



Evolution and Identity of the Kelantan Peranakan Chinese: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

The Kelantan Peranakan Chinese (KPC) has become the earliest evidence of China relationship with the Malay World. The fifty or so Peranakan settlements in Kelantan were believed to have been founded sometime before the 1800s starting from Tumpat to Gua Musang and along Sungai Kelantan. The descendants of those early Chinese settlers married local women and had close contacts with the Malays and Thais who formed the majority of the populace. This eventually led to the acculturation of the Chinese and gave rise to the formation of the Peranakan community. He is ethnically Chinese but his Kelantanese dialect is so homey that he could easily pass off as Malay. The Chinese perceived the local Malays as legitimately dominant and themselves as legitimately subordinate. This understanding and acceptance of the legitimacy of their relative positions is very crucial in the promotion of a successful inter-ethnic interaction. Today, the days of the Peranakan are numbered and the size of their community is rapidly declining. Modernisation, migration and marriage with non-Peranakans are among the main reasons for the decline. But perhaps the most significant factor is the need to re-orient their identities to suit the post-colonial racial landscape with its ethnic demarcations of Malay, Chinese, Indian and others categories. Peranakan children no longer mix with their Malay or Thai neighbours, preferring instead the society of their schoolmates or those of similar ethnicity. It is just a matter of time before the community disappears. The objectives of the research is to indicate present and future transformations of the Kelantan Peranakan Chinese in the rapidly changing and the future of a small group of Kelantanese Chinese, whose forefathers landed in this country more than 250 years ago - much longer than many current crop of so-called Malaysians. Through the process of assimilation, they have lost their identity. They are not Malays; and naturally would not be accepted as bumiputras. Since they don't speak Mandarin, Hakka or Cantonese, they feel out of place among the "real" or more "genuine" Chinese. Compounded by their tanned skin, they look every inch like the Malays. Though their Chinese surnames are maintained, many have taken the Malay names or are being called by the Malay names. But this unfortunate group of people will perish in history in 30 - 40 years to come. They may be a minority in Kelantan but the Peranakan are as colourful as they come. However, this community is in danger of losing its unique identity. After they are, the Kelantan Peranakan Chinese will go down in history. The whole wide gone world would not even know of their existence}.

Keywords: Kelantan Peranakan Chinese, Peranakan Community, Social Reality, Acculturation, Inter-ethnic

Introduction

This paper is written based partly on research and partly on personal experience. Everything sounds and looks familiar because at least three generations of my family before me were Kelantan Peranakan. There are two basic problem which need to be made clear. Firstly, it is not always possible, without in depth research to be certain who was and who was not a peranakan. Secondly, the peranakan community in this country has a history of at least 200 years. But like most communities, it is not sociologically static. Over the years the community was affected by numerous changes as a result of which the boundary that divides the peranakan from the rest of the Chinese has become increasingly vague. In more recent years, differences between the two are not easily identifiable. There have been of course some studies on the culture of the peranakan community in Malaysia. For this paper, we attempted to provide a rather holistic perspective not only because the peranakan community was not just culturally unique, the people also played an important role in the development of the country even if their political position was, by the early part of the 19th century, increasingly superseded by that of the non- peranakan Chinese. Although we prefer not to be tied down by definitions, we would nevertheless like to begin by saying something about nomenclature. The two terms are strictly not synonymous. The difference would be clearer if each is seen in terms of its actual usage. In general, there are two categories of Chinese in Kelantan. Winzeler (1974:50) calls the acculturated type “village Chinese” and the other category “town Chinese” who perceive themselves as possessing a ‘purer’ model of Chinese culture. The so-called village Chinese show more Malay and Thai influences in their Chinese culture. It is pertinent, at this juncture, to explain the beginnings of the Kelantan Peranakan Chinese community in this country.

The general impression is that it had important links with the coming of Xie Qinggao was Hakka born in Jiaying Zhaou of Guangdong province in 1765 and died in 1821. At the age of seventeen, he went out to sea and spent fourteen years in Southeast Asia between 1782 and 1795. During Xie Qinggao’s years abroad, the ruler of Kelantan was Long Yunus. In his description of Kelantan, he mentioned that the natives did not allow their women to marry Chinese, and thus the Chinese rarely married. Those who did married Siamese women. This account is interesting because it indicates the early intermarriage between Chinese and Siamese or Thai as they are now being called. The lack of any significant religious barrier between two ethnic groups certainly made it easier for such intermarriage to occur. Xie Qinggao also mentioned of Chinese mixing with Malays during a kind of fair with lasted a month, when there was much gambling and prostitution. The text further mentioned of Chinese Kapitan and that the people of Fujian lived at the port while those of Guangdong lived mostly in the hills.¹ Those who lived at the port engaged in commerce and pepper cultivation.² Those in the hills mined gold (Feng: 1962: 8-12).

In studying the history of Chinese settlement in Kelantan, one should also investigate the migration of Chinese from Thailand to Kelantan. A great number of Peranakan Chinese came from Thailand. Hanapi (1978: 30-31) mentioned that the Chinese in Kampung Mata Air originally came from Patani in Southern Thailand in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to the chaotic conditions there. They came to Kelantan via the border town of Legeh, and followed Pergau River and reached Kelantan River. Thus it is necessary to study the migration of Chinese from Thailand in order to know more about the period and condition of Chinese settlement in Kelantan. The description so far shows that there were certainly

¹ Wang Gungwu (1960: 31) thinks that was Kota Lama, not far from Kota Bharu; Feng (1962: 12) thinks that it referred to the present capital, Kota Bharu; Cui (1976: 10), following Huang (1966:39), thinks that it referred to Pulau Sabar. According to Graham (1908: 41) AND Rentse (1934: 58), the capital then was at Pulau Sabar, an island at the mouth of Kelantan River between the present Kota Bharu and Palekbang and it has since disappeared due to floods.

² It should be mentioned that Xie Qinggao also mentioned of gold be mined at Shuangge and Yalading, both of which Tweedie transcribed as Sangor and Galating. Galating, according to Tweedie (1953:219) was near or identical with modern Pulau. Pulau, as we have seen, is an old Chinese settlement (Castens: 1980).

Chinese settlements in Kelantan by the time Xie Qinggao visited it in the eighteenth century. The descendants of those early Chinese settlers who married local women had close contact with Siamese and Malays who were the majority people. This eventually led to the acculturation of Chinese and gave rise to the formation of Peranakan Chinese society. The Peranakan Chinese culture once formed perpetuated itself until today.

History of Chinese Settlement

The relations between the Malays and the Chinese before Western colonization did not create any turmoil. This was due to the fact that the early migration of the Chinese to the Malay Archipelago was not driven by the intent to colonize but more to create understanding and trading opportunities, hence they were respectful and recognized each other's authority and culture. Unfortunately, the close and good relationship between the Melaka Empire and the Ming Dynasty was destroyed by the Portuguese and when China was invaded by the British.

