17 ships from Pegu, Mergui, Aceh,



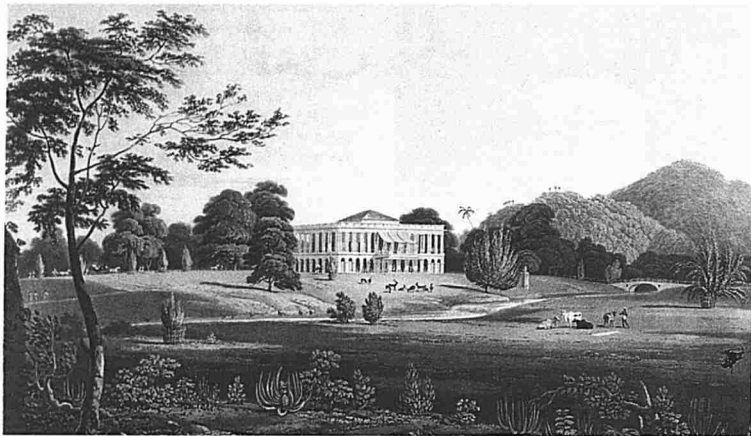
David Brown (1778-1821) was a law student in Edinburgh University before he came out to Penang. He joined James Scott and started Scott, Brown & Co in 1808. He took over the company when Scott died and the firm of Brown & Co flourished. By 1821 when he died, the Browns were the largest landowners in Penang. He donated almost 5ha of land to the municipality and a monument at the north-west corner of 'Padang Brown' (pronounced Padang Broom by the Malays) commemorates his generosity. This monument still stands at the intersection of Anson Road and Perak Road.

Malacca and eastwards. There were also six ships from southern India, 11 from Bengal, seven from Canton and Macau, and one from the United States. Penang had won the first battle against the eager-to-expand Dutch not with cannon fire but with its free trade. Despite having established themselves in Riau (in Sumatra) in 1784, the Dutch could not divert trade from Penang. In the first six months of 1790, Penang attracted 104 ships. Among the new traders who found Penang were those from Selangor, Batavia (in Java), Terengganu, Rangoon (now Yangon) and Cochin China (now Vietnam).

To the traders, what was as important as the free trade at Penang was British protection. For instance, when pirates in Pedir took Scott's ship in 1789, it was documented in the *Sumatra Factory Records* that the ship was subsequently returned upon Light's intervention. Traders from the Malay states also came in their *perahu* (boats) to Penang. Like the Acehnese — who brought pepper, coffee, betel nut, camphor, gold dust, rattan, padi and rice — the traders from neighbouring Malay states brought with them what came to be known as Straits produce. Malay *perahus* totalled 3,328 by 1836 on official count. They came mainly from Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Malacca, Johor and Terengganu. There was also an overland route across the peninsula linking Penang with the more developed East Coast Malay states.

Tin was only poised to be Penang's main trade product in the mid 19th century. At that time tin flowed down mainly from Junk Ceylon (Phuket, in what is now Thailand). Although tin also came to Penang from Banka Island off southern Sumatra — totalling \$130,000 (Straits dollars) in 1803 — Dutch intervention on that island meant an end to the northward flow. But this did not affect trade much in Penang, for in its early days, it was pepper, opium and betel nut that accounted for the bulk of the island's trade.

The city that sprung from this trading activity was George Town. Its early buildings had *atap* (thatch) roofs vulnerable to flame and fires frequently destroyed parts of the city. Two particularly bad fires in 1808 and 1814 respectively prompted the town's municipal government to widen Pitt Street and Armenian Lane. Robert Farquhar, one of Penang's early superintendents, built a brick aqueduct to bring water from waterfalls to the city.



'Suffolk House', an opulent reflection of the wealth acquired by the soldiers of fortune who made Penang an important port. This aquatint was made by William Daniel in 1818.

Penang's trade gave birth to George Town's diverse and cosmopolitan nature. In 1788, there were 65 shopkeepers and families of Indian origin totalling 334 people. The Chinese held a slim lead with 110 shopkeepers and families or 425 people. The island also attracted people from the Malay Archipelago. The population in 1833 reached 86,275 souls of which 45,953 lived in Province Wellesley (now Seberang Prai) on the mainland.

On the darker side, Penang was also famed for its slave trade with a record of 1,500 of them, mostly domestic helpers. Slavery was, however, abolished in 1808. Piracy, on the other hand, was more difficult to deal with as the definition of what exactly constituted a pirate was unclear. The problem, however, was bought under control in 1826 when steamers were placed on guard in the straits. With these problems dealt with, the European entrepreneurs settled down to build their fortunes — as

well as homes that reflected their wealth. By the time Scott, Light's business partner, died in 1808, he was known as "sole banker and money lender to the entire community". Standing testimony to his wealth were the two houses, *Scotland* and *Kelso*. Scott's other business partner, David Brown, built *Glugor House* while another influential trader, Stamford Raffles, built *Rummymede* between 1808 and 1809; it is now an army base. W.E. Phillips, the officer who was never made governor, is reported by Lord Minto, the visiting Governor-General of Bengal, to have occupied *Suffolk House*.

Thus was Penang graced "with mansions on the shore" at the turn of 19th century. But they were just the beginning. The soldiers of fortunes who built them eventually gave way to more legitimate entrepreneurs, including some of the world's first multinational financiers and bankers. The rest of this chapter is devoted to describing these traders and their port of call.



Penang's first government building, the British East India Company headquarters, was once located at the corner of Downing Street and Beach Street.

WESTERN COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE IN THE AGE OF EMPIRE

BY DR. LOH WEI LENG

WESTERN commercial entities sought to partake of the lucrative trade of South-East Asia ever since the Portuguese found a direct sea route to Asia in the 15th century. During the subsequent 16th to 18th centuries, dubbed the Vasco da Gama era after the successful mariner who rounded the Cape of Good Hope to reach Calicut in India in 1498, Europeans vied to capture the highly profitable spice trade, spawning the early versions of multinational corporations that operated in foreign lands far from their bases. The Dutch East India Company (EIC), or VOC as it was also known, became the dominant Western power in Indonesia by the mid 17th century, ousting all their competitors, while the English EIC was barely on the periphery of the region, operating out of India.

The British eventually gained a foothold in the archipelagic market when they acquired Penang in 1786, capping earlier efforts by individual traders who had been crossing the Bay of

Bengal from the Coromandel Coast, Bengal and Surat and intruding into the Dutch domain. Enterprising merchants, such as Thomas Bowrey in the 1680s, and Francis Light and James Scott in the 1770s, had been conducting trade with various Malay rulers who were bound by treaties to confine their commercial exchanges to the VOC. With a foothold in Penang, there was no stopping British entrepreneurs, backed by their governments, from expanding their sphere of activities, initially from Penang, thereafter to Singapore in 1819, and into the Malay Peninsula and locations in North Borneo, present-day Sabah and Sarawak, in the course of the 19th century.

While the imperial project remains the prominent theme for the 19th century, giving the impression that Westerners called all the shots, it has to be recognised that Western business had to contend with Asian merchants — the main groups being Arab, Indian and Chinese — with long-standing involvement

in the East-West Eurasian and Pan-Asian trade since the first millennium. In fact, former British Governor Frank Swettenham in his book, *British Malaya*, expressed a commonly-held view among colonial administrators that, "Up to the year 1900 it may be fairly said that the prosperity of the Malay states was due to the enterprise and labour of the Chinese ... (since then) foreign — mainly British — capital, energy and skill have changed the face of the country."

It is against this backdrop that we can identify the evolving nature of Western enterprise, which was largely mercantile in the initial phase, 1786-1874, firmly entrenching itself in the flourishing Straits Settlements ports, working with Asian producers of primary commodities, essentially Chinese who had migrated in greater numbers, drawn to the opportunities made available with British rule. Chinese capital and labour flooded

into the hinterland — Penang being the conduit for the north with Singapore serving the south — into tin-mining in Larut and Kinta in Perak and Kuala Lumpur, and into pepper and gambier in Johor.

Mercantile companies such as Boustead, Harper & Gilliland, McAlister, Sandilands & Buttery, and Behn Meyer, which were still around in the post-independent period, were among the leading lights in Singapore, with branches in Penang. Some of the major banks of yesteryear, Chartered Bank, Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank, Netherlands Trading Co (today's ABN Amro), shipping companies such as Mansfield, advocates and solicitors, Presgrave & Matthews, remain familiar names to us today.

A few Westerners did venture into planting — sugar in Province Wellesley on the mainland in the 1840s, some into coffee further inland in Perak, Selangor and Negri Sembilan in the



The Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank (building with dome) and the Chartered Bank were among the two biggest banks in Penang. Seen here at the Downing Street-Beach Street Junction, these banks bankrolled many Western companies starting out in Penang, Perak and the northern Malay states.



The Netherlands Trading Society, predecessor of ABN-AMRO Bank, in Penang.

1870s and 1880s. Progress in commercial agriculture and mining by Western firms, however, was slow. Even after British entry into Perak and Selangor in 1874, with the inexorable move towards the formation of the Federated Malay States by 1895 and the provision of greater order and hence security of investment, the pace did not noticeably pick up till the turn of the last century. It was with the introduction of more capital-intensive technology in tin-mining and the lure of the enormous returns from rubber to meet the voracious demand of the new motor car industry that Western firms increasingly made their presence felt. The classic export economy, with rubber and tin as the twin pillars, supported by palm-oil and timber which became more substantial contributors to total exports in the 1970s, was firmly set by the early years of the last century.

Hence, on the eve of World War II in 1940, the picture which emerges is the typical one in the popular imagination in post-war Malaysia, one which did obtain by then, i.e., in the main, the Europeans held the commanding heights of the econ-



Beach Street in the 1930s was the heart of Penang's commercial district.

omy, with the Chinese, Malays and Indians on the lower rungs of the ladder.

With the rise of the rubber industry, Western firms that may have begun as mercantile companies added on an important function by becoming managing agencies of rubber companies (agency houses, in short), in addition to acquiring plantations. They had, of course, held a range of agencies from earlier days, from banking and insurance to shipping, transforming themselves into very diversified companies. Mention of Guthrie or Sime Darby conjures up images of the leviathans in today's corporate scene with tin companies Gopeng, Renong, Pengkalen, Tanjong, Tongkah, and Tronoh not far behind.

While a good number of the names of firms that had their beginnings in the Imperial Age have managed to endure, the ownership, type and organisation of the original businesses have changed dramatically — from Western into Malaysian hands, from mercantile, planting and mining activities into the conglomerates of present times.



The family of Lim Eow Hooi, taken in 1921. Eow Hooi is one of the sons of rice miller Lim Leng Cheak. The family photo was taken in the latter's mansion in Penang Road. The house was occupied by the British Government in the 1930s and later demolished to make way for the police contingent headquarters.

RICE MILLING & CHINESE FAMILY NETWORKS IN PENANG AND KEDAH

By DR. WU XIAO AUN

IN GEOGRAPHICAL terms, north Malaya formed an integral rice milling hierarchy with Penang as its headquarters. In communal terms, rice milling was dominated by the Chinese, mostly Hokkien with a few Hakka families. The rice milling network was controlled by a few interrelated Penang Chinese families that formed the top layer of the rice millers' pyramid. In fact, the history of rice milling in north Malaya before World War II is basically their families' histories.

The establishment of rice mills can be traced back as far as the 1880s, with the first rice mill in Penang, Khie Heng Bee, being established jointly by Phuah Hin Leong, Lim Leng Cheak and Chuah Yu Kay.

A regional milling organisation controlled by the Penang Chinese, the Rice Milling Agency, was established in January 1913. There were seven mills in this "rice combine": four in Penang, one in Kedah, one in Parit Buntar (Perak) and one in Province Wellesley on the mainland. Its Chinese name was Tai Yu Co and it had a capital of \$1,000,000 (Straits dollars), which was divided into 20 shares.

The main purpose of this agency was to avoid competition and reduce risk on the one hand, and to monopolise the whole north Malayan rice milling and trading market on the other.

The agency's partnership, which lasted till 1918, saw many changes take place. It closed three mills and worked with the

remaining mills for a large profit. But a new, independent, mill in Krian (Perak) and another in Alor Star (Kedah) decreased profits. The final nail in the agency's coffin was the Government's decision to build mills in Kedah and Krian. The rice combine finally broke up in 1918.

In January 1919, however, the Penang Chinese families decided to try again with the Rice Milling Co. The company's name was changed in September that year to the Central Milling Agency with a capital of \$1,650,000; this agency lasted until 1925, after which less formal combines came into play while many families maintained independent mills.

Some of the independently-owned mills were certainly large enough to stand on their own. Take the Choong family's mills, for instance. The brothers Lye Hock and Lye Hin had one large mill in Kedah and another two large mills in Krian. The mills competed with two government mills, one in Bagan Serai and one in Kuala Kurau (both in north Perak, bordering Kedah).

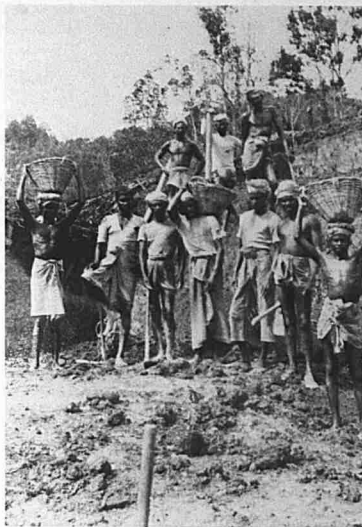
In 1934, the daily capacity of all the mills owned by the Choong family was 2,000 bags, a bag being 170 katis (a little over 100kg). This output equalled that of 14 large and medium-sized mills in the state of Kedah at that time.

In 1938, the rice millers in Kedah, Penang and Province Wellesley were again formally amalgamated and formed into a company with a capital of \$500,000. The primary object was "to buy padi economically and to sell rice at a moderate and fair profit", as stated in a local paper at the time; the report referred to the controlling firm as the Hock Hin Bros Co.

THE KEDAH SITUATION

At the local level in Kedah, the development of the rice milling industry might be divided into three main stages. The first stage was between 1888 and 1914. This was the period of a monopoly held by the Lim Leng Cheak family. The second stage was from 1915 to the mid-1930s. This was the first period of enormous growth in the Kedah rice milling industry.

The third stage was from the mid-1930s until 1941. This was the second period of the enormous growth in the Kedah rice milling industry. This growth was attributed to the efforts of people outside the "milling ring" who were encouraged by the government into competing with the big rice millers.



A photo of Indian indentured labourers in Rockhill. They were instrumental in the physical development of Penang. Their contributions are however often overlooked but without them, much would not have been built. This includes the houses and estates owned by the various traders and rice millers of Penang.

LINKS MAINTAINED

The relationship between the Chinese millers of Kedah and Penang was both overlapping and conflicting. Despite being so dominant, the Penang families were still dependant on Kedah and Kedah's padi agents for supply.

But by establishing branch mills in Kedah, by advancing their agents, the Penang milling community managed to maintain a close cross border link with the Kedah milling community.



FMS Railway Building, with lighters in the foreground in 1937.

THE PORT

THE development of Penang's wealth was much influenced by its port. Like all major port cities, the sea brought both hardship and riches to the people of Penang.

James Abraham, a surgeon on a large steamer, arrived in Penang in February 1906 just as the city was preparing to receive the Duke of Connaught. "We anchored opposite the jetty in 13 fathoms of water; and the first thing that struck us was that it had suddenly become intensely hot," he wrote. "The next impression was that we were being boarded by pirates. They came from every side, *sampan* (small boat) racing sampan for which would be the first to reach the lowered gangway. They tumbled on deck in heaps from every quarter." To his amazement, "in five minutes they had penetrated to every corner of the ship — Parsees, Malays, Klings, Chinamen, and

Eurasians ... in an almost incredibly short period after our arrival cargo was going over the side into the empty lighters, and khaki-clad Chinese tally-clerks in puggarees, standing one at each hatch, were checking the loads as they rose from the hold." Such was the bustle of Penang's port.

The port was served by the FMS Railway building, which was the only railway station without a railway — people bought their tickets there but went to the ferry terminal on the mainland. Much produce passed through Penang island to Province Wellesley after processing. Similarly, much raw material passed from the mainland to Penang — especially important was tin. Penang was a meeting point for travellers from East and West. George Bilainkin, who first arrived in Penang as a young

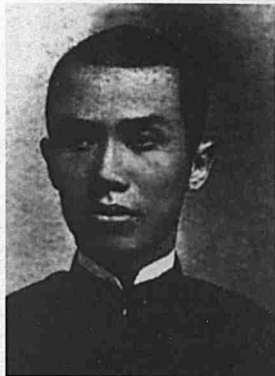
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Taken by an amateur pilot, this is a 1930s photo of Bagan Luar Pier, entry point to Butterworth town on the mainland. The photo also shows a ferry approaching the jetty.

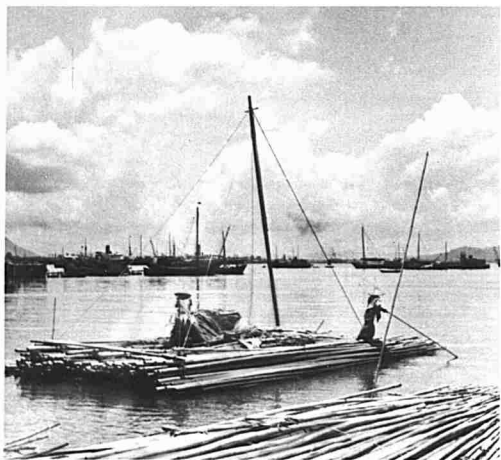
THE FERRY SERVICE

QUAH Beng Kee and his brothers started the ferry service in 1894. They operated from Kedah Pier on the island and various landing places at Province Wellesley on the mainland. In 1924, the Penang Harbour Board took over the ferry service and, a year later, the ferry service began operating between Church Street Ghaut on the island and Mitchell Pier at Butterworth, Province Wellesley. Quah was also one of the principal shareholders of the Eastern Shipping Company, one of the earliest attempts by a local shipping company to modernise and use steam-powered ships from New Zealand. Quah's residence in Penang, formerly known as *Columbia Lodge*, is presently the Maple Gold Club. The enterprising Penangite studied at the Penang Free School and served on the Legislative Council, the Penang Harbour Board, the Chinese Advisory Council and the Penang Hospital Board. He was a member of the Penang Chinese Town Hall and the Straits Chinese British Association. He was at one time the Chairman of the *Straits Echo* and the Penang Town Band. He provided free ferry service for school children attending schools on the island.



CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PENANG PORT

- 1592** James Lancaster arrives in what is known as Pulo Pinaom, part of the Kedah Sultanate
- 1786** Francis Light claims Penang Island for the British East India Company.
- 1805** Penang is declared British India's fourth presidency
- 1811** The British Occupation of Java results in British ships using the Sunda Straits. Penang, however, is by now an important regional emporium
- 1819** Founding of Singapore and beginning of the eclipse of Penang's port as the main British port in South-East Asia
- 1869** Penang trade recovers with the opening of the Suez Canal as more ships use the Straits of Malacca
- 1872** Penang declared a free port; historians note that Chinese shippers dominate Penang's shipping and sea transportation
- 1890** Some 800 ocean steamers and several thousand smaller craft are recorded to have docked in Penang
- 1894** Quah Beng Kee starts ferry service from Kedah Pier on the island with various landing places in Seberang Prai (as Province Wellesley is now known;)
- 1898** Swettenham Pier built after agitation from companies using the port



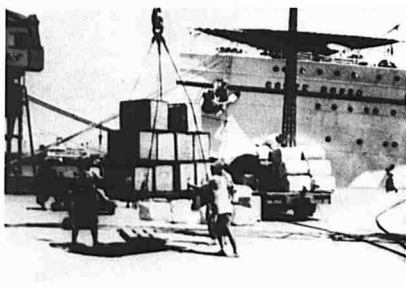
[Top] The mouth of Sungai Pinang leading to Weld Quay.
A raft ferrying bamboo off Weld Quay, 1946.



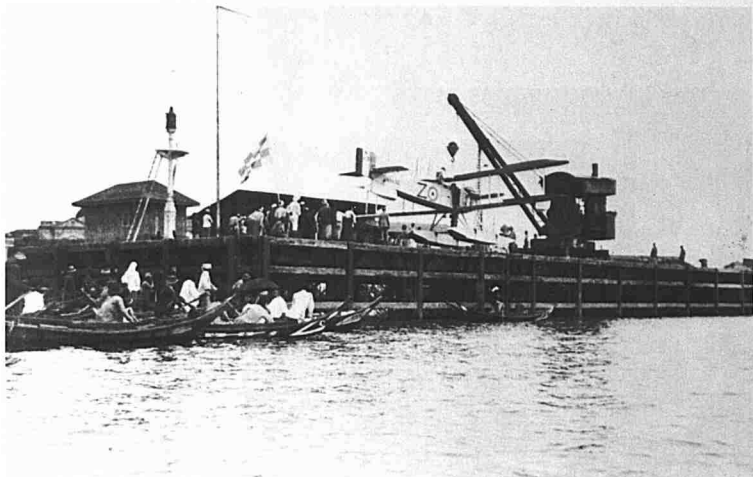
[Top] Cars lining-up in Swettenham Pier to collect passengers and goods. Notice the tram tracks in the road and beer advertisements. [Above] Another photo of the Pier in the 1930s.

THE PORT IN THE 20TH CENTURY

- 1903** Province Wellesley (later, Prai) connected to the FMS Railway. Eleven years later in 1914, the Railway Authority takes over the administration of the wharf facilities and Prai is developed as a railway wharf. Silting of the Sungai Prai, however, makes it unsuitable for ocean going vessels.
- 1939** Mouth of Sungai Pinang badly silted and inaccessible at neap tides
- 1942-1945** Japanese Occupation leaves Swettenham Pier silted and without a single transit shed
- 1948** Harbour Board spends M\$5mil to restore Swettenham Pier and increase capacity to 65% of pre-war figures.



[Top & left] Cargo being loaded onto the 'Conte Rosso', a vessel that docked at Swettenham Pier on Feb 25, 1937; selling cigarettes on the pier; Indian stevedores loading tin ingots and bales of rubber onto a ship.



The first sea plane to land in the channel off Penang Harbour being hoisted onto Swettenham Pier. The 'Penang Gazette' recorded the event and said that the plane was flown solo from Britain to Penang by a Royal Air Force pilot.

From page 30

journalist in 1928, had this to say upon disembarking from his ship: "From the deck I watched the ebullition of spirit among passengers in the second saloon where there was less restraint over joy and sorrow. They babbled and said nothing, but seemed human in their heartfelt welcome on seeing land.... As I stepped on shore, having told the office messenger that I should see my chief at the hotel at breakfast time, I was at last alone and free to think. It was pleasant to stand on a soft tarmacadam surface. I glanced at the long line of motor cars waiting to take the passengers whither they willed." Finally he decided to take a rickshaw: "I sat back and discovered how comfortable a rickshaw could be." Bilainkin went on to assume the editorship of the *Straits Echo*.

The busy port was, however, facing problems. One of the most serious was the problem of siltation. As early as the 1890s, the authorities had wanted to make the port deeper. Swettenham Pier was finally built in 1894 as a solution to the problem.

The Port also saw its fair share of military action. In 1914, at the outbreak of World War I, the *Emden*, a German cruiser, entered the harbour and wrecked havoc by sinking a Russian ship. During World War II, the docks were bombed by the Japanese and trade was virtually suspended.

Whatever the changes, Penang's port has always been shaped by its many visitors. From the moment traders started using its shores to unload and sell their goods, Penang became an important regional entrepot. Thus, till today, the sea is a gateway to this multicultural and cosmopolitan society.

People



Multicultural Penang: Children dressed for a school play

COMMENTS vary about the people of Penang. Some think most Penangites, like all islanders, are insular and think their island truly unique. Some feel that Penangites are sophisticated and cultured because they are from an old, established international settlement. Others disagree, saying that the people of Penang are too pro-British and have lost touch with their native traditions and cultures. Penangites, however, would rebut and say that it is on the island that Malaysia is most apparent — this is the real melting port, a model state of multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural harmony. Whatever your persuasion, Penang and its capital,

George Town, is very much a world-renowned destination because of its diversity. The following pages offer a glimpse of that diversity captured by studio cameras or those of amateur photographers of years ago. While some candid shots encapsulate certain unique features of people in their natural environment, others are studio shots showing what these people thought should be representations of themselves dedicated for posterity. This chapter also offers some essays on a few of Penang's hybrid communities, like the Straits Chinese, the Jawi Pekans and the Armenians. It begins appropriately with George Town's first census describing the population of the city in 1788.

THE FIRST CENSUS, DECEMBER 1788

BY ROGER SCOTT LEWIS

FROM this first head count it seems there was a grand total of 1,335 people on the island, concentrated, of course, in and around George Town. Unfortunately, this first census provides little additional information about each new pioneer.

For the Europeans, only their occupations, nationality and last port of call was given. The Catholics were listed separately by religion; there were about 199 of them and they were a mixed racial group, it seems. They might not have been fully European since none reported themselves to be from any European country, except for one new priest from Paris, not named, and Bishop Garnault, who came from France. These Catholics were certainly from a variety of places before their arrival but the column headed "from whence came?" can be ambiguous. Does it really mean "where were you born?" or "what country did you last come from?" or "what is your nationality?"

Those coming from the furthest away seemed to be two people from Madagascar, listed as servants; since they were also listed as "Caffir" it may be assumed that they were slaves. Several people came from Malabar, Madras and Bengal in India. One was from Batavia in Java and another from Macau. Of the rest, the majority had come from Kedah and Siam (present day Thailand) to escape religious persecution.

The census does not mention any occupations, though, for this group. As mentioned before no relationships are given here. Even Martina Rozells, who was living with Francis Light, the man who acquired the island for the British, was simply listed as "Martinha". Their son, William, was named simply as "her son". Interestingly, Light did not name him "our son"! Indeed, at least seven children had been born on the island within the last 17 months or so of the census. These babies were simply listed as being "from" Prince of Wales Island, as Penang was known to the British.

The British East India Company (EIC) troops stationed in the newly built Fort Cornwallis were not listed and so the census appears to have been composed only of civilians.

Of the Europeans, Light did not mention himself except to sign his name at the bottom of each list. Topping the list,



Three friends and employees of a British Club in the 1920s.

though, was his best friend and crony, James Scott, listed as a British merchant from Junk Ceylon (latter-day Phuket in Thailand).

This group was also a mixed lot. They included two Americans, both from Madras, one a merchant, the other a writer. There were five writers in all, and probably all were working for the EIC. Copying documents by hand was a most important job in the days before photocopiers and fax machines! The list went on to include a tavern keeper, a ship's carpenter, ship's caulker and a ship builder. There is also a cooper and blacksmith plus a shopkeeper, housebuilder, a planter and somebody called a "Bush Master." Most of these men were British, though there were those two Americans already mentioned as well as a Frenchman, an Indian and one man from Sweden.

The Chulias and Malays were grouped together and numbered 438 with 95 wives and family members soon to arrive

from elsewhere to accompany them. Only heads of households were recorded and the number of people in each family unit. The average family size was only three or four members. That would seem to indicate that they were mostly young people only recently married. Most of these heads of households gave their occupations as shopkeepers with a trader or two, a tailor, a company writer, a gunsmith, a woodman and a fisherman. Again, of these, most had come down from Kedah but Prai, Perlis, Aceh, Calcutta and even Borneo were represented as last ports of embarkation.