The early history of China's relation with the Malays has existed since the Han Dynasty (206-220 AD). According to the Han Dynasty Literature Script, the diplomatic ties with the Malay Archipelago at that time existed for the purpose of doing trade and also to make known the Han Dynasty Kaiser supremacy. China's relation with the Malay Archipelago was also good during the reign of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) which was one of the most influential dynasties in China. Shipping technology and government support had revitalized the diplomatic and trading relations to the Malay Archipelago and Middle Asia.³

During this era a pundit and scholar from China, I-Tsing or Yi Jing recorded, translated and informed about the sailing route to the Malay Archipelago and India. During the reign of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD), China's relation with the Malays was more lively and encouraging. According to Professor Liang Liji,⁴ in his book *Lembaran Sejarah Gemilang: Hubungan Empayar Melaka-Dinasti Ming Abad ke -15*, stated that the relationship at the time was amazing, close, firm and warm in the history of both races, and should be written in gold.

The Chinese migrated to this country since the start of the Melaka government's relation with China which was established in the early 15th century.⁵ This can also be proven through Zheng He's contribution who made seven historic sailing voyages to Asia-Africa in the early 15th century. It was one of the world's history most illustrious journeys. Zheng He's voyages brought him to multiple areas which included international sailing to the Malay Peninsular such as Melaka, Pahang, Alor Island, Sembilan Mountain, Langkawi and Kuala Kedah.⁶

There is a possibility that the Chinese came to Malay Peninsular earlier than those that has been recorded because there was a statement that said Chinese monks⁷ had earlier visited Southeast Asia.

³ Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail, 2001, *Pensejarahan dan Pembinaan Tamadun*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, pp. Ch. 1.

⁴ Liang Liji, *Lembaran Sejarah Gemilang: Hubungan Empayar Melaka-Dinasti Ming Abad ke -15*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

⁵ Victor Purcell, 1965, *The Chinese In Southeast Asia*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 235; see also, Sir Richard Winstedt, 1968, *Malaya and Its History*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 32.

⁶ Further explanation, please refer to Kong Yuanzhi, 2000, *Pelayaran Zheng He dan Alam Melayu*, Bangi, Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

⁷ Victor Purcell, 1967, *The Chinese in Malaya*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, pp. 16.

Furthermore, there is an opinion that the Chinese have existed in Kelantan since the 3rd century.⁸

Although this statement is doubtful because of the lack of evidence, nevertheless, Chinese migrations to Tanah Melayu itself were influenced by the monsoon season, during the period of November to April when the North East wind was blowing from the South China Sea. These seasonal trips were also verified from the existence of the sinkhehs from China in the 19th century. According to John Davis who lived in the Malay archipelago for 20 years, in 1834 “the Chinese were diligent traders, experts in handling their businesses and understood the trading activities in the country they resided, in fact they were better than the locals themselves...”. From these aspects of Chinese trading, those involved in local trading were the sinkheh (Hokkien) or sankah (Kantonis), the new recruits from China.

Every April or May, the Chinese traders will lease a ship to Macao with the South West monsoon wind. These traders will sail as “supercargoes” on those voyages. When the ships reached Macao or Amoy, the traders will appoint agents to coax potential migrants (sinkheh) with sweet promises of instant wealth. Payments that were being offered depended on one’s sense of manners. Agents, on the other hand, received a standard payment of a dollar per person (Sir Hugh Clifford). After leaving Canton and Amoy, they will cruise the coast until they reach the longitude of 112 E. Then, they will steer through the Hainan group of islands until they reach the southern section. From there, they will sail to the coast of Cochin China in the south. They will stay ashore at Tanjung Padaran and later move towards Singapore. Usually, their trip lasted for 20-30 days and sometimes even 40 days. They will not drop anchor until potential buyers had gathered on the ship to buy the sinkheh. The price of skilled workers such as seamstresses, goldsmiths, and carpenters was 10-15 dollars; while semi-skilled coolies cost 6-10 dollars and unskilled coolies was 3-4 dollars. These sinkhehs will later agree to work for 12 months, receiving food, clothing and little money for their services. In the 19th century, 2,000 - 3,000 sinkhehs arrived in Penang each year. The people from Kwangtung were considered to be energetic and were the best squatters and land pioneers for the Hokkiens and Teochews, who later became part of the multiracial society in the Malay Peninsular.

Chinese records also have stated the existence of the Chinese community living in the border area of Thai-Kelantan in the mid-18th century. Kelantan could be their early stopover station. Hence, the Chinese presence in Kelantan was much earlier than in the Peninsular’s West Coast. Seeing that the relationship between the Malay Peninsular and China has existed from way back, thus it is not surprising that there were many Chinese who came and migrated to this state. The Wan Ta-Yuan Report for example, stated that since the 14th century an important port existed as a trading center on the East Coast of the Malay Peninsular. The Kelantan River with its long basin and upstream reaches to the mountain range was the water way to extract forest products such as laka wood, rhinoceros horns, elephant tusks, gold and tin ore. The long and deep Kelantan River Basin has introduced Kelantan to the outside world (Wan Hashim Wan Teh, 1997:102).

Some of the studies on the Chinese community’s settlements in Kelantan included studies by Tweedie (1953), Hanapi Dollah (1986) who studied the Chinese communities in Kampung Mata Ayer, Kelantan and Tan Chee Beng (1982) who studied a few settlements along the banks of the Kelantan River starting from Kuala Kerai in the upstream to Tumpat in the estuary of the river. The studies found that the Peranakan Chinese community, also known as ‘rural Chinese’ had a close relationship with the local Malays so much so that they were fluent in the Kelantanese dialect and wore similar attires worn by the locals. The interaction between the ethnics that existed has created understanding and respect. In effect, the rural Chinese, Malays and Thais have the same interest in traditional games and dances such as wayang kulit (shadowplay), menora and wayang gedek. When the menora (a traditional dance) was

⁸ See, 1965, Cenderamata Ulang Tahun Ke-54 Dewan Perniagaan China Kelantan (in Chinese), Kota Bharu: The Chinese Chamber of Commerce Kelantan, pp. 2.

performed during a Chinese religious celebration, the Malays and Thais also participated in watching the show (Tan Chee Beng, *JMBRAS*, Pt. 1, 1982: 47-48).

In the early 7th century, some Chinese writers had written about a Malay state named “Ho- Lo-TAN or KOU-LO-TAN” which was situated at the southern part of Chi’ h-Tu (Sukhothai, Siam). In Rentse’s opinion, the Chinese came to Kelantan earlier than to any other states in the peninsular west coast.⁹ This clearly showed that Kelantan has been in the knowledge of the Chinese and probably had been visited by the Chinese earlier than the recorded date. According to Rentse also, the earliest Chinese settlement in Kelantan was Pulai, which was situated in the Gua Musang district in Ulu Kelantan. This settlement was believed to be earlier than the expected date. It was proven by the discovery of farming tools and ploughs used by the Chinese for the purpose of planting paddy, that were found to be similar to the ones used in China at that time. The dialects used by them were Chinese dialects and they were not fluent in Malay. They had their own leader who was known as the Chinese kapitan. They lived in an isolated manner by farming paddy and gold mining.¹⁰ It is believed that the foundation for the Chinese settlement in Pulai was set up by a Hakkan Chief named Chong Pah Chai, a criminal from south China, who ran to Pulai during the mid-18th century (Carsten 1980:50).