With the Chinese, again only heads of household units were given with another list for the number of people in the family. Surprisingly, only a few had come directly from China. Most had lived in the Malay Provinces of Kedah and Kuantan. They numbered 534 and were the most numerous ethnic group. Occupations were widely mixed and most had skilled trades. They included a butcher, several carpenters, opium and arrack sellers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, tailors, sawyers, barbers, tinnmen, coopers, fishermen, a goldsmith, gardeners, brickmakers, the ubiquitous shopkeepers and one man who claimed his occupation was "gameing" (sic). Perhaps he was the island's first professional mah-jong gambler?

Light did not make many personal comments or give us much more information about these people. He did, though, mention that the most industrious inhabitants were those living within the areas bounded by Sungai Dua, Sungai Nebon, Sungai Gelagor, Buttoo Lanchang (sic), and Sungai Penang. It was a large tract of land. Most of it had not been cleared yet by the inhabitants but they were preparing to do so and to bring their families to join them. And at Kampung Penang there were two headmen and about 80 people who said they "are greatly indebted to the Honourable Company for the land given to them but have been very idle. They promise to exert themselves later this year!"

From this very early counting of heads till today we have only to look out of the window to see that very little has changed. The types of heads are identical, only the numbers have increased. We still have brickmakers, barbers, shopkeepers and butchers. Has the type and number of "Gamesters" changed or increased? Well, that is a question that perhaps only Penagites can answer-lah!

THE PENANG CHINESE

THE Chinese were said to have already established themselves in Penang when Francis Light arrived in search of an outpost for the British. There were small Chinese villages in the Weld Quay area. As early as the first decade of the 15th century, the records of the renowned explorer, Admiral Cheng Ho, lists Penang as Ping-Lang-Yu. The greatest influx of Chinese immigration, however, began with the British East India Company's active encouragement in the last quarter of the 18th century, with Light himself appointing Chinese headmen as representatives of their communities. It was not until the 1850s that the Chinese began to become numerically dominant. In fact, according to colonial census records, Penang was as much an Indian city as it was a Chinese one up till the 1840s.

A heterogeneous group, the Chinese organised themselves according to dialect groups and territorial origins. There were also organisations based on kinship that included surname, clan and lineage affinities. Locality was also important depending on the province or village of origin. Dialect grouping and craft guilds were other important indicators of belonging. Later, there emerged the *sinkeh* and *laokhe* dichotomy measured against time of arrival, the latter being a long-time settler while the former was one who had just got off the boat.

The Chinese family was basically centred around the patriarch although a son-in-law could be co-opted to live in the house of his wife if she came from a higher social position. Several Chinese businessmen started this way. Khaw Soo Chiang, the patriarch of the Khaw clan, was reputed to have married a rich Penang merchant's daughter. The patriarch usually had two wives or more depending on his economic standing. There would be a wife from China chosen by his family and who usually lived in China taking care of his aged parents. He would also have a secondary wife who was usually locally born.

Family networks served an important social and economic role. Rich families usually married off their daughters or sons to secure a strategic business or social relationship. In the late 19th century, Chinese family networks allowed the Chinese to dominate Penang's local trade. It is not surprising that the Chinese are a close-knit community till this day.



Peranakan Chinese women dressed in the traditional sarong and kebaya.

THE "PERANAKAN" CHINESE

THE word "Peranakan" refers to a group of Chinese immigrants who are more acculturated than their later counterparts. Not all acculturated Chinese people in Malaysia, however, see themselves as Peranakan Chinese or *Baba Cina*.

Geographically, the Peranakan Chinese are scattered across what had been the Straits Settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore under the British, and the north-east Malay states of Kelantan and Terengganu.

The unifying features among these Chinese communities are the adoption of local Malay dialects into their daily language, the wearing of the sarong and *kebaya* (a form-fitting dress) and

the incorporation of local herbs and spices in their cuisine. The Peranakan Chinese are, therefore, linguistically and culturally different from other Chinese sub-groups in Malaysia and these differences, some would argue, sets them apart as a separate race.

The Penang "Babas" are a peculiar lot when compared with their Malaccan counterparts. They have resisted the label Peranakan or Baba and prefer the term Straits Chinese. This is understandable with the development of Penang as a British port after 1776 and with the arrival of the Chinese soon after. The earliest Penang Chinese families were mostly from the Chinese province of Fujian and thus many spoke the



A Chinese family assembled around their father and mothers. The elderly gentleman is in Western coat and tie like his sons, while his China-born wife (on his right) is in traditional Chinese dress. His Peranakan Chinese wife wears a 'baju panjang' (traditional long dress) and sports a 'sanggol nyonya' (coiffeur hairstyle). This is a typical hybridity unique to the overseas Chinese in the Malay world.

Hokkien dialect. Unlike the acculturated Chinese in Malacca, the Penang Chinese clung to their language — though adopting the use of many Malay words and appropriating the linguistic pattern of the native language. One of the most popular corruptions is adding the suffix "lah" at the end of a sentence. Although this is derived from the Hokkien practice, it has become very much a part of the way Malaysians speak English and Malay today. Other borrowings from Hokkein include the words *loteng* (upstairs), *tcho* (kettle or teapot), *tauhu* (bean curd) and *nyolo* (censer), to name a few.

The Straits Chinese were also Anglophiles and spoke English at home, apart from their hybridised Hokkien. The men would usually wore a European suit and a hat called a *topi* (Malay for hat) while the women wore the kebaya.

While the Straits Chinese in Penang exhibited the effects of Western influence and also aspects akin to their Hokkien origins, the *Cina kampung* (village Chinese) of Kelantan and Terengganu were more Malay due to the isolation of the two states from British influence. The clothes that the acculturated Chinese of these two states wore are examples of this unique development. The women were fond of wearing the sarong like their counterparts in Penang and Malacca but usually *berkemban* (wear a sarong tied above the bosom) in their *kain batik lepas*, as the sarongs were called, like the Malay women. Their men adopted the Malay *tanjak* (a type of headdress) by wrapping their heads with what they referred to as the *semutar*. The architecture of their houses also closely resembled the village houses of the Malays. And the Hokkien they spoke had linguistic links not



The patriarch of a Chinese family in 'death robes', flanked by his grandchildren. It was a traditional Chinese practice to select one's death robes and even keep one's coffin at home.

only with the Kelantan dialect but also exhibited Siamese, or Thai, influences.

Peranakan Chinese women, or *Nyonyas*, are perhaps the best example of cultural hybridity in this community. The 19th century Victorian traveller Isabella Bird remarked that the Peranakan Chinese women had adopted the "disgusting habit of betel nut chewing." To the *Nyonya*, it was far from disgusting. Every Peranakan Chinese woman had her own *sirih* (betel nut) set or was given one at her wedding. The fruit from the areca palm, the betel nut, was sliced and wrapped in a *sirih* leaf (the leaf of the betel pepper) and accompanied with a smear of moistened lime. Chewing this oblong package is akin to chewing gum today, though the betel nut acts as a mild stimulant not

much different from nicotine.

Today, many identify the Peranakan Chinese through their cuisine. The various *Nyonya* cakes, like "love-letters" or *Kuih Kapit*, or the famous *Kuih Lapis* (or Layer cake) are still present among the offerings of these families during Chinese New Year when guests visit. What is most striking about *Nyonya* cooking is the generous use of local herbs and spices. The *Ayam Ponteh*, *Babi Buah Keluak*, *Perut Ikan* and *Asam Laksa* are a few examples of local influences in Peranakan Chinese cooking. Other delicacies like the *Kuih Bahul*, *Kuih Koci* and the Malay *Kuih Dodol* were also incorporated into the Peranakan Chinese dessert menu. Food and the preparation of it now act as markers of a disappearing community.



The family photograph of the late Khoo Hock Siew (baby in mother's lap) taken in 1911 to commemorate the family's fifth year after leaving China. Khoo later became a trustee of the Leong San Tong of the Khoo Clan House

Peranakan Chinese businessmen made their mark in the 19th century as investors in the booming tin industry and as merchants in the Straits Settlements. The rich Baba families, like the Tans of Singapore and the Khaws of Penang, invested in tin-mining, merchant shipping, revenue farming and rubber-planting.

While the Peranakan Chinese, or Straits Chinese as they call themselves in Penang, identified with the British and held British passports, their newly arrived counterparts from China saw themselves as temporary settlers who would eventually return to China. Their numbers began to swell in the late 19th century and by the early 20th century, it was apparent that they formed the majority of Chinese in the Straits Settlements. In Singapore, the number of Straits-born Chinese numbered not more than 20% of the Chinese population and it is estimated that the situation was similar in Penang.

Despite their Anglophile leanings, however, the Straits

Chinese contributed towards the establishment of Chinese schools as they still identified with Chinese culture. Although they had formed the Straits Chinese British Association in Penang in 1921, the bilingual Straits Chinese of Penang were able to play an active role in the Chinese community.

In 1948, when the Federation of Malaya was formed, the Straits Settlements were disbanded. The Straits Chinese British Association of Penang called for Penang to remain a crown colony but was unsuccessful. Following Malayan independence in 1957, the difference between Peranakan Chinese and the *sinkeh* began to diminish. Thus, the Peranakan Chinese community in Penang decided to change its society's name from the Straits Chinese British Association to the State (Penang) Chinese Association, and later, to the Penang Peranakan Chinese Association. Today, the Straits Chinese is a fast disappearing community as its younger members find no reason to perpetuate their once unique cultural identity.



A photograph of a Jawi Pekan family. The woman on the left is from an Indian Muslim family. Indian Muslims who did not practise a Malay style of living were often referred to as 'Tangkajec' or 'Mamak'. In the post Mercha period, many Indian Muslims opted to join the United Malays National Organisation and, subsequently, began to assume a Malay identity.

THE RICH LEGACY OF THE JAWI PEKANS

BY KHOO SALMA NASUTION

MANY old Penang Malay families still remember the days when the Jawi Peranakan were the elite among the Muslim community. The earlier term used in Penang was "Jawi Pekan," translated as "bazaar Malays" or "town Malays".

It was applied to Muslims of mixed Indian (especially Tamil) and Malay descent, although mixed Arabic, Bengali, Punjabi, Acehese and even Siamese and Chinese parentage were also common. Sometimes, both parents were Tamil Muslim, for example, but due to a process of acculturation, the children identified themselves as Jawi Pekan or Malays. The early colonial administrators depended on the Jawi Pekan to deal with the Malay and Muslim populations of Penang and Province Wellesley (now Seberang Prai) on the mainland. James Low, an early 19th century commentator and a Madras army officer in charge of Province Wellesley, noted that "the Jawi Pakans are undoubtedly a very useful class in the Straits ... they are acute

accountants; expert, but not very liberal merchants; good assistants in public offices, and the only natives here who are acquainted with land-measuring. They are often smart interpreters of two or more languages, wily diplomatic agents, and generally respectable in the outward man."

The oldest Jawi Pekan families were closely related to each other and the royal house of Kedah. James Logan (editor of the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*) wrote in 1867 that "the paid Police *Penghulus* (chiefs), the collectors of Government rents and Municipal rates, the land measurers, the *shroffs* (middlemen), Malay Writers and Interpreters have always largely belonged to this family alliance, which also includes several leading men of the *jumahas* (pilgrims) ... Members of it are often employed by the Raja of Kedah as *kranis* (clerks) and land-measurers."

The government surveyor John Turnbull Thomson, writing

in 1865, described a Kader Mastan of Ulu Juru, Province Wellesley, as a Jawi Pekan of mixed Arab and Tamil descent, "who had settled for many years amongst the Malays for the purpose of paddy-planting, trading, and making his fortune. By his intelligence and industry, he had amassed some wealth, which was principally invested in rice-fields, coconut-groves, opium, cloth, nails, and tobacco, houses, slaves, and concubines."

As wealthy merchants and land dealers, the early Jawi Pekans easily came to accumulate substantial property. In 1836, Low remarked that "some of the richest natives are beginning to build brick houses", while previously such an action would have been considered an insult to the ruler of Kedah. "A substantial bungalow, from 60 to 70 feet long by 35 to 40 broad (18m to 21m long by 10.5m to 12m broad) — the under storey of brick and mortar, the upper constructed with the best kinds of wood, with a tiled roof, and the whole interior and exterior of the upper story painted — might be built perhaps for twelve hundred Spanish dollars." Such cottages housed the large extended families of Penang's Muslim elite and their dependents.

JAWI PEKAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN

In a pioneer settlement with a large number of male immigrants, it was only the wealthier immigrants who could afford to take local wives. Jawi Pekan girls were carefully matched to wealthy Arab or Indian traders and even Malay royalty. In the course of strategic intermarriages among the Muslim upper class, Jawi Pekan women played a very important role in stabilising and enriching the community.

Jawi Pekan women showed off their considerable wealth through their jewellery. "The gold ornaments worn by women and children strongly resemble Chinese and Indian jewellery and it is remarkable that the natives of Sumatra who dwell in Pinang (Penang) and Province Wellesley never indulge in such varieties." While Malay women used black pins to hold up their hair, the Jawi Pekans used "gold pins surmounted by curiously wrought tops", noted Low.

In the mid-19th century, J.D. Vaughan, who once served as Superintendent of Police in Penang, noted the extent of cultural borrowing among the Straits-born hybrid population. "The mixed races, namely the offspring of (Tamil), Bengali, and Chinese fathers and Malay mothers, adopt portions of the

costume worn by both parents so that a description of the dress worn by all natives in the Straits Settlements that are classified as Malays would be a description of the apparel of (Tamils), Bengalis and Chinese."

Jawi Pekan children were typically educated in English and Malay. Among the Muslims, this urban community was far more likely than the rural Malays to respond to educational opportunities and become Malay scribes, teachers, interpreters, printing press workers, and subordinate administrators. In the 19th century, many Jawi Pekan children were educated in both missionary and secular schools. Scholarships were offered to "Malay boys" to study at the Penang Free School, and in the 1880s, a "Home for Malay Boys" was set up at Buckingham Street. A school catering mainly to Jawi Pekan children was the Chowrusta Anglo-Tamil School, subsequently renamed the Chowrusta Malay School.

CUSTOMS AND TRADITION

Customs and language originating from the Indian Muslim community were commonly transmitted by the Jawi Pekan families into the larger Penang Malay population. At the same time, many educated Jawi Pekan adopted a secular, Westernised culture and also became modern role models.

The evolution of this fascinating community reflects an important part of Penang's social history. For example, many Indian Muslims joined the *Awal Muharram* (Muslim New Year) processions in the 19th century, but their Jawi Pekan children preferred *boria*, the popular entertainment performed during the *Awal Muharram* period by song and dance troupes. But by the time *boria* was condemned by religious reformists in the 1920s, the Jawi Pekan had already started organising their social life around literary clubs and football clubs.

The term Jawi Pekan was commonly used in Penang, while in Malacca, the great Malay writer and historian Abdullah Munshi referred to himself and others of Indian parentage born in the Straits Settlements, as "Peranakan Kling". In Singapore, the term Jawi Peranakan was the norm.

By the late 19th century, this community had achieved such wealth and status in the Straits Settlements of Malacca and Penang that it could support a *Jawi Peranakan* newspaper which first appeared in 1876 and ran uninterrupted for almost 20 years.

Edited and published by local-born South Indian Muslims, it became the most successful and enduring Jawi newspaper in the early period of the Malay press. The paper gave prestige to the name "Jawi Peranakan" which literally meant, "those born in Al-Jawi", Jawi being an Arabic term for this part of the world which included Malaya and Indonesia. The press no doubt helped to create popular identification with the Jawi Pekan as an "imagined community" of the Straits Settlements.

A NEW IDENTITY

The Jawi Pekan were first enumerated in the first official census of the Straits Settlements in 1871. In 1901, their population in Penang peaked at 8,599 Jawi Pekans out of 106,756 "Malays and other Natives of the Archipelago", a category which included "Aborigines, Acehnese, Boyanese, Bugis, Dyaks, Javanese, Jawi-Pekans, Malays, Manilamen." They numbered 7,081 on Penang, mostly in George Town and the north-east district, and only 1,514 in Province Wellesley on the mainland, mostly in northern Province Wellesley. In George Town itself, the Jawi Pekans (2,604) slightly outnumbered the Malay population (2,565).

By 1911, the number of Jawi Pekan had decreased 41% from the figure reported 10 years before, and it was remarked in the census report that, "the decrease in the Jawi Pekans is probably incorrect and due to these people being returned as Malays." As a result, the category was dropped out of subsequent censuses.

The reason for the sudden loss of appeal of the term Jawi Pekan is not known, but several reasons can be surmised.

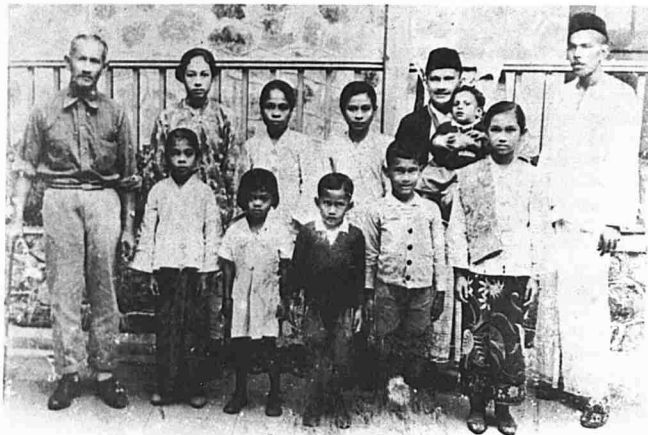
Throughout the 19th century, the prominent Muslims in the Straits Settlements were noticeably persons of Arab or Indian descent. When the British consolidated control over the Federated Malay States, however, they did so through a careful alliance with the Malay sultans. As such, the Malays — including "indigenous Malays" and "foreign Malays" (mainly Sumatrans and Javanese) — were now the ones picked for schooling and promoted as the administrative class.

Also, by the 1920s and 1930s, the Jawi Pekan were frequently criticised by Islamic reformists because elements in their religious culture did not conform to Malay Shafi Islam. At the same time, they also came under attack by Malay nationalists, led by the Sumatrans (principally the Minangs), who openly challenged the Jawi Pekan for leadership of the Malay community.



The late Tan Sri P. Ramlee (1928-1973) became famous as a screen star in the 1950s. In this photo, he is on a motorcycle in front of a house in Macalister Road; P. Ramlee Road is named after him. Although he is not of Indian blood, Ramlee is perhaps the most famous 'urban' Malay.

With the increasing dominance of European technology and the emergence of the Chinese capitalist class in the Straits Settlements, the position of the Indian Muslims as an economic class had also declined. Most Jawi Pekan were, by the 1930s, even more dependent on educational, government and clerical positions and, thus, chose to identify themselves with the Malay community. In contrast, those who could also qualify as Jawi Pekan but who were still involved with the India trade tended to maintain their identification with the Indian Muslim community.



Portrait of a Penang Malay family from the 1930s. Notice that the men are all dressed in Western style except for the gentleman on the far right who is in traditional Malay clothes. Urban Malay men usually dress in both Western style as well as traditional style, depending on the occasion. The women however are almost always in traditional 'kebaya' or 'baju kurung'.

Furthermore, the Jawi Pekan could easily be accepted as Malays according to the British definition of a Malay formulated in the Malay Reservation Act of 1913. The Act defines a Malay as one who speaks Malay, professes Islam and practises a Malay way of life, but it is conspicuously silent about descent. This definition is enshrined in Malaysia's national constitution today.

In 1927, the Penang Malay Association was formed by members of the urban Muslim community to secure government recognition for the "Penang Malays" and representation in terms of honours and political positions. Today, most Muslims of mixed descent in Penang register themselves as Malay.

With the loss of the Jawi Pekan identity, a rich cultural heritage is also about to be forgotten. The 19th century "compound houses", among the earliest and most important examples of domestic architecture in Penang, have been sadly ignored, because they do not fit in with the stereotyped categories of Malay rural house, European bungalow or Straits Chinese mansion.

Most Jawi Pekan families have sold their town houses along Chulia Street, Hutton Lane, Kedah Road (formerly Kampung Malacca), Transfer Road, Burmah Road, Macalister

Road and Datuk Kramat Road. Their descendants have moved to new homes in the city's outskirts, perhaps keeping an old cupboard or two with their colourful crockery, old photographs and a rare copy of the newspaper, *Jawi Peranakan*.

The old Jawi Pekan families are still custodians of a linguistic heritage that includes unique expressions and kinship terms. Like the Chinese Nyonyas, the Jawi Pekan women were patrons of a rich material culture, one which reflected the widespread trading links of the Muslim community in the past. Their textiles, jewellery and *hantaran* (ceremonial wedding gifts), all of which combined elements from India, South-East Asia, Arabia, Europe and China, can be found in a few family collections as well as museums.

The Jawi Pekan community's eclectic heritage has also greatly enriched Penang Malay food, with dishes like *gulai ikan kering* with *terung* (salted fish curry with brinjal), *nasi kacang* (rice and lentils), *bubur gandum* (wheat porridge), Arab-style *bania* (beef and brinjal), *masak Aceh* with *ikan sepat* (Acehnese-style freshwater fish with lemongrass), *almond korma* (almonds in a rich gravy) and the *tangy acar ambar* (pickled lime).

ONE OF PENANG'S HISTORICAL MINORITIES – THE ARMENIANS

BY NADIA WRIGHT

THE Armenians in Penang played a far greater role in the economic, social and civic life of the settlement than their actual numbers would suggest. These Armenians had not come from Armenia itself, located in the southern Caucasus, but were descendants of Armenians taken forcibly to Persia by Shah Abbas in the early 1600s. When conditions in Persia later became less attractive for them, a significant number resettled in India or the Dutch East Indies.

Soon after Francis Light acquired Penang for the British in 1786, Armenian traders were calling in on their way from India to Malacca and Batavia. In 1802, a local magistrate commented on their obvious numbers. By 1807, there were enough Armenian traders to justify the naming of Armenian Lane, which later became Armenian Street, and which still exists today.

Although many of these traders were transients, returning to live in India, a small Armenian community developed on Penang. In any given year, there were no more than 25 of them Armenians living on the island. From 1802 to 1956, the total number who ever lived in Penang was probably under 175. Yet Armenians made their presence felt. From the early years, they served on Grand Juries — in 1827 accounting for three of the 14 Grand Jurors — and were members of the Committee of Assessors. They also served as Justices of the Peace, officials of the Penang Exchange, the Penang Club and the Penang Racing Club.

An early leading merchant and philanthropist was Catchatour Galastaun who was responsible for the establishment of the Church of St Gregory the Illuminator on Bishop Street in 1824. Armenians were devout Christians, Armenia having adopted Christianity in 301CE (Common Era, equivalent to the previously used AD or Anno Domino). Priests were sent from Persia to minister to the needs of this small community until the late 1880s.

Ironically, soon after the church opened, the numbers of Armenians began to diminish as Singapore lured away prospective settlers. By 1825, they numbered only 13 out of Penang's population of 30,595. Indeed, from then on, it would be more accurate to speak of Armenians in the community



(Clockwise from top) The Sarkies Brothers — Martin, Togram and Arshak. The first two brothers built the Oriental Hotel in the 1860s and in 1884 they combined it with the the Eastern thus creating the E & O Hotel.

rather than an Armenian community. Yet the press continued to refer to such a community even in the early 20th century.

After 1840, few Armenian families remained in Penang apart from the Anthonys. It was claimed that “no history of Penang in the last 100 years could be considered complete without mention being made of the Anthony family.” Arathoon Anthony brought his family to Penang in 1819, becoming a trader and planter. Three of his sons — Anthony, Satoor and Johannes —



Burmese women in the 1900s. Like the Armenians, they are one of Penang's many ethnic minorities.

became leading civic figures. Anthony, who founded the firm A.A. Anthony and Company in 1840, his wife Mariamjan Ter Stephen, and their 12 children accounted for most of the Armenians in Penang. Their son Joseph expanded A.A. Anthony and diversified into steamship and insurance agency work, auctioneering, share broking, and tin and rubber representation. He also co-founded the stock-broking firm of Anthony and Anderson. For many years, Joseph was the Acting Vice-consul for Portugal and a Justice of the Peace and was keen on the turf. His obituary described him as "one of Penang's best known and most highly respected citizens ... the doyen of Penang men."

Joseph married Isabel Hogan and their first child, Anthony Stephen, became renowned as Penang's most prominent sportsman. Anthony Stephen married Lisa Apar and their son, Thomas, was the last Anthony to join the firm. After Isabel's premature death, Joseph married Regina Gregory.

Of Anthony Stephen's other sons, Gregory became a successful lawyer, while Seth made his name in the Penang Racing Club and the Penang Club. "There was no member of the community better known than he," said the press when he died in 1895.

There were other Armenians also making their mark at this

time. In the 1880s, Dr Thaddeus Avetoom set up practice in Penang and established the George Town Dispensary on Beach Street. He served as a Municipal Commissioner, Justice of the Peace and President of the "Pinnang" section of the British Medical Association.

Another newcomer was Tigran Sarkies who set up as an auctioneer in 1882. He soon ventured into the hotel business, opening the Eastern Hotel on Light Street in 1884. In 1886, he and his brother Martin, calling themselves Sarkies Brothers, established the Oriental Hotel on Farquhar Street. Younger brother Aviet joined them and managed the Eastern. Meanwhile, Tigran and Martin extended and refurbished the Oriental. Renaming it the Eastern and Oriental — the now-renowned E&O on Farquhar Street — they opened to an enthusiastic reception in 1889. In 1891, their youngest brother Arshak came to Penang and was put in charge of the E&O, initiating

the many extensions and improvements that transformed it into the leading hotel on the island.

Lavish extensions in 1928, coinciding with a downturn in clientele, financial mismanagement and unforeseen capital outlays, led to the hotel being put into the hands of receivers in 1931. Arshak did not live to see that sad day, having died in January. The press lauded his philanthropic spirit and his interest in racing, describing him as, "one of the most popular figures in Malaya."

The Sarkies Brothers also ran the Sea View Hotel, the Oriental Tiffin and Billiard Rooms and, from 1905 until 1920, the Crag Hotel. Most of their senior staff were Armenian, thus boosting the Armenian population.

Today, little attests to the Armenian presence in Penang. St Gregory's was demolished around 1906, and a commemorative monument was erected in its place — but even this was removed in the 1930s. Armenian Street and Aratoon Road remind you that Armenians once lived in Penang, as do the few tombstones engraved in Armenian script that lie in the Northham Road and Western Road cemeteries. A totally modernised E&O Hotel remains a tribute to its Armenian founders, while the stock broking firm of A.A. Anthony perpetuates the Anthony name.

EDUCATION

PENANG has been a regional education centre since the 19th century. The state boasts the first school for boys in Malaysia with the founding of the Penang Free School in 1816. The Free School got its name from its non-sectarian admission policy, although it was not free to study there. The school has produced Malaysia's most famous administrators, politicians and educationists. Malaysia's first prime minister, the late Tunku Abdul Rahman, remembered fondly his days at the Free School in the second decade of the last century. Then located in Farquhar Street where the present State Museum is, the school was famed for sports and educational excellence. At the Free School, the Tunku, as he came to be known, fared badly at first under a Mr Star who was "more interested in racing than teaching", the Tunku recounted. He started improving under a very good teacher named Cheng Hup. "He put up with no nonsense and made me work," the Tunku explained in one of his articles for his column in *The Star*. Within two years, he was in Standard Seven. The Tunku was recorded to be active in sports, particularly football, and was even patrol leader in the Scout movement.

In 1852 two missionary schools were established in Penang. The La Salle brothers founded St Xavier's Institution, in

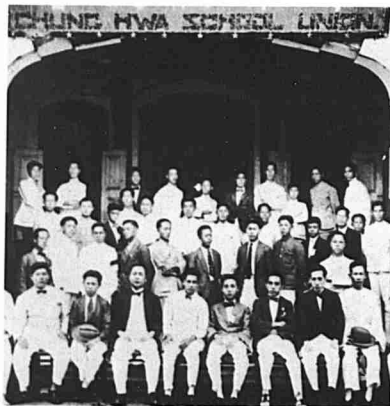
Farquhar Street while the French nuns founded the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, in Light Street. Both schools welcomed people from all walks of life. When St Xavier's D.A. Aeria, a Eurasian, won the Queen's scholarship in the early 20th century, the school began to rival the Penang Free School. In time, St Xavier's produced students like the late Lim Cheng Ean, legislative councillor and lawyer. Another famous alumnus is the late Choo Kia Peng, who was a successful businessman and philanthropist. Kia Peng road in Kuala Lumpur is named after him.

The convent is also a venerable institution in Penang. In fact, it is one of the earliest schools for girls in East Asia. The convent, run by French nuns, opened its doors to Penang's women in 1852. It also held domestic classes and, in its early days, the students did not wear uniforms. The convent also operated a boarding house and was once the premier school for girls in this northern settlement. Malaysia's first Cambridge-trained woman lawyer, Datuk P.G. Lim, is an alumnus of the convent.

Other schools in Penang that served as a preparatory educational centre were the Chinese-medium schools that included Chung Ling High School, the Penang Chinese Girls School, and Jit Sin High School on the mainland.

St Xavier's Institution's boys with their La Salle brother in the 1930s. The school is popularly known as SXI. Well-known for its academic and sporting achievements, SXI accepted students from all walks of life. The late Rev. Brother James is one of the school's most famous educationists. Jalan Brother James in Pulau Tikus is named after him.





[Clockwise from top] Girls playing in the St George's Girls School in Northam road; boys with their master in the Farquhar Street Government School, a photo of the 1926 Chung Hwa School reunion.

ORAL HISTORIES OF LIFE IN THE CONVENT

BY HAROLD KARL

"I THINK my parents paid RM100 a year as boarding fees. Boys like me who lived in the convent were known as 'abbey boys'. We were a mixture of all races, including boys from Thailand and Europe. The boys' dormitories were in the C wing on the first floor with classrooms below. Our dining room and study were on the ground floor of the Novitiate (formally, Government House). Madame St Hortense cared for the boys, with the help of Madames St Paul, St Appolinaire and St Francis.

"We had certain duties that we had to perform each day, before or after school at St Xavier's Institution (opposite the convent). These included sweeping the playground in front of the Novitiate and clearing swift droppings. On Saturday mornings, the *dhabi* (launderer) would call for the boys' washing. The clothing had to be ready in their named bags for collection. The boys did their mending on Saturday mornings. On Sunday mornings I was allowed to meet with my sisters, but I never saw or spoke to any of the other girls. The school doctor, Dr McKern, played Santa Claus at Christmas. He handed out small gifts during the Christmas party.

"For school and church, a white shirt and black trousers

were worn with shoes and socks, but during the boys' free time, we wore clothes from home. We had Mechno sets, roller skates and bicycles that were kept in the storeroom near the sea wall. I loved to hear the stories that Madame St Hortense read to us each day. I first attended the primary school at the convent. We were then transferred to St Xavier's Institution for Standard One, where we were nicknamed by our classmates 'Convent Jacks'.

"In 1936, I was transferred to St Xavier's for boarding and finished schooling at 16 years in 1940. During the war, I attended Japanese classes in Westlands (School) and held various jobs. These included dockworker, surveyor and hospital assistant. After working for Telekom, I was trained as a teacher. I subsequently taught in Butterworth, Alor Star, Sungai Petani and finally in St George's School in Balik Pulau on Penang until retirement.

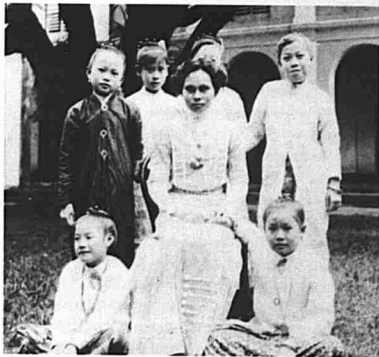
"I visit Sister St Hortense regularly and, during one visit, Sister asked why I did not marry. I replied that I had seen a young lady in church but had not approached her.

"Sister St Hortense arranged a meeting and, a year later, we were married. We raised five children. Our eldest daughter attended Convent Light Street."



[Above] A nun conducting a class in the Light Street Convent in 1936.

Teacher and pupils of the Light Street Convent in 1909. Notice that the girls are all in their traditional Straits Chinese dresses as school uniforms were not in vogue then.



A FAMOUS SON OF THE PENANG FREE SCHOOL

By Dr HO TAK MING



BORN on Penang in 1879, Dr Wu Lien-Teh was among the first Queen's Scholars from Malaya to read medicine at Britain's famous Cambridge University. Winning almost all available scholarships and awards, he pursued post-graduate studies after his early training at Emmanuel College and St Mary's Hospital, London. He did a year's postgraduate research in bacterio-

logy at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, and then spent time at other renowned places, such as the Pasteur Institute in France and the Bacteriological Institute of Halle in Germany. As non-British specialists or research workers could not join the colonial medical service, Dr Wu decided to enter the newly-established Institute for Medical Research in Kuala Lumpur. Upon returning to Malaya in 1903, however, he began a crusade to fight disease that would chart and shape his life.

His decision was influenced by a man he met in Singapore, Dr Lim Boon Kheng, the first Queen's Scholar who had read medicine at Edinburgh University. Dr Lim, together with his close friend Song Ong Siang, was a noted scholar and fighter for various social causes. Chief among the pair's causes was their battle against opium addiction.

Dr Wu not only married their ideas into the fabric of his life but also, in 1095, Dr Lim's sister-in-law, Ruth Huan Shu-Chiung. The couple moved back to Dr Wu's hometown where he set up a clinic in Chulia Street after completing his student research stint with the Institute for Medical Research.

Soon after, Dr Wu began his campaign against the evils of opium. But he faced a great obstacle in the colonial government. Dr Wu's efforts were viewed with suspicion and in early 1907 his dispensary was raided by the Senior Medical Officer of Penang. Dr Wu was fined \$100 (Straits dollars) for the illegal possession of "a deleterious drug" without a government licence. Dr Wu's appeal against the fine failed. Colonial secretary for Chinese

Affairs, W.D. Barnes, asserted that Dr Wu and a few other young men like him had "... more brains than discretion." Coupled with the opium scandal in Penang, Dr Wu discovered the painful realities of the disease of racism.

The case attracted wide publicity abroad, however, and he received a letter from the Grand Councillor of the Chinese Government, Yuan Shih-Kai, offering him the post of Vice-Director of the Imperial Army Medical College in Tientsin, China.

Dr Wu, probably disillusioned with the state of affairs in Penang, decided to accept the offer, complaining of "the inhospitable shores of my birthplace where neither government nor friends seem to need me".

CAREER IN CHINA

In China, Dr Wu's career spanned three eras, from the Chung dynasty to the warlord period. His first real challenge came in the form of pneumonic plague.

In 1910, a mysterious illness had afflicted the inhabitants of Fuchiaten, the Chinese sector of the half-Russian town of Harbin in North Manchuria. Dr Wu and his small team arrived in Harbin on Christmas Eve that year and found an air of "tenseness and foreboding" among the inhabitants of Fuchiaten. The illness was poised to grow worse with the coming of the Manchurian winter when temperatures would drop well below freezing point. Furthermore, Dr Wu could not proceed with a proper medical programme as he was faced with archaic and stubborn traditional beliefs. It was as though he had stepped into the Middle-Ages where performing a post-mortem was synonymous with sacrilege.

The death of a Chinese man's Japanese wife, however, allowed him the chance to perform a post-mortem and he was able to confirm bacteriologically his diagnosis of pneumonic plague. He could then request for more drastic measures to be taken as inoculating the population with Hoffkine's vaccine and treating the sick with Yersin serum was practically useless. People had to be stopped from moving about and homes had to be disinfected. They also had to be encouraged to wear gauze and cotton masks.



Penang Free School where Dr Wu got his early education. The building was bombed during World War II but was saved from being demolished by Malaya's first Prime Minister, the late Tunku Abdul Rahman, who suggested that it house the State Museum.

Even in the midst of such a dire predicament, Dr Wu was not spared racial prejudice. As he required more volunteer doctors and government support, the head of the Peiyang Medical College, Dr Mesny, a prominent French doctor with previous experience of bubonic plague, arrived at Harbin. The Frenchman insisted he be placed in charge of the anti-plague organisation, doubting the capabilities of this young "Chinaman". Dr Wu tendered his resignation but the government replied that it had full confidence in him. Then, Dr Mesny, who had refused to accept Dr Wu's instructions to wear a mask, caught the pneumonic plague and died six days later.

PLAGUE FIGHTER

Now fully in charge of the situation, Dr Wu managed to convince the local authorities to cremate the bodies of nearly 3,000 people on the outskirts of the town. He also discovered that the marmot, a rodent-like animal that roams the Manchurian plains, was the deadly vector of the plague. It was imperative that the epidemic did not become a pandemic, as these Chinese would return to Beijing for the Lunar New Year.

Finally, after a hard winter, the plague was brought under

control on March 1, 1911, when the last case of plague was recorded. The epidemic lasted seven months, covered a distance of 2,720km and killed 60,000.

Dr Wu received high praise from the Ching government and later headed the North Manchurian Plague Prevention Centre that was created in 1912. He turned down many prestigious offers, preferring, instead, to do research. In 1926 his *Treatise on Pneumonic Plague* was published by the League of Nations (which had been formed after World War I in 1918). He was subsequently elected as Fellow of that organisation's health section. By the time the Manchurian Plague Prevention Centre ceased operations in 1931 when the Japanese attacked Harbin, it had the best collection of pneumonic plague specimens and wild rodents, and the most complete data on pneumonic plague in the world.

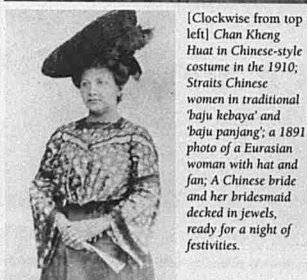
He was among a handful of Malaysians to earn such acclaim as this, written by Sir Philip Manson-Bahr in the *British Medical Journal*: "Wu Lien-Teh flashed forth as a monument of devotion and courage." *The Times of London*: "By his death, the world of medicine has lost a heroic and almost legendary figure and, the world at large, one of whom it is far more indebted to than it knows."

WEDDINGS



[Clockwise from top left] Western weddings were popular in the 1920s; Mr and Mrs Khoo Teng Cheong who married in traditional costume in the Khoo Kongsi in the 1936; a 1935 photo of a Malay couple taken in a photo studio — she is in traditional clothes while he sports a coat and tie.

THE FASHION OF YESTERYEAR



[Clockwise from top left] Chan Kheng Huat in Chinese-style costume in the 1910; Straits Chinese women in traditional 'baju kebaya' and 'baju panjang'; a 1891 photo of a Eurasian woman with hat and fan; A Chinese bride and her bridesmaid decked in jewels, ready for a night of festivities.

Society

PENANG is a sociable place. As in the past, Penangites today boast of having hundreds of societies — secret or otherwise. People gravitated toward causes or hobbies, and then set up associations. The earliest of these associations had to do with trade or mutual security.

Whether they were oriented towards sports or were merely created as a means for people to socialise, clubs and associations played an important role in creating a sense of belonging among Penang's many communities. While the first clubs were started by Europeans, they were emulated by the locals. Therefore although the Penang Club, the Penang Cricket Club, and the Penang Sports Club were all exclusively for whites, the locals, too, started their own exclusive clubs. Some associations, like the Chinese Recreation Club and the Chinese Swimming Club, became very popular centres for the Chinese. The Indians had their Indian Recreation Club. These clubs, however, were not always merely for recreation. The Penang Malays Recreation Club, for example, gave its leaders the opportunity to discuss the plight of its members. Other clubs were maintained out of

necessity. These included the various chambers of commerce and merchants' clubs. Penang's International Chamber of Commerce, started in 1837, is the first of its kind in Malaysia. The Indian Muslim Tenkasi Benefit Society is another good example of an economic-orientated club set up to protect the rights of its members. It also functioned as a place where the collective voice of the community could be heard. In other words, people came together for the benefit of trade and the community.

Two particularly interesting associations were the Penang Malay Women's League and the Women's Institute. Both were set up to help improve the education and healthcare of women in the state. Whatever the motive, associations gave people a chance to come together and assume a more vocal position in society.

The following pages offer a glimpse of the world of associations through photographs of their committee members. While their activities are not always apparent in these photographs, they offer a rare sight of the leaders of Penang's many communities of the past.



Members of the Penang Malay Women's League in a group photo at the EG-O Hotel's seafront; the occasion was in honour of the league's secretary, Datuk Zubaidah Ariff, receiving her AMN in 1958.



Tea with Lady McGilvray: Members of the Malay Women's League included [seated, from left] Mrs Sabapathy, Datuk Zubaidah Ariff, Lady Donald Charles McGilvray (wife of the British High Commissioner of 1954-1957), Lady Rahiman Bee Ariff, a friend of Lady McGilvray's, [standing, from left] Puan Hajjah Hanifah Bee, Che Jah, Che Sayang, Cik Sonajay Baboo, Mrs Robert Chia, Mrs Ang Guan Hoe, Puan Sri Lily Gunn Chit Tuan, Tengku Zahara and Puan Hajjah Aishah Hanoum.

THE MALAY WOMEN'S LEAGUE

THE Malay Women's League was the first Malay women's organisation to take root in Penang, and one of the earliest women's movements of any sort in the country. It was started in November 1946 after World War II with the objective of developing the welfare of Malay women. It was primarily driven by its early members' concerns for the problems that the women of Penang faced at that time. The members wanted to get women out of the house and into the workforce to improve their economic status and provide them with knowledge so that they could better educate their family members. In 1946, these were tremendous issues. Thus the first committee members, naturally, comprised women who could venture forth from the house. These were, of course, the leading Malay women in Penang

society. The league's first chairperson was the late Lady Hajjah Rahiman Bee Ariff, the wife of the late Dr Sir Haji Kamil Ariff who was a respected leader in the Malay community, a municipal councillor and a member of the Federal Legislative Council. Under the leadership of Rahiman and several others, the Malay Women's League attempted to attain the important objectives of providing women the opportunities to have an education and access to better healthcare.

Datuk Zubaidah Ariff, the daughter-in-law of Rahiman, was the League's secretary for 37 years. According to her, it all started as a "ladies' thing". "In those days, women did not go about as freely as you see them today. In fact, Malay women were an especially shy lot. Friendship was primarily the driving

force of the original committee — they were a group of friends who felt that if they extended their warmth to others, they would succeed in getting support.

"We did not see ourselves as having political ambitions. (The League) was purely motivated by the awareness that women were suffering and were living in ignorance after the Pacific War. This was a group of friends who banded together to go to each other's houses to chit-chat and then it struck them that they could use their time to help others. So we went forth to the places nearest to us. It was really a very practical thing, nothing ambitious or entirely altruistic."

THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

"After the groundwork had been done and we were able to organise a big charity event in 1949, a new committee took over in 1950. Lady Rahiman remained as chairperson while I joined as assistant secretary in 1954. Later, nobody wanted the thankless job of being secretary and I took over for the next 37 years.

"In those years, we ventured into the villages, first on the island and, subsequently, on the mainland. We then decided that we needed to elevate the status of all women and not merely Malay women. We therefore started a chapter of the Women's Institute with the help of Hajjah Sayang Mustakhin of Balik Pulau, Hajjah Siti Abubakar of Bayan Lepas, Cikgu Putih of Teluk Kumbang, Datuk Salbiah Akim of Kampung Kastam and Hajjah Hindon Hashim, Cikgu Kalsom Malik, Hajjah Safiah Kadir, Cikgu Zaiton and Kak Zainab from Province Wellesley. The first state organiser was Tengku Mahminah Mohd Jawa (niece of the late Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaya's first prime minister) and she was succeeded by Hajjah Siti Atshah Ibrahim."

Zubaidah also explained that many of the League's members were also members of the Women's Institute that had been formed in Kuala Lumpur by Lady Gerald Templer, the wife of the British High Commissioner (1951-1954).

"All the wives of government departments of all states including the Sultanas and Raja Perempuan together with the wives of the Resident Commissioners of Penang and Malacca attended the meeting. Lady Templer felt that women of different races were not mixing with each other. She also felt that urban women should venture out to help women in rural areas. So Women's Institute branches were set up in the states. The early

members were mostly teachers and nurses, as these were basically the only working women then. The first chairman in Penang was Mrs R.P. Bingham, the wife of the resident commissioner. Then Mrs Ooi Kee Wan took over before the baton was passed to Mrs Ong Huck Lim. I joined in 1956 and was made chairman in 1960. We then had four branches, but through rigorous efforts and outreach programmes by the members, we managed to establish 45 branches within the first five years. I remember that Mrs Ang Guan Hoe, Mrs Lim Eng Teik, Mrs Sahapathy, Mrs Masang, Mrs Robert Cheah and Mrs Hamer were particularly helpful to the organisation. Not forgetting also Mrs Sam Ah Chow, who also helped very much."

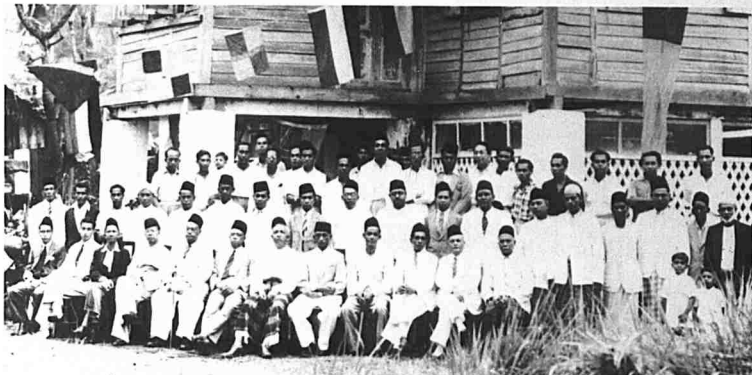
WOMEN COMING TOGETHER

"We brought people together through our concern for common issues like the health of children; we took nurses to rural areas, we taught proper hygiene in food preparation and, of course, we demonstrated our cooking skills. We basically aimed our programmes at the housewife and attended to her needs. Our activities were not glamorous and none of us expected to be rewarded.

"All I can say is that we had a lot of work but we had a lot of fun as well. We were not motivated by political gains as we really wanted to go out of the house to help others. There was really nothing much to gain personally and that is why it was all so successful. We should really thank our founding members for their devotion to the cause of women's welfare in the state. It was through their simple initiative that what was once a chit-chatting session turned into a welfare organisation.

"We must also thank our brothers and fathers who supported us. It was their belief in women's emancipation that allowed us to free members from the confines of tradition and the home to venture forth into society and do good work. It might seem trivial now but the right to go out of the house was once an issue over which a hard-fought battle was undertaken. I only hope that the women's organisations today would be less political and go back to the grassroots and attend to their problems."

Datuk Zubaidah Ariff is the eldest daughter of the late Tan Sri C.M. Hashim and the wife of Datuk Mushir K. Ariff. She was the Malay Women's League's secretary for some 37 years and is still its chairman. She lives in 'Baiduri', a bungalow along Batu Feringghi Road.

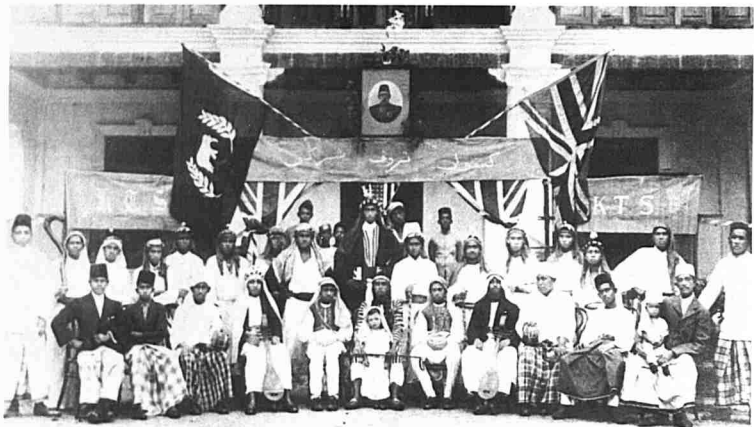


At a time when the British were wary of political organisation among the locals, Malays organised themselves through 'recreation' or 'sports' associations. The picture above shows the members of the Malay Recreation Club at Datuk Kramat Road before independence. Sitting fifth from left is Datuk S.M. Zaimul Abidin, followed by Tan Sri C.M. Hashim, and, eighth from left, Baba Ahmad; sitting second from right is Dr Sir Kamil Ariff.

PENANG MALAY ASSOCIATION

THE Penang Malay Association was established in 1927 by a group of English-educated Malays. Its original purpose was to promote Malay culture and education among its members and to advance the Malay cause within the parameters of the law. It was also an organisation that intended to help the colonial government understand the Malays and to highlight Malay problems to the government. Its patrons included Sir Hugh Clifford, the Governor of the Straits Settlements; Sultan Alang Iskandar of Perak; and Tengku Ibrahim, the Raja Muda of Kedah. Its first chairman was Dr A.O. Merican while Dr Sir Kamil Mohd Ariff was secretary. Its deputy chairmen included Mohammad Rouse, M.Z. Merican and S. Mohd Hashim. Its treasurer was M.N. Merican while its committee members included A. Abdullah, M.S.A. Ariffin, A.M. Bakar, C.M. Hashim, Haji Murshid, Mohd Hussin, T. Nyak Puteh and S. Mohammad Tamby. The first committee also included two auditors, Mohd.

Ismail Che Matt and Baba Ahmad. Although it was supposed to represent Malay interests, the Malay Association was not seen as a political party; many of its members were also in government service, however, and some were even appointed municipal councillors. While not seen as political, the association was, however, active in uniting the Malays to face the challenges of attaining independence, although its influence was much diluted by the fact that many of its members were Jawi Pekans (acculturised urban Malays); this distanced it from rural Malays. During the fight against the Malayan Union proposed by the British after the end of World War II, the Penang Malay Association was very active in organising talks and public forums to debate the issue. They also played host to Datuk Onn Jaafar, the first president of the United Malays National Organisation (Umno) when he came to campaign against the Malayan Union proposal.



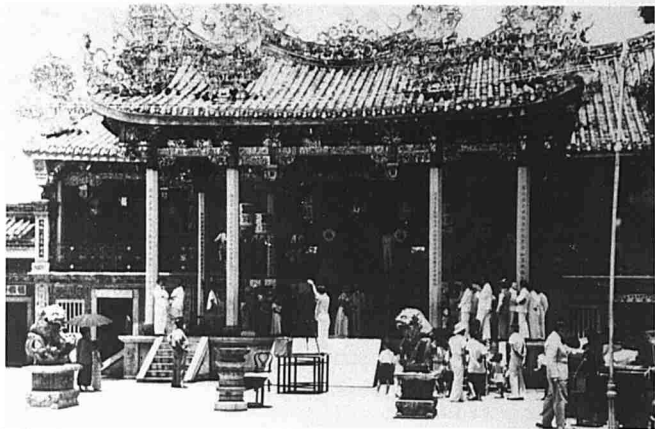
Many of the association's members later became Umno members representing Penang. But the association's members brought problems with them to Umno, especially when the question of race was raised. In this matter, the association's original definition of what constituted a Malay was adopted: it defined a Malay as a Muslim practising a Malay way of life.

The Penang Malay Association's members came to the national cause again when they banded together to fight the secessionist movement launched by the Straits Chinese British Association and led by some prominent leaders of Penang society. In this matter, they triumphed and Penang, therefore, remained in the federation. In the run-up to independence in the 1950s, the association's Penang Umno members supported the initiative of Umno's new head, Tunku Abdul Rahman, who went on to become Malaya's first prime minister.

Culturally, some of the Penang Malay Association's members organised and sponsored floats during festivals, sporting events and boria competitions, a once popular entertainment performed during the *Awal Muharram*, or Muslim New Year, period by song and dance troupes.



[Top] *Kumpulan Troupe Sharghi* a well-known 'boria' group that performed in the 1920s. They are seen here in Arab-style clothes posing in front of the Hutton Lane Football Club, near the junction of Transfer Road. The portrait above the flags is that of the Sultan of Turkey, used for decoration. [Above] The Bahadur Alam Football Club at River Road near Sungai Pinang in 1950. HJ Yaakob Ibrahim, the imam of Sungai Pinang Mosque who trained and led 'marhaban' groups (singers of songs in praise of the prophet who perform during weddings and other religious festivals), is seen here as a young man wearing traditional 'baju Melayu' and leading the students.



The Khoo Clan Temple, Canon Square. In the 19th century, members of clan associations were also members of secret societies

CHINESE SECRET SOCIETIES

ONE of the most notorious and prevalent associations that the Chinese carry with them wherever they go is the secret society, or triad. In Penang, two particularly powerful secret societies were the Khian Teik and Ghee Hin. While the Ghee Hin were mainly Cantonese, the Hokkiens dominated the Khian Teik.

These "associations" were originally formed to take care of the welfare of its members who were at the mercy of local elements in a strange new country. Secret societies should not to be confused with clan associations that were organised according to place of origin, dialect group, and trade guilds.

It was the growing importance of trade coupled with the booming tin industry in neighbouring Kedah and Perak that helped the influence of secret societies to grow. Furthermore, the British often gave out tenders for the running of their revenue farms to the leaders of competing societies. These tenders were particularly lucrative in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when the running of opium, liquor and even the

flesh trade was farmed out to collect revenue for the upkeep of the colonial administration.

The situation became problematic in 1867 when open warfare broke out between the rival Ghee Hin and Khian Teik societies in the streets of George Town. The British were caught off guard and it was some time before the violence was brought under control. Triad activity, however, continued to flourish under the guise of respectability. Many of these societies' leaders were also Chinese community leaders and the British appointed them as representatives in a move consistent with its colonial policy of taming elements of dissent with positions of responsibility.

This transition saw the birth of a genteel class of Chinese businessmen who owned fabulous villas and who lived a life of luxury. But under the luxury, the darkness continued. The following sections offer a glimpse into one of the darkest aspects of Penang's underworld: George Town's prostitutes and their fate in a world created and patronised by "respectable" society.



The Penang Cabaret Women's Association was established to protect the rights of 'taxi' dancers. These were women who took turns dancing with male customers in cabarets. Taxi dancers charged \$1.20 (Straits dollars) in the 1950s for three dances while a 'sit-out' cost about \$12.00. The girls received about 80% while the managers of the cabarets received the other 20% as commission. A girl could earn up to \$300 a month while a popular dancer could earn more than double that. While it was mainly locals who flocked to the cabarets, British soldiers and even some British officers were frequent visitors.