Based on this statement, it is proven that Pulai was an early Chinese settlement in Kelantan. They were there solely for economic purposes because the area was rich with gold. Based on the study by Nik Hassan Suhaimi Nik Abd Rahman (1999), the state of Ho-lo-tan once sent an envoy to China in 430 AD. According to Moens, Ho-lo-tan was situated in Kelantan and the name Ho-lo-tan was similar to the name K’ou-lu-tan and Kau-lo-choeh. The state of Ch’ih-tu (Tanah Merah) received an envoy from China in 607 AD.¹¹ This place was believed to be situated in the upstream of the Kelantan River. Archeological findings showed that the upstream areas of Kelantan River were filled with gold and tin mining vestiges especially in the surrounding areas of Galas and the Nenggiri River (Jenera River and Wias River); areas at the north east of the Setong River, Mempelam River and the northern area of east of Pergau River (Jitiang River and Sokor River); including, the north west area of Tadoh River towards Tomoh which was situated in the upstream of the Teluban River (Sai River and La River). The upstream areas of Belum and the Patani River were also believed to be littered with gold. These area rich in metal resources became well-known to the whole world and became the center of attraction for traders and travelers. According to Wheatley, surely the main rivers recorded in the Ptolemy map, were rivers that were linked economically for gold trading. The Attaba River found on the map was believed to be the Lebir River in Kelantan.¹² These areas were where the Chinese made their settlements.

At the end of the 18th century and early 19th century, the Chinese began their involvement in politics and in the state administration founded by Long Yunus. This could be seen during the war between Terengganu and Kelantan’s heir to the throne, Tengku Long Muhammad. In the Hikayat Seri Kelantan it was said that Long Muhammad was almost defeated in the war and managed to retreat to Nal River. There, his majesty sought the help and assistance from the Chinese to expel the Terengganu army with the promise “...when victory has been achieved; the Galas Chinese will be allowed to raid for three consecutive day because at the time there were many Chinese in Galas.”¹³ In that war Long Muhammad

⁹ Anker Rentse, 1934, “History of Kelantan I” , *JMBRAS*, vol. 12 part II, pp. 46.

¹⁰ Anker Rentse, 1934, “History of Kelantan I, ” pp. 57; see also, S.A. Carstens, 1980, “Pulai: Memories of a Gold Mining Settlement in Ulu Kelantan,” *JMBRAS*, vol. 53, part 1.

¹¹ Paul Wheatly, 1961, *The Golden Chersonese*, Kuala Lumpur.

¹² Paul Wheatly, 1961, *The Golden Khersonese*, pp. 52 and see map pp. 34.

¹³ Mohd Asri bin Hj. Muda, 1978, in the *Majalah Peringatan Ulang tahun Yang Ke-25 Sekolah Menengah dan Rendah Chung Hwa* foreword, Kota Bharu, pp. 11; for further clarification see, Rahmat Saripan, 1979, *Perkembangan Politik Melayu Tradisional Kelantan, 1776-1842*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

succeeded in seizing the Kelantan's throne with the assistance of the Galas Chinese. Other than that, there was another event that happened in Kelantan which was the murder of Long Tan by the Galas Chinese as a result of Long Jenal's evil conspiracy. Long Tan and Long Jenal were brothers and both were Long Yunus' sons. Long Tan went to Galas to collect taxes under the order of Sultan Muhammad I. The situation in Galas was not to his satisfaction, consequently he ordered the merchants to discontinue selling rice to the Chinese. As a result, a fight broke out and he was killed and his body was put on a raft. The incident was believed to be planned by Long Jenal.¹⁴ The Chinese who were involved in the incident were caught by the Sultan and were sentenced to death.¹⁵ After the incident, there was no other Chinese involvement in Galas in the history of Kelantan's traditional government. Nevertheless, by 1900 AD, another Chinese settlement emerged in Kelantan, known as Kampung Cina. The village was situated about a mile from the city center of Kota Bharu which is in Pantai Cinta Berahi Road (now known as *Pantai Cahaya Bulan*). From Kampung Cina's history and background, the village was occupied by settlers from Kwantung, China since 150 years ago. Based on oral sources, the Chinese currently in Kampung Cina were believed to be from other surrounding village areas such as Kampung Penambang, Kampung Laut, Kampung Tikat and Kedai Buluh which were situated on banks of the Kelantan River before they finally settled in Kampung Cina. Traces of their existence such as the Chinese cemetery in Kampung Laut and at the river bank near Kampung Penambang were evidence of their existence in those villages.

The Kelantan Peranakan Chinese Community

According to the history of the Kelantan Peranakan Chinese (KPC), their arrival was said to be earlier than the Chinese during The Malacca Sultanate (1402-1511). The existence of the KPC can be traced based on a physical evidence of an old statue "*Mar Chor Beaw*" in Sui Yek Khong Temple in Pulau, Gua Musang, Kelantan. The old statue was traced to be from the Ming Dynasty who ruled China between 1368 AD and 1644 AD. The 600-year-old Sui Yek Khong Temple is the oldest temple and a few other temples, were the evidences of the KPC's arrival in Kelantan.¹⁶ In the beginning, the Chinese came to the Malay peninsular to mine gold. Their concentration areas were West Kalimantan, Bangka Island and the Peninsular. They came to Kelantan for mining gold which was concentrated near Kampung Pulau, Galas River Valley, in Gua Musang. According to Kenny Chee Sien Chen, his article, "A Glimpse on Kampung Pulau's History"¹⁷ stated that;

"400 years ago, roughly in the 1600's during the fall of the Ming Dynasty, a group of Chinese began to migrate to Kampung Pulau sailing through the Kelantan River and Galas River to mine gold. When they arrived in Kota Bharu, the group's leader sought an audience with the Sultan of

¹⁴ Please refer, Sa'ad Shukri Hj. Muda, 1971. *Detik-deti Sejarah Kelantan*, Kota Bharu: Pustaka Aman Press; and also Rahmat Sariipan, 1979, *Perkembangan Politik Melayu Tradisional Kelantan, 1776-1842*.

¹⁵ It was told, "...all of the traitorous Chinese were tied two two one. Many Chinese were caught, brought to downstream for inspection, every one of them were killed so much so that the fish in the river cannot be eaten because fingernails were found in its stomach". For further explanation see, *Hikayat Seri Kelantan*.