Domestic helpers in the traditional black and white 'uniform' were common in Penang. The women here are looking at parcels brought back from Rangoon. By the 1950s, the services of 'amahs' were in decline. The 'Straits Echo' reported that these women were able to pension themselves off from the hard work they did while young. Some of these women also adopted children who in turn took care of them in their old age. The amah was also fiercely independent. There were 3,834 amahs working as domestic helpers, 265 as cooks and chefs, 95 in coffee shops as helpers, 165 in the 'dhabi' (laundry) business and 374 in the hair salon business in 1957. (Source: 'Ting Sing Chung', 2000)

THE UNACKNOWLEDGED TRADE & A LIFE OF SILENT SORROWS

By OOI KEAT GIN

FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD Su Lin left Macao on board a junk in the early months of 1851. Together with her was a score of adolescent girls, all of them feeling frightened, isolated and uncertain of what was in store at the end of their months-long sea journey to the Nanyang (South Seas). Upon embarkation at the British port-colony of Penang, Su Lin and the girls were taken to a brothel on Campbell Street. For the next two decades Su Lin was a prostitute. Initially, she entertained wealthy *towkays* (businessmen) and European *tuans* (masters) but as her youth faded she served Chinese coolies and labourers. Her movements were confined to the brothel under the watchful eyes of Ah Soh, a middle-aged woman who had trained her in the art of pleasing a man. The brothel itself was guarded by three or four men of unsavoury character who, the girls were told, were their protectors, but behaved more like their intimidators. Su Lin died of syphilis, aged 36.

Similar tales of the wretched lives of Chinese women and girls were not uncommon in 19th century Penang and Singapore. The sad tale of Su Lin was replicated in the brothels of the various tin mining settlements of the western peninsular Malay States of Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan.

TRAFFIC IN WOMEN AND GIRLS

An active traffic in Chinese women and girls operated throughout the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Pre-adolescent girls were brought in to serve as *mui tsai* or *char boh kan* (domestic slaves) for well-to-do families of the Straits ports of Penang, Malacca and Singapore.

But a more lucrative trade was the traffic in young women and teenaged girls for the high demand of commercial sex. Well-organised syndicates, what were then referred to as "secret societies" by British colonial authorities, had full and exclusive control over the procurement, traffic and sale of Chinese females for the purpose of prostitution. In most case, the syndicates also owned Chinese brothels in urban centres, and established and managed those in the mining settlements.

The traffic and trade in Chinese females was a profitable enterprise owing to the imbalanced sex ratio within Chinese communities in Malaya during the 19th century; the imbalance lasted as late as the late 1930s.

In 1823 in the Straits Settlements there were 361 females to 2,956 males, a ratio of 1:8. By the mid-19th century, the ratio had worsened to 1:12 (2,239 females to 25,749 males). The figures from the first few census for Malaya showed the gender disparity in the Chinese community: in 1911, there were 247 females per 1,000 males; 1921, 284 per 1,000; 1931, 436 per 1,000.

A MAN'S WORLD

The great majority of Chinese immigrants to Malaya were males who came from the south-western Chinese provinces of Guangdong and Fujian to seek their fortunes. They left a homeland that was ravaged by political upheavals and were part of a wave of hundreds of thousands of immigrants that ventured abroad to South-East Asia or crossed the Pacific. Although some of them came on their own, the majority came under the indentured coolie system.

Under this system, upon arrival in the Straits ports, their future employers took over their contract (amounting to the cost of the sea passage) and the *sinkoh* (new arrival) worked off his contract usually as a coolie in the tin mines of the Malay States. The employer provided the necessities of life, including food, lodging and recreational activities, which mainly comprised opium smoking, consumption of arrack, gambling, and sex.

Apart from the coolies in the mines, many Chinese merchants, petty traders, and artisans also came to Malaya. They, like the coolies, came on their own without wives and children. Only the very rich merchants could afford a wife and even several concubines, all brought from China. But for the rest of the Chinese in the Straits ports and in the Malay States, it was either lead a life of celibacy or patronise the brothels. It was, therefore, seen as imperative that the brothels were adequately supplied with Chinese women and girls to cater to this high demand.



Campbell Street, or 'Sinkay' (A Hokkien pun for 'new street' or 'new chicken'), a well known red light district in the 19th century.

'BETTER TO RAISE GEESSE THAN GIRLS'

In traditional Chinese feudal-patriarchal society the mobility of women and girls was highly restricted and they were confined mainly to performing the functions of daughter, wife and mother. Their responsibilities were to be homemakers, to produce and care for the young and other family members, including the old and infirm, as well as attend to various domestic chores.

Amidst the upheavals of 19th century China — there were wars, rebellions and natural calamities that resulted in famines and severely crippled the economy — impoverished peasants, in an attempt to maximise their meagre resources and minimise the number of mouths to feed, resorted to selling their daughters. A daughter was seen as a liability. When she married, she left the family and entered her husband's household where everyone counted on her to bear a son; failing which, her status in her husband's household would be slightly above that of a common servant. In fact, it was said that it was "better to raise geese than girls": at least the geese could contribute to the household.

The sale of daughters was seen as a practical option. It meant getting rid of an extra mouth and, at the same time, the household received a short-term material gain (mostly a small amount of cash) for the sale. For peasant families on the verge of starvation, selling their daughters into prostitution or domestic servitude ensured survival of both the families and the young girls; the other option was infanticide, a common practice, particularly in rural China.

'YOUNG CHICKENS'

Apart from those who were sold outright, there were young women and girls who were kidnapped or shanghaied, or, occasionally, duped and taken aboard ships for the journey overseas. Like the male coolies, the system of trafficking in female prostitutes was handled and controlled by syndicates whose members posed as procurers, junk captains, brothel-keepers, and tin mine and plantation owners.

Upon arrival in Singapore or Penang, the girls were taken to brothels either temporarily to await their transfer to mining

settlements or plantations further inland in the Malay States, or to remain as inmates to serve urban clientele. In George Town, the girls were lodged in one of the numerous Chinese brothels along Campbell Street.

Campbell Street, together with Cintra and Kimberley Streets, was the premier red light district of George Town in the 19th century and up to the late 1940s. Campbell Street was also known as *Sinkeh*, Hokkien for "New Street" as it was newly created in the mid-19th century. This name then became a pun because "keh" also means "chicken" in Hokkien — which is, of course, the slang term for prostitutes. *Sinkeh* eventually came to be known as the street of "newly-arrived prostitutes" in reference to the arrival of young Cantonese prostitutes from Macao during the latter part of the 19th century. Local Malays then began calling the street *Jalan Makau* (Macao Street). Neighbouring Cintra Street was a haven for Japanese *karayuki-sans*, the inmates of Japanese brothels that were established towards the end of the 19th century. Numerous Japanese brothels also appeared on Kimberley Street which earned it the sly name of "Ji Pun Keh" or "Japanese Street".

THE FATE OF SU LIN

Girls like Su Lin were categorised as "sold" prostitutes and referred to as "adopted daughters" of the brothel-keeper who purchased them from traffickers. The brothel-keeper, often a man, occasionally a woman who was usually an ex-prostitute, provided the girls with the basic necessities of life and they in turn served as prostitutes. All the girls' earnings went to the brothel-keeper.

Women working off a debt were regarded as "pawned" prostitutes. They were contracted to the brothel-keeper to pay off a debt owed by their parents or other relatives. In return for food and lodgings in the brothel, these women contributed half of their earnings to the brothel-keeper. The other half of their earnings was supposed to go towards paying off the debt owed. Because of often unscrupulous brothel-keepers, however, the girls did not receive their half of their earnings. And being unable to clear the debt, the pawned prostitute was indebted for life to the brothel-keeper.

There was also a very small minority of "voluntary" prostitutes who had similar arrangements with the brothel-

keeper receiving food and lodging against half their earnings but without any original debt to settle. Voluntary prostitutes were in a better position comparatively than pawned prostitutes but it was not uncommon to find that these volunteers were also cheated of their earnings.

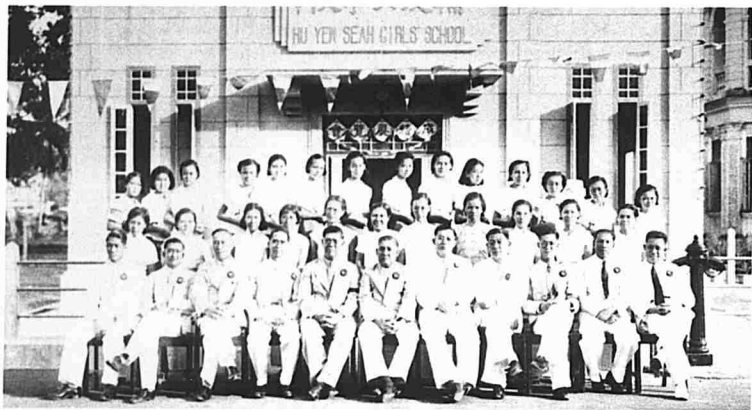
Overall, Chinese prostitutes were physically isolated without any recourse or hope of addressing their grievances. Not only were they commonly cheated of their earnings, they were also often physically abused, raped, or tortured if rebellious. Their movements were closely watched by the brothel-keeper and by an older woman (herself an ex-prostitute) who had trained them and was in daily charge of them. Brothel-keepers employed *samseng* (thugs) to intimidate the girls into submission. The *samsengs* also posed as "protectors" of these women, guarding them from being kidnapped by other brothels.

SERVICING TOWKAYS TO COOLIES

The loss of youth and beauty were the twin curses of a prostitute. It was a common belief among the Chinese that having sex with a virgin would reinvigorate a man's sexual prowess and performance. So virgins were reserved for wealthy clients like towkays and Europeans, including colonial officials. As long as she remained youthful and attractive, a prostitute would continue to serve rich clients. Her earnings would gradually decline as she grew older and became less appealing. Her clients, then, would be from the poorer class of tradesmen, artisans, and the lowly coolies.

A gradation of brothels was apparent in George Town and Singapore. The "high class" brothels possessed younger and more attractive inmates and catered exclusively to wealthier clients, both Chinese and Europeans. These high class bordellos were located where patrons could visit discreetly. At the other end of the scale were the "low class" brothels whose inmates were older, less attractive, and who had long lost their "freshness". These brothels serviced the labouring class.

Brothels in the tin mining settlements of the Malay States serviced the entire work force. Prostitutes of these establishments faced the worst working conditions. The women were often overworked due to the overwhelming demand. The brothels were part of the recreation of the coolies like the opium dens, gambling houses, and arrack stalls.



Hu Yew Seah's Girls' School is probably one of the earliest schools for girls in Penang. This is a picture of the school's committee members and teachers at its opening in 1939. The association itself is one of three major Chinese associations in Penang. The clubhouse's interior is a showcase of Chinese nationalism with pictures of China's revolutionary Sun Yat Sen featured prominently.

[Left] A 1926 photo of the Ming Sin Seah's committee members taken outside their clubhouse in Gladstone Road. The Ming Sin Seah was founded in 1921 to help raise money for schools and the China Relief Fund.



THE TAMIL MUSLIMS —WEAVING A TALE OF SUCCESS

BY KHOO SALMA NASUTUN

TWO Tamil Muslim groups from Tirunelveli, South India, who came to Penang with their families around the turn of the 20th century, have now become the largest domiciled Indian Muslim groups on the island of Penang. By one estimate, there are about 20,000 Kadayanallur Muslims and 5,000 Tenkasi Muslims in Penang today.

Kadayanallur is one of many traditional Muslim weaving villages in Tirunelveli, a district in India's state of Tamil Nadu. Practically every household in Kadayanallur worked a handloom, and the occupation was passed down from generation to generation.

But in the 19th century, the weaving industry in South India was twice transformed because of the industrial revolution in Britain. In the early 19th century, India's hand-spinning industry was destroyed by the import of machine-spun yarn from Britain and the establishment of local spinning mills. With a plentiful supply of cheap yarn, however, the handloom sector flourished until about 1860, when the British East India Company imposed a handloom tax to suppress competition to the British textile industry. Many of the traditional *nesavali* (weavers) found themselves without income and were forced to emigrate.

Kadayanallur males first immigrated to Penang in the 1880s and 1890s during times of severe famine in India. The sojourners first found their way to Nagapattinam on the east coast of Tamil Nadu, and from there followed Tamil traders on the 10-day boat journey to Penang.

"More than half the able men in the village made their way to Penang," explains N. Meerah, a local historian of the community. "They were weavers, not traders like many of the other Indian Muslim migrants. They didn't know how to wheel and deal, or how to make money. They only managed to get the lowest paid menial jobs — cargo-handling, odd-jobbing, construction and road sweeping." But they soon realised they had forerunners to turn to: the trade-savvy Malabaris.

Indian Muslims from the coastal state of Kerala — which borders Tamil Nadu — were forced by Portuguese attacks on their villages in the 16th century to flee into the rural interior. There they began spreading the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence



The Tenkasi Muslim Benefit Society based in Kedah Road is seen here preparing for the Victory Parade celebrating the end of World War II. The association was subsequently renamed Nurul Islam. The society's patron, Haji Mydin Pitchay, is sitting in the front, extreme left.

among the Tirunelveli villages in Tamil Nadu. Many of the present-day Tirunelveli Muslims claim to be descended from the Kerala *mapillais* (grooms), invite Malabari religious teachers to become *imam* (religious heads) of their mosques and look westwards to Kerala as the centre of Muslim learning in India, rather than eastward to Madras.

This close relationship between the Malabaris and the Kadayanallurs in India was transferred to Penang. Some Kadayanallur migrants first apprenticed with Malabari petty traders at the Chowrasta market (which in Urdu means "four-point junction") and then took over as butchers, poulterers, fishmongers and vegetable sellers. They became such a conspicuous group that the Chinese called the market *klinga bansan* (Hokkien for "Indian market"), while the adjacent street was named Tamil Street. The Kadayanallurs also started hawking food and making *teh tarik*, Malay for, literally, "pulled tea", which refers to the action of pouring tea from one container into another in a long stream to cool it. This now ubiquitous drink, claims Meerah, was pioneered by the Malabaris.



Members of the United Muslim Benefit Society in 1932

THRIVING COMMUNITY RISES

When they first settled in Penang, the Kadayanallur Muslims moved into the neighbourhoods along Transfer Road and Hutton Lane and attended Friday prayers at the Hutton Lane Mosque and the Bengali Mosque on Leith Street as well as Masjid Tarik Ayer and Masjid Titi Papan on Burmah Road. They also gathered around the Datuk Koya shrine at Transfer Road.

Despite their poverty, large families were common within the Kadayanallur community, and many had to put up with crowded conditions. Ahmad Shah, a librarian at the Penang Library and a descendant of A.S. Osman, a founder of the United Muslim Association, used to live in the big house at No. 20-22, Hutton Lane. It had 16 rooms partitioned to accommodate 40 Indian Muslim families.

"During the housing shortage of the 1960s and early 1970s, conditions in the neighbourhood were so cramped that, in some households, members took turns to sleep in any available space, even beneath beds and tables," he said.

The Kadayanallur Muslims were soon followed by their neighbours from Tenkasi, a small ward of the famous Hindu town of Kasi 16km from Kadayanallur. The Tenkasi migrants took up similar occupations as the Kadayanallurs, and settled in the same neighbourhoods. These two groups of Tamil Muslims found Penang to be a haven and, in the early 20th century, possibly after a major famine, they became the first group of Tamil Muslims to bring over their womenfolk and children in large numbers.

KADAYANALLUR AND TENKASI WOMEN

By the 1920s, the Kadayanallur and Tenkasi women had become well-known for their curry paste — so much so that they started the trade of *giling rempah* (grinding spices). Kadayanallur curry pastes were made famous through one of Penang's most popular foods, *nasi kandar*.

The nasi kandar vendors, usually Tamil males from Ramnad, would carry a basket of rice and another of curry, slung on a *bakau* (mangrove) wood yoke. As Ahmad Shah explains, "A Kadayanallur family may provide a sojourner from Ramnad with capital to start a nasi kandar stall and supply him with fresh spices each day".

ASSOCIATING FOR STRENGTH

The Penang Kadayanallur community is made up of three large endogamus (marrying within the limits of the clan) groups. Each group has its own religious teacher — called a sheikh — spiritual path and its own association. The oldest association is the United Muslim Association (UMA) in Transfer Road, formed by the descendants of a sheikh. There is also the Anjuman Himayathul Islam Association in Chulia Street, which serves as a mosque and a *madrasah* (religious school). Yet another is the Hidayatul Islam Association of Kedah Road. The three associations jointly formed the Kadayanallur Muslim Association. Their first premises, at No. 417F, Chulia Street, in the "Alimsavali" village, was rented for \$13 (Straits dollars) per month. The UMA was a centre for community service, where poorer members could turn to for help. It also offered Silambam (Indian martial arts) classes.

The TENKASI COME TOGETHER, TOO

In the 1930s, members of the Tenkasi community in Penang wanted to start their own community association.

According to their 50th anniversary souvenir programme, the Tenkasi Muslim Benefit Society (TMBS) was formed in 1946, just after World War II. Among the members' activities were weddings, circumcision ceremonies, Maulidur Rasul (Prophet Muhammad's birthday), and funerals. They formed a committee to hear and settle problems and disputes, a youth committee to organise sports activities, and provided English, Malay and Tamil classes for the children.

At the time, the Tenkasi Muslims supported the Malayian Indian Congress (MIC). With the help of the tycoon Arumugam Pillay, they started a Tamil school at Popus Lane, and the opening was attended by then MIC president, V.T. Sambanthan. Some years later, the Tenkasi community, realising where its political future lay, switched allegiance and began to support the United Malays National Organisation (Umno).

When the Tenkasi association premises at No. 39, Kedah Road, was acquired by the state government for the Kedah Road redevelopment project, the association moved into the Popus Lane school before finally settling in at No. 59, Kedah Road, and naming the premises Persatuan Nurul Islam (Light of Islam) in 1987.

FINDING THEIR NICHE

The Kadayanallur and Tenkasi Muslims have certainly made Malaysia their home. As Ahmad Shah put it, "we earn here and we spend here now. We don't send anything back to India. Our entire families and clans have settled down in Penang."

Before Merdeka, about one or two hundred Kadayanallur people took ship to Penang — they were the last batch. Subsequent sojourners from Kadayanallur and Tenkasi headed for Saudi Arabia to look for work as emigrating to Malaysia was no longer an option.

Now, the Kadayanallur community faces the same dilemma as other Indian Muslims in Malaysia. "We can't fit into any category — Malay, Chinese, Indian. We came here for a better life. We can't support the MIC just because it's an Indian party. Our support for Umno is 100%," says a member of the community who prefers to remain anonymous. "In the past 10 years, there have been many intermarriages with Malays. We will be assimilated because we are just a drop in the ocean." While most Kadayanallur Muslims accept the inevitability of their assimilation into the Malay community, others resist it. "We want our children to marry Kadayanallur people, so that they will keep their culture and remain hardworking."

On the whole, the community has done well. Many of them are professionals such as lawyers and teachers while some are businessmen. From a barely literate group of migrants at the turn of the century, the Kadayanallur community today boasts an increasing number of university graduates. Today, the younger generation applies its concentration to its studies.



The Penang Mutual Improvement Association was made up of Babas (acculturised Chinese) and English-educated Chinese. This photo features members of the association's Amateur Dramatic Company, also called the Baba Bangsawan Party. The association was housed in the Chinese Town Hall in Beach Street. Chung Thye Phin, the last 'Kapitan Cina' (Chinese Captain) of Perak, seated in front wearing a hat. The performances by that troupe were in aid of the Chung Hwa Confucian School, the Confucian Temple and the Lam Wah Ec Hospital.

THE MUSICAL LIFE OF THE BABA AND NYONYA

By TAN SOOI BENG

PRIOR to the wave of Chinese immigration in the 19th century, Chinese settlers on Penang married local women of Malay, Indonesian or Thai descent. Their descendants were known as Baba-Nyonya, Straits Chinese or *Peranakan Cina*. In the early 20th century, the Baba (as the men are known) sent their children to English schools set up by the British and formed an influential class of businessmen providing a link between the British and the Malays.

Penang Baba culture evolved from the local multi-ethnic environment and incorporated Malay, Chinese and Western elements. Malay influence is evident in the language, food and dress. The Penang Babas speak the Hokkien dialect incorporating Malay words (the Babas of Malacca and Singapore — the other two cities that comprised the Straits Settlements — speak a type of Creole Malay with Hokkien words). The older generation of the Penang Nyonyas (as *Peranakan Cina* women are called) wear the sarong and kebaya (a form-fitting top of Malay origins).

Nyonya cooking is a unique blend of Chinese and Malay culinary arts.

Likewise, the performing arts of the Penang Baba are eclectic. In the early 20th century, the Straits Chinese formed their own musical and theatrical clubs, which promoted hybrid forms of entertainment incorporating Malay, Chinese and British elements. These clubs survived on the patronage of the rich Baba as well as on annual subscriptions and concerts. Rehearsals were held in members' homes; performances were usually staged in theatre halls and amusement parks and were often a means of collecting money for charity.

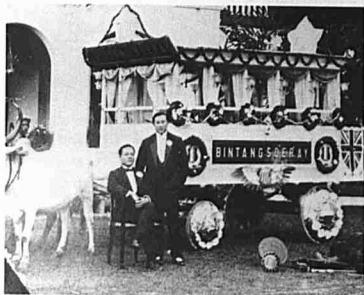
These amateur clubs often presented stories from Malay opera, or *bangsawan*, of which the Babas were great fans. When the Baba of Penang performed a Malay bangsawan play called *Princess Nilam Chahaya* to collect money for the China Flood Fund at the Anglo-Chinese School Union Building in May 1918, a review in the *Straits Echo* commented that even "the Malay



professionals present" admitted that "the piece ... was fairly well performed ... considering the fact that the artists (were) all Chinese, and the language spoken foreign to them." And a performance of *Ginuffah* or *Herto Brabant* staged at the Empire Theatre on Penang Road in 1920 was so "creditible" that the "chief performers" were given "a handsome cup ... and several gold medals ... by the Sultan of Perak" who was an invited guest.

Clubs such as the Chinese Amateur Dramatic Association were not only famous for promoting Baba bangsawan in the 1920s and 1930s but also for presenting their own plays which centred around the stereotypical Baba household in which the rich husband squandered money, the stepmother was strict and the mother-in-law ill-treated her daughter-in-law. Men were known to play women's roles. The distinctive feature of these plays, referred to as *wayang peranakan*, was the use of the distinct Baba language.

Famous *wayang peranakan* troupes from Singapore, such as The Oleh Oleh Party and The Merrilads, often toured Penang, sometimes putting on shows to raise money for charity.



The Bintang Soeray troupe posing with instruments and bullock-drawn carriage ready to perform the 'heroncong' (or 'kroncong'), love songs sung to musical accompaniment. The troupe above performed in 1921. The top photo was taken outside the now demolished Chinese Club on Macalister Road.



The Penang Mutual Improvement Association's Amateur Dramatic Company in 1920. Seated to the left of the silver cup is the late Kapitan Cina of Perak, Chung Thye Pin. This building was located at the junction of King Street and Church Street.

Amateur clubs that encouraged the singing of *dondang sayang* (love songs) were also set up by the Baba. Dondang sayang is an elaborate form of Malay *pantun* (poetry) singing. Singers try to outwit each other using *pantun* to debate topics of interest to the audience. Again, the distinctive feature is that Baba Malay is used. The singers are accompanied by a violin, a harmonium, two Malay *rebana* (drums) and a Malay gong. According to veteran Baba musician, Poh Chin Hean, the Babas used to perform *dondang sayang* in beautifully-decorated bullock carts during Chap Goh Meh (the 15th day of the Chinese New Year) in pre-World War II days.

These musicians tried to attract the attention of the Nyonyas, who dressed in their best sarong kebayas and *kerongsang* (decorative pins) and travelled in their horse carriages or cars to

throw oranges into the water by the Esplanade in the hope of getting good husbands. Poh recalled that one of the most famous Baba *dondang sayang* singers of Penang was Ah Pek Guai Ec. He was so good that he was given golden combs that he used on his moustache whenever he performed!

Musical groups such as the Sunbeam Musical Party, Springdale Minstrels and Moonlight Minstrels that promoted other forms of Malay and English songs also mushroomed in Penang (as well as in Malacca and Singapore). The Straits Chinese were ardent exponents of *kroncong* (more familiarly spelt *keroncong* in Malaysia now), which originated in Batavia in the 16th century and comprised love songs sung to the accompaniment of the violin, flute, guitar, ukulele, banjo or mandolin, cello and double bass.

MUSICAL MELODIES

Kroncong melodies were also performed in *komed stambul* (a type of opera popular in Java) and became known as *stambul* melodies. These songs were popularised in Malaya by Indonesian singers such as Dinah, Amelia, Doli and Ahmad C.B. who performed in *bangsawan* shows in the 1920s and 1930s. The Baba were so enamoured of the songs that books of *kroncong* and *stambul* melodies were published.

Penghiboran Hati, for instance, was a collection of 16 pieces published in 1924 with musical notation for violin or mandolin and guitar. Some of the melodies printed included *Stambol Satoe* (which became Malaysia's national anthem), *Kroncong Meritzkey* and *Kronchong Pandan*.

The Baba musical groups also performed Malay folk songs. It was reported in the *Straits Echo* that during Chap Goh Meh celebrations in Penang in the 1920s and early 1930s, musical parties and "gay minstrels", such as the *Bintang Soeray Party* and *The Music and Recreation Party*, toured the town playing "kroncong and popular Malay airs". On the eve of Chinese New Year, these "musicians made short house-to-house visits ... for payment". They played "all sorts of musical airs such as *Ta-ra-ra-Boom-d-ay*, *Bechrai Kasay*, *Track-tack-tack*". Influenced by American minstrel singers, members of these groups wore top hats, tailcoats and fancy trousers. They sang minstrel type songs (black American spirituals) which were accompanied by the violin, guitar, piccolo, banjo and mandolin.

Traditional Baba-Nyonya weddings in Penang were also musical affairs, inevitably ending with a *ronggeng* (also spelt *rongeng*) performance. This is a type of dance during which couples exchanged pantuns to the accompaniment of a violin, accordion, tambourine and maracas as well as two rebana and a gong. Believed to have developed during the post-Portuguese period in Malacca, *ronggeng* became a popular form of entertainment at Baba and Malay

weddings and other festivities in Penang in pre-war days.

The ensemble would play a mixture of Malay dance songs such as *Inang Cina*, *Gambus Api-Api*, *Aladom* and *Joget Kenangan Budi*, which had Malay, Chinese, Middle-Eastern and Indian influences. *Kroncong*, *dondang sayang*, *mambo* and *cha-cha* tunes were often inserted. The audience joined the *ronggeng* dancers weaving around each other with teasing movements without touching one another. The atmosphere was often highly charged as members of the audience clapped, cheered and whistled as they watched the dancers.

Today, the Penang Baba have integrated with the non-Baba Chinese communities and much of the glamour and popularity of Baba music and dances is lost. Nonetheless, *dondang sayang* performers continue to make their rounds of the city during Chap Goh Meh to entertain Penangites. They no longer travel in bullock carts but in brightly-illuminated and beautifully-decorated buses. *Ronggeng* troupes continue to entertain guests at the weddings of some well-to-do Babas. The troupes have added new songs from the various communities such as *Pu Yow Soh Chai Hoay*, *Born Free*, *Burung Kakak Tua* and *Loi-Loi Kratong* to stay in tune with the changing times.



A 1950s snapshot of 'ronggeng' dancers in the midst of their performance. Ronggeng (also spelt 'rongeng') is a type of dance during which couples exchanged poetry to musical accompaniment.