¹⁶ Carstens, Sharon A. (1980) *Pulau: Memories of a Gold Mining Settlement in Ulu Kelantan*. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch Royal Asiatic Society* 54(2):50-67; Wee Khoo Hock, (2002) *Kelantan and the Chinese Kelantene*, Kelantan Zaman Awal: *Kajian Arkeologi dan Sejarah*, Perbadanan Muzium Negeri Kelantan: O.W. Wolter, 1967, *Early Indonesian Commerce: A Study of the Origins of Srivijaya*, Ithaca: New York, pp. 107-8.

¹⁷ Kenny Chee Sien Chen "Sepintas Lalu Mengenai Sejarah Kampung Pulau" *Jurnal Dewan Bahasa*, Jilid 36, Bil 1, pp. 16-25. Reports on gold mining activities can be found in Hsieh Ching-Kao travel notes. Tweedie (1953: 219 dan Dodge (1977: 93) stated that Pulau has a wide gold mine area. Pulau and Galas River was an important gold mine area since a long time ago (Wee 1987:218). Wheatley (1961:xxvii) concluded that Kelantan River in Galas and Patani River in the Northern section was an area rich with gold and tin.

Kelantan asking for permission to trade and mine. They took a small boat and went upstream the Kelantan River and the Galas River which was flowing in the remote hills and jungle. From the odour of the water, the Chinese were able to identify the rivers and in upstream Kampong Pulai to be rich with gold. They took two to three weeks to arrive in Pulai.”¹⁸

Pulai in north Kelantan was an early Chinese settlement which was built earlier than other Chinese settlements in Malaysia (Carstens 1980: 50).¹⁹

However, a more specific study on the Chinese culture in Kelantan was “Hailu” or “Record of the Seas.” Hailu was a piece of work based on the story told by Hsieh Ching-Kao and recorded by Yang Ping Nan, the first person who found the *Hailu* in Macao in 1820.²⁰ According to Hsieh Ching-Kao, the local Malays forbade their daughters from marrying the Chinese because in the late 18th century, Kelantan has embraced Islam. Marrying without first becoming a Muslim was not allowed in the teaching of Islam. Therefore, the Chinese were more inclined to marry Siamese women. According to Skinner, the Siamese women were also known to be expert traders unlike their male counterparts. Thus in Skinner’s opinion, “this was certainly an advantage to the industrious male Chinese traders.” (Skinner 1957: 127). Intermarriages between the Chinese and Siamese marked the beginning of the Peranakan Chinese community in Kelantan. Further development saw the KPC community continued to grow as a result from the assimilation process with the Malay community’s surroundings. Language, food, clothing and in many aspects of their lives, either directly or indirectly, have been assimilated. This assimilation process developed the personality and characteristics of the KPC community to be a unique culture and inherited by the next KPC generation (Cuisinier 1936:1 as taken in Ismail 1982: 262).

In searching for the external outlines of Peranakan social reality, there are four sets of variables which appear salient, and which may be upon a more general level of understanding somehow interrelated with one another in rendering the conception of Peranakan social reality significant within a larger world. These four variables include social patterning, religious orientation, language, and, finally, what has become known as ethnicity. In a more general sense, the convergence of these four salient aspects of Peranakan culture is upon what has been referred to as the social construction of reality. It is a glimpse into the daily dynamics of the Peranakan world, and how its members interact to produce, individually and collectively, a socially constructed reality. Part of this process has to do with social praxis and performance, with the sense of ‘presentation of self’ in the everyday world. Part of it has to do with the process of social production. “Externalization” and “objectification” of a shared stock of knowledge, symbolisms and values, and part deals with the dialectically complementary process of social reproduction, with the problem of socio-cultural transmission of these externalized forms, and their internalizations, or subjectification, into the individual personality.

These processes can be seen to be ‘functioning’ dialectically at several levels. These are the infra-structural levels of economic adaptation, the social structural level of social interaction and integration,

¹⁸ S. M Middlebrook, M.C.S 1999, Pulai: An Early Chinese Settlement in Kelantan Kelantan in Archeological Perspective, A Collection of Essays, Kelantan Museum Corporation. Graham also stated, “*There, they engaged in gold mining (it is well known, since ancient times that the Kelantanese interior is littered with gold) and though, such large scale activities no longer exist today, the people continue to reside there in a rather isolated manner from the mainstream Chinese. These Hakka Chinese, confined to the extreme reach of the interior is however, smaller in number compared to the Hokkiens that followed later. The first Hokkiens came down to Kelantan through the Isthmus of Kra soon later or perhaps around the same time as the Hakka of Pulai. They scattered all over the Kelantanese plain, living side by side with either Malay or Thai neighbours, working the land as farmers, adopting local customs and languages in the process. Amidst hardships on the adopted foreign land, they thrived very well as the then “ Siamese-appointed ” British Advisor to the Kelantanese Cour.” see, W. A. Graham, 1908. Kelantan: A State of The Malay Peninsular, Scotland: James Maclehose & Sons, Glasgow.*

¹⁹ Details on early settlements of every Chinese in Kelantan by Middlebrook (1933: 151-156).

²⁰ In the 18th century, Hsieh Ching-Kao has visited South East Asia and spent almost 14 years overseas (1782 -1795) including Europe and America (Tweedie 1953: 216; Wang 1960: 31).

and the super-structural level of ideology. These three levels themselves constitute a sort of parallel-processing dialectical system, a 'complex' self-organizing system with a robust sense of historical structure that involves numerous interacting and mutually limiting variables. It is important to see that this set of social processes is also occurring and impinging upon a larger stream of social reality. The social construction of human reality is also, concomitantly, the psychological construction of human reality. Social definition of self and the psychological definition of society are also part of larger processes of human civilization, processes which involve boundary identification, projection, psycho-social reference, accommodation, acculturation, assimilation, etc. Both self and society are defined in mutual interrelation with one another, and with a larger world of "otherness" that has both psychological and sociological components.

Peranakan society, wherever it had taken root and flourished, wherever it had spread its seed, always had its own sense of order, organization, purpose and outlook upon the world. It has always had some kind of class structure within which each member's status-role identity has been shaped and measured. It has long had its hopes for the future espoused in its own way of bringing up its youngest generation, and a sense of present importance with the generation that has come of age in the world, and an orientation toward the past that is passing away with the oldest. If we look closely, we find that *Peranakan* society has always been composed of a seamless web of people caught up in the trials and tribulations of daily living, in the throes of larger events that shape the world around them and in the fortunes and misfortunes of the grand game of life. This web of people stretches in time through many periods as well as across many places, and each person has some sense of what it means to be *Peranakan* in the world, each person carries a part of the *Peranakan* present, past and future, upon their shoulders.