The Entertainment World

AMATEUR BANDS



Bands were extremely popular in the 1920s and 1930s. The photo above is of Lim Kean Chuan and his band, the Penang Chinese Jazz Lads, entertaining guests at 'Holland House', the mansion of tycoon Cheah Chen Eok, in the 1930s. The members of the Jazz Lads were (first row from left) Ooi Teik Siang (saxophone), Quah Cheow Cheong (second tenor saxophone), Ong Eng Boon (third tenor saxophone), Lim Kean Chuan (drums and vocals), Tan Kok Khoon (trumpet), Chuah Kok Wee (trombone), (second row from left) Ooi Kee Lip (tenor-banjo and guitar), Shum Sin Kam (tuba and contrabass), Teo Kim Hong (piano) and Tan Wee Beng (flute and piccolo). Band leader Lim was a teacher at a government school in Alor Setar. [Left] A photo of a popular band in the 1950s.

STAR ATTRACTION



[Clockwise from top] Penang had star attraction in the 1950s. The late Tan Sri P. Ramlee (extreme right) is seen here with actress Kasma Booty and her husband Jacob Booty. The man in the hat is the late D. Harris, P. Ramlee's father-in-law and fellow actor. Datuk Mohd Noor Ahmad stands behind them. The late actress Normadiah strikes a pose in the late Cikgu Mohd Noor Ishak's MG in the 1950s. The late Siput Sarawak at the Penang airport. She is flanked by the late Datuk S. Roomai Noor (on her right) and the late Datuk Zainal Alam, the former Radio Malaya broadcaster and RTM director-general.

SCENES FROM LADY PRECIOUS STREAM



The cast of the 1947 production of 'Lady Precious Stream' put up by the Straits Chinese British Association. The play was first performed in 1937 in order to collect money for the China Relief Fund. The late Dr Ong Boon Keng was the driving force behind the production.

THE OLEH-OLEH PARTY & THE GREAT WORLD ENTERTAINMENT PARK




[Top] The cast of the 'Oleh-Oleh Party' from Singapore. [Left] Female impersonators performing in the 'Odeon Revue' in Wembley Park. Both photographs were taken in 1938. Some of these entertainment places — the Great World Entertainment Park in Swatow Lane, for instance — was famed for their raunchy entertainment. Among the best remembered is striptease queen, the late Rose Chan.

Festivals, Processions and Celebrations of an Era Past



A float depicting Black and White fairies won third prize during the coronation celebrations of 1937.


 ENANG, famed for its diversity, is also a place where people came to celebrate and enjoy themselves. In the years gone by, the people of Penang have seen many colourful celebrations. From the colonial to the culturally specific, Penangites are well known for good humour and loud processions. The island has always been a place where people came to celebrate all sorts of events. The most popular are religious or cultural festivals. The Chinese are famous for their *Chingay* flag balancing competitions, lion dances and throwing of oranges at Chap Goh Meh. The Malays hold processions celebrating the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad and used to organise performances of *horja*, the popular entertainment performed during the Muslim New Year by song and dance troupes.

The Indian community's annual *Thaipusam* is still being practiced to this day. What is unique about the following pages, however, are pictures of colonial celebrations that we have since left behind. In the heyday of British colonialism, Penang's various communities came together to celebrate the visit of British royalty, the coronation of kings and queens and also held processions to mark British victories in both world wars. They even went as far as to celebrate the founding of Penang by organising an elaborate re-enactment of the handing over of Penang to Francis Light during Penang's 150th year under the British in 1936.

Bound in these pages, too, are photos of elaborate funerals that once marked a person's status in society.

CHAP GOH MEH

BY ANNA CHEAH

ONE of the most elaborately celebrated festivals falls on the 15th day of the Chinese New Year. The Chap Goh Meh (literally meaning the 15th night in Hokkien) celebration is still a big affair for many Penangites. But it was even bigger in the days when ladies were not usually allowed out of the house except for that single night; many waited to catch a glimpse of the procession of girls who would go to the Esplanade to throw mandarin oranges into the sea in the hope of getting a good husband.

Old timer Wee Chong Hoe recalled that in the early part of this century, young women led secluded lives. "Even inside the house, she must not be seen by guests, particularly male guests, unless ordered to present herself. Inquisitive girls would peep out from their rooms to see the goings-on.

"Only in the more modern families would girls be allowed to go to school. Other than that, Chap Goh Meh was the only night in the whole year when girls from traditional families could go out," he said. "On that auspicious evening, the unmarried girls would be beautifully coiffured and made-up, decked out in their finery, showing off as much jewellery as possible.

"The girls would ride round town in horse buggies or motorcars, and inevitably pass the Esplanade and Sungai Pinang bridge, the whole point being to be seen and also to throw *kums* (mandarin oranges) into the sea or the river to wish for a good husband. Everyone would be out on the streets, setting off fire-crackers and generally having a merry time on that moonlit night.

"Although Babas (acculturised Chinese men) had more freedom than their Nyonya sisters, they, too, had to act as gentlemen and could not approach girls on their own. During the Chap Goh Meh rounds, if they fell for a girl, they would note down the number of her vehicle, and hint of their liking to their parents, who would then send out their 'private investigator' — the matchmaker. Girls were usually married off between 16 and 20 years of age, and the men not later than their early 20s. The prospective bride and groom would then be taught details about the marriage ceremony, like the correct way to bow and accept red packets (of money), etc. No sex education, however, was given to either as the subject was taboo.

"Come the wedding night, the bride, being very timid, often found it embarrassing to sleep with a total stranger. She might start to cry for her mother or shiver in silence. The groom, on the other hand, would usually sit up with a stupid stare, unless he had been 'tipped off' by someone with experience! This was usually the male servant — the rascal who knows all but keeps silent." (First Published in *The Star's North Pullout*, September, 1987)



Two dressed-up Straits Chinese women ready for their Chap Goh Meh rendezvous.

PEACE CELEBRATIONS 1918



THIS is one of the earliest photos of a processional float taken in 1918 in conjunction with the peace celebrations after World War I. Penang's various communities donated money and gave their support to the British administration who were at war with the German Empire in Europe.

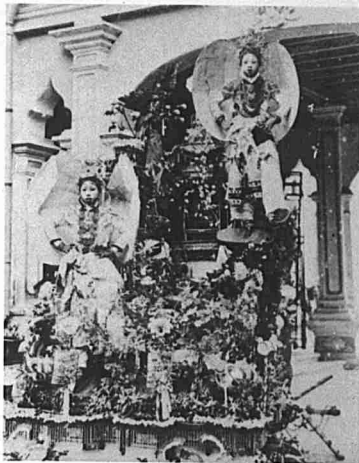
Although the War hardly affected Penang, its harbour was attacked by a German warship. During the incident in 1914, the Germans sank a Russian ship. The war in Europe left the Western powers exhausted and casualties were heavy. A cenotaph commemorating British victory in Europe was erected near the Esplanade. Penangites rejoiced in the victory and celebrated the occasion with a parade.

The photograph above, submitted by the late Daphne Jones of Logan Road, is of a decorated lorry that took first prize in the parade held to mark the return of peace after World War I. In the car are the Jones sisters, Olive, Millie and Doris. They were accompanied by their cousin Grace. The lorry was decorated with white and silver pom-poms. Millie assumed the role of the Angel of Peace while another girl, Faye, was "Britannia".

Jones, who is remembered in Penang for her compassion towards stray animals, especially cats, wrote in her submission that the photo was taken beside the St George's Girls' School in Northam Road (now the Sri Pinang Teacher's Training College in Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah).

THE CHINGAY PROCESSION

CHINGAY processions began as early as the 1900s when parades were held in honour of the *Tua Peh Kong* (God of Prosperity) or *Kuan Yin* (Goddess of Mercy). Chingay processions were grand and spectacular with ornate and lavishly decorated floats, and the balancing of triangular flags on towering poles. The festivities lasted three to four days. The pictures below show that the floats tended to depict scenes from Chinese legends, and featured girls dressed in Chinese costumes and wearing genuine jewellery while some had men dressed as warriors. Some floats would be pulled along by horses or donkeys, some would be placed on lorries but the majority were carried by hefty, strong men. The photos in these pages were taken in the 1920s. Chingay floats then were elaborately decorated and often featured Chinese mythical characters.





[Above] A float for a Chingay parade in front of the original Kheng Hoon bungalow in Anson Road in 1924. Tan was a well-known businessman in Penang then. A horse-drawn float has the attention of Penangites.



FROM THE 'STRAITS CHINESE MAGAZINE', MARCH 1905

THE Chinese New Year has come and gone, though owing to great depression in trade, the festivities this time have not been on such a grand scale as on former occasions. In spite of this, however, some kindly people took great trouble in arranging for a three-day Chingay procession costing at least \$50,000 (Straits dollars) exclusively of the loss sustained by the practical suspension of business for five days. And, on the Chap Goh Meh, too, a competent authority has estimated that the value of jewellery displayed by ladies passing round the Esplanade during that night was no less a sum than \$30,000,000 (thirty million dollars)! A contrast indeed!



Representatives of Penang's Chinese community offering tribute to the British, as acted out by the late Khoo Sian Ewe, Chce War Lok and Lee Soon Theam. [Below] Malays representing the Sultan of Kedah in the re-enactment of Light's arrival in 1786

THE SESQUICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS (1936)

THE Penang Sesquicentenary Celebrations was held in 1936 to commemorate the 150th year of Penang as a British settlement. The landing of Francis Light on Penang Island and the signing of the treaty with the Sultan of Kedah were re-enacted in the Hutchings School grounds (present day State Museum). Many European government officers and Chinese and Malay community leaders participated. The Indians were not involved as there was no Indian community on Penang at the time of Light's landing.



THE SILVER JUBILEE OF KING GEORGE V (1935)

By JACQUELINE TOW

(First Published in *The Star's North Pullout*, September, 1987)



THE Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935 was celebrated on a grand scale by British subjects everywhere, including in the Straits Settlements.

In Penang, all main streets and buildings were festooned with bunting, flags and lights; the Jubilee festivities included float processions, band performances and a competition of decorated arches.

One arch bearing a full-length portrait of the King and the message "Long Live the King" was created across Penang Road near the Hutton Lane junction (photo next page top). The buildings then, such as Wah Bee and the Tong Aik Emporium, remain more or less the same. The shop at left, from which the model badminton racket is sticking out, is Cheers, the toy shop.

At Beach Street, near the China Street junction where a Chinese-style arch was put up (photo above), the George Town

Dispensary can be seen at left; it still exists today. While a renovated Ban Hin Lee Bank still stands on the adjacent corner, the buildings on the right have now given way to the seven-storey UMBC building.

An arch with what was then considered a "modern" skyscraper design was put up at the Beach Street-Union street junction (photo next page bottom). The building at left, then housing the Netherlands Trading Society, is now Algemene Bank Nederland, but the structure next to it has been demolished and now replaced with the modern Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank branch and UAB building. Across the road can be seen a corner of the Logan Building with the sign "Robinson Piano". This was formerly a three-storey building which occupied the block from Union Street to Bishop street. It is now only two storeys, and this corner shop now houses Barkath Store.



[Opposite page] An arch
in the Beach Street-Chulia
Street Junction

[Top] Portrait of King
George V and Queen
Mary on an arch strad-
dling the Penang Road-
Hutton Lane Junction

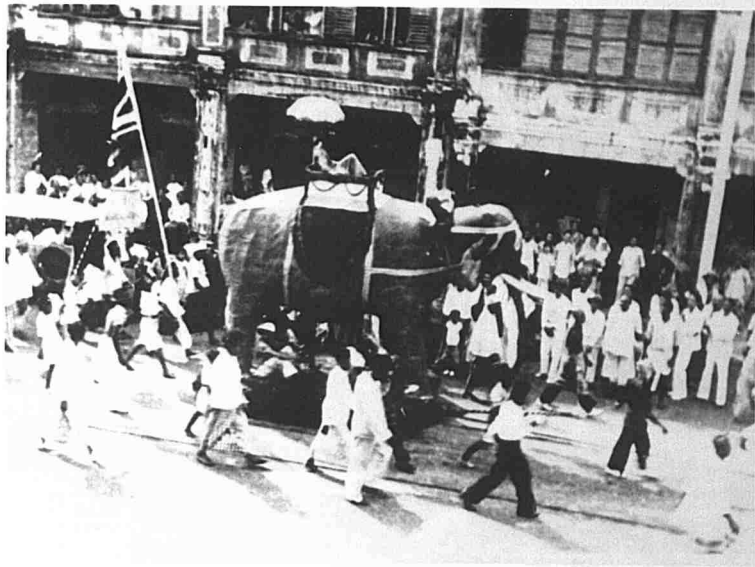
[Left] The Beach Street-
Union Street Junction

THE CORONATION OF KING GEORGE VI (1937)

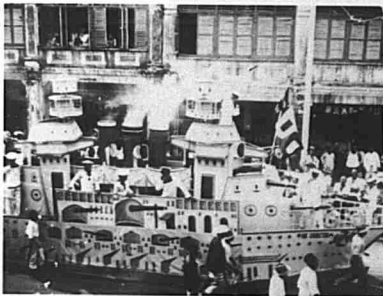


The coronation of King George VI was marked with elaborate floats. These two photos are of the winning entries. The one above shows Britannia ruling on her throne, it won first prize. The float in the photo on the right won second prize in the contest. It is probably supposed to depict the typical English garden, complete with ladies with parasols [Opposite page top] A coronation float from the Sungai Pinang Community [Opposite page right] An innovative float in the form of a battle-ship



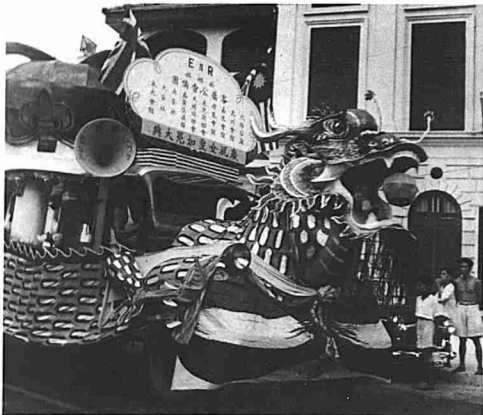


FLOATS from the coronation celebrations gaily demonstrate colonial Penang's devotion to the British monarchy in these two photographs. King Edward VIII had abdicated and his brother, the Duke of York, was crowned King George VI; his consort assumed the title of Queen Elizabeth. Many floats representing Penang's various communities took part in the procession. The picture above features the "Gajah of Penang" and was the creation of the late Tan Sri C.M. Hashim. His daughter, Datuk Zubaidah Ariff, remembers attending the procession and even taking part in the parade. "The tail and the trunk of the elephant could move up and down and many people were afraid because they thought it was real," she recalled. The float was sponsored by the people of Sungai Pinang. Because of the dazzling variety of floats, the procession lasted till late at night.



CORONATION OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II (1953)

QUEEN Elizabeth II was crowned queen in 1953 after her father, the late King George VI, died in 1952 after a bout with cancer. While the whole British Empire mourned his death, it also welcomed the crowning of the new queen. In Penang, the coronation was celebrated on a grand scale. Special cups, cutlery and books were printed to commemorate the event. A procession — Penangites' favourite way of marking occasions — was organised, of course! Eight years after the conclusion of the World War II and the Japanese Occupation, the people of Penang were ready for a big bash. It was also the last colonial procession that the city would play host to as independence followed in four years. The float above is of ladies dressed in Western dresses carrying umbrellas. The swans and flower petals sheding the girls creates a pastoral scene of rare beauty:



[This page] Queen Elizabeth II coronation floats alongside the Simpson Enam Police Station (present day site of GAMA Supermarket).

[Opposite page above] A 1950s photo of a 'borja' performance organised by the United Malays National Organisation in Padang Tambun (in what is now the Lorong Kult area) and [opposite page right] celebrating the birth of the Prophet in the City Stadium, in 1956.



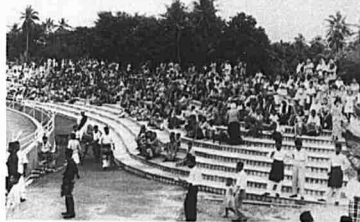
THE BORIA



AT A 1933 gathering of the Rotary Club of Penang, the late Dr Sir Kamil Ariff explained that boria performances in Penang took place annually in the month of Muharram, that is, the first month of the Muslim calendar. The festival was first introduced by early Muslim settlers from India to commemorate the great tragedy at Karbala in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), where Saidina Hussain, the second grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, was killed in a battle on the 10th day of Muharram in 680AD.

These early Muslim settlers of Penang established a memorial hall called Ashur Khana in Chulia Street, at the junction of Rope Walk and this became the base for the mourning of the tragedy of Muharram. The word "boria" itself is Hindi for "a mat" — mats were spread out on which performances took place, which is how the festival became known as boria. In time, people were so attracted to these performances that it became a new year festival without any reference to the Karbala incident. Eventually, even the Chinese, Eurasians and other non-Muslims took part in the boria.

In the last years of the 1930s, there were between 50-60 parties putting up shows throughout Penang. They were divided into four groups: topical songsters, troupes, play actors



and *keroncong* parties; the latter was most popular as they provided the melodies of the season. In fact, the groups were even invited to perform at weddings all year round.

The boria eventually became a comic performance followed by synchronised dances and singing. The first part was at times satirical and was often used to make verbal attacks. The Malay secret societies capitalised on this and began challenging one another. Because of their association with the societies, the boria was banned after the 1867 riots. It did make a comeback in modern times but in a much tamer version and is now limited to reminders of morality and cultural commentary.



[Top] The funeral of Mrs. Lam Kam Thong (*nee* Chung Siew Yin) in 1933 that started from No. 25 in Light Street.

[Below] A 1937 picture of monks participating in a funeral procession.

FUNERAL PROCESSIONS

BY ANNA CHEAH, 'THE STAR'S NORTH'

PULLOUT, SEPT 28, 1987

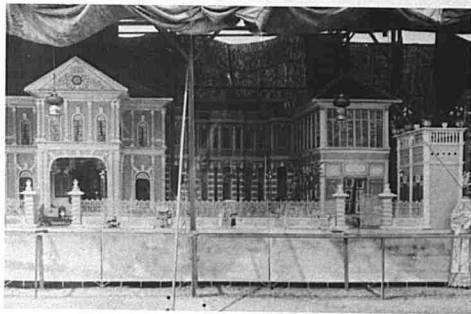
A GRAND and unique event — the late Mrs Heah died on May 31, 1937, and the funeral was held nearly two months later, on July 26! According to reports, the late Mrs Heah, 50, died on May 31 after a brief illness at the German Hospital in Beijing. She died while on tour with her youngest son and daughter-in-law, Mr and Mrs Heah Seng Hong. The report continued: "The remains of the late Mrs Heah were placed in a hermetically sealed Chinese coffin made of camphor wood, and brought by special train from the ancient capital of China to Shanghai, from where it was conveyed to Penang by the Peninsular & Oriental Lines SS *Corfu*, arriving in Penang on June 19.





[Above] A leading vehicle in Mrs. Lam Kam Thong's funeral procession in 1933 with a demon face to ward off evil.

[Right] A paper model of a mansion that would later be burned as an offering to the deceased. This photo shows the replica of Mrs. Lam Kam Thong nee Chung Siew Yin's family home at No. 25, Light Street; the paper model was made for her funeral in 1933. Mrs. Lam was the daughter of Kapitan Chung Keng Kwee, headman of the Hai San society and a Chinese Kapitan of Perak.



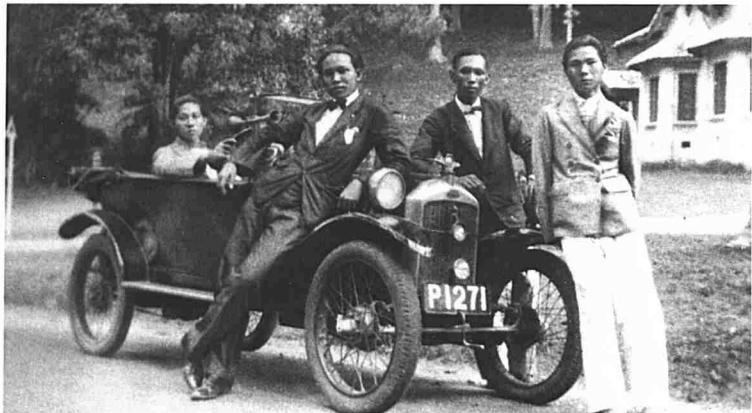
Sights of Old Penang

HERE are many ways to travel around in Penang. This chapter takes a trip down memory lane by first looking at the means of transport through the years. Public transport in George Town, especially at the turn of the last century, was second to none in the world. There were tarred roads, electric trams and cars when many cities in Asia were still using gas lamps. The funicular railway up Penang Hill was and is the only one of its kind in Asia. When it was opened to the public in 1923, it was considered an amazing feat of engineering.

The town boasted proper walkways, pavements and bicycle lanes that are no longer with us today. Many of these improvements are attributed to a Municipal Council elected by the people of George Town. These elected representatives often took on the colonial authorities in ensuring that public amenities were in

good order. They eventually won city status for George Town on Jan 1, 1957. Thus, as we explore the history of the city, we will also trace its streets, markets and entertainment outlets of yesteryear.

The rest of this chapter glances at sights in and around George Town. Readers will also be tracing the steps of an early 20th century visitor as he cycled round Penang island. And Penang attractions like the Botanical Gardens and Penang Hill will also be revisited. There are also photos of old Ayer Itam town and the fire that changed its face. Snapshots of Penang's hinterland beckon as our attention is turned towards sights not much exposed to the lens of the camera. We end with a contemporary journey to Pulau Jerejak, or Leper Isle, where leper patients were placed.



GETTING AROUND ON THE JINRIKISHA

THE Jinrikisha, a vehicle pulled by man, was a Chinese invention that by 1890 numbered some 1,984 in Penang. Their fittings came from Japan so it was an expensive proposition when some were smashed during the anti-Japanese riots of 1919. They were banned in Singapore in 1946 but there were still 19 in use in Penang that year.

Owning a jinrikisha for private use became popular in the late 19th century. There were 14 registered in early 1890, with the number rising to 150 in 1900. The highest number recorded for a year was 678 in 1912. Their numbers started falling after 1925 due to the introduction of motorcars, discouragement from municipal authorities and improvements in public transport. It was the introduction of the trishaw, the passenger carrying tricycle, in January 1941 that eventually displaced the jinrikisha completely. They disappeared after 1946 but the trishaw is still around today, though only tourists tend to use them.



[Opposite page] Young men posing with their car in the Botanical Gardens.

[Above] Private owners of a jinrikisha in the Waterfall Gardens.

[Left] Businessman Heah Seng Hong in a tricycle-chair used to transport visitors between the Tunnel Station and the Crag Hotel in the 1930s.



THE FIRST MOTORCYCLE AND MOTORCAR

The first motorcar to make its appearance in Penang was recorded in the *Annual Report of 1903*. The Municipal Commissioners of George Town were aware of the growing needs that came with the arrival of motor vehicles. At the end of that year, there were 80km of roads shared by 791 carriages, 73 gharries, 3,185 public jinrikishas, 323 private jinrikishas, 679 bullock carts and 803 handcarts. Horses and bicycles, which made their first appearance between 1896 and 1900, also used the same 80km of roads with these 5,834 vehicles. Penangites owned four cars in 1904, but 10 years later, 174 were licensed by the municipality.

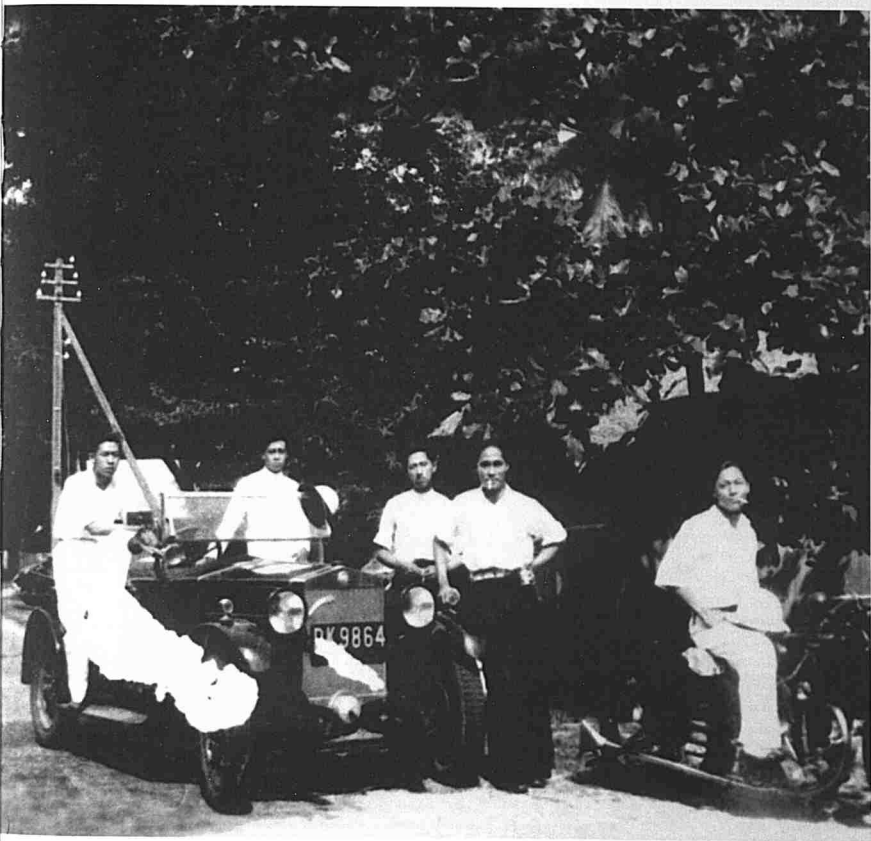
Motor cycles only made their appearance in 1911 when 25 were registered with the authorities in George Town. This number rose to 155 in 1920. In the next eight years there were as many as 462 motorcycles registered.

A year before the Great Depression in 1929, there were 1,676 cars registered with the Municipal Council. In 1940, prior to the outbreak of World War II, 2,615 cars and 208 motorcycles registered with the Vehicle Registration office. Such are the beginnings of today's notorious jams! (Source: *Penang Past and Present: A Historical Account of the City of George Town Since 1786*).

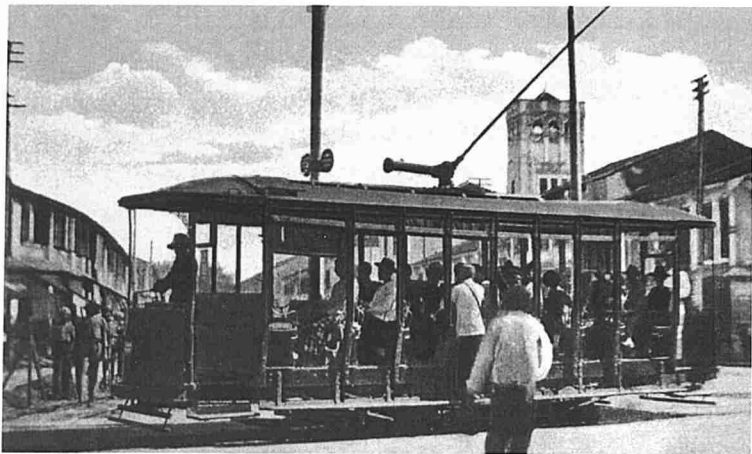


[Top] Muthiah Pillay posing next to his motorcycle in the Botanical Gardens.

[Above] An unusual sight: a motorcycle with a sidecar for passengers in one of George Town's busy streets.



Young men posing beside their car in old Tanjong Tokong Road. The pictures on both these pages were probably taken in the 1930s when owning a car usually meant you had a large disposable income.



TRAM AND TROLLEY

Tram cars were first introduced in the 1880s when one Mr Gardner, a businessman, established the steam-tram run on the Air Itam and Waterfall Roads. There were 11 cars on those routes in 1890 and the Penang Steam Tramways Co had its headquarters in Western Road. Failing business saw an Oriental Banking Corporation takeover of the business, which was then offered to the Municipality in 1893; the offer, however, was rejected by the commissioners. In 1898, the company laid light rails for its horse-drawn carts running from Magazine Road, along Penang Road and Chulia Street to Weld Quay. This was a slow and often unsafe means of transport. A collision was reported in the *Penang Gazette* on May 4, 1899, along Chulia Street and Beach Street. Owing to financial problems, the company was taken over by the government in 1900. It was good timing, for with the arrival of electricity in 1904, the trams were given a new lease on life. Electrification began that year and was completed in December the following year. The municipal commissioners, the new owners of the trams, made an inaugural journey on



[Top] An old postcard of a tram car with the fire station tower in the background. [Above] An electric tram transporting tin from the Datuk Kramat smelting plant. [Opposite page top] A trolley bus in front of the Police Headquarters in Penang Road. [Opposite page right] A group photo of the Vehicle Registration Officers taken in 1922. Seated in the centre is Registrar A.W.B. Hamilton.



Dec 23, 1905. On Jan 1, 1906, the service began on a 4km double track between the prison and the jetty. The Ayer Itam route was opened eight months later. The Tramway Offices were built in Dato' Kramat and occupied on Oct 27, 1907. The tramway was run by the Electricity Supply Department as a separate Transport Department was formed only in 1953.

While trams made steady profits between 1913 and 1922, their decline became imminent when they began making losses after that. Thus, trolley buses were first discussed as an alternative means of transport by the commissioners in the same year. The first trolley bus was put into service in 1925, although the last tram was not replaced until 1936.

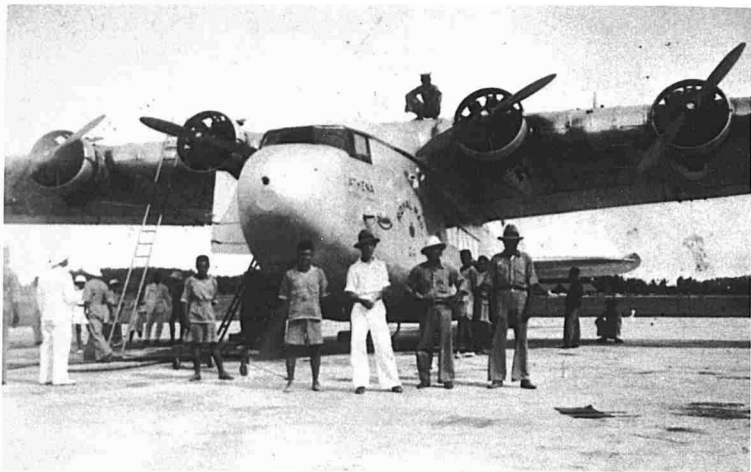
Another means of transportation in town was the private bus. The first regular private bus service started as early as 1919 and ran to Tanjung Bunga. According to the Vehicle Registration office, the number of buses fluctuated between 130 and 201. Other means of transport at the time included privately hired cars.

Roads, therefore, had to be improved as the old macadam-stone type, built with convict labour in 1884, were deemed unsuitable. In 1894 a short length of Beach Street from Union Street to Bishop Street was surfaced with tarmacadam. Tar was



introduced widely from 1913 and by 1916, 48km miles were tarred. By 1927, the use of bituminous macadam was introduced.

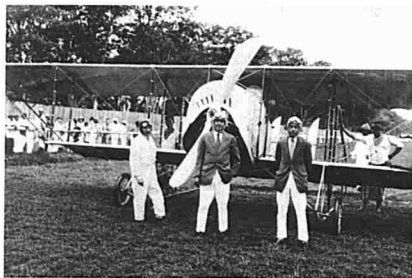
But with better roads and more cars came the problem of traffic control; even the recession did not stop the substantial increase of motor vehicles on the roads. The first marking of traffic lines and the first traffic signals were put up in 1928. One was at the junction of Simpang Enam and the other at the Burmah Road-Pangkor Road junction. Peons of the Registrar of Vehicles were supposed to control traffic initially, but the police eventually took over after the former proved to be ineffective.



[Above] One of the earliest four-propeller planes to land in Penang's Bayan Lepas aerodrome in the 1930s. People used to gather to watch the planes land and take off. [Below] The late Heah Seng Whatt (centre) and Heah Seng Hong (right) — sons of late tycoon Heah Swee Lee — with the pilot in 1926. Their aircraft was one of the earliest to take off and land at the Old Racecourse in the mid-1920s. The site currently houses the St George's Girls' School.

TAKING TO THE AIR

The first four-propeller aircraft of the Imperial Airways landed at the Bayan Lepas aerodrome in 1935. In fact, the site of the present Penang International Airport dates back to 1932 when padi fields and swamps were cleared by the Public Works Department for a runway under the supervision of Aerodrome Resident Engineer J.J. Byran. Penang then became a stop-over for the four-propeller planes including the Athena and Arethusa aircraft of the London-based Imperial Airways. This was soon followed by other airlines like Australia's Qantas and Holland's KLM. One or two planes, often half full, would land a week. Passengers were treated to food prepared by the Runnymede Hotel.



THE STREETS OF OLD IN GEORGE TOWN



[Clockwise from top] A flooded Kimberley Street in the 1930s; the residential houses still exist today.

Upper end of Penang Road showing Leith Street and Chulia Street Junction. The building on the left is the old Leith Street Police Station, now the Oriental Hotel.

A 1920s photo of Chulia Street, a busy road linking Penang Road to Beach Street.



The Chowrasta Market in the 1950s. This is the Penang Road entrance.

PENANG'S MARKETS

The market is the heart of every city or village. In Penang, several important market places were, and are till this day, the place where communities gathered to trade and haggle. While imitation branded items have been added to the list of goods available, the exotic spices of yesteryear can still be found here. Penang's earliest traders were spice traders selling pepper, nutmegs, cloves and other Straits produce. It was in the market places that these goods exchanged hands and headed off to China and Europe.

The earliest market is the Chowrasta Market. The original building was put up in 1870 by the Commissioners of the Municipality at the cost of \$16,471 (Straits dollars). They also paid \$25,963 for the land. It has two entrances, one facing Penang Road while another opens on to Kuala Kangsar Road. The front portion facing Penang Road was rebuilt in 1920.

In Urdu, Chowrasta means "four cross roads." The petty traders using the market were Tamil Muslims from the village of Kadayannallur. Apart from spices, they also sold fresh fish — few people today know that Indians were once the leading fisherfolk of Penang.

Penang has a few other interesting markets. The Prangin Road Market or "Sia Boey", meaning "end of the village", got its

name from Prangin Canal. Small lighters and sampans used to sail up the canal that once formed the natural boundary of 19th century George Town. This market has now made way for a big development project but was till late last year one of the most famous markets selling among other things, dried fish and shrimps.

Another well-patronised market is the Campbell Street Market. It was built on top of a Malay cemetery and used to be called *hutan mayat* (jungle of corpses) by the local Malays. The land was given to Kapitan Keling around 1800 but was bought back by the colonial government for public use. Although there are plans to convert the market into a Kuala Lumpur-style Central Market, locals prefer it to remain a community wet market.

Another market that attracted Penangites in hordes was the Fettes Park market, once located along Fettes Road at the junction with Tanjong Tokong Road. This was a street market that served the Chinese, Malay and Indian communities living in Tanjong Tokong, Bagan Jermal, Mount Erskine and Fettes Park. Traders would sponsor Teochiew and Hokkien opera performances there during the Chinese-equivalent to All Souls Day known as the Hungry Ghost month.



[Above] The Cathay Cinema in 1950, one of the most attractive entertainment outlets in its day, operated by the Choong family. Penangites have fond memories of going to cinemas and watching Hollywood films. Equally popular were the 'kacang petch' (peanut) and 'roti bak-kua' (roasted meat) peddlars. The Cathay closed in 2001.

[Left] The Odeon Cinema was also popular in the 1950s. Older Penangites remember trying to sneak in without paying to watch popular movies when they were children. In the days before the arrival of the television, going to the cinema was a rare treat. The Odeon was owned by the Indian Muslim family of Sultan Alauddin. The Odeon was once known as the Royal Cinema.



[Above] *The Loke Thye Kee restaurant was one of the first places to serve Western food. It was said that the cooks of millionaire Khoo Sian Ewe started the restaurant. In the past, the restaurant was the one place people would go to get a peek at their future life partners. The restaurant's unique architecture — in the shape of a ship — was once a George Town landmark. The restaurant is located at the junction of Penang Road and Burma Road.*

[Right] *The Boston Bar was an equally famous meeting place for Penang's urbane populace. Notice the relatively empty Penang Road-Prangin Road junction.*



MURRAY'S ROUND PENANG ISLAND ADVENTURE IN 1903

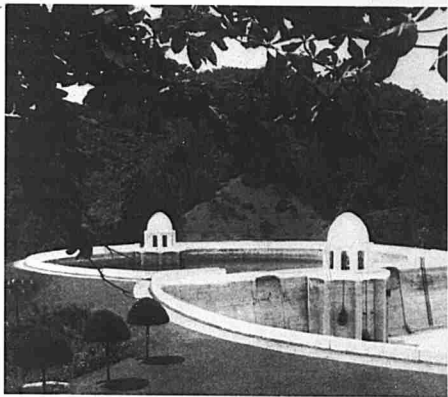
"IN THE cool air of the morning, we rolled along the northern coast of the island. Up to the 14th milestone, the road was good, with pleasant undulations, as it ran beneath a forest of palm trees, or clung to the breast of over-hanging cliffs, or skirted the shining sand, and all along the way there was the limitless expanse of ocean with its suggestions of infinity, and the slow, deep mellow voice of the waves, full of mystery and awe.

"The first halt was at Batu Ferringhi, 12 miles from town — where according to tradition, foreigners from the West first landed on Penang. Here the Penang Ice Works are situated, and, from the manager, we received a very warm reception in a very cold environment.

"It would require the pen of a Ruskin (John Ruskin, the art critic) to describe the beauties of nature which everywhere meets the eye at this point. The grandeur of form and colour in sea and sky, mountains and valleys, is in no little degree impressive to the human intelligence. At Teluk Pahang (Bahang), the public road, which we had followed for 14 miles (24.4km), ends, and the infinite difficulties of the way begin.

"We bid farewell to the sea-coast for a while, and to Muka Head lighthouse which towers above us at no great distance, and take a bridle-path to the left leading to Balik Pulau.

"First, two streams have to be crossed, the bridges of



The Guillemard Reservoir was opened in 1929 and would be part of today's round the island trip. According to Loo Choo Kheam in his 'History of Water Supply in Penang', the "Guillemard Reservoir ... is that of sound and durable construction which is essential for waterworks undertakings in addition to being carried out with a regard for artistic effect". Water Works engineer J.D. Fettes was responsible for its construction.

which are not yet completed, and there was nothing for it but to dismount and shoulder our bikes across a narrow plank. Then for a good part of a mile, the road, owing to recent rains, was underwater, and not water only but mud, which offered little of a foothold for the tyres. It needed fortune as well as skill to bring us through in safety. The two younger members of our party, tempted by the sight of the cooling water, divested themselves of all clothing and spent well-nigh an hour tumbling and rolling in the pools above.

"We have come at last to the hardest trial of the way. The path now crosses the shoulder of the mountain range which forms the back-bone of the island. In the next two miles (3.2km), we ascend nearly a thousand feet (300m). The iron steeds which had carried us along so well had to be dragged up with might and main. Two miles seemed like twenty. Though we determined not to turn back, we found ourselves wishing we never had come, and asking why a day of pleasure should be made a day of toil. We move on slowly in very short stages and with very long rests.

"It is a day of burning heat and the sun is at its zenith. It is curious to note the silence which reigns for two or three hours at midday in the jungle. The birds cease to sing, the monkeys to chatter and the butterflies to flit about. All nature seems to fall asleep. It is stillness which may be felt. The only sound which

breaks the terrible monopoly is the rush of a stream hundreds of feet below us, or the occasional bark of a squatter's dog on the distant hill-side.

"It was three very weary travellers that arrived at Sungai Penang after a steep descent only a little less difficult than the ascent had been. Here a stay of half an hour was made to tighten some screws which the rough mountain path had loosened, and to refresh ourselves with draughts of water from the coconut. Then, after half an hour's run along a good road flat as a table but hot and dazzling like the sun above, with rice fields on either side, we reach Balik Pulau.

"Balik Pulau is a village of considerable dimensions, a centre for the produce of plantations on the western slopes of the Penang hills — nutmegs, cloves, pepper, paddy, coconut, and fruit of various kinds. The European magistrate here, during intervals of business, can enjoy the luxury of snipe shooting at his very door. We searched for refreshments at Balik Pulau and enjoyed a rest for about three hours; and if ever rest was welcome it was then.

"It was nearly five o'clock when we left Balik Pulau, and the run home of 22 miles or so (a little more than 35km) in the cool of the evening was verily a cyclist's ideal. After two miles (3.2km) of level road, a sharp turn to the left brings one into the entrance of the Ginting Pass. There is a steady, but quite rideable, ascent for three miles or so (almost 5km), and the road winding in and out along the mountain side, affording many a fine view of hill and glen.

"At the foot of the hill is the village of Teluk Kumber and a few miles further on Bayan Lepas is reached. Here a stay of 15 minutes is made, during which we obtained excellent tea and toast in a Chinese shop for the very small price of 12 cents for the three of us. This was our last halting-place. The run home of



A fisherman's hut in Tanjong Bunga. The beach in this picture taken in 1952 most probably resembles the beaches that Murray describes in his round island trip in 1903.

11 and a half miles (18.4km) more was accomplished with ease, and the pleasure of the way enhanced by the varied glories of a fine sunset. A Chinese temple is passed by the wayside in which visitors find a peculiar interests because of the sacred snakes which are kept in it.

"The moon was shining in all its brilliance as we reached our homes, after an absence of 12 hours, three of which had been spent in hill-climbing and three in resting. We felt that we had done a good day's work for the heated atmosphere of the tropics. Not only did we enjoy the excursions of the day; but also felt assured that the doings of the day would afford many a happy recollection for future years."

(First published in the *Straits Chinese Magazine* Vol. 7, 1903.)

SOME COASTAL SCENES



[Top] Taking a stroll in Tanjong Tokong.
[Above] Friends in a group photo behind the Chinese Swimming Club near Springtide Hotel in Tanjong Tokong.
[Left] A near deserted beach in Tanjong Bunga.

SOME COASTAL SCENES (continued)



[Clockwise from top] A photo of a pristine Batu Feringghi taken in the 1950s; The secluded Muka Head beach, a popular camping ground, is a worth-while prize upon completing a strenous hike; boys in a small boat off Batu Feringghi beach.



UP PENANG HILL ON THE 'FUNICULAR RAILWAY'

By RIC FRANCIS

WHEN the lowlands got too hot, Penang Hill's cool environs beckoned. The journey was made on foot, on horseback or Acehnese pony, or on palanquins — *doolies* — carried by Indian coolies. Until, that is, the peculiar and fascinating funicular railway was built, the only one of its kind in South-East Asia. Then the journey was made in leisurely comfort through fern-covered cuttings, over viaducts and through a tunnel to the summit.

The first attempt at constructing the railway began with the formation in 1897 of a limited company. Construction was completed only in 1906 for the company had to also provide the motive power: a water turbine situated in a winding house at the bottom of the hill. The design, however, was faulty and no means was discovered to ensure that the cars could actually move on the rails. The company, accordingly, went into liquidation, causing the enterprise to be abandoned. The original two cars are believed to have ended up as chicken houses!

After World War I, the Straits Settlement Government decided to construct a funicular railway as it was possibly a cheaper option than building a well-graded road, which would have had to take a long and circuitous route to the summit. This enterprise would rival the Federated Malay States Government's projects in Fraser's Hill and Cameron Highlands.

The Senior District Engineer, Arnold R. Johnson, had designed the Federated Malay States Railways, a name that has been linked with the railways as early as April 1909. He was sent to Switzerland to acquaint himself with funicular railways operated by electricity. The Penang Hill Railway was constructed under his direction, with work beginning on the revamped line in 1920. The line was opened to passenger traffic on Oct 21, 1923, and officially opened by the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Sir Laurence Guillemard, on Jan 1, 1924. The line carried 35,201 passengers and made 4,021 journeys that year.

POWER AND COMMUNICATION

To meet the railway's specifications, the system of supply required direct current. To supply this economically, and to fall in line with the complete electrical scheme for Penang, it was decided to transmit 11,000 volts of direct current to the substation at the top of the hill. This also supplied power for lighting purposes on the hill without having long overhead transmission lines.

The telephones on the railway were classed service telephones and track telephones. The service telephones were arranged as a communication device between stations, and also from the bottom station through the middle station to the top station. These were independent telephones and had no connection with either the track telephones or the usual Post Office lines.

The Penang Hill railway was built in two sections, with each working independently. The total length of the line along the formation level is 1 mile 435 yards (almost 2km) and it rises 2,270 feet (961m). The mean gradient is about 1 in 3 and the maximum gradient about 1 in 1.96. The centre of the upper station

is 2,381 feet (725m) above sea level. The tunnel, which bears the date 1922, is in the upper section and is 258 feet (78m) long along the formation level, and is on a gradient of 1 in 2.04.

As a commercial venture, the Penang Hill Railway was not an unqualified success. The peak of its popularity was in 1926, when the hill was being developed rapidly. It showed a modest profit of \$3,355 (Straits dollars) in 1927 but was hard hit in 1930 when hill development slowed.

By 1931, the losses of the Hill Railway amounted to £11,762.37. It ran at a loss in 1936 but made a profit of \$1,651 in 1937. It broke even in 1938 before plunging into new losses in 1939 and 1940. While development slowed, the hill was useful for officials in need of a break or citizens in need of cooler air. The value of this was recognised by the Penang Municipality when it built the Richmond and South View bungalows for its own staff, no doubt a sound investment. But still, traffic up the hill was not enough to create a profit for the railway.



The Top Station of the Funicular Railway in the 1930s.



LIFE AT THE TOP

Many have opted to live on Penang Hill. First used as a recuperation centre by British officers and businessmen, the hill has since become a retreat for those wanting to get away from the busy city down below. The Europeans started the trend by building small bungalows for themselves to get away from hot and humid George Town. Locals soon followed suit as ownership of a bungalow had become a sign of status and prestige. Tycoon Loke Yew built a Chinese-Italianate villa and named it *Mon Sejour*, while Lim Cheng Ean, legislative councillor and lawyer, bought *Claremont* at a huge bargain from the Germans who were fleeing the island during World War I. The *Ban Hin Lee* bungalow that once belonged to businessman Yeap Chor Ee now stands abandoned. Other notable Chinese businessmen who carved retreats for themselves include cinema magnate Khoo Heng Pan, who named his bungalow *Grace Dieu*. It is the first bungalow one sees upon walking up the jeep track leading up the hill. One of the most lovely and well hidden secrets of the hill has to be the La Salle Brothers' bungalow — a home-away from home for many a school boy from the St Xavier's Institution.

Another venerable hill institution was the Crag Hotel. Built in 1890, it was the first hotel on Penang Hill. Sitting on the



[Top and above] An outside view of the Crag Hotel and its dining room in the 1920s.

edge of a precipice 2,262 feet (690m) above sea-level, the hotel commanded a panoramic view of the island. The first owner of the hotel was Captain J. Kerr. In 1900, the hotel was acquired by the Sarkies Brothers, the famous Armenian hoteliers who also founded the E&O Hotel. In the late 1920s, the Crag was taken over by the Straits Government. In mid-1950s, the hotel was leased to the Uplands School until the 1960s. The Crag is now dilapidated and unoccupied.

FLORA AND FAUNA OF THE BOTANICAL GARDENS

By ES. BANFIELD (FORMER HORTICULTURAL OFFICER)



The Botanical Gardens in the 1950s, when horticulturist ES. Banfield wrote this article.

THE Botanic Gardens are situated 8km from the town of George Town in rural surroundings at the terminal point of a road; they are completely surrounded by evergreen, jungle-clad hills of 360m, far from the bustle and noise that are indissolubly connected with speed. Indeed, the silence is complete except perhaps for the splash of water as it cascades down the rocky jungle stream and the distant chatter of monkeys.

Throughout the years of their existence the gardens have rightly been regarded as one of Penang's chief assets. They not only supply an open space, but provide an unfailing source of interest to jaded ocean travellers who find in them a relief, both for their eyes and minds, after the comparative monotony of blue sky and ocean. The actual site of the Botanic Gardens is a valley almost divided into two separate sections by a stream. On

either side of the stream are a series of undulating, closely-cut lawns on which tastefully arranged beds of flowering and other plants are maintained at all times. Also present is the bandstand where the Municipal band plays twice a week.

Several hundred feet above the gardens is the waterfall that may be seen from viewpoints in the Gardens. The office of the Gardens is unobtrusively situated a few hundred yards from the entrance on the jungle edge. The lawns in the vicinity are judiciously laid out and both shrubs and successional annuals provide a display of colour throughout the year. Within the office there is a comprehensive library and herbarium; some of the specimens have been preserved since the century before last and are frequently used for confirming the identity of numerous specimens.

At appropriate places throughout the Gardens are 10 well-designed plant houses in which excellent collections of plants are maintained. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of repair work to be done before several of the plant houses can be put into full use while large quantities of planting materials, especially orchids, are necessary to replace those removed during the Japanese Occupation. During recent months (in 1952), however, large quantities of plants suitable for the many private homes in Malaya have been raised and distributed, even so far north as Siam. Large demands for pot plants, including ferns, have been satisfied and at the moment the plant nursery is a popular rendezvous for many people who are re-establishing their gardens.

One of the most charming parts of the gardens is the Lily Pond, which lies about 90m from the motor road and is approached by a shady path surrounded by large tree ferns and a variety of tropical trees and creepers. In the arrangement and planting the aim has been to copy nature and thereby enhance rather than spoil the natural beauty. Flowering trees and shrubs are planted on the lawns and slopes and also where the jungle merges with the gardens so that the whole forms a harmonious collection.

Another delightful corner of the gardens is the Fern Rockery which was constructed around the stream that is fed by the waterfall. The rockeries contain a large variety of plants, among which are many from the local jungle; the somewhat grotesque *Tacca* or black lily, which produces curious, long, whisker-like stamens from the centre of its purple-black flowers, abounds, as do many Gesneraceous plants, ferns and Aroids, all of which flourish beneath the trees and epiphytes that tower nearly 30m above them.

The Sun Rockery, which is established on about half a hectare of ground on a more exposed portion of the gardens, contains a large collection of succulent plants. Agaves, Aloes, Euphorbias and Cacti are well-represented and many of the specimens exceed 3m in height and are of many shapes. Among the most noteworthy are *Agave sisalana*, *Euphorbia Tirucalli*, *Opuntia cochenilifera* and *O. decumana* and *Cereus hexagonus*.

The Formal Garden is most popular with the residential population, particularly the Europeans, who find the lawns,



Muthiah Pillay, a hospital dresser, with his family in the Botanical Gardens.

closely-clipped hedges, lily and ornamental pools, and the successional displays of annuals in the beds reminiscent of the gardens of the West. The two chief borders are each 90m long and contain a wealth of flowering plants. The latter are selected to ensure that throughout the whole year the borders remain colourful. The plants are not all herbaceous in character and resemble those used in borders in cooler climes. Many common herbaceous plants such as lupins, hollyhocks, peonies, pyrethrums, etc. will not grow here but there are plenty of others to choose from to form effective borders. *Lantana pink*, white, orange and mauve, *Beloperone guttata*, *Tecoma Stans*, *Tecomaria Capensis*, *Plumbago*s blue and pink, *thunbergias*, *clerodendrons*, *jatrophas*, *poinsettias*, *malvaiscus pink*, white and red, *mussaendas*, *turneras*, *hibiscus* and *baubiniyas* red and white are mostly planted towards the back of the border and are of a more permanent character.

The Malayan Snapdragon, *Angelonia salicariifolia* and its varieties, *Gomphrena Globosa*, *barlerias*, *Pentas Carnea*, *crossandras*, and *orthosiphon*, combine with the better known cressandras, *phlox*, *dianthus*, *antirrhinum*, *rudbeckia*, *gaillardia*, *sunflower*, *balsam*, *zinnia*, *gerbera*, *cosmea*, *verbena*, *petunia* and several members of the lily and iris families. All of these maintain a succession of bloom despite the heavy rainfall.

(This article was First Published in 1952.)

OLD AYER ITAM



The war memorial at Ayer Itam, dedicated to the Chinese in Penang who died resisting Japanese Forces during World War II. In the background is the Kong Min School (1950).

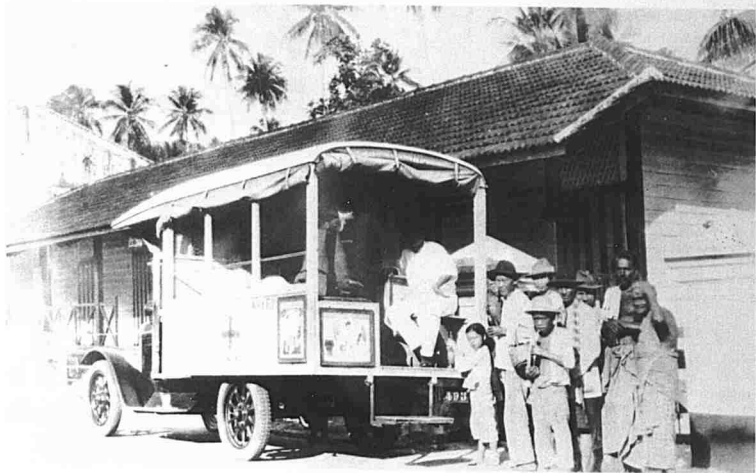
AYER Itam Village got its name from the murky waters of the river that flowed through it. The village thrived because of its proximity to the Kek Lok Si temple and the Cheng Jee Chan (1,200 Steps) temple in the Paya Terubong hills — both the site of religious activities for the Chinese. Balik Pulau, the collection centre for plantation produce, is also easily accessible by a foot-path over the hills.

A tramcar route from George Town to the village was started in 1906 but this was taken over by the trolley-buses around 1937. In 1961, trolley-buses were in turn phased out and replaced with motor buses.

The present Ayer Itam town was formerly a rural village of

attap huts and wooden houses. In 1935, however, fire razed all the wooden houses on both sides of the Paya Terubong Road. Kwang Wah Jit Poh, the oldest existing Chinese daily in Malaysia, reported that the fire started at 1.25pm on Feb 3 when a gust of wind blew some burning incense papers onto an attap roof opposite the police station. By the time the two fire engines arrived 45 minutes later, more than 100 houses were gutted, resulting in 1,000 people being made homeless with losses estimated at \$200,000 (Straits dollars).

Only one building survived: a double-storey brick pawnshop, which shielded the small, wooden police station next to it.