As a social phenomenon, *Peranakan* society stretches across many boundaries and zones, social and ecological, and includes many different habitats and niches. Its centers can be found in different cityscapes, and its tendrils can be found stretching out into the remotest of countrysides. *Peranakan* society may be a finite phenomenon, but its finiteness is too vast to calculate, too confusingly complex to neatly separate. *Peranakan* society, fit within a larger framework, must be seen as both a "transitional culture" in a larger stream of cultural assimilation, and a "culture of transition" that emerged as a self-sustaining social pattern in the interstitial regions between different cultural orientations. *Peranakan* culture and character emerged as a distinctive configuration wherever and whenever the processes of assimilation that were occurring in the passing of Chinese into Malay.

The term *Peranakan* Chinese is always used to refer to the group of Chinese in Malaya that have experienced an acculturation process with the Malay community influenced by the local surroundings. This term was first used to refer to the Baba (male) and Nyonya (female) Chinese in the Malay Straits such as Melaka, Penang and Singapore. Hanapi Dollah chose the term rural Chinese to refer to the group of Chinese who have experienced the acculturation and adaptation process with the Malay and Thai community.²¹ However, the term *Peranakan* Chinese has been used since the 1980's to refer to the Rural Chinese group. This term was officially used by the Kelantan *Peranakan* Chinese Association (KPCA) and KPCA was established. Hanapi Dollah regards this group as having an unfinished assimilation process with the Kelantanese Malay culture and community. The *Peranakan* Chinese still preserve their Chinese identity and their religion is Buddhism. However, from an outsider's view, it might be difficult to look for some cultural differences between the *Peranakan* Chinese and the Malays. Some confusion may arise because the *Peranakan* Chinese has nicknames that are similar with Malay names.²²

²¹ Hanapi Dollah, 1986, *Asimilasi Budaya: Kajian Kes Komuniti Cina di Kelantan*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

²² According to Hanapi Dollah's study, Malay names used included Gan Awang @ Abdullah bin Balisen also known as Cikgu Lah. Due to the name, his membership to the Kelantan Malay Teachers Cooperative was accepted although the membership was open to Malays only. Other commonly used names were Tan Awang Besar, Tan Awang Kechik and Bin Tha. According to Hanapi Dollah, his maternal great grandmother was named Mek Lebar. Other names includes En. Ismail, or sometimes called Smail Cina, Che Hassan, Bedah, Mek Bunga and Jenab. Hanapi Dollah, 1986, *Asimilasi Budaya: Kajian Kes Komuniti Cina di Kelantan*.

The KPC is a minority group where many of them are Hokkien Chinese. They are a unique and distinctive group from the aspects of language, lifestyle, culture and religion. It is estimated that about six percent of the 2.1 million people in Kelantan within an area of 14,970 km² are the KPC living in 48 settlements in 10 districts in the state of Kelantan.²³ Some of the well-known *Peranakan* Chinese Kelantanese “Kampungs” includes Kampung Tok Kong, Kampung Pasir Parit, Kampung Chenderong Batu, Kampung Kulim, Kampung Joh, Kampung Jelatok, Kampung Tawang, Kampung Batu Jong, Kampung Temangan, Kampung Balai, Kampung Chepa, Kampung Tendong, Kampung Kasa, Kampung Chetok, Kampung Sering, Kampung Kelar, Kampung Chekok, Kampung Jelawat, Kampung Berangan, Kampung Bekelam, Kampung Salor and others.

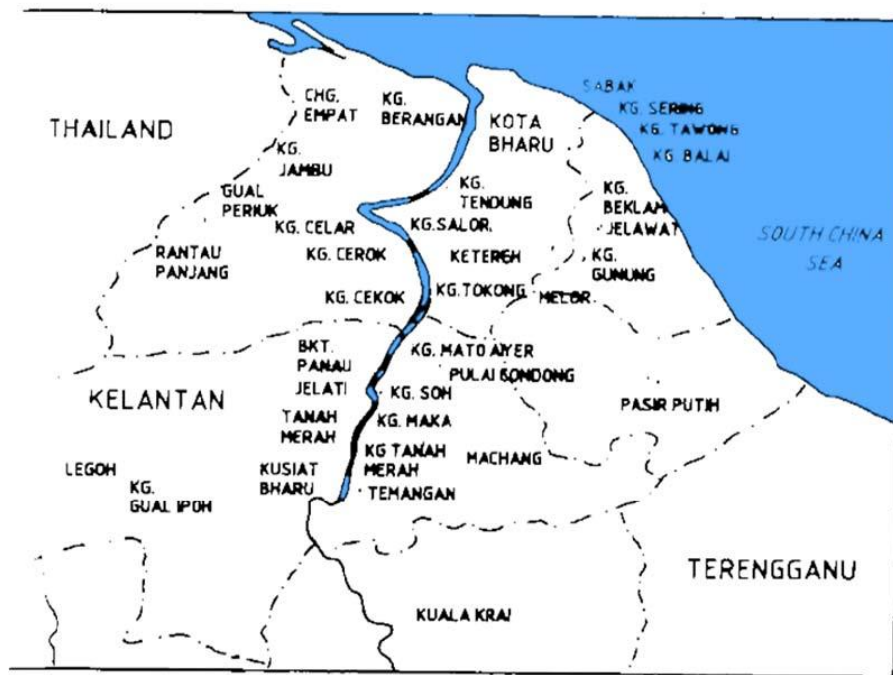


Fig. 1 Location of the Kelantan Peranakan Chinese Settlements (Kampung)

Source: Tan Goe Sim, 1996, “Latar belakang Masyarakat Cina Kelantan.” Warisan Kelantan XV, Perbadanan Muzium Negeri Kelantan.

The State of Kelantan is situated on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia with the coordinates of 5°15'N, 102°0'E and it is bordered by Thailand in the north, Singapore and Indonesia in the south. It has a river that played an important role in the history of Kelantan and the Kelantan Peranakan Chinese. The 248 km long Kelantan River has become the historic path for the civilization and heritage of the Kelantan *Peranakan* Chinese. As evidence, many of the Kelantan *Peranakan* Chinese settlements and dwellings are situated on the river bank or near the Kelantan River. The Hsieh Ching-Kao report focused on two Chinese groups in Kelantan namely the Hokkien (or sometimes known as Fukien) who were mostly businessman or traders and farmers living in town which is the state capital, known as the

²³ Teo Kok Seong, “Chinese-Malay-Thai Interactions and the making of Kelantan Peranakan Chinese Ethnicity,” in Michael J. Montesano and Patrick Jory (ed.) *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*, Singapore: NUS, 2008, pp. 214-223.

Kelantan plains. Another group was the Cantonese who were in general made up of gold miners living in remote areas in Kelantan. Hsieh Ching-Kao also observed that the process of development for both groups was different from the Hakka settlement in Pulai who were less assimilated as compared to other Hokkien settlements which were more dispersed in towns and market towns and also other rural areas mostly along the Kelantan River.

Table 1 The composition and total number of the Chinese in Kelantan, 1957.

DISTRICT	CHINESE	TOTAL POPULATION
Kota Bharu	13,393	150,884
Pasir Mas	2,855	82,847
Ulu Kelantan	4,025	34,564
Pasir Puteh	1,946	53,866
Bachok	964	51,520
Machang	2,662	39,440
Tumpat	2,425	60,365
Tanah Merah	1,443	32,099

Source: Victor Purcell, 1965, *The Chinese In Southeast Asia*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 227.

Economic Activities: The Early Phase

It is quite well-known that the Straits Chinese since the early 19th century increasingly became involved in the opening up of mines in the western parts of the Malay Peninsula in order to meet the demands of the tin-plate industry in Britain. The Straits merchants, the majority of whom were Hokkien, had two distinct advantages. Their knowledge of Malay enabled them to establish close rapport with the Malay chieftains to whom they provided loans and obtained concessions to mining lands. The *Peranakan* merchants, later, were also favoured by the British not only because they were the first of the Chinese to arrive but by the third or fourth decade of the 19th century, many of them had acquired sufficient working knowledge of the English for some of them to work in government service as well as in the British agency houses.

In case of Kelantan, *Peranakan* Chinese settlements in Kelantan are mostly distributed on both sides of Kelantan River, going downstream from Kampung²⁴ Paloh Rawa and Kampung Tanah Merah. There is a *Peranakan* Chinese settlement in each of the village mentioned and this village may be multi-ethnic. In towns, the Chinese population consists of both *Peranakan* and non- *Peranakan* Chinese, although the Chinese in such towns as Tumpat and Wakaf Bharu are largely *Peranakan* Chinese.

Historically, Kampung Cina and its surrounding areas were ruled by Raja Muda Penambang who was the son of Long Tan who was killed by the Chinese in Galas.²⁵ He was responsible for allowing the

²⁴ Kampung from the Malay word . Kampung which means “village.”

²⁵ Sa’ad Shukri Hj. Muda, 1971. *Detik-detik Sejarah Kelantan*, pp. 53-56.

Chinese to settle in Kampung Cina and the Chinese had gazetted their areas. Then, during Tengku Cik's²⁶ administration, many lands in Kampung Cina were sold to the Chinese. The Chinese in Kampung Cina, Kota Bharu then had a Chinese Kapitan to rule and oversee Chinese welfare and to represent his community in any negotiations with the dignitaries and the sultan. The last Chinese Kapitan in Kampung Cina was Chia Eng Chong who passed away in 1948. The position was replaced with a new position and title which is Datok Kaya Pati.

The Chinese Kapitan had several important duties and functions in the Chinese community in Kampung Cina. His role was similar to the position of Penghulu or Penggawa. The Chinese Kapitan's responsibility was not only for the welfare of the Chinese, but also was given the authority to solve and carry out punishment on small cases in the local Chinese community while major crime cases will be brought to the Sultan. Although the Kapitan did not receive any salary, he was given the authority by the Sultan to collect taxes on the goods traded in the Chinese community. In short, the Chinese Kapitan played an important role as an intermediary between the Chinese, the local Malay community and the ruler. He was responsible to maintain harmony in the Chinese community in Kota Bharu since the Chinese settlements were mostly concentrated here. This was due to the fact that Kota Bharu is the state capital and center of administration. As a major center that carried out economic, social and political activities, Kota Bharu also has a river that connects it with the outlying remote areas. Because of these facilities, the Chinese chose Kota Bharu during their early migration especially when they came for trading. Kota Bharu is also suitable for agriculture that enables them to plant paddy, vegetables and fruits.²⁷

Although there was other economical development, the Kelantan *Peranakan* Chinese's economic activities still revolved around agriculture, fishing and livestock. But economically, the *Peranakan* Chinese are mostly farmers. In most *Peranakan* villages there are usually fruit trees. The cultivation of vegetables, coconut, ground-nut and tobacco is common along both banks of Kelantan River. In fact Winzeler (1976:319) argues that the sandy river lands not suitable for rice cultivation, and Malays therefore settled slightly inland from the river. The Chinese immigrants who were adept at making use of the sandy land for fruit and vegetable cultivation therefore settled close to the river banks, where Winzeler's Chinese informants claimed were empty of Malays when their forefathers arrived. The general pattern of agricultural activities of the *Peranakan* Chinese along Kelantan River has been well described by Hanapi (1978: 68-69). He divides the *Peranakan* Chinese settlements along the river into the upper course region, middle course region and lower course region. In the upper course region (e.g. Temangan and Kampung Joh) the main crop is rubber. In the middle course region (e.g. Kampung Tokong and Kampung Mata Ayer), rubber and padi are the main crops, while in the lower course (e.g. Pasir Parit and Kampung Tendong) vegetable cultivation is most important. Thus *Peranakan* Chinese earn their income through paddy, vegetable and rubber cultivation as well as working as labourers and rubber tappers. The villagers also rear some livestock such as chicken, goats, cattle and some pigs in certain villages. Pig raising is, however, not important among the *Peranakan* Chinese. In fact, the *Peranakan* Chinese villagers seldom eat pork which has become mostly an item for ritual purpose only.

Nevertheless, there were individuals in villages that provided craft works such as cloth weaving, ironsmiths making knives and machetes, mengkuang mat weaving, silversmiths and goldsmiths. In the fishing villages, there were individuals who built boats, made fishing nets, fish sauce (budu) and salted fish. These industries in the beginning were industries among family members and for personal consumption. However, with the development of trade between Kelantan and the outside world, especially through Singapore, the goods were marketed. Hence, in the Sultan Muhammad II's administration, besides uniting the state of Kelantan, he took action to strengthen his power by creating a central administrative system in Kota Bharu. This strengthening of power was due to the emergence of

²⁶ Tengku Cik is the son of Raja Muda Penambang. The title for Tengku Cik was Tengku Panglima Raja.

²⁷ Paul Wheatly, 1966, *The Golden Khersonese*, Kuala Lumpur, pp. 77.

growing economical influence from the opening of Singapore as an international trading center. At that time trade between Singapore and the states in the East Coast of Malaya including Kelantan was growing rapidly (Wong Lin Ken, 1960: 11-231). This showed that in the mid 19th century, during the reign of Sultan Muhammad II, Kelantan was already exposed to the form of a capitalist economy.