[Above] *The travelling government dispensary attending to people at Balik Pulau Road, Ayer Itam. Clinic Day at Ayer Itam was every Saturday.*



[Left] *Missionary sisters, attended by nursing staff, checking the health of newborns, children and women. People were also vaccinated on Clinic Day. These photos of Ayer Itam were taken in the 1930s.*

RECREATION IN AYER ITAM



[Above] Youths enjoying the swimming pool at the Eastern Garden Amusement Park in Ayer Itam in 1950. Several drownings occurred and the once popular park lost its luster.

[Left] Zoo Road in Ayer Itam was named after the Penang Zoological Gardens sited there. The gardens were established by a monk in the mid-1920s and boasted more than 10 types of animals. Tigers and lions were housed in separate artificial caves, while the rest of the zoo was landscaped with Chinese-style decorative bridges spanning fish and lily ponds. Unfortunately, the zoo closed down before the Japanese Occupation because it became too expensive to maintain.

MEN AT WORK IN OLD AYER ITAM

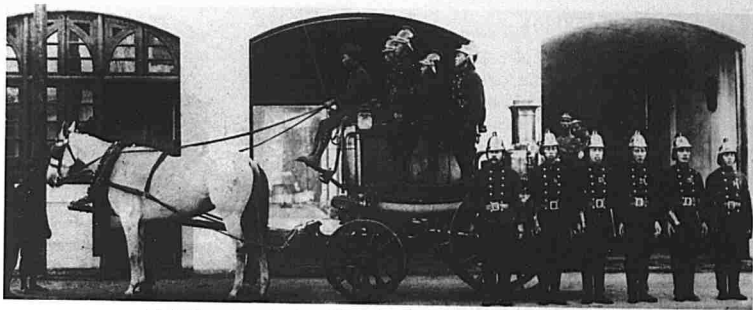


[Clockwise from top] A night soil collector in a street in Ayer Itam village; workers cleaning the drains in the village before the Great Fire of 1935; shopkeepers cleaning their stalls in the Paya Terubong fish market.

SCENES FROM THE GREAT FIRE OF 1935 AT AYER ITAM



[Clockwise from top] Sikh guards looking at the two remaining buildings – a pawn shop and a police station – that survived the fire. A photo showing the extent of the damage caused by the fire. A fireman standing in the remnants of the houses that were destroyed by the fire.



The first fire engine and nucleus of the fire brigade sub-station in Penang Road (1910).

FIREs have plagued Penang and George Town in particular since its founding in 1786. The Great Ayer Itam fire is just one case in point that soon led to improvements in the fire brigade. The *Straits Chinese Magazine* complained about the inefficiency of the Fire Brigade in its 1904 *Letter from Penang*, saying that: "The year 1904 in Penang is unparalleled for its records of disastrous fires. The burning down of the whole block of the Ah Kwi buildings, which included the *Pinang Gazette* office, will be fresh in the minds of many. At the time of writing I have to record the seventh fire of the year, making the fourth one in Beach Street. In spite of all the heavy claims, though, the insurance business is booming. But the question of the moment is the "efficiency" of our Fire Brigade. When it takes half-an-hour for a fire engine to arrive at the scene of a fire, and perhaps another half-hour to get up steam, it is time for a wholesale reorganisation of the Brigade. I commend this to the notice of our City Fathers, for it would be far more worthy of attention than wasting valuable time in framing such things as the Burial Ground By-Laws, and considering sheets and sheets of dry-as-dust water reports."

Although the Municipality had taken over the equipment of the Fire Brigade in 1888, fire-fighting was still the responsibility of the police. The police was, of course, under the government and

when in August 1906 another disastrous fire broke out at a pawn-broker's situated at 422 Chulia Street, the fire fighting team was accused of being "amateurish" in its handling of the fire. In 1908 it was decided that new fire stations were to be built and that a new superintendent would be appointed. A central station was built in Chulia Street Ghaut and a sub-station in Penang Road. Both were completed in 1909. The new Fire Brigade with its 28 firemen took over from the police on the May 1, 1909.



Haji Zainal Abidin Abdul Rahman was the first Malaysian Chief Fire Officer of Penang in 1948.

Water pressure on the island was low and this proved a real danger. And arson was an important problem faced by the Fire Brigade. Fire crackers were also a major cause for concern and the firing of them during a Chinese funeral ceremony almost led to the destruction of the Supreme Court and the Public Library in December 1916.

The good news was that, after it was re-organised, the efficiency of the Fire Brigade was much improved. In 1921, the Brigade reached one fire in two-and-a-half minutes after receiving the alarm. By 1953, it was decided to build a new Central Fire Station in Perak Road. The performance of the Fire Brigade had by this time moved from being amateurish to heroic, as evident in the 1936 fire in which two fire fighters lost their lives.

THE STORY OF JEREJAK

PULAU Jerejak, or Leper Island as it was formerly known, is merely a 10-minute boat ride from Penang, but little of Penang's development has touched the isle. Since progress and development never reached the 362ha island, the serenity of the island has been left intact. Although ignored by most groups, Pulau Jerejak has a long and interesting history — much of which has been characterised by neglect and confinement.

This seclusion led to an interesting negotiation between human development and nature. George Bilainkin, the late editor of the *Penang Straits Echo*, on his first visit to Pulau Jerejak in the 1930s wrote: "Ocean-going ships pass near Jerejak, but none stops. It is a territory of which few people have heard, and fewer still know anything. In the distance, Jerejak looks a mass of virgin jungle. On the shore palms and coconut trees abound, and as you approach the beach, you are inclined to forgive fiction writers, who throw a seemingly fantastic flood-

light of colour over the islands near Siam and Malaya. It looks, indeed, as if the forces of nature have determined to make their contribution towards lessening the sorrow of the stricken."

Pulau Jerejak was then a leper colony where "a thousand Asiatic lepers, largely Chinese, have learnt to smile in the face of the most awful visitation of Divine anger." Like Bilainkin, visitors to the former leper settlement will still have to climb onto an old jetty leading towards the now deserted hospital wards and decaying wooden bungalows. Yet evidence of life can be seen in rows of hibiscus trees that loosely form a fence against the jungle that threatens to reclaim this settlement of human suffering.

Subsequent to being a leper colony, the island was a centre for contagious diseases. Later, it became a penal colony. This is ironic as the island had an auspicious past. It had always been home to fishermen who made it their home and gave it its name long before it was turned into a leprosarium. In fact, Jerejak first



The old jetty still greets visitors to the old hospital and government quarters of Pulau Jerejak. [Opposite page top] Abandoned government quarters viewed from the sea, and one of the surviving hospital wards on the island.



appeared in colonial records when Colonel Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington who defeated the French forces of Napoleon Bonaparte at Waterloo) proposed it as a possible alternative to Fort Cornwallis as a naval base in 1797.

Wellesley, who was on his way to the Philippines in what became an aborted attempt by the English to capture those islands, wrote favourably about Penang's potential as a naval base. He was, however, not so confident about Fort Cornwallis' location as a military outpost.

At that time, the clearing of the jungle gave rise to what was probably an outbreak of malaria. Francis Light, the man who acquired Penang for the British, had himself succumbed to the disease in 1794. Wellesley was thus more in favour of a new area for the capital of Penang and recommended that the military post be situated on Pulau Jerejak, thus, providing military protection to the proposed town opposite Jerejak on Penang in the area called Bayan Lepas. It was recorded that this new town should be called Jamestown.

Based on potential alone, Penang was declared a presidency in 1805. Furthermore, the Battle of Trafalgar between British and French forces in the same year guaranteed British supremacy on the seas. Plans for turning Pulau Jerejak into a naval base and for Jamestown to be the capital were, thus, stillborn.

In his article, Bilainkin explained that the lepers were segregated according to race. The biggest complaint of the Chinese lepers, he wrote, was the poor quality of opium they received from the authorities. When Bilainkin visited the island, the Indian lepers were receiving their first priest for their newly-opened temple. The editor also mentioned that there was only one white couple living with the lepers. The woman, most

probably from Lancaster, England, lived with her Australian husband, Bilainkin said. When he asked her what life was like on the island, she said: "There is nowhere to walk except over the short stretch of sand you see in front of the bungalow. There are no roads on the island — it is all thick jungle, and one cannot get from one part to another without using the rowing boat ... in the evenings I sometimes accompany my husband when he goes in the sampan to some of the other settlements. It is a little change. Perhaps we may be provided soon with a motor launch — then the inspection will become almost joy rides."

Transport between the various settlements on the island is still dependent on the motorboat today. Nothing much remains, however, of the temples and bungalows mentioned by Bilainkin, although the small huts built for leper couples still stand by the beaches. After World War II, Malaya was ravaged by tuberculosis which replaced leprosy as the "poor man's disease". Again, Jerejak was where a hospital for contagious disease and a sanatorium were located. The graves of TB victims can be found near the ruins of prison buildings on the island. Jerejak was later transformed into a penal colony and became the Alcatraz of Malaysia. Luckily, these developments were restricted to the coast and, thus, much of the island's flora and fauna are preserved.

For much of its history, Pulau Jerejak has been neglected or sealed off from the public. Not many people remember life on the island. It certainly was not always as lonely as Bilainkin reported. The children of the island's hospital staff or the island's prison workers remember a lively beautiful island. "The sea was clean and the people were very friendly," recalled a retired civil servant who used to live there with her parents.



The Heart of Penang — Beliefs and Homes



The Acheen Street Malay Mosque, established in 1808, is one of the oldest mosques in the country. This photo taken in the 1950s shows a group of children standing beside its minaret.

PENANG is a place where many beliefs are found side by side. There are countless mosques, temples and churches along the many streets that were once homogenous enclaves. The Muslims, of Arab, Indian or Malay origin, erected their own mosques, the two most significant being the Kapitan Keling Mosque along Pitt Street (now Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling) and the Acheen Street Malay Mosque. One of the oldest Chinese temples is the Kuan Imn temple which is also situated in Pitt Street. However the bigger Kek Lok Si Temple in Ayer Itam with its pagoda is perhaps more famous while the Snake Temple in Sungai Kluang must surely be one of the most unique. The Hindu community, too, had their beliefs firmly rooted in Penang. The Sri Mariamman temple in Queen Street is one of the most popular while the largest is the Natu Kotai Chettiar Temple in Waterfall Road. Thai Pusam is celebrated in Penang with devotees carrying the *kavadh* (wooden or bamboo structures that were often attached to the body with hooks) as a sign of devotion

and gratitude. The British brought with them Christianity and the Anglican Church had official status with the British administration. St George's Church is the most visible Christian landmark on the island. It is located at the junction between Pitt Street and Farquhar Street. The rest of this last chapter takes us into homes of some of Penang's leading families. Stately homes along Northam Road (now Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah), Anson Road and the exquisite Chung Thye Pin villa in Relau are some examples of how Penang's elite lived in the past. Of particular interest is a rare photo of one of the island's leading Eurasian families — the Phipps were photographed on the porch of their home just before the outbreak of World War II. Penang was also a place visited by many famous personalities. Among the most notable are Nobel laureate the late Rabindranath Tagore; the father of modern China, Sun Yat Sen; and Indian prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. The chapter opens with a nostalgic stroll down Penang's Muslim enclave in Acheen Street, once the centre of the Haj pilgrimage and of Malay literary publishing.

PENANG'S MUSLIM HERITAGE

PENANG'S unique position at the northern tip of the Straits of Malacca not only served to enrich it as a trade emporium but also gave it a special place in one of humankind's great spiritual journeys: the Haj. Penang was a key port of call before embarking on this great journey. In the old days, the Haj entailed a long sea voyage across the Indian Ocean before setting out on foot on the Arabian peninsula. For many who had never ventured off Penang Island, it was not a journey to be taken lightly. But those who had made the journey often felt heightened spiritually and made great efforts to help their fellow faithful onto the path towards Mecca. Through this wellspring of Muslim faith, Penang today has a truly fascinating cultural and architectural heritage that is as rich as it is diverse.

A TALE OF TWO MOSQUES

Take a brief stroll down one of Penang's major roads and what you may not notice at first becomes significant upon a second look: the staggering number of small mosques and holy shrines (*kramat*). In Burmah Road alone there are more than eight mosques serving a now much reduced number of inner-city believers — the gentrification of George Town has seen the displacement of many of its former Muslim brethren. Thus, there are small mausoleums, cemeteries and holy shrines that are abandoned by relatives who have long since moved away. Like archaeological relics, these are markers of a once vibrant Muslim community living in George Town.

Among the many mosques in Penang, two of the oldest and most prominent are the Kapitan Keling Mosque in Pitt Street (now Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling) and the Acheen Street Malay Mosque. In 1801, Sir George Leith, then Lieutenant-Governor of Penang, granted the Muslims a 7ha piece of land for religious purposes. Cauder Mohidden, the Kapitan of the Indian Muslim settlers, was credited with the founding of the mosque that was subsequently named after him. While the first Indians were concentrated along the Pitt Street and Chulia Street areas, the first Arab traders who came from Aceh settled in what became the Acheen Street-Armenian Street Muslim enclave. Tunku Syed Hussain Al-Aidid, an Arab trader with links to the royal court of



The Kapitan Keling Mosque with its unique minaret served to the Indian Muslims of Penang

Aceh, became rich by trading in spices between Sumatra and Penang. Subsequently, he acquired large tracts of land from the colonial government and founded the Acheen Street Malay Mosque in 1808. This is still a Masjid Jamek, or a mosque provided for congregational prayers on Friday (Jumaat or Jamek). Its architecture, according to the now defunct Pulau Pinang Magazine, "juxtaposes an Arab-style minaret with a characteristic Acehnese roof". It was, and still is, commonly known as Masjid Melayu (Malay Mosque) to differentiate it from the nearby Kapitan Keling mosque, which was specifically for Indian Muslims.

There is a unique tradition in George Town where Muslims performed their Friday prayers alternately between the Kapitan Keling Mosque and the Acheen Street Malay Mosque. This tradition dates back to an incident in the middle of the 19th century when a dispute over the date of the end of the fasting month of Ramadan resulted in riots between devotees of both mosques. Subsequently, the authorities insisted that Friday prayers be performed alternately between the two mosques as a means of promoting friendship between the two groups.

THE 1867 RIOTS

Muslims also participated in the power struggle that engulfed Penang in the 1860s. In an era before the British exerted complete control over Penang, and when competition in trade was at times very bitter, there emerged two Muslim secret societies that were allied to different Chinese counterparts. The Acheen-Armenian Street area was linked to the Khian Teik (or Tua Pek Kong) society while their rivals were mainly the Cantonese-dominated Ghee Hin and the Malay White Flag society. The White Flag Malays were mainly based in the Kelawei Road area. Riots broke out in 1867 during which there was some fierce fighting — a legacy to that extremity is Cannon Street, which was so named after fierce cannon fire created a hole in the street.

The Muslims were reconciled under the leadership of Sheikh Omar Basheer. Sheikh Omar was one of the most respected Muslim leaders of Penang. He was a famous Sufi (Islamic mysticism) teacher and his house subsequently became the first Kadi's (Muslim registrar) office in 1888 when one of his sons, Haji Yahya, was appointed Kadi. After the 1867 Penang Riots, the Malays all had to take an oath before Sheikh Omar promising that they would not be members of any secret society. The boria troupes — famed for their stinging satirical songs and biting skits — were then blamed for their role in fanning the rivalry between the White and Red flag societies and were subsequently banned. Their members all began to start sports associations. Particularly popular were the various football associations.

THE MADRASAHs

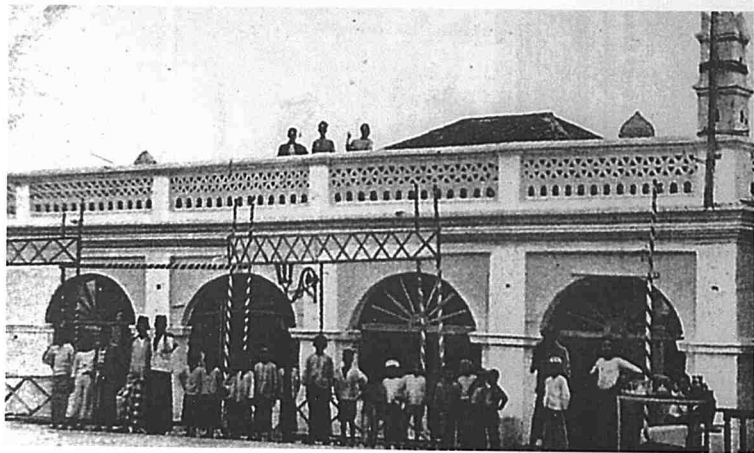
Muslims in 19th century Penang were also active proponents of Arab education. If in the past Aceh had been the *serambi agama Islam* (literally, "the porch of Muslim religion"), the Acehnese presence in Penang instilled an appreciation for religious learning among the local Muslims. Place names sometimes reflect this rich tradition. Kampung Tuan Guru, which encompasses a village area bordered by Armenian Street, Cannon Square and Kampung Che Long, is named after Abdul Ghani Abdul Rashid, an orthodox teacher from Madura (*guru* is "teacher" in Malay). Others like Haji Abdullah Buyong taught behind the Acheen Street Mosque. Another famous name is the late Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin, father of former Penang Governor Tun Dr Hamdan,



The late Sheikh Omar Basheer was a leading cleric and respected leader of Penang's Malay Muslim community. His descendants still live in the area.

who had just returned from Al-Azhar University in Cairo in 1893.

In 1916, an Arab school called the Madrasatul Quran was founded in Acheen Street. The school was located in the compound of Kampung Tuan Guru and had Syed Abdul Rahman Al-Habshee (father of Yan Sri Syed Abbas Al-Habshee, president, Penang Malay Chambers of Commerce) as its pioneer teacher. Syed Abdul Rahman was born in Surabaya, Java, and had taught in Deli before coming to Penang. Originally set up to cater to the Arab community, the school was soon expanded due to popular demand from the rest of the Muslim community. This school later grew into the Madrasatul Mashoor Al-Islamiyah, the largest Islamic school in Penang and, for some time, one of the most important institutions for Arabic education in South-East Asia.



A Muslim 'keramat' in Transfer Road. A keramat is a tomb of a revered Muslim. It is usually visited by devotees asking for favours or by those who gather to pray during special occasions.

CENTRE OF MUSLIM BUSINESSES

The Muslim enclave in George Town that centred on Acheen Street Mosque was once a thriving Malay Muslim commercial area. The Acehnese traders carried spices, especially pepper, to trade with the Chinese. The late Khoo Tiong Poh, who lived in the house at the corner of Acheen Street and Carnarvon Street, together with his son-in-law Syed Mohamed Al-Atas (who lived in the Syed Al-Atas Mansion or 128, Armenian Street), cornered the pepper trade. Syed Al-Atas was also closely connected with the Red Flag Society, bitter rivals of the White Flag society.

At the same time, Armenian Street became known as "Copper-Smithing Street" due to a brazier owned by a Malay coppersmith — Mohammad Tahir, *tukang tembaga* (copper smith). There was also trade in Egyptian perfumes and other Middle Eastern products transforming the street into a great bazaar.

Among the most entrepreneurial Muslims in Penang were

the Rawas. These were merchants who came from a place not far from Padang in Sumatra. They moved into Penang's Acheen Street with their textile shops, batik stores and book shops. The Rawas were well-known in the book trade as sellers of religious books, framed Arabic calligraphy, stationery and Muslim headgear. According to the *Pulau Pinang Magazine*, the long-running Persama Press printed Malay and Arabic literature. This was later taken over by the Sulaiman Press. The one-time president of the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), the late and respected Haji Yusof Rawa, published prolifically through the United Press in his bookshop. Another important literary figure in Malay literature wrote and published in this enclave: Ahmad Rashid Talu and his first novel — *lakah Salmah?* (Is It True, Salmah?) — is the first Malay novel to have a local setting. The novel is also among the first to highlight the important role of women in Malay society.



[Above] Picture of Sheikh Zachariah Basheer (seated fourth from left) with Malay community leaders welcoming the first Malay lawyer from Singapore who stopped by Penang on the way back from London. The picture was taken in a house in Hutton Lane.

[Right] A 1937 photo of Hajjah Maimunah Haji Kassim, upon her return from performing the Haj (pilgrimage) in Mecca. Beside her is her son, the late Haji Ahmad, and his father, Haji Mohd Din Mat, the headmaster of Jelutong Malay School. Maimunah was a well-known traditional healer in Jelutong and boarded the P&O's 'SS Neleus' in 1936 for Jeddah.

KAPAL HAJI

The modern age brought with it new opportunities for the Muslim community in Penang. With the advent of the steamship and the establishment of European steamship companies in Singapore and Penang, Muslims could travel from Penang to Jeddah in two weeks. In the days before Tabung Haji (the fund that helps pilgrims), Muslims had to make their way to Mecca by their own means. A thriving enterprise started in Penang and among the most famous companies that provided transport to the Holy land was the Jeddah Pilgrim Ticket Agency at No. 87, Acheen Street.

The company belonged to Syed Ahmad Al-Mashoor, whose father-in-law was the late Sheikh Zachariah Basheer. The latter acted as guarantor for the ships which were chartered by the famed Mansfield company. Penang's "pilgrim brokers" provided this important service to pilgrims from Malaya, Indonesia and even Thailand.

The 1950s was the heyday of the *Kapal Haji* (Pilgrimage

Ship) business, as the Acheen Street area became a second Jeddah to pilgrims from all over Muslim South-East Asia. They would stop for a few days and stay in the Muslim enclave in George Town, recite verses from the Quran and pray in the mosques. One of the former employees at the Jeddah Pilgrim Ticket Agency, Abdul Aziz, remembers that the majority of pilgrims from Malaya came from Kelantan. These people were housed in the mosque enclave, Lumut Lane and Kelab Kolang. At the height of its popularity, the company chartered up to six ships to cater to its swelling clientele. With the advent of air travel, however, the company was forced to close its doors in 1975 and its function was taken over by the government-run Lembaga Tabung Haji (Pilgrim Fund Board).

The Muslim enclave in Acheen Street lost its lustre in the 1980s as more Malay Muslims moved out of the city. Today it is merely a pale shadow of its former self. Efforts are being taken, however, to transform it into a living heritage site.

Haji Abdullah Ibrahim @ Abdullah Fahim @ Pak Him

ONE of Penang's most famous religious teachers and Malay nationalists is the late Haji Abdullah Ibrahim. He was born in the holy city of Mecca to Haji Ibrahim, a teacher of the Al-Quran. Many of his father's students came from South-East Asia, namely from the Malay States, Indonesia and Patani. Growing up in a place called Shuaib Ali (near the Kaabah), Abdullah was much influenced by the religious scholars who came seeking knowledge from his father. Soon he mastered the Quran and Arabic literature. It is said that he was taught by 42 famous teachers while in Mecca, and it was there that he gained both religious and secular knowledge.

In 1921, Abdullah left Mecca and travelled to Malaya. He is said to have walked from Mecca to Malaya in order to gain knowledge. This emboldening experience drew him to spread the good word of the Quran and later to teach the holy text for seven years in Kedah. He taught at home at first, beginning with only five students. These included Haji Abu Bakar Al-Baqir, Haji Abdul Halim Hadi, and Haji Ghazali (who died in Mecca). Abdullah then started teaching in the mosque before finally starting a school: the Daeratul Maarif Al Wataniah Religious School in Kepala Batas, Province Wellesley (now Seberang Prai). His son, the late Datuk Abdullah Badawi, took over the school when Abdullah died in 1961 at the age of 92.

Abdullah is remembered as the first religious teacher to teach the Hadith in Kepala Batas and who spread the teachings of Islam in Province Wellesley on the mainland. He was also a religious teacher in Kuala Kangsar. While in this royal capital of Perak he was advisor to the late Sultan Alang Iskandar. Not that he was one who was after titles or favours. Abdullah once turned down an offer made to him to be Syekhul Islam in Kedah because he was worried that his absence would affect his school, where student numbers were, at that time, growing quickly.

In 1957, when Malaya gained its independence, he became the first Mufti of Penang. He accepted the position due to strong pressure from the government and, it is said, because he felt he had to defend the true teachings of Islam in the state. He held this position until 1961. He is also remembered as a staunch supporter of the Ahl-e Sunnah Wal Jamaah doctrine.



The late Haji Abdullah Ibrahim was a well-known Penang Muslim religious figure in whose house, and on whose advice, the date of Malaysia's national day was decided.

Abdullah was also a staunch nationalist. He had developed over time a strong will to fight the British colonialists. He would later echo the famous slogan "Hidup Melayu, dan Negara Malaya dan Indonesia adalah saudara kembar (Long live the Malays, and the Malay nation and Indonesia are twins)" during the crucial years when the Malays were fighting the British subsequent to the Malayan Union proposal. His son, the late Datuk Ahmad Badawi joined the United Malays National Organisation and was once Acting Chief Minister of Penang.

Abdullah's lasting legacy to the nation has to do with our national day. Based on his calculations, he managed to convince Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaya's first prime minister that Aug 31, 1957, was a suitable date to proclaim Malaysia's independence. Almost providentially, his grandson, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, will become the nation's fifth prime minister come October 2003.

SOME PLACES OF WORSHIP

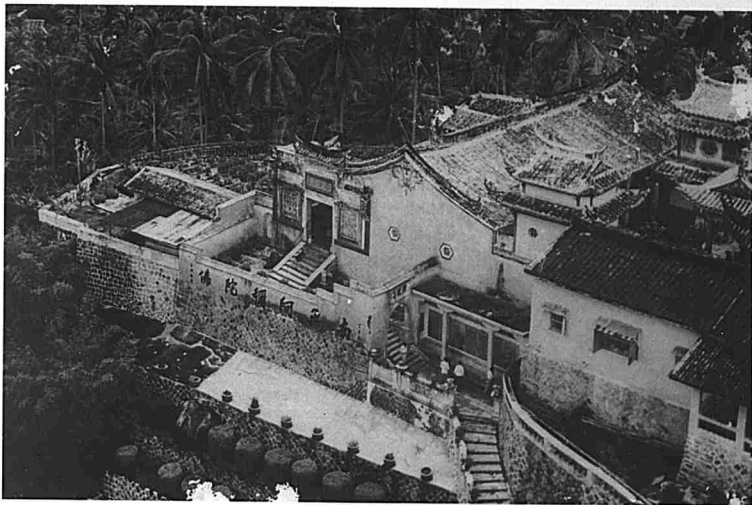


The Kuan Imm Temple in the 1950s

THE KUAN IMM TENG OR THE TEMPLE OF THE KNOLL

LOCAL Penang researcher Ong Seng Huat explains in the *Pulau Pinang Magazine* (Jan-Feb, 1989) that the Goddess of Mercy Temple in Pitt Street is one of the most important temples for the Chinese community in Penang. It was founded in 1800 on land presented to the temple's founders by the British East India Company. Originally started as a shrine dedicated to Ma Chor Po, the patron saint of seafarers, the founders of the temple chose the site because it was on higher ground and the gentle knoll was regarded as a "dragon" or *leong me* — a geometrically suitable place to locate a temple. The temple later became the religious and community centre of the Chinese. The temple's actual name

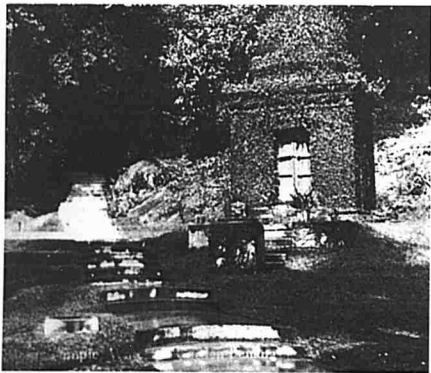
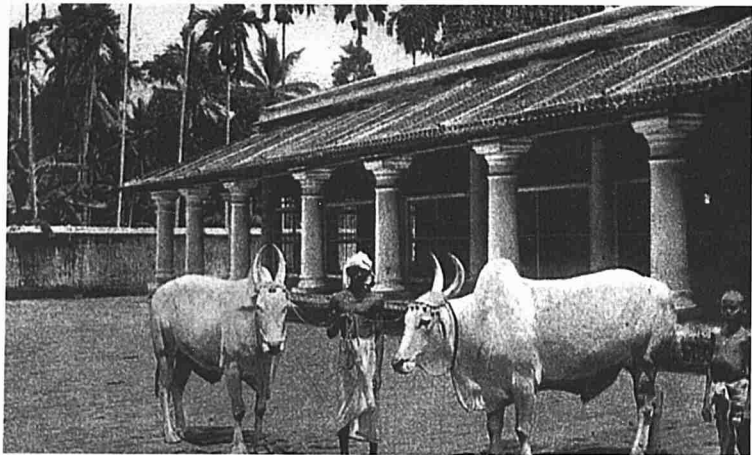
is Kong Hock Keong, literally, the "Kwantung-Hokkien Temple", with "Kong" deriving from "Kong Hu" or Kwantung and "Hock" from "Hokkien" or Fujian. The temple therefore represents a majority of Chinese migrants in South-East Asia. According to Ong, however, when the community expanded, the Chinese Town Hall was formed to take care of community and social matters while the Kong Hock Keong remained a religious centre. Extensions to the temple date from 1824 while the Chinese Town Hall building was erected beside it in the 1880s. Today the temple continues to attract many devotees. (Source: *Pulau Pinang Magazine*, Jan-Feb, 1989.)



KEK LOK SI TEMPLE

The Kek Lok Si Temple is the largest Buddhist temple complex in Malaysia. It is made of many temples climbing tier upon tier of Penang Hill. The first tier is the Kuan Yin Temple and between this temple and the second one is a turtle pond representing "longevity". The second temple contains the mighty statues of Four Heavenly Kings while the third tier contains large figures of the Buddha. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the temple is its pagoda (picture on the right) which was a feat when it was first built. The picture above is of the temple complex in the 1950s.

HINDU AND BUDDHIST TEMPLES

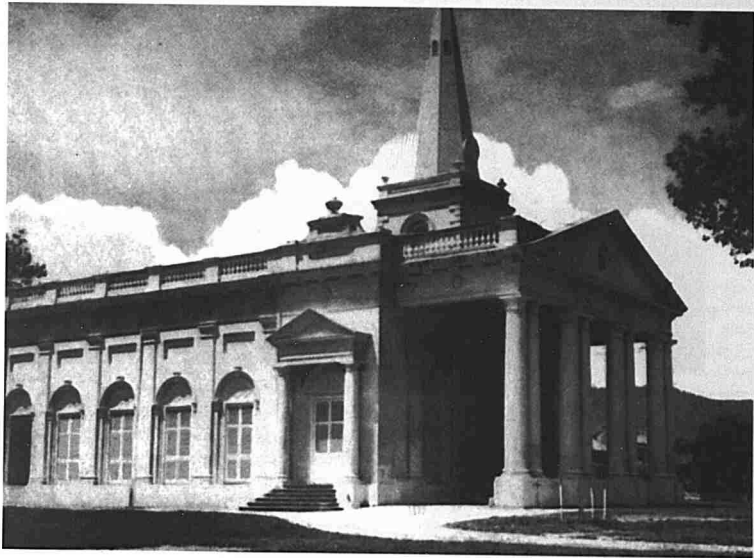


[Top] Sacred cows outside the Hindu temple in Waterfall Gardens. Hindus make the trip up the steps of the temple every year to celebrate *Thaipusam* and to make offerings in exchange for wishes granted.

[Left] Photo of the steps leading to the temple in the Waterfalls, reproduced from an early postcard.

[Above] An early postcard of the Siamese Buddhist temple which catered to Penang's Thai community.

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH



[Above] St George's Church, the largest Anglican Church in Penang, was built in 1805. Together with the Kuan Imm Temple, the Kapitan Keling Mosque and the Mariamman Temple, the church completes Penang's multi-religious setting. A memorial dedicated to Francis Light, the man who acquired Penang for the British, stands in front of the church while Harriet Fullerton, the wife of a Penang governor, Robert Fullerton, is buried under the pulpit.

[Left] An early postcard of the Burmese Buddhist temple. Penang's proximity to and trade links with Burma and Thailand saw the proliferation of Buddhist teachings. Today, the Siamese Buddhist temple in Pulau Tikus boasts of one of the biggest reclining Buddha statues in the world.

HOUSES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS



Lim Lean Teng's 'Woodville', a model of an English Garden House.

PENANG, the oldest British colony in Malaysia and one of the most cosmopolitan populations in South-East Asia, has some of the most unique buildings in the world. Among its most captivating are those situated on the island's north coast. Once known as North Beach, this coastal area reflected the opulence of George Town's elite.

Delineated by Northam Road (now Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah), the area contained the island's "Millionaires' Row" in the middle of the 19th century. Known in Hokkien as *Ang Moh Lor*, or "the European's Road", it was an enclave of rich European planters, entrepreneurs, officers and lawyers. In the late 19th century, however, the Europeans started moving out of North Beach and into new southern suburbs along Macalister Road and Western Road to be closer to their clubs, such as the Penang Sports Club, the Turf Club and the Polo Club. The lovely stretch of beach and the houses that the Europeans left behind were slowly transformed into abodes for ostentatious living by migrant Chinese enriched through their ventures in tin mining, trading and other island business.

This was the heyday of British imperial power, so locals emulated the style of the West very much in the way the world is

now influenced by American culture. Rich Chinese businessmen like Cheah Chen Eok, who was a municipal commissioner and respected leader of the Chinese community, donated lavishly towards the building of monuments. His most famous legacy is the Victoria Memorial clock tower that was built at a cost of \$35,000 (Straits dollars) in 1897. It was only completed in 1903 and its height, 60 feet (18m) tall, commemorates Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. Lavish entertainment ranked second to building monuments. In his homes, the stately *Holland House* among others, Cheah hosted lavish parties. In the Swinging '30s, a young Lim Kean Chuan and his band, the Penang Chinese Jazz Lads, performed there.

These mansions all adopted Western architectural features, complete with imported European furniture and, in some cases, even imported Roman classical sculptures to adorn their lavish gardens. *Woodville*, for instance, is a beautiful testimony to the French chateau style. It was designed by British architect Joseph Charles Miller (an associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects) in 1925 for the late Lim Lean Teng.

Arguably the most famous house on Northam Road is *Homestead* with its imposing white pillars and amazing lawn.

It was built for Lim Mah Chye but fell into the hands of millionaire Yeap Chor Ee, the founder of Ban Hin Lee Bank. Designed by James Stark of the famed Scottish civil engineering firm Stark and McNeil, *Homestead* reflects the influence of an English country house known as *Holkham Hall* in Norfolk, designed by William Kent in 1734. It is said that, typical of the abode of Chinese millionaires, *Homestead* had two sets of furniture, one European and one Chinese, in separate wings. Each of the wings was used to entertain guests from the two different worlds through which these men moved.

Their visits to Europe inspired these millionaires to build "nobility" into their lives. If Europe was not at hand, established architectural firms in Penang were, and they provided the newly rich with the wherewithal to leapfrog into "upper society." None made a higher leap than the Khaw family. The patriarch of the family, Khaw Soo Cheang, dabbled in tin mining, revenue farming and trading between Penang and the southern states of Siam (modern Thailand). He became known as the "Raja" of Ranong and his sons all soon took over the vast fortune built up by their father. Khaw's second son, Sim Kong, who succeeded him as Raja of Ranong, took over the European bungalow *Hardwicke*, the first of many acquisitions along

Northam Road that were fuelled by increasing revenues from a regional shipping company and tin smelting outfit.

One of their more famous homes was the former Hotel Metropole, an interesting building that was, unfortunately, demolished in 1993. Originally known as *Nova Scotia*, Stark and McNeil was commissioned in 1921 to enlarge and re-design the house. The re-designed house was renamed *Asdong House* and became the abode of Khaw's fourth son, Sim Khim. Khaw's sixth son, Sim Bee, who became governor of Trang and subsequently high commissioner of Siam, moved into another house called *Scotia* and renamed it *Chakrabong House*. This became the abode of a weary Prince Chulalongkorn when the young Siamese prince visited Penang. Other Khaw mansions included *Brook Lodge*.

Today, many of these houses have been pulled down and replaced with highrise office complexes. One of the most tragic fates was that of *Hardwicke*, former home of the late Lim Cheng Ean. It is now completely overshadowed by towering office blocks. These mansions were built to survive anything — except the greed of developers. Those that have withstood even that threat are reminders of a bygone era. The following pages take a peek into the luxurious lifestyles of Penang's elite of old from that era.



Yeap Chor Ee's 'Homestead', modelled after 'Holkham Hall', an English country house



The Shanghai Hotel was a popular dance hall and venue for weddings. Some believe it to be the Chung Thye Pin seaside bungalow. The Persiaran Gurney Condominium complex was built on the site of the demolished hotel.

CHUNG THYE PIN SEASIDE VILLA IN GURNEY DRIVE

EXTRACT FROM QUEENIE CHANG'S 'MEMORIES OF A NYONYA FIRST'
PUBLISHED IN 1981

QUEENIE Chang was the daughter of Chang A-Fie, a successful Hakka businessman based in Medan, Sumatra. She was born in 1898 and visited Penang as a girl in the 1900s. The following is her recollection of visiting the seaside villa of Kapitan Chung Thye Pin during its days of glory.

"I was so confused by the many strange faces and different things that I saw in each household that everything seemed like a dream. There were so many rich people with beautiful mansions in Penang. One family was as wealthy as the other, if not wealthier. One house that has remained in my memory is that of Chung Thye Pin. It was like a castle with two towers and was built on a hill. The garden stretched to the sea. Black marble steps led to a porticoed entrance with two rose-coloured marble Greek statues on either side. When we entered the big hall, my eyes were arrested by a life-size oil painting of an extremely handsome young man in a costume usually worn by English



A group of picnickers posing on the main staircase leading up to Kapitan Chung Thye Pin's Relau Bungalow.

lords — white breeches, sapphire blue long-tailed cutaway coat, frilly white shirt and a high cravat. His head was covered with a white wig, his hand poised lightly on a small table and on his little finger he wore a huge diamond ring, its unmistakable blue sparkle skilfully brought out by the artist. He held a

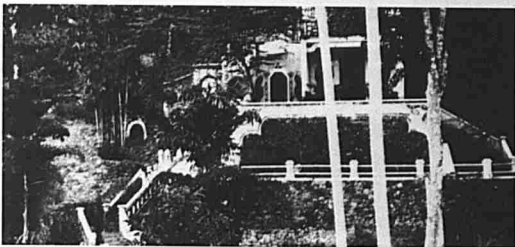
white lace handkerchief in his left hand. He looked so elegant and grand that I could hardly take my eyes off him.

"The bedroom was an absolute dream. The walls were panelled with *bois-de-rose* brocade which was also used for draperies for the windows over cream-coloured lace curtains. The soft sunlight shimmered through accompanied by a cool breeze from the sea. The bed was in the form of a big shell covered with a canopy decorated with silver cupids. The pillows and bedspread were of pink lace and satin. On the floor lay a fleecy cream-coloured carpet and the high ceiling was painted with lilies-of-the-valley and forget-me-nots.

"Finally Mrs Chung took us downstairs to have tea in the dining room built under the sea. We sat at a long table laid with all sorts of delicacies. We really enjoyed the tea and I ate to my heart's content. When I happened to look up at the ceiling I saw that it was not painted as I had at first thought. It was a glass dome through which I could see fishes swimming about!

"Seeing my amazement, Mrs Chung explained amiably: 'Yes, they are real fishes. My husband designed this room himself and had it built under the sea. He claims that it will relieve our boredom if we have our meals in the company of fishes. It is a pity that he is now in London buying race horses but he will be back for the Gold Cup next month. Then, he can show you more of his eccentricities.'

"It was beyond my comprehension what money could bring about. I now understood how wealthy people in Penang were and that they knew how to enjoy life. "After seeing all this, our big house in Medan seemed insignificant. But it was our home and we were very happy. I wondered whether all the people we had seen in their luxurious home felt the same."



[Top] A group of visitors using the diving board and slide by the swimming pool. The pool was 20m long and the water was pumped from a nearby stream.

[Above] Landscaped garden next to the bungalow.

These photographs were taken in the 1930s and 1940s at the late Kapitan Chung Thye Phin's holiday bungalow at Relau where the island's first private swimming pool was built. This country retreat was a favourite spot for outings by groups of scouts and picnickers. During the Japanese Occupation, ammunition was stored in the many gullies and ravines around the house. After the war, the British demolished the stores, and in the process, damaged parts of the building.



Cheah Tatjin, son of millionaire Cheah Chen Eok, is standing on the left outside his mansion in 'Combe Hill'.

The 1917 picture shows typical elements of the lifestyles of the rich at that time: the liveried carriage drawn by horses and the Sikh guards.

BEEHAM AND COMBE HILL

Cheah Chen Eok, a third generation Hokkien community leader of Penang, was born in 1852. His father was Cheah Sim Hean, a merchant. Chen Eok studied at the Penang Free School until he was 16, after which he worked for Messrs Boon Tek & Co, a Chandler. He then left to join the Chartered Mercantile Bank of India, London and China. After eight years working in the bank, he started his own business as a shipping agent and general merchant. He set up the firm of Chen Eok & Co in 1876. He later branched into opium and spirit revenue farming in Perak in 1888. He was a Justice of Peace, Penang Municipal Commissioner, member of the Chinese Advisory Board, a trustee of the Penang Free School and founder member of Poh Choo Seah at King Street.

Today, Penangites are reminded of Chen Eok by his donation of the clock tower at King Edwards Place (near Weld Quay) in commemoration of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. In 1897, he was awarded the title of *Tao-Yuan* by the Chinese government in

recognition for his contributions. He was survived by his sons Totto and Tatjin.

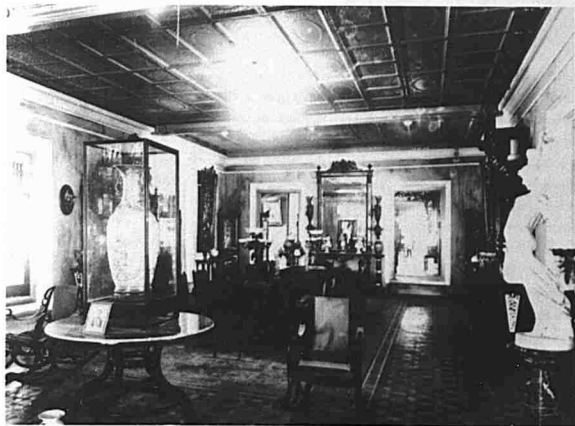
Beeham House, Chen Eok's palatial double storey country was sited on Combe Hill, Glugor. He had named the hillock and its surrounding grounds (30ha in all) Combe Hill after a little hill in Cornwall in Britain and named the grand house *Bee ham* after his wife, Ah Bee.

The mansion was the first private residence on Penang to have its own electricity and water supplies. Electricity came from its own generator, and water was pumped out from a well, not only for household use, but also for the fountains that graced the grounds. The Japanese commandeered the house during World War II. After the war, the house was requisitioned for the use of the Dutch and later leased to the Salvation Army. In 1957, the government took it over from the late Cheah Tatjin for the Malayan Teacher's Training College.

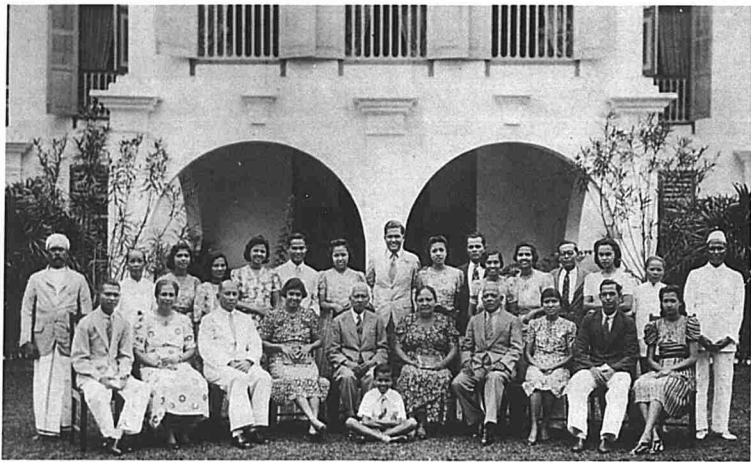


The interior of Becham with its Western style furniture. It was common practice to have two sets of furniture to cater to different guests. Yeap Chor Ee's 'Homestead' is another good example of wealthy Chinese creating two worlds, one private and the other public. In Becham, the Western-style room is a showcase of its owner's affiliation with Western culture, particularly important as all the Cheahs held high public offices.

The Chinese section of 'Becham House' with Chinese vases encased in glass. Here the family's Chinese friends would be entertained. It was mostly the women who would use the room when their guests visited. The room's character is much influenced by the rosewood and mother-of-pearl-inlaid furniture. Also notice the tiles on the floor, quite similar to the one in the Leong Yin Kean Mansion that houses the offices of Escoy and Datuk Kramat Tin Smelting Company.



GREEN LAWN' AND 'SPRING GROVE'



The first Eurasians came to Penang at the invitation of Francis Light, the man who acquired the island for the British, in the late 18th century. They subsequently held important positions in government. One of the most distinguished Eurasian families are the Phipps. The photo above was taken just before the late Oliver Phipps left for Cambridge University on a Queen's Scholarship in 1941. The patriarch of the family, the late James Henry Phipps, was Chief Government Auditor, Penang. *Green Lawn* is located No. 4, Anson Road. Notice also the Indian cook and driver flanking the family.

Spring Grove in Macalister Road belonged to the late Yeap Kim Hoe, son of millionaire Yeap Chor Ee. Prior to his residence there, it was occupied by the German Consul to Penang who had installed heavy grill doors (similar to those used in bank vaults) outside his bedroom on the first floor. The property was sold to the Firrell School. The house has since been demolished and the land is now occupied by St Christopher's School.





PENAWAR

The late Tan Sri C.M. Hashim, fondly remembered as Che Din Allen Dennys, studied at St Xavier's Institution, then began his working life in the auction house of Allen Dennys. Having built a solid rapport with his employer, Hashim bought over the company just before World War II; during the Japanese Occupation, he re-registered the company as Hashim & Dennys but subsequently retained the original name after the war. Hashim was also a founding member of the Malay Recreation Club and later the United Malays National Organisation, Penang branch. He was also a Federal Legislative Council member and was on the board of the George Town Municipal Council that was awarded city status by Queen Elizabeth II in 1957. Later, he became the president of the Malaysian Chamber of Commerce. Hashim built and moved into *Penawar*, located in Ayer Itam, in 1938. The residence was a place of refuge during the Japanese Occupation for the Hashim and Ariff families. In the 1950s, many parties took place in *Penawar*. Today, his wife, Puan Sri Fatimah, in her 90s, still lives in the house.



[Opposite page] The Phipps gathered around Oliver Phipps (standing in the centre) just before he left for Cambridge in 1941. 'Spring Grove' in the 1930s. [Above] 'Penawar', home of the late Tan Sri CM Hashim (inset). A party in 'Penawar' in the 1950s.

VISITORS FROM INDIA



FATHER OF MODERN CHINA



[Clockwise in opposite page] The visit of the Maharaja and Maharani of Kapurthala (North West India) to Penang in the late 1930s. They are aboard the ship that had stopped in Penang. The opening ceremony of the Penang Municipal and Public Works Department by Jawaharlal Nehru at Kampung Jawa Padang in 1946; Nehru was instrumental in India's fight for Independence. Noble laureate Dr Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian to win the Nobel Prize for literature, was invited to lay the foundation stone of a new clubhouse, the Hu Yew Seah, on Aug 14, 1927.

[Top and right] The Chinese nationalist, the late Dr Sun Yat Sen visited and made Penang his base in the early 20th century. The house on the left is his Penang headquarters located in Armenian Street. It was from here that the Nationalists raised money to fight the Ching dynasty. Dr Sun returned to China in 1911 after the fall of the last imperial dynasty of China. Today, the house is the operations centre of Penang Heritage Trust's honorary secretary, Khoo Salma Nasution, who is fighting to preserve George Town's unique architectural heritage.



Postscript

"HELP PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE"

BY TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

PEOPLE sometimes ask me how I occupy my time. I tell them I have many engagements in Penang, Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere. I attend many meetings connected with charitable, religious or sporting organisations in which I am still keenly interested. I also receive visitors from different parts of Malaysia and from overseas. I have not had a quiet moment so far.

A few years ago (*this article was written in 1987*), Sir Jack Boles, former Director-General of the National Trust of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, called on me. He had been in charge of a large and successful organisation which helps to preserve and maintain over 1,000 historic buildings and a number of villages. We discussed the need to preserve historic buildings in Malaysia, for they are part of our national heritage.

Many of the old family mansions in Penang, built more than a century ago, are no longer cared for and many have been demolished. If the best of these are restored and opened to the public, they could be turned into national archives and an attraction to tourists.

In Kedah and other northern states, beautiful timber palaces with carved panels and doors have been allowed to rot or replaced by modern buildings. They can never be replaced. One I still remember is the house where I was born. It was built by Chinese workmen brought directly from China. It was a three-storey building and incorporated both Malay and Chinese styles, design and architecture. The courtyard had green glazed dragons all around with a gateway leading to a river house on iron pillars.

In this courtyard the children used to play, dance and sing, particularly on moonlit nights. In 1918, I came back from school for the holidays and found, to my sorrow, that the building had been pulled down. In its place was the Sultan of Kedah's office, now partly occupied by the new secretariat building.

Nobody at the time paid much attention or cared for its historical value. It could have been preserved, but people those



The late Tunku Abdul Rahman and his wife, the late Tun Sharifah Rodziah, dancing the joget on his 70th birthday.

dance thought only of building new structures to replace old ones. The Balai Besar was also rebuilt in 1901 but fortunately it followed the old structure and design. It was built of timber and now of brick and mortar.

A house of historical value in Penang is the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion situated in Lebuh Leith (Leith Street). It was built in 1880, also by Chinese workmen from China engaged by

philanthropist Cheong Fatt Tze @ Thio Tiaw Siat as he wanted to establish himself in South-East Asia as a wealthy merchant and landed proprietor with interests in trade and shipping. The building is regarded as one of the finest examples of residential architecture.

There are two other buildings of historical value — *Suffolk House*, built by the first British governor of Penang and *Udini House* which was built by my great uncle, Tunku Kudin, who was viceroy of Selangor.

He ceded Selangor to the British in the first treaty ever made between a Malay ruler and the British Government, and for that the Sultan of Kedah refused to allow him to return to the state. So he stayed in Penang until his death. He owned two houses, one in Northam Road and the other in Bukit Glugor, that was *Udini House*.

The oldest reconstructed building — actually a monument — existing in Malaysia today is to be found in Batu Pahat, Mukim Merbok, Kedah. An old Hindu shrine built in the Merong Wangsa dynasty as a tomb to mark the grave of a nobleman, it was rebuilt after Merdeka by Professor French who was then supervising the renovation of Angkor Wat in Kampuchea. All Hindu shrines were destroyed about 800 years ago when the people of Kedah embraced Islam. Perhaps, when real research is undertaken, more buildings could be discovered.

A group of people headed by Datuk Lim Chong Keat have taken an interest in Penang's historical buildings (*the Tunku was referring to the Penang Heritage Trust's founding members.*) According to them, "the question of heritage is often a question of knowing ourselves, our landscape, our built environment in customs and cultures, and our inner strivings, so that we could be secure within ourselves that we are truly Malaysian people with strong inherent Penang traits, feeling and tastes".

They call this society the "Penang Heritage Trust", and they ask people "to meet the challenge of seeking, if not definite answers, at least an understanding to questions about ourselves, on the principle that what we receive from our ancestors, we must hand down to our children and our descendants".

The idea of setting up a heritage group in Penang was mooted by this group. They comprised people from diverse professions who met informally as early as March 1985 and preserved to the best of their ability old historical buildings. I



Tan Sri Wong Pow Nee celebrating Tunku Abdul Rahman's birthday in 1987.

want this group of young people to meet the new group that is being organised by (now the late) Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard in Kuala Lumpur who call themselves the "National Heritage Trust". Together, they might create new interest among the people of Malaysia in old crafts and buildings. If these two groups come together, they could help to preserve a few of the finest examples of our heritage, but the work should not be left to a few volunteers.

This is a national responsibility. The Government at federal and state levels should adopt and implement a policy of conservation. Well-wishers all over the country could contribute or at least help shoulder the cost of conserving old buildings, and major industrial and commercial firms could give their support in the way of annual donations or grants. I hope those interested in our heritage would do their best to contribute towards this fund to help make it a success as it will result in creating a new historical venture in our country.

(Published in The Star, 1987.)



Lookout Post at the Esplanade before the outbreak of World War II

Acknowledgments

This is a work of many people – contributors, graphic designers, editors and the readers of *The Star*. As the idea of the book began in the 1987 "Penang in Pictures" contest, it is appropriate that the present book committee thank the many readers who contributed photos to *The Star*. "Penang in Pictures", headed by Laurence Loh, was also fortunate to have the generous support of construction company Farlim Group (M) Bhd and Datuk Seri Lim Gait Tong, presently the president of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce (Penang).

In attempting to complete the book, *The Star* decided to co-organise the Penang Story Project with the Penang Heritage Trust. The support of Datuk Steven Tan, Datuk Kamal Hashim and Datuk Ng Poh Tip, was crucial for the success of the project. The Penang Story also spawned the Penang Story series featured in *The Star's* Section 2 pullout from July 2001 till April 2002. I would like to thank Lim Cheng Hoe, our Section 2 editor, for his support for the series.

Glimpses of Old Penang is also indebted to the National Archives, the Penang State Museum and the Penang Art Gallery for allowing us to reproduce illustrations from their collections. Research work was also carried out in Universiti Malaya's Za'ba Memorial Library, the Penang State Library and the Penang Heritage Trust Library. Microfilms of *The Star's* North pullout was made available by the librarians of the Star Information Centre (Static).

Other individuals also helped shape this book. Datuk PG Lim, Datuk Khoo Keat Siew and Datuk Zubaidah Ariff, spent valuable time allowing me to record their experiences through numerous interviews. Datuk Nazir Ariff, Dr Loh Wei Leng and Khoo Salma Nasution gave invaluable comments on Penang's local history. I am also grateful to Cikgu Jaafar Shaikh Abdul Rahim for his assistance in gathering information about Penang's Muslim heritage.

I would also like to thank *The Star's* Managing Editor, Teh Eng Huat and Azura Anuar of *The Star's* Marketing Services Department for helping with the production of the book. Dr Lee Kam Hing, Kamatchy Sappani and Malini Dias read the drafts meticulously and helped greatly in realising *Glimpses*. Marcus Tan, Jonathan Luen and James Ooi spent hours laying out the book. Finally, I would like to thank Izrin Muaz Mohd Adnan for locating photos from his family albums and for providing criticism of the book.

Neil Khor

August 2, 2002.

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