As a result from trading expansion between Kelantan and the outside world, artisan goods such as woven items, knives and machetes, mengkuang mats and jewelery made from silver and gold were begun to be marketed.²⁸ The development in trade contributed to the increase of trade capitalists who were mostly Chinese, who played the role as the linkage between the locals and the world market. They bought goods such as dried coconuts, dried fish and forest products and sold them to traders at the port for export. These capitalists also bought imported products to be sold to the locals. At the time, Kota Bharu itself became a busy port city. F.F. Laidlaw for example described Kota Bharu as,

“I’m amazed looking at the shopping center in this small city. There you can find beautiful locally made sarongs. There’s also imported cotton and silk textiles., sweets made by the locals; tin and copper from Brunei, Trengganu, Birmingham; tools and knives from Japan and China; gold jewelry made by local craftsman and fruits (F.F. Laidlaw, 1953:156)”

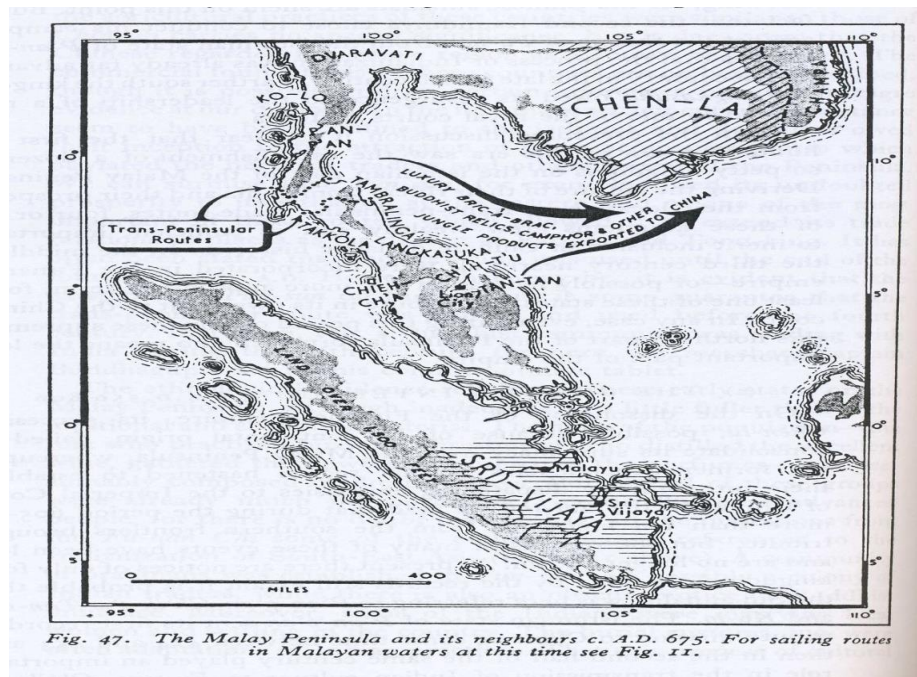


Fig. 2 Sailing routes in the Malay Peninsular and traded goods

Source: Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abdul Rahman, 2004, *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: Early History*, Singapore: Archipelago Press.

²⁸ The description was from H.Clifford’s notes on his visit to Kelantan in 1895. He noted that the main products in the state were silk (said to be the best in Semenanjung), cotton and pottery. See, H. Clifford, “Expedition to Trengganu and Kelantan,” pp. 116.

Apart from producing goods for local consumption, Kelantan also exported some of its rice. As noted by Hsieh Ching-Kao, the economy of the *Peranakan* Chinese was tied to the land.

The *Peranakan* Chinese lived along both sides of the Kelantan River. They cultivated fruits and vegetables. A large number of them worked on lands belonging to the Malays for planting paddy by using the profit-sharing system. The Chinese who were known for their diligence were successful in contributing to the high yields of rice. According to W.A. Graham, besides having the capabilities to produce 70,000 tons of rice for its local consumption (W.A. Graham, 1908:19), Kelantan was able to export its rice. In ordinary years about 15,000 tonnes of rice was produced and usually 3,000 tons of rice was exported.²⁹ Furthermore Kelantan also produced dried fish not only for local consumption but also for export. The farmers in Kelantan were able to produce a total of 40,000 tons annually (W.A. Graham, 1908:19).

T.J. Newbold estimated that Kelantan exported approximately 12,000 pikul (1 pikul = 62.5kg) of black pepper annually in 1838 (T.J. Newbold, 1939: 65). In fact, in the early 19th century, for quite sometime, Kelantan was the main gold exporter in Peninsular Malaysia.³⁰

The most well-known gold mining areas included Sokor and Galas. In addition, Kelantan was the fifth important tin producing state in Peninsular Malaysia. According to T.J. Newbold's estimates, Kelantan produced about 179 tons of tin ore in 1835. Although the production activities for trading were limited in Kelantan's economy at the time, nonetheless, it has proven that there existed trading activities among the people of Kelantan since the 19th century. In this century also, the use of money in buying and selling began to thrive. The currency used was small rounded coins made from tin.

Based on the description given on the trading development, it clearly showed that Kelantan's main exports in the first part of the 19th century was black pepper, betel nuts, forest products and tin. Kelantan's export data at the end of the 19th century showed that the number increased from \$632,742 in 1897 to \$969,813 in 1901.³¹ The clarification on trading activities in Kelantan showed that the state had been exposed to the capitalist economy. Its economic activities were concentrated on the relationship between man and land i.e. the majority of the Kelantan population depended on land for their life sustenance. Land functioned as their primary source of income and the concept of land as capital was still foreign to the people of the state.

Long Senik too has leased the Kelantan river estuary to a Chinese Kapitan which was situated approximately 12 miles from the king's head office. The rate imposed was three percent on import tax and three percent on export tax. This means the rate paid by the Chinese Kapitan in a year was \$7,000 for import tax and \$7,000 for export tax. The Sultan and state dignitaries also collected revenue on head taxes by imposing a tax called 'banci'. During the reign of Long Senik, 'banci' tax was \$1.00 for a free adult Malay male for every three years. For an adult Chinese male the charge was \$3.00 per person for every three years, starting after three years residing in the state. The tax collecting system varied in forms and there was a difference from one ruler to another and from time to time. This form of tax had no

²⁹ The description of trading activities can be found in W.W. Skeat's writings while he was in Kampung Aur Gading at the end of the 19th century. Among them was a story of a retail shop selling rice, sugar, glutinous rice, torchlights, salt and matches. The prices on these items were quite high. There were other necessity goods such as fish sauce (budu) in claypots, dried fish, coconut oil and coconut. For further information, see W.W. Skeat, "The Cambridge University Expedition to the North Eastern States, and to Upper Perak, 1899-1900," JMBRAS, vol. 26, part IV, 1953, pp. 97.

³⁰ M.W.F Tweedie, 1953, "An Early Chinese Account of Kelantan," JMBRAS, Vol. XXVI, Pt. I; see also Shahril Talib, 1995, History of Kelantan, 1890-1940, monograph no.21, Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS).

³¹ See, C. O. 273/295, Swettenham to C.O., 4 October 1903, pp. 203.

uniformity for the whole state. Long Senik also collected taxes in the areas where the people were gold miners. The rate of 'banci' tax for them was \$3.00 per person for Malays and \$12.00 per person for the Chinese. Children and old people were excluded from paying them, while every slave was imposed a charge of \$0.50 cents for every three years. Usually, excess revenue from the tax collection will be collected into the royal treasury. Estate taxes were usually monopolized by the government by controlling certain trading activities. The ruler also had special rights to collect taxes on more specific commodities. For example, the Sultan had the right on export and import taxes on the Kelantan River that was leased to the Chinese Kapitan. In 1900-1903, Long Senik had leased six to ten years on the revenue on the export of cows, kerosene monopoly, paddy and rice exports and also opium. The monopoly rights on those revenues were for a certain period of time.

In the following developments, during the reign of Long Senik who took the title of Sultan Muhammad IV (1899-1920), tax collection was not done directly by the palace staff but was leased to affluent entrepreneurs deemed qualified by the Sultan. Besides that the Sultan also had the right to award any forms of gifts to whomever he wanted such as giving lands and the rights to collect taxes. If the person received the right to collect taxes, he may lease it to another person, usually a Chinese leaseholder. Other than taxes, the income of the Kelantan rulers were acquired from other payments imposed on trading activities. For example, during the end of the 19th century, any steam ship anchored in the Kelantan port was imposed to pay a sum of \$25.00 to \$45.00 depending on the size of the ship. For smaller ships they were exempted from the charges but were required to pay import and export duties on the trading goods they brought. Collections were made directly by the port officers or by way of the Sultan 'leasing the right to collect taxes by an individual (usually in the period of six to ten years). He will then make a fixed payment to the Sultan annually. Some of the taxes awarded to the 'tax leaseholder' included the export tax on rice, paddy, buffaloes, and sale of opium and import of kerosene.

The involvement in the trading activities contributed a lucrative income to the Sultan and state dignitaries. The Sultan had a monopoly on the production of India-rubber and was generally involved in the trading of every good. All business affairs were done by the state dignitaries such as the Datuk Seri Diraja, who was one of the four powerful state dignitaries. By having the monopoly on traded goods, they received lucrative profits from this activity. This was due to the fact that most imported and exported goods must first go through the hands of the 'rich people' who had the power to monopolise the goods. Later the goods will go through the hands of the Chinese traders, who obtained high profits from trading. It was also found that during the reign of Sultan Long Senik, his majesty also faced foreign trickery especially by the Siamese and British, who were attempting to continue their policies to gain advantages by having domination on Kelantan.

However, it was only in 1920s, that more Chinese immigrants, especially from Guandong, Fujian, Hainan, came settled in Kelantan, mainly small shopkeepers dealing with copra, seafood, rice and other goods. As minority community, the Chinese in Kelantan (5% of Kelantan population) are having cultural harmonies with their majority community, the Malay. This is the lesson we need to learn for One Malaysia, One Malaysian. The religion harmonies in the state can be seen in Tumpat town where there is large population of Siamese and *Peranakan* Chinese. There are many temples of Siamese architecture and statue of Buddha in the town, which is rare even in West Coast.

Malay, by the time of Japanese invasion, had undergone widespread changes-socially, economically and technologically. While immigrant laws changed, population growth continued at a rapid rate through birth. Even by the first decade of the 20th century, the *totok* had drastically outnumbered the *Peranakan* Chinese segment of the Chinese population owing to rapid immigration. But the local born *totok*, through the process of socialization in a plural cultural environment, became increasingly more difficult to distinguish from the *Peranakan* Chinese. The difference could be determined only genealogically or if customary habits and practices within the household were known. In the course of the late 1940s and early 1950s, political consciousness swept across the country as the end of World II saw America again

urging the liberation of people all over the world. America itself began the process of decolonization by freeing the Philippines in 1946 and brought its influence to bear on Britain in particular to follow suit.

The more hardcore of the *Peranakan* Chinese, not regarded as representatives of mainstream Malayan Chinese politics, who until 1949, leaned clearly towards China, were still preoccupied with efforts to carve out for themselves a permanent place in the larger national context. A few joined forces with the more radical activities. They were found, for example, in the Malayan Democratic Union. The majority remained in the Straits Chinese British Association (SBCA). With what, the political future of *Peranakan* Chinese as a distinct ethnic group had all but evaporated. Although until today they have by means met their demise, they are no longer easily identifiable except in Kelantan. There are also descendants of the community who feel apologetic that they lack all those qualities of "Chineseness" which are extolled by members of the Chinese community, to the extent that many of the present generation of *Peranakan* Chinese prefer publicly to deny that they are *Peranakan*. Since it is not a Malaysian preoccupation to take pains to preserve one's genealogical ancestors, the time may yet come when most of the descents of *Peranakan* Chinese become actually ignorant of the fact that they are of that stock. The process, I am afraid, may be irreversible if no step is taken to try to ascertain who among the present generation are in fact descended from the Kelantan *Peranakan* Chinese community. The survey, needless to say, should be nationwide.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is shown that the Kelantan *Peranakan* Chinese community had a firm and meaningful history starting from the existence and development of China's trading in the Malay Archipelago which later flourished because of the amiable relationship between China and "Ho-LoTan or Kou-Lo-Tan" (Kelantan). The historic journey etched since the 6th century by the *Peranakan* Chinese who came initially looking for gold and continued to be glorious until the 15th century during the Ming Dynasty's golden age. The relationship between Melaka and China further resulted in developing a Chinese trading world and culture which continued to expand rapidly in the Malay Archipelago in line with the development of Kelantan and the Kelantan *Peranakan* Chinese community.

Close interethnic interactions in Kelantan is the main factor for good interethnic relationship and the acculturation of the Chinese. Interethnic socialization from childhood to adulthood has fostered a greater interethnic understanding and respect. As a result of such socialization, members of different ethnic groups have developed certain common values a "cultural taste." In Kelantan, most *Peranakan* Chinese are concentrated in the rural areas and the interaction is more among themselves as well as with the Malays and Thai. Thus the process of assimilation into the mainstream Chinese does not occur. Instead, in a predominantly Malay area, the acculturation of the Chinese is reinforced in that they continue to speak without being looked down upon. This unique group of *Peranakan* Chinese deserves more attention by scholars, be they interested in ethnography, ethnicity or others. Among the topics which can be investigated in depth how it is accommodated to the local multi-cultural environment. The question of culture and social change is also important. The New Economy Policy of the government as well as the socio-economic projects has certain effects on the people in Kelantan, including the *Peranakan* Chinese. For example, will the improvement in infra-structure brings about greater interaction between the non-*Peranakan* Chinese and the *Peranakan* Chinese, and what will be the consequences of such interaction? Of course, the very nature of *Peranakan* Chinese culture and society is ideal for studying ethnicity. That's why the study will compile the ethnography of social interaction between the *Peranakan* Chinese and the other ethnic groups in Kelantan. Such a study will certainly throw more light on the nature of ethnic relations and interethnic cultural influences in Malaysia. Through the process of assimilation, they have lost their identity. They are not Malays; and naturally would not be accepted as bumiputras. Since they don't speak Mandarin, Hakka or Cantonese, they feel out of place among the "real" or more "genuine"

Chinese. Compounded by their tanned skin, they look every inch like the Malays. Though their Chinese surnames are maintained, many have taken the Malay names or are being called by the Malay names.

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